

The Mighty Honeybee

The modern honeybee first appeared on Earth about 30 million years ago, but was not introduced into North America until 1622.

The hive consists of drones (male bees), workers (infertile female bees), and the fertile queen bee. There can be anywhere from a few thousand to 50 to 60 thousand worker bees in a colony, depending on the season and timing of the annual colony cycle.

It takes 24 days from egg to adult for a drone, 21 days for a worker and 16 days for a queen.

A viable queen may live two years laying 1,000 to 3,000 eggs per day. When she starts to fail in her laying duties, or is damaged, the workers will take a fresh 3 day old larvae and feed it royal jelly which starts the process of making a *new* queen. The *old* queen, along with the field bees, will leave the hive to find new living quarters. This is known as swarming.

Even though honeybees produce deliciously sweet honey, their major role in the ecosystem is pollination. As almost all fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains and cotton need to be pollinated, it would be devastating to our lives if we lost the mighty honeybee.

Did you know:

- *A bee visits 50 to 100 flowers during one collection trip.
- *Honeybees must tap 2 million flowers to make a pound of honey.
- *Bees see ultra-violet color, where people cannot.
- *U.S. per capita consumption of honey is 1.31 pounds.
- *A bee has 5 eyes—two large compound eyes and 3 simple eyes called *ocelli*.
- *Bees do not sleep but can be found resting in empty cells.
- *A bee's wings beat about 180 beats per second.
- *There are 30,000 to 60,000 bees in an average hive.
- *The oldest record of beekeeping is 6,000 BC, from a rock painting in Spain.
- *A bee has 4 wings, two per side and 6 legs.
- *The average life span of a worker in summer is 7-8 weeks (egg through forage life).
- *It takes 9-10 bees to equal the weight of one M & M plain chocolate candy
- *Bees can fly a maximum of 13.7 kilometers or 8 ½ miles.
- *The average pollen load compared to the weight of the bee is about one sixth (1/6) the weight of a worker bee, or 15 milligrams of pollen
- *The average size of a nectar load compared to the weight of the bee is about half the weight of a worker bee, or 40 milligrams of nectar.
- *A queen bee has to eat about 80 times her own weight each day to produce 2,000 eggs. This is equivalent to a 12 year old human eating about 6,400 pounds of food.
- *Bees need 10 grams or about 1/3 ounce of honey to make the wax in a 2 ¼ inch birthday candle.