

# About bees

Bees are the main pollinators of many of our wildflowers, crops and vegetation. Without them these plants would struggle to reproduce and could result in other species being able to dominate our landscape. The countryside could lose its colour and many rare plants may disappear.

The sight and sound of bees lazily buzzing from flower to flower is a common sight during British summers. However bee numbers are dropping all the time and since 1950's the population of some species have halved.



Therefore Leeds City Council promote the safeguarding and protection of all bees. We will never undertake a treatment unless the bees are a direct threat to human health. This leaflet is designed to provide you with the information and reassurance you require to help ensure bees do not come to any harm.



Swarms of honey bees are very rare and if left alone will cause no harm to humans

## Masonry and Mining Bees

These bees are a non aggressive solitary bee. They are not a threat to human health as they do not sting (they do have a sting but it is unable to penetrate the skin).

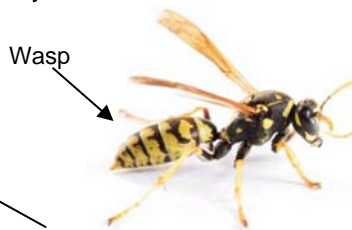
Masonry and mining bees have a hairy body that appears brown and orange. Compared to a wasp they are fatter and do not have an elongated body.



Mining bee



Masonry bee



Wasp

Both species breed early and are active from March until the end of June. Once egg laying is completed in June the bees will die off.

To lay their eggs masonry bees make small passages in the soft mortar of walls or occupy existing holes. They then seal the holes ready for new bees to emerge the following year. Mining bees have a similar practise but prefer to lay their eggs in soil (preferring sandy areas).



Masonry bees in mortar



Mining bees in soil

Re-pointing or turning the soil once the eggs have hatched can prevent them laying more eggs.

## Bumble Bees

Bumble bees are also non aggressive and social insects. They are a large, hairy, black and yellow bee with a bumbling clumsy flight.

Bumble bees rarely sting. They will only sting if they are handled roughly or feel threatened.

They never swarm or attack. They are more interested in going about their business pollinating the environment.

They usually die off by the end of September.

Bumble bees create nests which last one summer. The nests are a simple structure covered in moss and are usually located on the ground or under wood piles / sheds.

If you notice a bumble bee nest we recommend that you take no action as they are unlikely to cause you a problem. Nests can be moved but the bees often die as a result so this should always be a last resort.

For good advice please refer to [www.bumblebeeconservation.org.uk](http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org.uk) or [www.leedsbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.leedsbeekeepers.org.uk).



## Honey Bees

Like the other bees honey bees are hugely beneficial to the environment. Honey bees have dark brown and black stripes as opposed to wasps which are bright yellow and black.



Only honey bees swarm. Swarms are caused when the population increases and a group of worker bees leave to form a new colony with a queen. This can appear as a mass of insects in mid air or gathered on a surface like a branch or fence, clinging to each other.

They will remain here temporarily (this could be a few days) until the scout bees return with a new location. If the swarm is still there after a week it is unlikely that they will move on.



Honey bees are usually non aggressive when swarming and will only react if they believe the swarm is under threat. Leeds City Council are committed to saving swarms and re-homing them in safe locations. If you find a swarm do not panic! Ring us on 0113 222 4406 and we will arrange for a bee keeper to collect the swarm (for use in their own hives) or give you advice.

If the swarm is inaccessible (e.g. within a chimney or wall cavity) and accessing your property it may be necessary to destroy them. However, this is a last resort and should only be done professionally. This is partly because honey from a treated nest can attract other bees. If this contaminated honey is taken to other hives it could kill them, leaving you open to prosecution.

Leeds City Council do not offer a service for the treatment of bees as we recommend that these beneficial insects should be left alone. If you have any concerns or would like further information please contact 0113 222 4406.



## Contact us

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet or would like professional advice please contact

Leeds City Council Corporate Call Centre  
0113 2224406  
or email  
[pests@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:pests@leeds.gov.uk)

Further information and copies of this leaflet can be found on the council's website  
[www.leeds.gov.uk/pestcontrol](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/pestcontrol)