

About the London Natural History Society

The London Natural History Society traces its history back to 1858. The Society is made up of a number of active sections that provide a wide range of talks, organised nature walks, coach trips and other activities. This range of events makes the LNHS one of the most active natural history societies in the world. Whether it is purely for recreation, or to develop field skills for a career in conservation, the LNHS offers a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. Beginners are welcome at every event and gain access to the knowledge of some very skilled naturalists.

On top of its varied public engagement, the LNHS also provides a raft of publications free to members. The London Naturalist is its annual journal with scientific papers as well as lighter material such as book reviews. The annual London Bird Report published since 1937 sets a benchmark for publications of this genre. Furthermore, there is a quarterly Newsletter that carries many trip reports and useful announcements.

The LNHS maintains its annual membership subscription at a modest level, representing fantastic value for money.

Distribution and Use of this PDF

This PDF may be freely distributed in print or electronic form and can be freely uploaded to private or commercial websites provided it is kept in its entirety without any changes. The text and images should not be used separately without permission from the copyright holders. LNHS Learning materials, with the inner pages in a poster format for young audiences, are designed to be printed off and used on a class room wall or a child's bedroom.

The selection of species is a subjective decision of the contributor(s) and not based on quantitative criteria such as population numbers, database records or presence on recording grids in surveys. These PDFs are not available in print form from the LNHS.

Taking your interest further

Details of other organizations with an interest in wildlife and a whole host of information is on the LNHS website. Past copies of the printed LNHS publications are available from Catherine Schmitt. Details on www.lnhs.org.uk.

Contributing to the LNHS Education Series

If you would like to contribute to LNHS Learning please get in touch with one of the following section chairpersons in the LNHS or Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne who is coordinating the series.

Botany	David Bevan	conserving.bevan@virgin.net
Ecology & Entomology	Mick Massie	mick.massie@gmail.com
London Bird Club	Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne	gehan.desilva.w@gmail.com

Credits

Text: Hauke Koch (@HaukeKoch | H.koch@kew.org) is the Ann Sowerby Fellow in Pollinator Health at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. His research looks at the role of plants and microbes in bee health.

Images: Hauke Koch

Design & Layout: Keith Wijesuriya (www.totalmediadirection.com)

Version Date: 1 July 2016

10 Bumblebees of London



10 Bumblebees of London

Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)

Probably the most common bumblebee to see in London. A very adaptable species that forages on a wide variety of plants. It has a short tongue, but often bites holes in the base of deep flowers to rob nectar. The only bumblebee species bred commercially in Europe for pollination of crops. This species has colonies active throughout the winter in London.



Garden Bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*)

Has the longest tongue of the common UK bumblebees, and long, triangular face in frontal view. It has an extra yellow band at the back of the thorax compared to Buff-tailed. Garden Bumblebees prefer to forage on deep flowers like dead nettles, red clover, monkshood, viper's bugloss, or foxglove. They have relatively small nests with 100 or fewer workers.



Common Carder Bumblebee (*Bombus pascuorum*)

Common around London with a relatively long tongue, workers forage on diverse plants like sages, vetches, clovers and brambles. Queens like white deadnettle, ground-ivy and bluebells in spring. Nest are often in tussocks of grass, which the bees "carder" around the colony as a protective cover. Colonies stay small but can last longer than any other species.



Tree Bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*)

A relatively new bumblebee to Britain, only first recorded in 2001, but spreading rapidly across the UK and now very common in the South. It has a brown thorax with a black abdomen and white tail. Generally nests above and ground in tree cavities, rooftops, or even bird nest boxes. Tree Bumblebees visit a wide variety of flowers.



Southern Cuckoo Bumblebee (*Bombus vestalis*)

The cuckoo bumblebee of the Buff-tailed Bumblebee. The females invade the host nest and kill or suppress the Buff-tailed Bumblebee queen (lower right). The workers of the usurped host colony raise the cuckoo female's offspring. Female cuckoo bumblebees lack the pollen collecting structure (corbicula) of other bumblebees on their hind legs.



White-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*)

Workers and queens of this species look very similar to buff-tailed bumblebees, but have pure white instead of buff tails. Males (see image) are easier to tell apart because of their yellow head (black in Buff-tailed). Mostly nests underground in old rodent burrows like Buff-tailed. Common in London, and has a broad range of foraging plants.



Early Bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*)

Queens of this species emerge very early in spring, and two colony cycles may be completed in one season. Early Bumblebees are yellow and black-banded with a red tail. Both queens and workers are relatively small compared to other species; some workers can be tiny. It has a particular liking for flowers of raspberry and blackberry, for which it is an important pollinator.



Red-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*)

An attractive black bumblebee with a red tail. They are short-tongued and reputed to have a preference for yellow flowers, such as dandelion, bird's-foot trefoil or wild mignonette. Red-tailed Bumblebees are common in gardens and parks across London. May nest under stone walls, but also in abandoned rodent nests.



Heath Bumblebee (*Bombus jonellus*)

The Heath Bumblebee has a similar yellow and black colour pattern to the Garden Bumblebee, but a much shorter face and tongue. Not commonly seen in London, but may be present in the South and West, especially in parks with heathland. Can nest both below and above ground, and is related to the Early and Tree Bumblebee.



Forest Cuckoo Bumblebee (*Bombus sylvestris*)

The Cuckoo bumblebee of the Early Bumblebee. As with the Southern Cuckoo Bumblebee, females usurp the nest of their host, and have host workers raise their brood. Can be found where there is a strong population of Early Bumblebees. Males of the cuckoo bumblebee can often be seen on thistle and knapweed flowers in summer.

