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## ***Honeybee thrives in Sonoran***

There is no better way to more fully understand and appreciate the abundance of the desert than through the fascinating world of the honeybee. Of all our insect friends, man has a much closer relationship with the honeybee, and has learned far more about her than any other insect. The history of that relationship is as old as the history of man himself. The bee is our window through which we may more clearly see the wisdom and mystery of Mother Nature.

The Sonoran Desert supports a tremendous

variety of life forms, but within the insect kingdom there is found a greater variety here than anywhere else on the entire planet. The reason is quite simple. A great majority of desert flora are insect pollinated. Therefore, insects, including bees, wasps, bumblebees, moths, beetles, ants and butterflies are necessary for the plants' reproduction.

For doing their good work, the insects are rewarded with nectar (carbohydrate) and pollen (protein, fats). Being a highly organized and cooperative society, the honeybee is uniquely qualified to take advantage of the desert's abundance.

Not only is there a great variety of flora and a long foraging season, but many sources of nectar and pollen can bloom several times a year, needing only a little rainfall for encouragement. Mesquite and creosote bush are two good examples.

Interestingly, what is probably the world's most dependable source of nectar and pollen is found in Sonora — the giant saguaro cactus, equipped to survive a 48-month drought. It is consistently year after year, a fantastic source of nectar and what is easily the most delicious pollen I've ever eaten.

Every one of our desert plants has a unique story to tell. Often, the honeybee is intimately woven into the drama, cast into a role that perpetuates the play. Hers is an industrious and cooperative character in the melodrama (the root word, mel, means honey), as she is nourished by the plants whose survival she ensures.