

Is it a Honey Bee?

Look closely and you'll find that honey bees are black and honey colored, or even gray, and FUZZY. If the bee looks like the picture in your grade school books, bright yellow with obvious stripes, and shiny, it is really a *wasp*. If it is fuzzy but lemon yellow, with black wings and head, it is a *bumble bee*. Honey bees only sting once, and then die, and they only eat flower nectar. Wasps can sting over and over, and since they eat meat, they like to hover around your picnic plate and collect butter and scraps. Honey bees never visit picnics and only sting if you harass or threaten them.



photo by Sue Klein

Basic Books

Langstroth's Hive and the Honey-Bee: The Classic Beekeeper's Manual, Langstroth L. L., Dover Publications, Inc., 2004

Natural Beekeeping: Organic Approaches to Modern Apiculture, Conrad, Ross, Chelsea Green Pub., c2007.

The Backyard Beekeeper: An Absolute Beginner's Guide to Keeping Bees in Your Yard and Garden, Flottum, Kim, Quarry Books, c2005.

Who We Are

The association is a group of local people from all walks of life who have one thing in common: our fascination with bees and the honey-making process. Come to a monthly meeting and you'll find beekeepers of all ages and all abilities sharing their experiences with beekeeping. This is a great opportunity for aspiring new beekeepers to gain expert advice, follow techniques through the seasons, and discuss their concerns. The Google group discussion board is a running commentary of various topics including requests for help and advice, alerts for swarms, equipment discussions, ongoing nectar flows, information referrals and announcements.

Monthly meetings rotate among various locations which are announced on the web site and in the Google group. The program includes members hive reports, guest speakers presenting fundamental to specific beekeeping information, and recent developments. All meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Meetings are free and open to the general public.

Other Resources

Wisconsin Honey Producers: wihoney.com

National Honey Board: nhb.org

American Bee Journal: abj.com

BeeCulture: beeculture.com

Dadant: dadant.com

Lapps: lappsbeesupplycenter.com

Kelley: kelleybees.com



Dane County Beekeepers Association

*dedicated to raising
survivor bees*

...assists backyard beekeepers to work in tune with nature to find a natural method of managing bees, to provide pollination for your garden, honey for your table, and heightened appreciation for the role bees play in our lives.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Jeanne Hansen
jeanniealabeannie@yahoo.com
(608) 244-5094

WEB: madbees.org/

DISCUSSION: groups.google.com/group/madbees

MEETINGS: First Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 pm

The Importance of Survivor Honey Bees

Honey bees are important pollinators of food crops. Many of the fruits we have come to take for granted, like apples, pears, almonds are intensively grown introduced European plants for which honey bees are the significant pollinator. Native bees can fulfill this function in some cases, but the intensive nature of commercial cultivation has made bees essential. The success of these crops are threatened with the fate of the domestic honey bee and its recent survival problems.

Commercial beekeepers have selected for a strain of honey bee that grows a large workforce, is a huge honey producer but not necessarily adapted for survival without the aid of chemical treatments. This strain has dominated the landscape as migratory hives are transported all over the country following the crop seasons. Some management practices depend on the use of treatments which are ever less safe for the bees, while at the same time becoming less and less effective because of increasing resistance to them by diseases and pests. The toolbox of effective treatments is being exhausted and hives are dying at much higher rates.

One solution is to breed bees that are resistant to pests and diseases and will survive over several seasons and years and reproduce themselves. This is difficult to do. Some progress has been made by researchers in breeding a strain of bee that will exhibit “hygenic behavior” which is to clean out cells where larva are diseased. Some will groom each other to remove mites. Some strains will interrupt their egg laying cycle which thwarts mite growth. These strains may not be as hugely productive as the traditional strains, but they are superior by virtue of not needing chemical treatments.

Backyard beekeepers can try to harbor survivor

hives that show mite resistance, hygenic hive behavior and good winter tolerance. They can do this by selecting the most durable, successful colonies that have survived winter with the fewest treatments, and by propagating daughter colonies from these successful mother hives in a way that mimics their natural life cycle.

Promoting genetic diversity of honeybees and providing safe, insecticide free environments for them are crucial steps toward future sustainable agriculture.

Apis Mellifera



Honeybees are social. Adult bees are divided into a queen, female workers and male drones. The queen will leave the hive only once to mate with several drones, storing sperm in her spermatheca to last her lifetime. In order to rear and defend the eggs laid by the queen, worker bees develop stinging mechanisms, pollen baskets, dance languages and labor divisions. Tasks are divided according to age and colony needs. Younger worker bees tend to the queen, and older worker bees forage, construct wax cells, convert nectar into honey, clean cells and guard the hive. Ideally, a healthy hive is a collection of overlapping generations.

Beekeeping became commercially viable during the 19th century with four inventions: the moveable-frame hive, the smoker, the comb foundation maker and the honey extractor.

Beekeeping is a low tech hobby and a great way to understand the connections between plants and insects, while producing locally-raised honey and hive products. Individuals all around Dane County, urban, suburban, and rural, live and work successfully with honey bees—you could join us!

Stings

Stinging insects are in the order Hymenoptera, which includes wasps (like yellowjackets), bumble bees, and honey bees, among others. Honey bees, have a barbed stinger that remains in the flesh, and die shortly after stinging. Wasps have a non-barbed stinger and can sting multiple times.

Most bees and wasps don't sting unless provoked, disturbed, or defending a nest. Guard bees may launch an attack when they think their home has been disturbed. Since quick motions further excite bees, a calm deliberate removal to some distance and shade can help the honey bee lose interest. Wasps may be more persistent.

Should a honey bee sting, quickly remove the stinger before all the venom is released to minimize the reaction. Carefully scrape the stinger off with a fine edge, like the side of a credit card. A wasp's sting won't leave a stinger.

The site of the sting should be cleaned. Remedies include applying a paste of baking soda or meat tenderizer, baking soda mixed with vinegar, Caladryl (calamine with pain killer), toothpaste, or ice packs. Antihistamines can also be helpful to suppress swelling.

Uncomfortable swelling and itching are normal reactions to stings. The allergic reactions are experienced by only a very small percentage of the population. The most severe reaction is anaphylaxis. This occurs shortly after a bee sting and includes hives and itching all over the body, difficulty breathing, swelling of throat or tongue, fainting, and loss of consciousness. This rare type of reaction requires immediate medical attention, and those that know they are allergic should carry an emergency epinephrine auto-injector. Allergic reactions can be to any one of the Hymenoptera's venoms and not necessarily to the honey bee.