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Shrill carder bee

(*Bombus sylvarum*)

“Shrill” comes from the high-pitched buzz it makes when flying”

Phylum	Arthropoda
Class	Insecta
Order	Hymenoptera
Family	Apidae
Genus	Bombus

Diet: Likes vetches, thistles and oxtongues

Size: Queen 16 - 18 mm, worker 10 - 15 mm

Rarity: One of the UK's rarest bumblebees



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Common

Rare

What's the story?

In the 1900s, the Shrill carder bee was seen throughout much of England and Wales. Loss and fragmentation of flower-rich habitat through agricultural intensification, overgrazing, and land use changes have all contributed to the rapid decline of the Shrill carder bee, making it one of the UK's rarest bumblebees.

Canvey Wick SSSI - Britain's first Bug Reserve, in Essex, is home to one of the most important populations of this bumblebee in southern England. Buglife are working with The Land Trust and RSPB to restore wildflower-rich habitat at Canvey Wick, ensuring the Shrill carder bee population thrives.

Description

A distinctive greenish-grey colour, with a single wide band of black hairs across its thorax, two on the abdomen and an orange tail. Queens are much bigger than workers or males.

Lifecycle

Hibernating queens emerge in May, feed on nectar and build new nests. Workers are on the wing June to September, foraging on a wide variety of flowers. Males and daughter queens emerge late July to September. When the daughter queens have been produced, the colony begins to die.

Daughter queens mate then hibernate, and emerge the following May to begin the cycle again.

Where in UK?

Fragmented populations are concentrated into just 3 areas; the Thames Estuary, South West England and South Wales.



Habitat

Shrill carder bees need large areas of tall open flower-rich grasslands close to undisturbed nesting habitat. Brownfields can offer good open mosaic habitat suiting the Shrill carder bee.

Nests are usually made in thick tussocky grassland vegetation, near the ground. Shrill carder bees have small colonies with between 50-70 workers in a nest.

Threats

Intensification of farming and grazing practices has led to a loss of field margins and large areas of flower-rich grasslands. Other threats include scrub encroachment, frequent grass cutting and re-development of brownfield sites.

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