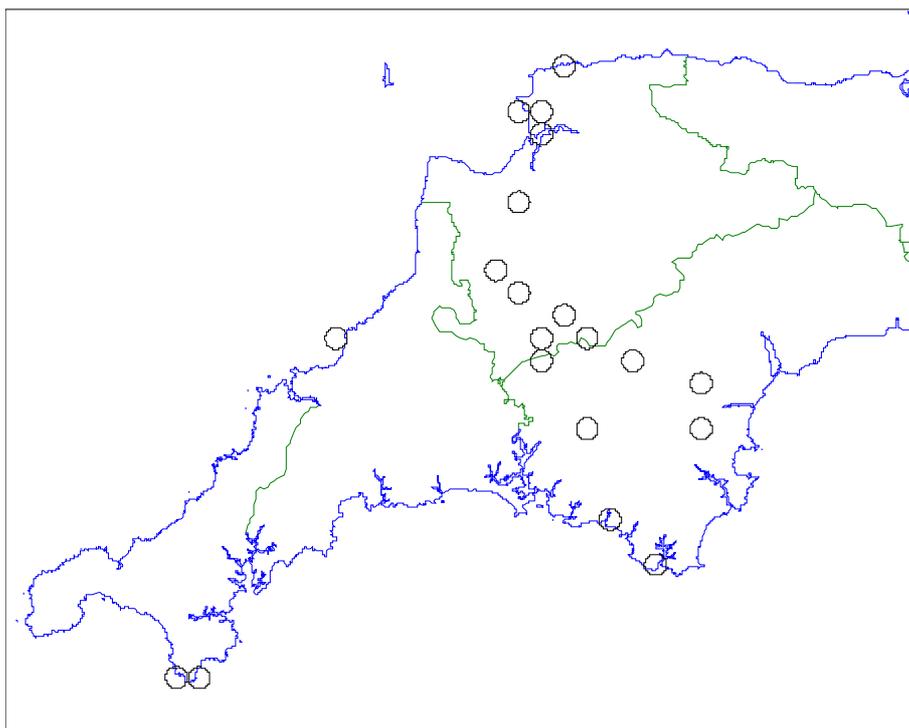


## ***Bombus soroeensis* The Broken-belted Bumblebee in Devon and Cornwall**

*I have recently been working on an atlas of bumblebees in Devon and Cornwall with the hope of publishing. I would be very keen for any further bumblebee records particularly in North and East Devon. The following is an extract from the atlas covering one of the bumblebees recorded in the region. *Bombus soroeensis* is a “white tailed bee” for identification refer to *Bumblebees* (Benton 2006) [patrick.saunders@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:patrick.saunders@mypostoffice.co.uk)*

*Bombus soroeensis*



*Hollow dots records before 1991*

- **Regional Distribution**

Possibly extinct last recorded in 1981. G.M. Spooner recorded it at a number of sites on the Devon/Cornwall border and on Dartmoor in the late 1970's where it now appears to be absent. The species is easy to overlook so there still is possibility the species occurs in the region, with Exmoor probably having the best chance of retaining the species. M. Spooner (1985) “the species is widely distributed and in some seasons locally abundant occurring both in North and South Devon, on the whole frequent in the neighbourhood of heaths and moorland, but has been seen in numbers on the coast near Dawlish and a mile or so inland from Paignton (R.C.L.P. 1923)”

- **National Range & Status**

Local in Scottish highlands, rare and declining in England and Wales although strong populations on Salisbury plain.

- **Phenology & Life cycle**

Very late species. Queens emerge from late May. With peak numbers often in early September.

- **Habitat & Ecology**

Short-medium tongued, usually nests below ground. About 100 workers in a nest. One of the latest *Bombus* species with populations at peak numbers into the middle of September. In Scotland and Wales associated with wet heath/moorland forage including Cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and *Rubus* sp. On Salisbury plain associated with chalk grassland forage including Mellilot *Melilotus officinalis*, Sanfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* and Devils-bit scabious *Succisa pratense*. On the latter they can be abundant. Past populations at Ilfracombe associated with Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* (Sladen 1912). Past populations in Cornwall found on Coastal, Culm and Moor habitats. Within Europe the species can be common and is considered and not to be specific in its forage requirements (Iserbyt Et. Al. 2008)

- **Conservation**

Protection of large areas of later flowering habitats such as heathland/moorland with Devils-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. "Species Recovery Scheme" Species in need of further conservation effort in region. Although this designation doesn't really reflect the rapid decline of the species in the South West.

It is hard to know exactly why the species is no longer present in the region. Although fragmentation and reduction in quality of later flowering habitats seems most likely. I suspect where there are areas of suitable wet heath/ moorland habitats, there is not enough suitable early small flowered legumes for the Queens. Wet late flowering grassland with Devils bit scabious has also declined and is often either overgrazed or under grazed. The Lizard would possibly be suitable for reintroduction scheme as there has been recent work on conservation grazing schemes and some areas look suitable for the species.

## References

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**Sladen F.W.L.**, 1912. *The humblebee*, Logaston press (reprint 1989)

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*B.soroensis* worker



*B.soroensis* male

