



## Search

This site only

[Advanced Search](#)

## Browse By Subject

 Home

 [About Us](#)
 [Research](#)
 [Products & Services](#)
 [People & Places](#)
 [News & Events](#)
 [Partnering](#)
 [Careers](#)
You are here: [Home](#) /

## Home

## Greetings from beautiful Cache Valley in Northern Utah, home of the USDA-ARS Pollinating Insects - Biology, Management and Systematics Laboratory



Have you ever, on a hot summer day, or maybe early in the spring, stopped to watch the flowers for a moment and noticed insects scrambling around on them? You wonder, "Are they bees? They don't exactly look like bees to me?" Another time, perhaps you are in your garden or out on your ranch, you notice similar insects coming in and out of small holes in the ground, or emerging from small holes in the side of your house or barn, these may be carrying pollen on their legs or hind ends. What are these insects? What are they doing? And how do they know where to go to find the flowers? How do they find their way back to their little holes? What is down inside that hole? What happens to these insects in the winter when it gets too cold for there to be any flowers? Are these insects good or bad for my garden or my farm? Do they ever get sick?

These are questions the scientists here seek answers to every day. Did you know that there are more different kinds (different species) of bees than all of the mammals, lizards, frogs, and birds put together? Most of these bees do not form large family colonies, as do our familiar honey bee. Instead, the majority of bees are solitary, living a life alone and where every female is a queen. And these bees do not produce honey, so some people call them the pollen bees. A couple of common solitary bees are the alfalfa leafcutting bee and the blue orchard bee. Bumble bees are another common bee, and they also come in a large variety: fat ones, skinny ones, big ones, little ones. Most of them are black and yellow, but some with more black than yellow, while others have more yellow than black, and still others have white or red markings -- but all of them are furry. They form colonies like the honey bee, but only small colonies, and they only produce enough honey to feed themselves for a few days (not enough for you to take for your morning toast)!

And now how about sweat bees? Have you ever had an experience with these? They live in the desert, and are attracted to the water and salt in your sweat. Yes, I am talking about bees! Bees that also like to visit flowers and are critically important for pollination. If you would like to find out more about what a bee is, or how to identify some of them, check out our Products and Services link to the left. In addition to several pages describing bees, and interesting things about bees, we also have a list of our scientific publications (for those of you who really want to know more). If you want to know something about the research projects we work on, check out the Research link at the left. And then the next time you are out smelling the roses and daisies, you will not be able to look at them the same way

again!

Last Modified: 11/20/2009

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