



NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2022

News

Welcome to the fourth 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 June 2021

- 93 transects were walked last June.
- While eleven people spotted more than 100 *individual* bumblebees on their walk last June, the average number was 45. This is well up on June 2020, when the average was 27.
- In good news, there were no zero abundance transects last June. Everyone recorded some bumblebees on their walk.
- You should mainly be seeing workers now. *Bombus lucorum* agg. was by far the most predominant taxa recorded in June 2021.
- I haven't picked winners for most variety on their June 2021 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*, *B. terrestris* and *B. lucorum* agg.
- Top recorded in order for last June were: *Bombus lucorum* agg. (recorded on 89% of all transects), *B. pascuorum* workers (78%), *B. pratorum* workers (56%), *B. lapidarius* workers (40%), *B. hortorum* workers (32%), *B. pratorum* males (31%), *B. terrestris* queens (31%), *B. lucorum* queens (30%), *B. lucorum* males (22%), *B. pascuorum* queens (22%), *B. hortorum* queens (18%), *B. pratorum* queens (13%), *B. terrestris* males (12%).
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were *B. hypnorum* (worker), *B. pascuorum* (males), *B. hortorum* (males), *B. jonellus* (worker and male), *B. lapidarius* (queen and male), *B. muscorum* (queen and worker), *B. sylvarum* (queen and worker), *B. barbutellus* and *B. sylvestris*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last June was 4,205 (plus 681 honeybees). This is well up on the June 2020 figure.



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 can also occur with the other more common species.
- ✓ 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 May

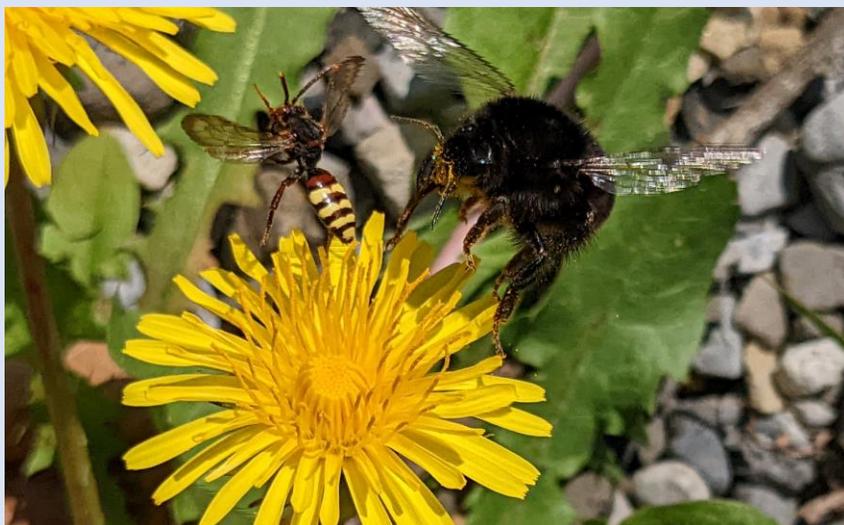
- Take care with males. Males of the later emerging species are unlikely to be out.
- Be careful about recording very rare species e.g., *B. sylvarum*, *B. ruderarius*. Often they are habitat specific or restricted to a particular geographic area. If you're not sure, I'm always very happy to check photographs for you. You would have to be in a particularly nice habitat to see either of these.
- *B. rupestris* and *B. campestris* are very rare cuckoo species. If you think you have spotted these, I'm happy to check photographs to confirm.
- So far, *B. hypnorum* is only known from Dublin City in RoI, but it is more widespread in eastern NI. Take care not to confuse this with *B. pascuorum*.

Important food plants

In June 2021, we received 238 casual bumblebee records that also stated what the bee was feeding on. Based on this data, bumblebees were foraging on over 100 different plant species last June. At this time of year, there isn't one predominant species. Bush Vetch, Red Clover, White Clover, Bird's foot trefoil, Buttercup, Foxglove, Bramble & Chives were all very popular. 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



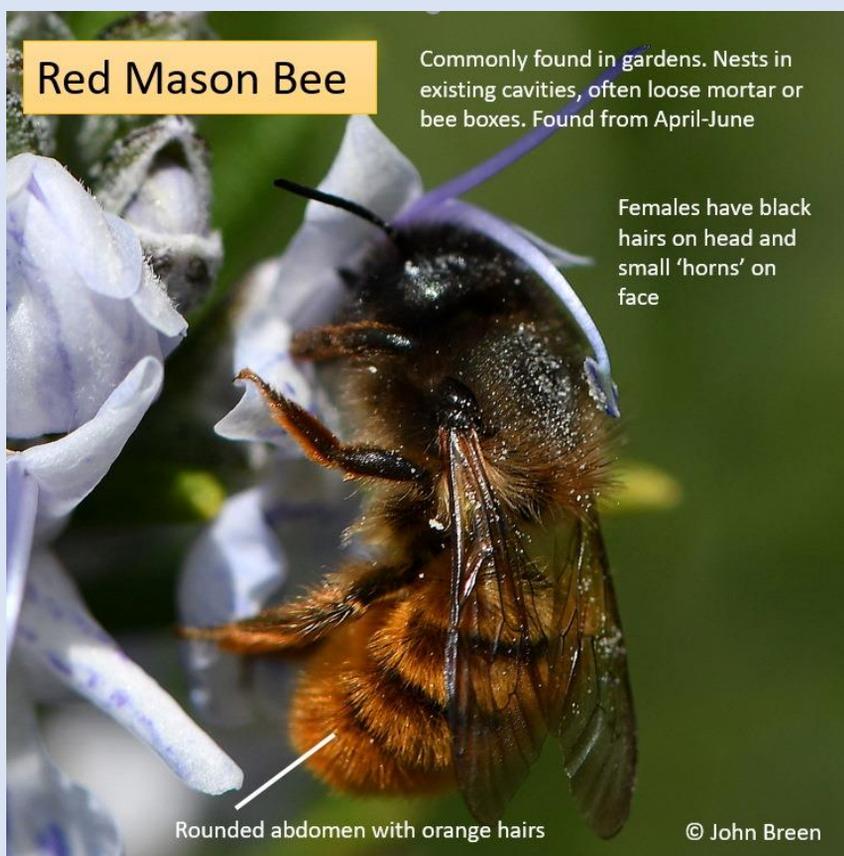
This great photo of a *Bombus lapidarius* queen scaring off a *Nomada* solitary bee was submitted by Áine Fenner.

Interesting recent research

Climate crisis could lead to rise of smaller bumblebees

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/21/climate-crisis-smaller-bees-bumblebees-study>

Other things to keep an eye out for this month



Osmia bicornis is another distinctive solitary bee species. June is a good time to spot these, often in gardens.

They are excellent pollinators. It's estimated that one female can carry out the pollinator work of a hundred honey bees!

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.

I am hoping to hold a bumblebee recording weekend in Skerries on the 27-28th August. More details will be posted on the website as they are available.

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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