

Bumblebee Identification Guide for Beginners

By Richard Daborn

The following guide should enable eighty percent of bumblebees in **Surrey** to be identified. It focuses on the eight most common species, ignoring the cuckoo bumblebees. This guide comprises four pairs i.e. eight species. Each pair has something in common, and a way to distinguish between the species within the pair.

1st pair

Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*

- Ginger thorax, white tail



Common Carder Bumblebee *Bombus pascuorum*

- Ginger thorax, pale and dark hairs on abdomen
- Tail may be ginger or buff coloured



Common factor: Both bumblebees have a ginger thorax

Distinctive features: Tree bumblebee has solid white on last few segments of abdomen
Carder bee has a mixture of pale and dark hairs all over the abdomen, with the *light form* of Carder bee having more light hairs than dark, and the *dark form* having more dark than pale hairs

2nd pair

Red-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*

- Fairly large bee, all black with red tail



Early Bumblebee *Bombus pratorum*

- A smaller bee, with yellow stripes on the thorax
- Reddish often orange tail



Common factor: Both have reddish tails

Distinctive features: The Early bumblebee is smaller and has yellow stripes

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This guide with artworks has been designed and published in memory of Richard Daborn

3rd pair

Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*

- Large bee with two yellow stripes, one front of thorax, second stripe part way along abdomen
- Buff-coloured tail



White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lucorum*

- Two yellow stripes in same position as Buff-tailed bumblebee
- White tail



Common factor: The number and position of the two yellow stripes

Distinctive features: Colour of tail applies to queens only

Note: The worker bees of both species have white tails and cannot be separated in the field

4th pair

Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum*

- Three yellow stripes: front of thorax, rear of thorax and front of abdomen
- White tail



Heath Bumblebee *Bombus jonellus*

- Three yellow stripes in same position as on Garden bumblebee
- White tail



Common factor: The number and position of the three yellow stripes. White tail

Distinctive features: Garden bumblebee has a long face when viewed from side
Heath bumblebee has a short face

English name: 'Garden' has more letters than 'Heath' - *Long face:* long name, *short face:* short name

