Bees

Bees are well-known for pollination of various species of flowers. They are so efficient at pollination that they are located everywhere on the planet where there are insect pollinated flowers. Antarctica is the single place in the world where there are no bees. There are nearly 20,000 different species of bees.

Evolutionary history links bees to wasps and even ants. All bees have two pair of wings but they are not considered to be efficient flyers when compared to other insects. Bees are rather bulky and fuzzy which helps them to collect and carry pollen. Bees have a long proboscis or specially shaped tongue which aids them in obtaining nectar. All bees have a pair of antennae. Different species of bees have a wide range of size, from barely a sixteenth of an inch to the massive leaf cutter bee. Leaf cutter female bees grow to an inch and a half in length.

The familiar European honey bee, which was imported to the United States long ago, is quite probably the most well known and best liked bee because of the wonderfully sweet honey it produces. With the technological changes in horticulture, commercial bee keepers today supply bees to pollinate commercially grown flowers and vegetables.

Bees may be solitary in their life style or live in small groups of a dozen or so. Honey bees are the species that create colonies of hundreds of bees, while commercial beekeepers create very special hives may have as many as 40,000 bees in a hive. The honey bee queen is at the center of the colony. She can produce over 2,000 eggs per day during the early formation of a colony. Later, during the primary pollinating and foraging season, she may need to create more than 1,000 eggs per day just to offset losses in population.

Great concern over the large reduction in bee populations has been expressed across England, Europe, and the United States. While some people want to put the blame for the loss of bees on spraying pesticides used to eliminate pests such as mosquitoes, there have been several studies that have shown the real reason to be changes in farming practices. Extensive farming of land has destroyed the bees’ habitat of fields of wildflowers. Whatever the reasons, the loss of bee populations affects human food supplies.