



Blaeberry bumblebee identification guide

What to look for

A small-medium sized bumblebee (Figure 1). Two brightly lemony yellow bands on the thorax, none on the abdomen. Almost the entire rear end (abdomen) is a glorious bright rosy orange. Males of the red-tailed bumblebee (Figure 2) and all types of the early bumblebee (Figure 3) might cause confusion. However, ONLY the Blaeberry bumblebee has the orange 'tail' covering the majority the abdomen. If you're in doubt please try to take a digital photograph (camera phones are fine) and attach it to your email.



Figure 1. Blaeberry bumblebee



Figure 2. Red-tailed bumblebee male



Figure 3. The Early bumblebee



Queens and males are similar





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Where to look:

Whether Munro or Corbett, Graham or Donald please keep your eyes open everywhere since these bumblebees can also be found in lowland flower meadows close to hill ground.

When to look:

Spring queens are out searching for nest sites as early as March but mainly May onwards, and the smaller workers from June until September. Males and new queens are on the wing in late summer and autumn. The following flowers are popular:

Spring

Blaeberry/ bilberry and related species such as cowberry. Also keep an eye out for newly emerged queens on willow catkins and flowering cherries. Bird's-foot trefoil and white clover are commonly used.

Summer

On the hills, bell heather, cross leaved heather and ling heather, but alpine species such as purple saxifrage are also visited as this bumblebee ranges well above the heather line.

Autumn

As ling heather finishes flowering, they commonly use devil's bit scabious and ragwort.

