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Jeremy's Corner

A few miscellaneous thoughts.

I have wondered often how to place a value on a one-pound jar of honey. Consider the following.

Worker bees are foragers for the last two weeks of their lives, and let's presume that half of that is collecting nectar, the other half pollen. So working 8 hours a day for 7 days is a 56-hour week.

If we had to pay each bee minimum wage, a week's work would cost $7.25 x 56 = $392.00.

We know it takes 12 bees to collect sufficient nectar to make one teaspoon of honey. So $392 x 12 means that, using minimum wage as a measure, a teaspoon of honey costs $4,704.

It takes 50 teaspoons to fill a one pound jar (yes, I counted) so the cost of a jar of honey is $235,200 ... and that is for the nectar collection only.

I have no idea how to calculate the amount of time spent on reducing the moisture content of the stored nectar, nor for producing the wax and capping each cell. Yet it is safe to say that, at these rates, we would be paying the bees in excess of $500,000 for each one pound jar of honey.

$10.00 a pound is a bargain!

A different calculation. If a worker bee spends two weeks as a forager and averages 30 flights a day averaging one mile from the hive, the total distance she will fly is 840 miles, which is a little further than the distance from Pittsburgh to Wichita, KS, or from Philadelphia to Tallahassee, FL. And the end result of all that flying, besides the pollination that she does, is enough nectar to make one twelfth of a teaspoon of honey.

So If one honey bee could collect enough nectar to make the teaspoon of honey that I put in my tea every morning, she would have to fly 5,040 miles, which if she went east would take her to Madrid, Spain, and if she went west, almost to Hawaii.

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