



**BWARS**

## Information Sheet

# FLOWER BEE (*Anthophora plumipes*)

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- \* Safe with Children and with Pets
- \* Important wild pollinator early-flowering plants
- \* Distinctive UK colour form
- \* Can you add to our knowledge?

### Featuring:

- Background information
- Distribution in UK and the world
- Habitat requirements
- Conservation

## Background and Distribution

The rapid darting flight of the gingery males of the hairy-footed Flower-bee (*Anthophora plumipes*) heralds the end of winter in much of southern and central England and Wales. The bee is unknown in Ireland or Scotland.

*A. plumipes* emerges from hibernation in late February or early March and is a regular visitor to flowers of Lungwort.

About two weeks after the males emerge, the first of the females may be seen. These are very different to look at, resembling all black bumblebees with yellowish hairs on the hind legs. They too visit tubular early season flowers and in addition to Lungwort, will also visit Comfrees and Deadnettles.

There is a single flight period each year. The species is on the wing from early March to late May.

The species is extremely widespread on continental Europe where it can exist in several distinctly different colour forms.

In a very few places in the extreme south of England it may fly with its extremely rare relative, *A. retusa*.

## Habitat and Conservation

*Anthophora plumipes* typically nests in old cob walls, in soft mortar joints in walls, and (more rarely) in the ground. In favoured locations, the bee can easily nest in aggregations of hundreds.

Typical habitats include town parks and gardens, roadside verges and flower rich natural habitats such as south facing coastal cliffs. The species is widespread, but the limits to its range are not well known, and neither are the full range of habitat preferences.

Nests may attract the cuckoo bee *Melecta albifrons*, which invades the nest and consumes the *Anthophora* larval food reserves.

No special conservation measures are required.



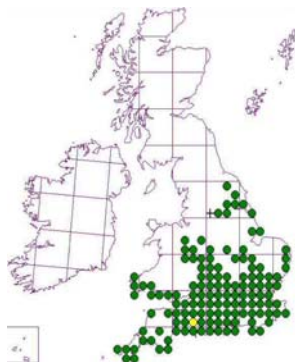
A female of *Anthophora plumipes* foraging at White Deadnettle



A male nectaring at flowers of Red Deadnettle



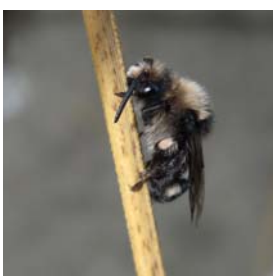
Female excavating a nest burrow in the ground



UK distribution of *Anthophora plumipes*



The cuckoo bee *Melecta albifrons*



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<http://hymettus.org.uk/>

**BWARS, The Bees Wasps & Ants Recording Society** is the national recording scheme which provides the only source of fully validated data on the UK bee, wasp & ant fauna.

<http://www.bwars.com/>

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