



The Buzz



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Pollinators

Spring seems to come early here in Southern Arizona and summer is never far behind. The days warm up and flowers begin blooming all over. It is a fun time to get outside before the extreme heat of summer sets in. It is the perfect time to watch all of the hard working insect pollinators.

Pollinators are very important because without them some plants could not produce fruits or seeds which help them to start new plants or feed people and other animals. Pollen is tiny dust-like stuff that plants make to pass along to other plants of the same type. When the pollen is moved to another plant of the same kind this is called pollination. Once a plant is pollinated it can use the other plants' pollen to help make fruits and seeds. Foods like apples, and almonds are just a couple examples of things we eat thanks to pollinators

People always think of honey bees when you mention flowers and pollinating, but there are many more insects and even bats and birds that are out there doing the hard work of pollinating.

When you come upon an area that is buzzing with insect activity it is easy to think that everything you see and hear are honey bees, but stop and observe just a little closer to see much more. Many beetles, butterflies, moths, and flies are also pollinators. Hoverflies are always in the mix of these busy insects and some even look like bees. If you watch carefully you can pick out the flies from the bees. Hoverflies don't rest on flowers for too long they are always hovering and then quickly darting off to the next flower. Their flight seems a little nervous to me. Honey bees on the other hand will stop more frequently and aren't as quick and seem to take their time at and between flowers. Flies only have one set of wings and bees have two sets, to me this makes them sound a little different when they fly so listen carefully and you might be surprised to hear it too.

Honey bees have big fuzzy legs that dangle when they fly, but hoverflies have skinny hairless legs that aren't noticeable until you see them land.

There are other types of bees out pollinating too, like big black carpenter bees, and fuzzy bumble bees. Of course the butterflies are out taking advantage of all the tasty nectar too. Pollinators like moths and nectar feeding bats will get to work in the cover of night. Thanks to a lot of hard work by pollinators there are new plants that can grow and foods for us to eat.

Ben Beal

Reader Pictures



Since we learned a little bit about pollinators look at this cool bee drawn by Aurora of Ms. Carter's 4th grade. I really love the details of this drawing, great job Aurora.

Evan of Ms. Bohlland's 2nd grade drew something that I really wouldn't want to find in my shoe!



Spring is awesome because it means soon we will see all sorts of exciting insects. And this wonderful picture reminds me of the excitement of spring. Drawn by Devany of Ms. Mulcahy's 1st grade

Ask an Entomologist

Grant in Ms. Carter's 4th grade asked:

"Do you know how to say millipede in Japanese?"

Well Grant the short answer is no, I do not, but I once heard that in parts of Africa, "Songololo" is how you say millipede. I know Tucson has people from all over the world. If you know how to say millipede or anything insect related in another language write to me and teach me. I love learning words in new languages. Until then I will have to use Google Translate
Millipede in Japanese: ヤスデ (Yasude)

~Thank you for the fun question Grant

Nicholas of Ms. Anderson's 4th grade asked:

"What is your favorite bug?"

Nicholas, this is always the toughest question for me to answer. I have such a hard time picking just one. It seems each time I learn about a new insect it becomes my new favorite until I learn about another insect. Some of my long time favorites are: Praying Mantises. I have had many as pets that I raised from egg to adult. They are so cool and cute. Dragonflies are super-fast. I love the way they zip through the air and hover in one place. I also really like cicadas, stick bugs, centipedes, millipedes, giant water bugs, clearwing moths, and recently I have discovered how cool ants are.

~Thank you Nicholas, I love talking about my favorite insects