Honey to the Bee

Bees are flying insects that feed on nectar and pollen. There are over 20,000 kinds of bees. Most of them are yellow and black. Most of them also have fuzzy hair on their bodies. This hair makes gathering pollen easier.

A bee's body is a lot like the bodies of other insects. It has three main sections. One is the head. A bee has five eyes on its head. It uses all of these eyes to see. It also has two antennae on its head. It uses them to touch and smell. In the middle of a bee's body is the thorax. On this section there are two sets of wings and three sets of legs. Some bees have little sacs on their last set of legs. The sacs hold the pollen that the bee gathers from flowers. The last section of a bee's body is the abdomen.

A lot of bees have stingers. The stingers are about 12 millimeters long. They are full of poison and used for protection.

One kind of bee is the honeybee. Honeybees live in beehives. The honeybees in a hive are organized in groups. Each group has different duties. All this organization helps the bees get things done.

One group in a hive of honeybees is the workers. Workers are young female bees. They live for 4 to 9 months. One of their duties is building the hive. Then they have to keep it clean. They are also in charge of getting food for all the bees in the hive. To do this, they go out and find nectar and pollen. They may go as far as eight miles.

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Workers are the only bees that sting. They are usually close to the hive when they do so. They sting to protect the hive. Workers away from the hive may also sting if they sense danger.

The biggest bee in a hive is the queen. There is usually only one queen in a hive. Her job is to lay eggs. She lays more than a thousand eggs every day. New bees will come out of these eggs. They are the next generation of honeybees.

The queen lives for 3 to 5 years. After that a new queen must take over. When this time comes, some young female bees are put in special parts of the hive. They are fed royal jelly. This jelly is a healthy food that worker bees produce. It usually takes about two weeks for one of the young bees to grow into a queen. The first one to become a queen then kills the others.

Male honeybees are called drones. All drones do is mate with the queen. They don't even have stingers!

Hundreds of drones can live in a hive at once. The other bees make them leave before winter, though. The drones are forced out of the hive so that food can be saved. In the winter there are fewer flowers for bees to collect pollen and nectar from. Less food means the drones have to go! Once they are gone, it is easier for the queen and her workers to survive.

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