Wild Bees of Switzerland

30 Species in Profile

Powered by

USGS Bee Database & Swiss Records

Published by

Buzzescapes

As of May 2026

Andrenidae — Mining Bees

5 species

Andrenidae are solitary ground-nesting bees, often called mining bees. Most species dig tunnels in sandy or loose soil, creating small volcano-like mounds at the entrance. They are among the first bees to emerge in spring and are important pollinators of early-blooming trees and shrubs.

Andrena barbilabris

Sand Mining Bee

Size: 11–12 mm **Flight:** March to July

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** generalist

A small mining bee that nests in sandy soils, often in large aggregations. It is an important early-spring pollinator of willow and fruit trees.

Andrena clarkella

Clark's Mining Bee

Size: 12–13 mm **Flight:** March to May

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** Willow/Salix

One of the earliest bees to emerge in spring, specialized on willow pollen. Females have distinctive orange-red hairs on the thorax.

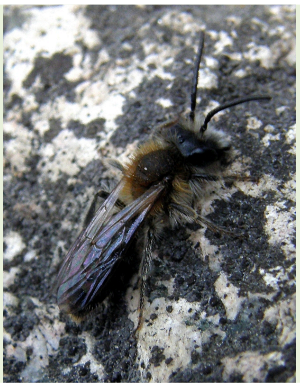
Andrena haemorrhoa

Orange-tailed Mining Bee

Size: 10–12 mm **Flight:** April to July

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** generalist

A common spring mining bee with a distinctive orange-red tail. It visits a wide variety of flowers and nests in bare soil patches in gardens and meadows.



Andrena lapponica

Heather Mining Bee

Size: 12–13 mm **Flight:** April to June

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** Blueberry/Heather (Ericaceae)

A specialist pollinator of blueberries and heather, this mining bee is found in acidic soils across northern regions and alpine meadows.

Andrena wilkella

Wilke's Mining Bee

Size: 10–12 mm **Flight:** May to August

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** Legumes/Fabaceae

A distinctive mining bee with white abdominal hair bands and a preference for legume flowers. Introduced from Europe to North America, it is now widespread in both regions.

Apidae — Honey & Bumble Bees

5 species

Apidae is a diverse family that includes honey bees, bumble bees, and cuckoo bees. While honey bees live in large perennial colonies, bumble bees form smaller annual nests and are excellent buzz pollinators. Many species are social, with a queen and worker caste.

Apis mellifera

Western Honey Bee

Size: 12–15 mm **Flight:** March to October

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

The familiar honey bee lives in large perennial colonies and is one of the most important crop pollinators worldwide. Originally from Europe, it is now managed on every continent except Antarctica.

Bombus jonellus

Heath Bumble Bee

Size: 14–18 mm **Flight:** March to September

Nesting: underground **Specialization:** generalist

A small bumble bee with a short tongue, common in heathlands and upland areas. It nests in old rodent burrows and is a key pollinator of heather and bilberry.

Bombus bohemicus

Bohemian Cuckoo Bumble Bee

Size: 16–20 mm **Flight:** April to September

Nesting: brood parasite **Specialization:** parasite of Bombus lucorum group

A cuckoo bumble bee that takes over nests of white-tailed bumble bees. It has no worker caste and produces no pollen; females invade host nests to lay their eggs.

Bombus lucorum

White-tailed Bumble Bee

Size: 18–22 mm **Flight:** April to September

Nesting: underground **Specialization:** generalist

A common large bumble bee with a white tail and a yellow collar. It nests underground in old rodent burrows and is widespread across gardens, farmlands, and forests.

Xylocopa violacea

Violet Carpenter Bee

Size: 20–28 mm **Flight:** March to October

Nesting: wood nester **Specialization:** generalist

The largest bee in Switzerland, with a striking violet-black body and dark wings. It gnaws nesting tunnels in soft dead wood and is a powerful pollinator of large flowers.

Colletidae — Plasterer & Yellow-face Bees

6 species

Colletidae are known as plasterer bees because they line their nest burrows with a cellophane-like secretion that dries into a waterproof membrane. Yellow-face bees (Hylaeus) are slender, mostly black and yellow, and carry pollen internally in their crop rather than on their legs.

Hylaeus communis

Common Yellow-face Bee

Size: 6–8 mm **Flight:** May to September

Nesting: hollow stem nester **Specialization:** generalist

A small, mostly black bee with yellow facial markings. It nests in hollow plant stems and beetle burrows, and carries pollen in its crop rather than on its legs.

Hylaeus confusus

Confused Yellow-face Bee

Size: 6–8 mm **Flight:** May to August

Nesting: hollow stem nester **Specialization:** generalist

A slender yellow-face bee with white facial markings. It nests in hollow stems and is commonly found visiting wildflowers in meadows and along forest edges.

Hylaeus hyalinatus

Hairy Yellow-face Bee

Size: 6–7 mm **Flight:** May to September

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

A yellow-face bee with largely transparent wings and white face marks. Originally from Europe, it has become established in North America and nests in cavities.

No photo

Hylaeus punctatus

Dotted Yellow-face Bee

Size: 5–7 mm **Flight:** May to September

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

A small yellow-face bee with distinctive punctuation on the head and thorax. It is associated with dry, sandy habitats and visits a range of wildflowers.

Colletes daviesanus

Davies' Plasterer Bee

Size: 8–10 mm **Flight:** June to August

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** Asteraceae (composites)

A medium-sized plasterer bee that lines its underground nest cells with a waterproof secretion. It specializes on composite flowers, especially tansy and ragwort.

Colletes hederae

Ivy Bee

Size: 10–14 mm **Flight:** September to November

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** Ivy/Hedera

A specialist late-autumn bee that emerges when ivy blooms. It nests in large aggregations in sandy soil and is one of the latest-flying bees in the season.

Halictidae — Sweat Bees

5 species

Halictidae, commonly called sweat bees, range from solitary to primitively social. Many species have a metallic sheen and are attracted to human perspiration for salts. They nest in soil or rotting wood and are important generalist pollinators in meadows and gardens.

Halictus rubicundus

Orange-legged Furrow Bee

Size: 8–11 mm **Flight:** April to September

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** generalist

A distinctive sweat bee with orange-red legs and a metallic greenish body. It nests in bare soil in large aggregations and exhibits a wide range of social behaviors.

Halictus tumulorum

Bronze Furrow Bee

Size: 6–8 mm **Flight:** April to September

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** generalist

A small metallic-green sweat bee found in a wide range of habitats. Females nest in bare soil and often share a common entrance tunnel in small aggregations.

Lasioglossum albipes

White-legged Furrow Bee

Size: 6–8 mm **Flight:** May to September

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** generalist

A small sweat bee with pale leg hairs, common in meadows and gardens. It nests in bare soil and is a generalist forager on many flower species.

Lasioglossum leucozonium

White-banded Furrow Bee

Size: 8–10 mm **Flight:** April to October

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** generalist

A medium-sized sweat bee with distinct white hair bands on the abdomen. It is a common and important pollinator of many crops and wild plants across its Holarctic range.

Lasioglossum zonulum

Green Furrow Bee

Size: 8–10 mm **Flight:** April to September

Nesting: ground-nesting **Specialization:** generalist

A striking metallic-green sweat bee, one of the larger Lasioglossum species. It nests in bare soil and is often seen on brambles and thistles in sunny locations.

Megachilidae — Leafcutter & Mason Bees

9 species

Megachilidae are solitary bees known for their unique nesting behaviors. Leafcutter bees cut circular pieces from leaves to line their nests, while mason bees use mud or plant resins. All carry pollen on their underside (scopa) rather than on their hind legs.

Chelostoma campanularum

Harebell Carpenter Bee

Size: 5–6 mm **Flight:** June to August

Nesting: hollow stem nester **Specialization:** Bellflowers/Campanula

A tiny slender bee specialized on bellflowers (Campanula). Females nest in hollow stems and dead wood and are one of the few insects that can enter narrow bellflower corollas.

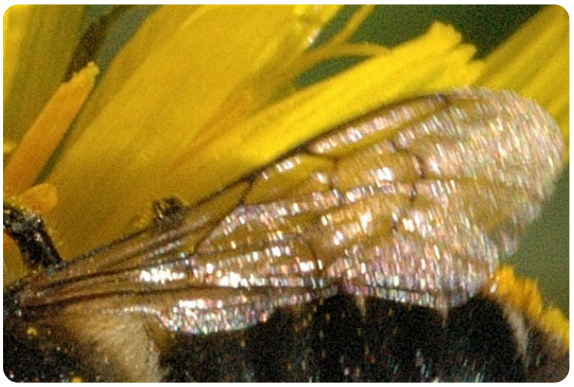
Chelostoma rapunculi

Rampion Carpenter Bee

Size: 8–9 mm **Flight:** June to August

Nesting: hollow stem nester **Specialization:** Bellflowers/Campanula

A slender black bee that specializes on Campanula flowers. It nests in pre-existing cavities and dead wood, using mud to partition its nest cells.



Megachile centuncularis

Common Leafcutter Bee

Size: 11–12 mm **Flight:** June to October

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

A medium-sized leafcutter bee that cuts circular pieces from rose and birch leaves to build its nest cells. It nests in cavities and dead wood and is an important alfalfa pollinator.

Megachile ericetorum

Heather Leafcutter Bee

Size: 13–15 mm **Flight:** June to August

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** Legumes/Fabaceae

A robust leafcutter bee that specializes on Fabaceae (legume) flowers. It uses leaf pieces to line its nest burrows in the ground and dead wood.

Osmia caerulescens

Blue Mason Bee

Size: 8–10 mm **Flight:** March to August

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

A metallic-blue mason bee that nests in pre-existing cavities such as hollow stems and beetle holes. It is an excellent pollinator of fruit trees and uses mud to seal its nest cells.

Osmia bicornis

Red Mason Bee

Size: 10–13 mm **Flight:** March to June

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

A common spring mason bee with a ginger-red coat of hairs on the thorax. It readily uses bee hotels and nesting tubes, making it a popular garden pollinator throughout Europe and parts of North America.

Osmia cornuta

European Orchard Bee

Size: 12–16 mm **Flight:** February to May

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

A large spring mason bee with a distinctive red abdomen and black face. It emerges early in spring and is a crucial pollinator of orchard trees, especially apple and cherry blossoms.

Anthidium manicatum

European Wool Carder Bee

Size: 12–15 mm **Flight:** June to August

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** generalist

A large, striking bee that collects plant hairs (not pollen) to line its nest. Males are territorial and aggressively defend flower patches. It was introduced from Europe to North America.

Megachile rotundata

Alfalfa Leafcutter Bee

Size: 8–10 mm **Flight:** June to August

Nesting: cavity nester **Specialization:** Legumes/Fabaceae

A managed crop pollinator introduced worldwide for alfalfa seed production. It cuts neat oval leaf pieces to line its nest and is an efficient, solitary cavity-nesting bee.

Photo Credits

Species	Photographer / License
Andrena barbilabris	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Andrena clarkella	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Andrena haemorrhoa	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Andrena lapponica	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Andrena wilkella	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Apis mellifera	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Bombus jonellus	James Lindsey / CC BY-SA 2.5
Bombus bohemicus	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Bombus lucorum	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Hylaeus communis	James Lindsey / CC BY-SA 2.5
Hylaeus confusus	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Hylaeus hyalinatus	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Colletes daviesanus	James K. Lindsey / CC BY-SA 3.0
Halictus rubicundus	Martien van den Heuvel / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY
Halictus tumulorum	Aiwok / CC BY-SA 3.0
Lasioglossum albipes	James K. Lindsey / CC BY-SA 3.0
Lasioglossum leucozonium	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Lasioglossum zonulum	James K. Lindsey / CC BY-SA 3.0
Chelostoma campanularum	Lukas Large / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 2.0
Chelostoma rapunculi	linsepatron / CC BY 2.0
Megachile centuncularis	James K. Lindsey / CC BY-SA 3.0
Megachile ericetorum	Dick Belgers / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY 3.0
Osmia caerulescens	gailhampshire / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY 2.0
Osmia bicornis	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / Public Domain
Osmia cornuta	USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab / CC BY-SA
Anthidium manicatum	Jacy Lucier / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0
Megachile rotundata	Adrian Tync / CC BY-SA 4.0
Xylocopa violacea	Tony Hisgett / CC BY 2.0
Colletes hederae	Colsu / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0