



NEWSLETTER: AUGUST 2021

News

Welcome to the sixth month of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme for 2021.

Don't worry if your 2021 walk has been impacted by Covid restrictions. The main thing is to try to get back to your walk as soon as you can. If that can happen, the longer term impacts should be minimal, particularly where you have a well established walk.

Remember new volunteers can join at anytime!

What happened in August 2020

- 82 transects were walked last August.
- While five people spotted more than 100 *individual* bumblebees on their walk last August, the average number was 34. Two people walked their route and didn't see any bumblebees.
- Even the most diverse walks were only recording 6-7 different species last August. Within these, they did have males, workers and queens, so still plenty to contend with!
- You should still mainly be seeing workers. *Bombus pascuorum* workers were the most commonly observed last August.
- Top recorded in order for last August were: *B. pascuorum* workers (recorded on 85% of all transects), *Bombus lucorum* agg. (71%), *B. lapidarius* males (35%), *B. lucorum* queens (28%), *B. pascuorum* males (26%), *B. terrestris* queens (26%), *B. lucorum* males (24%), *B. pratorum* workers (23%), *B. lapidarius* workers (22%), *B. pascuorum* queens (21%), *B. hortorum* workers (17%), *B. lapidarius* queens (15%), *B. terrestris* males (12%) & *B. muscorum* workers (10%).
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were *B. jonellus* (queen, worker and males), as well as queens and males of *B. muscorum*, *B. hortorum* and *B. pratorum*. There were also a small number of sightings of *B. bohemicus*, *B. sylvestris* and *B. barbutellus*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last August was 2,747 (plus 1,156 honeybees). This was slightly down on August 2019 when we had 3,008 bumblebees across all walks.

Tips & advice this month

- ✓ July and August are when you tend to see the greatest numbers of individual bees. You should mainly be seeing workers. *Bombus pascuorum* workers often overtake *B. lucorum* agg. as the most commonly observed this month.
- ✓ Typically, *B. lapidarius* remains common, but you will start to see a noticeable drop off in *B. hortorum* and *B. pratorum* as they begin winding up their season.
- ✓ For those of you lucky enough to have *B. muscorum* on your transect, they may reach their peak this month.
- ✓ You should see new queens and males this month.
- ✓ Without experience, it can be difficult to identify males. *B. pascuorum* males can be particularly difficult. You need to check for longer antennae and remember they will never have a pollen basket. Don't worry if you are new to the scheme or if you don't get a clear look – we understand that some are misclassified as workers.
- ✓ Don't forget *Bombus terrestris* workers should be recorded as *Bombus lucorum* agg. While we can distinguish *B. lucorum* and *B. terrestris* queens, it's not possible to reliably separate the workers by sight so both get recorded as *B. lucorum* agg.

Common errors last August

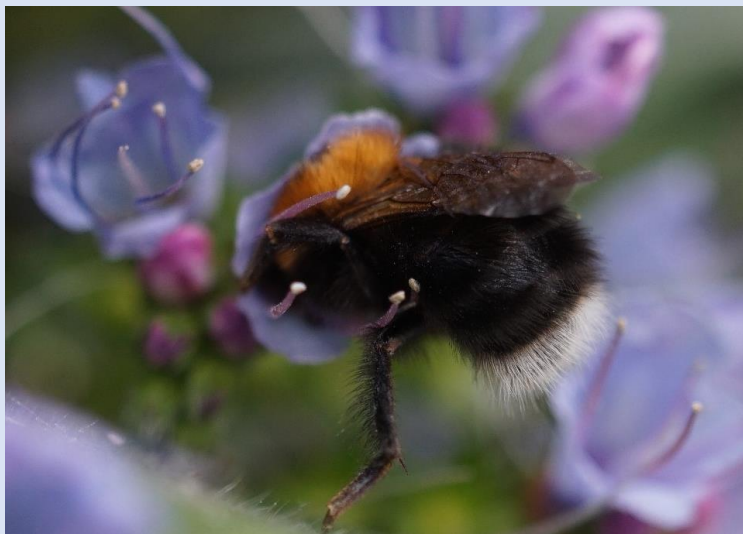
- There were very few errors last August.
- Be careful about recording very rare species e.g., *B. sylvarum*, *B. monticola*. Often they are habitat specific or restricted to a particular geographic area. If you're not sure, I'm always very happy to check photographs for you.
- Be careful with the cuckoo bumblebees. They will be around but are rare. If you're not sure, you can email a photograph and I'm very happy to check for you.

Important food plants in August

In August 2020, we received 155 casual bumblebee records that also stated what the bee was feeding on. Based on this data, bumblebees were foraging on over 70 different plant species last August. By far and away the most important was Knapweed. This was then followed by Thistles, Heathers, Ragwort, Bramble and Lavender. If you're seeing something important or unusual on your walk this month, please submit a casual record and fill in the foraging box: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/bumblebees>



Photo of the month



Here's the one we need to watch out for! This lovely photo of *Bombus hypnorum* (Tree Bumblebee) was spotted by Maja Ilic in the Botanic Gardens, Belfast.

Interesting recent research

The humidity of flowers acts as an invisible attractor for bumblebees

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2021/june/bees-humidity.html>

Other things to keep an eye out for this month

Keep an eye out for this distinctive hoverfly – *Volucella pellucens*. It's often found in woodland clearings or along hedgerows, where it likes to feed on Bramble and umbellifers. It lays its eggs in the nest of our common wasp and the larvae feed as scavengers on nest debris. Photo: Gillian Stewart. Submit any sightings here:

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/hoverflies>



Workshops and upcoming events

All our events are still suspended currently. I am happy to answer as many queries as you have by email and to look at any photographs you have for identification.

Free online course on identifying and monitoring bumblebees

Don't forget we have this free online resource. It should be especially useful for new volunteers. It not only helps you get familiar with our common bumblebees, but it also explains how to take part in the monitoring scheme, including how to log your route online and submit your monthly data. You can access it here:

<https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/monitoring-scheme-initiatives/bumblebee-monitoring-scheme/identifying-irish-bumblebees-online-course>

We need more volunteers

Despite Covid, 2020 was a successful year. While a lot of people dabbled, we had 66 transects that were walked sufficient times to be included in the 2020 monitoring analyses (at least 6 out of 8). There are some walks that couldn't be walked due to Covid restrictions, that will hopefully come back on track as things improve. Also, some new people joined the scheme mid-way through and will hopefully come on stream with their data from this year. **This is an incredible achievement and we are very grateful to all of you.**

We also fully understand that sometimes unexpected events arise and it is simply impossible to achieve this target in a particular year. Where this happens, please do still persevere as the data is still very useful. The longer you've been in the scheme, the better able we are to cope with occasional monthly gaps in your walk data.

Our target is to get to 100 monitoring standard walks each year so we do still need to recruit many more volunteers over the coming years. If you know of anyone wishing to get involved with the monitoring scheme please forward this to them and/or encourage them to get in touch with us here in the Data Centre.

Thank you for all your efforts and for being generous enough with your time to take part in this important scheme.

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