



## NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2021

### News

Welcome to the fourth 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 June 2020

- 83 transects were walked last June.
- While eleven people spotted more than 50 *individual* bumblebees on their walk last June, the average number was 27.
- Two person walked their transect and recorded no bees in June 2020. Where at all possible, you should try to choose a day when some bees are flying.
- You should mainly be seeing workers now. *Bombus lucorum* agg. was the predominant taxa across all transects in June 2020. You will still spot queens and males will also be flying now.
- I haven't picked winners for most variety on their June 2020 walk, as there were many people who all spotted a good diversity of species. The most common combination seems to have been *B. pratorum*, *B. pascuorum*, *B. lapidarius*, *B. hortorum* and *B. lucorum* agg.
- Top recorded in order for last June were: *Bombus lucorum* agg. (recorded on 88% of all transects), *B. pascuorum* workers (71%), *B. lapidarius* workers (43%), *B. pratorum* workers (41%), *B. hortorum* workers (39%), *B. lucorum* queens (24%), *B. pascuorum* queens (20%), *B. pratorum* males (19%), *B. terrestris* queens (16%), *B. lucorum* males (13%), *B. hortorum* queens (12%), *B. muscorum* workers (10%).
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were *B. jonellus*, *B. bohemicus* and *B. sylvestris*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last June was 2,218 (plus 765 honeybees).

## Tips & advice this month

- ✓ In a typical June, 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.
- ✓ For some early emerging species, you will now start seeing males and new queens as they produce a new generation. This is particularly the case for *B. lucorum*, *B. terrestris* and *B. pratorum*; but also possibly *B. pascuorum* and *B. hortorum*.
- ✓ 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 June

- There were very few errors last June!
- Take care with males. You will now be seeing males for the common early emerging species who have two generations a year, but it'd still be unlikely for the later emerging species (e.g. *B. muscorum*).
- Be careful not to confuse *B. pratorum* males for *B. lapidarius* males. Both have yellow faces and a yellow band on the thorax, but *B. pratorum* males also have a yellow band on the abdomen.
- Be careful about recording very rare species e.g., *B. sylvarum*, *B. ruderarius*. 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 June

In June 2020, we received 238 casual bumblebee records that also stated what the bee was feeding on. Based on this data, bumblebees were foraging on over 90 different plant species last June. White Clover was most common, followed by Bramble, Bird's-foot-trefoil, Bush Vetch & Red Clover. 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 beautiful photo of a *Bombus lapidarius* queen foraging on Spring Gentian in the Burren was submitted by Sallyann Marron.

### Interesting recent research

Larger bumblebees prefer to forage earlier in the morning

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/bumblebees-foraging-dawn-exeter-study-b1843145.html>

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

*Andrena haemorrhoa* is another of our more distinctive mining solitary bees. It is common and can be found in most habitats. You need to check for the orange-haired thorax, red-tipped abdomen plus orange hind legs.





### 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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