

BUMBLE BEE

Hymenoptera, Apidae

By Eric Day

SIZE: 3/4 to 1 1/2 inches (19.1-38mm).

COLOR: Generally black and yellow.

DESCRIPTION: Bumble bees are large, hairy bees that collect and carry pollen on their hind legs to bring it back to the hive.

HABITAT: Often encountered foraging at flowers. Some species choose nesting places around people's houses. Wooden storage sheds and small barns, which may also house small rodents, are a favorite nesting place of bumble bees.

LIFE CYCLE: Their colonies are a spectacular example of social organization, with each member working tirelessly to protect and build the colony.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: Bumble bees are beneficial insects, performing unexcelled pollinating services for such crops as red clover and blueberries. Many species, normally docile and unaggressive while foraging on flowers, turn vicious when their nests are disturbed, chasing intruders for many yards away from the nest.

CONTROL: Control is usually not recommended. But if desired, it would be best to find and destroy the nest. Individual bumble bees that get into the house can be controlled with an aerosol.

INTERESTING FACTS: Bumble bees are common and inconspicuous insects; yet most people have never seen the fascinating bustle of activity in the nest of the bumble bee. Inside the nest, a colony of these social insects may number 200 or more. Members engage in most of the activities of a human society-gathering food, caring for offspring, constructing a home, defending it, and regulating the environment inside it. Bumble bees have very few natural enemies, skunks being one of the few animals that find bumble bees tasty, sting and all.



Bumble bee. David Cappaert,
Michigan State University.
Bugwood.org