



To 'bee' or not to 'bee' that is the question!

Bumblebees have been in the news quite a bit recently. Declines in bumblebee, and other insect populations, is worrying and something that almost all of us are able to do something about in our gardens and green spaces.

One bumblebee species that has bucked the trend is the tree bumblebee. These relatively recent arrivals to our shores (they arrived in 2001 from Europe) have spread rapidly throughout the UK. Tree bumblebees get their name from their habit of establishing nests in holes in trees although they're often spotted in garden bird boxes, sometimes even evicting the blue or great tits that were just starting to set up home. They have been known to establish colonies under roof tiles but their presence usually goes undetected until about this time of year when the colony is coming to the end of its life. It's at this point that male tree bumblebees appear to swarm outside the nest as they wait for new queens to emerge – they're keen to mate and pass on their genes to the next generation. Once this stage is reached, the colony will die off within the next few weeks.

These distinctive bumblebees (chestnut thorax with a black abdomen that's tipped off with a white tail) are unusual amongst UK bumblebees in nesting in cavities. Buff-tailed bumblebees, for example, often chose an old underground mouse hole to establish their nests in whereas common carder bees will nest at the base of tussocky grass. So, as well as providing lots of bee-friendly pollen and nectar plants in your garden or community green space, why not also think about what else our beleaguered bumblebees need. Could you leave a corner of your garden to grow wild, only cutting the grass much later in the year? Perhaps you could create a small compost heap (as well as offering space for bumblebee nests, you might also attract slow-worms)? If you spot tree bumblebees under your tiles, don't call in pest control – leave them to their own devices and they'll be gone soon.



Tree bumblebee by Rosemary Winnall

For more information about how you can help our bees, visit
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-gardening
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/action-insects



Caryl Bracewell

Summer butterflies

Summer is a great time to get out and enjoy the countryside. On a warm summer day, why not see how many butterflies you can spot? Depending on whether you're in your garden, local green space or nature reserve, you may spot some (or all) of the following: small tortoiseshell, speckled wood, gatekeeper, peacock, marbled white, painted lady and comma.

Did you know, though, that almost half of British butterflies are classed as endangered, vulnerable or near threatened because their numbers have dropped so much? As with bumblebees (overleaf), there's a little something that most of us can do to help. If you have a garden, or even space for a couple of patio pots or a window box, choose plants that provide a rich nectar source such as lavender, buddleia, marjoram, thyme or Verbena. Try to plant flowers that provide nectar from late winter/early summer right the way through the year and deadhead some flowers to prolong the season (although leaving lots to go to seed later in the year will benefit birds too).

Why not visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/actions/how-attract-butterflies-your-garden for inspiration?

As two caterpillars were crawling along, a butterfly flew overhead.

One caterpillar turned to the other and said...

"You'll never get me up in one of those things!"



Your committee & future activities

After more than a decade in post, your local group committee is stepping down and would like to invite you to get involved with taking the group forwards. If you're interested in getting involved but would like to know more about it, please contact Anne at Lower Smite Farm anne@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org or 01905 754919.

In the meantime, Anne and colleagues are hoping to run more online talks via Zoom during autumn and winter. Please check the events section of the Trust's website for the most up to date event information www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on The page also has information about walks, talks and other activities that are happening across the county if you'd like to travel a little further afield to get your wild fix.