

Bumble Bees

COOL FACTS:

Bees are the only insect in the world that make food that humans can eat.

Scientific name:	Bombus
Average size:	2.5 cm
Lifespan:	28 days

PHYSIOLOGY

Bumble bees are a large, hairy, black-and-yellow, social bees. There are 50 species of bumble bees in North America.

Bumble bees are similar to the honey bees in several aspects. They both have queen, worker (female), and drone (male) bees in their hives. However, bumble bees, only survive during the warm season. Only the queen will hibernate to start a new colony next spring. Bumble bee colonies are generally smaller and although they do collect nectar and store it as honey, they do not hoard it in large amounts the way honeybees do.

Bumble bees are one of the few insects that can control their body temperature. They can shiver their flight muscles in cold weather to warm themselves. Their large size and hairy coats also help them stay warm. Bumble bees are very sensitive to habitat disturbance.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

Bumble bees usually nest in the ground, in an existing whole, like an empty mouse nest. They do not make flat, vertical combs but instead make a hemispherical wax cup, called a honeypot.

Bumble bees are important pollinators and the worker bees collect pollen in pollen baskets on their hind legs. The body and tongue size of the bee determines which flowers it will visit for nectar and which it can pollinate. Bees have straw-like tongues called a proboscis so they can suck up liquids and also mandibles so they can chew.

MORE COOL FACTS:

- Nectar is a sweet watery substance that the bees gather. The nectar is processed in their stomachs and then they regurgitate it into the honeycomb cells. Then they fan with their wings to remove excess moisture. The final result is honey.
- Although bears do like honey, they prefer to eat the bee larvae.
- The scientific study of bees is called Apiology.
- Bees have two stomachs - one stomach for eating and the other is for storing nectar collected from flowers or water so that they can carry it back to their hive.
- Bees have five eyes - two compound eyes and three tiny ocelli eyes.

