

Thàinig an seillean-mòr suaicheanta seo, le earball fada, bodhaig dhubh agus amhach bhuidhe, gu Alba o chionn gu math goirid ach tha e air sgapadh gu farsaing mar-thà. Seach gu bheil e dèidheil air na gàrraidhean, na togalaichean agus bogsaichean nan eun againn, tha e ri fhaicinn gu bitheanta air feadh na dùthcha gu lèir cha mhòr.

Bha e ri lorg bho thùs air feadh na h-Eòrpa agus Àisia ach, mar thoradh air blàthachadh na gnàth-shìde, tha e air a bhith a’ tuineachadh nas fhaide tuath agus ràinig e an RA ann an 2001, agus an uair sin Alba ann an 2013. Tha e bitheanta a-nis ann am meadhan na h-Alba agus bidh e a’ nochdadh ann an àiteachan cho sgapte ris an Eilean Sgitheanach agus Siorrachd Inbhir Nis, agus tha e a’ nochdadh a-nis suas ris a’ Chearcall Artach.

Tha iad a’ cur gu dòigheil, a rèir choltais, ris an eag-shiostam againn airson a bhith a’ poileanachadh agus, gu ruige seo, chan eil droch bhuaidh air a bhith aca, a rèir choltais, air àireamhan ghnèithean eile. Faodaidh gun nèadaich iad ann an slochan nan craobh ach ’s fheàrr leotha rudan a thog mac an duine (leithid bùird-eun, mullaichean agus beàrnann ann an togalaichean), agus tha iad rim faighinn fiù ’s anns a’ mhothtan am broinn fosglaidhean thiomadairean-aodaich.

This distinctive-looking bumblebee, with its white tail, black body and orange thorax, is a very recent newcomer to Scotland but has already spread widely. Because of its liking for our gardens, buildings and bird-boxes, it has become a familiar sight across much of the country.

Its original range extended through Europe and Asia although (as a consequence of climate warming) it has been colonising northwards and reached the UK in 2001, then Scotland in 2013. It is now common in central Scotland and occurs in locations as widely scattered as Skye and Inverness-shire. In Europe, it now occurs up to the Arctic Circle.

They may nest in tree cavities but have a preference for man-made structures (such as bird-boxes, roofs and gaps in buildings) and occasionally can even be found among the fluff inside tumble dryer vents.

These are very early-emerging bumble-bees. The queen begins searching for a nest site in March-April, investigating up and along walls and roofs. It takes 4-6 weeks before the first cohort of workers emerges. Thereafter, the nest grows until the characteristic drone display flights, which continue through June and July when the new queens have flown and the colony dies.

Their behaviour often draws attention as the males engage in a characteristic display flight around the nest, dancing in a buzzing cloud in anticipation of queens emerging. Quite often you will see two drones tumble to the ground in a case of mistaken identity- each thinking the other is a queen. This buzzing display behaviour is often taken for a honeybee swarm and, together with their very defensive protection of the nest, means that they are often the cause of concern to householders. They are likely to become increasingly noticeable as they continue to thrive in our warming climate.

# Tree Bumblebee

## Seillean-mòr Craoibhe

### *Bombus hypnorum*

Tha iad a’ nochdadh gu math tràth sa bhliadhna cuideachd. Bidh a’ bhanrigh a’ tòiseachadh air sireadh làrach-neadachaidh sa Mhàrt is sa Ghiblean, a’ toirt sùil suas is air feadh bhallachan is mhullaichean. Tha e a’ toirt 4 gu 6 seachdainean mus tog a’ chiad bhuidheann de dh’obraichean ceann. Na dhèidh sin, bidh an nead a’ fàs gu àm nan itealaichean suaicheanta taisbeanaidh leis na seilleanan-dìomhain, a chumas air adhart gu meadhan an t-samhraidh nuair a dh’fhalbhas na banrighrean agus a thèid an tuineachadh bàs.

Bidh an giùlan aca a’ tarraing aire gu tric agus na fireannaich an sàs ann an itealaich-thaisbeanaidh chomharraichte mun nead, a’ dannsadh ann an sgòth le srann mus nochd na banrighrean. Gu math tric chithear dà sheillean-dìomhain a’ tuiteam gu làr ann an suidheachadh iomraill-aithneachaidh - agus an dara fear an dùil gur e banrigh a tha san fhear eile. Tha an giùlan seo de thaisbeanadh le srann gu tric ga ghabhail mar sgoath sheilleanan-meala agus, a bharrachd air dìon feargach an nid, a’ ciallachadh gu bheil iad gu tric nan dragh do luchd-taighe. ’S coltach gum fàs iad nas fhaicsinniche, agus iad a’ cinntinn gu soirbheachail anns a’ ghnàth-shìde bhlàthachaidh againn.

*ged a dh’fhalbhadh e là buidhe  
no geal air choreigin ri tìde,  
fhathast, seall, seillean-mòr na craoibhe*

#### NOTES

They seem to be welcome additions to our ecosystem as pollinators and, so far, they do not seem to have had any detrimental effect on populations of other species.

Tree bumble-bees have a preference for nectar-rich drooping flowers like comfrey. The nesting search-pattern of the queen along vertical surfaces is completely different to our native bumble-bees who fly in a search pattern along the ground. The Gaelic name follows the English meaning where seillean-mòr (literally “big-bee”) is the common name for bumblebee.

*ged a dh’fhalbhadh e là buidhe  
no geal air choreigin ri tìde,  
fhathast, seall, seillean-mòr na craoibhe*

although it’ll soon be gone in time, still, look – the tree bumblebee