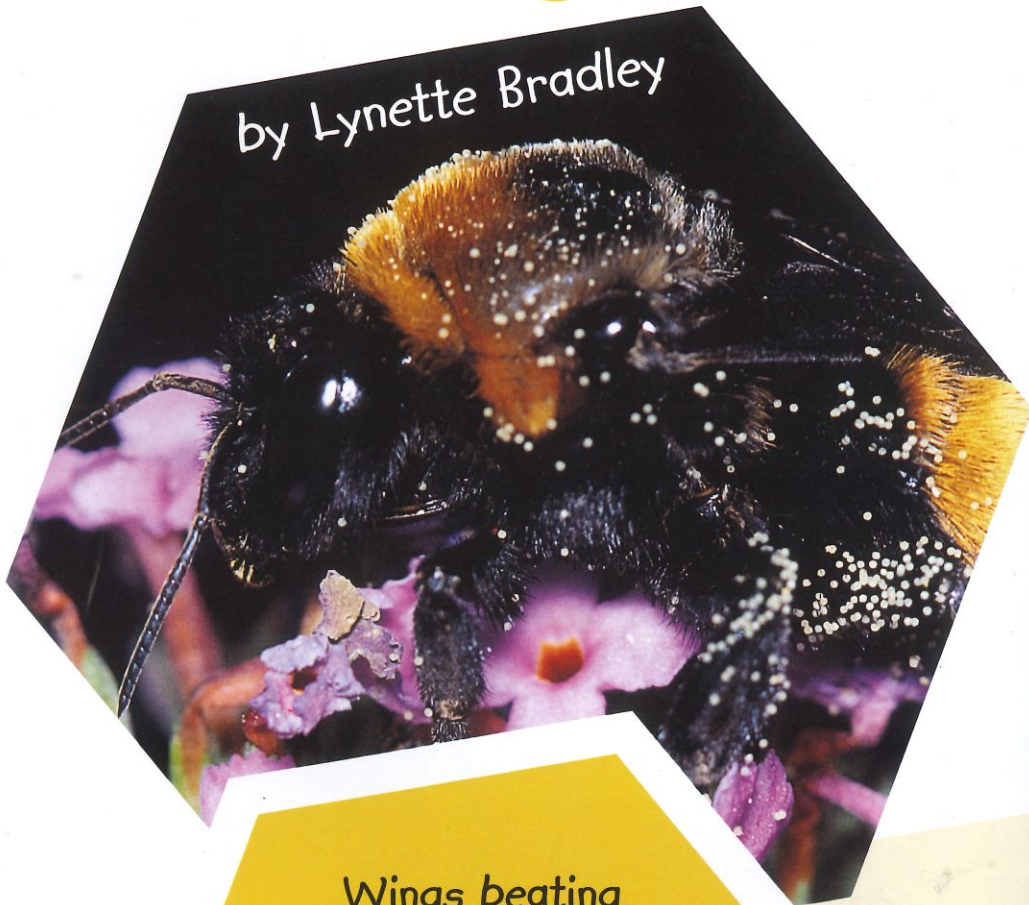


Dancing Bees

by Lynette Bradley



Wings beating,
Feet tapping,
Bodies spinning,
Bees are dancing.

Inside the beehive, worker bees
twist and twirl and shake and swing.
Bees are clever dancers,
but they're not dancing for fun.
Bees dance just as we talk.
They dance to tell each other things,
and each dance has a different message.





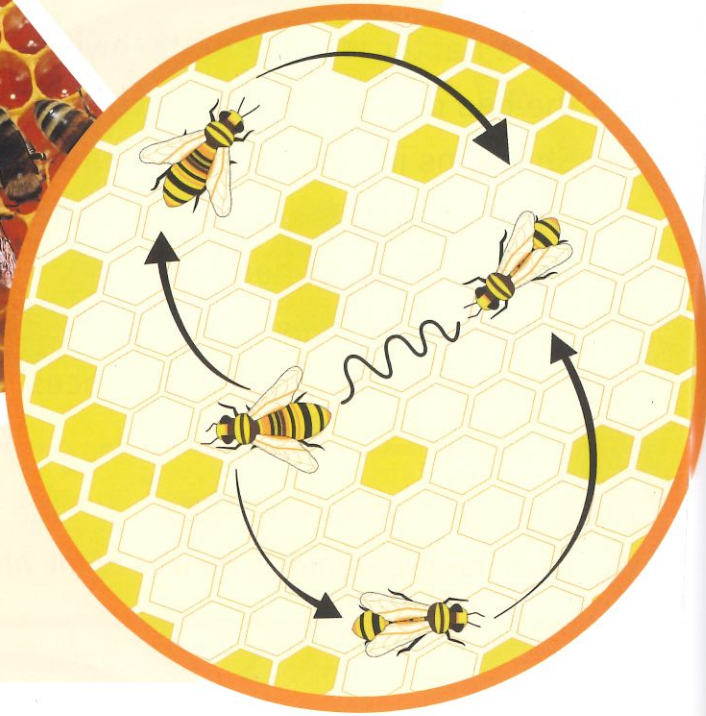
Worker bees collect nectar from flowers and turn it into honey.

When a bee finds a new place to gather nectar, she takes some back into the hive and lets the other bees taste it. Then she dances to tell them where she found it.

If the nectar is close to the hive, the bee does a “round dance”. She spins in small circles round one way and then the other. The time she spends dancing, and the speed of her dancing, tell the other bees how good the nectar is. The longer and faster she dances, the better it is.

Bees dance the round dance when food is within 25 metres of the hive.





If a bee finds a lot of good nectar, she does a “shake dance”, shaking her belly in front of bees that aren’t busy working. This tells the bees that they have to come to find out where the nectar is and help to bring it back to the hive.

Bees dance the shake dance when there’s so much food that lots of workers are needed to collect it.

If the nectar is further away, she does a “waggle dance” by running around and wagging her tail. She runs in a circle, then in a straight line, and then in another circle – a bit like a figure of eight. The path she dances is like a map that shows the bees which way to fly to find the nectar.

Bees dance the waggle dance when the food is more than 80 metres and up to 10 kilometres away.



When they have collected lots of nectar, a bee does a “tremble dance”. She walks slowly around the hive for a long time with her legs shaking and her body trembling. This tells the other bees that they need to come and help to turn the nectar into honey.

Bees dance the tremble dance when help is needed to turn the nectar into honey. The tremble dance can last for up to an hour.



What if we were like bees?

If your mum came home and did a round dance, you'd have to bring the shopping in from the car.

If she waggled, you'd probably have to go to the shop.

Her shaking belly dance would let you know that you have to come and listen to her, and if she did the tremble dance, watch out! You might have to cook dinner!

