

Species Status Assessment

Common Name: Bear-like Digger Bee **Date Updated:** 2025-03-11
Scientific Name: *Anthophora ursina* **Updated By:** Erin L. White
Class: Insecta
Family: Apidae

Species Synopsis

(a short paragraph which describes species taxonomy, distribution, recent trends, and habitat in New York):

Bear-like Digger Bee is known from British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, Canada and in the US, generally from coast to coast (but not documented in the central states) (NatureServe 2025, DiscoverLife 2025).

The species was ranked an S1 as part of the ESNPS (White et al. 2022) based on rarity, trend, and threat information. The species is historically (1999 and earlier) known from Richmond and Ontario Counties and has been confirmed in Chatauqua County since 2000, suggesting this has always been a rare bee in NY but has the potential to be present statewide.

Bear-like Digger Bee was observed in meadow habitat during the ESNPS (White et al. 2022). *Anthophora* are known pollinators of wildflowers including *Penstemon*, *Lupinus*, and *Oenothera* (Wilson and Carril 2016).

I. Status

a. Current legal protected Status

- i. **Federal:** Not Listed **Candidate: No**
- ii. **New York:** Unprotected

b. Natural Heritage Program

- i. **Global:** GNR
- ii. **New York:** S1 **Tracked by NYNHP?** On Active Tracking List

Other Ranks:

NYS 2025 SGCN Status: High Priority Species of Greatest Conservation Need
IUCN Red List: Not assessed by IUCN Red List
Northeast Regional SGCN: Not listed

Status Discussion:

The species was ranked an S1 as part of the ESNPS (White et al. 2022) based on rarity, trend, and threat information. The species is historically (1999 and earlier) known from Richmond and Ontario Counties and has been confirmed in Chatauqua County since 2000, suggesting this has always been a rare bee in NY but has the potential to be present statewide.

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status or S-Rank	SGCN?
North America	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		
Northeastern US	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		No
New York	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S1	No
Connecticut	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SH	No
Massachusetts	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SNR	No
New Jersey	No	-	-	-		
Pennsylvania	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SNR	No
Vermont	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		
Ontario	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		
Quebec	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		

Column options

Present?: Yes; No; Unknown; No data; (blank) or Choose an Item

Abundance and Distribution: Declining; Increasing; Stable; Unknown; Extirpated; N/A; (blank) or Choose an item

SGCN?: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Monitoring in New York

The Empire State Native Pollinator Survey (ESNPS) was conducted from 2017-2021, but there are no organized, regular monitoring or survey activities directed toward this species or to sites where they have been documented. Some regular monitoring may occur at protected sites that Heritage staff revisit if they occur on state properties, as part of OPRHP or State Lands inventory work.

Trends Discussion

The species is historically (1999 and earlier) known from Richmond and Ontario Counties and has been confirmed in Chatauqua County since 2000, suggesting this has always been a rare bee in NY but has the potential to be present statewide.

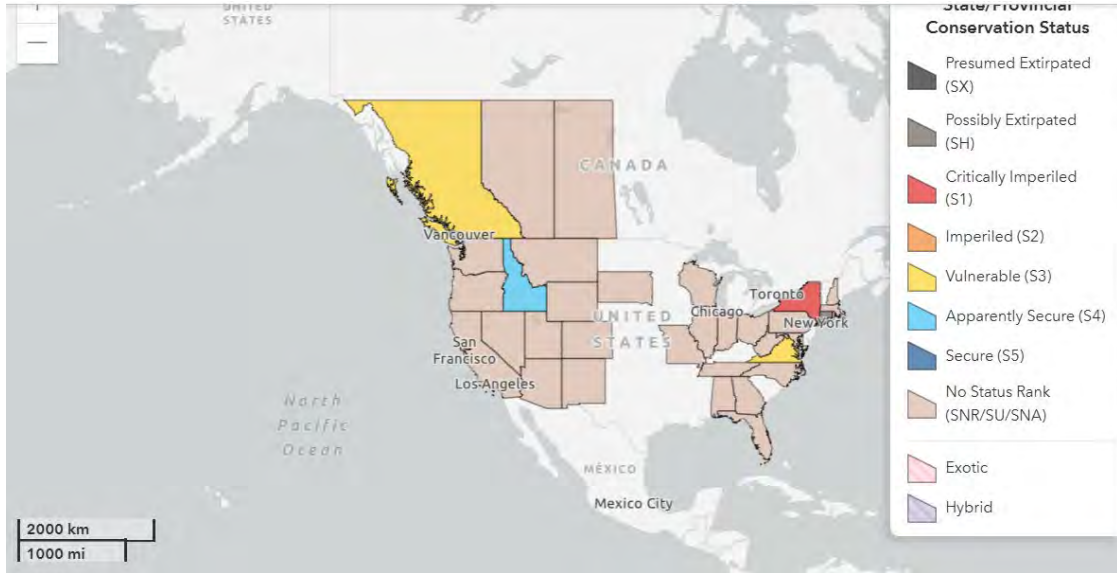


Figure 11: *Anthophora ursina* North American distribution (NatureServe 2025).

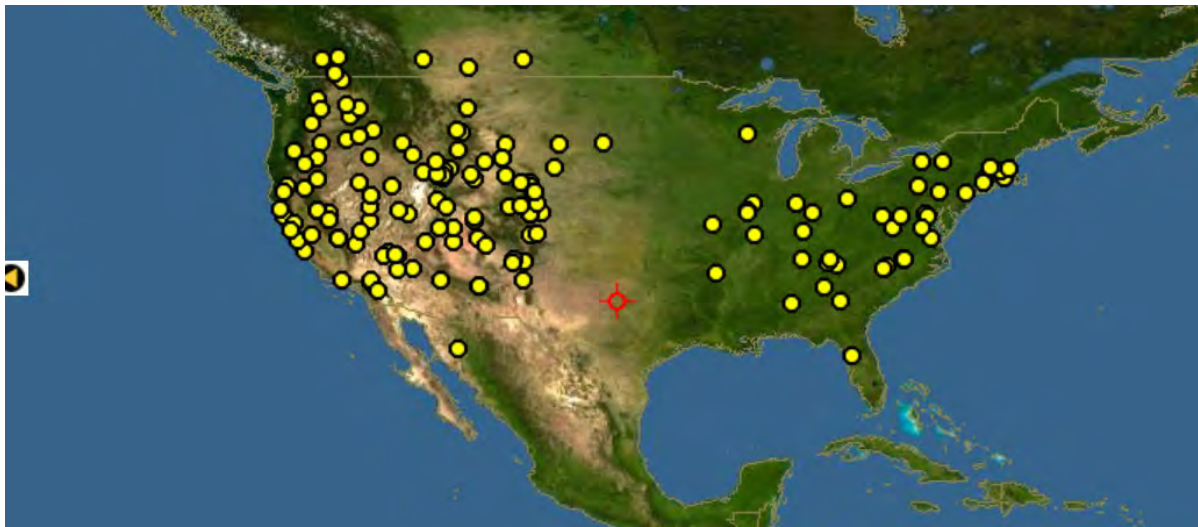


Figure 22: *Anthophora ursina* North American distribution (DiscoverLife 2025).

III. New York Rarity

(provide map, numbers, and percent of state occupied)

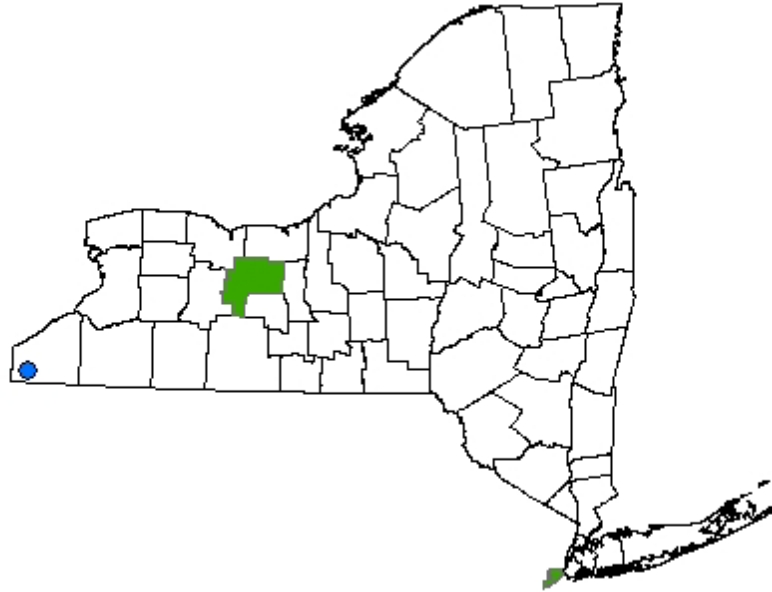


Figure 3 3: NYS distribution for *Anthophora ursina* based on ESNPS data (White et al. 2022). Observations from 2000 to present depicted as dots; those from 1999 and earlier as shaded counties.

Years	Observations	# of Counties	% of counties in State
Pre-2000	2	2	3.2
2000-2023	1	1	1.6

Table 1. Number of observations of *Anthophora ursina* grouped by the dates known to be extant (repeat observations (element occurrences) include the years spanning first observation to last observation) and the number and percent of total of counties these observations fall within for New York State.

Details of historic and current occurrence:

Historically, Bear-like Digger Bee is known from Richmond (1994) and Ontario (1894) counties. It is currently known from one location in Chautauque County in 2019 (White et al. 2022).

Percent of North American Range in NY	Classification of NY Range	Distance to core population, if not in NY
1-25%	Peripheral	~2000 mi

Column options

Percent of North American Range in NY: 100% (endemic); 76-99%; 51-75%; 26-50% 1-25%; 0%; Choose an item

Classification of NY Range: Core; Peripheral; Disjunct; (blank) or Choose an item

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type

(from NY crosswalk of NE Aquatic, Marine, or Terrestrial Habitat Classification Systems):

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York

Habitat Specialist?	Indicator Species?	Habitat/ Community Trend	Time frame of Decline/ Increase
No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Column options

Habitat Specialist and Indicator Species: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Habitat/Community Trend: Declining; Stable; Increasing; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Habitat Discussion:

Bear-like Digger Bee was observed in meadow habitat during the ESNPS (White et al. 2022). *Anthophora* are known pollinators of wildflowers including *Penstemon*, *Lupinus*, and *Oenothera* (Wilson and Carril 2016).

V. Species Demographics and Life History

Breeder in NY?	Non-breeder in NY?	Migratory Only?	Summer Resident?	Winter Resident?	Anadromous/ Catadromous?
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

Column options

First 5 fields: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Anadromous/Catadromous: Anadromous; Catadromous; (blank) or Choose an item

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion

(include information about species life span, reproductive longevity, reproductive capacity, age to maturity, and ability to disperse and colonize):

This species has been recorded March to June throughout its range (DiscoverLife 2025). Recent observations (since 1990) in NY have been in July (White et al. 2022).

VI. Threats

Threats facing *Anthophora ursina* and other ground-nesting bees include habitat loss and degradation, invasive plants and pathogens, pesticides, and climate change (White et al. 2022). Kammerer et al. (2020) found that warmer winters will result in fewer bees and solitary bees are more sensitive to drought conditions, which are predicted in the Northeast as a result of climate change.

Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3	Scope	Severity	Irreversibility	Trend	Certainty
1. Residential and Commercial	1.1 Housing & Urban Areas		W	L	H	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
3. Energy Production & Mining	3.2 Mining & Quarrying		R	L	M	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
4. Transportation & Service Corridors	4.1 Roads & Railroads		W	L	H	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
8. Invasive & Other Problematic Species	8.1 Invasive Non-Native Plants & Animals	8.1.2 Terrestrial plants	P	M	H	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
8. Invasive & Other Problematic Species	8.4 Pathogens		P	M	H	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
9. Pollution	9.3 Agricultural & Forestry Effluents	9.3.3 Herbicides & pesticides	R	L	H	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
11. Climate Change	11.1 Habitat Shifting & Alteration	(warmer winters result in fewer bees)	W	L	H	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
11. Climate Change	11.4 Changes in Precipitation & Hydrological Regimes	11.4.2 Droughts (solitary bees more sensitive to drought).	R	L	H	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Table 2. Threats to *Anthophora ursina*.

SCOPE: Spatial proportion of the distribution that is expected to be affected in the next 10 years (**narrow**= 1-10%; **restricted**=11-30%; **widespread**=31-70%; **pervasive**= 71-100%).

SEVERITY: The degree of population reduction in the next 10 years that can be reasonably expected from the threat given the current circumstances and trends (**low**=degrade/reduce population by 1-10%; **medium**=d/r population by 11-30%; **high**=d/r population by 30-70%; **very high**=d/r population by 71-100%).

IRREVERSIBILITY: The degree to which the effects can be reduced and the species restored (**low**=easily reversed, at a low cost, and/or within 0-5 years; **medium**=can be reversed with a reasonable commitment of resources and/or within 6-20 years; **high**=can technically be reversed, but not practicably affordable and/or it would take 21-100 years; **very high**=cannot be reversed and species not likely to be restore and/or it would take >100 years).

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

Yes:

No:



Unknown:

If yes, describe mechanism and whether adequate to protect species/habitat:

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

Any efforts to protect wild bee populations from pathogen exposure would benefit this species. Suggested actions would include using mesh to prevent escape of bees from commercial breeding greenhouses, proper disposal of commercial bees, sanitation in greenhouses, and development of molecular screening. Tight restrictions on importing bees and elimination of parasites from commercial populations has been suggested as ideal (Meeus et al. 2011, Schweitzer et al. 2012). Limiting exposure of Bear-like Digger Bee to insecticides would also benefit them. Suggested actions include avoidance of application to flowers that bees are attracted to and application of solutions or soluble powders (rather than dusts or wettable powders) to the ground in calm wind and warmer temperatures during periods of dewless nights to minimize the impact to resident native bee populations (Schweitzer et al. 2012). Organic farming has also been suggested to benefit native bees. Ensuring habitat resources for foraging, nesting, and overwintering will also benefit *Anthophora ursina*. These habitats should be within close proximity to each other and without road or railroads between them, which have been suggested as potential barriers to dispersal. Suggested actions for habitat management should include ensuring nectar availability throughout the spring and summer by improving flower abundance and species richness and species with overlapping blooms. If mowing of fields occurs, summer is the best time and mower blades should be raised to avoid ground nests. Staggering cutting times in different field areas will ensure nectaring sources are always available. Increasing available nesting habitat may be accomplished by reducing tillage in fields or leaving unplowed strips vegetated, or even providing artificial nesting boxes. Managing for rodents and ground-nesting birds should also benefit native ground-nesting bees (Schweitzer et al. 2012).

Action Category	Action	Description
A.1 Direct Habitat Management	A.1.0.0.0 Direct habitat management	Site/Area management
A.1 Direct Habitat Management	A.1.1.0.0 Manage plants, animals, fungi, or bacteria	Invasive/Problematic species control
B.3 Outreach	B.3.1.4.0 Public outreach and information	Awareness & Communications
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.0.0 Conservation planning	Site/Area Protection
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.0.0 Conservation planning	Resource/Habitat Protection
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.1.3 Develop a conservation, management, or restoration plan for protected private lands	Habitat/Natural process restoration
C.7 Legislative and Regulatory Framework or Tools	C.7.1.3.0 Create, amend, or influence regulation	
C.7 Legislative and Regulatory Framework or Tools	C.7.2.1.0 Create or amend policies	
C.9 Education and Training	C.9.2.0.0 Training and individual skill development	Training

Table 3. Recommended conservation actions for *Andrena aliciae*.

VII. References

This SSA drew heavily from these resources:

New York Natural Heritage Program, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. 2023. Element Occurrence and Element Dataset. Albany, New York. [Exported 12/14/2023].

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DiscoverLife. 2025. Online. Available at: <http://www.discoverlife.org/> [Accessed March 11, 2025].

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Kammerer, M., Goslee, S.C., Douglas, M.R., Tooker, J.F. and Grozinger, C.M., 2021. Wild bees as winners and losers: Relative impacts of landscape composition, quality, and climate. *Global change biology*, 27(6), pp.1250-1265.

Meeus, I., M. J. F. Brown, D. C. De Graaf, and G. Smagghe. 2011. Effects of invasive parasites on bumble bee declines. *Conservation Biology* 25(4):662–671.

NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. [Accessed 3/11/2025].

Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity. 2024. Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (2024). <https://northeastwildlifediversity.org/rsgcn>. Accessed May 14, 2024.

Schweitzer, D.F., N.A. Capuano, B.E. Young and S.R. Colla. 2012. Conservation and management of North American bumble bees. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia, and USDA Forest Service, Washington, D.C. 17 pp.

Wilson, J.S. and O. M. Carril. 2016. A guide to North America's Bees: The bees in your backyard. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

White, Erin L., Matthew D. Schlesinger, and Timothy G. Howard. 2022. The Empire State Native Pollinator Survey (2017-2021). New York Natural Heritage Program. Albany, NY.

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