



July-August 2014

Those Marvelous Talking Bees

by Lanny and Marilyn Johnson

"How are you doing with the homework that I assigned you, Mary?" Mrs. Jones asked her daughter.

"I finished it this morning, Mother."

"Good. After dinner, I would like for you to read to the family."

Later, the Jones family met in the living room. "Before you begin Mary, where did you get your information for your story?" Mrs. Jones asked.

"I made a list of references at the end of my paper like you taught me. I used information from nature books, encyclopedias, and lots of good stuff from *Creation Moments*!" Mary replied.

Mary began to read her story, "Those Marvelous Talking Bees, by Mary Jones. My favorite insect is the honeybee. As I studied the honeybee I discovered that it was able to do so many special things and had all kinds of wonderful parts. One of the things that I found out was that bees have a language and can 'talk' to each other ..."

"Bees can't talk!" interrupted Mary's young brother Billy.

"I'm glad you are listening and thinking,

Billy, but let's allow Mary to tell her story, and we will find out if they can or not," chuckled Mr. Jones.

Mary continued, "Scientists have known for a long time that honeybees could communicate or tell other bees in their hive or nest about where the nectar for making honey could be found. Now scientists studying bees have found that many kinds of bees also have languages they use to tell others like themselves about where to find food. Some scientists have even figured out how many types of bees 'talk' to each other ..."

"But Mom, Dad ... tell Mary that bees can't talk!" Billy chimed in again.



"Please have patience, Billy. Let Mary finish her story," instructed Mrs. Jones.

"Where was I?" Mary continued. "Honeybees do not use words, like we do, to communicate. They talk to each other using movement, smells, and samples of food (pollen) gathered. When a honeybee worker returns to the hive with good nectar or pollen, she does a 'waggle dance' to



tell other workers how far and in what direction (based on the direction of the sun) the food can be found. Some scientists believe that she also is carrying the smell of the flowers she visited on her body that tells the other bees which flowers have the good food. Then the other honeybees leave the hive to find the nectar or pollen.

"Another type of bee runs a zigzag pattern in the hive bumping into her hive mates to get their attention. If they like the nectar she brought, they follow her to bring in more.

"One kind of bee tells others of a good find by pulsing buzzes and a circular dance.

"Some other types of bees lay a scent trail to the food.

"Many plants depend on honeybees (and other bees) to exist and multiply. By carrying pollen from one plant to another in its search for food, the honeybee helps the plants to pollinate – form seeds and reproduce themselves. The honeybees are rewarded for their work by the nectar they collect from the plants. The honeybees use the nectar to make honey ... my favorite sweetener! So I thank God for the amazing honeybee!"

* <http://www.creationmoments.com/>

** Citation: Chittka L (2004) Dances as Windows into Insect Perception. *PLoS Biol* 2(7): e216. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.0020216

