You probably think that most wasps live in big social hives with a lot of other individuals, but many wasps are actually solitary!

**This is Bembix americana**

These wasps live alone and hunt a variety of flies. Once they capture a fly, they carry it back to their nest.

They prefer dry, sandy environments. Unlike social wasps, they keep their nests hidden.

Every time the wasp returns with prey, she has to locate the nest entrance and dig out the sand covering it. She does this with the aid of special spines on her forelimbs that scoop and move sand.

**Quick! Let's follow her in!**
TO CONFUSE ANY PREDATORS THAT MIGHT FOLLOW HER, THE WASP CREATES “FALSE” CHAMBERS TO THROW THEM OFF THE TRAIL. BECAUSE SHE DOESN’T HAVE HIVEMATES TO HELP HER DEFEND THE NEST, SHE HAS TO RELY ON HER OWN INGENUITY!

HEY! MY FRIENDS AND I ARE LEARNING ABOUT WASPS AND THEIR LIFESTYLES, WE WANTED TO KNOW IF WE CAN TALK TO YOU ABOUT A FEW THINGS.

I DON’T KNOW... ARE YOU SURE YOU DON’T WANT TO TALK TO SOME HORNETS OR PAPER WASPS...?

NOPE! WE WANTED TO MEET WITH A SOLITARY WASP FIRST, JUST TO BE DIFFERENT.

OH! COOL! YEAH, JUST STEP INSIDE.
By the way, my name is Bembi! It's short for Bembix Americana. I'm just putting away some food. Make yourself comfortable.
So you live alone, right? Can you tell us some pros and cons about being a solitary wasp?

Sure! Well, for one thing, I get to choose what I'm eating! Whatever I want, whenever I want, and however much I want. I don't have to deal with sharing with hundreds of other wasps.

I mean, some wasps like the big group thing and it has its perks - you always have someone to watch your back and you always know what your job is.

Here! This is some fly smoothie I preserved the other night!

Uh... thanks, Bembi.

It's good, right? You couldn't find that in a big wasp hive!

Yeah, the big group thing isn't really for me. I give up on being protected by other wasps, but I do pretty well on my own. No one bores me around and I love making my own decisions.

It has a... distinct flavor.

Especially when I go hunting and my next meal!
All right, now to start our interview. So what is all this food for?

To feed my offspring! I constantly hunt so that it has fresh food to eat.

What kind of food does your larva prefer?

Flies! I can even carry ones that are nearly my own size. Every time my larva finishes eating a fly, I bring it a nice fresh one.

How do you capture prey?

I sting them! My sting then releases a poison that paralyzes the fly, making it easy for me to carry them back.

Do you sting people?

I could, but I rarely do because my nest is pretty hidden from humans like you. Even if I did, the poison in my sting won’t hurt a human as much as a bee or hornet sting. My sting is meant for subduing prey, not as a defense mechanism against nest invaders.

Did you know that some of the flies you eat are considered pests to humans?

Really? Raaaad.

I guess you guys like me then.

We do! And thanks for giving us so much info about solitary wasps. We’re going to a hive next. Can you point us in the right direction?

Sure, there’s one not too far from my nest! It’s going to be awfully boring there though...
That's where you want to go next. It's a wasp hive.

Thanks, Bembi! You've been really helpful. What are you doing now?

First I need to cover the entrance to my nest so that no one sees it.

Are you going to go pick up more food for your larva?

Yup! Whether wasps live alone or in groups, we're always busy!

Bye Bembi! Good hunting and good luck!