

20 May – World Bee Day

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20 May was proclaimed World Bee Day by a UN resolution in December 2017, with the aim of informing the public about the importance of bees and bee products, as well as on issues related to the protection of endangered bees, demonstrating the key role of bees in plant pollination and life on Earth.

In honour of Anton Janša, the United Nations designated 20 May as World Bee Day, the date of birth of the founder of modern beekeeping.

Did you know that...

- The celebration of bees is in May, because this is the month with the highest activity in the growth of bee colonies.

- On this day Anton Janša (1734–1773) was born – known as one of the pioneers of modern beekeeping. He is considered the first modern teacher of beekeeping in the world. The Slovenian Anton Janša made several discoveries that are of great importance for modern beekeeping. The beekeeper identified more specific relationships in the mating of the queen with the drones. Furthermore, he concluded that on each brood comb there is a specific order in the distribution of honey, pollen and brood. It is no coincidence that in 1769 Empress Maria Theresa founded a school for the development of beekeeping in Vienna and appointed Anton Janša as its head. Janša's teaching and scientific work served as a model for many beekeeping schools. In 1775 the first book on beekeeping by the renowned beekeeper Anton Janša – “A Guide to Beekeeping” – was published. Two years after his death, on 8 April 1775, the first law for the promotion of beekeeping was adopted.

The keeping of bees, including under urban conditions, to this day is a priority of the Austrian capital. Bees are important for the pollination and reproduction of many plant species. A major topic in recent years has been the decline in bee populations, not only due to incorrectly applied pesticides, but also due to the spread of parasitic diseases dangerous to bee populations (varroosis, nosemosis).

It is an indisputable fact that honey bees and wild bees are of enormous importance for the preservation of biodiversity, for the pollination of various plant species and, not least, for their important role for humans.

The Austrian capital continues to promote urban beekeeping by creating special meadows with melliferous plant species in parks and other green areas throughout the urban space, which create natural conditions for the reproduction of bees. In the city itself there are about 500 hives belonging to the municipality. They are located both in the city centre (for example on the roof of Vienna City Hall or on the roofs of some museums, ministries, public buildings, balconies and residential buildings) and in large urban gardens and green areas situated in various locations. Since 2014 there have been beehives on the roof of City Hall, and the park in front of it is rich in diverse tree species that offer the tireless bee colonies a wide range of food. The bees provide over 180 kilograms of honey every year, which is sold for charitable purposes. Thus, in the city there are:

- nearly 5,000 hives with honey bees and about 500 species of wild bees;
- depending on the weather and the number of bees, one colony produces about 25 to 40 kilograms of honey per year;
- there are over 700 active beekeepers;

- the hexagonal honeycomb cells are used for rearing larvae and for storing honey and pollen.

Let us protect the bees; they are important for nature and for humankind!