

# What **bee** is that?

**Did you know there are over 270 different species of bee in the UK!**

As bees travel from flower to flower collecting nectar and pollen to feed themselves and their young, they carry out a large majority of pollination. This process of moving pollen between flowers is essential for many plants to make fruit and reproduce.

Our wild bumblebees and solitary bees are struggling due to loss of flower-rich habitats. For example, 97% of the wildflower meadows have been lost in the last century. Other factors like climate change, pesticide use and diseases also play a role.

**UK bees can be split into three groups:**  
**Honeybees, Bumblebees and Solitary bees**



Honeybee

## Honeybee

**1** species of honeybee, **domesticated in the UK.**

The honeybee is the only UK bee species that **makes honey** and is managed by beekeepers. A hive can have up to **100,000** bees and is made up of one queen, female workers and male drones. Pollen is held in baskets on the back legs.

**ID:** Slim, striped and barrel-shaped. Some can be dark.



Common carder bee

## Bumblebees

**24** species of bumblebee – **all of which are wild.**

Most species are social and live in nests of **50–400** bees. A social nest creates queens, female workers and males. Bumblebees often like to nest where small mammals or birds have nested before. Pollen is held in baskets on the back legs.

**ID:** Round and furry appearance, with a familiar deep buzz  
**(Top tip for ID: start with tail colour).**



Early bumblebee



Tree bumblebee



Ivy bee



Leafcutter bee



Tawny mining bee

## Solitary bees

Most bees are solitary with more than **250** wild solitary bee species.

Solitary bees do not have social colonies with workers. Each female tends to her own young, although they are called solitary bees, some can be found living in large groups. Bee hotels, bare ground and banks can be used for nesting by solitary bees. Pollen is held in dense hairs, either on the back legs or under the abdomen, depending on the species.

**ID:** Smaller bees that are highly variable in shape, markings and colour.