

# How you can help

## Volunteer

There are so many local projects and initiatives that will help our bees. Some include:

- The Stepping Stones Project (partnership project currently led by the National Trust)
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust Bee Walk in Stepping Stones project area
- Caring for God's Acre
- Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project
- Marches Meadow Group
- Buglife's Severn B-Lines initiative

More info on all these can be found by searching online.



Find out about the Shropshire Hills AONB species recovery plan which includes the bilberry bumblebee.

Join Shropshire Wildlife Trust and/or buy a bilberry bumblebee "Sponsor a Species" pack.

## Take action

- Make your garden a 'Stepping Stone' for pollinators:  
[beekind.bumblebeeconservation.org](http://beekind.bumblebeeconservation.org)
- Monitor your garden for pollinators:  
[ukpoms.org.uk/fit-counts](http://ukpoms.org.uk/fit-counts)



## Contact us

[bumblebeesonthemynd@gmail.com](mailto:bumblebeesonthemynd@gmail.com)



Volunteers surveying a meadow for bilberry bumblebee (Charlie Bell)

## What we are doing to help

Volunteers from the Bumblebees on the Mynd initiative are conducting surveys to learn which areas in the Shropshire hills are important for the bilberry bumblebee. Various organisations are also helping to create and restore habitat. For example, creating flower-rich meadows near to heathland helps fill the 'hungry gap' between the flowering of bilberry (spring) and heather (late summer).

## What to do if you see a bilberry bumblebee

Try and photograph the bee so we can verify your sighting. Make a note of the location (grid reference or what. three. words) and the date. You can submit your record by scanning the QR code below or using the iRecord website or app.



Use our online form



Use our iRecord facility



# The bilberry bumblebee



(Photo: David Williams)

The bilberry bumblebee is a special local bee. It is rare in the UK but still found in the south Shropshire hills. If you're in the area between spring and late summer you have a great chance of spotting it.

Bilberry bumblebees evolved in heathland and are largely dependent on bilberry flowers. In the past local families picked bilberries, exporting vast quantities to the cities.

This provided an income for them as well as a food source. The bilberry bumblebee was crucial to this industry - pollinating the bilberry flowers as it fed. We need to remember and support this connection between wild bees and our food.



## Bilberry bumblebee factsheet

**Scientific name:** *Bombus monticola*

**Conservation status:** Localised and declining

**Habitat:** Upland moorland, heath and grassland

**Food:** A range of flowers through the year. Newly emerged queens use pussy willow. Bilberry becomes important during nest building in spring. They also forage in nearby meadows and gardens, if available - clover, trefoils and vetches are used during peak nest activity. In late summer heather is used by new males and queens.

**Ecology:** A distinctive bumblebee with extensive red marking over more than half of the abdomen (tail), and bright yellow bands on the front and back of the thorax (mid-section).

It is closely associated with uplands and bilberries. Historically it was widely distributed throughout northern and western Britain but there has been a marked decline in the distribution. It has now been included on Natural England's Species Recovery Programme.

## Identifying bilberry bumblebees

The bilberry bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*) is one of five species of red-tailed bumblebees found in Shropshire. Bilberry bumblebees have the following four features:



(Photo: Bumblebee Conservation Trust)

1. Large fiery orange-red tail, covering more than half the abdomen



(Photo: Glen Shee)

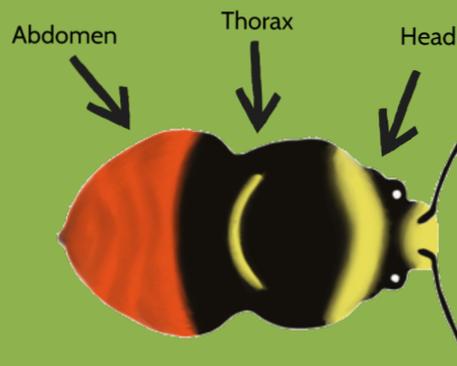
2. Yellow bands on the top and bottom of the thorax



(Photo: Keith Broomfield)

3. Relatively small in size and rounder compared to other bees

4. Found on or near upland heath where heather or bilberry grow.



## Similar species - don't be fooled!

There are several similar-looking red-tailed bumblebees to rule out.



### Early bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*):

Only the very tip of the tail is red, often 'washed out' in colour. Common in Shropshire.

(Photo: Anna Hobbs)

### Worker Red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*):

Relatively large with all black elongated body and a red tail, which is prone to fading. Common in Shropshire.

(Photo: Patricia Dove)



### Male Red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*):

Yellow bands on the top and bottom of the thorax, but the 'fire extinguisher' red tail covers less than half the abdomen.

(Photo: Tessa Bramall)



### Red-tailed cuckoo bumblebee (*Bombus rupestris*):

Darker wing membranes. It prefers to crawl over flowers rather than fly. Neither sex has pollen baskets.

(Photo: Nick Owens)



**Red-shanked carder bee (*Bombus ruderarius*):** Has been recorded in Shropshire but is very rare.

## Green Recovery Challenge Fund



*Bumblebees on the Mynd is a volunteer-led project devoted to furthering our knowledge of the bilberry bumblebee and all other species of bee within south Shropshire. It is an element of the Stepping Stones Project, a landscape-scale nature conservation project aiming to create ecological links between the Stretton Hills and the Stiperstones.*

