



NATUREKIDS NB

Interesting Insects

WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR OF NATUREKIDS!

Summer comes to an end this month, so we will be exploring a group of animals that we mostly see during this season: insects! Fly, inch, hop, or crawl your way into learning more about these incredibly diverse and intriguing creatures that make up the majority of life on Earth.

BACKYARD INSECT EXPLORATION

Check out the new Backyard Insect Identification Guide included with this month's NatureKids! Go on an outdoor adventure in your neighbourhood and check off any of the species that you encounter. See if you can figure out which major group of insects each one that you find belongs to, and try to find one of each type. Do you have a favourite insect or know any interesting facts about insects? Share with your friends!

BUILD-A-BUG

The picture on the right was taken by a Nature NB employee at the Montreal Insectarium. It shows just a small amount of the huge diversity of beetles, and insects overall are even more diverse!

Use craft supplies, the insect anatomy page, and the Backyard Insect Identification Guide to "build your own bugs." These can be existing species or entirely new ones, but make sure they have all the characteristics of the type of insect they are. They'll all have two antennae, six legs, three body segments, and paired wings, but there are many variations on this anatomy. Take a look through the Identification Guide or search for insects outside for inspiration!

Try it on your own, or group up and choose a type of insect to create collaboratively. Have each member of the group make a different part of the body without seeing the others, and combine them all when they're finished to see what unique and diverse combinations of traits you can come up with together!





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INSECT MOVEMENT GAMES

Use the included creature cutouts to play these games and learn about the different ways insects move. Mimic how a water bug skates across a pond, a dragonfly expertly maneuvers in midair, and a bumble bee collects pollen!

Here's how to move like each insect:

Caterpillar: Inch along on your belly using your arms

Beetle: Crawl on your hands and feet

Grasshopper: Crouch down and hop using your hands and feet

Fly: Run while pumping your arms really fast

Water Bug: Glide while lifting your feet as little as possible

Dragonfly: Carefully walk backwards while flapping your arms

Bumble Bee: Run and touch the ground with both hands every three steps

"SNEAKY SNEAKY"

This game is played very similarly to red light, green light, but the person who is 'it' is watching the other players the whole time. Line players up along one end of a field or a gymnasium and have the person who is 'it' stand facing them at the other end. They will hold up one of the cutouts to show players how they have to move, and when they say "sneaky sneaky!" players can begin to move toward them. Whenever they hold up a different cutout, players must then switch to moving like that insect instead. If the person who is 'it' says "stop!" and holds up the bird cutout, all the insects must freeze so they don't get eaten. However, they can try to keep sneaking ahead if they think the person who is 'it' isn't looking at them! If players get caught moving when they're supposed to be frozen, or moving differently from the insect cutout that is being held up, they must return to the starting line and begin again from there. To make the game easier, have the person who is 'it' call out the insect each time they switch, for example "sneaky sneaky dragonflies!" For more of a challenge, tell players they have to pay close attention, because if the insect changes and they don't notice they might get caught and sent back! The first player to tag the person who is 'it' wins the game!

CRITTER CHASE

Another way to use the included cutouts is by having an insect relay race. Divide players into teams and assign each player an insect that they must move like during their turn in the relay. Try lining up all the insects in the same order, (for example, the caterpillars first, then the beetles, etc.), or see if it makes a difference to scramble the order for each team!



Interesting Insects



**Golden Northern
Bumble Bee**

CREATURE FEATURE: NATIVE BEES

When most people hear the phrase “save the bees,” they probably think of honey bees. Unfortunately, honey bees aren’t native to North America and are actually contributing to the decline of our almost 4000 native bee species! They use up limited nesting spots and food, pollinate invasive plants, and spread diseases that harm native bees. Combined with the effects of pesticides and habitat loss from human activities, most native bees are facing threats and are really the ones in need of our help!

There are many different groups of native bees, including carpenter bees, leafcutter bees, and sweat bees. One group that you may already be familiar with is bumble bees. These fuzzy “gentle giants” have the unique ability to do buzz pollination by vibrating their bodies to shake pollen out of flowers, which gives them their distinctive hum. Bumble bees are very important pollinators for many wild plants and agricultural crops alike, and only the females, known as queens and workers, pollinate or have stingers. Males, or drones, primarily exist to mate with the queens. Unlike honey bees, many native bees do not live in hives, but bumble bees are social species that nest on the ground during the spring and summer. Throughout the rest of the year, only a solitary queen from each nest survives and hibernates underground before emerging to build a new colony in a new location. Planting native flowers, avoiding using mulch and pesticides, and leaving patches of your yard untouched are all ways you can help your local bumble bees!

Yellow-banded bumble bees, like the one on the left, are a Species-At-Risk in NB, which means they need extra help to thrive. This summer, Nature NB joined a diverse community of organizations studying the habitats and distribution of the 18 bumble bee species found across the Maritimes. This research will help us gain a better understanding of how to protect native bees in NB! Remember to always be careful when interacting with wildlife, especially Species-At-Risk.



**Tri-coloured
Bumble Bee**



Fun Fact: The study of bees is called **melittology**.



**Common Eastern
Bumble Bee**

Head to BumbleBeeWatch.org and scan the QR code above to learn more about our native species of bees!

1 pair of antennae

3 body regions:

head

thorax

abdomen

6 legs
in 3 pairs

4 wings in 2 pairs

**Insect
Anatomy**

















