
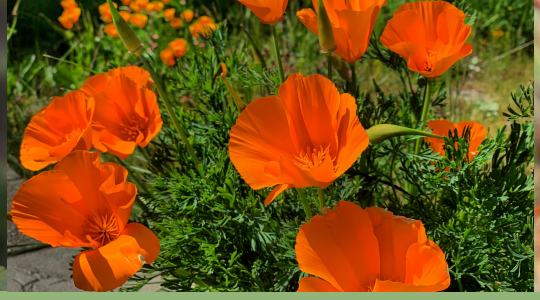

Solitary Bees

Take a stroll through the local dunes on a warm day between April and September and your eyes will be met with a feast of wildflowers scattered across the sand. Take a closer look, and you may notice a plethora of insects attending the blooms. Many insects visit flowers to gather food in the form of pollen and nectar, and, while foraging, transfer pollen from one flower to another. This process, called pollination, results in fruit/seed production for the plant.

You can see bees flying from one flower to the next, covered in pollen and filling themselves with nectar. You might look around and ask yourself, "Where is the hive?". Well, unlike the popular European honeybee (Apis mellifera), most of the world's 20,000+ bee species are solitary bees. That means that they live alone without a colony or a hive. Instead, hard working female bees build or find holes to nest in. These holes can be found in the stems of plants or on the face of a sand dune. Some female solitary bees dig a meter into the sand to safely store their eggs or steal fuzz off a beach buckwheat to line their nests. They are incredibly resourceful creatures!

Aside from the important service they provide as pollinators, bees are fascinating creatures. The next time you're out enjoying the floral display in the dunes, remember to keep an eye out for our local bees and give them a nod of "thanks" for the part they play in maintaining floral diversity.

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