



The Domesticated Honey Bee and Its Subspecies of *Apis Mellifera*

James Lucifer*

Department of Veterinary, Pompeu Fabra University, Spain

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Description

There are currently close to 20,000 different species of bees in the world. Ants, wasps, and hornets are all closely related to bees. All honey bee species are classified into the single genus *Apis*, which includes at least 44 subspecies. All members of this genus can make and store honey, as well as construct wax comb, which distinguishes them from other bee species. By discovering how to gather honey from untamed colonies or control colonies in hives, humans have learnt to make use of these qualities.

***Apis mellifera*:** The honey bee species that is most widely distributed worldwide is *Apis mellifera*. It is the primary animal that people have truly “domesticated,” in large part because it has a tendency of creating its nests inside of cavities (e.g. amongst rocks or within hollows in trees). *A. mellifera* lends itself to being “kept” in hives as a result of this tendency. Humans have been growing *A. mellifera* for at least 5000 years.

The *A. mellifera mellifera* is the native bee of the United Kingdom and is therefore the most commonly kept bee. The subspecies ranges across Northern and Central Europe, including Britain and Ireland. As honey bees returned to Northern Europe during the last ice age, *A. mellifera mellifera* is a relatively recent arrival. These subspecies of bees are normally small, stocky bees, though there are a few variations seen in various regions. Jet-black to dark brown are some of the possible colours.

***Apis mellifera ligustica*:** *A. mellifera ligustica* is native to Italy and the surrounding Mediterranean regions, where it is thought to have endured the previous ice age.

Of all the Western Bee subspecies, it is the most prevalent. Italian bees are distinguished by their blatant yellow/orange banding and are slightly smaller than their darker, northern subspecies.

***Apis mellifera carnica*:** The *A. mellifera carnica*, also known as the carneolan bee, is a subspecies that originated in the Balkan peninsula. It is sometimes referred to as the Slovenian bee since Slovenia’s mountain ranges isolate it geographically, maintaining its purity (Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria down to Bosnia and Serbia). The sub-species are distinguished by being smaller than other European races and appearing grey in colour due to the abundance of hair.

***Apis mellifera macedonica*:** The Macedonian Bee resembles its cousin from the north, *A. mellifera*. The Macedonian bee has easily bred with the Italian bee, much like its northern relative. The region where this strain is considered to have originated, which extends all the way into the Ukraine and around the north of the Black Sea towards the Middle East, is where it has naturalised despite being initially described in Macedonia and northern sections of Greece.

***Apis mellifera cecropia*:** The Greek bee, which resembles the Italian bee in appearance, is preferred for its excellent foraging abilities, fairly moderate temperament, high colony size, and absence of swarming tendencies. Although it is noted for producing a lot of propolis, which makes it challenging to distinguish hive sections, it is not expected to thrive in the damp and chilly climates of Northern Europe. The Greek bee has frequently been used to create crosses in an effort to make northern bees less aggressive.