

THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Photo : Public domain
A swarm of honeybees.

The Big Apple has a big bee problem

Level 2

Spring came. The flowers were out.
And so were the bees.
And bees are now a problem
in New York City.

New York is called *The Big Apple*.
The New York Police Department (NYPD)
has a “bee man”.
He gets a lot of calls in *The Big Apple*.

Who is the bee man?

The NYPD calls Anthony Planakis
when there is a problem with bees.
Planakis is a policeman. And he loves bees.
He has bee **hives** at his home
and around the area.
He has helped the NYPD and people
in New York City for 18 years.
But the NYPD called the bee-man 30 times
this spring!

Why do people call him?

In the spring, a queen honeybee
is **reproducing**. This means the hive where
the bees live is healthy.
A hive can have 20,000 buzzing bees in it.
Soon it gets too crowded. So, a group of
bees will move out with their queen.
Sometimes two groups move.
They look for a new place to live.
They form a **cluster** or close group
called a swarm and wait.
There can be 7,000 to 8,000 bees in a cluster.

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People and swarms

Planakis knows the bees in a swarm are not dangerous. The bees are waiting for one of their **scouts**. The scouts fly off and look for new homes.

These scouts will fly up to five miles away. Then they return and lead the group to the new place. Planakis last year removed 2 kg of bees from a tree near a shopping mall. Sometimes he uses a special box for the bees. He also rescued a family in their car. The family's car had 10,000 bees on it.

One swarm stayed in a tree near a shop. People stayed away from the shop. Another swarm was hanging outside the door of a grocery store. A **fire hydrant** had 17,000 bees buzzing around it.

Why does New York have a problem?

In 2010, New York City passed a new law. The law allows people to keep bees. Before 2010, there were three hives in the city. Now there are 161 hives. These hives are on the tops of homes and hotels. Planakis says, "There are too many hives right now." Beekeeping is becoming more and more popular. But Planakis says it will be more and more difficult to control those bees.

Vocabulary:

- **hives:** small containers for keeping bees, built by people
- **reproducing:** making offspring or babies
- **cluster:** a bunch of the same things, close together
- **scouts:** someone or something which looks for new places or people

Learn new expressions:

- **to have a bee in your bonnet:** to talk a lot about something you think is important

Martin has a bee in his bonnet about recycling.

- **busy as a bee:** busy with many activities or jobs, busier than usual

Sorry, I can't go to the movie this evening. I'm as busy as a bee.

- **the birds and the bees:** a humorous expression for the subject of sex and reproduction.

My father tried to teach me about the birds and the bees. My friend is twenty years old and doesn't understand about the birds and the bees!

- **to make a beeline for:** to take the most direct way to get somewhere.

He made a beeline for the bathroom.

When she gets to work, she makes a beeline for the coffee machine.

(Links are on next page.)

Links:

Bees swarming in the city1:

<http://eastvillage.thelocal.nytimes.com/2012/05/16/bowery-bumbles-bees-swarm-near-bleecker/>

Bees swarming in the city2:

<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20120430/melrose/bees-swarm-bodega-south-bronx#ixzz1yZtgAEgL>