

Research Day | March 15, 2017

Title: The Buzz on Northern Bees

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Abstract:

Amid the growing concern for the fate of bees, I have begun several studies on bees in northern British Columbia and the Yukon, collaborating with colleagues at the Natural History Museum (UK) and the Royal Saskatchewan Museum. Over the past six years, these studies have revolved around focused collecting with nets and traps in the various ecosystems of the north; at least 5000 specimens have been deposited in the RBCM.

In general, bumblebee species that have declined dramatically in the south (e.g. the Western Bumblebee and Yellow-banded Bumblebee) are still common in the southern Yukon. However, the Gypsy Cuckoo Bumblebee (Endangered in Canada) seems to be much sparser than it was in the 1980s.

Mitochondrial DNA analysis of some of the bumblebees we've collected has revealed a new species of subarctic bumblebee, now named *Bombus kluanensis*. This is apparently a Beringian counterpart to the North American arctic species, *Bombus neoboreus*. Even though we now have a better idea of the status of most northern bees, we do not have good data on ongoing trends. To tackle that issue, we are planning to institute a repeatable monitoring plan for bumblebees, modeled after the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

