



NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2021

News

Welcome to the seventh 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 September 2020

- 76 transects were walked last September.
- Seven walks still recorded more than 30 *individual* bumblebees, but the average number spotted was 11. As is to be expected, this is significantly down from last August's average of 34.
- Six people walked their route and didn't find any bumblebees last September.
- *B. pascuorum* workers were the predominant taxa across all transects last September (recorded on 76% of all walks). This was followed by *B. lucorum* agg. (37%), *B. pascuorum* males (21%), *B. terrestris* queens (20%), *B. pascuorum* queens (18%), *B. lucorum* queens (17%) and *B. lapidarius* males (9%).
- *B. pascuorum* workers (519 individuals) took over from *B. lucorum* agg. (117) as the most abundant bumblebee spotted across all walks this month. The total number of *B. pascuorum* workers spotted was up from Sept 2019 figures of 378 individuals.
- Species diversity is now much lower – only 8 species were spotted across all walks last September – *B. pascuorum*, *B. lucorum* and *B. terrestris* predominated, with smaller numbers of *B. hortorum*, *B. lapidarius* and *B. pratorum*. *B. jonellus* and *B. muscorum* were still occasionally spotted on walks in areas that are lucky enough to have these species.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last September was 813 (plus 459 honey bees). As expected, this is a big drop from the previous month last year (2,747 bumblebees).

Tips & advice this month

- ✓ For me, September is often the month of the *B. pascuorum* worker and that is what many of us might see in greatest abundance.
- ✓ Numbers are generally substantially down as bumblebees begin hibernating again. The later in September you leave your walk, the less bees you're likely to see.
- ✓ There will still be males around this month so keep an eye out for them. You are also likely to see new queens at they fatten up before going into hibernation.
- ✓ If you're lucky enough to have rarer species like *B. muscorum*, *B. sylvarum* or *B. distinguendus*, you are likely to still see them, especially earlier in the month.

Common errors last September

- There were very few errors last September.
- Be careful with rarer species like *B. muscorum*. *B. pascuorum* can become quite faded and cause confusion. If you're not sure, I'm happy to check photographs for you.
- Bear in mind that the season is drawing to a close for bumblebees so if you're spotting something outside the very common species, double check to be sure.

Important food plants in September

These records drop substantially now. In September 2020, we received 55 casual bumblebee records that also stated what the bee was feeding on. Based on this data, bumblebees were foraging on around 30 different plant species last September. Most important were: Devil's-bit Scabious, Knapweed, Heather, Thistles and Verbena bonariensis. 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 jonellus* was sent by Janet Whelehan

Interesting recent research

Caffeine-fuelled bumblebees are better at foraging for nectar

Read more: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2285364-caffeine-fuelled-bumblebees-are-better-at-foraging-for-nectar/>

Other things to keep an eye out for this month

This hoverfly is an amazing bumblebee mimic! It's called *Arctophila superbiens* and mimics *Bombus muscorum*. Hoverflies differ from bumblebees in having one pair of wings, being able to hover, and having very large eyes that take up most of the head. This is a hairy hoverfly with ginger hairs on the thorax & blonde hairs on the abdomen. Flies from the end of July to October.





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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