



Scabious Bee
Andrena hattorfiana



Great Yellow Bumblebee
Bombus distinguendus



Northern Colletes Bee
Colletes borealis



Bilberry Bumblebee
Bombus morio



Large Mason Bee
Osmia xanthomelana



Potter Flower Bee
Anthophora rufosa

Pretty precious

Coming soon – six bees from different parts of the UK. Do you know your locals?

BEES ARE OUR ANCIENT ALLIES in towns and in the countryside, and unacknowledged partners in agriculture. They play a vital role in the pollination of food crops, keeping farms in business, and in helping parks, gardens and hedgerows to thrive. Yet bees are in decline in their numbers and their range, so Royal Mail is paying tribute to their vital work with a Bees Special Stamp issue on 18 August, comprising a set of six Special Stamps, Miniature Sheet, Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards and a Stamp Book.

Stamp by stamp

The Special sheet stamps portray two bumblebee species and four 'solitary' bees. They are chosen to represent a range of species, habitats and different UK regions. **SCABIOUS BEE** (*Andrena hattorfiana*). Most likely to be seen in South West

England, but with other populations found in East Anglia and South Wales, this bee lives in sandy or open grassland where there are scabious flowers. *Second Class*

GREAT YELLOW BUMBLEBEE (*Bombus distinguendus*). Believed to have declined from 80 per cent of its historic range in the UK, this bee is a focus of ▶



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Bees Stamps – Prices

Stamp set, AS19B	£7.27
Miniature Sheet MZ109	£3.92
Presentation Pack Code AP406	£11.70
First Day Cover Stamps/overseas, AF395	£9.20/£7.67
Stamp Cards (set of 10) Code AQ225	£4.95
Retail Stamp Book, Code UB384 (see page 330)	£3.78

Bees Stamps – Specifications

Date of issue	18 August
Number of stamps	Six (individual sheets)
Design	Anna Ekelund
Illustration	Richard Lewington
Stamp format	Over-square landscape
Stamp size	37mm x 35mm
Number per sheet	25/50
Full sheet size	380mm x 202mm
Printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14 x 14.5
Phosphor	Bars as appropriate
Gum	PVA



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Postmarks: alternative location St Bees (see previous page); Talents House postmark with a quote from William Blake (above); non-pictorial with St Bees location (see page 330)

Bees Miniature Sheet – Specifications

Date of issue	18 August
Number of stamps	Four
Design	Interbang
Illustration	Andy English
Stamp format	Over-square landscape
Stamp size	37mm x 35mm
Miniature Sheet size	179mm x 74mm
Printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14 x 14.5
Gum	PVA

conservation in Scotland. It lives in grassland where it can forage on clover, vetch and knapweed. *First Class*

NORTHERN COLLETES BEE (*Colletes floralis*). Its UK population is 50 per cent of the global total, so is very important. It prefers a sandy, coastal environment and forages on many flowers, including the carrot and parsley family. In 2003 this species was seen in Northern Ireland for the first time in 70 years. **£1 BILBERRY BUMBLEBEE** (*Bombus monticola*). Concentrated in North East England but also in the South West and in Wales, this bumblebee prefers to live in higher altitudes. It forages on bilberries as well as brambles, raspberries, bell heather, sallow and legumes such as clover and bird's foot trefoil – which means that it can have a vital role in pollinating nitrogen-fixing plants in agriculture. **£1.33**

LARGE MASON BEE (*Osmia xanthomelana*). Found at only two sites in Wales, this is Britain's rarest solitary bee. Females collect fresh water from cliffs and use it to make mud for building nests. The Large Mason forages nectar mainly from horse shoe vetch, bramble and bugle. **£1.52**

POTTER FLOWER BEE (*Anthophora retusa*). This is a 'flower bee' that has the appearance of a bumblebee but is solitary. Numbers have declined severely and today it can be seen in just a few sites in South East England. Its preferred habitat is sandy soils such as dunes, cliffs and commons, where it forages from ground ivy, vetches, clovers and bird's foot trefoil. **£2.25**

All six Special Stamps are available in the Presentation Pack, designed by Anna Ekelund and shown on the facing page, which includes an informative insert card written by Dave Goulson.

Four Miniature Sheet stamps

The Honeybee Miniature Sheet focuses on the Western Honeybee, *Apis mellifera*. The four stamps portray different aspects of apian behaviour: the waggle dance, pollinating, making honey and tending the young, as shown below on the Bees Miniature Sheet First Day Cover. ▶



Mr B Graham
20 Marton Avenue
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

Royal Mail Talents House 21 South Gyle Crescent Edinburgh EH12 6PB



The variety and importance of bees

Many people incorrectly think that bees are just one species of bees, which visit a hive and go back to their home. In fact, there are over 20,000 known species, almost all of them with colonies that are largely unvisited by humans. There are honeybees, leaf-cutter bees, carpenter bees, cranefly bees, mining bees, or flat-footed, solitary bees and many more. All of them pollinate plants and are important in their unique way.

Some bees live in social groups with a queen and workers, including honeybees and bumblebees, but many are solitary species. In those cases, the female individuals build a small nest in which to lay eggs. In particular place such as a hole in a tree or a burrow in the soil. Some bees even nest inside abandoned wood shavings.

Many will be important crop-pollinators. Together with domestic honeybees, they pollinate thousands of the crop species we grow in the world and account for roughly 90% in every three months of food we eat worldwide. Without bees, we would have no tomatoes, no coffee, no avocados, oranges, peppers or blueberries, corn, wheat, much more.

Threats to bees

Buffy, many species of bees have been in decline in recent decades. Two honeybees have gone extinct in the UK, and elsewhere in the world there are being no more. Modern farming methods such as monoculture, pesticides, loss of wild flowers, and no time for beneficial insects left food for a wide range of bees. On top of that, they are exposed to many pesticides, and they also face problems from parasites and diseases that have recently spread around the globe. All of it, all of it, has become deadly for the bees.

What we can do

The good news is that we can help. No matter where you live, even if it is in the centre of a large city, if you plant bee-friendly plants in your garden, the bees will find them. There are plenty and are very easy to offer. Annual flowers, especially those that are brightly coloured, are best. Many of these flowers are heath, so you can have fresh honey from your own back garden from the first day of summer. You might also consider making or buying a solitary bee 'hotel' (see information overleaf).

If you have no garden, contact your local council and ask them to set up nesting boxes, particularly wild birds' boxes in your garden. You can also contact your local council to see if they have any 'ground' holes. 'Wildflower meadows' are both wonderful and important and do not require any tending other than to be left alone.

We can all do more to ensure that our gardens, verges and parks are filled with insect-friendly plants. If you have a garden, you can plant bee-friendly flowers and shrubs of other insects, plus plants that are used by their eggs and larvae in the soil. This could go a long way to ensuring that our bees thrive into the future.

Royal Mail

Scabrous Bee
Halictus hortulana
This is a very common bee, but it is often overlooked. It is a solitary species, but it is very important as it pollinates many of the plants that we grow in our gardens.

Great Yellow Bumblebee
Bombus agrorum
This is a very common bee, but it is often overlooked. It is a solitary species, but it is very important as it pollinates many of the plants that we grow in our gardens.

Northern Colletes Bee
Colletes bairdii
This is a very common bee, but it is often overlooked. It is a solitary species, but it is very important as it pollinates many of the plants that we grow in our gardens.

Silvery Bumblebee
Bombus lucorum
This is a very common bee, but it is often overlooked. It is a solitary species, but it is very important as it pollinates many of the plants that we grow in our gardens.

Large Mason Bee
Osmia santhomeana
This is a very common bee, but it is often overlooked. It is a solitary species, but it is very important as it pollinates many of the plants that we grow in our gardens.

Potter Flower Bee
Anthophora plumosa
This is a very common bee, but it is often overlooked. It is a solitary species, but it is very important as it pollinates many of the plants that we grow in our gardens.

Gardening for bees

Whether you have a big garden or just a window box, there are many ways to attract bees. As a general rule, bees like flowers that are bright in colour, particularly purple, yellow and red. They also like flowers that have a long tube, such as those of the honeysuckle, which have a long tube that the bees can use to reach the nectar. To attract bees, you should plant a variety of flowers that are in bloom at different times of the year. This will ensure that there are always flowers for the bees to visit.

Making a bee 'hotel'

One way to help bees is to make a 'bee hotel'. A bee hotel is a structure that provides a safe place for bees to nest. It can be made from a variety of materials, including wood, bamboo, and straw. The most common type of bee hotel is made from bamboo. To make a bamboo bee hotel, you need to cut bamboo into small sections and stack them on top of each other. The bees will use the hollow sections of the bamboo as nesting sites.

The life cycle of the bumblebee

The life cycle of a bumblebee is a complex process. It begins with a queen laying eggs in a nest. The eggs hatch and the young bees grow up. The queen then lays more eggs, and the cycle repeats. The life cycle of a bumblebee is a complex process, and it is important to understand it in order to protect the bees.

Above: the colourful Bees Presentation Pack contains an informative illustrated insert card, with text from expert writer Dave Goulson



Bees

Royal Mail First Day Cover



Mr B Graham
20 Marton Avenue
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

Royal Mail Tallents House 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh, EH12 6RP

Above: First Day Cover of Bee Stamps, with special postmarks dated on the first day of issue, 18 August

First Day facilities

Serviced (i.e. stamped and postmarked) Royal Mail First Day Covers for the Bees Special Stamps and Miniature Sheet are available by mail order from Royal Mail Tallents House at the address on page 322.

Orders for Serviced First Day Covers should reach Royal Mail by 18 August. You may also send stamped envelopes on the day of issue to Royal Mail, Tallents House for the Tallents House, Edinburgh postmark. Customers who hand in or post stamped Royal Mail First Day Cover envelopes at Post Offices with a philatelic counter on the day of issue will receive the pictorial St Bees first day postmark.

Alternatively, customers may also send stamped envelopes to any of the Special Handstamp Centres for the pictorial or plain St Bees postmark quoting the appropriate reference number, as shown on these pages.

Bees Stamp Book – Specifications

Issue date	18 August
Book format	4 x Royal Mail Red 1st Class Machin definitives, 2 x 1st Class Bees Great Yellow Bumblebee
Definitive Stamp format	Portrait 20mm x 24mm
Special Stamp format	Over-square landscape 37mm x 35mm
Printer	ISP
Print process	Gravure
Phosphor	Bars as appropriate
Gum	Self-adhesive

Bees book Also available on 18 August is a Stamp Book containing six First Class stamps: four Royal Mail Red definitives and two Great Yellow Bumblebee stamps from the new issue ●



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