

BROWN-BELTED BUMBLE BEE

Hymenoptera: Apidae

Bombus griseocollis

Bug of the Month



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The brown-belted bumble bee is one of the most widespread bumble bees, ranging from Eastern North America to the Pacific Northwest and is the third most common bumble bee species in Pennsylvania. Mostly a generalist forager, this bee also specializes on milkweed flowers (*Asclepias* spp.) which is unique among bumble bees. In contrast to cavity nesting bumble bees, this species nests on the surface of the ground, typically in tall grass.

This species can be easily

reared in lab settings and is being investigated for commercial use in greenhouse crop pollination. Currently the only commercially available bumble bee in North America is the common eastern bumble bee, which is not native to western regions.

B. griseocollis males have unusually large eyes, which they use to search for emerging queens while perched on tall vegetation. Other bumble bee species have smaller eyed males that patrol along paths in search for mates.

Bumble bees have an annual life cycle, with newly mated queens overwintering and producing a colony of non-reproductive workers in the spring that forage and tend brood. This species has relatively small colonies that produce 25 to 50 workers prior to males and new queens.

For more information on bumblebee life history, visit the Center for Pollinator Research website.



pollinators.psu.edu

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