

Pollination Behavior in Bees: What *Wolbachia* Studies in *Drosophila* Can Teach Us

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ABSTRACT: *Wolbachia* is an endosymbiotic bacterial species that is transmitted through the female germline. *Wolbachia* use several strategies to enhance the reproductive success of their infected hosts. Recent evidence suggests that *Wolbachia* proteins in the brain manipulate host behavior to increase their reproduction. In the fruit fly *Drosophila Melanogaster*, *Wolbachia* colonize brain regions that are associated with mating and reproduction behaviors. This raises the question of whether *Wolbachia* alter behaviors in other insect species. Insects infected by *Wolbachia* include a number of *Anthophila* bee species, which are important pollinators of flowers. In these bees, the same brain regions that *Wolbachia* colonizes in fruit flies are involved in more complex behavior beyond reproduction, including pollination. Direct evidence of *Wolbachia* affecting the brains of *Anthophila* bees has not yet been established, but growing evidence of structural similarities (e.g., brain) between *Drosophila* and bees suggests that *Wolbachia* may influence bee behavior as well. The review of existing literature suggests that *Wolbachia*'s effect on ecological decision-making in pollinators can be further investigated, as *Wolbachia*'s effect on pollinators remains underinvestigated.

KEYWORDS: Cellular and Molecular Biology, Neuromicrobiology, Brain Homology, Pollination, Food Chain.

■ Introduction

Wolbachia are highly successful bacterial endosymbionts that infect a vast array of arthropods and filarial nematodes. Their remarkable evolutionary success stems from their ability to manipulate host behavior and reproduction. On a molecular and cellular level, *Wolbachia* interact with a broad range of host-derived cellular components to adapt and thrive in diverse cell types and environments.¹

Recent studies suggest that *Wolbachia* proteins in the brains of infected fruit flies manipulate host behavior to increase their reproduction. In the fruit fly *Drosophila Melanogaster*, *Wolbachia* colonizes brain regions that are associated with mating and reproduction behaviors.² However, studies have mainly focused on fruit flies and other insects through understanding cytoplasmic incompatibility, male killing, parthenogenesis, and feminization.¹ Little is known about whether *Wolbachia* alter the behaviors of bees that play significant roles in pollination and the ecosystem. However, as previous research has mainly focused on fruitflies, little is known about whether *Wolbachia* alter behaviors in other insect species that play significant roles in pollination and the ecosystem.

Given the similarities in brain structure between fruit flies and bees,³ I hypothesize that the effects of *Wolbachia* on host behavior may also extend to bees. The study of the effects of *Wolbachia* infection on *Anthophila* bees is particularly important because it can help elucidate manipulations of pollination, specifically floral selection preferences and pollen-collecting patterns. Additionally, such modifications can disturb the food chain, triggering a chain reaction that affects animals across the population. Extension of research on the effects of *Wolbachia* to include *Anthophila* bees provides insights into how the consequences of endosymbionts on pollinators may influence ecosystem stability.

Building on existing research, this study examines whether *Wolbachia* infection influences pollination behavior in bees, specifically their floral selection and pollen-collecting behaviors. Since bees play a key part in ecosystem functioning and flower reproduction, this study has the potential to reveal unexplored mechanisms through which symbiotic bacteria impact pollination and biodiversity.

■ Discussion

Wolbachia Infection and Host Colonization:

Wolbachia are bacterial endosymbionts of arthropods and some filarial nematodes. It is estimated to infect 40-60% of all insect populations, such as mites, isopods, and worms.^{1,4} *Wolbachia* are vertically transmitted through infected female oocytes. *Wolbachia* employ several well-characterized strategies to ensure their reproductive success in mixed populations of infected and uninfected hosts. More recently, an intriguing report suggests that *Wolbachia* might alter host behavior to increase mating by infected hosts.

Although *Wolbachia* are vertically transmitted through infected female oocytes, they also colonize somatic tissues. The full extent of *Wolbachia*'s cellular localization remains incompletely mapped.⁵ A study identified distinct patterns of oocyte infection, primarily localized at the posterior pole of the germline, suggesting targeted infection of female reproductive structures.⁶ *Wolbachia* have also been found in the brain, neural cells, salivary glands, and excretory cells of diverse hosts.¹ Specifically in *Drosophila* fruit flies, *Wolbachia* has been known to induce tissue-specific behaviors through the points at which it infects (Figure 1).



Figure 1: *Wolbachia* (marked in green) is concentrated along the female germline and the brain of a *Drosophila Melanogaster*.

Wolbachia's Effects on Host:

Effects of *Wolbachia* on *Drosophila* behavior have been extensively researched, particularly through studies of its localization in the brain. Albertson *et al.* mapped *Wolbachia* distribution in the brain and found that the bacterium interferes with cells involved in neural signaling.⁷ Using 3D imaging, they showed that *Wolbachia* is not evenly distributed throughout the brain, but instead is concentrated in specific regions. High densities of *Wolbachia* were observed in the antennal lobes (olfactory-guided behaviors), mushroom bodies (learning and memory), optic lobes (vision-based behaviors), and the central complex and suboesophageal ganglion (locomotor and feeding behaviors), each corresponding to distinct behavioral functions. *Wolbachia* was particularly associated with ganglion cells, supporting and nourishing the neural environment of the brain. The particular strains of *Wolbachia* and the species of *Drosophila* had subtle influences on infection patterns. Furthermore, female *Drosophila* exhibited slightly higher *Wolbachia* densities in the brain than males.

Wolbachia has been shown to influence *Drosophila melanogaster*, ameliorating learning and memory positively. Studies by Chen *et al.* indicated that *Wolbachia* infection in the brain improves both learning ability and memory performance.⁸ They further suggested that these cognitive augments may result from *Wolbachia*-induced changes in host gene expression within neural tissues.

An important consideration in understanding *Wolbachia*-induced behavioral effects across host taxa is the diversity of *Wolbachia* strains. In *Drosophila*, multiple closely related strains, such as wMel, wMelPop, and wRi, have been shown to vary in tissue distribution and behavioral consequences, including effects on sleep, learning, and reproductive behavior.⁹ Notably, even within a single host species, distinct *Wolbachia* strains can produce different phenotypes, accentuating the strain-specific nature of *Wolbachia*-host interactions. Likewise, *Anthophila* bees are also naturally infected by diverse *Wolbachia* strains.¹⁰ Given that different *Wolbachia* strains can exert distinct effects on host behavior, as demonstrated in multiple insect systems, it is likely that any influence of *Wolbachia* on pollination behavior in *Anthophila* would depend strongly on the specific strain involved.

Sleep behaviors in *Drosophila* are affected by *Wolbachia* upon infection. Bi and Wang reported that *Wolbachia* can influence the sleep patterns of *Drosophila melanogaster* and *Drosophila simulans*.² Using an advanced *Drosophila* monitoring system, they evaluated the activity of the flies and found that *Wolba-*

chia-infected individuals manifested decreased daytime activity and increased sleep duration.

Wolbachia has also been shown to manipulate the reproductive behaviors of *Drosophila*. Warecki *et al.* demonstrated that *Wolbachia* localizes in brain regions critical for sensory perception and decision-making in *Drosophila melanogaster*, resulting in alterations in reproductive behavior and promotion to promiscuity.⁹ These effects were linked to disruption of glutamatergic signaling, as *Wolbachia* infection reduced host metabotropic glutamate receptor (mGluR) abundance, implicating synaptic transmission as a molecular target of behavioral modulation.

Glutamate signaling is a molecular target that *Wolbachia* could influence pollination behavior, as glutamate receptors hugely contribute to sensory integration, decision-making, and motor coordination in insects. In *Drosophila*, *Wolbachia*-mediated reduction of the metabotropic glutamate receptor mGluR has been shown to alter mating behavior by modifying neural signaling efficiency, demonstrating that *Wolbachia* can directly affect neurotransmitter receptor abundance and synaptic function. In pollinating insects, glutamatergic pathways are essential to processing various sensory inputs, including visual, olfactory, and mechanosensory cues, that guide flower recognition, landing, and handling. Consequently, *Wolbachia*-induced modulation of glutamatergic signaling influences foraging efficiency, floral choice, or behavioral persistence on flowers.

The study also identified cellular mechanisms associated with neural transmission. Protein analysis of infected larval brains revealed changes in host proteins and transcription factors, all of which are associated with sensory processing. Additionally, video recordings further showed that infected females had significantly higher copulation rates, despite no difference in mating initiation time. Hybrid mating experiments supported these findings, revealing that infected females were more likely to engage in cross-species mating with *D. simulans* males, resulting in hybrid offspring. Beyond strain identity, an additional approach to assessing the potential for *Wolbachia*-induced behavioral modulation is to examine whether *Wolbachia* strains infecting *Anthophila* have gene families previously identified as candidate effectors in other insect hosts. Comparative genomic analyses have identified ankyrin repeat-containing proteins and Type IV secretion system components in *Wolbachia*, which functions as effector proteins involved in host manipulation.^{1,5,11}

In *Drosophila*, several of these effector classes have been associated with neural, reproductive, and behavioral phenotypes, suggesting that their presence reflects a latent capacity for host behavioral modulation.⁹ Although the behavioral roles of these effectors have not been directly characterized in *Anthophila*, molecular surveys indicate that bee-infecting *Wolbachia* strains possess homologous effector gene families.¹⁰ This shared effector repertoire raises the possibility that *Wolbachia* infecting bees retain the genomic potential to influence host neural processes relevant to pollination behavior. Importantly, whether these effectors are expressed in neural tissues or produce behavioral consequences in bees remains an open

question, underscoring a key direction for future functional and comparative genomic studies.

Neurobiological Links Between *Drosophila* and *Anthophila* Brain:

In *Anthophila* bees, strong homology exists with *Drosophila* brains.¹² Within the genus of *Drosophila*, multiple species have been independently leveraged to study *Wolbachia*-host interactions. While *Drosophila melanogaster* has been the primary model in many neurobiological and behavioral studies, other *Drosophila* species, such as *Drosophila yakuba*, *Drosophila sechellia*, *Drosophila ananassae*, and *Drosophila recens*, have been central to research on *Wolbachia* transmission dynamics, host manipulation, and cellular interactions.^{1,2,4,7} The hypothesis that *Drosophila*-based findings can inform *Anthophila* behavior, therefore, rests not on a single species comparison, but on convergent evidence across multiple *Drosophila* systems, supported by conserved brain architectures involved in sensory integration and behavioral modulation (Figure 2).

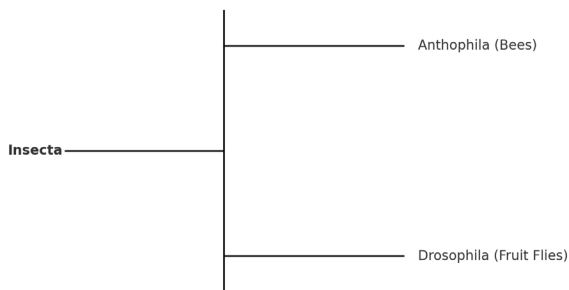


Figure 2: The phylogeny shows the divergence of insect species, such as *Anthophila* bees, *Drosophila* fruit flies, and additional insect species known to host *Wolbachia*. In several of the taxa shown, particularly *Drosophila* species and *Aedes aegypti*, *Wolbachia* has been detected in neural tissues and/or demonstrated to alter host behavior, including sensory processing, activity, and reproductive behaviors. In contrast, corresponding neurobiological and behavioral effects of *Wolbachia* in *Anthophila* bees remain poorly characterized. This phylogenetic context highlights that *Wolbachia*-mediated behavioral modulation occurs across diverse insect lineages and provides a framework for evaluating whether similar interactions may exist in bees.

The homology between the bee and fly brain structures has been established through comparative morphological studies, which revealed evolutionarily conserved features across the two taxa. Strausfeld demonstrated that despite vast differences in behavior and ecological niches, insects share conserved morphology in their central nervous systems.⁴ Strausfeld and Hirth showed that specific neural circuits, such as those in the mushroom bodies and central complex, are conserved across insect lineages.¹² These shared circuits are crucial for behavioral plasticity, decision-making, and sensory integration, all of which may be modulated by *Wolbachia*.

Comparative studies of insect neuroanatomy have highlighted the organization of the *Drosophila* brain and its functional parallels in other species such as *Apis mellifera*. The *Drosophila* brain contains ~100,000 neurons organized into functional neuropils,⁷ including the mushroom bodies and antennal lobes, which are involved in olfactory processing and learning.¹³ These structures are critical for modulating behavioral responses to stimuli, such as courtship and foraging. The

central complex, another conserved brain region, contributes to motor coordination and spatial orientation.¹⁴ In *Apis mellifera*, a member of the *Anthophila* clade, the brain also contains well-developed mushroom bodies, which are associated with olfactory learning and memory.¹⁵ The antennal lobes process floral odors and pheromones (Galizia & Rössler, 2010), while the optic lobes support visual navigation during foraging. Similarly, the central complex contributes to orientation and locomotion (Figure 3).¹⁴



Figure 3: Antennal lobes (marked in green), mushroom bodies (marked in red), optic lobes (marked in yellow), and the central complex (marked in blue) are comparatively analyzed between the two species. The brain on the left represents that of *Drosophila melanogaster*, while the one on the right depicts the brain of an *Anthophila* bee. The general locations of each brain region are similar. The antennal lobes are localized in the lower center of the brain, the mushroom bodies are situated at the top, the optic lobes are positioned along the right and left sides, and the central complex lies at the center of the brain.

Anthophila and *Drosophila* both rely heavily on olfactory and gustatory systems for resource detection, including food and mate location. In these groups, chemosensory function is supported by odorant-binding proteins (OBPs), which enable odorant receptors to solubilize and transport volatile compounds to sensory neurons. In *Apis mellifera*, genomic analyses have identified dozens of OBP genes that are highly expressed in antennal and mouthpart tissues, reflecting strong functional capability in olfaction and taste.¹⁶ Although direct one-to-one orthology between individual *Drosophila* OBPs (such as Obp99b) and bee OBPs has not been fully resolved, OBPs across insects share conserved structure and biochemical roles, suggesting functional conservation despite the divergence.

Given that Warecki *et al.* demonstrated *Wolbachia*-mediated upregulation of specific OBPs in *Drosophila*, including Obp99b, which is expressed in chemosensory tissues and linked to behavior, it is plausible that *Wolbachia* could similarly alter OBP expression in *Anthophila*.⁹ Such modulation could occur through conserved regulatory pathways acting on OBPs broadly rather than on a single strict ortholog, potentially influencing olfactory-driven behaviors such as floral preference, foraging efficiency, or pollen collection. However, comparative analyses of OBP sequence similarity, tissue-specific expression, and *Wolbachia* responsiveness in bees remain limited; future molecular and transcriptomic investigations would help support this claim.

Furthermore, both taxa exhibit flexible foraging strategies mediated by neural plasticity in the mushroom bodies. Giurfa demonstrated that bees can learn complex patterns and odors associated with floral resources, dependent on mushroom body function.¹¹ In *Drosophila*, comparable learning processes have been linked to dopaminergic circuits modulated by environmental cues.¹⁷ Therefore, if *Wolbachia* alters neural processing in flies, as shown by Warecki *et al.*,⁹ similar mechanisms may also be present in bees.

Both *Anthophila* and *Drosophila* are known to be naturally infected with *Wolbachia*. Many studies confirmed natural infections in *Drosophila melanogaster*, with *Wolbachia* localized in specific brain regions. Bee species within *Anthophila* are also frequently infected, although evidence for *Wolbachia* localization in bee brains remains limited. Gerth *et al.*, for example, conducted a molecular screening of multiple *Anthophila* families and found *Wolbachia* infection in the majority.¹⁰ Their analysis revealed substantial variation in infection prevalence across *Anthophila* species and in the *Wolbachia* strains detected.

Insights from the literature on *Wolbachia*'s ability to manipulate the *Drosophila* brain provide new perspectives, particularly for investigating species with more complex behaviors. By infecting brain regions involved in sensory perception and decision-making, *Wolbachia* alters the reproductive behavior of its hosts. However, current studies have primarily focused on *Wolbachia*-targeted regions in *Drosophila* fruit flies. These brain regions are limited to personal behaviors, including sleep, learning, memory, and reproduction.

Pollination Biology and Behavior of Bees:

In contrast to fruit flies, the brain regions of bees are not only linked to individual behaviors, but are also directly stimulated during pollination. While *Drosophila* mating relies on complex neural circuitry, pollination behavior in bees requires learning, navigation, and multimodal sensory processing across repeated foraging events and broader ecological contexts, making it more complex than mating. Visual cues, scents, learning, and memory form the foundation of pollination in bees, with distinct brain regions responsible for these functions. Visual cues, particularly floral color and pattern, strongly influence foraging preferences in *Anthophila* bees. With vision tuned to ultraviolet, blue, and green light, bees are able to perceive intricate floral cues hidden from human eyes.¹⁸ UV nectar guides, such as radial patterns or petal color contrasts, direct bees to floral rewards and increase foraging efficiency.¹⁹ In *Bombus terrestris* and *Apis mellifera*, studies have shown a marked preference for blue and violet flowers, which typically provide higher nectar rewards in natural settings.²⁰ Floral symmetry and shape, such as radial symmetry and shallow corollas, also affect the speed and accuracy of landing and handling.²¹ Together, these visual traits not only attract pollinators but also facilitate rapid flower recognition and efficient reward retrieval, thereby optimizing the energetic return of each foraging trip.

Floral scent acts as a powerful olfactory cue shaping both initial attraction and long-term foraging behavior in bees. The antennal lobes of the bee brain are specialized for detecting volatile organic compounds (VOCs) emitted by flowers, many of which are species-specific.²² These odors are readily learned and remembered, allowing bees to form associative memories that guide future foraging decisions.²³ In stingless bees such as *Trigona fulviventris*, foragers display strong scent fidelity, returning to flowers that emit familiar VOCs after just one successful visit.²⁴ Honeybee foragers can also detect scent trails left by conspecifics, using this social information to locate productive floral patches.²⁵

Nectar and pollen reward characteristics are central to floral choice. Bees evaluate not only the presence, but also the quality of floral rewards. Studies confirm that they prefer flowers with higher nectar sugar concentration and greater pollen protein content, both of which directly impact colony nutrition.²⁶ In *Apis mellifera*, and more broadly across *Hymenoptera*, foragers adjust visitation rates according to changes in nectar volume and concentration, reflecting a dynamic assessment of floral profitability.²⁷ This behavior aligns with optimal foraging theory, which predicts that pollinators maximize net energy gain per unit time. Furthermore, bees can detect and remember floral traits associated with rich rewards, reinforcing constancy to high-quality species.²⁸

Handling time and extraction efficiency further shape floral preferences. Morphologically complex flowers, such as those with long or narrow corollas, require more time and skill to handle, discouraging inexperienced or time-constrained foragers.²⁹ Bumblebees and honeybees often favor flowers that allow rapid nectar access with minimal manipulation, especially when simpler alternatives are available in the same patch.³⁰ Over time, experienced bees reduce handling time through motor learning, yet innate or early-learned preferences still bias them toward simpler floral structures.³¹ This trade-off explains why certain flowers, despite offering abundant rewards, receive few visits: the mechanical costs outweigh the benefits. Thus, handling efficiency acts not only as a foraging constraint but also as a selective filter in plant-pollinator interactions.

The mushroom bodies, responsible for learning and memory, underlie the complex foraging strategies of *Anthophila* bees, particularly flower constancy. These brain structures integrate multisensory experiences and guide learned behaviors.¹⁵ Through repeated exposure, bees associate floral traits with specific rewards and exhibit strong flower constancy, even in the presence of alternative options.³² This constancy reflects not cognitive limitation but an optimization of memory recall, motor patterns, and search efficiency.³³ Bees also demonstrate spatiotemporal learning, remembering not only which flowers are profitable but also when and where rewards are available.³⁴ These memory-driven behaviors show that floral selection is not random but instead shaped by cognitive investment, highlighting the role of neural architecture in ecological interactions.

Pollination's Role in the Ecosystem:

Pollination significantly enhances both agricultural productivity and ecosystem stability. Klein *et al.* evaluated the world's leading crops and found pollinators to be essential or highly significant for many fruits, nuts, and oilseeds.³⁵ This dependence has increased in recent decades as agriculture has shifted toward pollinator-dependent crops.³⁶ At field scales, a landmark global analysis showed wild insects consistently increase fruit set, and honey bees do not substitute for wild pollinators; both groups act additively.³⁷ In the U.S., a 131-site, 7-crop study found that five of seven crops were pollinator-limited, with wild bees often matching honey bees in delivered pollination.³⁸ Landscape context is also critical. The synthesis across continents shows that both pollinator richness and visitation rates

decline exponentially as the distance from natural or semi-natural habitats increases, with visitation dropping by half within approximately 0.6 km, underscoring the direct role of habitat conservation in maintaining stable crop yields.³⁹ At broader scales, yield growth and stability are lower in pollinator-dependent crops, consistent with pollen limitation constraining production.⁴⁰

Pollination supports plant growth and reproduction, thereby sustaining entire ecosystems. Because most flowering plants rely on animal pollination, declines in pollinator populations can propagate through plant-pollinator networks and affect wider food webs. Network theory and simulations by Memmott *et al.*⁴¹ and Kaiser-Bunbury *et al.*⁴² demonstrate that removing pollinators can trigger secondary plant extinctions and community collapse, with the extent of vulnerability depending on network structure. Empirical studies support these predictions. Biesmeijer *et al.*⁴³ documented simultaneous declines in bees, hoverflies, and their associated plant guilds, while Burkle, Marlin, and Knight, using a 120-year dataset, showed degraded network structure and the extirpation of ~50% of bee species, consistent with reduced pollination services for many plants.⁴⁴ Experimental manipulations provide mechanistic insight: removing a single pollinator species reduced the floral fidelity of remaining pollinators and depressed plant reproduction, causing cascading effects on seed and fruit resources for herbivores and frugivores.⁴⁵ Meta-analyses and reviews such as Knight *et al.*⁴⁶ further confirm that pollen limitation is widespread and can constrain plant demography, thereby affecting the quantity and timing of resources (seeds, fruits, foliage) that higher trophic levels depend on. Importantly, restoration experiments demonstrate that these disruptions are reversible: vegetation restoration strengthened network structure and improved pollination outcomes.⁴⁷

Given that *Wolbachia* can influence fruit fly behavior, it is plausible that it may also affect *Anthophila* bees and their complex behaviors.^{1,2} *Drosophila* and *Anthophila* share homologous brain structures, meaning they possess evolutionarily conserved regions responsible for similar functions.^{12,14} Both groups also include species naturally infected with *Wolbachia* strains.^{1,4,5,7} However, whereas fruit fly behaviors are largely limited to reproduction and social interactions, bees exhibit far more sophisticated behaviors. With the same brain structures, bees engage in activities beyond reproduction and communication, most notably, pollination.^{15,18}

Pollination plays a critical role in ecosystems. The vast majority of flowering plants rely on bees for reproduction, which in turn supports plant propagation and ecosystem productivity.^{35,36} Through pollination, plants reproduce and thrive, increasing the abundance of primary producers within ecosystems.^{39,40} These producers form the foundation of the food chain, supplying energy to all consumer organisms. Because many species depend on plants for energy, and those plants often rely on bees for reproduction, bees play an essential role in maintaining ecosystem energy flow (Figure 4).^{37,41,43}

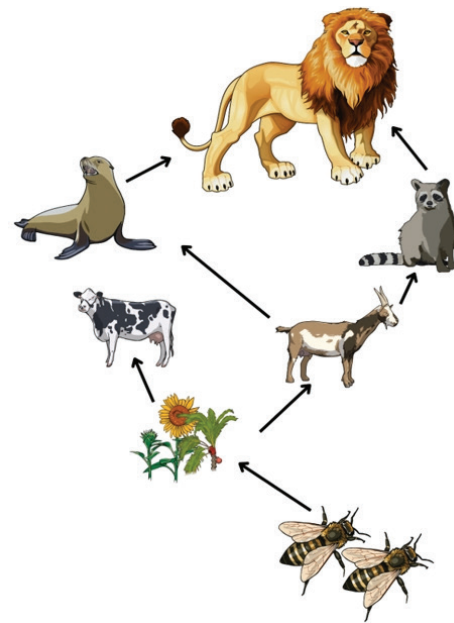


Figure 4: Flowers and plants, reproduced by pollinators, nourish the ecosystem with energy. The figure shows how this energy is transferred through the predation of species within the ecosystem. Initially, the flowers containing this energy can be consumed by primary consumers, such as cows or goats. Those animals are then consumed by secondary consumers, like raccoons or seals, and ultimately by tertiary consumers.

Therefore, it can be hypothesized that *Wolbachia* targets specific regions of the *Anthophila* bee brain that play key roles in pollination. If this is the case, pollination behavior could change, potentially changing ecosystem dynamics in a significant way. However, there is still little compelling scientific evidence to support this hypothesis. Very little is known about how *Wolbachia* spreads within *Anthophila* bees at the molecular level, or how it might influence behavior in real-world ecological settings.

Possible Effects of *Wolbachia* Infections on Pollination and Ecosystems:

Wolbachia may infect the brains of *Anthophila* bees by targeting such regions as antennal lobes, optic lobes, and mushroom bodies, structures critical for pollination. Such infections could lead to changes in pollination behavior. This hypothesis is supported by previous studies that examined the effects of *Wolbachia* on *Drosophila* fruit fly behavior, molecular evidence detecting *Wolbachia* in *Anthophila* bees, and the well-documented ecological importance of pollination.

As *Drosophila* and *Anthophila* share homologous brain structures, they possess evolutionarily conserved regions responsible for similar functions. Both groups also include species naturally infected with *Wolbachia* strains. Given that *Wolbachia* can influence fruit fly behavior, it can also affect *Anthophila* bees and their behaviors. However, while fruit fly behaviors are largely limited to reproduction and social interactions, bees exhibit much more sophisticated behaviors. With the same brain structures, bees engage in activities beyond reproduction and communication, most notably, pollination.

Pollination also plays a vital role in ecosystems. The vast majority of the plants in the ecosystem generally rely on bees

for pollination. Not only are bees able to increase agricultural productivity, but they also support ecological networks by facilitating plant reproduction. Through pollination, plants can reproduce and thrive, increasing the abundance of primary producers within ecosystems. Producers form the foundation of the food chain, supplying energy to all consumer organisms. Since many species depend on plants for energy, and those plants often rely on bees for reproduction, the role of bees in maintaining energy flow is essential.

Currently, a direct causal role of *Wolbachia* in shaping pollination behavior has not yet been established, as the studies discussed here do not employ germ-free or antibiotic-mediated *Wolbachia* removal approaches in *Anthophila*. Pietri and colleagues reviewed *Wolbachia*'s somatic interactions and noted that antibiotic treatment of non-*Wolbachia*-infected *Drosophila* has substantial long-term effects on host physiology and behavior, including mitochondrial dysfunction and metabolic changes after tetracycline treatment. This demonstrates that antibiotics commonly used to clear *Wolbachia* (e.g., tetracycline) can independently impact host cell physiology beyond *Wolbachia* removal, complicating the interpretation of "germ-free."

■ Conclusion

The review of existing literature suggests that it is plausible to hypothesize that *Wolbachia* may infect specific structures of the *Anthophila* bee brain that are heavily involved in pollination. In this case, pollination patterns could be disrupted, significantly influencing ecosystem dynamics. Therefore, this study suggests the following two studies. First, molecular studies need to be conducted to explore the mechanisms by which *Wolbachia* localizes in the brains of *Anthophila* bees. It is important to identify the specific brain regions targeted by *Wolbachia* and determine the functions these regions control. In addition, the molecular mechanisms underlying these interactions require further investigation. For instance, *Wolbachia* proteins concentrated in neural tissues may alter transcription factors regulating brain-associated genes or disrupt signal transduction pathways critical for normal brain function.

Second, an analysis of the effects of *Wolbachia* infection on the pollen-collection behavior of *Anthophila* bees is needed. It is important to identify the types of flowers *Wolbachia*-infected bees prefer to pollinate, and the duration of time they spend probing each flower. The observations could provide useful insights into how *Wolbachia* infection influences pollination dynamics and impacts the overall ecosystem flow through agricultural productivity and changes to energy access in the food web.

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