

# BATH CITY FARM

## September Nature Trail

Wildlife observations & text by Mike Williams

Follow the nature trail from by the pig pens and into the wood to discover what minibeasts are living on the Farm in September. We've put out four signs for you to find – one by the pigs, two in the field beyond the pigs and one in the woods beyond that. See how many you can find, and learn more about them.

### LOCATION 1: IVY FLOWERS



Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*) – This species was new to science in 1993 and first recorded in Britain in 2001. It has only recently become established in Bath but is now fairly common. They make large nest aggregations that can at first appear to be one big hive, but is in fact composed of numerous small nest-holes in which the females lay their eggs and their favourite nectar source is ivy flowers and in some years they are very abundant on the farm.



Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*) – Many honeybees on the farm are from the hive, although there are sometimes wild honeybees as well. Unlike the Ivy Bees they live together in one big nest and have a worker caste that performs the task of collecting nectar and pollen, while the queen usually stays in the hive laying eggs.



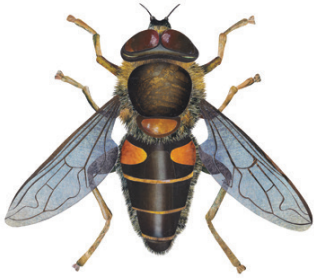
Footballer Hoverfly (*Helophilus pendulus*) – The scientific name means 'dangling marsh-lover', but it is also known as the footballer due to the stripes on the thorax. This species breeds in ponds (and occasionally in cow pats) but is often found some distance from water. The adults are often found feeding at a variety of flowers including ivy, and are frequently seen basking on the leaves in sunny weather.



Common Drone-fly (*Eristalis tenax*) – This is a very variable species and can often be quite dark, with only the markings at the top of the abdomen present. If in doubt, it always has a thick black vertical stripe running down the face. This species is harmless, but mimics the honeybee so that potential predators don't eat them out of fear of getting stung. They breed in ponds and the larvae is the well-known rat-tailed maggot.



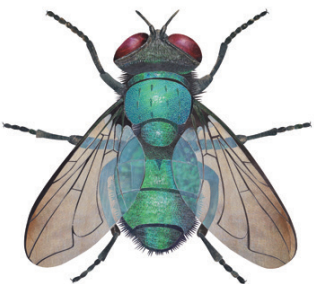
**Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)** – A common bumblebee, although there are several very similar species, two of which have only recently been discovered in Britain. Like the honeybee, they make communal nests, often in old rodent burrows, with a single queen and workers who do the job of collecting pollen and nectar.



**Tapered Drone-fly (*Eristalis pertinax*)** – Very similar to the Common Drone-fly in appearance and habits, but with a more tapered abdomen and a thinner black facial stripe.



**Common Wasp (*Vespula vulgaris*)** – one of several similar-looking social wasps found on Bath City Farm. Like honeybees and bumblebees, they are social insects who make large communal nests with one queen and many workers. The nests are made out of wood-pulp and are very complex. They are important pollinators and also eat numerous insects that gardeners consider to be pests. Sometimes the badgers on the farm dig up the nests to eat the grubs – they are not bothered by the stings! Wasps will not sting humans unless they are threatened, although in the autumn they do seek out sweet things and may come into contact with humans more frequently.



**Green Bottle (*Lucilia* sp.)** – A common species of fly which feeds on flower nectar. These flies lay their eggs on dead animals, poo & rubbish.