

Victoria Park Bee Trail

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Welcome to the Victoria Park bee trail

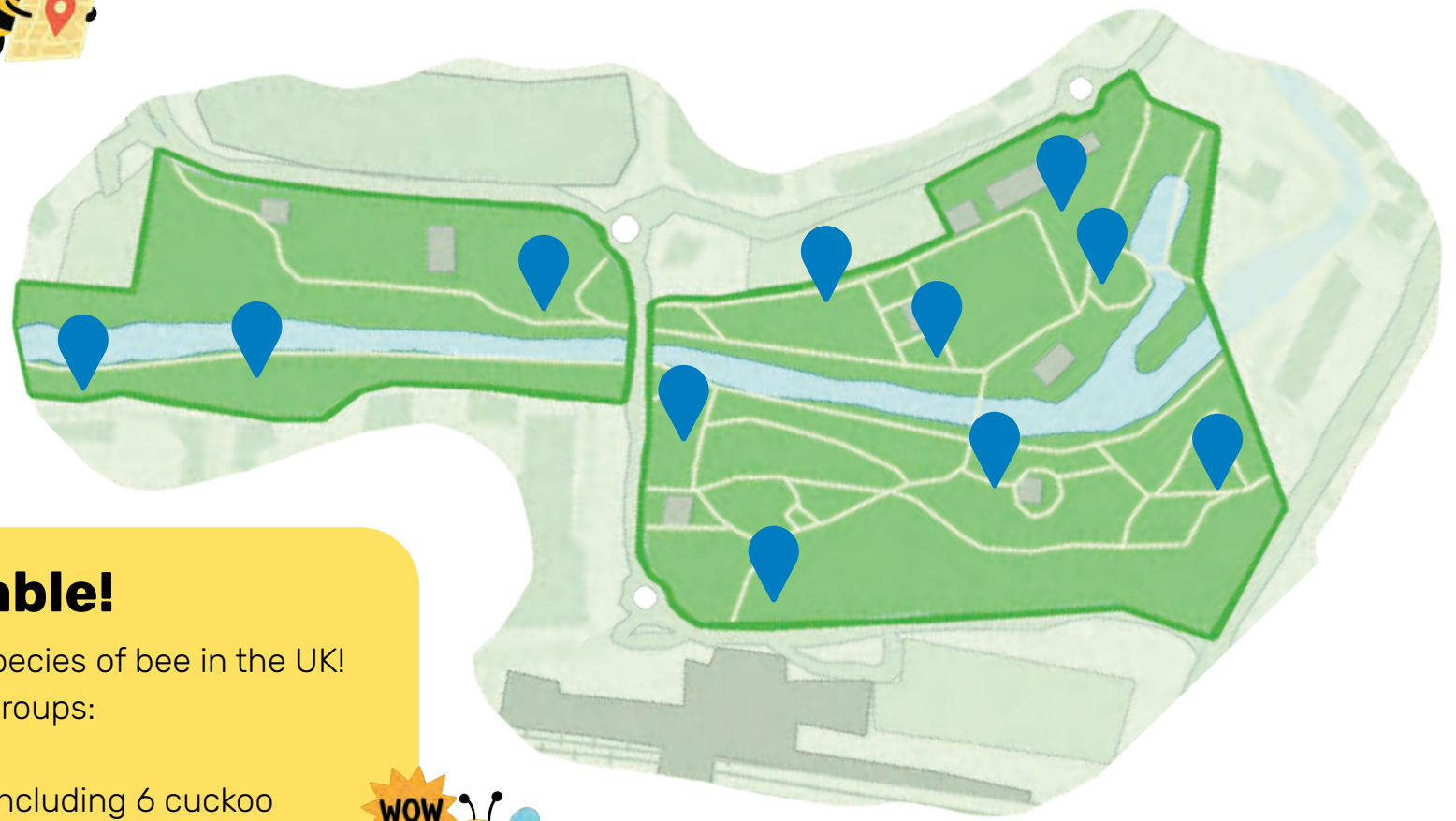
We are celebrating Stafford town's bee friendly status and the value bees bring to supporting our natural world.



Explore the park to find the matching boards.



The boards contains information about common bumblebees and easy ways you can help bees at home.



It's un-BEE-lievable!

There are over 270 different species of bee in the UK! Which can be split into three groups:

- Honeybees (1 species)
- Bumblebees (24 species, including 6 cuckoo species)
- Solitary bees (the remaining 245 species)



The blue markers show where to find a trail board

What is the buzz about?

Bees are known as **pollinators** as they fly from flower to flower to collect pollen and nectar to feed on.

To collect their food they will visit a flower, vibrate the flower's anthers (the stems that hold pollen), which causes the pollen to fall and stick to the small hairs that cover the bees body/legs. When the bee visits another flower the pollen attached to their body will brush off onto the flowers stamen, which pollinates the flower.

Pollination enables the next generation of wildflowers to be created. It also supports food production as many crops need pollination to grow. Pollinators make our lives both beautiful and delicious.



DID YOU KNOW?

FUN FACT

Bumblebees evolved around 140 million years ago in the himalayas from a family of spechid wasps.



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Buff-tailed bumblebee queens are some of the first queens to emerge in late winter/early spring and can be seen from February onwards.

Workers appear roughly six weeks after the nest is established. New queens and males are produced towards the end of the three to four month nesting period. This species can be seen up to the end of September.

In southern parts of the UK, as well as in cities further north, this species can also be winter-active. Nests are established in October/November, and workers can be seen foraging all winter on Mahonia and other winter-flowering plants, before males and new queens emerge in early spring.

Can often be seen foraging on dandelions early in the year.

Conservation status: Common

Key features →

The buff-tailed bumblebee has a **yellow collar** near the head and another on the abdomen.

The queen has a buff-coloured 'tail', while the workers have white 'tails' with a faint buff line separating them from the rest of the abdomen. Males have buff-tinged tails and also have black hair on their faces.



Queen

Worker

Male

Biggest of the Bumblebees: 2 -2.2cm long

FUN FACT

Buff-tailed bumblebees are known as 'nectar robbers': if they come across a flower that is too deep for their tongue, they bite a hole at its base to get the nectar.



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Early bumblebee



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Bombus pratorum

Early bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation from March onwards.

Workers appear roughly six weeks after the nest is established. New queens and males are produced towards the end of the two month nesting period, in May and June.

This species can have another generation, particularly in the south of the UK, but numbers tail off through July.

Conservation status: Common

Key features

Queens and workers are similar, with one **yellow band at the front of the thorax** and another **at the front of the abdomen**, although this can be reduced or missing completely in workers. Males often have yellow hairs at the base of the thorax, and have yellow facial hair. **All have a small, pale orange/red tail.**



Queen

Worker

Male

Smallest of the UK bumblebees

FUN FACT

The early bumblebee is not picky about the flowers it gets nectar from and is known to visit more than 140 different species!



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White-tailed bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation in March and April.

Workers appear roughly six weeks after the nest is established. New queens and males are produced towards the end of the three to four month nesting period.

This species can be seen up to the end of August.

Conservation status: Common

Key features →

The white-tailed bumblebee is **black with two lemon-yellow bands on its body and a white 'tail'.**

There are several very similar species that can be very difficult to tell apart: the buff-tailed bumblebee, for example, has black and dull yellow bands, and a buff-coloured tail, instead of a bright white one.



Queen

Worker

Male

FUN FACT

Compared to honey bee colonies, which can number 50,000 individuals, bumblebee colonies are small, with only about 200 workers in each.



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Tree bumblebee



Bombus hypnorum

Tree bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation from February onwards.

Workers appear roughly six weeks after the nest is established. New queens and males are produced towards the end of the two to three month nesting period.

Tree bumblebees usually nest above ground in bird boxes and in roof spaces. Nests can have up to 150 workers. Males show a distinctive behaviour where large groups fly around outside a nest entrance. They are waiting for new queens to emerge so they can mate with them.

This species often has a partial second generation and can be seen up to the end of August.

Conservation status: Introduced, non-native species.

Key features

The tree bumblebee has fuzzy, brownish-orange hairs on its thorax, a black abdomen, and a white tail.

FUN FACT

During May and June, tree bumblebees can be seen 'swarming' around their nest entrances, which can be alarming if they are nesting in your roof or garden! But it's not a cause for worry. It is actually lots of males buzzing about, waiting for the queens to emerge so that they can mate with them. The males do not have stingers, so are harmless.



Queen



Worker



Male

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Garden bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation from April onwards.

Workers appear roughly six weeks after the nest is established. Males are produced towards the end of the three to four month nesting period.

This species can have another generation and be seen up to the end of September.

Look for them on red campion and foxglove flowers

Conservation status: Common

Key features

The garden bumblebee is a large, scruffy-looking bee, with a long tongue and face. It has yellow bands at the collar, rear of the thorax and at the first segment of the abdomen, and the tip of the tail is white.



Queen

Worker

Male

FUN FACT

The garden bumblebee has the longest tongue of all our bumble bees. It can stretch up to 2cm, which is as long as its own body! This means it can reach right inside flowers like red campion, foxgloves and cowslips.



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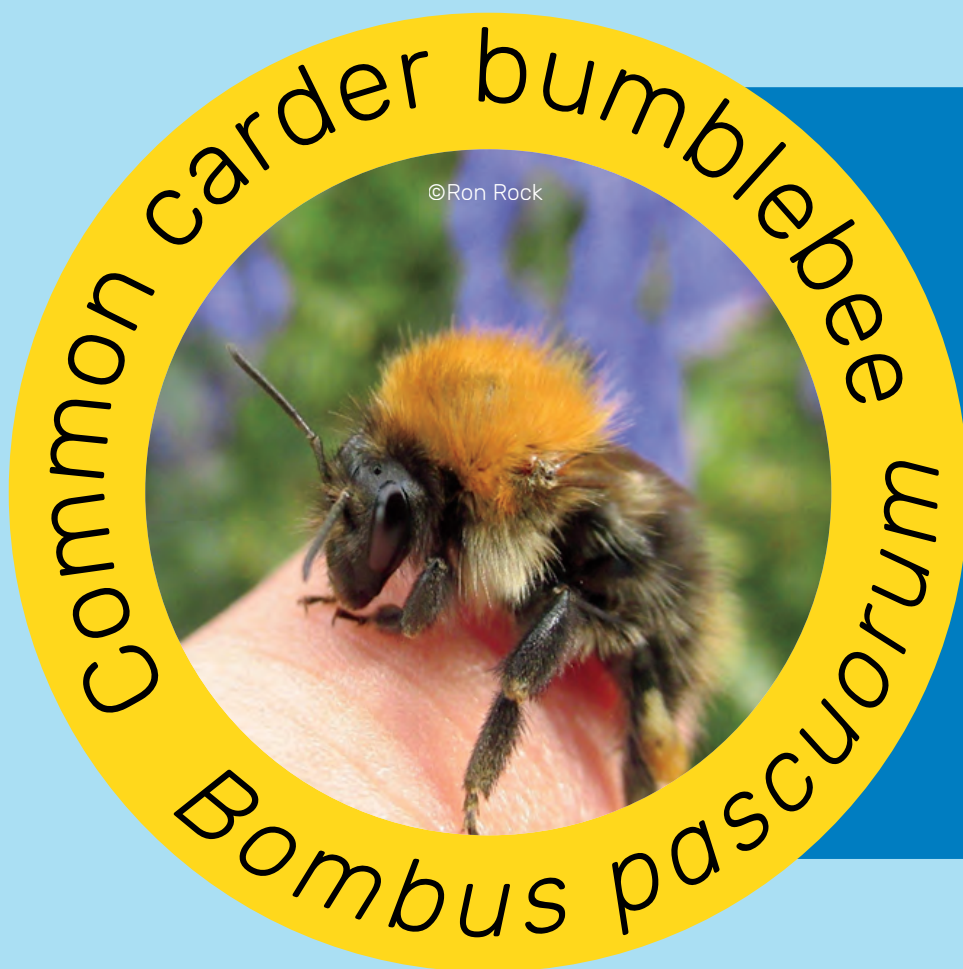


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Common carder bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation from March onwards.

Workers appear roughly six weeks after the nest is established and new queens and males are produced towards the end of the three to six month nesting period. They are the last species to be seen in good numbers and can fly into early November if the weather is mild.

This species can be seen up to the end of October.

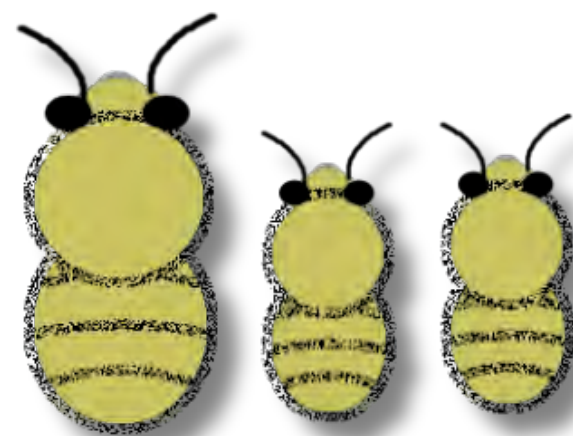
Conservation status: Common

Key features

The common carder bee is a fluffy, brown-and-orange bumble bee, sometimes displaying darker bands on the abdomen.

FUN FACT

Common carder bees are one of a number of 'long-tongued bees' that feed on flowers with long tubular florets, such as comfrey, foxglove and red clover.



Queen

Worker

Male

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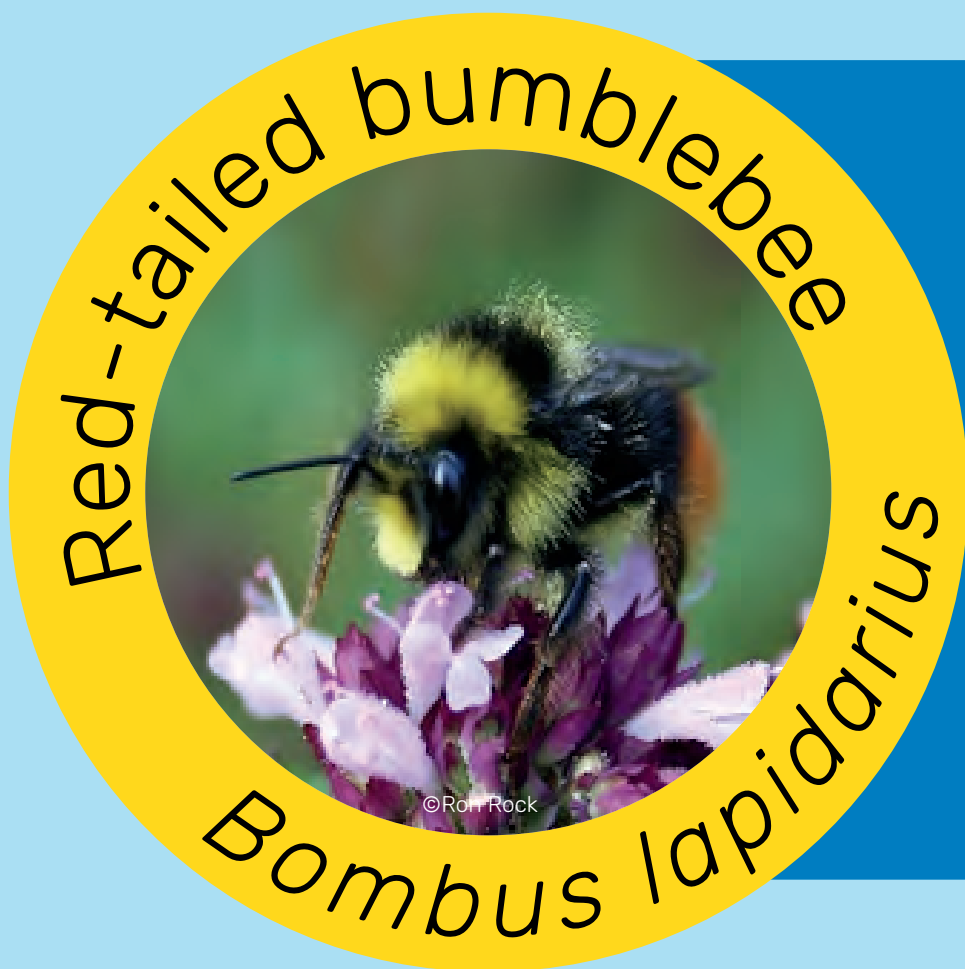
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Red-tailed bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation from March onwards.

Workers appear roughly six weeks after the nest is established. Males are produced towards the end of the three to four month nesting period.

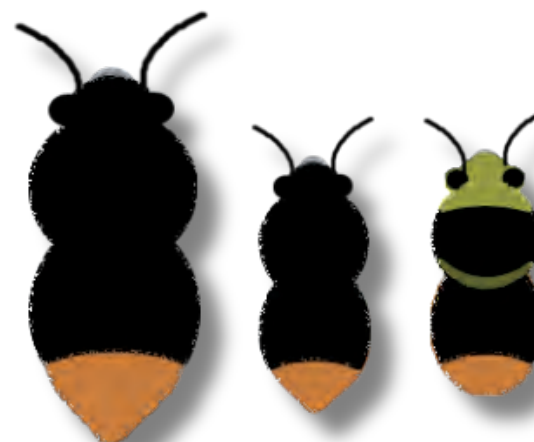
This species can sometimes have a second generation and be seen up to the end of September.

Knapweed is a favourite foraging plant.

Conservation status: Common

Key features →

The female red-tailed bumblebee is a very large, black bumblebee with a big red 'tail'. Males are smaller and as well as the red tail some males have two yellow bands on the thorax, and one at the base of the abdomen – however usually this is very faint. There are two other similar species of bumblebee, but both are much rarer.



Queen

Worker

Male

FUN FACT

Red-tailed bumblebees nest underground, often in old vole burrows, under stones, or at the base of old walls.



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Cuckoo bees

Did you know **six** of the UK's 24 bumblebees are cuckoo bees. They are named this way because just like the bird, they have a parasitic lifestyle.

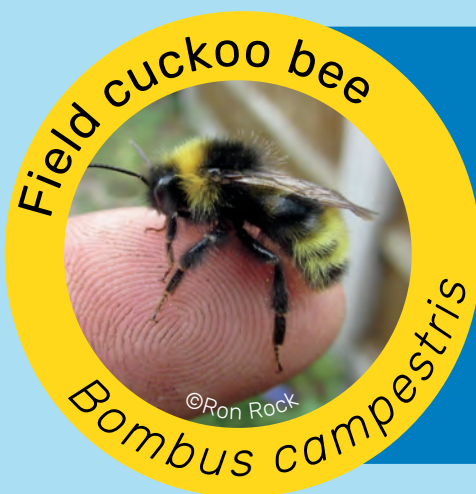
But don't be alarmed, they are important pollinators in their own right and are not a major threat to social bumblebee populations.

A female cuckoo bee will go into the nest of a social bumblebee, kill the host queen, and take over the nest for herself.

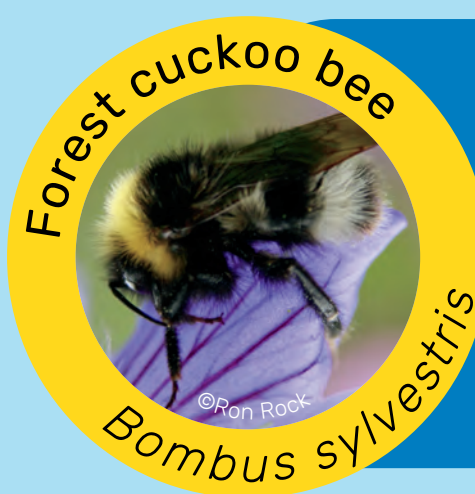
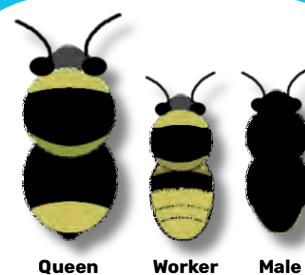
A cuckoo bee does not produce any workers, just new females and males. They also don't collect pollen because the original queen's workers collect it for them! This is why cuckoo bumblebees don't have pollen baskets on their legs.



Below are four common cuckoo bee species:



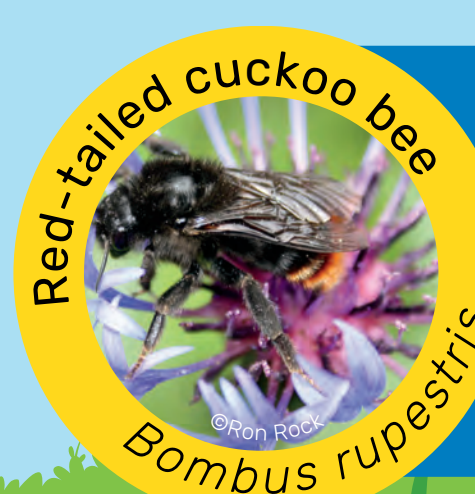
Host: Common carder bees



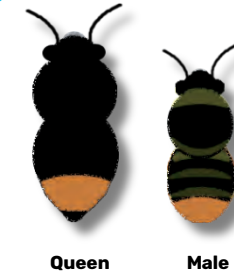
Host: Early bumblebees



Host: White-tailed bumblebees



Host: Red-tailed bumblebees



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Stafford has been awarded the status of “**Bee friendly Town**” by the Bee Friendly Trust, because of the amazing actions local schools, community groups and the Borough Council have made to support pollinators in the area.



Victoria park is owned by Stafford Borough Council and belongs to the people of Stafford, for their peaceful enjoyment.

The Friends of Victoria Park are an independent voluntary group working in partnership with the Borough Council, to improve, protect and market the park as a shared community space in the heart of Stafford town.



What can you do for bees?

Grow a mini meadow



Find a how to guide here:
www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/actions/how-grow-wild-patch-or-mini-meadow

Create a bee water station



Fill a shallow dish with pebbles and rainwater. Place in a shady place outside. Remember to top up the water level on hot days.

Make a bug hotel



Find a how to guide here:
www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/actions/how-make-bee-hotel

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Solitary means these bees live separately not in a large colony of bees

Common solitary bees

A majority of the bee species in the UK are solitary bees, just under 250 species to be exact.



Tawny mason bee - *Andrena fulva*

- One of the most recognisable spring-flying solitary bees.
- Commonly found in gardens, parks, and the wider countryside.
- They feed on a wide variety of flowers including buttercups, dandelions, hawthorn, blackthorn, maple, willows and fruit trees.
- Active from March to June.



Ashy mining bee - *Andrena cineraria*

- One of our most distinctive spring-flying solitary bees with their striking black and grey/white markings.
- Commonly found in open sunny sites, particularly in places with sandy soil, across gardens, parks, and the wider countryside.
- They feed from a wide variety of spring flowers and shrubs, including buttercups, hawthorn, blackthorn, gorse and fruit trees.
- Active from March to June.



Red mason bee - *Osmia bicornis*

- Common and familiar throughout most of the UK.
- They get their name from their habit of nesting in cavities between brickwork, although they also happily use solitary bee hotels too.
- They feed on many spring flowering garden plants as well as shrubs and trees, especially apples and pears.
- Active from late March until June.



Hairy footed flower bee - *Anthophora plumipes*

- One of the first solitary bees to emerge in spring.
- Often mistaken for small bumblebees because of their round and hairy appearance but they fly quicker.
- Active between February and June.
- Often seen visiting lungworts, primroses, dead-nettles and comfrey.



Ivy bee - *Colletes hederæ*

- Relative newcomers to the UK, first spotted in 2001.
- They can be seen in autumn, coinciding with flowering ivy, which is their main food source.
- Ivy bees are the last solitary bees of the year. Males appear from late August and females a few weeks later, and they can be seen into November.

All photos ©Ron Rock

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