Backyard biodiversity

Identifying pollinators: UK

AXA POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP

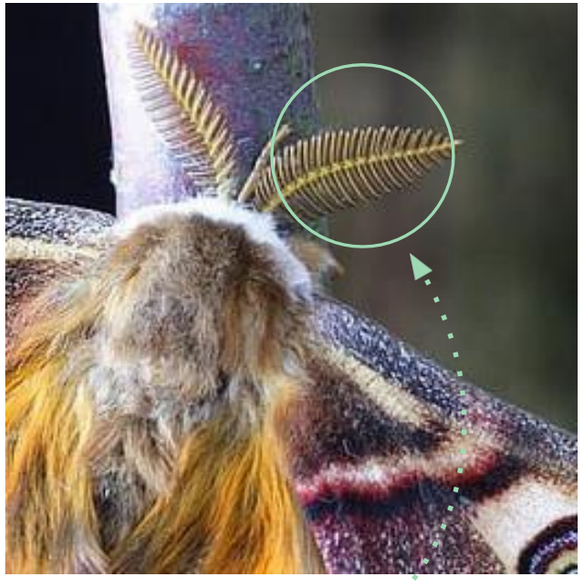
You probably know that bees are pollinators, but did you know there are other creatures that do the same job?

Read on to learn about the differences between these pollinators, the insects that resemble pollinators, as well as the different species you might be able to spot in your own pollinator habitat.

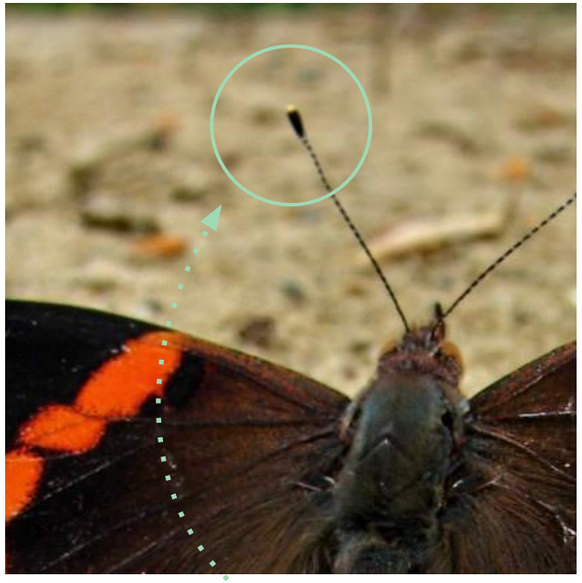
What’s the difference between a moth and a butterfly?

Moths and butterflies are both pollinators, but telling the difference can sometimes be tricky. Generally, butterflies fly during the day while moths fly at night. However, some moths are more closely related to butterflies than other moths and fly during the day like butterflies.

The most reliable way to tell a moth apart from a butterfly is to look at the shape and style of their antennae. Butterflies have antennae that are clubbed, with a small bulb at the end of a skinny shaft, while moths have feathery or comb-like antennae that taper to a point at the end. Note the narrow, clubbed antennae of the butterfly, compared to the wider, feathery antennae of the moth.



Moth: feathery or comb-like antennae



Butterflies: clubbed antennae, with a small bulb at the end of a skinny shaft

Is it a bee, fly, or wasp?

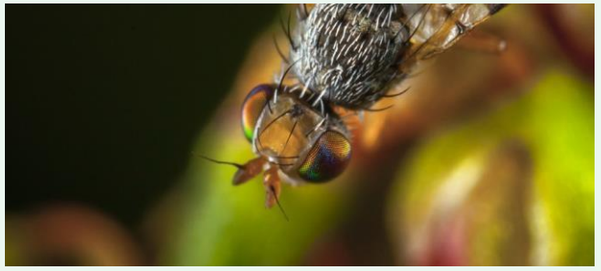
Some insects that you see visiting flowers are what are known as bee mimics. While they may resemble bees in appearance, they are actually entirely different types of insects. Some, but not all, of these bee mimics are pollinators that aid in the reproduction of plants.

Flies and wasps are common bee mimics. A fly has only two wings, while a bee has four. Flies have sucking mouthparts, not the jaws of a bee, and their antennae are not long and slender like a bee, but short and stubby or feathery. Some flies are easy to spot because their eyes meet in the center at the top of the head.

A wasp has four wings, chewing mouthparts, a sting, and long antennae like a bee. Wasps are smooth and almost hairless, while bees are generally covered with hair on their bodies and legs. Wasps have slender waists and they will never have pollen- carrying hairs. Certain wasps make paper nests that hang from a tree or building, bees do not.

A final clue: if an insect is eating another insect, it may be a fly or a wasp. Bees are vegetarians and only eat pollen and nectar from flowers!

Spot the difference

	Bees	Wasps	Flies
Mouth	 Jaws	 Jaws	 Suckers
Body and legs	 Hairs for carrying pollen on body and legs	 Smooth, almost hairless, with slender waist	 Dark body
Antennae	 Long and slender	 Long and slender	 Short, stubby or feathery

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Hopefully you now understand the difference between the types of pollinators and those that simply look like pollinators. The list below highlights the most common bees and other pollinators found in your region. Are you able to spot any at home?

Mining bee

Notes
Black body with black, yellow, and sometimes rust-colored hair on most of body. Pollen carried on hairy back legs.

Common nesting locations
Solitary ground nests, often in s andy soils.

Other ID features
Short, velvety hairs between eyes and antennae.

Honey bee

Notes
Light to dark brown body with pale and dark hairs in bands on abdomen. Abdomen barrel-shaped. Head heart-shaped.

Common nesting locations
Human-made hives, in the open, and in cavities.

Other ID features
Hairy eyes.

Sweat bee

Notes
Found in two forms: bright metallic green or black/brown with light bands of hair on abdomen. Pollen-carrying hairs on rear legs. Slender body.

Common nesting locations
Solitary to communal nesters, in soil.

Fun fact
Sweat bees are attracted to human sweat, which provides important moisture and salts. If one lands on you on a hot day, don’t worry – they are not aggressive!

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Red Admiral

Notes
Dark-colored body with wingspan of 4.5-7.5cm). Black wings with bold orange band and white spots toward the tips of wings.

Common nesting locations
Found in many types of habitat. Often lay eggs on nettle.

Identifying behaviors
Sometimes drink sap from trees.

Bumble bee

Notes
Black body, covered with black and yellow hairs throughout. Pollen basket present.

Robust body. Long face.

Common nesting locations
Underground, often in old rodent burrows.

Identifying behaviors
Usually active in cool, cloudy weather.

Fun fact
Bumble bees can beat their wings 200 times per second – much faster than the human eye can detect!

Mason bee

Notes
Found in two forms: black body covered in pale hairs or dull metallic blue-green and less hairy. Pollen-carrying hairs beneath abdomen. Head as broad as thorax.

Robust body.

Common nesting locations
Solitary in pre-existing holes.

Identifying behaviors
Use mud to line nests.

European Peacock butterfly

Notes
Dark body with 5-5.5cm wingspan. Multicolored wings with large red patch and black, white, and blue eyespots.

Common nesting locations
Often overwinters in trees.

Other ID features
Caterpillars are shiny black with rows of barbed spikes.

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Leaf-cutting bee

Notes
Black body with light or dark hairs. Pollen-carrying hairs beneath abdomen. Head is as broad as the thorax with large mouthparts for cutting leaves.

Common nesting locations
Solitary in pre-existing holes.

Identifying behaviors
Cut circular pieces from leaves.

Yellow-faced bee

Notes
Dark-colored body with few hairs. Distinctive white or yellow marks on face. Usually small (3-6mm long).

Common nesting locations
Solitary in pre-existing holes

Identifying behaviors
Use a silk-like substance to line nests.

Fun fact
Yellow-faced bees carry their collected pollen internally, so they lack the hairs on their bodies that other types of bees have.

Plasterer bee

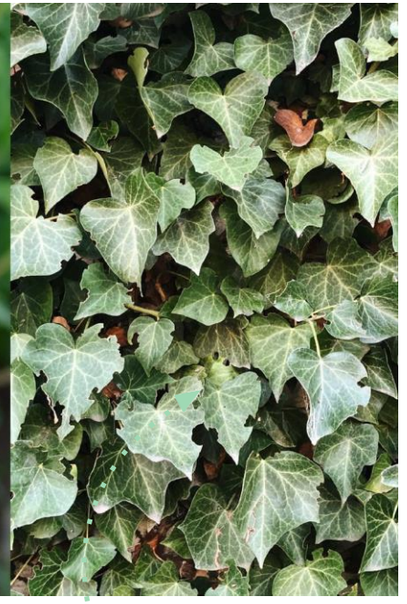
Notes
Medium to large sized with black, grey, or brown coloration. Can be confused for mining bees.

Common nesting locations
Solitary ground nests lined with polyester-like material.

Other ID features
Collect pollen in hairs on hind legs.

Native pollinator plants

If you would like to see more bees and butterflies in your outside space, try planting a variety of these native pollinator plants!



Genus	Salix	Campanula	Centaurea	Nepeta	Symphytum	Origanum	Echium	Stachys	Hedera
Common	Willow	Bellflower	Knapweed	Catmint	Borage	Oregano	Bugloss	Woundwort	Ivy

Spring bloom

Summer bloom

Fall bloom

Native plant nursery

Not sure where to start? Have a look at the following list of recommended plant nurseries.

- British Wild Flower Plants, Norwich
- Habitat Aid, Bruton
- Landlife Wildflowers, Boston
- Naturescape, Nottingham
- PlantWild, Templecombe

Plant nurseries are an ideal place to start.

About Pollinator Partnership

Pollinator Partnership is the largest nonprofit in the world dedicated exclusively to the protection and promotion of pollinatorsand their ecosystems. Their mission is to promote the health of pollinators, critical to food and ecosystems, through conservation, education, and research. Please visit the **Pollinator Partnership website** to find out more and support their work. Thanks to Pollinator Partnership for their expertise in producing the AXA XL Backyard Biodiversity resources.

Here's what else you can discover in the AXA XL Backyard Biodiversity toolkit:

Learn about pollinators and the threats they face by visiting **Meet the pollinators**.

Find out how to support pollinators and other native wildlife in **Growing plants for pollinators**.

Discover how to create a buzz where you live by visiting the **Guide to bee hotels**.

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