

Name: _____

The Busy World of Bees

Have you ever heard a buzzing sound while playing outside near flowers? Chances are, you were hearing a bee! Bees are some of the most fascinating and important insects on Earth. They are known for being hard workers, but they do much more than just buzz around. Bees have a critical job that helps plants, animals, and people every single day.

Bees belong to a large group of insects. While people often think of the black-and-yellow honey bee, there are actually over 20,000 different species, or types, of bees in the world! They come in many sizes and colors, from tiny blue bees to large, fuzzy bumblebees.

What is a Bee's Job?

Bees are best known as pollinators. A pollinator is an animal that moves pollen from one part of a flower to another. Why do they do this? They aren't trying to be helpful; they are looking for food! Bees visit flowers to collect two things: nectar and pollen.

- Nectar is a sweet liquid that gives bees the energy to fly and work.
- Pollen is a dusty powder that bees use as protein to help their larvae (baby bees) grow strong.

As a bee moves from flower to flower, drinking nectar, its fuzzy body gets covered in pollen. When it lands on the next flower, some of that pollen rubs off. This accidental transfer is called pollination.

Pollination is essential because it allows many plants to create seeds, fruits, and vegetables. Without pollinators like bees, many of the foods we eat—like apples, berries, cucumbers, and almonds—would not be able to grow.



Name: _____

How Do Bees Live?

Bees live in two main ways: socially or solitarily.

- **Social Bees:** Some bees, like honey bees and bumblebees, live together in large groups called colonies. They build a hive, which is their home, made of small, six-sided rooms called honeycombs.
- **Solitary Bees:** Most bee species are actually solitary! This means they live and work alone. A solitary female bee builds her own small nest (often in a tunnel in the ground or wood), collects her own food, and lays her eggs without any help. Solitary bees, like mason bees and leafcutter bees, do not live in big hives, but they are still extremely important pollinators.

Bees in Trouble

Sadly, bees around the world are facing many challenges. Scientists have noticed that bee populations are shrinking. This is due to several reasons, including:

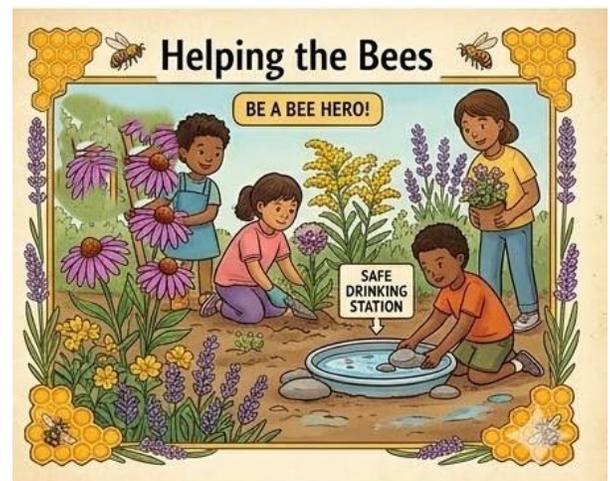
- **Habitat Loss:** Fewer wildflowers are available for bees to find food as cities and farms expand.
- **Pesticides:** Harmful chemicals sprayed on plants to kill pests can also harm or kill bees.
- **Diseases and Pests:** New sicknesses and tiny mites can weaken bee colonies.

How Can We Help?

Bees may be small, but they play a massive role in our world. By understanding and protecting these incredible, hard-working insects, we are also helping to protect our environment and our food supply.

The good news is that we can all help bees! Here are some simple ways to be a "bee hero":

- **Plant a Bee Garden:** Plant colorful, native flowers (especially purple, blue, and yellow ones!) that bees love to visit.
- **Avoid Chemicals:** Encourage your family not to use harmful pesticides in your yard or garden.
- **Provide Water:** Put out a shallow water dish with stones in it so bees can safely rest and take a drink.





Name: _____

1. What is the primary job of a "pollinator"?
 - a) To protect the queen bee from drones.
 - b) To move pollen from one flower to another.
 - c) To build six-sided honeycombs out of wax.
 - d) To turn nectar into protein for the larvae.

2. Based on the passage, why do bees visit flowers?
 - a) To find a safe place to hide from predators.
 - b) To collect materials to build a solitary nest.
 - c) To find colorful petals to bring back to the hive.
 - d) To gather nectar for energy and pollen for protein.

3. How does a "solitary" bee differ from a "social" bee?
 - a) Solitary bees live and work alone instead of in a large colony.
 - b) Solitary bees do not have wings and cannot fly.
 - c) Solitary bees are the only types of bees that can pollinate.
 - d) Solitary bees live in big hives with thousands of other bees.

4. Which of the following is a reason mentioned in the text for why bee populations are shrinking?
 - a) Bees are moving to colder climates where there are fewer people.
 - b) Flowers are becoming too large for small bees to climb inside.
 - c) Habitat loss and the use of harmful chemical pesticides.
 - d) There are too many queen bees laying eggs at the same time.

5. What is the main idea of this entire passage?
 - a) Bees are dangerous insects that people should avoid in their gardens.
 - b) Honey bees are the only type of bee that helps humans grow food.
 - c) Bees are important pollinators that come in many types and need our protection.
 - d) Scientists have discovered exactly 20,000 different species of social bees.