

CLARENCE NATIVE BEES – CARE FACT 2

STINGLESS BEE (*Tetragonula carbonaria*)



The social native stingless bee *Tetragonula carbonaria* is a popular native honey producer and pollinator of crops.

This species is not easily distinguished as individuals. However, each species has a hive nest architecture that is unique. Hollow bearing trees are generally preferred habitat where the social stingless bees will construct their hive nests in the trunk or branches.

Tetragonula carbonaria is the preferred species when having a hive box as this species is more common and they have good reproduction capacity.

Photo : Laura Noble

REED BEE (*Exoneura*)



The semi-social Reed Bees are 5-8mm in length. They like to live in small colonies within the cavities of dried plant stems. There may be several females and a small number of males within the colony at any one time.

They rear their brood in a single brood chamber where they progressively feed the developing larvae. Reproductive females share the tasks of egg laying, brood rearing, nest guarding and foraging. One of the favoured nesting places for Reed Bees is the woody weed *Lantana camara*. They will also nest in hollow stems and pre-drilled holes.

Photo : Bob Lutterell

LEAFCUTTER BEE (*Megachile*)



Leafcutter bees are 6-15mm in length, they are solitary but are also known to nest in aggregations.

Females usually nest in pre-existing cavities such as old wood borer holes, rock crevices or dried plant stems.

The females are specialist bees and cut discs of plant leaves and weave them together to construct their brood cells. They build multiple cells and deposit an egg, together with saliva, nectar, and pollen into each cell to help the larvae develop.

Photo : Rosalie Franklin

MASKED BEE (*Hyaleine*)



These bees are 3 to 11 mm in length and are mostly black with a little yellow banded segment across the thorax. Slight patches of yellow are also observed on their head.

This species carries pollen by swallowing it (Dollin, A), probably because it has very little hair. This species spends a lot of time in eucalyptus and angophoras when they are in flower (Australian Museum).

They like to nest in cavities, holes in timber or soft fleshy stems

Photo : Andrew Donnelly

TETRAGONULA (*Austroplebia australis*)



This fascinating species is reported to be found widely throughout Australia, however, they are in fact very difficult to find in the Clarence.

About the same size as *Tetragonula carbonaria* these little bees have white markings on their abdomens. They are quite shy in their nests. They are known to reduce their nests size to coincide with available food resources. When food is low, the bees numbers are too and this could create problems if they incur any nest issues.

At the front of their nest entrances these bees have a tunnel-like entrance and make a fragile lace curtain which they close at night.

It is this, and their nest architecture, that helps tell them apart from *Tetragonula carbonaria*.

Photo : Neville Anderson

HALICTIDAE (Subfamily Nomiinae)



These are a very well represented bee family and widespread, with a large number of species known to exist. Sometimes they are referred to as Sweat-bees. These bees have large brown compound eyes and long antenna.

Males are less hairy than females as they do not need to carry pollen for the young. Even though they are solitary bees, males cluster together on grass stems for the night. Females nest in ground burrows or in tunnels that they construct in the soil, or less often, in rotting wood, and each have their own tunnel. They can nest in grass tree spikes, tree fern fronds, bamboo and other hollow stems.

Photo : Laura Noble