

## **The Honey Bee - Did you know this??**

There are 10,000 - 20,000 species of bee including many wasp like and fly like bees. Most are small being 2mm to 4cm long. Bees and wasps are closely related. Bees provide their young with pollen and honey while wasps eat animal food, insects or spiders. In addition wasps have unbranched hairs.

Honey bees' wings beat 11,400 times per minute.

Their flight speed averages only 15 miles per hour.

Bees possess five eyes.

Honeybees can perceive movements that are separated by 1/300th of a second. Humans can only sense movements separated by 1/50th of a second. Were a bee to enter a cinema, it would be able to differentiate each individual movie frame being projected.

Bees cannot recognize the colour red.

Honeybees' stingers have a barb which anchors the stinger in the victim's body. The bee leaves its stinger and venom pouch behind and soon dies from abdominal rupture.

Honeybees communicate with one another by "dancing" so as to give the direction and distance of flowers.

A single hive contains approximately 40-45,000 bees.

### **\* Queen bees**

The queen bee is the only sexually developed female in the hive.

She mates in flight with approximately 18 drones. She only mates once in her lifetime.

A queen can lay 3,000 eggs in a day.

She can live for up to 2 years.

A queen can lay her weight in eggs in one day and 200,000 eggs in a year.

Fertilized eggs will become female offspring, while unfertilized eggs will become males.

### **\* Drones**

The drone bees are male and do not have stingers - they are therefore unable help protect the hive.

They are unable to collect pollen or nectar so cannot contribute to feeding their community. The only function of a drone is to mate with the queen after which it dies. In autumn worker bees will prevent any "left over" drones from entering the hive thereby starving them to death.

### **\* Workers**

The workers are sexually undeveloped females.

Life expectancy is approximately 28 to 35 days.

Workers must visit over 4,000 flowers to make just a tablespoon of honey.

In the course of her lifetime, a worker bee will produce 1/12<sup>th</sup> of a teaspoon of honey.

A worker will travel up to and sometimes beyond 3 kilometres to collect pollen or nectar.

Bees communicate with each other about food sources using dances. The sound from the movement of the bees is picked up by the tiny hairs on the bee's head. Bees use the sun as a navigational tool.

### **\* Honey**

Bees have been producing honey for at least 150 million years.

The honeycomb is composed of hexagonal cells with walls that are only 2/1000 inch thick, but support 25 times their own weight.

Honey is nectar that bees have repeatedly regurgitated and dehydrated.

Theoretically, the energy in one ounce of honey would provide one bee with enough energy to fly around the world.

The honeybee is not born knowing how to make honey; the younger bees are taught by the more experienced ones.

**\* Killer Bees**

The 'killer bee' we sometimes hear about is a type of African honey bee. These were accidentally released in Brazil during an experiment and began to move north reaching Mexico in the 1980s. The 'killer bee' is now found in the south west of the U.S.A. They react very quickly, attack in large numbers and swarm for long periods. Killer bees will pursue an enemy 1/4 mile or more.

**\* Bee eating bird.** In Australia we have a bird called The Rainbow Bee-eater. It is found over a lot of Australia, particularly in areas of open country. It is described as having a black bill, Rufus crown, black eye-stripe, edged in blue - a black band on a yellow throat. It has a light green back and its tail feathers are black. Both sexes have extended central tail feathers - these are much longer in the male. Some of our customers north of Melbourne report seeing these birds eating their bees.

**ANY INTERESTING FACTS WE HAVE MISSED??**

**LET US KNOW SO THAT WE CAN ADD THEM!**

