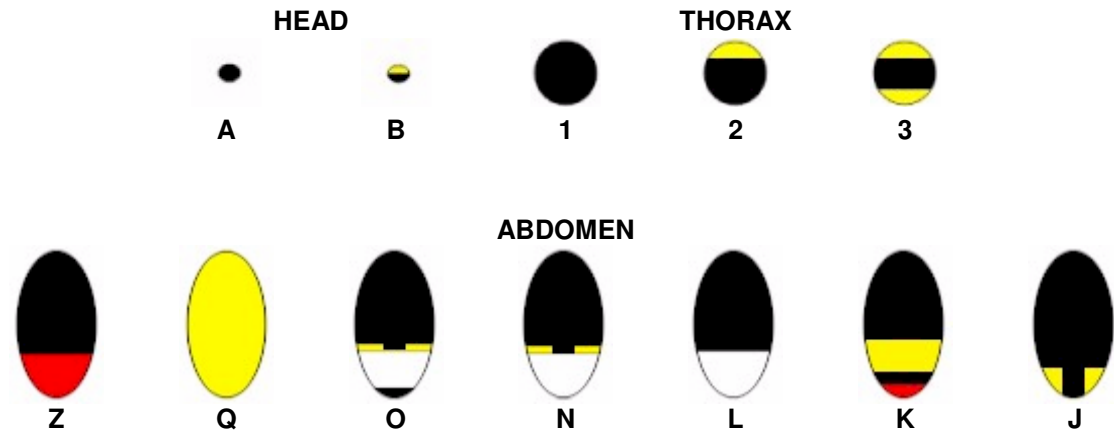


## Cuckoo Bumblebee (*Psithyrus*) Crib Sheet



### What to do?

1. Decide which combination of schematic head, thorax and abdomen shown above best matches the bee you are trying to identify.
2. Look up the combination in the table opposite to find the contenders.
3. If there is more than one contender, use the further information overleaf to try to resolve the issue.

### But remember:

1. Only 2 colours are used in the chart. They should be interpreted as "some hue of yellow" and "some hue of red".
2. Cuckoo bumblebee colouring is hair colour and hairs wear off with age, so beware pensioner bees.
3. Beware smaller versions of normally larger species (resulting from poor nutrition).
4. Cuckoo bumblebees mimic bumblebees and so can be confused with them.













Head	Thor.	Abd.	Contenders
A	1	Z	rupestris
A	2	K	sylvestris (M)
A	2	L	sylvestris (F)
A	2	N	vestalis
A	2	O	bohemicus
A	3	J	campestris (F)
B	3	L	barbutellus
B	3	Q	campestris (M)

NB. F = Female; M=Male. There are no workers.

### Compared with bumblebees, cuckoo bumbles:

1. Do not have a pollen basket (on the middle section of the back leg);
2. tend to have darker wing membranes; and
3. tend to be less hairy so that abdominal plates shine through.

These features are clear in the photograph of *P. vestalis* (above left).

Name	Female	Male	Host / Habitat*	Distribution	Freq- uency	Notes
P. rupestris (Hill)			B. lapidarius	Countrywide	Local	Male usually has narrow yellowish-grey bands on thorax & abdomen.
P. barbutellus (Barbut's)			B. hortorum	Countrywide; local in north	Common	Collar dingy yellow.
P. bohemicus (Gypsy)			B. lucorum	Countrywide; local in south	Common	Shaggy coat. Dull collar. Yellow on abdomen fades rapidly.
P. campestris			B. pascuorum	Countrywide	Common	Yellow on abdomen & rear thorax very variable. Male sometimes all yellow; female sometimes all black.
P. sylvestris (Four-coloured)			B. pratorum & B. jonellus	Northern	Local	
P. vestalis (Vestal)			B. terrestris	Southern	Sporadic	Collar golden. Frequency varies between years – sometimes common.

\*. Cuckoo bumblebees obviously live in the same habitat as the host bumblebees they parasitise.

## Other Mimics

Other insects also mimic, or at least superficially resemble, bumblebees and, therefore, each other.

## Solitary Bees

A number of solitary bee species resemble bumblebees (and cuckoo bumblebees) because of their similar shape, hairiness, colour and size (which is comparable with some worker and male bees). The most likely confusion is with Carder bumblebees. Useful distinguishing features for those solitary bees which are most likely to be confused with bumblebees are their **quicker flight**, their **ability to hover** and

the **lack of a cheek** between the eye and the jaw. This last feature is obvious on the



Wool Carder Bee (*Anthidium manicatum*) in the photograph.

## Flies

There are also bumblebee mimics amongst the hoverflies and bee-flies. Once again there are a number of distinguishing features, notably their **fast, hovering flight, short feathery antennae** (which also distinguish them from solitary bees), and a tendency to **longer more spindly legs**. Flies, of course, also only have one pair of wings as opposed to two in bees but this feature is not so obvious in casual observation.