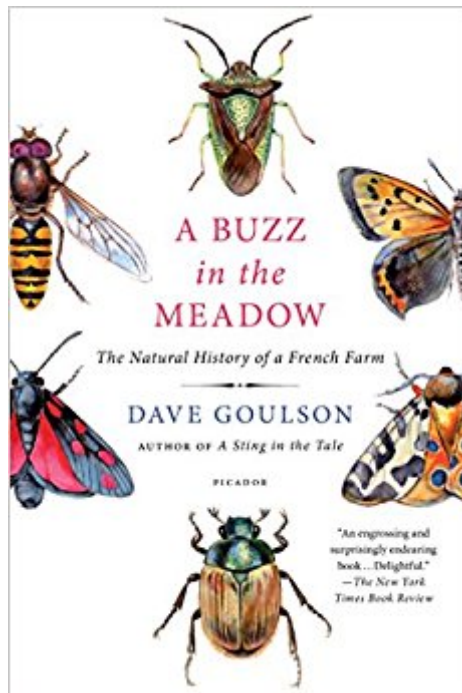


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# A Buzz In The Meadow: The Natural History Of A French Farm



## Synopsis

A CONSERVATIONIST'S DEEPLY PERSONAL AND FASCINATING REFLECTION ON OWNING AND REVITALIZING A FARM IN RURAL FRANCE

*A Sting in the Tale*, Dave Goulson's account of a lifetime studying bumblebees, was a powerful call to arms for nature lovers everywhere. Brilliantly reviewed, it was shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize for the best nonfiction book of the year, and it debuted the already renowned conservationist's ability to charm, educate, and tell an absorbing story. In *A Buzz in the Meadow*, Goulson returns to tell the tale of how he bought a derelict farm in the heart of rural France. Over the course of a decade, on thirty-three acres of meadow, he created a place for his beloved bumblebees to thrive. But other creatures now live there too, myriad insects of every kind, many of which Goulson had studied before in his career as a biologist. You'll learn how a deathwatch beetle finds its mate and why butterflies have spots on their wings, and you'll see how a real scientist actually conducts his experiments. But this book is also a wake-up call, urging us to cherish and protect life in all its forms. Goulson has that rare ability to persuade you to go out into your garden or local park and observe the natural world. The subtle glory that is life in all its forms is there to be discovered. And if we learn to value what we have, perhaps we will find a way to keep it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“An artful blend of E.O. Wilson and Barry Lopez, with a continental flair. Backyard naturalists, regardless of their locale, will delight in the amiable company of this witty and thoughtful guide.”

•Booklist• A charming but serious warning of the need to protect our natural ecosystems from heedless, irreversible destruction.

•Kirkus Reviews• Warm and delightful: I frequently found myself wanting to put it down to go bird and bee watching, to find for myself the species [Goulson] discusses.

•NPR on A Sting in the Tale• A Sting in the Tale is both a whodunit as well as a revealing study of a bug on whom we depend a great deal.

•The Seattle Times on A Sting in the Tale• Goulson transforms what could be dry material with stinging wit.

•New York Post on A Sting in the Tale• Much more than a series of romantic wildlife walks. [Goulson] is adept at weaving profound biological concepts in with accounts of nearly being shot off the root by a zealous French huntswoman or decoding the head-banging knocks of deathwatch beetles....A trove of elegant and fascinating ecological tales

•BBC Wildlife• A wonderfully entertaining one-man campaign to persuade the world to love his favourite animals--insects....A Buzz in the Meadow feels like a cross between Peter Mayle's stories of homemaking in Provence and Gerald Durrell's works of domestic mayhem among Greek wildlife. Goulson has a similar comic gift to both, but although he may choose to play it for laughs, he is the cleverest fool you could imagine....A blend of scientific evidence and amusing travelogue that engages the reader as much with the eloquence of its argument as with the charm of its good humour.

•The Mail on Sunday (London)• You can't help but be charmed by the intriguing stories of paper moths, spotted butterflies and mating praying mantises.

•The Big Issue (London)• Goulson writes with infectious enthusiasm....His passionate interest in and defence of the planet's smallest inhabitants makes the book a lively and important read.

•The Sunday Times (London)• Goulson's sheer enthusiasm for wild things, from the lizards, mice and spiders that share his home to minute tardigrades or 'water ears' that wriggle in damp moss cushions, is that of a young Gerald Durrell on Corfu....He engages his readers in clear, lively language, avoids jargon and presents his thesis with a smile, not doom and gloom.

•The Spectator (London)• What begins as a scientific rural idyll becomes a journey into the imperilled territory of Rachel Caron's Silent Spring.

•Nature• [Dave Goulson] is among the brightest things in the recent flowering of composite works of nature writing, natural history and memoir.

•The Observer (London)

DAVE GOULSON studied biology at Oxford University and is now a professor of biological sciences at the University of Stirling. He founded the Bumblebee Conservation Trust in 2006, whose groundbreaking conservation work earned him the Heritage Lottery Award for Best Environmental Project and "Social Innovator of the Year" from the Biology and Biotechnology Research Council. His previous book, *A Sting in the Tale*, was a Seattle Times Best Book of the Year, and shortlisted

for the Samuel Johnson Prize.

This was a really wonderful book. I love bugs and am fascinated by them, but this would be a great read for anyone who is even a little ecologically minded or interested in conservation. It introduces you to some insects and makes them approachable and loveable, giving you an insight into their plight and how we could help keep them from disappearing. Goulson is a wonderful story-teller and his enthusiasm for his subject comes through and gets you hooked. I actually first heard of this book when Radiolab interviewed him about the Deathwatch Beetle and he was so engaging I bought this book to get more. Was not disappointed. I will likely pick this up in hard copy as well to keep on my shelf. A wonderful book.

This is a fine book. The title is a bit misleading in that it is not the natural history of a French farm--it's the natural history of insects (and a few other creatures) in a meadow on what was once a farm, there's no farming involved. Goulson bought the farm in an area where the land was cheaper than elsewhere and because it was for sale. He's allowing much of it to return to nature, so the place is both an on-going experiment and a second residence. The book is actually two books in one. The first half contains a great deal of natural history in the context of the farm, and the second half is more a strong call for better understanding and better relationship with the planet, and includes such themes as the importance of biodiversity and the grave difficulty of generating change in the way we humans do things. I strongly agree with what he writes but not all readers may see the urgency. The writing is excellent. The species are European, which American readers like me may not recognize, and he's got some British usages in words and style, although no real problem arises from that. Funding for British research and the organization of universities may also be a little strange (it was for me). Some photos would be helpful and maybe a map. The description of the old farm and its buildings got me very curious about what they actually look like. Two chapters stood out for me. Chapter 8 is on the death watch beetle, which infests his farmhouse--they can riddle wooden beams but it may take them a few centuries. And chapter 13 on disappearing bees is enlightening. It describes examining the impact of neonics--neonicotinoid chemicals used on pests. His research showed that the impact likely is an accumulation of low levels of chemicals disorienting bees and inhibiting their learning (sounds odd but explained fully). They published a report that drew a lot of attention and was almost immediately targeted by manufacturers with the result that the pesticide practices continue and the decline of bees (many many species) continues. So Chapter 13 is a case study in important research countered so as to prevent needed changes. Goulson manages to

remain optimistic, somehow. Maybe it's the wine and cheese he says he loves, maybe it's that the French are not as rapidly altering the countryside (same population as the UK but more than twice the space).

Dave Goulson's *A Buzz in the Meadow* is a very interesting book. So few scientists so far have taken the trouble to write about their work in an understandable, entertaining way. We know too little about insects. I shall read more of his books.

Loved his first book "A Sting in the Tale" and learned so much about bumble bees. I wish this newest book detailed more of the actual work that went into restoring the meadow. The discussions on the various fauna and flora of the area is great, but as someone who has been trying to turn a typical suburban monoculture into a wildlife haven, I would have loved to hear more about Mr. Goulson's endeavors to do the same. Wonderful book and I hope he writes more.

Dave writes in an entertaining way & makes his fascination with insects interesting as well as educational. Insects have survived much longer than man & considering how vital they are to our earth & food chain it is imperative that their myriad of species continue to not only survive but thrive.

Great book. This one was to share and spread the word about meadow for Pollinators. Thanks

A pleasant tour of several orders of Insecta, with other plants and animals along the way, as the author purchases and improves his farm in France. Goulson writes as if this is a personal journal, with the exception of the final section, which is a plea for people not to poison and destroy the natural world we live in.

*A Buzz in the Meadow* describes the change of a plot of land in France from a farm to a feral landscape. The shift in plant life followed by the shift in animal life is well catalogued and described by the author and the methods used to change the plant life are very interesting.

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