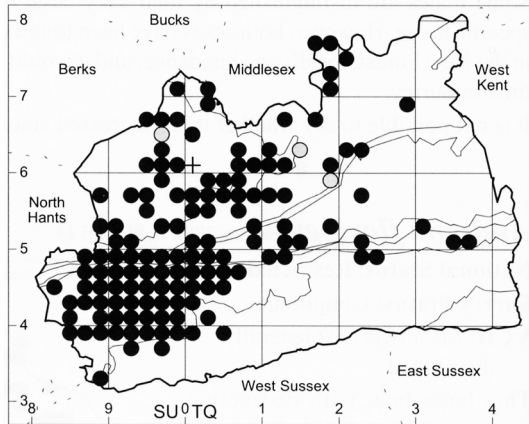


Andrena florea Fabricius, 1793 PLATE 5**National Status:** Scarce; RDB3**Surrey Status:** Locally very common**VCH:** Woking, Chobham, Weybridge

This striking medium-sized shiny black bee is conspicuous by the wide red band on the abdomen of both sexes. It has a very restricted distribution in south-east England where it occurs in Hampshire, West Sussex, Surrey, Middlesex and Essex. It is the only British *Andrena* that is restricted to a single plant species for pollen, namely white bryony.



In Surrey this bee is widespread and locally common, being found, sometimes in large numbers, at almost every flowering plant of white bryony. The plant and the bee are abundant on the Bargate Sands around Godalming, and common on the western Chalk as well as on the Greensand and Bagshot Sands, but both are absent from the Clay and from very dry acid heaths. Both plant and bee also occur sporadically on the dry acid grassland commons around southwest London, such as Barnes Common, Richmond Park and Kew Gardens. From the map the bee seems to peter out in the east of the county but this may be due to lack of recording, as the plant does occur there. It was possibly as common and widespread in Victorian times but there is no doubt that the centre of distribution in this country is west Surrey.

Because the bee is restricted to white bryony it is one of the easiest bees to find; go to a flowering plant and there it will be, identifiable at once by its red band, although many other *Andrena* species and honey bees will also be found there. Both males and females fly to white bryony for nectar but swarms of males have been observed flying round patches of gromwell at Shepleas and Westcott Downs (DWB), these possibly being mating areas.

The nest burrows are usually found in hard sandy paths, sometimes in large aggregations. This bee is single-brooded and flies from late May to early July, but it has been observed nesting as late as 4 August 1998 at Burrowhill Green and even 10 August 1998 at Compton (DWB); the latest date it was seen, but not nesting, was at Albury Heath on 13 August 1998 (GAC).

It has probably increased and expanded its range since 1900.