

NZ Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Winter Newsletter

What's happening in Winter

Are bumblebees active during the winter?



Yes, a very small number of bumblebees do stay active during the winter.

Since the 1990s, naturalists have noticed that rather than hibernating, some bumblebees stay active over winter. These have almost all been identified as Buff-tailed bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*- our most common bumblebee) and it's clear that a proportion of the queens produced over the summer have begun to establish nests in the autumn instead of going into hibernation.

If you see a bumblebee, you can take some notes:

- Are the bees collecting pollen from the flowers or just feeding on nectar (or both)?
- Which type of flowers are being visited?
- What are the best winter weather conditions for winter active bumblebees?
- What are the conditions - are they in a warm or cold climate?

Send your findings to bumblebuzz@nbct.org.nz

This may help us gather information on the life cycle of bumblebees .

To Catch a Queen Project



There are four exotic Bumblebee species in New Zealand. One, *Bombus subterraneus* - the short haired bumblebee, is only found in the McKenzie Basin & parts of Southland. It is extinct in the UK and today it appears that population numbers are dwindling here in NZ.

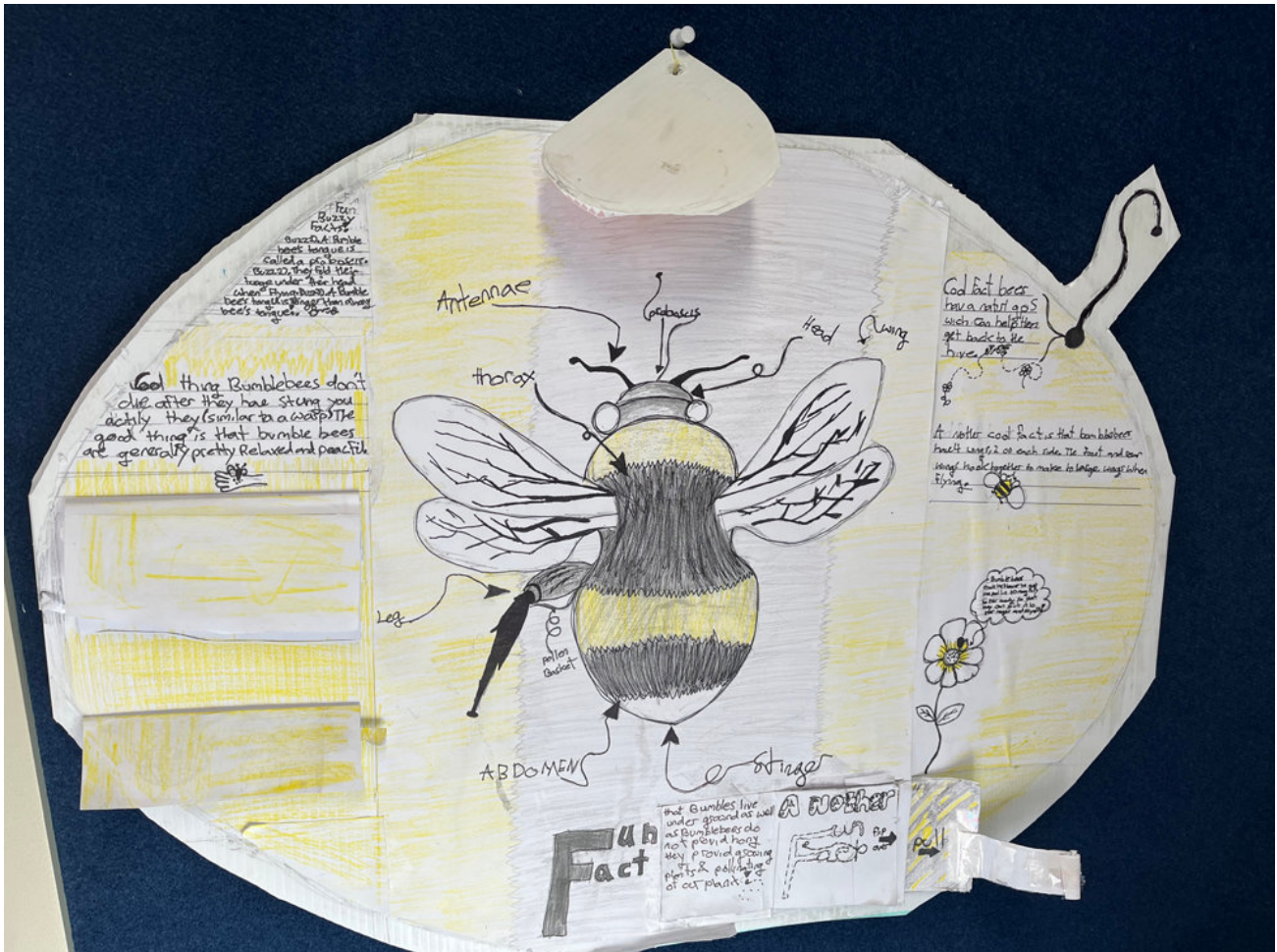
In late 2024 a programme was set up by Entomologist Rudd Kleinpaste, the NZBCT & Otago University, involving primary school children and the communities of Tekapo, Twizel and McKenzie country. The object is to teach about the life cycle of our Bumblebees and their critical importance. Projects are underway on how to help grow populations in this region. Practical involvement includes sowing wildflower beds as food resources to flower at critical times, setting up live bumblebee hives and studying activity, placing man-made wooden hives in the school grounds to attract queens to build new colonies and creating ground holes and little wooden box homes to encourage hibernating Queens.

In the spring 2025 the children will begin a programme to identify different bumblebee species and collect data on numbers and other environmental factors. Eventually we hope to raise colonies of *Bombus subterraneus* off site and reintroduce them back to the area.

Here is some of the work the children have done so far:



Tekapo School children placing small wooden boxes in the school grounds to encourage a hibernating queen bumblebee to take shelter over the winter. Below is just one of their amazing drawings.



Bumblebee Hives

Over the winter the home garden bumblebee hives are not available as the bees are in hibernation. They will be available again next spring. If you are interested in one then check back on our website in October.





Out and About with Rachel Weston

Board member Rachel Weston was recently involved in a Children's Literature and Art Program held at Paengaroa School during the holidays.

70 children ranging from 4 to 15 participated.

She had 25 children in a workshop where children learnt all about bumblebees and their amazing pollinating abilities and how they too could write a non-fiction book.

The NZBCT generously gave each of the participating children (25) a free copy of Rachel's book 'Bumblebees Have Smelly Feet'



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