



Pretty precious

Coming soon – six bees from different parts of the UK. Do you know your locals?

BEES ARE OUR ANCIENT ALLIES in towns and in the countryside, and unacknowledged partners in agriculture. They play a vital role in the pollination of food crops, keeping farms in business, and in helping parks, gardens and hedgerows to thrive. Yet bees are in decline in their numbers and their range, so Royal Mail is paying tribute to their vital work with a Bees Special Stamp issue on 18 August, comprising a set of six Special Stamps, Miniature Sheet, Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards and a Stamp Book.

Stamp by stamp

The Special sheet stamps portray two bumblebee species and four ‘solitary’ bees. They are chosen to represent a range of species, habitats and different UK regions. SCABIOUS BEE (*Andrena hattorfiana*). Most likely to be seen in South West England, but with other populations found in East Anglia and South Wales, this bee lives in sandy or open grassland where there are scabious flowers. *Second Class*

GREAT YELLOW BUMBLEBEE (*Bombus distinguendus*). Believed to have declined from 80 per cent of its historic range in the UK, this bee is a focus of ▶



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Bees Stamps – Prices

Stamp set AS19B	£7.27
Miniature Sheet MZ109	£3.92
Presentation Pack Code AP406	£11.70
First Day Cover Stamps/overseas, AF395	£9.20/£7.67
Stamp Cards (set of 10) Code AQ225	£4.95
Retail Stamp Book, Code UB384 (see page 330)	£3.78

Bees Stamps – Specifications

Date of issue	18 August
Number of stamps	Six (individual sheets)
Design	Anna Ekelund
Illustration	Richard Lewington
Stamp format	Over-square landscape
Stamp size	37mm x 35mm
Number per sheet	25/50
Full sheet size	380mm x 202mm
Printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14 x 14.5
Phosphor	Bars as appropriate
Gum	PVA



Postmarks: alternative location St Bees (see previous page); Tallents House postmark with a quote from William Blake (above); non-pictorial with St Bees location (see page 330)

conservation in Scotland. It lives in grassland where it can forage on clover, vetch and knapweed. *First Class*

NORTHERN COLLETES BEE (*Colletes floralis*). Its UK population is 50 per cent of the global total, so is very important. It prefers a sandy, coastal environment and forages on many flowers, including the carrot and parsley family. In 2003 this species was seen in Northern Ireland for the first time in 70 years. £1

BILBERRY BUMBLEBEE (*Bombus monticolus*). Concentrated in North East England but also in the South West and in Wales, this bumblebee prefers to live in higher altitudes. It forages on bilberries as well as brambles, raspberries, bell heather, sallow and legumes such as clover and bird's foot trefoil – which means that it can have a vital role in pollinating nitrogen-fixing plants in agriculture. £1.33

LARGE MASON BEE (*Osmia xanthomelana*). Found at only two sites in Wales, this is Britain's rarest solitary bee. Females collect fresh water from cliffs and use it to make mud for building nests. The Large Mason forages nectar mainly from horse shoe vetch, bramble and bugle. £1.52

POTTER FLOWER BEE (*Anthophora retusa*). This is a 'flower bee' that has the appearance of a bumblebee but is solitary. Numbers have declined severely and today it can be seen in just a few sites in South East England. Its preferred habitat is sandy soils such as dunes, cliffs and commons, where it forages from ground ivy, vetches, clovers and bird's foot trefoil. £2.25

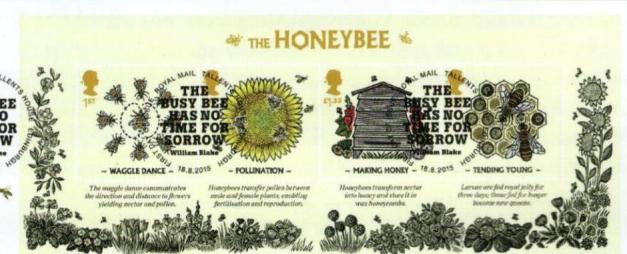
Bees Miniature Sheet – Specifications

Date of issue	18 August
Number of stamps	Four
Design	Interabang
Illustration	Andy English
Stamp format	Over-square landscape
Stamp size	37mm x 35mm
Miniature Sheet size	179mm x 74mm
Printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14 x 14.5
Gum	PVA

All six Special Stamps are available in the Presentation Pack, designed by Anna Ekelund and shown on the facing page, which includes an informative insert card written by Dave Goulson.

Four Miniature Sheet stamps

The Honeybee Miniature Sheet focuses on the Western Honeybee, *Apis mellifera*. The four stamps portray different aspects of apian behaviour: the waggle dance, pollinating, making honey and tending the young, as shown below on the Bees Miniature Sheet First Day Cover. ►



Mr B Graham

20 Marton Avenue

Ilkeston

Derbyshire .

DE7 4AB



Royal Mail First Day Cover



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Above: First Day Cover of Bee Stamps, with special postmarks dated on the first day of issue, 18 August

First Day facilities

Serviced (i.e. stamped and postmarked) Royal Mail First Day Covers for the Bees Special Stamps and Miniature Sheet are available by mail order from Royal Mail Tallents House at the address on page 322.

Orders for Serviced First Day Covers should reach Royal Mail by 18 August. You may also send stamped envelopes on the day of issue to Royal Mail, Tallents House for the Tallents House, Edinburgh postmark. Customers who hand in or post stamped Royal Mail First Day Cover envelopes at Post Offices with a philatelic counter on the day of issue will receive the pictorial St Bees first day postmark.

Alternatively, customers may also send stamped envelopes to any of the Special Handstamp Centres for the pictorial or plain St Bees postmark quoting the appropriate reference number, as shown on these pages.

Bees Stamp Book - Specifications

Issue date	18 August
Book format	4 x Royal Mail Red 1st Class Machin definitives, 2 x 1st Class Bees Great Yellow Bumblebee
Definitive Stamp format	Portrait 20mm x 24mm
Special Stamp format	Over-square landscape 37mm x 35mm
Printer	ISP
Print process	Gravure
Phosphor	Bars as appropriate
Gum	Self-adhesive



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