

Buff-tailed Bumblebee

Bombus terrestris

Insects · Active Feb-Nov · queens may fly all winter



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A large, robust bumblebee with two dirty-yellow bands and — on queens — a distinctly buff or off-white tail. Workers can have a whiter tail with a faint buff line, which makes them tricky to separate from white-tailed bumblebees. Buff-tails are abundant in gardens, farmland and waste ground around Dumfries, and queens are among the first bees on the wing each spring.

BEHAVIOUR

Buff-tails have a short tongue, so they favour open, shallow flowers, and they are notorious nectar robbers — biting a hole in the base of a long flower such as comfrey to reach nectar without pollinating it. Nests are underground, often in old rodent burrows, and can hold several hundred workers. In milder winters some colonies now stay active right through, which is a genuinely recent change.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Bees (Apidae)
SIZE	Queens 20-22 mm · our largest bumblebee
STATUS	Native; abundant and widespread

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