

southern plains bumble bee

Bombus fraternus

FEATURES

Color descriptions refer to “hair.” Queens and workers have a yellow thorax, and about the front half of the abdomen is yellow, too. There is a black band between the wing bases. The tail is black. Hairs are very short. Males of this species are similar in coloration to the females but may show more yellow on the head.

BEHAVIORS

These are short-tongued bees. Asters (*Symphyotrichum spp.*), bee balms (*Monarda spp.*), sumacs (*Rhus spp.*) and thistles (*Cirsium spp.*) are among the many plant species that they visit. Queens are active from April through October. Workers are active from April through September. Males are active in August. 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.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Arthropoda
Class: Insecta
Order: Hymenoptera
Family: Apidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



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male

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

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