

# What's the Buzz?

by Margery Facklam

“What do bees do?” Ask most people and they will say, “Bees make honey and they sting.” They may even tell you that bees are fuzzy, black-and-yellow insects that live in hives. But there are lots of kinds of bees, and they’re not all the same. Some fly at night. Some can’t sting. Some live only a few months, and others live several years. Every species of bee has its own story. A species is one of the groups used by scientists to classify, or group, living things. Animals of the same species can mate with each other. And they give birth to young that can mate and give birth, or reproduce.

Scientists have named about 20,000 species of bees. But they think there may be as many as 40,000 species. Why so many?

Over millions of years, environments change. Animals slowly evolve, or change, too. These changes help the animals survive, or live, so that they can reproduce. And it’s reproducing that matters, not how long an animal lives.

To survive, some bee species developed new ways to live together. Some found new ways to “talk” to each other, or communicate. Others developed other new skills and new behaviors. Scientists call these kinds of changes adaptations. Over a long time, a group of bees can change so much it becomes a new species.

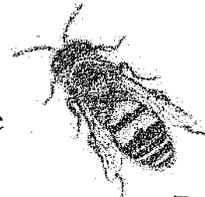
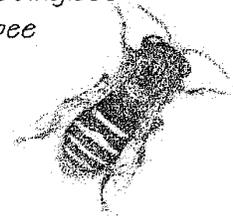
Bees come in different sizes. There are fat bumblebees and bees not much bigger than the tip of a pencil. There are bees of many colors, from dull black to glittering green. Some species of tropical bees are such bright reds and blues that they sparkle in the sun like little jewels.

Most bees play an important role in plant reproduction. Bees collect pollen, a powderlike material that flowers make. By carrying pollen from one flower to another,



Day-active  
sweat bee

Stingless  
bee

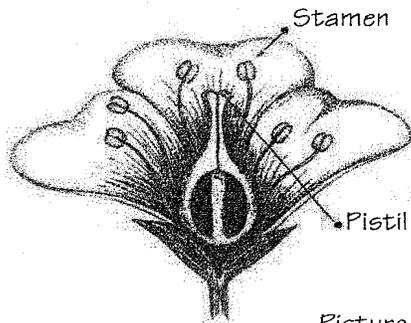


European  
honeybee

bees help plants reproduce. Bees are among the world's most important insects. Without them, many plants might not survive. And for most animals, life would be impossible without plants.

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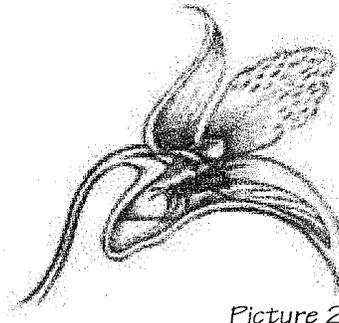
## Pollination



Picture 1

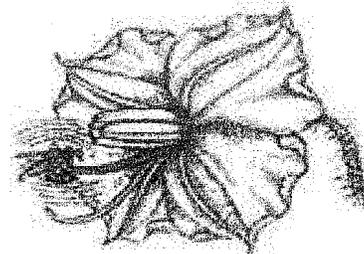
Pollination is the first step in making seeds. The male part of the plant is called the stamen. The female part is called the pistil. A plant can't make seeds until the pollen from the stamen reaches the pistil. Some flowers pollinate themselves when pollen from the stamen falls on the pistil. Other flowers are pollinated when pollen blows from one flower to another.

Many animals spread pollen. But bees are the best pollinators of all. They go to the flowers to gather pollen for food. Bees collect pollen in different ways. Some bees gather pollen from flower stamens by brushing against them. Some of the pollen then rubs off on the next flower the bees visit. In this way, bees spread pollen from flower to flower as they gather food.



Picture 2

Bees also drink nectar, a sweet liquid in flowers. As a bee goes inside this orchid for nectar, its weight makes the orchid's stamen bend over. Pollen from the stamen brushes on the bee.



Picture 3

Stingless bees like this one sometimes shake themselves to gather pollen from flowers. Shaking loosens the pollen and makes it fall on the bee.

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Illustrations by Patricia J. Wynne.

5. Explain why bees are important to both plants and animals. Use information from the article to support your answer.

#1  
It is important to the animals because the animals that it that bee get strength. It helps that plant because it takes that plants nectar and gives it to another plant.

#2  
So animals can reproduce and a bee carries away pollen and a flower can reproduce also.

#3  
Bees are important because they pollinate flowers by catching the pollen on them and spreading it on other plants.

#4  
They take pollen from flowers and bring it to other flowers. And pollination is the first step to making seeds. And bees do that. Without bees some plants would probably die, and some animals need plants.

#5

Over millions of years, environments change. Animals slowly evolve, or change, too. These help animals survive, or live.

#6

Bees are important to both plant and animals, because bees pollinate plants which means help them grow and they will pollinate every plant that they can. That is how bees are important to plants.

This is how bees are important to animals.

Bees are important to animals because most animals eat plants like flowers and bees help keep plants alive by pollinate flowers. That is how bees help animals.

#7

Bees are important to plants because they help take pollen so the plant can make seeds. Bees are important to animals because sometimes animals eat honey and bees make it.

#8

Bees are important because bees among the world's most important insects and for most animals, life would be impossible without plants.