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**Review: Oil and Honey: The Education of an Unlikely Activist**  
By Bill McKibben

**Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller**  
San Francisco, California, USA

McKibben, Bill. *Oil and Honey: The Education of an Unlikely Activist*. New York: Times Books, 2013. 272 pp. ISBN-10: 0805092846. ISBN-13: 9780805092844, hardcover. 272 pages. US\$26.00.

*Oil and Honey* by Bill McKibben tells a fascinating personal tale about author's involvement in the effort to stop the Keystone XL pipeline, and alert the public to the problem of global warming. He also gets to the roots of the honey bee crisis that faced the nation. New Englander McKibben earned his place in the environmental movement with his book *The End of Nature* (1989) which argued that our old conception of Nature was no longer plausible. He pointed out that we could affect nature to such an extent through greenhouse gas emissions that it was no longer some big powerful other that we were fully at the mercy of. As it turns out it, nature is still beyond prediction and shows signs that we have fooled around with it too much.

In *Oil and Honey*, McKibben takes the reader on a fascinating tour of his agricultural struggles to help honey bees which were dying in record numbers across the country, and his efforts to combat the fossil fuel industry. He flexes his and the movement's muscles here. One finds that many allies were required to help him with the efforts of his global warming group 350.org to make an impact. The environmental movement is wiser for what he has learned in the process, and the world has changed with global warming being more widely acknowledged by the public and the press.

It is interesting to explore some of the values shown here. McKibben sends a message that the environmental movement can enact change and should not be trifled with. Like McKibben, there are passionate people who are willing to go to jail over these issues. The author makes friends and allies in the process. There is not a lot of internal jockeying taking place here, instead a story about personal education and actions taken. As shown here, much of McKibben's success is due to the allies he made and the help he received and he goes out of his way to thank the Sierra Club in particular.

One might not find a clear connection between helping honeybees and fighting the fossil fuel industry. McKibben has been a visionary and has travelled all over the continent to tell this story. There does seem to be a growing knowledge, however, that we need to do something further about this, with *Oil and Honey* likely to inspire students and the general public.

This book tells of recent environmental history and the need to organize for consensus to fight for the environment. As such, it will light a flame in those who are looking to keep the battle going whether they are an activist or a scholar. Many Environmental

Studies and Natural History students have been told that one cannot be both an activist and a scholar. There are, however, some scholars who must speak out and do so. McKibben, a scholar, tries here to do it differently, because the change and action was needed. This is a good book for those who want to consider being activists, showing some of the gamesmanship and passion involved. Though some might think or advise otherwise, activism has long been a part of environmentalism and, as such, the field and the public have a great deal for which to thank activists.

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