

ENTOMOLOGY

Beepedia: a Brief Compendium of Bee Curiosities

By Laurence Packer. Illustrations by Ann Sanderson. 2025. Princeton University Press. 176 pages and 51 black and white illustrations, 24.99 CAD, Hardcover. Also available as an E-book.

Beepedia is an alphabetical encyclopaedia of bee trivia, from *Agapostemon* to *Zacosmia*. It is a small book (18 × 12 cm), and while there is a very brief introduction, short further reading list, bee taxa classification table, and phylogeny chart, the entries are the main attraction. Each one is about a page in length and ends with a See Also section that lists related topics also found in the book. Sprinkled throughout the text are drawings by the talented science illustrator Ann Sanderson, and these are quite helpful. For example, explanations of anatomy benefit enormously from diagrams, and behaviours such as nectar robbing and leaf cutting are also easier to understand with visuals.

This is a true encyclopaedia, not a glossary; topics include Squash Bees, Tear-drinking Bees, and Napoleon Bonaparte. In addition to bee anatomy and behaviour, the human element is represented by entries such as Proverbs, Religion, Citizen Science, and Urban (on Danúncia Urban, a prominent bee taxonomist with a publication history spanning more than 60 years). I especially appreciated the entry on bee hotels, human-made structures for stem-nesting bees, which took a measured approach, acknowledging the good intentions behind them as well as their many issues, such as disease and predation. A few TV

programs, films, and books are also featured.

Beepedia is written primarily in plain language. It is for the most part very accessible, although there are some specialised terms scattered throughout (e.g., plumose, mycotoxin, triungulins), and it may have benefitted from a glossary. There are no citations provided, but the author is a leading expert on wild bees and corroborating evidence is easily found. While honey bees are included, it is refreshing to see a book which de-centres them and instead focusses more broadly on bee-related topics that apply to some of the other ~21 000 species.

It's difficult to know how to pitch *Beepedia*: each topic is interesting, but there is no overarching narrative. Without a table of contents or index, the reader has the option of reading from beginning to end or skipping around as they see fit; either way, the contents will be a surprise. For me, this was a book to pick up between tasks. The short entries lend themselves to casual reading, and the variety of subjects make for an enjoyable experience; it's tough to beat a book that goes from Cartoon Bees to Central Place Foraging in the span of a few pages. Fundamentally, this book is probably best suited for those who are already interested in bees, or at least ecology more broadly. Specialists may not learn anything new, but for those less familiar there is a lot of content in a small package. If melittological trivia strikes your fancy, you'll enjoy this little gem.

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