

Honey Bee



©James Ellis, U.F. Bugwood.org

©Bl. Brenneman



social nester

Honey Bees - *Apis mellifera*

Genus: *Apis* Family: *Apidae*

Hairy bees with hair on their eyes too

Black to amber brown bodies

stripes on the abdomen

10-15 mm long and Non-native to America

Ancient scenes show humans seeking out honey from bees thousands of years ago! The honey bee was introduced to America by European settlers as a managed pollinator for honey and pollination of crops.



ARS-USDA, Stephen Ausmus

Honey bees are easily moved since they are social nesters, meaning they nest together. Honeybees are also unique in that they are perennial. In this case perennial means they live all year long; living off the food they stored in the nest and shivering in mass for warmth in cold weather. Living in perennial colonies allows honey bee populations to grow rapidly.

Communal feeding of honey bees

Mite on the back of a honey bee

Colonies often have 50,000 or more workers and queens can lay up to 1000 eggs per day. Worker bees will travel far and wide, up to 6 miles for the best nectar for the hive. Females carry moistened pollen on their hind legs.



ARS-USDA, Scott Bauer

Recently honey bee populations have been declining across the United States. One cause is a small mite that attacks the honey bee. Another destructive force for honey bees is Colony Collapse Disorder. The cause of this syndrome which was first documented in 2006 has not been discovered.

Although it is unclear what causes colony collapse, it is clear that the disorder means that all of the adults in a hive will disappear, leaving behind no bodies or trace of what happened. As many as one third of bee hives have been affected. Scientists are working to solve this puzzle, checking to see if the syndrome is spread by communal feeding.