THE MONTHLY BUZZ:

WHAT ARE BEES UP TO YEAR ROUND?

Bees buzz a different way every month of the year! The lifespan and activities of all bee species can change with their location and environment. Let's take a closer look into what honey bees and native bees are doing all year round!

JANUARY

When colder temperatures set in, honey bees focus on keeping each other safe and warm in the hive. Honey bee hives can survive extreme temperatures and snow if they have enough bees to huddle for warmth, and food to last the winter. By mid-January in other regions, honey bees are already pollinating the earliest blooming crops such as almonds.

POLLINATION: Almond blossoms

FEBRUARY

Calling all beekeepers and bee lovers! When the weather is chilly, honey bees are clustering in the hive, and most native bees are hibernating. This is the perfect time for you to plan your bee garden for Spring, organize beekeeping supplies, or learn more about a new species of native bee!

POLLINATION: Snowdrops (flower)

MARCH

Tree flowers are beginning to bud, and the bees take notice! If it is warm enough, honey bees begin to venture out for food and water, stretch their wings, and soak up the sun. Remember native bees are still hibernating in most areas. Leave the leaves, wait to mow the lawn or mow it at a higher level, and check before moving yard debris. Bees may still bee sleeping!

POLLINATION: Eastern Redbud Tree

APRIL

Spring has sprung and so have the bees! With warmer temperatures comes growth. Honey bees are foraging for nectar, the Queen Bee is laying eggs, nurse bees are feeding the brood (baby bees), and male bees resume their presence in the hive. If you are starting a new hive, your bees should arrive from March to May in order for a warm welcome.

POLLINATION: Cherry blossoms and Oranges

MAY

This time of year is buzzing! Remember to bee gentle when you are outside exploring. Native bees make their homes in the ground (bumblebees), create nests out of leaves (leafcutter bees), or in the crevices of trees (wild bees). We all share a habitat with bees! This is a great time of year to explore how many species you can find buzzing around your home.

POLLINATION: Blueberry

JUNE

Swarm Season! When nectar is flowing and everything is in bloom, the bees are happy! As soon as the bees are well fed, and there is no longer space in the current hive, the older Queen will decide it is time to go. Before she goes, she lays a few more eggs. One of these eggs will become the new Queen. Now there are two hives!

POLLINATION: Garden Vegetables, Tomatoes

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JULY

Honey making time! Honey bees are hard at work building up their honey stores in July. This means the honey bees are collecting nectar from flowers, bringing it back to the hive, and turning it into honey. Visit the Bee Cause Curriculum to learn more about how honey is made in the hive!

POLLINATION: Cranberries, Sourwood Tree Blossoms

AUGUST

Hit the breaks! August is a time when the nectar flow begins to slow down. This time of year is hot for people and pollinators. Without as much food supply, the bees turn to wildflowers for food and water sources to cool down their hive. Oftentimes, the Queen will stop laying as many eggs in order to slow the growth of the hive and prepare for Fall.

POLLINATION: Wildflowers

SEPTEMBER

National Honey Month! This is the time of year when beekeepers harvest honey. It is important to only take a small amount of honey in order for the colony to have plenty of food for the upcoming winter.

POLLINATION: Goldenrod

OCTOBER

Fall is in full swing! Honey bee hives are a matriarchy. This means the authority and function of the hive is led by females. Throughout the colder months, the hive has no need for the males, called drone bees, so they leave the hive for the winter. Few to no drones live in the hive over the winter until Spring when the nurse bees raise drones again.

POLLINATION: Clover (Year Round)

NOVEMBER

While honey bees are communal and live together in a hive all year round, several native bee species burrow into the ground for the winter. These native bee species like bumblebees find a cozy home in the ground to hibernate for the winter. You can help native bees find a cozy winter hideaway by leaving mulch or fallen leaves in place!

POLLINATION: Oregon Grape

DECEMBER

When temperatures dip below 55-50 degrees, honey bees tuck themselves in for the winter. The colony of bees will stay active all winter long inside the hive by clustering together, moving to a new frame when one frame of honey is eaten, and keeping each other warm.

POLLINATION: Rosemary

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THE MONTHLY BUZZ:
JOURNAL PROMPTS

JANUARY
Honey bees need each other and all the food they have stored to survive the winter. Think about what you would store up for a winter inside. What other items would you need to have to get through a winter completely indoors?

FEBRUARY
Begin to design or draw your dream pollinator garden. Remember, bees only have food when nectar is available. Research native plants and label the plants in your garden. Remember, try to find a plant that blooms for each season so the bees always have nectar to eat!

MARCH
In most areas, March is when the first buds begin to blossom. Take a few minutes outdoors to notice which trees, plants, edible plants, and flowers are blooming right now.

APRIL
Depending upon their age, bees have different jobs to do in the hive. They begin by keeping the hive clean, then acting as nurse bees, moving on later in life to foraging for food. Consider how you help your community to function and what you can do to work as a team for your environment.

MAY
Examine an outdoor space and see if you can find a native bee or a native bee home. Do not approach, but observe this species. Draw what they look like compared to other bees. Do they have a fuzzy abdomen? Vibrant colors or stripes? Is there a dot on their back? These are all characteristics of different species.

JUNE
When honey bees swarm, scout bees all go out and search for a new home. They decide as a team on the best location for the whole hive. Imagine and reflect on where you think a honey bee hive could find a new home in your area. Get creative!

JULY
Summer is a time when farmer's markets and fresh vegetables are abundant. Take a look at your dinner plate and find one food that traces back to the bees! Helpful hint: sometimes a plant does not require pollination by bees, but the quality of the fruit or veggie is much better as a result!

AUGUST
Even though the honey bees may slow down this time of year, other pollinators are going strong. This can include bumblebees, mason bees, birds, butterflies, and many more. Share which pollinators you are observing outside right now. Are they busy or bumbling along?

SEPTEMBER
When bees bring pollen back into the hive from goldenrod flowers, it has a scent similar to smelly socks! The honey however, tastes delicious as usual! Can you think of a food that does not look appetizing, but is actually delicious?

OCTOBER
"Telling the bees" is a longstanding tradition where a beekeeper will share significant life events such as birthdays, sad days, or favorite memories with their hive. Fall is a good time for reflection. What would you tell the bees today? There is no right or wrong answer!

NOVEMBER
There are many things people can do to help pollinators at home or in our communities. List three ways you can help to create a safe home for pollinators.

DECEMEBER
This is a quiet time of year for bees, pollinators, and animals. They have worked hard all year to store up for the winter. Take a moment to imagine what you would like to do in the New Year to benefit pollinators and help them live their most buzzworthy lives!

SUGGESTED READING BYGRADE LEVEL

Please check our reading list on
https://www.thebeecause.org/the-bee-blog/reading-list/

Pre-K through 1st Grade
Kaia and the Bees, Maribeth Boelts
Please Please the Bees, Gerald Kelley
The Thing About Bees: A Love Letter, Shabazz Larkin
Bea's Bees, Katherine Pryor

Grades 2-3
The Bee Tree, Patricia Polacco
Try'umsee's Wings (A Gullah Folktale), Patricia Bee
The World of Bees, Cristina Banfi
Bees in the City, Andrea Cheng

Grades 4-5
What If There Were No Bees?: A Book About the Grassland Ecosystem, Suzanne Buckingham Slade
Zinnia and the Bees, Danielle Davis, YA Fiction
The Life and Times of the Honey Bee, Charles Micucci, Non-Fiction, Guided Learning
A Honeyed History, Piotr Socha

Grades 6-8
The Bee Maker, Mobi Warren, YA Fiction
Beekeeper's Lab, Kim Lehman, Activity Book of Bee Themed Lessons and Labs
The Beginner's Guide to Beekeeping, Samantha Johnson and Daniel Johnson

Grades 9-12 (And Beyond)
Natural History: A Selection, Pliny the Elder
The Secret Life of Bees, Sue Monk Kidd, Fiction
The Murmur of the Bees, Sofia Segovia, Fiction
The Lives of Bees, Thomas Seeley, Non Fiction
100 Plants to Feed the Bees, The Xerces Society, Guidebook