



Honeybees vs Native Bees

“The public already cares about pollinators; we just need to expand our understanding and conversation about bees to include native bees and not just focus on honey bees.”

Notes from the following articles:

1. **“The Truth About Honey Bees” by Laura Tangle 2021 - National Wildlife Federation**
2. **“The Problem with Honey Bees” by Alison McAfee 2020 - Scientific American**
3. **“Focus on Native Bees, Not Honey Bees” by Chris Helzer 2023 - The Nature Conservancy**
4. **“Native Bees Often Better Pollinators Than Honey Bee” by Erik Vance 2011 - The University of California Berkeley Research**

- Most of the world’s bees do not live in hives or make honey.
- Honey bees are not native to North America but were brought over from Europe in the 17th century to help pollinate crops.
- Honey bees have gotten disproportionate attention from the media over native pollinators. Native bees are the ones in more dire need of support.
- Bringing in honey bees reduces the connectedness of the plant-pollinator networks. By introducing quantities of beehives, the relative density of honey bees increases exponentially compared with wild native pollinators.
- Beekeeping may have more pervasive negative impacts on biodiversity than it was previously assumed.
- Honey bees also carry diseases that can infect native bees including parasites and deformed wing virus.
- Native bee species live alone in nests carved into soil, wood or hollow plant stems. They are often mistaken for flies and the majority are tiny and do not have queens or produce honey. Without a hive’s larvae and food supplies to defend, native bees almost never sting.
- Native bee species are split into categories such as digger bees, carpenter bees, mason bees, sweat bees, bumble bees, and cuckoo bees.
- Most native bees are reared in small nests built and tended by single mothers.
- Most native bees nest in the ground, while others occupy tubular tunnels, and a few drill holes in wood.
- Farmers wanting to attract native bees have to be careful about the timing and how they plow their fields knowing when native bees are likely to become active.
- Farmers wanting to employ native bees must lure them onto the farm field with hedgerows of specific flowers they know that native bees like. It is similar to the strategy organic farmers use to invite predatory insects like ladybugs to rid their crops of pests rather than use pesticides.
- In order to conserve the full species diversity and resilience of our ecosystems, we need our native bees.
- There is growing evidence that honey bees compete with and potentially contribute to the declines of native bees so we need to be thoughtful about how and where honey bee hives are placed around natural areas.
- Native bees and honey bees share most of the same threats to their survival, with the loss of quality habitat topping the list. Strategies that help native bees will also help honey bees and vice versa. We need to be careful that saving honey bees is not the primary focus of conversation efforts and communications.
- Increasing the size and quality of habitat for all pollinators will boost populations of all bees, both native and honey bees.
- Pollinators rely on habitat size, connectivity, and plant diversity. Rebuilding and protecting the healthy and resilient landscapes bees need will provide for the needs of both people and nature.
- The public already cares about pollinators; we just need to expand our understanding and conversation about bees to include native bees and not just focus on honey bees.