

Bees

There are nearly 20,000 types of bees across the world. The bees that we are most familiar with are Honeybees and Bumblebees. If you were a bee what type of flower would you pollinate? What would you say to the other bees when you went back to the hive after a long day visiting flowers? What do you think a flower would say to you?

Little known facts on Bees

- The honeybee has been around for 30 million years and is the only insect that produces food eaten by man.
- A bee must tap two million flowers to make a jar of honey.
- Bees fly an average of 13-15 mph.
- Fermented honey, known as Mead, is the most ancient fermented drink. The word "honey moon" originated from an ancient practise of consuming large quantities of Mead during the first month of a marriage.

But why are Bees important?

- Bees are our most well known and important global pollinators and essential to the world's agriculture. They pollinate a third of the food we consume, as well as plants such as cotton.
- Bees pollinate flowering plants and trees world-wide, which then form habitats such as forests to jungles that support our wildlife. Many flowering plants cannot reproduce without pollinators such as bees.
- Bee pollination is an essential ecosystem service. As an ecosystem service, bees are worth £200m a year to the UK economy.
- Honeybees produce honey, a well-known cure for many different ailments, such as respiratory problems, sore throats, coughs, colds and reduce the symptoms of asthma or other allergies.
- Honey has also been used for millennia as a topical dressing for wounds since microbes cannot live in it.

How climate change will affect Bees

- A decline in bees is due to several different things, including agricultural changes, pesticide use, disease, and climate change. A warming climate will affect the seasonal flowering of flowering plants and trees which will in turn impact upon the food supply of the bee.
- Flowering plants and bees have co-evolved. One cannot survive without the other. If a rise in temperature causes flowers to appear too early in the year for their bee pollinators to be available, the bee colony may not have built up enough workers to pollinate. The hive will then struggle to stockpile enough honey to sustain them through the following winter.
- Beekeepers have reported losses of up to 80% from commercial hives from various locations around the world. A third of UK bee colonies have been lost over the last two years. Pesticides, climate change, disease, varroa mites and shifts in flowering patterns could all be playing a part in the decline of honey bees.

The world without Bees

- Without bees we would lose at least one third of our global food supply.
- If other pollinators could not perform the services of bees, we wouldn't be able to produce clothes made of cotton as cotton depends on bee pollination.
- Medicines would be reduced in supply as many are made of plant extracts.

Albert Einstein quoted

"If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would only have four years of life left."

