

Male Carpenter Bee and Foothill Penstemon

Photo by Colene Rauh

I caught this male Carpenter Bee nectar robbing my Foothill Penstemon. Each year I only see these guys for a short time, like two to three weeks. I understand they come out and mate and then they guard the nest which is interesting as they don't have stingers, only their intimidating size and aggression to ward off threats. They are typically on my Mock Orange which is right next door but this guy was drawn to the Penstemon. He was very focused as he let me get quite close.



Pollen Collection Techniques

Carpenter bees have developed efficient methods to collect pollen from flowers. As they hover near a blossom, their bodies become dusted with fine pollen particles. However, unlike honeybees that use pollen baskets on their hind legs to store pollen, carpenter bees rely on their hairy bodies to transport it. Their dense and branched hairs act as tiny hooks, allowing them to carry a significant amount of pollen back to their nests.

Interestingly, carpenter bees employ a unique technique known as “buzz” or “sonication.” This process involves vibrating their flight muscles at a specific frequency while clinging to a flower. The vibrations cause the pollen to be released from the anthers of the flower, making it easier for the bees to collect. This method is particularly useful for extracting pollen from flowers with tightly closed anthers.

Much more on Carpenter Bees: <https://pollenpaths.com/male-vs-female-carpenter-bee/>