

# Towards acoustic monitoring of bees: wingbeat sounds are related to species and individual traits

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2 individual traits

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#### 24 Abstract

25 Global pollinator decline urgently requires effective methods to assess their trends, distribution and behaviour. Passive acoustics is a non-invasive and cost-efficient 26 monitoring tool increasingly employed for monitoring animal communities. However, 27 insect sounds remain highly unexplored, hindering the application of this technique for 28 29 pollinators. To overcome this shortfall and support future developments, we recorded and characterized wingbeat sounds of a variety of Iberian domestic and wild bees and tested 30 their relationship with taxonomic, morphological, behavioural and environmental traits 31 32 at inter- and intra-specific levels. Using directional microphones and machine learning, we shed light on the acoustic signature of bee wingbeat sounds and their potential to be 33 34 used for species identification and monitoring. Our results revealed that frequency of wingbeat sounds is negatively related with body size and environmental temperature 35 36 (between-species analysis), while positively related with experimentally induced stress 37 conditions (within-individual analysis). We also found a characteristic acoustic signature 38 in the European honeybee that supported automated classification of this bee from a pool of wild bees, paving the way for passive acoustic monitoring of pollinators. Overall, these 39 40 findings confirm that insect sounds during flight activity can provide insights on individual and species traits, and hence suggest novel and promising applications for this 41 42 endangered animal group.

43

# 44 Keywords

- 45 *pollinators; body size; fundamental frequency; acoustic signature; species classification;*
- 46 *bioacoustics*
- 47

#### 48 Introduction

49 Bees (Hymenoptera: Apoidea) are considered the most important group of pollinators (Pashte & Kulkarni, 2015; Hung et. al, 2018). With over 20,000 species worldwide, these 50 flying insects play a crucial role in ecosystem services, food security and sustainable 51 development (Patel et. al, 2021). However, surveys in North America and Europe have 52 53 reported negative trends in bees and other relevant pollinators (e.g. syrphid flies) during the past decades (National Research Council, 2007; Potts et al., 2016), associated to 54 different anthropogenic drivers, such as habitat loss and fragmentation, climate change or 55 agricultural intensification (Winfree, 2010; Goulson et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2021). 56 This global decline calls for developing scalable, inexpensive and efficient methods to 57 58 monitor behaviour and trends of bee communities.

Commonly studied in a variety of vertebrate and invertebrate species, animal 59 sounds are a well-established source of ecological information (Bradbury & Vehrencamp, 60 1998) that can reveal species presence, abundance, position, body size or behavioural 61 status (Obrist et. al, 2010). Thus, passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) has become an 62 emerging technique that is used to record, store and analyse animal sounds in an 63 64 automated, non-invasive way (Sugai et al., 2019a). In combination with computational tools, PAM has proven to efficiently record animal activity for a wide variety of subjects, 65 e.g. population density (Margues et al., 2013; Pérez-Granados & Traba, 2021) and 66 distribution (Ribeiro et al., 2022), conservation (Laiolo, 2010) or climate change research 67 68 (Llusia et al., 2013; Desjonquères et al., 2022). PAM is typically aimed to record wellknown species-specific acoustic signals that are emitted by specialized sound-producing 69 70 structures and play a role in mating, resource defence or navigation (Wilkins et al., 2013).

71 In comparison with birds, bats or anurans (animal groups extensively studied with PAM; Sugai et al., 2019a), bees do not possess specialized sound-producing structures 72 and emit incidental sounds that arise as a by-product of activities such as moving or eating 73 (Chesmore, 2008), e.g. a diverse a suit of pitches generated by rhythmic thoracic 74 75 oscillations (see review by Hrncir et al., 2005). Some of the most well-known examples of bee sounds are emitted during different behaviours of social species, such as 76 77 honeybees, bumblebees or some stingless bees (Hrncir et al., 2005; Hrncir et al., 2008; Rittschof & Seeley, 2008; De Luca et al., 2014), and they are usually exclusive to certain 78 79 families, genus or species (e.g. buzz pollination, see Pritchard & Vallejo-Marín, 2020). There is, however, one sound type found across all bee species: the flight buzz. 80

Bees' flight and its associated sounds have been theoretically studied since the 60s 81 82 (Esch & Wilson, 1967; Unwin & Corbet, 1984; Santoyo et al., 2016). More recently, applied studies have shown that wingbeat frequency and pattern during flight may be 83 species-specific, and thus it could serve as a 'fingerprint' for automatic species 84 classification (Potamitis & Rigakis, 2015; Kawakita & Ichikawa, 2019). However, most 85 studies on this topic have been performed in laboratory settings, with a narrow number of 86 species (e.g. only Bombus sp. or Apis mellifera), or without considering morphological 87 88 (e.g. body size) and environmental (e.g. temperature) factors (Gradišek et al., 2017; 89 Parmezan et al., 2021).

90 For PAM to be a reliable tool to remotely monitor bee communities, it is paramount to detect which are the most relevant factors affecting the variability of 91 wingbeat sounds between and within species. Here we recorded and characterized 92 93 wingbeat sounds of a variety of Iberian bees under field conditions and tested their relationship with species and individual traits. Particularly, we investigate four sources of 94 95 inter- and intra-specific variation in sound frequency (taxonomy, morphology, temperature and behaviour) and hypothesize that: (i) each taxa shows a specific wingbeat 96 acoustic signature; (ii) frequency of wingbeat sounds is negatively correlated with body 97 size; and positively correlated with (iii) air temperature and (iv) induced stress. Thereby, 98 99 we examine the information that can be retrieved from wingbeat sounds of bees and assess 100 the applicability of PAM to investigate bee diversity, morphology and behaviour through 101 their sounds.

102

#### 103 Material & Methods

# 104 *Study area*

105 The study was conducted in three farmlands located in Central Spain (Torrelaguna and 106 La Cabrera, Madrid), between 600 and 1200 meters a.s.l., at the southern side of the 107 mountain range Sierra de Guadarrama (see Fig. S1 for farm pictures). These areas belong 108 to the mesomediterranean bioclimatic layer, characterized by highly variable 109 temperatures (mean annual temperatures between 12°C and 17°C) and moderate rainfall 100 (annual precipitation of 500 mm; Rivas-Martínez, 1983; AEMET, 2020; Girón *et. al*, 111 2020).

#### 112 Sound recording and insect sampling

To record their sounds, we actively searched for bees in the three farmlands from May to 113 114 July 2019, during a total of 8 sampling days. Fieldwork was conducted between 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM in warm days, with clear sky, little wind and no precipitation. To increase 115 116 the diversity of sampled species, the active search was oriented to maximise the selection 117 of specimens with different characteristics, by *in-situ* observation of the size, colour and shape of the flying insects. Additionally, we focused on individuals of the European 118 honeybee (Apis mellifera), the most abundant bee species in the study farmlands, to 119 120 explore the intra-specific variability of their sounds. Each specimen was recorded under 121 two treatments: (i) in natural conditions (NC) during free ranging flight manoeuvres 122 between flowers before capture; and (ii) subjected to an experimentally-induced stress 123 (IS) after capture, while being confined inside the entomological net.

124 We recorded wingbeat sounds of the focal bees with a directional microphone (ME-66 and module K6; Sennheiser) connected to a portable digital audio recorder 125 126 (PMD-660 Marantz Professional). During recordings, the tip of the microphone was placed at a distance of 2-5 cm above the thorax of the insect to correctly register the sound 127 without disrupting its behaviour (De Luca et. al, 2019; see Fig S2 for a graphic 128 visualization of the recording protocol). To increase the signal-to-noise ratio, the audio 129 130 gain of the recorder was manually regulated while continuously tracking sound amplitude. We used a shock-mount to avoid stand-borne noise, a windshield to reduce 131 132 excessive pressure from wind, and headphones to properly perceive the sound source. The recordings were stored as uncompressed .wav files and digitalised at a sampling rate 133 134 of 48kHz and a depth of 16 bits.

During sampling, air temperature were measured with a datalogger (HOBO U23 Pro V2, ONSET), located at 20-30 cm from the floor in a shaded area. Every specimen were euthanised in small plastic vials (33 cm<sup>3</sup>) with 70% alcohol to ensure their proper conservation. Individuals were then carefully dried and labelled for subsequent taxonomic identification and morphological measurement.

We created and visualized spectrograms of the recorded sounds using the Raven Pro v. 142 143 1.5.0. software (Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Fig. 1; Fig. S3). An optimal spectrogram configuration was applied to all the recordings (Window size: 4098; Overlap: 90%; 144 145 Window Type: Hann), providing a high resolution of wingbeat sound frequencies. For 146 each individual and treatment, a single audio with the best signal-to-noise ratio was 147 selected and three acoustic parameters measured for both the fundamental harmonic (i.e. the lowest frequency of a periodic wave; Arthur et. al, 2014) and the second harmonic. 148 149 These parameters were: duration (s), dominant frequency (Hz) and maximum energy 150 (dB). To best characterise between- and within-bee variation in sound frequency 151 throughout the individual displacement, we also measured dominant frequency and 152 maximum energy in a short segment at the onset, centre and end of the selected audio 153 (Fig. S2). The duration of each segment corresponds to ca. 10% of the duration of the 154 entire audio. Based on these measurements, we calculated how often sound energy was higher at the fundamental harmonic than at the second one. By pairwise comparisons of 155 156 energy in harmonics of the same segment, we thus estimated a within-bee percentage of 157 audio segments with dominant frequency in the fundamental harmonic.

158

#### 159 *Trait measurements*

160 We measured two morphological traits from the focal specimens: the intertegular distance (ITD), defined as the minimum linear distance between both tegulae, measured over the 161 thoracic dorsum (Cane, 1987), and the average forewings length (WL; Fig. S4). Both 162 163 morphological traits are considered good proxies for body size (Hagen & Dupont, 2013; 164 van Roy et. al, 2014). For these measurements, photographs of every specimen were taken over paper measured in millimetres with a digital camera Canon EOS M10 (Canon, 165 166 Tokyo, Japan) adjusted to an optical microscope Leica MZ6 (Leica, Wetzlar, Germany), ranging between 0,8 and 4 magnifications. The length in millimetres was measured with 167 the software Image J (Abràmoff et. al, 2004). When one of the two wings was deteriorated 168 169 or absent, the average between two measurements of the other wing was calculated.

170



Figure 1. Spectrogram visualization of three collected individuals from different species: *Megachile* (*Megachile*) octosignata, Xyllocopa cantabrita, Apis mellifera. The spectral component observed at a
 frequency of 5 Hz in the third spectrogram corresponded to environmental noise.

175

#### 176 *Regression models*

To examine factors that influence inter- and intra-specific variation in the dominant 177 178 frequency of wingbeat sounds, we used general linear mixed-effect models (LMM), with Gaussian error structure, including dominant frequency as response variable, and 179 180 morphological, environmental and behavioural factors as explanatory variables. 181 Specifically, we fitted two models: (i) a LMM at inter-specific level, using all recorded individuals, and (ii) a LMM at intra-specific level, with only specimens from the most 182 abundant species, the domestic bee (A. mellifera). In each model, we included seven fixed 183 184 factors: WL (mm), ITD (mm), temperature (°C, linear and quadratic terms, to account for potential linear and curvilinear relationships), experimental treatment (NC vs. IS), audio 185 segment (4 levels; entire, onset, centre and end), harmonic type (fundamental vs. second) 186 and family (Andrenidae, Apidae, Halictidae, and Megachilidae). Additionally, we added 187 individual identity as a random factor in both LMMs to account for repeated measures 188 within individuals, and species and genus as random factors in the inter-specific model to 189 190 evaluate the amount of variation explained by these factors. As ITD and WL were 191 correlated at inter-specific level, we first fitted a linear regression with both variables at inter-specific level (log10 transformed to achieve linearity) and used WL and statistically 192 controlled ITD (residuals of the regression) as explanatory variables in the LMM model 193 to avoid collinearity. All continuous variables (WL, ITD and temperature) were centred 194 and scaled (mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1) to facilitate model fitting. 195

We checked the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of the residuals by 196 197 visually inspecting a quantile-quantile plot and the residuals against the fitted values, both 198 indicating no deviation from these assumptions. We inspected model stability by 199 excluding data points one at a time from the data. We derived variance inflation factors (Field, 2009) using the function vif of the R-package car (version 2.1-4; Fox & Weisberg 200 201 2011) and they did not indicate collinearity between fixed effects to be an issue. We conducted all analyses in R using the *lmer* function of the R-package *lme4* (v. 3.1-139; 202 203 Pinheiro et al. 2017).

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# 205 *Classification analysis*

To visualise and test for inter-specific differences in wingbeat sounds, we created density scatter plots with dominant frequency and flight time as axes, and taxonomic entities as grouped variables. Among all measurements of dominant frequency, we chose the fundamental frequency at the centre of the recorded audio to avoid the doppler effect (compared with onset and ending segments). Acoustic segregation between species, genus or families were then explored based on sound properties.

212 Additionally, we applied a machine learning framework to test if wingbeat sounds 213 encode species-specific acoustic signatures that can be used for automated acoustic species identification. As a first approach, we focused the identification test on 214 discriminating the wingbeat sounds produced by a domestic bee (A. mellifera) from those 215 of wild bees (17 species). For this purpose, we only selected recordings of the first 216 treatment (under natural conditions, NC) and with moderate and high signal to noise ratio 217 218  $(SNR \ge 15 \text{ dB})$ . This led to a filtered database, including 18 bee species and 42 audio 219 recordings, with a balanced distribution of classes (22 and 20 recordings from domestic 220 and wild bees, respectively).

First, we characterized the audio samples in the spectral domain by computing the power spectrum. This spectral representation allowed us to compare visually the spectral differences between classes. To have tight representation of the spectral domain, we then computed mel-frequency cepstral coefficients (MFCC). MFCCs have been the dominant features used for audio classification since they have the ability to deliver a compact representation of sounds with high harmonic content, such as speech and music (Rabiner & Schafer, 2010). In particular, we used 20 coefficients extracted between the frequency

band where the wingbeat sounds and the harmonics were predominant (i.e., 0.1 and 5 228 229 kHz). The final predictor matrix included 20 MFCC coefficients and 42 observations. We 230 measured binary classification performance using a Random Forest classifier (number of 231 trees = 300, maximum features = 6) and computing the balanced accuracy metric in a 232 stratified 10-fold cross-validation scheme. To assess whether the accuracy of the machine 233 learning model was significantly better than expected by chance, we computed baseline accuracies using two dummy classifier strategies: majority and random. The majority 234 strategy simulates a classifier always returning the most frequent class, which, in our case, 235 236 is Apis mellifera. The random strategy generates predictions uniformly at random. The 237 automated classification analyses were performed in Python 3, using the package librosa 238 (McFee et al., 2015) for audio characterization, and the package scikit-learn (Pedregosa 239 et al., 2011) for fitting and evaluation of statistical classifiers.

240

# 241 **Results**

# 242 Taxonomic and morphological traits

243 Overall, 73 bees were registered and captured, and 65 of them identified at species level 244 (Table S1). The taxonomic identification revealed 27 species, belonging to 4 families: 245 Apidae (42 individuals; 57%), Andrenidae (15; 21%) Halictidae (9; 12%) and 246 Megachilidae (7; 10%). European honeybee (Apis mellifera) was the most commonly 247 collected species, with 26 registered individuals (36%). A set of 16 species, one subgenus, and one genus was represented by a single specimen. The average WL was 8.84 mm 248 249  $(\pm 2.39)$  and varied between the 2.73 and 17.73 mm, while the average ITD was 2.93 mm  $(\pm 0.97)$  and varied between 0.76 and 6.52 mm (Table S1). Temperature was 24.04 °C 250  $(\pm 10.63)$  and ranged between 16.25 and 41.39 °C. 251

252

#### 253 *Bee sounds*

Wingbeat sounds were analysed in 69 individuals under NC treatment and 71 individuals under IS treatment. These sounds were highly variable and characterized by a large number of harmonics (1-12), with sharp, moderate or restricted frequency modulation (Fig. 1). Sound energy of the harmonics typically decreases with frequency (i.e. lower harmonics having higher energy), although some individuals did not follow that pattern.

Duration of bee flying between flowers ranged from 1.9 s ( $\pm$  1.3) in wild bees to 2.1 s ( $\pm$ 259 260 0.8) in the European honeybee. The fundamental frequency of sounds produced by this domestic bee (at the centre of the audio segment) was on average 222.4 Hz ( $\pm$  21.4) and 261 262  $251.3 \text{ Hz} (\pm 15.9)$  under NC and IS treatments, respectively. In wild bees, the fundamental frequency was on average 180.3 Hz ( $\pm$  50.9) and 195.5 Hz ( $\pm$  95.7). The fundamental 263 264 harmonic was higher in energy than the second harmonic in 80% of the time for all observations, and 90% of the time for the IS treatment (Table S2). In general, dominant 265 frequency and the patterns of frequency modulation were distinct across specimens and 266 267 might be good candidate parameters for acoustic species identification (see Figure S5). 268 The greatest intensity of background noise occurred between 0 and 70 Hz.

269

# 270 Determinants of wingbeat sounds at inter- and intra-specific level

271 Using the full dataset (n=138 individuals, 27 species), the first LMM model revealed that 272 frequency of bee sounds was related to wing length bound to harmonic, as well as 273 experimental treatment (NC vs. IS) and air temperature (Table S3; Figure 2). Lower frequencies were emitted by larger-sized bees and individuals subjected to higher 274 275 temperatures, while stress was associated with high-pitched sounds. We also found 276 significant differences in dominant frequency among the bee families and the audio segments within the recording (Table S3). Using the subset for the European honeybee 277 (n=26 individuals), the second LMM model pointed out that the frequency of wingbeat 278 279 sounds of this species was also associated to its behavioural status, with higher-pitched sounds under stress conditions (Table S4). We also found significant differences in 280 dominant frequency among the harmonics and the audio segments within the recording 281 (Table S4, Figure 2). 282

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Fig. 2. The effects of wing length, environmental temperature and treatment (NC *vs.* IS) on the wingbeatfrequency of all bees.



Fig. 3. The dominant frequency of wingbeat sounds of the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) under two
experimental treatments: flight between flowers under natural conditions (NC) and flight inside a net
under experimentally-induced stress (IS).

#### 295 Inter- and intra-specific acoustic signatures

The power spectrum of wingbeat sounds of the European honeybee showed multiple 296 consistent peaks at low frequencies (Fig. 4) that were only masked by the background 297 298 noise at higher frequencies. On the contrary, the mixed set of wingbeat sounds of wild 299 bee species were highly variable and did not show a clear signal. Our statistical analyses 300 on the discrimination between these sounds showed that the Random Forest classifier had an average balanced accuracy of  $0.77 \pm 0.12$ , over 10 cross-validation runs. The baseline 301 302 accuracies obtained were 0.5 ( $\pm$ 0) for the majority strategy and 0.47 ( $\pm$ 0.21) for the random strategy, showing that our model's accuracy is significantly better than chance. 303 The main classification errors (false positives and false negatives) were observed on the 304 noisier samples. This suggests that the wingbeat sound of the European honeybee has a 305 specific acoustic signature and machine learning could be used to automatically 306 discriminate between domestic and wild bee species. 307



308

Fig. 4. Spectral characteristics of wingbeat sounds of the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*; top) and a
 mixed set of 17 wild bee species (bottom). The sounds of the domestic bee show consistent regularities at
 low frequencies, while the sounds of wild bee species are often noisy with no clear signal.

The recorded sounds were distinct in frequency and duration across genus and families, with some level of overlap between groups (Figure 5). We found no significant differences in dominant frequency at the centre of the audio segment (F=0.11; df=2; p=0.89) amongst the three taxonomic levels, calculated by the mean differences in frequency between pairs of species (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation: 57.6 Hz  $\pm$  43.6), genus (59.9 Hz  $\pm$  44.3) and families (58.3  $\pm$  43.8 Hz).



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Fig. 5. Dominant frequency of the wingbeat sounds (Hz) and flight time between flowers (s) of domesticand wild bees under NC treatment. Each dot indicates an individual (n=67), grouped by family.

322

# 323 Discussion

324 Animal sounds have the potential to provide a large amount of inter- and intra-specific 325 information and assist researchers to monitor species activity and diversity (Bradbury & 326 Vehrencamp, 1998; Obrist et al., 2010; Sugai et. al, 2019a). Bee sounds have received still little attention compared to other groups, despite their diversity and potential for 327 328 species automatic classification (Hrncir et al., 2005; Truong et al., 2023). At the inter-329 specific level, we found that variations in frequency of wingbeat sounds emerged from 330 taxonomic, morphological, environmental and behavioural differences of a pool of 27 domestic and wild bee species. First, we confirmed a negative relationship between 331 332 dominant frequency of these sounds and wing length of the recorded specimens, in

agreement with the general allometric pattern that predicts lower sound frequencies in 333 334 larger-sized animals. Second, we found a negative relationship between dominant 335 frequency and environmental temperature. Finally, we unveiled that bee behaviour also 336 influenced wingbeat sounds, with bees under induced experimentally-induced stress conditions (in a net trap) emitting higher-pitched sounds than bees under natural 337 338 conditions (in free ranging movements). At the intra-specific level, wingbeat sounds of the European honeybee exhibited a consistent acoustic signature and limited variations, 339 being only behaviour a significant determinant of sound frequency. 340

341

# 342 Wingbeat frequency

The interest of the scientific community to study wingbeat sounds produced by flying 343 344 insects is increasingly growing due to its potential to support species identification, with applications in pest control or biodiversity monitoring (van Roy et. al, 2014; Zhang et. 345 346 al, 2017). In this study, we characterized wingbeat sounds of domestic and wild bees with acoustic methods under field conditions. Fundamental frequency of the sounds produced 347 348 by the European honeybee (Apis mellifera) was on average (± standard deviation) 222.4  $\pm$  21.4 Hz (n=26 specimens), a similar frequency to the one observed in previous studies 349 350 with smaller samples (e.g.  $235.2 \pm 7.5$  Hz, n = 10, Goyal & Atwal, 1977;  $238.2 \pm 4.57$ Hz, n = 10, Spangler, 1986), while wingbeat sounds of wild bees were on average lower-351 pitched sounds (180.3 Hz  $\pm$  50.9). 352

353 It is worth mentioning that frequencies of wingbeat sounds could significantly vary depending if the insect flight is sustained (hovering flight) or describes a specific 354 355 direction (Bae & Moon, 2008). Apart from these flying patterns, other factors such as 356 temperature or the load imposed on the motor system could be influencing the vibrational system (Esch & Wilson, 1967; Spangler & Buchmann, 1991). The sound produced is 357 even more delicate to study in certain taxa such as flies, where wings do not only move 358 359 from top to bottom, but also undergo deformations, rotations and speed variations (Sueur et. al, 2005; Geng et. al, 2017). Thus, further analysis based on larger databases would be 360 361 helpful to keep increasing the resolution of insect's wingbeats frequencies values.

#### 363 Morphology and bee sounds

364 As in other animal groups, there is a certain consensus that frequency of sounds emitted by insects (also wingbeat sounds) is negatively correlated with their body size (Moore et. 365 366 al, 1986; Bennet-Clark, 1998; Darveau et. al, 2005; De Luca et al., 2019). A larger-sized individual typically has larger wings and hence produces higher forces, which end up 367 368 reducing the number of wingbeats they need to fly (van Roy et. al, 2014). This is also consistent with previous studies in individuals of the Euglossini tribe, bumblebees and 369 370 orchid bees (Casey et al., 1985; Joos et. al, 1991; Darveau et. al, 2005), whereas opposite 371 to some studies in mosquitos (e.g. Villareal et al., 2017). Our results, which include 372 several solitary species as well as social bees, are still in line with this allometric pattern, 373 supporting that bees with longer wing length emit lower sound frequencies. In contrast 374 with wing length, ITD did not show a clear relationship with wingbeat sounds, suggesting that the former morphological trait could be a better predictor of body size, and thus 375 376 wingbeat sounds, than the latter one.

At the intra-specific level, neither of the two functional traits were related to the sound frequency emitted by the European honeybee, contrary to what was expected according to our hypothesis. This, however, aligns with Kendall *et. al*, (2019), as they found no significant correlations between ITD and dry weight (an alternative indicator of body size) in this species.

382

# 383 Environmental temperature

384 Temperature is a pervasive factor influencing physiology and behaviour of ectotherms, such as flying insects (Belton, 1986). Previous studies often found that increases in 385 wingbeat fundamental frequency were correlated with increases in environmental 386 387 temperature, e.g. in various bees and flies (Sotavalta, 1947; Unwin & Corbet, 1984; ) or in mosquitos (Villarreal et al., 2017). However, this is not always the case. In larger bees, 388 389 air temperature can be negatively correlated with wingbeat frequency. As bees 390 significantly differ in body size, ranging from a few mm to more than 20 mm, body 391 temperature in larger-sized insects could substantially deviate from environmental 392 temperature, hence attenuating such a relationship (Unwin & Corbet, 1984; Parmezan et al., 2021). Actually, we found a negative correlation between wingbeat frequency and 393 394 temperature at both the inter- and intra-specific levels, opposite to the most commonly

effect. Other studies have also shown that social bees such as Apis mellifera can be able 395 396 to control their wingbeat frequency regardless of external temperature (Parmezan et al., 397 2021). Even, Sotavalta (1947) did not find differences in Bombus pascuorum wingbeat 398 frequency over a wide temperature range, while Spangler & Buchmann (1991) did not consider temperature as an important factor affecting wingbeat frequency in social and 399 400 non-social bees. Other factors, such as sex of the individuals, can also be playing a role in wingbeat frequency (Coelho, 1991). Our results are aligned with this diversity of 401 relationships reported in the literature between temperature and wingbeat frequency, and 402 403 suggest that the effect of temperature on wingbeat frequency may be taxa-specific and that generalizations on this link are still elusive due to the scarce amount of 404 405 documentation available so far.

406

# 407 Under stress conditions

When the flight of European honeybees were recorded under induced stress conditions 408 409 (within an entomological net), dominant frequency of their wingbeat sounds significantly increased (above 25 Hz) in comparison with those under natural conditions. This shift 410 411 may indicate an effect of stress in the frequency of these flight sounds, as a behavioural response to the context. Sounds emitted from bees' defensive behaviours, alarming 412 signals or other intra-specific communication mechanisms have been previously reported 413 in literature (Hrncir et al., 2005; Hrncir et al., 2008; Wehmann et al., 2015; Pritchard & 414 415 Vallejo-Marín, 2020). For instance, the African stingless bee Axestotrigona ferruginea 416 produces frequent guarding signals to alarm nestmates (Krausa et al., 2021). However, during these behaviours, insects are typically laying on a surface and their wings are 417 418 folded over the thorax, uncoupled from the indirect flight muscles. Thus, the vibrational response of these non-flying individuals is different (e.g. higher pitched) from the flying 419 420 individuals recorded in this study (King & Buchmann, 2003; Hrncir et al., 2008). To the 421 best of our knowledge, no other study has shown stress-related sounds in flying 422 individuals. Our findings suggest that there is plenty of room to explore the diversity of bee sounds under different flying and non-flying behaviors. 423

# 425 Acoustic species-level identification

426 Our Random Forest-based models showed a good classification performance of wingbeat sounds between domestic (Apis mellifera) and wild bee species, evidencing the potential 427 of bee flight sounds to support automated acoustic identification. Our results are in line 428 429 with previous studies using machine learning approaches in other insect groups. For 430 instance, Kawakita & Ichikawa (2019) successfully identified three species of bees (Apis 431 mellifera, Bombus ardens and Tetralonia nipponensis), and a hornet (Vespa simillima 432 xanthoptera) using the fundamental frequency of their flight as a variable (Kawakita & 433 Ichikawa, 2019). Li et. al (2005) managed to classify five species of mosquitoes based on 434 their sounds, with a success rate of 73%. Similarly, Yin et al., (2023) successfully 435 detected and classified several mosquito species with wingbeat sounds using computational techniques. Folliot et al. (2022) also monitored pollination by insects and 436 tree use by woodpecker with acoustics methods and artificial intelligence. Other studies 437 which did not rely on wingbeat sounds but on measuring wingbeat frequency with laser 438 439 sensors have also demonstrated a good potential of this related parameter for taxonomic 440 identification of insect pests (Moore & Miller, 2002; Potamitis & Rigakis, 2015).

441 According to our results, acoustic classification of bees based on their wingbeat 442 sounds entities seem to be possible in some cases, but might be hindered by species overlap. The wingbeat sounds are weak and hence their recording is challenging. Our 443 findings showed that improving signal-to-noise ratio of audio samples may further 444 445 increase the accuracy of the automated classification. The design of techniques to better capture such sounds in the field and increasing the sample size of training dataset for 446 447 statistical classifiers will likely contribute to the efforts of developing new methods for monitor pollinating species in a non-intrusively and efficient way (Høye et al., 2021). It 448 is also important to highlight that our study, which aimed to distinguish Apis mellifera 449 from other wild bee species, employed handcrafted features due to the availability of 450 451 samples. While our Random Forest-based models demonstrated commendable 452 classification performance, we acknowledge the existence of more advanced methods, particularly the use of deep learning models for classifying bee species based on wingbeat 453 sounds (Truong et al., 2023; Ferreira et al., 2023). These advanced methods have 454 demonstrated highly accurate classification results, especially when provided with a 455 larger dataset. 456

457 Next steps should also be oriented towards: (i) the documentation of acoustic 458 diversity of these sounds, including a fine analysis of their determinants, which 459 overcomes the current lack of knowledge, (ii) the creation of sound libraries that support 460 the future development of species classification algorithms, and (iii) the test of alternative 461 machine learning techniques for the automated analysis of wingbeat sounds of flying 462 insects.

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