

Bees factsheet

- There are more than 250 different types of bee in Britain.
- Some types of bees live by themselves; others (e.g. honey bees and bumble bees) are social and live in big colonies.
- Honey bees live in colonies that can contain up to 50,000 bees; bumble bees live in smaller groups of a few hundred.
- The place where a bee colony lives is called a *hive*.
- From early spring until late autumn, worker bees in honey bee and bumble bee colonies gather nectar and pollen from flowers.
- Honey bees communicate with each other via 'waggle-dancing', i.e. they communicate the proximity and direction of sources of food to other bees in the hive by spinning around and wagging their tails.
- Bees use a long hollow tube, called a *proboscis*, to collect the nectar.
- Female bees gather pollen in 'baskets' on their hind legs.
- Nectar is made into honey; honey and pollen are stored in separate combs for food.
- Baby bees (larvae) and adult bees feed on the nectar of flowers, honey and pollen (different types of bee will eat different things).
- Only the queen in a bumble bee or honey bee hive can lay eggs.
- In honey bee and bumble bee colonies, worker bees (female) do all the work inside and outside the hive while drones (male) fertilise queens.
- Flowering plants need to be pollinated in order to reproduce and insects like bees are important for this.
- Bees help to pollinate flowers by transferring pollen from the stamen to the stigma.
- Bees are eaten by spiders, birds, wasps and flies.

References

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