

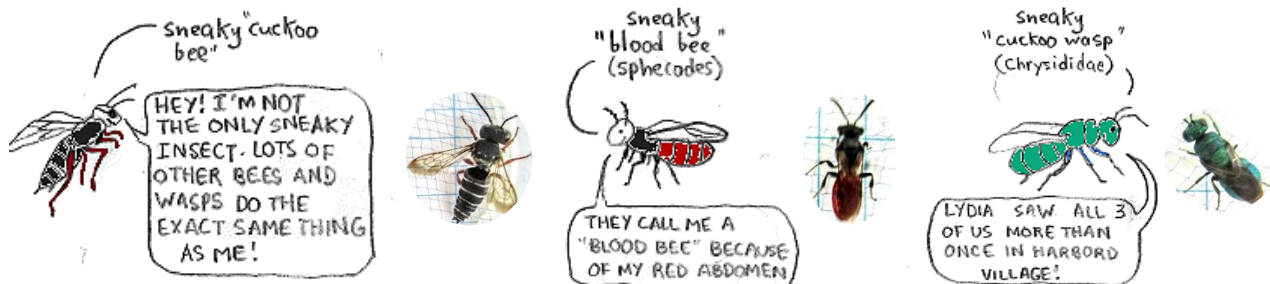
Bee Project Musing #5

August 15, 2018

Hello gardeners and fellow bee enthusiasts!

This week I'd like to tell you about what I like to call "bee personalities". With 364 different species of bee sharing Toronto with us, it's no surprise that there are also many ways in which bees can act!

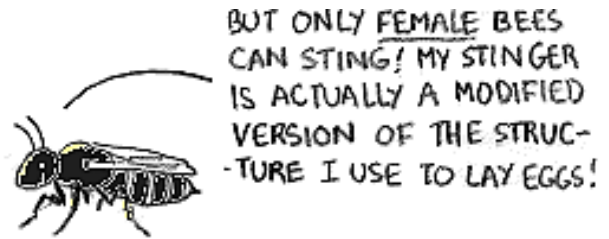
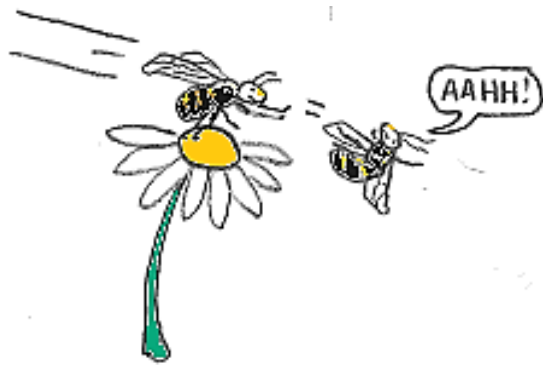
For example, you might describe the cuckoo bees that I mentioned in Musing 3 as having very **sneaky** personalities. A mama cuckoo bee (*Coelioxys*) waits outside the nest of a cavity-nesting bee. She then sneaks inside and lays her own egg on top of the pollen ball gathered by the owner of the nest! There are lots of other bees and wasps that have this sneaky habit. Animals that act like this are called "kleptoparasites".



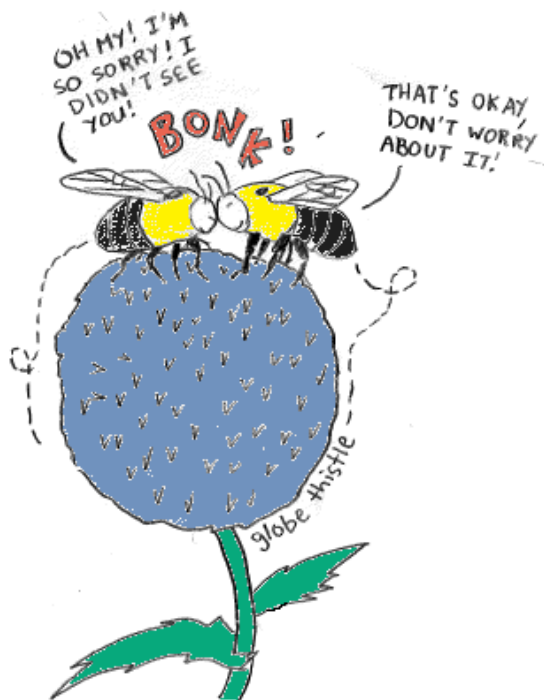
Some bees have very **energetic** and **upbeat** personalities. The yellow-masked bees (*Hylaeus*) whizz to and fro around flowers so quickly that I can barely count them! In fact, I can only tell that they really are yellow-masked bees when they finally decide to land. Most often, these fast-whizzing bees also happen to be male bees. Male bees don't help collect pollen and only visit flowers to get a sip of nectar if they're feeling hungry. If they're not eating, they look for females to mate with on flowers.



Other bees can have very **fierce** personalities. Several times this summer, I watched male leafcutter bees knock one another off flowers. Other times, I saw them grapple with their front legs. Many bees, including sweat bees, carpenter bees, wool carder bees, and honey bees can be a bit territorial and aggressive when it comes to defending nesting spots and flower patches.



Some bees however, can also be very **gentle** and **docile**. I often see two or three bumble bees feeding peacefully together on the same flower. I've even watched two Common Eastern Bumble Bees work their way around the same flower in opposite directions, bonk heads, and carry on as if absolutely nothing happened! Maybe they were from the same colony.

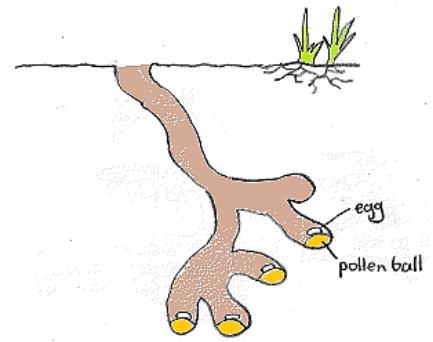


Bumble bees are also very unafraid of humans compared to other bees. They always let me get very close to them.

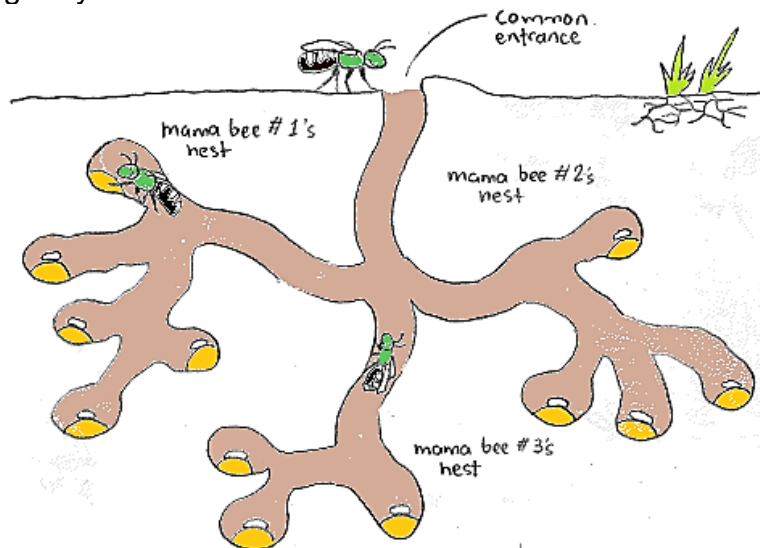


Finally, the Bicoloured Agapostemon are known for their **welcoming** and **friendly** personalities.

Agapostemon are “ground-nesting” bees because each mama Agapostemon digs a nest underground with branching tunnels and lots small rooms. Much like cavity-nesting bees, each room is filled with a ball of pollen and one egg.

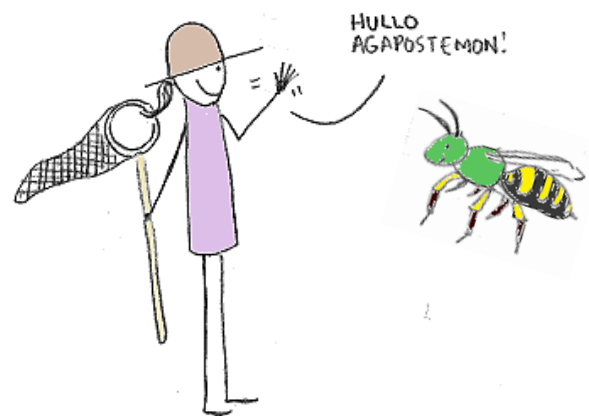


Even though Bicoloured Agapostemon are considered solitary bees because each mama bee has her own nest, many biologists also consider them as “semi-social”. This is because multiple mama Agapostemon often use the same nest entrance. Having the same nest entrance as a few other mama bees means that there are more eyes to watch for intruders and predators that might try to attack the nests.



Mama bees of most other bee species don't let anyone near their nests –not even bees of the same species. Bicoloured Agapostemon are different because they have these “communal nests” and are very tolerant of newcomers!

The **welcoming, friendly,** and “**good-neighbour**” personality of the Bicoloured Agapostemon is one of the reasons why it is Toronto's Official Bee! The Bicoloured Agapostemon is also very easy to spot because they have bright shiny-green bodies with either white-black or yellow-black stripes. They are quite common in urban areas, but seeing one always makes me very excited and I usually greet my friendly neighbours by saying “Hullo Agapostemon!”. I want to be a **friendly neighbour** to the Agapostemon bees too!



Anyways, that's all for now! Hope you all have a nice week!

Lydia

