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1 **Honey bees solve a multi-comparison ranking task by probability matching**

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7 *Abstract*

8 Honey bees forage on diverse flowers which vary in the amount and type of rewards they offer,
9 and bees are challenged with maximising the resources they gather for their colony. That bees
10 are effective foragers is clear, but how bees solve this type of complex multi-choice task is
11 unknown. Here we set bees a five-comparison choice task in which five colours differed in
12 their probability of offering reward and punishment. The colours were ranked such that high
13 ranked colours were more likely to offer reward, and the ranking was unambiguous. Bees'
14 choices in unrewarded tests matched their individual experiences of reward and punishment of
15 each colour, indicating bees solved this test not by comparing or ranking colours but by basing
16 their colour choices on their history of reinforcement for each colour. Computational modelling
17 suggests a structure like the honey bee mushroom body with reinforcement-related plasticity
18 at both input and output can be sufficient for this cognitive strategy. We discuss how
19 probability matching enables effective choices to be made without a need to compare any
20 stimuli directly, and the utility and limitations of this simple cognitive strategy for foraging
21 animals.

22 **Key words.** colour learning, ecological rationality, Multi-armed bandit task, mushroom body,
23 probability matching, reinforcement learning.

24

25 **Introduction**

26 Foraging honey bees must gather concealed pollen and nectar from many cryptic and variable
27 flower species, all of which vary in the quality and amount of reward. None of these
28 probabilities are known to the foraging bee. This kind of problem has been described as a multi-
29 armed bandit task [1, 2] since there are multiple options available all with unknown potential
30 for payouts. Here we challenged honey bees with a controlled learning task that offered five
31 options differing in the probability of offering reward and punishment to examine how bees
32 solved this type of multiple-comparison task.

33 One solution would be to identify the option that offered the highest probability of reward and
34 always pick that option (probability maximising) [3]. For example, if a bee learned that blue is
35 rewarded 60% of the time and yellow 40% of the time, and if the bee could compare and rank
36 these alternatives then she would maximise her return by picking blue all the time. An
37 alternative solution involves no comparisons at all. Bees could simply learn the reinforcement
38 properties of each option and match their choices accordingly (probability matching) [4-6]. In
39 the above example, trained bees would choose blue 60% of the time and yellow 40% of the
40 time. This would still result in bees preferring one colour over another, but this could be
41 achieved without comparing or ranking them.

42 Probability maximising is economically rational since it offers the maximum possible reward
43 where probabilities of different options are known and fixed. In scenarios where the reward
44 probabilities are not known a-priori and have to be estimated from sampling and/or change
45 during sampling probability matching offers a better solution to the trade-off of exploiting
46 current resources while exploring other alternatives [2, 7]. In situations that demand
47 simultaneous sampling of different alternatives while harvesting from the best estimated option
48 (a problem faced by many generalist forager animals), probability matching may be the best
49 foraging strategy [1, 2, 7, 8].

50 Probability maximising requires comparing and ranking different options [7, 9]. Bees do have
51 the capacity to learn abstract relationships between stimuli [10-12]. A recent study showed
52 *Polistes* wasps could pass a behavioural test considered indicative of the capacity for transitive
53 inference [13]. This requires arranging stimuli in a ranked order [13] suggesting that *Polistes*
54 *dominula* and *Polistes metricus* at least have a capacity for ranking stimuli. Probability
55 matching involves no comparisons: it involves learning the reinforcement properties of each

56 stimulus only. In foundational comparative cognition Bitterman considered probability
57 matching to be “less intelligent” than probability maximising [4, 14]. While that interpretation
58 is open to debate, it is true that probability matching is computationally simpler than probability
59 maximising [2, 7].

60 Whether honey bees choose by ranking stimuli by probability of reinforcement (probability
61 maximising) or whether they learn the probability of reinforcement for different stimuli
62 (probability matching), is presently unclear. Greggers and Menzel [15] trained honey bees to
63 four different artificial feeders that varied in rate of sucrose delivery, and showed evidence of
64 both probability matching and probability maximising strategies [15]. Fischer et al [16] and
65 Keasar et al [2] tested honey bees and bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*) and found that bees
66 imperfectly matched their preferences to feeder probability of reward. Here we examined
67 honey bees’ choice strategy in a complex multi-option choice test in which bees were punished
68 for wrong choices.

69 We set honey bees a five-armed bandit task. We challenged honey bees with a colour learning
70 task in which five coloured stimuli were organised in a rank order such that when trained with
71 pairwise presentations of colours only the higher ranked colour was rewarded, with the lower
72 ranked colour being punished. The ranking was unambiguous, and it influenced the probability
73 of each colour being rewarded or punished during training. Tests then explored whether honey
74 bees demonstrated learning of the ranking of the colours (probability maximising), or whether
75 they instead learned the reinforcement history of each separate colour (probability matching).
76 Our data supported a probability matching strategy. To explore how bees might achieve a
77 probability matching strategy we developed a neural network model capable of probability
78 matching inspired by the bee brain. We discuss the consequences of these findings for our
79 understanding of insect choice behaviour.

80 ***Material and methods***

81 **Animals and testing arena.** Experiments were conducted at the Sheffield University Research
82 Apiary containing four standard commercial hives of honey bees (*Apis mellifera*). To attract
83 bees for our experiments we placed a gravity feeder of 20% sucrose solution (w/w)
84 approximately 15m from the hives. Bees visiting this feeder were given individually distinctive
85 marks on their abdomen and/or thorax using coloured Posca marking pens (Uni-Ball, Japan).

86 5 m from the gravity feeder (and further from the hives) we established the testing arena: a box
87 (100 x 80 x 80 cm) of white expanded PVC foam boards with a UV-transparent Plexiglas roof.
88 Bees could enter the arena through a transparent Perspex corridor (20 x 4 x 4 cm). Interior
89 walls and floor were covered with a pink random dot pattern to provide a contrast between the
90 colour of the bees and the background to assist video analysis (figure 1*a*).

91 **Stimuli.** Bees were trained to visit coloured stimuli inside the arena. These were disks (2.5 cm
92 in diameter) of coloured paper covered with transparent laminate (figures 1*b* and S1). The
93 colours of stimuli were selected to cover the range of visible and discriminable colours for
94 bees. (Figures S1*d* and S1*e*). Stimuli were placed on small inverted transparent plastic cups to
95 raise them from the arena floor.

96 **Pre-training phase.** Marked bees were attracted from the gravity feeder by offering them a
97 cotton bud soaked with 50% sucrose solution (w/w). Bees feeding from the cotton bud were
98 gently moved to the entrance of the arena and given more 50% sucrose to drink to satiation.
99 This was repeated until the bee flew independently to the entrance of the arena. Bees were
100 trained to fly into the arena via the entrance tube to find drops of 50% sucrose placed on
101 transparent disks of laminate on top of the plastic cups. Bees were released from the arena by
102 lifting the roof. Once a bee flew by herself into the arena to feed, she was selected for the
103 training phase.

104 **Task and training.** Bees were trained with five different coloured stimuli in a colour
105 discrimination task. The five different colours were assigned an arbitrary rank (C1-5). Multiple
106 stimuli were presented to them at each trial so that bees could visit a number of different colours
107 in a trial before returning to the hive (capturing the ecology of bees foraging on patches on
108 flowers). In each trial a bee was presented with eight stimuli: four of one colour and four of a
109 different colour (figure 1*a*). For any given pair of colours in a trial the colour with the lower
110 rank was rewarded and the colour with the higher rank was punished, (table S1). To prevent
111 bees from learning any configural cues, feeders were placed randomly within the arena.
112 Feeders were rewarded with 10 μ l sucrose solution 50% (w/w) and punished with 10 μ l of
113 saturated quinine hemisulphate solution.

114 In each trial bees were able to freely land on stimuli and to feed. 10 μ l drops of 50% sucrose
115 solution were replaced on depleted rewarded stimuli until the bee had fed to satiation and left
116 the arena via the roof. Bees returned to the arena by their own volition. Typically, the inter-

117 trial interval was 5-10 minutes. After each trial, all stimuli were cleaned with 70% ethanol and
118 water to remove any possible pheromonal cues left by the bee., then air-dried before reuse [17,
119 18].

120 Bees were assigned at random to one of two groups: A and B. For group A colours were
121 assigned as: blue = C1, yellow = C2, pink = C3, orange = C4 and green = C5 with white used
122 as a novel colour for testing. For group B the colour assignment was: green = C1, orange = C2,
123 white = C3, yellow = C4 and blue = C5 with pink used as a novel colour in testing. Colours
124 were pseudo-randomly selected to cover the range of colours from green to orange (figure S1).
125 Note that similar colours in hexagon coordinates (figure S1) were not close to each other in the
126 order of the protocol. For example, green and orange in group B were the first and second
127 highest-ranked (C1 and C2) while they are far apart in the hexagon colour space (figure S1c).
128 Moreover, the stimuli C2 and C4 were chosen such that they were not similar to C1 and C5,
129 respectively. This does not let the bees use a similarity rule in responding to stimuli. Comparing
130 behaviour of bees from groups A and B allowed us to explore for possible innate colour biases
131 influencing choice.

132 Bees were randomly assigned to one of two protocols P1 and P2 (tables S2, S3). Although the
133 pairs of stimuli were randomly ordered in both protocols, the number of presentations of each
134 pair was consistent in both protocols (table S1).. Comparing performance between protocols
135 allowed us to examine whether training sequence influenced performance. In training each bee
136 was therefore assigned to one colour group (A or B) and one training protocol (P1 or P2). Over
137 18 training trials bees experienced all combinations of the five colours twice, with the
138 exception that bees in training never experienced C2 paired with C4 (table S1). This pairing
139 was excluded so that in the post training *transfer test* we could examine how bees responded
140 to a colour pair they had never previously encountered. The 18 bouts of training presented bees
141 with reward from C1 in eight out of eight trials; from C2 in 4 out of 6 trials, from C3 in 4 out
142 of eight trials, from C4 for two out of six trials, and never from C5 (table S1).

143 **Testing.** Immediately following the training phase each bee was given three learning tests. The
144 *learning test* presented bees with C1 and C5 – a colour combination they had previously
145 experienced and that had the greatest difference in reinforcement history. The *transfer test*
146 presented bees with C2 and C4 – a combination they never experienced in training. The *novel*
147 *test* presented bees with white and pink, which was a choice between a colour they had

148 experienced to be rewarded and punished equally often in training trials and a colour they had
149 not experienced in training.

150 During all tests all stimuli offered 10 ul water. During tests bees were video recorded for 120
151 s and their landings on stimuli recorded, after which bees were released from the roof of the
152 arena. The sequence of the tests was randomised for each bee. Between tests bees were allowed
153 to feed in the arena on 10 ul sucrose drops placed on disks of transparent laminate so that we
154 maintained their motivation to visit the arena. As in training, stimuli were cleaned between
155 tests.

156 **Colour selection.** In this study we used colours that are distinguishable for bees [17, 19-22]
157 (figure S1a). We measured the spectral reflectance of the all colours used in the experiment
158 (figure S1b) following methods of the honeybees' receptors model demonstrated by Chittka
159 [23] and using the spectral sensitivity functions of the honeybees [24] (figure S1c). We
160 calculated the Euclidean distance between all pairs of colour in the bee colour space (figure
161 S1d). It has been established that colours differing by a Euclidian distance of 0.1 or more in
162 the hexagon coordinates are discriminable for bees [19, 22, 25]. Thus, bees were able to
163 distinguish all colours used in this study (figure S1d.) All used colours evoke different levels
164 of the activity from the visual receptors of honeybees (figure S1e). Bees also can use colour
165 contrast for target detection [26] and the colour contrasts for all stimuli are high enough to be
166 distinguishable by bees (figure S1e). In addition to these models, The bees' performance in the
167 training phase confirms that the bees could distinguish all pairs of colours (see tables S2&S3
168 for training bout order and figure S2 for results).

169

170 **Observation and video recording.** To record bee behaviour inside the arena iPhone 6 cameras
171 were positioned above the entrance viewing into the arena, and on the top of the arena viewing
172 down. The cameras were configured to record at 30 fps at a resolution of 720p (1,280x 720
173 pixels) in the training phase, and 240 fps in the testing phase. During training we recorded from
174 when the bee entered the arena until she was released from the roof. During tests we recorded
175 for 120 s from when she entered the arena. We developed an algorithm to analyse the flight
176 paths of bees from the videos. Bees' flight path was determined by extracting the x-y
177 coordinates of the bee's body and their direction of flight frame by frame (Video S1). The
178 algorithm was used to calculate the number of rewarding and punishing experiences each bee
179 had with each colour during the training and testing.

180 Only bees that completed the entire training and test sequences were included in the results. Of
181 our 20 bees, only one bee did not complete the entire paradigm due to rain stopping the
182 experiment on that day. We noted each time a bee landed on a stimulus in training, from which
183 we determined how many times each bee encountered each colour as rewarded or punished.
184 Given the spatial information of the stimuli in the view of the camera, we used a threshold
185 flight speed classification to evaluate if bees had landed on a stimulus. This was considered a
186 choice (correct or incorrect) if the bee's body was located on the stimulus' border and her
187 speed is less than the threshold obtained from all flight information (ref).

188 **Data analysis and statistics.** To evaluate bees' performance in the three different unrewarded
189 tests, we analysed the proportion of correct choices estimated as landings on the rewarded
190 stimuli divided by the total number of landings during the 120 s test. We examined the effect
191 of colour group (A or B), protocol (P1 or P2), test type and colour ranking on performance
192 using Wilcoxon signed rank and Wilcoxon rank-sum tests. In addition, Generalised linear
193 mixed models (GLMM) were applied to the performance of the bees in the learning, transfer
194 and novel tests to examine the effects of the protocol, the colour sets and the interaction
195 between these factors on the bees' responses (table S4). Further, to evaluate the homogeneity
196 of the behaviour of different groups of bees, the Brown-Forsythe test was used.

197 To further examine whether individual experience of the history of reward and punishment
198 associated with each colour influenced degree of colour preference we calculated the number
199 of visits to each colour that was rewarded and punished for each bee (figure S3). In our protocol
200 bees freely visited and chose multiple feeders within each training bout and therefore each
201 individual bee experienced a unique history of rewards and punishments for each colour.

202 For each bee we calculated a reinforcement index (R index) for each colour (C_i) as:

$$203 \quad R_{C_i} = (\#rewarded\ choices\ of\ C_i - \#punished\ choices\ of\ C_i) / \#total\ choices$$

204 This index has a scale from -1 to +1, and colours that were experienced as punished more often
205 than rewarded had negative R indices. Since the total number of choices both within and
206 between trials varied between bees, the reinforcement index was normalised to the total number
207 of choices each bee made across all of its trials. Hence, the reinforcement index as defined is
208 independent of the motivation of bees to respond to stimuli, but also shows the relative
209 preference of bees for all the colours. We evaluated the relationship between bees' R indices

210 and bees' performance in the transfer test using a Spearman's correlation test. All statistical
211 tests were performed in MATLAB 2018 (MathWorks, Natick, MA, USA).

212 **Results**

213 In the learning test bees preferred C1 (always rewarded in training) to C5 (always punished)
214 (figure 1c; Wilcoxon rank-sum test, $z = 5.77$, $n = 20$, $p = 7.47e-10$, chance level = 0.5). The
215 transfer test presented bees with a colour combination not used in training (C2 vs C4). Here
216 bees preferred C2 to C4 (figure 1c: Wilcoxon rank-sum test, $z = 5.19$, $n = 20$, $p = 2.09e-07$)
217 demonstrating that bees preferred a stimulus with both a higher likelihood of reward and a
218 higher ranking in a novel colour comparison. The total numbers of choices during the first 120
219 s of tests differed between bees and between tests (figure S3a; Kruskal-Wallis test, $df=62$, chi -
220 $chq=6.78$, $p=0.03$) but we do not think this impacted the results. We obtained the same result
221 even if the same number of choices was standardised across bees' and tests when calculating
222 performance (figures S3b and S3c). This indicates the number of choices did not have any
223 effect on bees' performance.

224 The degree of preference differed between the learning test and transfer tests (Wilcoxon signed
225 rank test, $z = 3.92$, $n = 20$, $p = 8.79e-05$). The preference for C1 in the learning test was greater
226 than the preference for C2 in the transfer test (figure 1c). This indicates that the degree of colour
227 preference was not absolute (as would be expected if bees were probability maximising). The
228 degree of preference was influenced by the probability of reward and punishment for different
229 colours during training, which is consistent with probability matching.

230 The training protocols gave bees different numbers of rewarded and punished trials for each
231 stimulus, and within a trial bees differed in how many visits they made to coloured stimuli
232 before departing the arena. The R index was calculated from visit numbers, and R indices
233 differed significantly for different colours (figure 2a,b, Wilcoxon rank-sum test, $z > 3.74$, $n =$
234 10 , $p < 1.82e-4$). The R index for C3 was greater than zero (Wilcoxon rank-sum test, $z = 4.16$,
235 $n = 10$, $p = 3.07e-5$ for group A; $z = 5.21$, $n = 10$, $p = 1.82e-7$ for group B). Therefore even
236 though C3 was paired with reward and punishment in 50% of the training trials, on average
237 bees experienced C3 as rewarded more often than punished, indicating that bees visited C3
238 more in rewarded trials than punished trials. In the novel test bees preferred C3 more than a
239 novel colour (figure 1d: Wilcoxon rank-sum test, $z = 5.76$, $n = 20$, $p = 7.93e-09$), perhaps as a
240 consequence of this experience in training.

241 There was no difference in performance in the learning, transfer and novel tests of bees that
242 had been trained with different colour contingencies (Groups A and B, figure S3d; Wilcoxon
243 rank-sum test, $z = -1.32$, $n = 10$, $p > 0.18$; Generalized linear mixed model, $p > 0.08$; see table
244 S1 for more details). There was also no difference in performance between bees from different
245 training protocols in the learning, transfer and novel tests (P1 and P2, figure S3e; Wilcoxon
246 rank-sum test, $z = -1.32$, $n = 10$, $p > 0.18$; Generalized linear mixed model, $p > 0.16$, table S4).
247 The Dimulated data generated from a Monte Carlo algorithm (See Supplementary methods)
248 confirmed that the result of the GLMM would be consistent for a larger sample size with 60
249 observations (table S5). Also, to make sure each group of 5 bees that were trained to a specific
250 colour set and a protocol showed statistically homogenous behaviour in terms of performance
251 in the tests, the Brown-Forsythe test was applied. All four groups of bees were statistically
252 homogenous (Brown-Forsythe test, $df_1=3$, $df_2=16$; in the learning test: $F=1.25$, $p=0.32$; in the
253 transfer test: $F=0.08$, $p=0.96$; in the novel test: $F=1.82$, $p=0.18$). Further, for all three tests there
254 was no significant effect of the interaction between the protocol and the colour set used in the
255 experiment on bee performance ($p > 0.14$, tables S4 and S5). In addition to the homogeneity
256 of the data, power analyses of the statistical tests were calculated for the bees' performances in
257 the tests (figure S3f). The power analyses support that an appropriate number of bees were
258 chosen for the experiment.

259 Bees' performance in the transfer test was positively correlated with the difference in their R
260 indices for C2 and C4 (figure 2c; Spearman's correlation test, $\rho=0.4$, $n=20$, $p=0.046$). This
261 finding is consistent with each individuals' degree of preference in the transfer test being
262 influenced by their specific experience of reward and punishment for the two colours in
263 training. It is not consistent with bees comparing and ranking colours by reward likelihood to
264 make a choice.

265 **A simple neural network model sufficient for learning history of reinforcement,**
266 **consistent with the neuroanatomy of the bee brain.**

267 To explore how learning of the history of reinforcement of colours in this 5-colour learning
268 task might be achieved by honeybees we developed a neural network model inspired by the

269 neurobiology of colour coding and colour learning in bees [29-32] (figure 3a). Full details of
270 the model are given in Supplementary Methods.

271 In this model, three different types of receptors, Short (S)-, medium (M)- and long (L)-
272 wavelength-sensitive photoreceptors are stimulated by the light reflected by each colour
273 stimulus, which we quantified as the spectral reflectance function of each stimulus (figures S1b
274 and S1e). Axons from colour receptors project to the medulla and make inhibitory connections
275 with transmedullary (TM) neurons [33-36]. In bees the L-receptors project to the lamina also,
276 [37] but in this model we consider medulla processing only.

277 We considered a simple circuit such that one transmedullary neuron is activated by one type of
278 receptor only. Transmedullary neurons exhibit high spontaneous activity and receive inhibitory
279 signals from receptors, therefore the three different types of transmedullary neurons respond
280 to colours by decreasing their firing rate from the spontaneous rate [33]. The transmedullary
281 neurons send either excitatory or inhibitory signals to the third order neurons (amacrine or large
282 field neurons) in the next layer of the medulla [33, 38, 39] (figure 3a). Following the algorithm
283 presented in Vasas et al. [30], in the model their synaptic weights (L) were estimated from
284 empirical neurophysiological data to reproduce the diverse activity of colour sensitive neurons
285 reported by Kien and Menzel [31, 32] (figure S5).

286 W in figure 3a describes the matrix connectivity between the third-order neurons and Kenyon
287 cells (KCs) of the mushroom body in the collar region. Kenyon cells output to a single
288 mushroom body output neuron (MBON) in the alpha lobe of the mushroom body $D(c)$ through
289 a vector of synaptic weights, V . The protocerebral-calycal tract feedback pathway (figure 3a,
290 red) takes inputs from all Kenyon cells and sends a feedback inhibitory signal to the collar
291 region [40-44]. In the model this pathway is represented as a single neuron that contributes
292 feedback gain control to the system and maintains sparse coding across the Kenyon cell
293 population.

294 In the model, a single reinforcement neuron (figure 3a, yellow) modulates strengths of synaptic
295 connectivity at both the input and output of the Kenyon cells in response to both reward and

296 punishment. This is responsible for the changes in activity of the network during training with
297 rewarded and punished coloured stimuli (supplementary methods, Equations 6-8).

298 The output of the MBON $D(c)$ was used to evaluate the performance of the model. $D(c)$ has a
299 tonic firing rate, which is decreased by punishment, and increased by reward. Following
300 training, maximal performance of the model was judged as an increase in firing rate of $D(c)$ to
301 maximum to a colour that had been rewarded in training, or a decrease in firing rate of $D(c)$ to
302 minimum to a colour that had been punished in training.

303

304 We assessed the performance of the model in a simple colour discrimination task. The model
305 was presented with any pair of monochromatic colours between 300 to 700nm, one was
306 rewarded and one punished. Prior to training the model did not differentiate between any two
307 colours (no difference in output from $D(c)$). Following 10 training trials with the rewarded and
308 punished colours the model was able to discriminate different colours (figure 3b) [26, 45]. We
309 then trained the model using protocol P1 or P2 (table S2). Performance of the model closely
310 matched responses of bees in the learning test (figure 3a; compare with figure 1c). Following
311 training the model also successfully discriminated between a novel pair of colours and
312 preferred the colour that had been more often associated with reward in training, similar to that
313 of honey bees (figure 3c; compare with 1c).

314

315 The model did not differentiate between a novel colour and a colour that had been equally
316 reinforced and punished during training (figure 3c). Honey bees, by contrast, preferred a colour
317 that had been paired with reward in 50% of trials (C3) over a novel colour (figure 1d). But, as
318 we noted above, bees made more visits to C3 when rewarded than when punished and hence
319 the mean R index for C3 was positive (figures. 2a,b). In this respect training of bees differed
320 from training in the model. When training the model the R index of a colour paired equally
321 with punishment and reward was zero. We therefore added an additional test, and found that
322 the model was able to successfully discriminate a colour that had been paired with reward on
323 66% of trials during training from a novel colour (figure S6, Wilcoxon rank-sum test, $z = 5.31$,
324 $n = 20$, $p = 5.62e-8$).

325

326 The model allowed us to examine which elements of our network were necessary for this form
327 of colour discrimination learning. Sparseness of colour coding in the KCs strongly affected the

328 performance of the model: Dense coding of colours in the KC population reduced the ability
329 to learn to discriminate colours by reward and punishment (figure S7).

330

331 Plasticity at both the input (W) and output (V , figure 3a) of the Kenyon cells was essential for
332 the model to correctly discriminate all colours by their history of reinforcement. In training if
333 the weights in connection matrix W (between the third-order neurons and Kenyon cells) were
334 fixed bees could learn to prefer a colour that was always rewarded over a colour that was always
335 punished in training (figures S7b,c), but their performance in the transfer test (a comparison
336 between one stimulus reinforced at 66% and one reinforced at 33%) was reduced when
337 compared to the full model (figure 3c and figures S7b,c), and depended on both the perceptual
338 similarity and the reinforcement history of the colours. Plasticity in connection matrix W
339 decorrelates the activity of KC for any two presented colours that differ in reward history, even
340 if the population activity of third-order neurons are highly correlated (figure S5). Hence, post
341 training distinctive groups of KCs separately encode the colour information of each colour.
342 This increases the ability of KCs activated by different colours to drive different levels of
343 activity in the MBON from $D(c)$ due to changes in connectivity resulting from different
344 reward/penalty ratios associated with each colour during training.

345

346 If connection weights in W were fixed the degree of difference between the pattern of KC
347 activation to two different colours correlated with the perceptual difference between the two
348 colours (figure S1). With this limitation the response of the model to any specific colour post
349 training was sensitive to both the reinforcement history of that colour during training, and the
350 reinforcement history of similar colours during training (figures S7b,c).

351

352 ***Discussion***

353 Our data show that in a five-armed bandit task bees matched their colour choices in tests to the
354 probability of each colour being rewarded in training (figure 1c, 2c). This behaviour can be
355 explained simply by them learning the properties of each stimulus, and does not require
356 comparison between options.

357 Probability matching may be the ecologically optimal solution to this kind of task if
358 reinforcement probabilities for each option are unknown or could change [1, 2, 7]. Matching
359 choice probability to the history of reinforcement offers a simple and effective solution to the

360 explore/exploit trade off in which an animal must optimise across exploiting a current resource
361 type or patch, or moving to and sampling alternatives [1, 7]. Under some circumstances, a
362 probability matching strategy could appear as floral constancy if one flower type were
363 significantly more rewarded than others in a patch, or as floral majoring and minoring if two
364 alternative flower types differed strongly in reward likelihood [2, 7].

365 Probability matching as a solution to a five-armed bandit task is computationally parsimonious.
366 Niv et al [7] have argued that reinforcement learning is sufficient for probability matching.
367 The mushroom body is an important brain region for learning [46-48], and octopaminergic and
368 dopaminergic neuromodulatory neurons are essential for plastic adjustment of connection
369 strengths in the mushroom body circuit in response to reinforcement [49-54]. Distinct but
370 interacting dopaminergic and octopaminergic neurons encode reward and punishment in the
371 fly brain [50], and it is likely that something similar occurs in honey bee brains [51, 52].

372 In our model we considered the insect mushroom body and its visual inputs (figure 3a) as a
373 very simple reinforcement learning system to explore the feasibility of learning to probability
374 match in insects. In the model plasticity at both the input (calyx) and output (lobes) of the
375 mushroom body was necessary for the model to effectively learn the history of reinforcement
376 for different colours. Plasticity at the mushroom body input was needed for the system to be
377 able to decorrelate the neural representations of perceptually similar colours in order to learn
378 independent reinforcement histories for them (figure S7). Reinforcement-related plasticity at
379 the mushroom body calyx and lobes is feasible for insects. Hammer [55, 56] argued the
380 modulatory neuron VUMmx1 mediates learning of sugar reward in honey bees. This neuron
381 innervates both the calyx and lobes of the mushroom body [55]. There are other modulatory
382 inputs (both inhibitory and excitatory) to the calyx of both bees and flies [52-54]. Strube-Bloss
383 [47] has also argued plasticity in the calyx may be important for learning to distinguish different
384 stimuli by reward and punishment.

385 Our model also emphasised the need for sparse coding of colour across the Kenyon cell
386 population for efficient learning (figure S7). Our mushroom body model is equivalent to a
387 three-layer associative network. Sparse coding in the middle layer of a three-layer network is
388 recognised to be an important feature for effective classification in such types of network [57,
389 58]. In honey bees sparse coding is supported by the GABAergic inhibitory feedback PCT
390 pathway from the mushroom body outputs to the calyx [29, 52, 59-61], and such feedback is
391 essential for complex discrimination in bees [41, 62].

392 We can explain bee's behaviour in this complex task without requiring the bees to compare the
393 properties of any of the stimuli offered. This is perhaps a counter-intuitive way of thinking
394 about behaviour in a choice test, but probability matching will give the appearance of choice
395 and preference without the animal effecting any choice. This is, of course, not evidence bees
396 or other insects *cannot* rank. As we noted above, Polistes wasps have solved a transitive
397 inference task that controlled for reinforcement history [13] suggesting a capacity to compare
398 and rank. Honey bees, however, failed at a similar task [63]. We note that the speed at which
399 bees learn reinforcement history, and the effectiveness of this strategy in optimising
400 performance in most foraging tasks may obviate the need for more complex choice strategies
401 in most circumstances.

402 We also propose that given its simplicity, plausibility and ubiquity probability matching should
403 be considered a most parsimonious explanation of behaviour in animal 'choice' assays. Under
404 many circumstances in assays offering a binary-choice probability matching can give the
405 appearance of overt comparison or even ranking of options to form a preference, when no
406 comparison may be involved. Considering and controlling for the reinforcement history of
407 different options would help to distinguish probability matching strategies from true ranking
408 or comparison strategies.

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417

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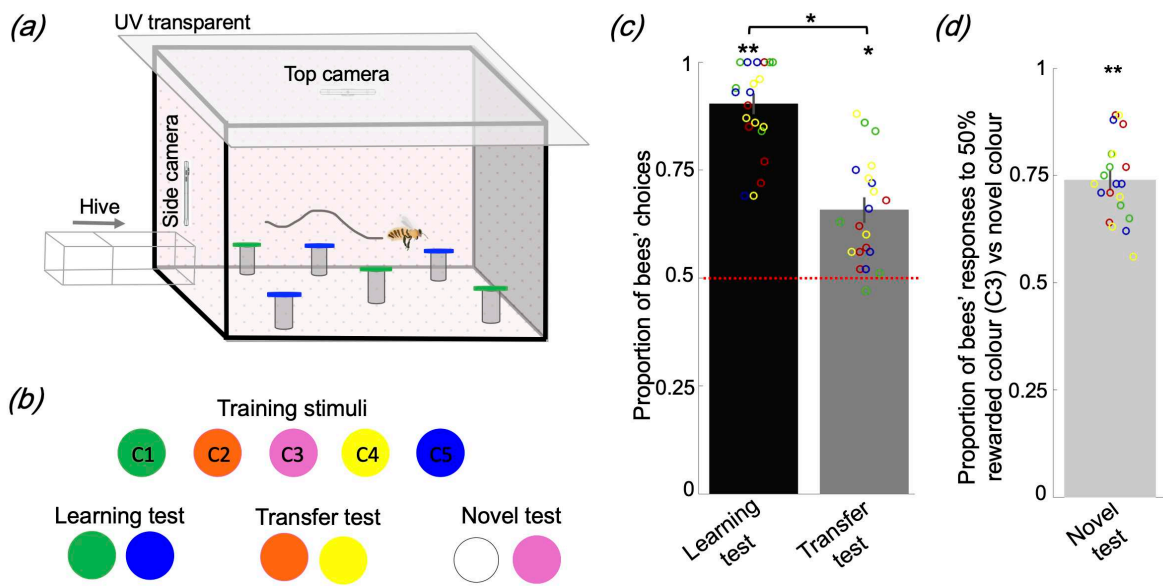
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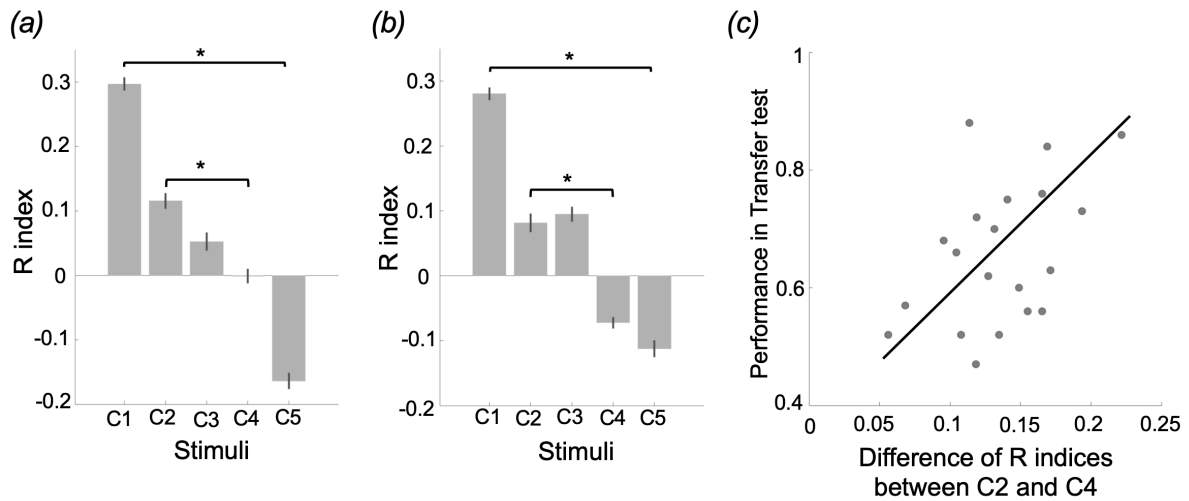
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570 **Figures**



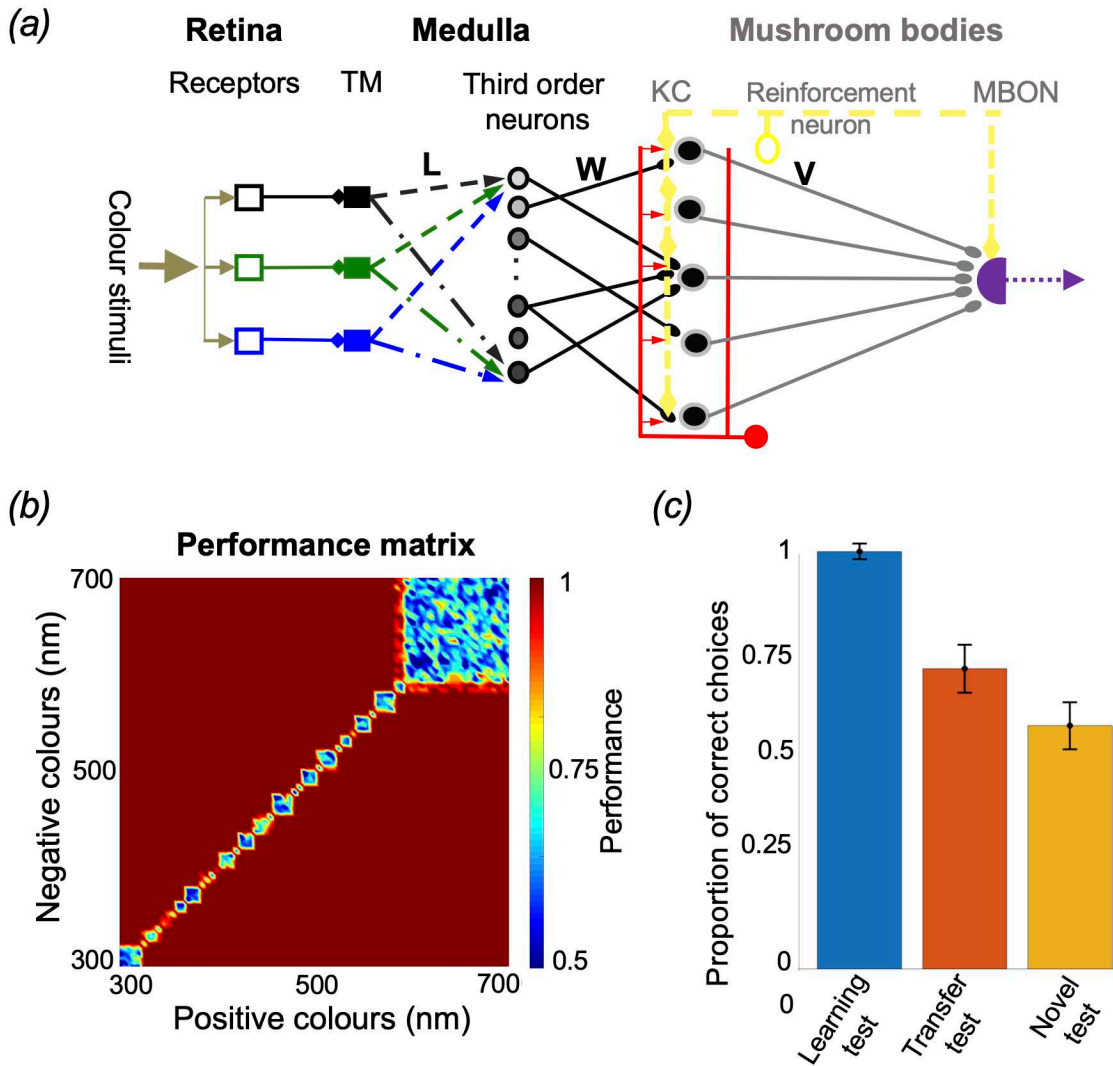
571

572 **Figure 1.** *a)* The experimental paradigm. Each bee received 18 training trials. In each training
 573 trial, stimuli of one colour offered 10 ul sucrose solution and the other offered 10 ul of quinine
 574 hemisulphate. *b)* Five different colours were used in this study. The colours differed in the
 575 proportion of training trials in which they offered reward and punishment (rewarded at 100%,
 576 66%, 50%, 33%, 0% of trials, table 1). Following training bees received three unreinforced
 577 tests. In the *learning test* bees were presented with the colours that had always been rewarded
 578 and always punished in training. In the *transfer test* bees were tested with a colour combination
 579 that had not been used in training. In the *novel test* bees were presented with a novel colour
 580 and a colour that had been rewarded in 50% of training trials. *c, d)* Performance on the tests.
 581 Bars show mean frequency with which bees landed on stimuli they had experienced as more
 582 rewarded during training. *d)* In the novel test, bees chose the trained colours (C3) more than
 583 the novel colour. Values for each individual bee are shown by small empty circles in different
 584 colours: Red: group A, Protocol P1; Green: group A, Protocol P2; Blue: group B, Protocol P1;
 585 Yellow: group B, Protocol P2 (table S6). N = 20. Vertical lines: s.e.m. Dashed line indicates
 586 performance expected at random. * indicates $p < 0.05$ and ** indicates $p < 0.005$.



587

588 **Figure 2. a,b)** Mean R index for bees for each colour (*a* = group A, *b* = group B). Bars show
 589 mean and s.e.m. of the 10 bees experience of each colour in the training phase. * indicates
 590 $p < 0.05$ for comparing the R index of a pair of colours used in the learning test (C1 vs C5) and
 591 the transfer test (C2 vs C4). **c)** Relationship between performance in the transfer test and
 592 difference in R index between the two colours in the transfer test. Line indicates the linear fit
 593 to the data (Spearman's correlation test, $\rho = 0.4$, $n = 20$, $p = 0.046$).



594

595 **Figure 3.** *a*) Network topology of the model of colour learning in the bee brain. Colour
 596 information is transferred from the three different types of photoreceptors to the medulla. Each
 597 receptor sends an inhibitory signal to only one type of transmedullary neuron (TM). Next, TM
 598 neurons randomly connect with the third order neurons via a connection matrix L. The vector
 599 connectivity of L was estimated from empirical data to produce a wide diversity of colour
 600 sensitive neurons. Colour information was transferred from the medulla to the Kenyon cells of
 601 the mushroom bodies (MB) via connection matrix W. Kenyon cells output to a single neuron
 602 (MBON) in the alpha lobe of the mushroom bodies via connection matrix V. The inhibitory
 603 feedback PCT pathway (red) maintains low excitability and sparse coding across the Kenyon
 604 cell population. A neuromodulatory neuron firing in response to both reward and punishment
 605 projects to both the input and output of the MB. There it acts to alter synaptic connectivity in
 606 both regions (W and V) in response to reward and punishment according to the proposed
 607 learning rule (see Supplementary Material and Method). *b*) The performance matrix of the

608 model in a simple colour discrimination task. The colour at each matrix's element displays the
609 performance of the model to two monochromatic colours whose wavelengths are presented on
610 the x and y axes. Following 10 trials with one colour associated with reward and one with
611 punishment the model is able to discriminate all combination of colours if their wavelength
612 distances are larger than 5 nm. *c)* Model's performance following training with protocol P1 or
613 P2 (tables S2&S3). Bars were calculated from the performance of the model for 50 different
614 initial parameters that simulated 50 different model bees that were trained to the training
615 stimuli.

616

Supplementary Material for:

Honey bees solve a multi-comparison ranking task by probability matching

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Supplementary Method:

A neural network model for learning the history of reinforcements in bees

a) Model of colour coding in the visual sensory system of bees

Three different types of photoreceptors (i.e. short, medium and long wavelength sensitive) are simulated by the light reflected by the stimulus. The amount of light absorbed by these photoreceptors was estimated as

$$P_m = R \int_{300}^{700} I_c(\lambda) S_m(\lambda) D(\lambda) d\lambda \quad \text{Eq. 1}$$

where R describes the overall sensitivity of the receptor, $I_c(\lambda)$ is the spectral reflectance function of the stimulus, c , $S_m(\lambda)$ is the spectral sensitivity function of each receptor (short, medium and long), and $D(\lambda)$ is the illumination. Based on prior research on bees' photoreceptors, in this study we set perfectly uniform illumination ($D(\lambda) = 1$ at all λ) and the sensitivity factor $R = 6$.

Because of the reported non-linearity in the response of photoreceptors, the receptors' response to a colour c , $E_m(c)$ is calculated from the quantum catch, $E_m(c) = P_m / (P_m + 1)$.

Next, each photoreceptor sends an inhibitory signal to only one type of transmedullary cell in the medulla (TM). Hence the firing rate response of m -th TM neurons is calculated with

$$r_m^{TM}(c) = r_0 + v_m E_m(c) \quad \text{Eq. 2}$$

where r_0 is the high spontaneous activity of TM cells. v_m is the inhibitory synaptic weights of pre-synapse TM cells which take values between $[-1, 0]$.

The TM cells send either excitatory or inhibitory signals to the third-order cells in the next layer (figure 3a) of the medulla through the matrix of synaptic weights $L = (L_{m,k})$. The response of the k -th third-order cells is modelled as

$$r_k^A(c) = F \left(\sum_{m=1}^3 L_{m,k} r_m^{TM}(c) + b^A; \alpha, \beta \right) \quad \text{Eq. 3}$$

where $F(x; \alpha, \beta) = A_0 / (1 + e^{-\alpha(x-\beta)})$ is the activation function and b^A represents the spontaneous activity of third-order neurons. The parameters α, β control the sensitivity of the third-order neurons to the total presynaptic input. Following Vasas et al [1], the synaptic weights of these third-order cells, $(L_{m,k})$, were fitted to the empirical data [2, 3] (figure S5) using a gradient descent algorithm as described in Vasas et al [1]. Previously, Vasas et al. [1] showed that in a similar model random connectivity between transmedullary neurons and third-

order neurons was sufficient to describe all the documented types of colour sensitive neurons in medulla: narrow or broad-band neurons that respond to a small or large range wavelength of the light and colour opponent neurons that respond to multiple ranges of light wavelengths with either excitation or inhibition [1].

b) Model of learning in the mushroom bodies

After fitting the third-order cells' responses to the empirical data, the firing rate of Kenyon cells (KC) of the mushroom bodies (figure 3a) is modelled as:

$$r_p^{KC}(c) = F \left(\sum_{k=1}^{22} W_{p,k} r_k^A(c) - I_f; \alpha, \beta \right) \quad \text{Eq. 4}$$

where $W_{p,k}$ is the synaptic connectivity between k - th third order neurons and p - th KC in the mushroom bodies. The outputs of all KC stimulate a single mushroom body output neuron, $D(c)$ through a vector of synaptic weights, $V = (v_1, v_2, \dots, v_i)$; $i = 1: N_{kc}$. The activity of this neuron in response to the colour c is expressed by

$$r^D(c) = F \left(\sum_{m=1}^{N_{kc}} V_m \cdot r_m^{KC}(c); \alpha, \beta \right) \quad \text{Eq. 5}$$

For simplicity, we set the same activation function, $F(x; a, b)$ for all firing rate models of third-order cells, KC and the decision neuron (Eqs. 3, 4 and 5) with fixed parameters: $A_0 = 100$ spike/ sec and $\alpha = 0.05$ and $\beta = 50$.

$I_{f=} \sum_{m=1}^{N_{kc}} Q_m \cdot r_m^{KC}(c)$ is the input of the inhibitory feedback pathway to the KC that is obtained from the average activity of Kenyon cells. The synaptic weights Q_m control the sparseness of activity of the KC. Higher values of Q_m increase inhibitory input to the KCs (Eq. 4). This results in reduced or no activity in some KC. Hence, the population activity of KC becomes more sparse. Setting Q_m to 0 effectively models the system without any inhibitory feedback to the KC, which produces dense activity in the KC population.

We propose that the difference in responses of $D(c)$ to the rewarding and punishing stimuli must be increased during the training phase. Hence, the optimal synaptic weights, V^{opt} and W^{opt} , could be obtained from maximizing the cost function that represents the difference between the activity of $D(c)$ to all pairs of the positive (c_p) and negative stimuli (c_n)

$$\langle W, V \rangle^{opt} = \underset{\langle c_p, c_n \rangle}{argmax} [r^D(c_p) - r^D(c_n)]. \quad \text{Eq. 6}$$

If we assume $E = r^D(c_p) - r^D(c_n)$ in the equation 6, as the cost function, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial E}{\partial V_i} = & r_i^{KC}(c_p) f \left(\sum_{m=1}^{N_{kc}} V_m r_m^{KC}(c_p); a, b \right) \\ & - r_i^{KC}(c_n) f \left(\sum_{m=1}^{N_{kc}} V_m r_m^{KC}(c_n); a, b \right) \end{aligned} \quad \text{Eq. 7}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial E}{\partial W_{i,j}} = & V_j r_i^A(c_p) f \left(\sum_{k=1}^{22} W_{p,k} r_k^A(c_p) - I_f; a, b \right) f \left(\sum_{m=1}^{N_{kc}} V_m r_m^{KC}(c_p); a, b \right) \\ & - V_j r_i^A(c_n) f \left(\sum_{k=1}^{22} W_{p,k} r_k^A(c_n) \right. \\ & \left. - I_f; a, b \right) f \left(\sum_{m=1}^{N_{kc}} V_m r_m^{KC}(c_n); a, b \right) \end{aligned} \quad \text{Eq. 8}$$

where $f(\cdot)$ is the derivation of the activation function F .

Finally, the reinforcement neuron (figure 3a) makes a reward- or punishment- modulated connection with $D(c)$ and KC. $\delta(t)$ presents the reinforcement signal that depends on whether a stimulus is paired with reward or punishment ($\delta(t) = 1$), or $\delta(t) = 0$ for when no reinforcement is presented with the stimulus. Hence, the synaptic weights of the last two layers, V and W might increase or decrease from stimuli presented at step t to $t + 1$ according to the following learning rules:

$$V_i^{t+1} = V_i^t + \eta \frac{\partial E}{\partial V_j} \delta(t) \quad \text{Eq. 9}$$

and

$$W_{i,j}^{t+1} = W_{i,j}^t + \eta \frac{\partial E}{\partial W_{i,j}} \delta(t) \quad \text{Eq.10}$$

where η is the time constant that controls that learning rate at which the weights change.

Power Analysis

To assess the effect of sample size on the outcomes of GLMM (table S4), a simulated data based on the bees' performance in the experimental tests was generated using a Monte Carlo algorithm. The number of observations within groups was artificially increased to 15 bees (60







bees in total) through the simulation (there were 5 observations at each group in the current data). The R Packages SIMR and LME4 were used to simulate and evaluate the extended data [4, 5].

References

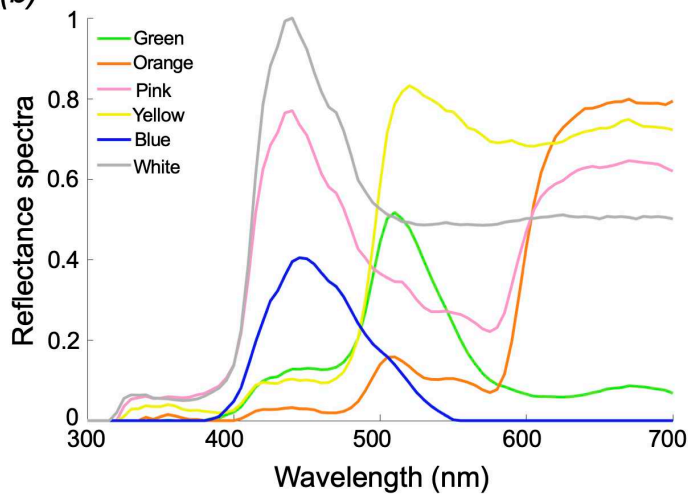
- [1] Vasas, V., Peng, F., MaBouDi, H. & Chittka, L. 2019 Randomly weighted receptor inputs can explain the large diversity of colour-coding neurons in the bee visual system. *Scientific Reports* **9**, 8330.
- [2] Kien, J. & Menzel, R. 1977 Chromatic properties of interneurons in the optic lobes of the bee. I. Broad band neurons. *Journal of Comoparative Physiology* **113**, 35-53.
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- [4] Green, P. & MacLeod, C.J. 2016 SIMR:anR package for power analysis of generalizedlinear mixed models by simulation. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* **7**, 493-498.
- [5] Bates, D., Mächler, M., Bolker, B. & Walker, S. 2014 Fitting Linear Mixed-Effects Models using lme4. (doi:<https://arxiv.org/abs/1406.5823>).

Supplementary Figures:

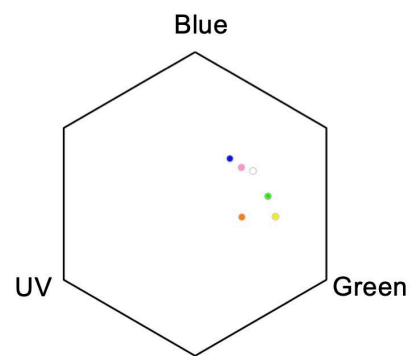
(a)

Stimuli	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	test
Human colour						
RGB values (R, G, B)	(5, 255, 5)	(250, 120, 10)	(255, 190, 220)	(250, 250, 0)	(5, 5, 255)	(250, 250, 250)
Hexagon loci (x,y)	(0.47, 0.05)	(0.31, -0.09)	(0.30, 0.24)	(0.53, -0.09)	(0.22, 0.29)	(0.38, 0.22)

(b)



(c)



(d)

Euclidean distance in Hexagon colour space

Green	0	0.22	0.26	0.14	0.35	0.19
Orange	0.22	0	0.33	0.22	0.39	0.31
Pink	0.26	0.33	0	0.39	0.1	0.08
Yellow	0.14	0.22	0.39	0	0.49	0.34
Blue	0.35	0.39	0.1	0.49	0	0.18
White	0.19	0.31	0.08	0.34	0.18	0

(e)

Excitation value of receptors

	UV	Blue	Green
Green	0.04	0.39	0.62
Orange	0.03	0.12	0.39
Pink	0.38	0.77	0.73
Yellow	0.15	0.37	0.76
Blue	0.09	0.56	0.43
White	0.35	0.78	0.76

Figure S1. Colour information for stimuli used in this study. *a)* The stimuli used in this experiment with RGB values, and the hexagon loci in the honey bee visual space. *b)* Relative spectral reflectance plot of the stimuli used in the training phase and the tests. *c)* Loci of colours in a model of bee colour space, describing the range of colours a bee can see given their three photoreceptors maximally sensitive to UV, blue, and green wavelengths. Dots indicate each of

the stimuli coded by colour as perceived by humans. *d*) The Euclidean distance between each pair of coloured stimuli was calculated in the hexagon colour space. Smaller distance indicates more similarity between colours for a bee. *e*) The activity of each honeybee receptor (UV, blue and green) evoked by each colour. Darker cell shadings indicate higher activation of the receptor.

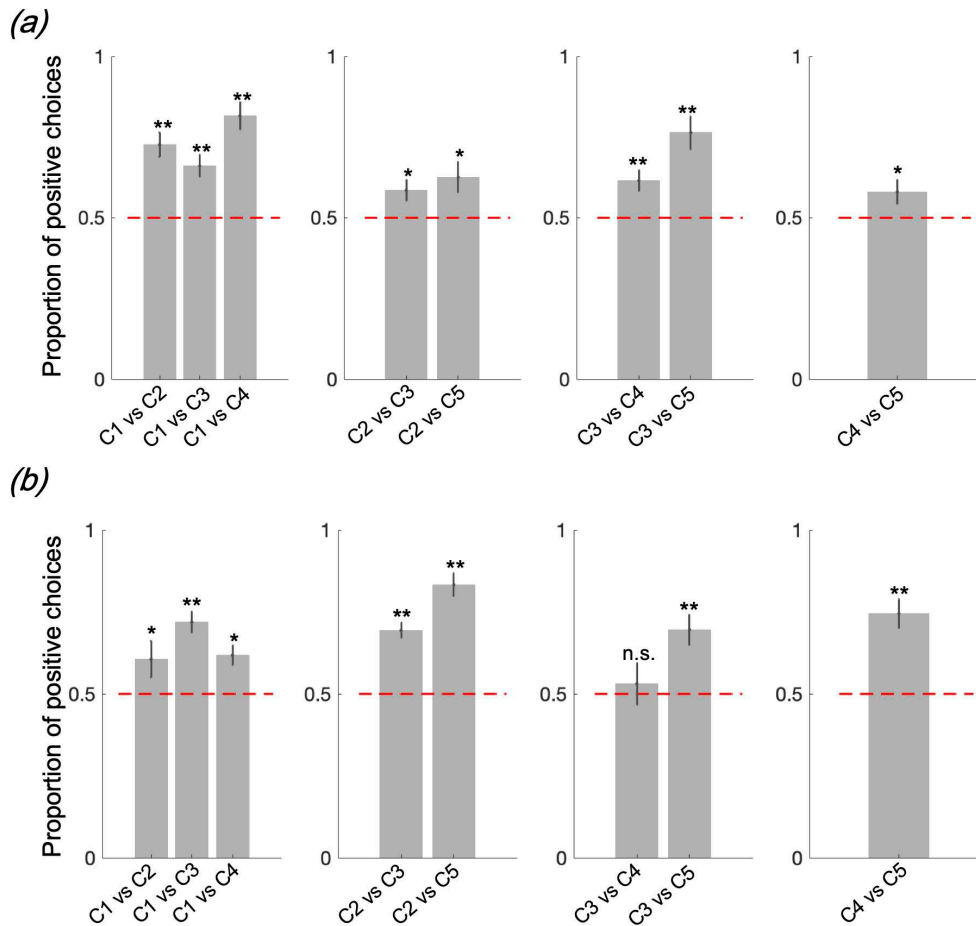


Figure S2. Bees' responses to different pairs of colours at the end of the training phase.

Bees' responses to each pair of stimuli on the last presentation of each pair of colours during training. The responses of bees trained to protocol A and B are presented in panels *a* and *b*, respectively. For group A (panel *a*) the colours were assigned as: C1=blue, C2=yellow, C3=pink, C4= orange and C= green. For group B (panel *b*) the colour assignment was: C1=green, C2=orange, C3=white, C4=yellow and C5=blue. The left bar-graphs shows the proportion choosing C1 over colours C2 (at bout 10 in protocol P1 and at 17 in protocol P2), C3 (at bout 15 in protocol P1 and at 14 in protocol P2) and C4 (at bout 12 in protocol P1 and at 16 in protocol P2). The second left graphs shows the proportion selecting C2 over C3 (at bout 17 in protocol P1 and at 12 in protocol P2) and C5 (at bout 13 in protocol P1 and at 15 in protocol P2). The third graph shows the proportion choosing C3 over C4 (at bout 14 in protocol P1 and at 11 in protocol P2) and C5 (at bout 11 in protocol P1 and at 18 in protocol P2). Finally, the last bar-graph shows the performance of bees in choosing C4 over C5 at bout 16 in protocol P1 and at bout 18 in protocol P2. This figure confirms that the bees were able to discriminate between all pairs of colours used in the experiment. Bars show mean and standard error. Asterisks show the rewarding colours was chosen more than the chance level. * indicates $p < 0.05$ and ** indicates $p < 0.005$.

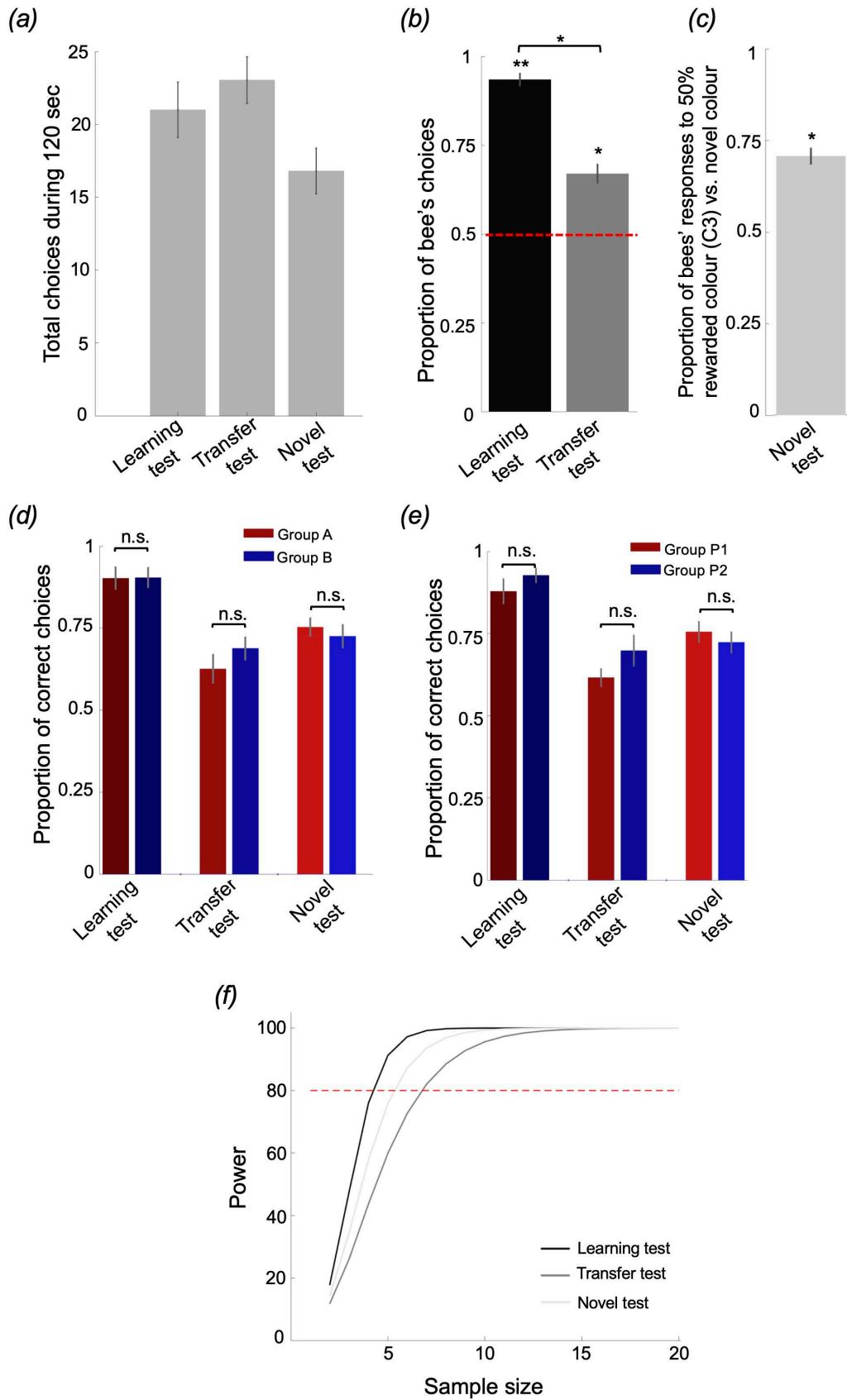


Figure S3. Bees' performance in the tests. *a)* the bar-graph shows the total choices of the bees during the first 120 sec of the learning, transfer and novel tests. *b, c)* Bees' performance

calculated from the first 10 choices only of each bee in the learning test, transfer and novel test. Bars show mean frequency with which bees landed on stimuli they had experienced as more rewarded during training. Dashed line indicates performance expected at random. *c)* In the novel test, bees chose the trained colours (C3) more than the novel colour. Values for each individual bee are shown by small empty circles in different colours: Red: group A, Protocol P1; Green: group A, Protocol P2; Blue: group B, Protocol P1; Yellow: group B, Protocol P2. There was no significant difference between *(d)* groups of bees trained with different colours (A vs B) and *(e)* groups of bees trained with different order of colour presentation (P1 vs P2). Further GLM analyses confirm that bees' responses in the three tests did not differ between protocols or the colour sets used in the experiment (Tables *S1*). Vertical lines: s.e.m. * indicates $p < 0.05$ and ** indicates $p < 0.005$. *(f)* Results of power analyses for each behavioural test assuming mean and variance in performance seen in this study. Our sample size was 20 and these power analyses suggest we had more than acceptable power (80% is a threshold power that is commonly accepted).

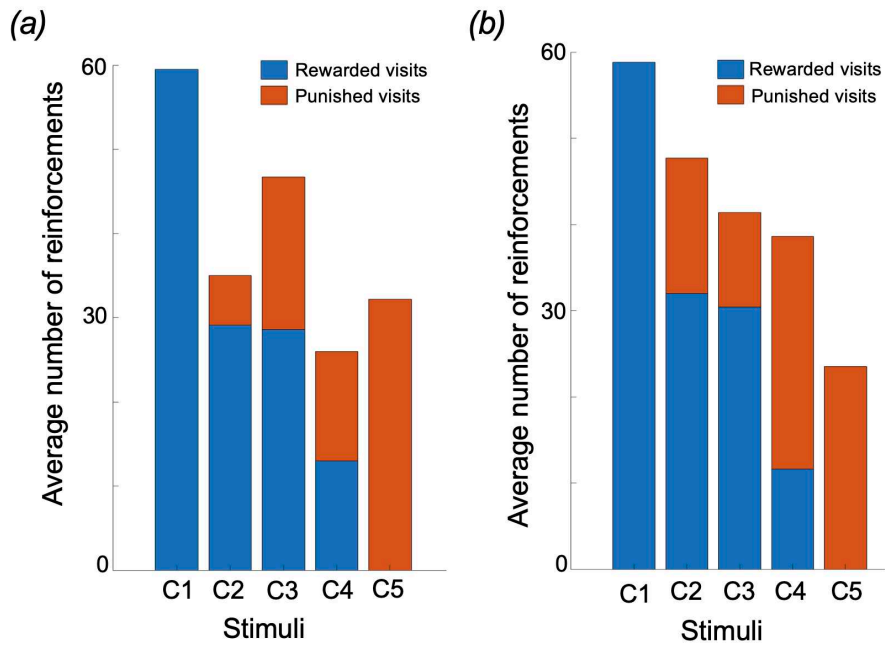


Figure S4. Number of visits to stimuli that were reinforced and punished in the training trials. The stacked bars show the average number of punished and rewarded visits that bees experienced from each colour in the training phase *a*) Group A; *b*) Group B).

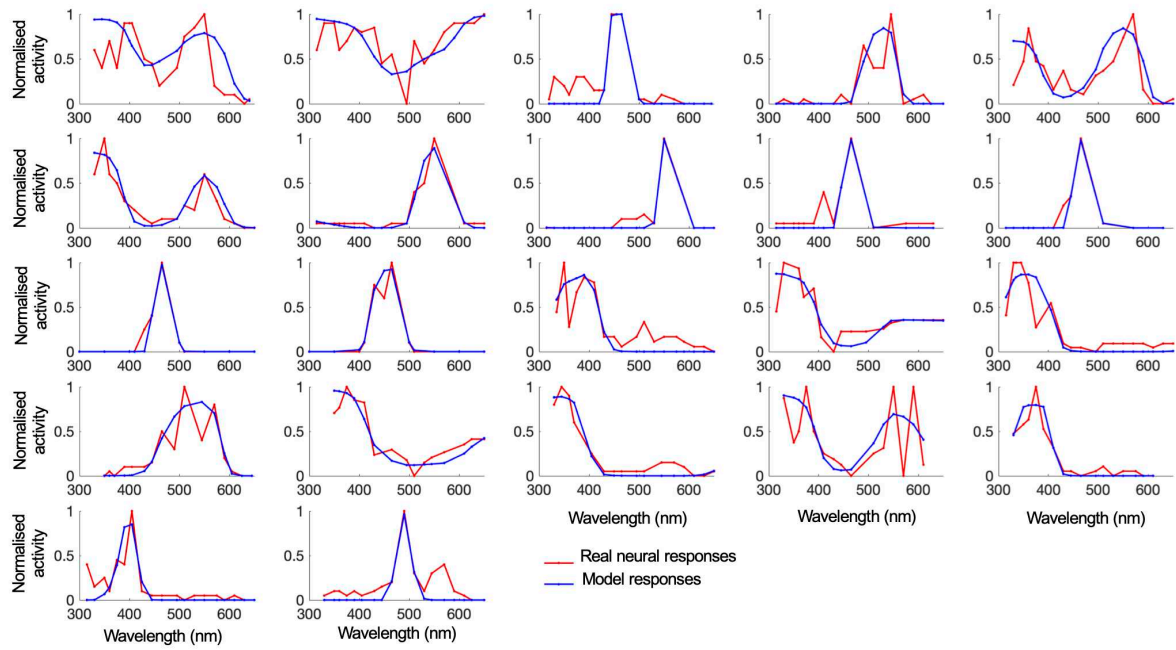


Figure S5. Diverse activities of medulla neurons generated by the model. Plots show the spectral tuning curves of third-order neurons. The red curves show the empirically measured spectral tuning curves reported in [2, 4]. The blue curves show the model responses of the third-order neurons in the medulla to different colours.

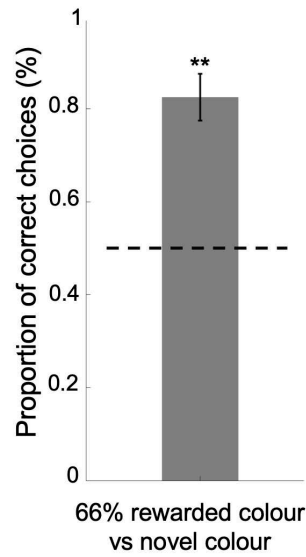


Figure S6. Model's performance in discriminating 66% rewarded colour from the novel colour. Mean \pm SE of the model's performance in discriminating a colour rewarded 66% of time in training from a novel colour. Data generated from 50 different initial parameters that simulated 50 different model bees following training with protocol P1 or P2 (Table 2).

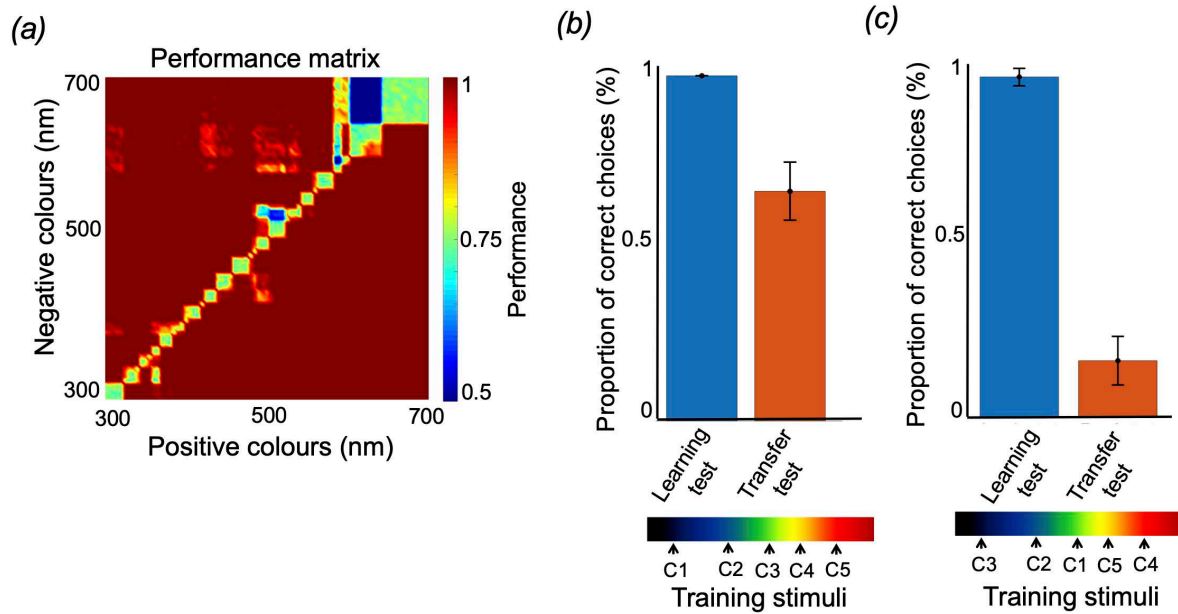


Figure S7. a) The performance of the model with low sparseness in the Kenyon cell population. The matrix shows the performance of the model in the colour discrimination task. The colour of each matrix element displays the performance of the model to two monochromatic colours whose wavelengths are presented on the x and y axes. The performance of the model in colour discrimination is reduced when the number of KCs activated by any colour is increased (compare with figure 3*b*). **b & c).** Performance of the model with connection plasticity in layer V only (figure 3). The model was trained in the history of reinforcement paradigm with two different colour sets, shown beneath panels b and c. This model with no plasticity in connection matrix W (figure 3) is not able to reproduce the performance of bees in the transfer test (compare with figures 1*c* and 3*c*). The performance of the model in the transfer test is sensitive to the set of training colors. The model chose a 66% rewarded colour more than a 66% punished colour if the five training colours were ordered from low wavelength to high wavelength by reinforcement history during training (**b**). However the model did not learn to prefer the 66% rewarded colour if training colours were randomly assigned a reinforcement history (**c**). Bars were calculated from the performance of the model for 50 different initial parameters each initial parameter provides the responses of a model bee.

Supplementary Tables

Stimulus	% trials rewarded	% trials punished	Colour Pairs
C1	100	0	C1 vs C2
			C1 vs C3
			C1 vs C4
			C1 vs C5
C2	66	33	C2 vs C1
			C2 vs C3
			C2 vs C5
C3	50	50	C3 vs C1
			C3 vs C2
			C3 vs C4
			C3 vs C5
C4	33	66	C4 vs C1
			C4 vs C3
			C4 vs C5
C5	0	100	C5 vs C1
			C5 vs C2
			C5 vs C3
			C5 vs C4
(Novel colour)	0	0	...

Table S1. Summary of training trials. Each colour was paired with all others, except for pairing C4 with C2. This pairing was excluded from the training procedure to use as a novel pair in the transfer test. In each pairing the higher ranked colour (red) was rewarded and the lower ranked colour punished (blue).

Protocol P1

# Bouts	Stimuli at each bout
1	C1 vs C2
2	C3 vs C5
3	C1 vs C4
4	C2 vs C5
5	C3 vs C4
6	C1 vs C3
7	C4 vs C5
8	C2 vs C3
9	C1 vs C5
10	C1 vs C2
11	C3 vs C5
12	C1 vs C4
13	C2 vs C5
14	C3 vs C4
15	C1 vs C3
16	C4 vs C5
17	C2 vs C3
18	C1 vs C5

Protocol P2

# Bouts	Stimuli at each bout
1	C3 vs C5
2	C1 vs C2
3	C1 vs C4
4	C2 vs C5
5	C1 vs C3
6	C3 vs C4
7	C1 vs C5
8	C4 vs C5
9	C2 vs C3
10	C1 vs C5
11	C3 vs C4
12	C2 vs C3
13	C4 vs C5
14	C1 vs C3
15	C2 vs C5
16	C1 vs C4
17	C1 vs C2
18	C3 vs C5

Tables S2 & S3. Training sequences. Two different protocols for training were used. Each protocol was created by ensuring bees experienced each pair of colours in each half of the 18 training bouts. Otherwise colour pairings were ordered randomly. 10 bees were trained with P1, and 10 with P2.

Dependent variable	Fixed factors	Estimate	SE	tStat	DF	pValue
Bees's performance in the learning test	Intercept	0.0154	0.0025	6.1524	16	1.3909e-05
	Protocol	-0.0022	0.0015	-1.461	16	0.16
	Colour set	-0.0028	0.0015	-1.824	16	0.08
	Protocol:Colour set	0.0014	0.0009	1.5208	16	0.14
Bees's performance in the transfer test	Intercept	0.0183	0.0056	3.215	16	0.005
	Protocol	-0.00017	0.0036	-0.049	16	0.96
	Colour set	-1.28e-05	0.0036	-0.003	16	0.99
	Protocol:Colour set	-0.0010	0.0022	-0.449	16	0.65
Bees's performance in the novel test	Intercept	0.0108	0.0036	2.990	16	0.008
	Protocol	0.0012	0.0023	0.517	16	0.61
	Colour set	0.0012	0.0023	0.548	16	0.59
	Protocol:Colour set	-0.0004	0.0014	-0.314	16	0.75

Table S4. Summary of generalised liner mixed models (GLMM) of original data. GLMM exams the effect of the training protocol, the colour set and their interaction on bees' responses in the learning, transfer and novel tests. The dependent variables for each GLMM were the performance of the bees in the learning test, transfer test and novel tests (proportion of correct choices, figure S3). Bee index was included in the models as random factors.

Dependent variable	Fixed factors	Estimate	SE	tStat	DF	pValue
Bees's performance in the learning test	Intercept	0.0158	0.0027	5.777	16	7.62-09
	Protocol	-0.0017	0.0017	-1.036	16	0.30
	Colour set	-0.0029	0.0017	-1.674	16	0.09
	Protocol:Colour set	0.0011	0.0010	1.091	16	0.27
Bees's performance in the transfer test	Intercept	0.0162	0.0057	2.815	16	0.004
	Protocol	-0.0014	0.0036	-0.391	16	0.69
	Colour set	-0.0018	0.0036	-0.4949	16	0.62
	Protocol:Colour set	-0.0022	0.0023	-0.984	16	0.32
Bees's performance in the novel test	Intercept	0.0132	0.0039	3.338	16	0.008
	Protocol	-0.0002	0.0025	-0.082	16	0.93
	Colour set	-0.0001	0.0025	-0.053	16	0.95
	Protocol:Colour set	0.0006	0.0015	0.405	16	0.68

Table S5. Summary of generalised liner mixed models (GLMM) of simulated data. GLMM evaluates the effect of the training protocol, the colour set and their interaction on *simulated data* that was generated from the original bees' responses in the learning, transfer and novel tests assuming the sample size was 15 bees per groups per protocol (60 bees in total). The simulated data was obtained from Monte Carlo simulation based on the bees' performance in the test for more sample size (see supplementary methods). The dependent variables for each GLMM were the performance of the bees in the learning test, transfer test and novel tests (proportion of correct choices). Bee index was included in the models as random factors.

Bee index	Protocol	Group	learning test (%)	Transfer test (%)	Novel test (%)
1	P1	A	90	57	87
2	P1	A	77	56	89
3	P1	A	85	68	77
4	P1	A	100	62	71
5	P1	A	72	52	64
6	P1	B	84	51	65
7	P1	B	94	84	75
8	P1	B	100	86	77
9	P1	B	100	47	68
10	P1	B	100	63	80
11	P2	A	93	72	62
12	P2	A	100	66	73
13	P2	A	100	52	88
14	P2	A	93	75	71
15	P2	A	69	56	73
16	P2	B	95	88	80
17	P2	B	87	70	89
18	P2	B	86	73	63
19	P2	B	85	60	70
20	P2	B	96	76	56

Table S6. Bees' performance in the experiment tests. The table shows the responses of each individual bee to the learning, transfer and novel test (see figure 1).

Supplementary Video

Video S1: Sample video of honey bee in transfer test.