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## Red tailed bumblebee queen

Orange-belted Bumble Bee (Bombus ternarius) The Orange-belted Bumble Bee (Bombus ternarius) is a common and important bee in the area of French Hill Pond. It is also called a Tricolored Bumble Bee or Red-tailed Bumble Bee by some authorities. The latter alternative name, Red-tailed Bumble Bee, is misleading in that the Bombus lapidarius is also called Red-tailed Bumble Bee and, unlike the Bombus ternarius, actually has a red posterior. The family name is Apidae and the order name is Hymenoptera. "Bombus" is Latin for "buzzing." "Ternarius" is from the Latin for "three parts." The family name is from the Latin, "apis," which means "bee." Like other bees, the Orange-belted Bumble Bee (Bombus ternarius) lives in colonies with three groups having distinct functions and slightly different markings. The queen and the workers have black heads with some yellow hairs. The drones (males) have yellow heads with some black hairs. The thorax and first segment of the abdomen in all three groups are yellow except for a black band in the wing area. A segment is a band of color on the abdomen. The next two abdominal segments for all three groups are orange. The remaining abdominal segments in the queen and workers are black. The drones differ by having one yellow segment following the orange abdominal segments. The remaining segments of the drone's abdomen are black with some yellow on the sides. The photograph above shows a drone. The yellow coloring of the drone in the photograph below appears pale and almost white in contrast to the bright yellow of the goldenrod on which the drone is feeding. These bees are about ½ inch (1.4 centimeters) long, hairy and robust. The adults eat nectar and the larvae eat the honey these bees produce. They prefer the nectar of goldenrods and milkweeds. Before the introduction of the Honey Bee in North America, this species was the only bee producing honey. However, it produces very little honey and is not normally commercially raised to produce honey. Honey Bees (Apis mellifera) are NOT Bumble Bees. The nests are constructed in a hole in the ground. Only fertile females will survive the winter and begin a new colony in the spring. The queen and workers both produce offspring by mating with the drones. New queens leave the nest to establish a new colony. In the fall, drones and non-fertile workers are driven from the nest. The buzzing of the Bumble Bee is a sound generated by the flight muscles, NOT the wings. A Bumble Bee can decouple its flight muscles from the wings and vibrate the flight muscles to warm their bodies. Therefore, Bumble Bees can emit a buzzing sound even though their wings are not moving. Bumble Bees do not have ears but feel vibrations from noise. The Orange-belted Bumble Bee (Bombus ternarius) is native to Maine and a very important pollinator. It should not be disturbed. These bees have stingers that lack barbs and, therefore, can sting numerous times. However, they are not very aggressive and will not sting unless they feel threatened. The Red tailed Bumble Bee is one of the six commonly found species of Bee in the UK. It is widespread throughout England but less common in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is a large black bee with an orange red tail, the females are black apart from this but the males have an additional yellow band on their head. The Red tails emerge from hibernation about a month later than similar species such as the white tailed and the buff tailed bees. It is a common sight in gardens and is not aggressive but will fly around the heads of people who near their nest. The nests are normally under stones or slabs with the drones and normally contain a maximum of 50 insects. The old queen dies each year with the onset of winter with only the new Queen hibernating over the winter, under ground or under moss to keep warm. In spring she will make wax pots to lay the first batch of eggs in and these will hatch into infertile female workers/ drones about three weeks later. Once the first batch is active they will take over collection of food and building new cells in the nest for young while the queen focuses solely on egg laying. Male bees are not hatched until late summer (from eggs laid by the workers as the queen's ability to suppress reproduction declines) and as autumn approaches they will leave the nest never to return, as when they leave so do any new queens and once mating has occurred the males die. Unlike other social insects the worker bees are capable of laying eggs but the Queen suppresses the ability to breed through aggression and pheromone chemical suppressants. Food and Predators The larvae feed on both pollen and nectar for carbohydrate and protein; the adults will seek food from a wide variety of plants including Foxglove, Gorse, Broom, Monks Hood, and Thistles. In moorland areas adults have been observed eating aphids as other food sources decline but this is not an ideal replacement food. Predators are normally limited to creatures that dig up the nests such as badgers, wood mice and yellow necked mice. As with all types of British bumble bees the Red tailed is suffering a decline in numbers as countryside habitats become less common. You can help by encouraging Bees into your garden by creating nest boxes and mowing your lawn less in the summer if it has clover on as the Bees love clover. Advice on encouraging bees into your garden can be found the National trust web site and a helpful free leaflet is also available as a download from Natural England. www.nationaltrust.org.uk www.english-nature.org.uk When to see them: March-November (sometimes year-round in the south). Nesting habits: Old burrows and cavities. ID tips: Distinctive yellow and black bands and a white tail. Description: The classic stripy bumblebees. Several species of bumblebee have this colour pattern. See our guide to the most common species of banded white-tailed bumblebees. When to see them: March-June. Nesting habits: Old burrows and cavities. ID tips: Yellow and black bands and an orange tail. Small size. Males have yellow facial hair. Description: The UK's smallest bumblebee. Common in gardens and other areas with trees and bushes. The early bumblebee is a key pollinator of summer fruits such as raspberries. Order a bee saver kit and get a fold-out bee identification guide to take out into your nearest park or garden. The kit also contains wildflower seeds to attract and feed more bees, as well as a garden planner and a bee-themed postcard. When to see them: April-November. Nesting habits: Old burrows or tussocks. ID tips: Black body and an orange tail. Male red-tailed bumblebees have a yellow ruff. Description: Of the three species this colour, you are most likely to see the red-tailed bumblebee, but check for dark-winged red-tailed cuckoo bees which are nest parasites. See our guide to red-tailed black bumblebees. When to see them: March-November. Nesting habits: In tussocks. ID tips: Varying shades of brown or ginger. Rear legs bare and shiny. Common carder bees have black hairs on their abdomen. Description: The brown bumblebee you will most likely see is the common carder bee. All three like tubular flowers such as foxglove and deadnettle along with legume flowers including beans. See our guide to brown carder bees. When to see them: March-July. Nesting habits: Cavities above ground. ID tips: Ginger thorax, black abdomen and a white tail. Black underside. Description: This distinctive bumblebee first arrived in the UK in 2001. Your records can help us track its spread. As its name suggests it prefers to nest in trees, also using bird boxes and buildings. When to see them: May-September. Nesting habits: In tussocks. ID tips: Pale yellow and grey bands with a peachy tail. Description: This is one of Britain's rarest bumblebees. It is restricted to grasslands in southern England and Wales that are rich in its favoured legume flowers such as vetches, trefoils and clovers. When to see them: March-October. Nesting habits: Beehives or cavities above ground. ID tips: Abdomen with amber bands or completely black. Buff-haired thorax. Rear legs bare and shiny. Description: Most honeybees in the UK live in hives managed by beekeepers. Each hive can contain over 20,000 bees. Only worker honeybees make delicious honey, using nectar gathered from flowers. Get your bee saver kit and give nature a boost. When to see them: March-June. Nesting habits: Aerial or ground nester (banks, walls or bare ground). ID tips: Females: Black with yellow legs. Males: Brown with a pale face and hair plumes on their middle legs. Description: These bumblebee-lookalikes are amongst the earliest bees to emerge in spring. They dart rapidly between flowers and blossoms, particularly favouring lungwort, deadnettle and wallflowers. When to see them: March-June. Nesting habits: Bee nest parasite. ID tips: Grey collar. White spots along abdomen. Sometimes all-black. Pointed rear. Description: The common mourning bee is a 'cuckoo bee'. She lays her eggs in the nests of hairy-footed flower bees, where the larvae eat the food stores gathered for the flower bee's own young. When to see them: May-July. Nesting habits: Aerial nester including bee hotels. ID tips: Yellow spots along abdomen. Males have prongs on their rear. Description: Female wool carder bees gather balls of plant hairs to build their nest cells. Males guard hairy plants such as lamb's-ear, fighting off other bees to ensure they get to mate with visiting females. When to see them: May-August. Nesting habits: Aerial nesters including bee hotels. ID tips: Broad head and body. Females have a brush of hairs under the abdomen. Description: Found neat crescents cut from your rose bush? That's a sign that leafcutter bees are about. The female uses the leaves to line her chosen nest cavity and build snug cells for her young. When to see them: June-August. Nesting habits: Aerial nesting including bee hotels. ID tips: Very small (6-7mm), black and shiny. Slender body with a large head. Female collects pollen under her abdomen. Description: Britain's smallest bee. The females mainly collect pollen from bellflowers (campanulas) and nest inside woodworm holes in dead wood. The males sleep inside flowers. When to see them: March-June. Nesting habits: Aerial nester including bee hotels. ID tips: Bristly orange hair with dark head and thorax showing through. Males have white face hairs. Female collects pollen under abdomen. Description: A common resident of bee hotels and stone walls. Females gather mud to build their nest cells and are efficient pollinators of fruit-tree blossoms. Smaller males hover around nest sites. When to see them: March-June. Nesting tips: Long proboscis. Short antennae. Hovers around flowers. Description: Bee flies not only look like bees, they live with them. Females fling their eggs into solitary bee burrows where the larvae eat the pollen stores. The adult flies like deadnettle and primrose flowers. With thanks to Chris Shields for bee illustrations. Your continued support has brought about crucial changes to protect bees. These include: A ban on 3 bee-harming neonicotinoid pesticides National Bee Action Plans, the first in the world, drawn up by the UK and Welsh governments Support for communities to establish bee-friendly sites that provide better sources of food and shelter for bees and other pollinating insects If you'd like to support our efforts to help bees, buy a Bee Saver Kit today. Bombus lapidarius Tail colour: Crimson, but fades in old individuals. Wing colour: Transparent Hind legs: Bare, black and shining with a fringe of black hairs in queens and workers. Have pollen baskets. Body hair: Short and neat. Other features: Males have a yellow ruff and face Habitat and range: Common and widespread in a variety of habitats, including gardens, towns and woodland. Bombus rupestris Tail colour: Bright red Wing colour: Dark grey/brown Hind legs: Hairy. No pollen baskets. Body hair: Short and sparse Other features: Broad head. Long body. Males have grey bands Habitat and range: A variety of habitats but mostly unimproved grasslands. England and Wales but expanding North. Bombus rudericus Tail colour: Orange/red Wing colour: Transparent Legs: Bare, black and shining with a fringe of orange hairs in queens and workers Body hair: Long and scruffy Other features: Dumpy body. Habitat and range: a declining species mainly found in wildflower-rich grasslands. Southern England, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Osmia bicolor A hairy solitary bee is mainly found in chalk grasslands in England and Wales, where it nests in snail shells. Sometimes in sandy areas and brownfield sites. The females are black with red hairs covering most of their abdomen. They have a broad head and greenish eyes. A few species of hoverflies mimic these bees. The most common are the bumblebee hoverfly Volucella bombylans and the narcissus bulfly Merodon equestris. These hoverflies have short antennae, a pale face and large eyes that meet in middle in males (bee eyes never meet). The bumblebee hoverfly has dark bands across its wings.

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