



## NEWSLETTER: JULY 2021

### News

Welcome to the fifth month of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme for 2021. In exciting news, one of our NI walks has picked up the Tree Bumblebee for the first time!

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 July 2020

- 81 transects were walked last July.
- While seven people spotted more than 100 *individual* bumblebees on their walk last July, the average number was 37 (this up from an average of 27 last June).
- You should mainly be seeing workers now. *Bombus lucorum* agg. and *B. pascuorum* workers were the predominant taxa across all transects in July 2020.
- I haven't picked winners for most variety on their July 2020 walk, as there were many people who all spotted a good diversity of species. The most common combination still seems to be *B. pratorum*, *B. pascuorum*, *B. lapidarius*, *B. hortorum* and *B. lucorum* agg.
- Top recorded in order for last July were: *Bombus lucorum* agg. (recorded on 88% of all transects), *B. pascuorum* workers (74%), *B. lapidarius* workers (43%), *B. lapidarius* males (35%), *B. lucorum* males (35%), *B. hortorum* workers (32%), *B. pratorum* workers (31%), *B. lucorum* queens (25%), *B. terrestris* queens (23%), *B. pascuorum* males (14%), *B. pascuorum* queens (14%), *B. lapidarius* queens (12%), *B. hortorum* queens (11%), *B. pratorum* males (10%) & *B. terrestris* males (10%).
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were *B. jonellus* (queen, worker and males), *B. muscorum* (queen, worker and males), *B. pratorum* queens and *B. hortorum* males. One person also spotted the rare cuckoo bumblebee, *B. rupestris*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last June was 3,004 (plus 1,360 honeybees).

## Tips & advice this month

- ✓ In a typical July, you should be seeing much greater numbers of individual bees and you should mainly be seeing workers. *Bombus lucorum* agg., *pascuorum*, *lapidarius*, *pratorum* and *hortorum* workers should be particularly common.
- ✓ Some people are only picking up the big two – *B. lucorum* agg. and *B. pascuorum*. Don't worry if that's the case.
- ✓ Males will also be active from now, and it should be easy to spot the more distinctive ones – *B. lapidarius*, *B. pratorum* & *B. lucorum* especially.
- ✓ Without experience, it can be difficult to identify males of *B. hortorum*, *B. pascuorum* and *B. terrestris* as they don't have a different banding pattern to the females. 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 – we understand that some are misclassified as workers in the early years.
- ✓ 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 July

- We didn't receive too many errors last July.
- Be careful not to confuse *B. pascuorum* and *B. muscorum*. Not too many of us are lucky enough to see the latter unfortunately! With *B. muscorum* all the hairs on the abdomen will be blonde. *B. pascuorum* usually has a gingerish tail and will have some black hairs on the abdomen. Remember that *B. pascuorum* is prone to fading and can look pale. If you're not sure, I'm always happy to check photographs for you.
- 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.

## Important food plants in July

In July 2020, we received 181 casual bumblebee records that also stated what the bee was feeding on. Based on this data, bumblebees were foraging on over 80 different plant species last July. Thistles were most common, followed by Bramble, Clovers 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



This lovely photo of *Bombus hortorum* was submitted by Lynne Gillespie

### Interesting recent research

Natural caffeine found in floral nectar can prevent disease in bumblebees

<https://phys.org/news/2021-05-natural-caffeine-floral-nectar-disease.html>

### Other things to keep an eye out for this month

The Wool Carder Bee (*Anthidium manicatum*) is another of our more distinctive solitary bees. It's a large robust bee with yellow spots on the side of the abdomen and yellow markings on the face and legs. It was first recorded from Ireland in 2015 and is spreading across the Southeast. It's often found in gardens. Submit any sightings here: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/solitary-bees>



### 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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