

## Bumblebee aware November 2019

We now have to look to our bird population if we hope to see creatures flying in our gardens. Most insects survive the winter as eggs or larvae waiting to emerge in the spring, or as adults in a hibernation site. Bumblebees evolved in the Himalayas and are well suited to survive the cold, having thick fur coats, a round body shape, a large nectar stomach that can store enough food to keep them alive, and an internal fat depot. Even so their survival depends on being able to fill their stores to maximum before winter, and on finding a totally safe site to hide in. If we have done our bit by making sure our gardens provide pollen and nectar throughout the year then the bees should be strong enough to cope with their normal load of parasites and any prolonged spells at low temperatures.



At the end of the winter the bees will emerge when they feel that the air is warm enough to make foraging a possibility. The queens will spend some time looking for food but even more time resting in the sun to gain warmth and to direct energy to their ovaries where the first batch of eggs will be developing. At such times they are very attractive to hungry predators like blue tits.



Christmas will soon be here and it is a time for giving. Some of the most relevant gifts are flowering shrubs (Mahonia), or bulbs (Crocus), or perennials (Hollyhock), or seeds (Echium). Contact me at the address below for a fuller list of suggested plants that will provide forage throughout the year, or look at the BeeKind pages of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust website. Another present that lasts for 12 months is a subscription to a wildlife charity, costing less than a modest meal for two in Maidenhead. This idea is particularly appropriate for anyone who expresses an interest in the environment because it will suggest many practical ways to get involved.

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