

Many Kinds of Bees

When you think of bees, you probably think of the cubby bumble bee or the black and yellow honey bee. These bees are common in many parts of the world. Honey bees can be found on every continent except Antarctica. While these bees are popular, they are not the only kinds of bees. In fact, there are a variety of bee species all around the world.

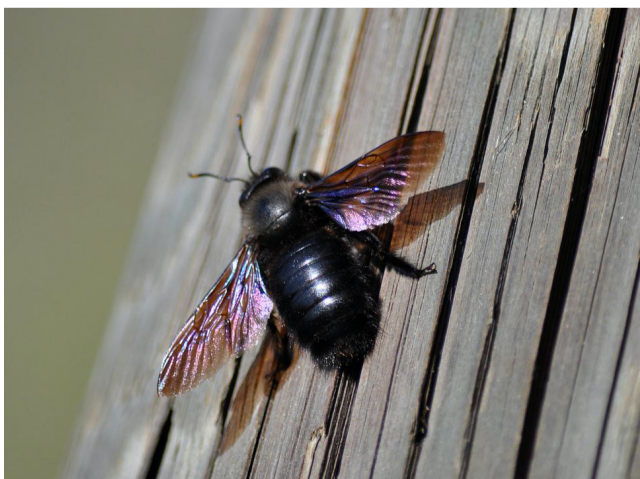


Photo of a honey bee on a flower.



Photo of a bumble bee going to a flower.

Carpenter bees are busy little insects. They make their nests by burrowing into hard plants like trees or bamboo. A carpenter is a person who works with wood so that is how the bees got their name. These bees often have a lot of black on them, sometimes they can be all black. These bees do not make honey but they can help with pollinating plants. These bees are different from honey bees in other ways too. They do not live in colonies and there is no queen bee. Unfortunately, people often kill these bees because they don't want them to mess up the wood in their houses. But these bees are just as important as other bees, and we should try to get along with them.



Carpenter bee on wood



Photo of a carpenter bee flying towards a fence.

Orchid bees brighten up the air with their beautiful colors. These bees can be blue, green, orange, and even purple. They have a shiny, metallic look to them almost like little bee robots. But these bees are very real. They mostly live in South America. However, as the world gets warmer, they have moved into North America as well. Orchid bees get their name because many of them help to pollinate orchid flowers. This is not the only flower they visit, but their colors are just as lovely as an orchid so the name stuck. These bees are unique because the males have a larger role than most male bees of other species. They collect scents from different orchid flowers. While they are there, they help to pollinate the flowers.



Photo of an orchid bee.



Closeup of an orchid bee.

Cuckoo bees are special because they do not make their own nests. Instead, they steal nests from other bees. Because they do this, they are called parasites. They sneak into bee hives and lay their eggs. When the eggs hatch, they eat the bee larvae. Sometimes they even take over the whole nest by killing the queen bee and taking her place. These bees can look many different ways. The most common type has less body hair than other bees and does not have the sacs for collecting pollen.



Photo by Giles Gonthier

Photo of a cuckoo bee.



Photo by Jean and Fred Hort

Photo of a domino cuckoo bee

Mining bees are another kind of bee that lives alone. They dig tunnels into dirt and clay to make their nests. They make their tunnels waterproof by using their spit. These nests can look like tubes of dirt from the outside. These bees are very good at pollinating. Both the males and females go out to collect nectar so they spread lots of pollen. These bees are usually very fluffy and can sometimes look like bumble bees. But they are smaller than bumble bees. Sometimes they come in unique colors like orange.



Photo of a mining bee.



Photo of tawny mining bee.

Leaf cutter bees get their name from collecting leaves from plants. Most bees carry pollen in sacs on their legs, but the leaf cutter bees have a very furry belly that they carry the pollen. These bees build nests in wood or underground. They also do not have queen bees. They are special because they use chewed leaves to cover their nests. Inside the nest, they make a ball of spit, nectar, and pollen. The mother bee lays an egg on top. When the larva hatches, it eats this loaf. It does not come out of the nest until the next spring.



Photo of a leaf cutter bee nest.

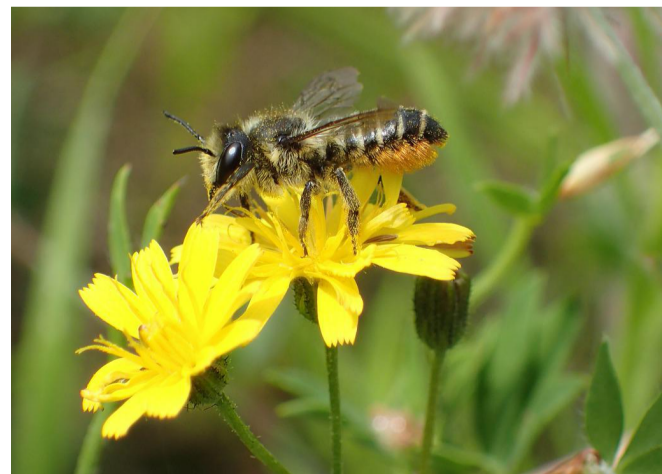


Photo of a leaf cutter bee.

Mason bees are also called orchard bees because they are very good at pollinating fruit trees. If you like to eat apples, thank the mason bees. These bees can look many different ways but a common one is blue. Mason bees make their nests similar to leaf cutter bees. However, they don't use leaves to cover the nests, instead, they use clay. A mason is someone who works with bricks that are made from clay, that's how the bees got their name. These bees also do not have a queen bee but they like to live near each other. Each bee makes her nest on her own though. She lays female eggs in the back of the nest and male eggs in the front of the nest. Then she seals off the whole nest with a thick wall of clay.



Photo of a mason bee nest.



Mason bee flying to its nest.

There are hundreds of kinds of bees. Wild bees are bees that humans do not keep on farms. Most bees help with pollination, but some bees are better at pollinating certain plants. Many wild bees are best at pollinating a certain plant. It's important for us to protect all bees, not just the ones that make us honey. What can you do to help the bees?

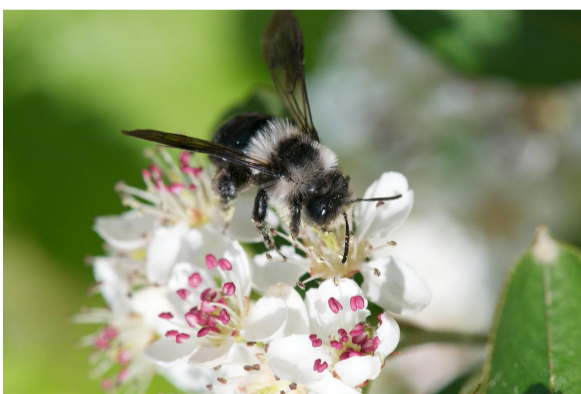


Photo of a wild bee.



Photo of a bee on a flower.
a Messy Classroom



Photo of a Western honey bee.