

# What's Not to Love About Bumble Bees!

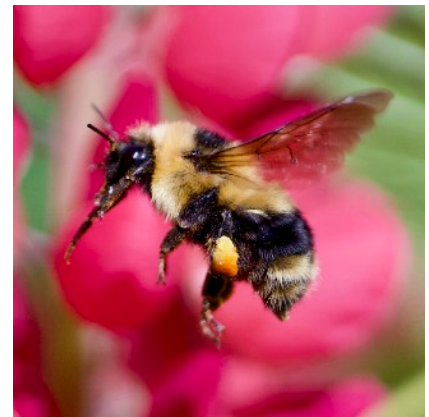
With their rather ungainly fuzzy bodies and short, stubby wings these robust insects spend their summers pollinating both wild plants and commercial crops.

By vibrating their wings at an ultra-high frequency (130 beats/*second*) they induce flowers to release pollen which the bees then collect: a process known as “buzz pollination”.

Some other interesting facts about these insects:

- The comparatively large size of bumble bees allows them to generate enough metabolic heat to continue working even in cool and rainy weather. A body oil on their “fuzz” makes them waterproof.
- Colonies consist of 50 to 500 insects ruled by an egg-laying queen. Their nests or hives are usually built close to the ground, under wood piles or in abandoned rodent tunnels.
- Only the fertilized queens hibernate overwinter. They then lay eggs in the spring and start a new colony.
- Bumble bees are responsible for approximately 2/3 of total pollination in North America, pollinating many plants that other insects don't.
- Bumble bees are less aggressive than honey bees and will only sting if they or their nests are threatened. Because their stingers are not barbed they can sting many times.
- We have at least 19 species of bumble bees (genus *Bombus*) here in Alberta. Many of them are under rapid decline. Loss of habitat, toxic chemicals and changes in climate are all contributing to this decline.

For eons bumble bees have been quietly helping to feed humanity. It's now our turn to step up and extend a hand to help these beneficial little creatures survive.



Bob Griebel  
Director  
Legacy Land Trust Society

Photos by  
Sally Banks  
Legacy Volunteer