



## NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2022

### News

Welcome to the second month of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme for 2022. We are still number crunching the 2021 data but will release an annual report with the 2012-2021 trends over the coming months.

Remember new volunteers can join at anytime!

### What happened in April 2021

- 98 transects were walked last April. This was one of our highest totals ever!
- While the maximum number of *individual* bees spotted on a walk last April was 43, the average number was 7 (this is very typical for April).
- Many people were still seeing only queens – not workers yet. This is very normal.
- Six people walked their transect without seeing any bumblebees last April. It is possible to walk a zero bumblebee transect in April, depending on the weather conditions. However, where at all possible, you should try to choose a day when some bees are flying.
- Winner for last April with most variety, were Charlie & Marion Heasman who spotted 6 different queens: *B. lapidarius*, *B. lucorum*, *B. pascuorum*, *B. pratorum*, *B. terrestris* & *B. muscorum*. Most people spotted 2-5 species.
- Often in April, *B. terrestris* and *B. lucorum* queens will still predominate, but last year it was *B. pascuorum* queens. Top recorded in order were: *Bombus pascuorum* queens (recorded on 53% of all transects), *B. lucorum* queens (48%), *Bombus terrestris* queens (45%), *B. pratorum* queens (27%), *B. lucorum* agg. (22%), *B. lapidarius* queens (20%) and *B. hortorum* queens (11%). We also had first sightings for the year of *B. muscorum* (5%) and *B. monticola* (1%) as well as two of the cuckoo bumblebees (*B. bohemicus* and *B. sylvestris*). *B. jonellus* queens were also spotted on a few walks. The following other workers were spotted in small numbers last April: *B. pratorum*, *B. pascuorum*, *B. hortorum*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last April was 646 (plus 230 honeybees). This is back down to typical April figures. You might remember that April 2020 weather (first lockdown) was beautiful and we had 1017 bumblebees.

### Tips & advice this month

- ✓ It can still be difficult to find suitable weather conditions to do your walk this month. Don't forget it should be above 13°C and at least 60% sunshine. If this simply isn't possible just try your best and record the conditions you did have.
- ✓ You are going to gradually start seeing more variety this month as widespread species like *B. lapidarius*, *B. hortorum*, *B. pascuorum* and *B. pratorum* come out of hibernation. Given the lovely weather in late March, they are definitely going to be around! It's not unusual to still only see queens, particularly if you do your walk earlier in the month.
- ✓ Cuckoo bumblebees can start to appear towards the end of April on some sites, but don't worry if you don't see them (I've never found them on my own walks). They are very rare overall. If you see something unusual, you can always try to get a photo and send it to me to check.

### Common errors last April

- It would be very unusual to see males already, so be careful not to mistakenly identify these.
- Depending on the weather, you might start seeing workers of *B. lucorum* agg., *B. pratorum*, *B. pascuorum* or *B. hortorum*. Workers of other species are possible, but less likely.
- *B. muscorum* has only blonde hairs on the abdomen. It emerges a little later, so it would be unusual to see anything other than queens in April (if you're lucky enough to have this species on your route!).
- Be careful with cuckoo bees. Those most likely to be spotted are *B. bohemicus* and *B. sylvestris*. Send a photo to check if you're not sure.

### Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2021, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 70 different plant species last April. Miles out in front was Dandelion. This was followed by: Berberis, Blackcurrant, Willow, Flowering currant, Heather, Gorse, Rosemary, Apple blossom. If you're seeing something important or unusual on your walk this month, please submit a casual record and filling the foraging box:

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



### Photo of the month



This lovely photo of a *Bombus distinguendus* queen was submitted on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2022 by Dave Suddaby. This is the earliest ever sighting in Ireland. It had previously been 1st April in 1923!

### Interesting recent research

Antibiotics used on crops might make it harder for bumblebees to forage

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/02/220217131907.htm>

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

Keep an eye out for the Grey Mining Bee (*Andrena cineraria*). This is one of our most distinctive solitary bees. It nests by making little burrows into bare soil. It is the only solitary bee that is black with two grey bands. Photos from left to right show the bee itself, its nest sites and what a good pollinator it is!



Jonathan Derham



Liz Gabbett



John Cullen



### Workshops and upcoming events

While we might not yet return to pre-Covid levels, I am hoping that we can have a few workshops again in 2022. I'll bring you the dates as they are arranged. I am still more than happy to answer as many queries as you have by email and to look at any photographs you have for identification.

May workshop: <https://events.eventzilla.net/e/bumblebee-monitoring-scheme-2138817957>

### 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://biodiversityireland.ie/identifying-irish-bumblebees/lesson.html>

### We need more volunteers

2021 was our most successful year to date, with 84 transects that were walked at least 6 of the 8 months. Some new volunteers joined the scheme during the year and their data will hopefully come fully on board from 2022. **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 the target of at least 6 walks in a particular year. Where this happens, please do still persevere as the data is still extremely useful. The longer you've been in the scheme, the better we are able to statistically account for 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 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 me.

**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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