

American bumble bee *Bombus pensylvanicus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Hymenoptera

Family: Apidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Color refers to “hair” color. Queens and workers are black on the top of the head. At least the front section of the thorax and at least the front half of the abdomen are yellow. There is a black band between the wing bases. The tail is black. Males may show some yellow on the top of the head. The majority of the male’s abdomen is yellow with brown or black at the tail tip.

BEHAVIORS

American bumble bees are long-tongued bees. Vetches (*Vicia* spp.), clovers (*Trifolium* spp.) and goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) are among the many plant species this bee visits for pollen and nectar. It nests on the surface of the ground. Queens are active from May through September. Workers are active from June through September. Males are active from July through October. These bees are important pollinators of the flowers that they visit to collect nectar and pollen. Bumble bees are eusocial insects. Their life cycle includes egg, larva, pupa and adult stages. Only the fertilized queen overwinters from a colony. In the spring, she selects a nest site and constructs the nest, which is lined with plant material. The first brood raised consists of all workers (females). The workers do all the jobs of the hive except egg-laying. Late in the year both males and queens are produced. Males mate with queens in the fall.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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