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### **It's as easy as one, two, bee! New Field Guide to Britain and Ireland's bumblebees**

The first-ever comprehensive photographic field guide to the British bumblebee, 'Field Guide to the Bumblebees of Great Britain and Ireland' published on Thursday (24 March) uses for the first time a new three-step way to identify bees doing away with the need to put bees under the microscope.

The new technique could help an army of amateur naturalists and professional field workers in the front line of monitoring decades of decline in Britain's native bumblebees. Information about distribution and numbers can be a bit patchy as some rarer bumblebees have been quite difficult to identify.

Follow three simple steps.

- Step one - look for presence of and number of yellow bands on thorax and find on colour chart
- Step two - cross check with pattern on abdomen and accompanying notes on colour chart
- Step three - confirm identification with photographs and species accounts

The easy-to-use graphic guide has been developed by leading authority Mike Edwards, and entomologist and former secretary of the Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society, Martin Jenner. Martin Jenner, a science marketing consultant, came up with the strong visuals that makes the three-step identification guide so simple to use.

Mr Jenner explained: "Traditional taxonomic guides are quite slow to use. We wanted something quick and easy. Pop the bumblebee into a test tube and have a good look for the presence of and number of yellow bands on its thorax. Then cross reference with patterns on the abdomen. Using the colour chart allows you to quickly identify most species. And finally check against the species accounts and it's as easy as one, two bee!"

Martin collaborated with leading bee specialist Mike Edwards to put together the authoritative field guide. It includes more than 90 stunning colour photographs taken by top bee photographer Ted Benton of both sexes of all 22 known species., life history, conservation action and how to attract bumblebees to your garden.

The idea to publish the field guide with support from English Nature - the Government's wildlife advisor, came after thousands of people requested their new leaflet listing garden plants that provide food for bees.

Dr David Sheppard, English Nature's authority on bees, said: "This book is the only one that introduces new information and corrects old mistakes and will hopefully help provide us with up to date information about bumblebee populations in the future."

Scientists recently recorded a 300 fold increase in the number of bumblebees visiting plants in 6m x 100m margins grown in agricultural fields using a cheap legume mix in Romney Marsh, Kent. Now English Nature is campaigning to use farm subsidies to pay farmers to help provide more foraging for bees.

