
Bumblebee nests

what to do if you find one



www.bumblebeeconservation.org

Saving the sound of summer

Where will you find a bumblebee nest?

Bumblebee season starts in spring when the queens emerge from hibernation to look for food and shelter. At this time they can often be seen investigating a variety of different places for potential nesting sites. Some nest underground, in places such as abandoned rodent holes, under sheds or under garden decking. Others nest above ground in thick grass or compost heaps, while some make nests high up in bird boxes, hollowed trees, or roof eaves. The colony will live in the nest for a few months before dying off naturally, in most places they only last until the end of summer. Some bumblebees have a second nesting season within the same year, with these nests ending in autumn.

If you have Tree bumblebees (*Bombus hypnorum*) nesting in a bird box or your roof eaves you may see large groups of bees flying around the nest in the summer. This is not a 'swarm' - it is known as a 'drone cloud' which is a group of male bees competing with each other for a chance to mate with a new queen as she emerges from the nest. Although this can look intimidating, male bees cannot sting and this is nothing to be concerned about.



Tree bumblebees (*Bombus hypnorum*) are now one of our most common species, they are urban nesters and

will readily nest in bird boxes and roof eaves.



What to do if you find a nest

If you find a bumblebee nest, consider yourself very lucky! Not everyone gets the chance to see a living, working bumblebee colony. Thankfully bumblebees are not aggressive and will quietly go about their lives looking for flowers to forage on, pollinating our crops and wildflowers as they do so.

- If you are lucky enough to find a nest, do not disturb it, and they won't disturb you either!
- Don't get too close and avoid breathing on the nest.
- If bumblebees are nesting in or on your house - you can rest assured they do not cause structural damage and do not bore holes or chew through wood.
- If bumblebees have nested in your roof space or cavity wall and you'd rather not have another nest next year, wait for the autumn when the nest is empty and block the entrance hole, to prevent a new queen from finding the same hole next year.
- Make sure to provide plenty of bee-friendly plants to help the colony throughout its life-cycle. Visit our Bee kind tool for plant recommendations.

Moving bumblebee nests

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We do not recommend moving bumblebee nests. However, if you find a nest is causing real problems for you and you simply can't allow it to finish its lifecycle in the current location, we have some guidance on our website on how to re-route a nest entrance and how to move a nest yourself at www.bumblebeeconservation.org. Make sure to read all of the available information before attempting to work on a nest. **Please note: Bumblebee Conservation Trust staff are unable to move bumblebee nests.**

What do bumblebees do?

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Bumblebees are vitally important as they pollinate many of our everyday favourites, including strawberries, cucumbers, tomatoes, apples and raspberries. Sadly though, bumblebee numbers are in decline.



Remember . . .



Bumblebee colonies don't last long and all of the bees die off naturally within a couple of months, except for the new queens which find a place to hibernate

elsewhere in the soil – ready to start next year's colonies. Occasionally, some bumblebees have a second nest in the same year, but all nests are empty by late autumn.

Did you know . . .

- Bumblebee nesting season starts in spring and ends in autumn, only queens survive over winter - they hibernate in the soil.
- Bumblebees are not aggressive, only females can sting (and only do so if they feel threatened).
- 97% of the UK's wildflower meadows have disappeared in the last 80 years, leaving bumblebees and other pollinators with less to eat.
- Bumblebees do not swarm - sometimes large numbers of males can be seen outside a nest competing for a mate, this is known as a 'drone cloud'.
- Bumblebee nests only live for a couple of months and all are empty by the end of autumn.
- In the UK there are over 250 different types of bee, 24 of these are bumblebees, one of them is the honeybee and the others are solitary bees.



Further information

Staff at the Bumblebee Conservation Trust are unable to move nests and do not recommend doing so.

If you require more information on bumblebee nests (including information on re-routing nest entrances or moving nests) please visit our website where you will find a list of frequently asked questions about nests.

If after reading all of the information you still require further assistance, please contact enquiries@bumblebeeconservation.org

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is a registered charity (England & Wales 1115634 / Scotland SC042830). Company registration number 05618710 (England & Wales).

www.bumblebeeconservation.org

Photos: Raymond Hutcheon, Hilary Lloyd.



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Improve your Bee ID skills with our 'What's that bumblebee?' App for the Big 8 - search on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store today!

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