

HONEYBEE

The Latin name for the honey-bee is *Apis mellifera*.

The honey-bee is a social, honey-producing bee. It is recognised as the most economically valuable of all insects. This reputation commonly rests on its production of honey and beeswax. The honey-bee's greatest usefulness, however, is actually in the pollination of crops, including fruits, nuts, vegetables and forage crops.

There are three types of honey-bee:

The queen is the only sexually productive female in the community, so is the mother of all drones, workers and future queens. Her capacity for laying eggs is outstanding, producing up to 1,500 eggs per day, the weight of which is equal to that of her own body.

The worker bees outnumber the drones at all times. During the spring, the number of worker bees ranges from 8,000 to 15,000 and by early summer the number may total more than 80,000. Although lacking the ability to mate and reproduce, the workers secrete wax, build the honeycomb, gather nectar, pollen and water, convert the nectar into honey, clean the hive and, when necessary, defend it.

The drone honeybee is stingless and defenceless; it has no pollen baskets or wax glands, and cannot secrete royal jelly. Its one function is to mate with new queens. After mating, which always takes place on the wing in the open air, the drone dies immediately.