How to Paint *Bombus vosnesenskii*

The Yellow-Face Bumblebee

But first…some facts

(skip ahead to page 3 for the tutorial)

Fun Fact*: Bombus* comes from the Greek word "*bombos*", which means "a buzzing sound"…quite apt, as these bees are so large that you can often hear them coming.

Bombus (the bumblebee genus, containing about 25 other species in California, and over 250 species world wide) are eusocial bees. Eusociality – meaning "truly social" – is not a common trait. Most bees are solitary, with each female building her own nest and collecting food for her own young. By contrast, in eusocial colonies, tasks to keep the colony alive – foraging, raising young, hive defense, and reproduction – are completed by different groups of bees, often delineated by age or size. As in honeybees, only the queen bumblebee reproduces.

A *Bombus* colony, unlike a perennial honeybee colony which may have many thousands of bees, generally has fewer than 500 individuals, and will live only one year. Only queen bumblebees overwinter – all the workers and males die at the end of the foraging season.

These bees can be distinguished from other similar, local bees by the following characteristics:

- The Yellow-Face Bumblebee is unapologetically fuzzy
- The Yellow-Face Bumblebee always has the same hair pattern: yellow face, half-yellow thorax, and yellow 4th tergite (dorsal abdonminal segment); black everywhere else.

Things to remember in the Painting Process:

- **Does the painting look good close up AND far away? Remember that the mural will be first seen at a distance.**
- **Don't forget to sign your name (subtly) on your painting**

ANYWAY…

Painting *Bombus vosnesenskii* well requires only a few colors, as their banded color pattern is quite recognizable.

At their most basic, these bees only need Black (for the body and any outlining), yellow (for the face), and white (for highlights and texture as needed)

However, for painters who want to take the process a step farther, the full array of colors, well-managed, will increase the vibrancy of your bee…

Step 1

Paint in the outline of your bee. This will allow you to essentially build your own “paint by number” if you outline where each of the sections of color will go.

This artist sketched directly with paint, and made a few mistakes. That is A-OK at this stage; the painting will be cut out, or a background painted in, at a later stage. Take care with your drawing to balance having an “active” line (one that is variable in width, maybe a little sloppy, highly expressive) with making sure that your base drawing is accurate. In this case, the artist drew first in a light, watered-down color, and then painted over the accurate drawing with a more opaque dark. Don’t be afraid to add a bit of water to your paint to make it spread farther.

Step 2

Fill in color blocks (like mosaic)

This step is pretty straight-forward. Notice that there are some areas on the legs and wings that are drawn in a contrasting color. These small highlights on the legs bring the view-side legs into focus, and make them stand out from the body, while the dark line around the head helps define the separate sections of the bees body.

Oops! The front leg is filled in with white. Is it a mistake? It's not really an issue, as from here out, it is artist's (your) discretion to create more details, clean up lines, add shadows and highlights, dial in details, and generally make your artistic vision known to the world.

Step 3

Add texture, wing venation, highlights, dark stuff, and a background but only if appropriate for the application. For kits that will be applied as mural decals, the background may be unnecessary, as the last step will be to cut out just the bee.

Figure 1: final be painting uses blue-violet-greys for highlights on the black areas, and yellow-browns and nearly-white yellows for highlights in the yellow areas. The artist chose to paint orange pollen on the bee's hind leg.

For poly-tab cut-outs, cut out the bee with no background at all. The background will be painted on the wall, and the poly-tab cutout will be applied over the top. Please cut out your designs carefully.

Images for Reference

Figure 2 Fore and Hind wings of a North American *Bombus*. the arrow points to a difinitiv charictaristic of *Bombus* wings, which is the lack of a jugal lobe. Image from Bees in Your Backyard, by Joseph S. Wilson & Olivia Messinger Carril (c) 2016

The number and shape of cells within the winds informs a knowledgeable viewer about what kind of bee it is. **If this is not your cup of tea, don't include this level of detail; this document is simply meant to provide you with the resources if you want them.**

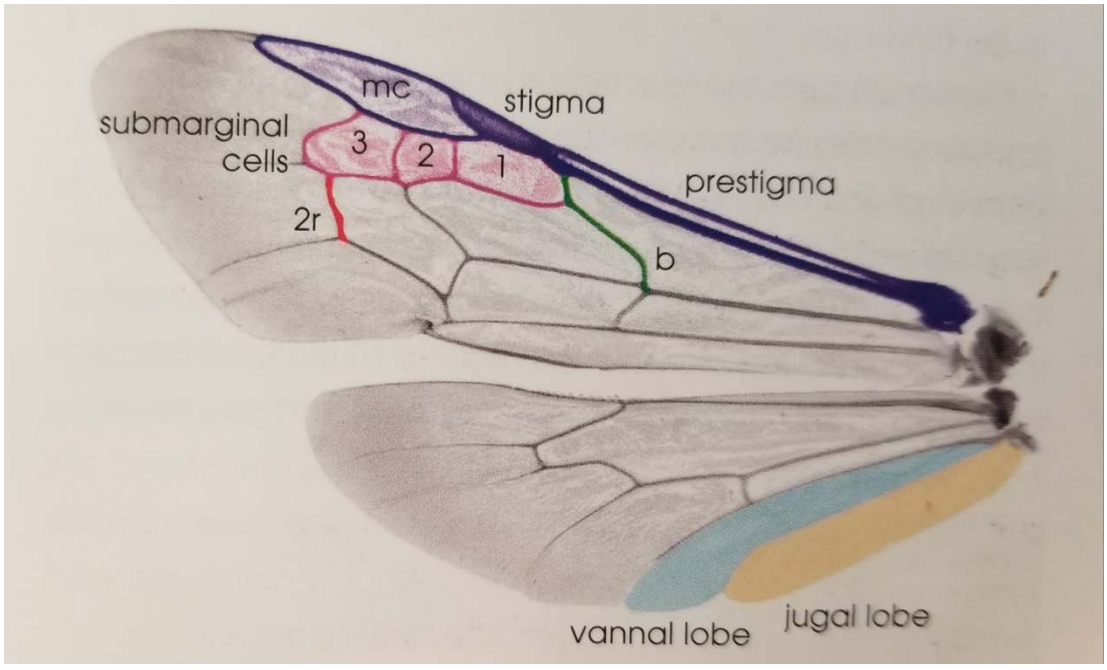

Figure 3 For the interested party or general pedant, here is a general diagram of a bee's wing with the associated terminology. The jugal lobe, mentioned in the above image, in the lowerermost, unveined lobe in the hind wing. Image from Bees in Your Backyard, by Joseph S. Wilson & Olivia Messinger Carril (c) 2016

Examples of *Bombus vosnesenskii*

There are many kinds of bees – do some research to find out what other kinds of bees look like, or use your imagination!

Figure 4 Vozzie coming in hot! This bee is either just landing or just taking off, as her legs are extended. Bees mostly keep their legs tucked up next to their [continued on next page…] […continued from previous page…] bodies in flight. Also note the blob of pollen on the hind leg --that is a mixture of pollen and nectar (sometimes called "bee bread") carried in a special depression of the hind leg called a corbicula (or "pollen basket). Locally, European Honeybees and bumblebees have corbicula. Most bees in Sonoma County, if female, will have hairy back legs. Male bees, because they do not collect pollen to provision nests, have neither corbicula nor scopae.

Figure 5 This image shows a number of identifying traits for Vozzies. The face is yellow, the leading edge of the thorax is yellow, and the fourth tergal segment is yellow. Female bees have six segments.