



Buzzing

ABOUT BEES



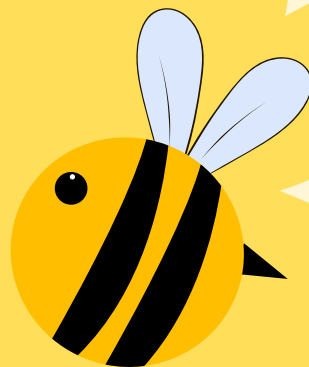
Bees are amazing little insects - did you know that if it wasn't for bees, we wouldn't be able to grow lots of our favourite foods? You may be wondering why that is - it's because they're pollinators.

What is pollination?

Pollination is a really important part of the life cycle of plants. Insects (and even some birds, bats, and the wind) carry pollen between flowering plants of the same type. They land on a flower to feast on the nectar and the pollen sticks to their legs - dropping off when they land on another flower. The pollen fertilises egg cells, so that seeds are created and the plant can reproduce - giving us plants to use as food, shelter and all sorts of other things! The insects or creatures that carry the pollen between the flowers, making all of this happen, are known as pollinators. Around 84% of all crops and 80% of wildflowers depend on insect pollination - so you can see why bees are so important to us!



Creating a buzz around bees



TASK!

Can you name another pollinator? You can do some research if you're not sure!

So, now we know a bit more about how vital bees are to our world, let's learn a bit more about these fuzzy little creatures! For starters, did you know there are over 250 different species of bee in the UK? Some of the bees you've probably heard of include the bumblebee, honeybee, and solitary bees. When we're talking about wild bees, honeybees aren't going to be at the top of the list. There are some wild honeybees buzzing about, but most honeybees are kept in managed hives by beekeepers to produce honey, beeswax and royal jelly.

Why are bees at risk?

Wild bees, just like many other pollinators, are facing a risky future. They're losing their habitats, there aren't as many different types of plants available to them, and chemicals such as insecticides (used to poison insects) and herbicides (weed killers), are killing them.

How can you help wild bees?

There are lots of ways you can do your bit to save our amazing wild bees!

- You can help a tired bumblebee. Mix white sugar and water (50/50) to give the bumblebee a one-off energy boost. This can be offered on a teaspoon.
- Plant a wildflower garden - if you made your wildflower bomb in last month's craft activity, now's the time to use it! This will provide much-needed food to our black & yellow friends.
- Ask your parents not to use pesticides or herbicides in your garden, which are harmful to many wild animals (and pets, too).
- Bees need water too! If you don't have any water sources in your garden (such as a wildlife pond), try a bird bath or a pot slightly sunk into the ground with some rocks in so that bees can land and easily reach the water.
- Bumblebees usually make their own nests (often in places like a loft/attic, compost heap, unused bird box), but you can help out solitary bees by providing them with a home - check out our craft activity this month - making a solitary bee nest!



DID YOU KNOW?

Queen bumblebees are one of the first to emerge in Spring. They're able to vibrate and warm up their flight muscles, meaning they can fly in cooler weather!

DID YOU KNOW?

Bumblebees have smelly feet! They can smell their footprints to tell the difference between their own scent, their relative's scent, or the scent of a stranger! This helps them when they're searching for food because they can avoid flowers that have already been visited.

FUN FACT!

Bumblebees collect pollen in 'pollen baskets' on their back legs!

FUN FACT!

Bees have four wings - not two! They have two pairs on each side which hook together when they're flying (to form a bigger wing), and then unhook when they're not flying. How cool is that!

FUN FACT!

Honeybees have dance moves! Yes, you read that right! Their 'waggle dance' lets their fellow bees know where to go for the best source of food!