

# ABOUT BEES

Bees are a well-known group of insects, though they are mostly known for the honey bee and the bumble bee. Yet Earth is home to approximately 20,000 bee species. Our native bee species are fascinating creatures with unique life histories, behaviors, ecological roles, shapes, colours and sizes. Bees play an extremely important role in nature as its primary pollinators. Bees are one of our most valuable insects; their pollination activities contribute to many fruits, vegetables, seeds and nuts produced across the world as well as flowers. Bees have physical traits characteristic of all insects as well as structures that improve their ability to pollinate.

## Classification

Bees belong to phylum Arthropoda because they are invertebrates with an exoskeleton, jointed legs and a segmented body. Bees belong to the class *Insecta*.

Bees are more than *just* bees! Honey and beeswax come only from the famous honey bee, *Apis mellifera*.

## Bee Life Cycle

Bees go through a complete metamorphosis. They begin their life cycle as a tiny white egg. This hatches into a white, worm-like larva. After feeding, the larva develops into a pupa within a cocoon. Finally a winged adult emerges. With social bees, eggs are laid by one female and cared for by her workers. With solitary bees, each female makes her own nest and raises her own young.

## Show off your Skills!

1. What is the most important role for bees in the environment?

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2. What do bees produce that is useful to animals and humans?

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3. At what stage in the life cycle of a bee is Maya?

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4. What do bees look like?

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5. Do bees produce anything other than honey?

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