

Common Bees & Wasps

A series of ID guides to help you discover more of Leicestershire's wonderful wildlife

There are around 280 bee species in the UK and only 10% of these are social bumblebees. There are even more wasps with the familiar 'yellow-jackets' just a tiny fraction. They play a vital role in the ecosystem, both as pollinators and pest controllers, as well as being food for other animals. Though many look similar and are hard to identify, those shown below should provide a good start to the group. Some of the wasps are most easily identified from the plant galls that house their larvae.

When viewing online, simply click on the species name to find out more.



Carder Bumblebee – *Bombus pascuorum*

ID: Ginger thorax. Ginger bands on the abdomen but becoming dark as hairs are lost. Never a white 'tail'!

Where: Meadows, gardens. June-Oct.

Similar: [Tree Bumblebee](#) (white 'tail')



Tree Bumblebee – *Bombus hypnorum*

ID: Ginger thorax, black abdomen with white 'tail'.

Where: Meadows, gardens. Will nest in bird boxes. Apr-July.

Similar: [Carder Bumblebee](#) (ginger/black tail)



Red-tailed Bumblebee – *Bombus lapidarius*

ID: Black with a red 'tail'. Males (right) may have yellow band on the thorax.

Where: Meadows, gardens. May-Sept.

Similar: Early Bumblebee (yellow band on abdomen)



Honey Bee – *Apis mellifera*

ID: Banded abdomen with orange front segments.

Where: Anywhere with flowers! March-Oct.

Similar: Worn bees can look like *Andrena* species.

Become a citizen scientist! If you can spot any of these species, why not submit your sighting at www.naturespot.org.uk and contribute to our scientific knowledge of local wildlife. Record data submitted by the public is vital to conservation. Simply register online then follow the guidance on the Submit Records page.

Other common Leicestershire bees and wasps to check out:

[Buff-tailed Bumblebee](#), [White-tailed Bumblebee](#), [Early Bumblebee](#), [Leaf-cutter Bee](#), [Oak Marble Gall Wasp](#)



Common Wasp – *Vespula vulgaris*

ID: Yellow and black. Anchor mark on face.

Where: Woods, meadows, gardens. Apr-Oct.

Similar: Other social wasps (lack anchor mark).



Hairy-footed Flower Bee – *Anthophora plumipes*

ID: Look like small bumblebees. Males are orange, females black with orange hind leg pollen baskets.

Where: Gardens, flowery grassland. Mar-May.

Similar: None.



Hornet – *Vespa crabro*

ID: Large (to 35mm.). Red, yellow and brown pattern.

Where: Woodland, parks, gardens. May-Nov.

Similar: Queen Median Wasp (has black not brown)



Knopper Gall Wasp – *Andricus quercuscalicis*

ID: Gall distorts acorn growth. The wasp itself is tiny and rarely seen.

Where: English Oak.

Similar: None.



Bedeguar Gall Wasp – *Diplolepis rosae*

ID: Red/yellow hairy growth – golfball sized. Turns brown with age. The wasp is tiny and rarely seen.

Where: Anywhere that Dog-rose is found. May onwards.

Similar: None.



Silk Button Gall Wasp – *Neuroterus numismalis*

ID: Tiny, golden donut-shaped growths – often in profusion. The tiny wasp hatches in Feb-Apr.

Where: Underside of Oak leaves. July-Oct.

Similar: None.

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Wildlife ID Guides at:
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