

BEES OF CONNECTICUT

Connecticut is home to 388 recorded bee species, covering 43 genera and six of the seven bee families. These bees come in all different colors, shapes, and sizes. Bees also display a variety of distinguishing traits: for example, their social behaviors, nesting habits, and diet breadth. Let's get to know the bees of Connecticut by examining their traits!



Agapostemon virescens, the bi-colored striped sweat bee, foraging on *Geranium maculatum*. Photo by Nicole Bell.

DIET BREADTH

GENERALIST (polylectic) bees forage for pollen from a wide array of flowering plant families.*

76% of recorded Connecticut bees are generalists*

SPECIALIST (oligolectic) bees limit their pollen foraging to typically one plant family or genus.

24% of recorded Connecticut bees are specialists

Fun fact! Cuckoo bees often look very wasp-like. They may lack obvious body hair and have bright body colors. *Cuckoo bees do not forage for pollen, but are included in the "generalist" group as potential incidental pollinators. Photo by Casey Johnson.



SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

SOLITARY bees live alone. A single female builds and provisions each nest.

COMMUNAL bees share the same nest entrance, but have their own nesting chambers within.

SOCIAL bees live in large groups, and exhibit cooperative brood care, overlapping generations, and division of labor.

CUCKOO bees lay their eggs in the nests of pollen-collecting bees. Once hatched, the larvae kill the host's offspring and consume the stored food.

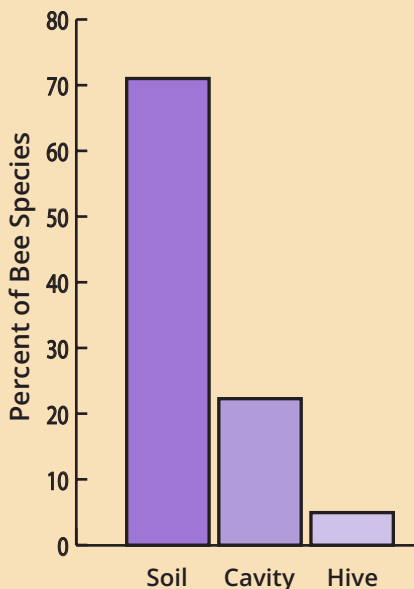
NESTING HABITS

GROUND NESTING bees dig tunnels in soil or sand that vary in depth from 6" to several feet below the surface. The vast majority of bee species in Connecticut nest in the ground.

CAVITY nesting bees utilize pre-existing cavities such as beetle galleries in wood, cracks in buildings, and even snail shells. Alternatively, some species may excavate a new cavity in pithy stems or wood.

HIVE nesting bees utilize abandoned rodent holes, crevices in rocks, grass tussocks, and tree hollows. Domesticated honey bees are raised in 'hive boxes' and reared bumble bees are raised in "quads" for agriculture.

Where do Connecticut bees nest?



WHAT DO NESTS LOOK LIKE?

GROUND NESTING



CAVITY



HIVE



Photos from left to right: Jen Hayes, Nicole Bell, Nicole Bell.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Zarrillo, T.A., Stoner, K.A., Ascher, J.S., 2025. Biodiversity of Bees (Hymenoptera: Apoidea: Anthophila) in Connecticut (USA). *Zootaxa* 5586, 1–138. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.5586.1.1>

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