

CLARENCE NATIVE BEES – CARE FACT 2

BLUE-BANDED BEE (Amegilla cingulata)



Blue-banded bees measure 10-12mm and have pale metallic blue stripes across their bodies. Males have five stripes and females have four. They are important BUZZ pollinators and vibrate the flower's anthers in order to release the pollen.

These bees are also ground-dwelling insects and dig burrows into the banks of rivers and dams. They will also nest in soft mortar and mud bricks. Preferring the company of others, they nest in aggregations.

It is reported that this bee has great potential as a valuable greenhouse pollinator.

Photo : Laura Noble

GREAT CARPENTER BEE (Xylocopa)



Great Carpenter bees are 24mm and the largest bees in Australia. They are also another 'buzz' pollinator. Their nests are cut into burrows of soft pithy timber, such as dead limbs of the mango trees or stalks of the grass tree (Xanthorrhoea). The females have glossy black abdomens and bright yellow waistcoats.

The males are quite different - they are covered with soft golden fur. They will nest in all types of dead branches, as long as they are not too hard, and will build in stacks of old timber. Males can emit a chemical pheromone to attract females. This scent smells like flowers or pollen, which lures young female bees.

Photo : Laura Noble

METALLIC CARPENTER BEE (Xylocopa lestis)



This female metallic green carpenter bee is measured at 17mm long but they can be found up to 20mm. Also a 'Buzz' pollinator.

These bees are a large metallic and hairy bee. They have a black abdomen and thorax and their wings are light brown. They prefer to live and nest in tunnels of wood.

This bee is foraging on the Australian Native Grasstree (Xanthorrhoea) at Minnie Water NSW.

Photo : Ian McPhee

TEDDY BEAR BEE (Amegilla)



The Teddy Bear Bee is another "Buzz pollinator". However, it can often be mistaken for a bumble bee. Bumble Bees, in fact, do not exist in mainland Australia, but were introduced into Tasmania.

The Teddy Bear Bee is measured at around 7-15mm long. The females dig their burrows into soil in creek banks and lay their eggs into several cells, while the male generally hangs out on branches at night.

These bees are a threat to our native bees.

Photo : Bob Lutterell

RESIN BEE (Megachile)



Resin bees are solitary, however, they do nest in aggregations. These bees come in many colours and sizes. From large black 14mm bees with white tufts of hair to small 8mm black bees with bright orange abdomens. They are called resin bees because they collect resin and gums to build partitions between their brood cells and to seal their nests. Sometimes resin bees are noticed hanging around social stingless bee hives trying to get a little resin for their nests. The female uses resin and chewed leaf to construct her brood cells and sometimes incorporates pebbles. Females usually nest in pre-existing cavities, such as timber crevices, old wood borer holes, rock crevices or dried plant stems.

Photo : Laura Noble

CUCKOO BEE (Thyreus spp)



The Neon cuckoo bees are 1-14mm in length and are noted for their brilliant metallic blue and black banded colours. These bees are usually up to no good! They lay their eggs in the nests of other bees, particularly the blue-banded bees. They have characteristics very similar to that of the cuckoo bird, where they get others to raise their young.

When the eggs of the cuckoo bee hatch, the cuckoo baby bees will eat all the food of the other bees and then leave them to starve to death. It is a bit of a trickster and can sometimes be mistaken for a blue-banded bee.

Photo : Bob Lutterell