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FLIGHT ACTIVITY OF STINGLESS BEE

Geotrigona subterranea FRIESE, 1901

(APIDAE, MELIPONINI)

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Flight activity of bees is influenced both by environmental factors, such as temperature, relative humidity and luminosity; and by internal condition of the colonies. Information about external activity of bees is very important, because it provides important data to knowledge of the species biology, supplying subsidies for the use of these insects in the pollination of crops. The present work aimed to evaluate the flight activity of *Geotrigona subterranea* in natural environment. The study was performed at campus of the Instituto Federal do Norte de Minas, at municipality Januária (15° 29' 16" S, 44° 21' 43" W; 554 m altitude), Minas Gerais State. Two natural nests were observed. The external activities of bees were recorded, one to three times each month, between December 2011 and April 2012, totaling 252 observations. The number of bees leaving and entering and the type of material transported were recorded during ten minutes each hour from 5:00 to 19:00 h. Temperature and humidity data were taken locally using a TFA station. It was observed bees carrying pollen, resin and debris. As it was not possible to identify the transport of nectar, it was considered only the bees that entered into the colony without any material (WAM). The bees began external activities by 6:00 h at 20°C and finished at 18:30 h. The activity peak occurred between 13:00 and 14:00 h, with temperature ranging from 28°C to 35°C and relative humidity between 31% and 65%. The pollen collections occurred between 6:00 and 18:00 h; resin and WAM throughout the foraging period; and debris, from 11:00 at 18:00 h. This study is in its initial phase and will be expanded, since additional observations in other times of year are necessary.

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Palavra chave: Meliponini - *Geotrigona subterranea* - external activity - temperature - relative humidity.