



219th Lecture Series 7.30pm - 27 January 2021



Professor Lars Chittka
The Mind of the Bee

ABSTRACT

Bees have a diverse instinctual repertoire that allows the functioning of the beehive like a smoothly oiled factory, with different workers specialising in comb construction, climate control system, defence and foraging for nectar and pollen. However, the richness of bees' instincts has traditionally been contrasted with the notion that bees' small brains allow little behavioural flexibility and learning behaviour. This view has been entirely overturned in recent years, when it was discovered that bees display abilities such as counting, attention, simple tool use, learning by observation and metacognition (knowing their own knowledge). There is now suggestive evidence that bees might have a form of consciousness, with a rich library of autobiographical memories, emotional states, the possibility of planning at least for the immediate future and solving problems by thinking rather than trial and error. This may have profound implications for research ethics and pollinator conservation.

BIOGRAPHY

Lars Chittka is a German biologist and a world authority on the sensory perception and the psychology of animals. He has published over 250 articles in this field, and is especially well known for his discoveries on the intelligence of bees; his team found that these tiny-brained creatures have detailed memories of the landscape surrounding their hives, can count and recognize human faces, pay attention, and even learn from each other how to manipulate tools to gain access to reward. Chittka is currently a Professor of Sensory and Behavioural Ecology at Queen Mary University of London.

LINKS

<http://chittkalab.sbcs.qmul.ac.uk/Lars.html>

<https://scholar.google.co.uk/citations?user=ux2CNs0AAAAJ&hl=en>

The talk will be given over Zoom and if you would like to join the webinar please email info@royalphil.org and joining information will be sent to you.