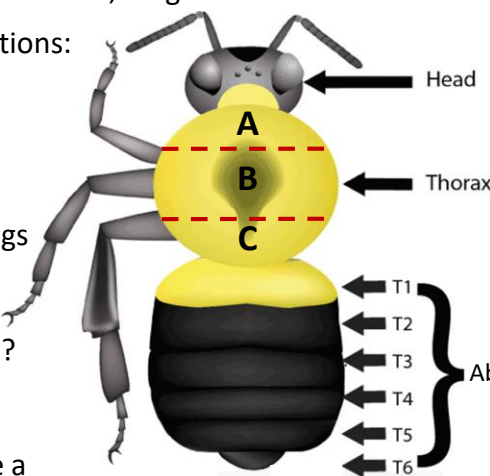
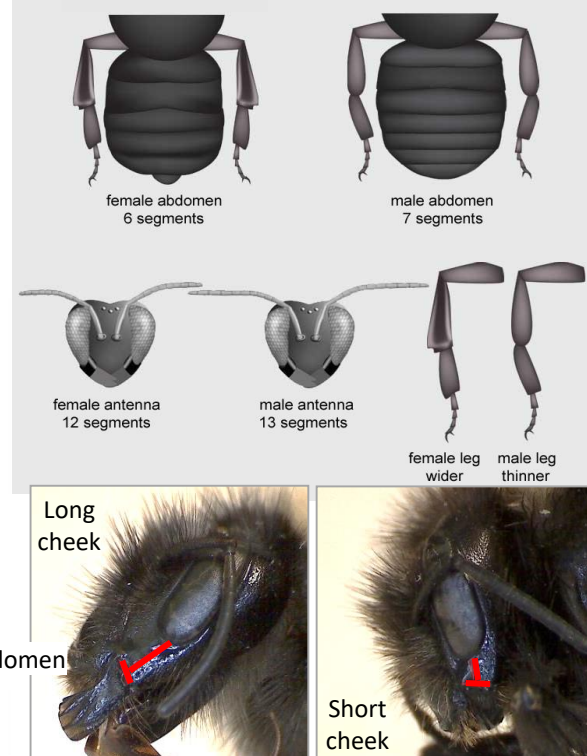


# Steps for Identifying a Bumble Bee:

- After determining you have a bumble bee (not a carpenter bee, wasp or fly) check to see if it is a female or a male, and if it is a cuckoo bee.
  - Female: Pollen basket on hind leg (shiny, hairless zone); 6 tergites
  - Male: No pollen basket on hind leg; 7 tergites; some with bulgy eyes
  - Cuckoo: No pollen basket on hind leg, instead with dense, long hair
- Examine the **hair color and pattern** on the following sections:
  - Head:
    - Front of the face
    - Top of the head
  - Thorax:
    - Front of (A), between (B), and behind (C) the wings
    - Side of thorax/under the wings
    - Is there a circle or stripe between the wings (B)?
    - Is there a black notch or "v" behind the wings (C)?
  - Abdomen:
    - What color is T1? T2? T3? ...T6?
    - Does the color cover the entire tergite or is there a pattern to (i.e. crescent shape or gap in the center)?



- Examine the cheek length; is it long or short?
- Make sure your photos show the features in the above checklist.

## Symbol and Term Descriptions:

- Common:** Species occurs frequently or in large abundance.
- Threatened:** Declining species that are in need of conservation (identified by the IUCN Redlist).
- Tergite:** A tergite is an abdominal segment. Females have 6 tergites, males have 7. The tergite nearest the thorax is Tergite 1 or "T1" and the terminal segment is Tergite 6 or "T6." Hair color of T1-T6 helps determine the species.

**Male Identification:**  
Visit [BumbleBeeAtlas.org](http://BumbleBeeAtlas.org) for alternative guides.

### Look-alikes!

- American vs Black-and-Gold Bumble Bee:** American has black hairs on top of the head, Black-and-Gold has yellow. T1 of American is often times 1/2 black and 1/2 yellow, Black-and-Gold is usually black, but can have yellow on sides. **Photos need to include: Top of head and T1**
- American (Male) vs Yellow Bumble Bee (Male):** American has mixed hair colors (yellow and black) behind the wings and on the sides of the thorax, while the Yellow bumble bee has yellow hair in these areas. Often, T7 of American will have orange coloration. **Photos need to include: Thorax (top and side) and T6/T7**

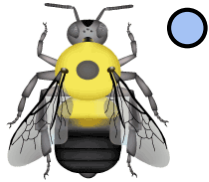


**Bumble bee illustrations:** Paul Williams (identification and color patterns), Elaine Evans, Rich Hatfield (bee body design).

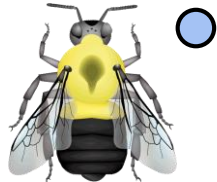
# Iowa Bee Identification Guide (Females)

This guide separates bees into three sections based on the patterns on the bee's thorax

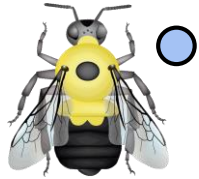
## Solid yellow or yellow with a black spot



*Bombus griseocollis*  
**Brown-belted Bumble Bee**  
T2 color is crescent-shaped



*Bombus impatiens*  
**Common Eastern Bumble Bee**  
Thorax w/ teardrop shape



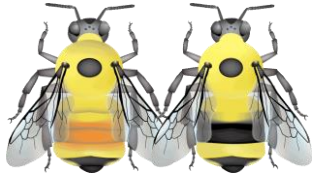
*Bombus bimaculatus*  
**Two-spotted Bumble Bee**  
Yellow "W" shape on T2



*Bombus vagans*  
**Half Black Bumble Bee**  
Spot on thorax is black/yellow



*Bombus perplexus*  
**Perplexing Bumble Bee**  
Black hairs below wing joints



*Bombus rufocinctus*  
**Red-belted Bumble Bee**  
Color extremely variable

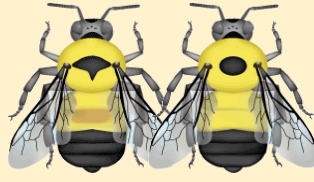


*Bombus variabilis*  
**Variable Cuckoo Bumble Bee**  
Very short hair; Uncommon



*Bombus citrinus*  
**Lemon Cuckoo Bumble Bee**  
Color patterns variable

## Yellow with a stripe or t-shape



*Bombus affinis*  
**Rusty Patched Bumble Bee**  
Patterns differ between workers (left) and queens (right)

This species is protected under the Endangered Species Act.



*Bombus fervidus*  
**Yellow Bumble Bee**  
Black hairs on top of head



*Bombus borealis*  
**Boreal Bumble Bee**  
Yellow hairs on the top of head



*Bombus ternarius*  
**Tri-Colored Bumble Bee**  
Yellow hairs on face



*Bombus fraternus*  
**Southern Plains Bumble Bee**  
T1/T2 hairs appressed/laid flat

## Mostly black



*Bombus pensylvanicus*  
**American Bumble Bee**  
T1 often 1/2 black, 1/2 yellow

\* Males very similar to *B. fervidus*, see **Look-alikes** on reverse side.



*Bombus auricomus*  
**Black and Gold Bumble Bee**  
Yellow hairs on top of head

\* Very similar to *B. pensylvanicus*, see **Look-alikes** on reverse side.



*Bombus tericola*  
**Yellow Banded Bumble Bee**  
T5 fringe of brownish yellow hairs

## Cuckoo Bumble Bees



*Bombus variabilis*  
**Variable Cuckoo Bumble Bee**  
Very short hair; Uncommon



*Bombus citrinus*  
**Lemon Cuckoo Bumble Bee**  
Color patterns variable



*Bombus bohemicus*  
**Ashton's Cuckoo Bumble Bee**  
T4-5 with white

**Key** (See reverse side for descriptions)

Common    **T** = Tergite

Threatened