

Does plant diversity affect the behaviour of honeybees?

A Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT) cluster of nine local schools will work with the author of 'The Most Important Animal of All' on a year-long project. The book focuses on keystone species such as beavers, bats and bees, and looks at their impact on different environments. Each school will have an animal to investigate over the course of the year and will work with a STEM partner who is an expert on that particular animal. The STEM partner will support the investigations by encouraging the children to use scientific language, a range of enquiry skills as well as helping to drive the collection of scientific data. At the end of the project the schools will share their outcomes in a Great Science Share for Schools event.

For Saxton Primary School the chosen species is the bee, and the following investigations will be undertaken:

Classifying and identifying the plant life in the local environment

The children will use the school nature area as their base. This is a large, enclosed space at the back of the school with mature trees and a pond. The children will work in groups to identify the plants in the nature area. They will then use classification skills, including classification keys, to record the variety of the plants and make links with bee biodiversity. They will also observe how the plants change through the seasons, investigate what plants need to grow, and explore pollination and its role in providing a food supply for bees.

Observing and monitoring bee and colony behaviour

As part of this investigation, the children will work closely with the STEM partner who will be introducing scientific research skills to investigate the biology of bees and bee colonies, by observing the bees over the course of a year. They will also make links with the previous investigation into plant life and how this may affect honeybee productivity and bee biodiversity more broadly. The STEM partner will support the children in maintaining a healthy bee colony through visits to school and trips to the research apiaries.

"[The children] are already designing their Bee Friendly Gardens so we can use their ideas in our outdoor area. It will be something that all the children can be involved in and will hopefully still be here after the children have moved on to High School" **Class teacher**

"I like it when we are all doing the same topic, I like to work with the younger children and we get to help them and teach them too" **Project student**