Selection and hybridization shaped the rapid spread of African honey bee ancestry in the Americas

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A honey bee collects pollen from mustard flowers in California. Compared to European subspecies, honey bees adapted to the lowlands of southern and eastern Africa (Apis mellifera scutellata) preferentially forage for pollen over nectar and store little honey for winter. Foraging behavior is one of many divergently evolved traits that may contribute to a natural climatic range limit for scutellata-European hybrid honey bees, which spread rapidly out of Brazil in the 1950s and today dominate across tropical (but not temperate) regions in the Americas.

Image credit: Kathy Keatley Garvey.