



## NEWSLETTER: MAY 2022

### News

Welcome to the third 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 May 2021

- 96 transects were walked last May.
- Six people had over 50 *individual* bumblebees on their walk last May. However, the average number was 17 (this is slightly down on May 2021 when the average was 22).
- Queens were still commonly observed last May. This is very normal.
- Five people walked their transect and recorded no bees in May 2021. At this time of year, where at all possible, you should try to choose a day when some bees are flying.
- I haven't picked winners for most variety on their May 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* and *B. lucorum* agg.
- Top recorded in order for last May were: *Bombus lucorum* agg. (recorded on 70% of all transects), *B. pascuorum* workers (63%), *B. pascuorum* queens (45%), *B. pratorum* workers (43%), *B. terrestris* queens (28%), *B. hortorum* queen (27%), *B. lapidarius* workers (24%), *B. lucorum* queens (22%), *B. pratorum* queens (19%), *B. lapidarius* queens (18%), *B. hortorum* workers (17%), and *B. pratorum* males (14%).
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were *B. jonellus* (queens and workers), *B. muscorum* (queens and workers), *B. bohemicus* and *B. sylvestris*. One *B. hypnorum* worker was also spotted from a transect in N. Ireland.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last May was 1,663 (plus 277 honeybees).

### Tips & advice this month

- ✓ You should now be seeing more workers, but queens will still be around. Males of some earlier species will begin to be spotted, especially towards the end of the month.
- ✓ Many people find it difficult to tell *B. pascuorum* queens and workers apart. The queens are larger but it does take practice. The main thing is to try to be consistent.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Cuckoo bumblebees may be around 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 May

- By far the most common error last May was mistakenly recording males. Some of you will definitely see *B. pratorum* males this month and possibly *B. lucorum* or *B. terrestris* males. While it's possible you might see other true males, it would still be a little unusual.
- 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.

### Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2021, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 100 different plant species last May. Bush Vetch and Dandelion were way out in front. This was followed by: Cotoneaster, Bird's foot trefoil, Kidney Vetch, 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



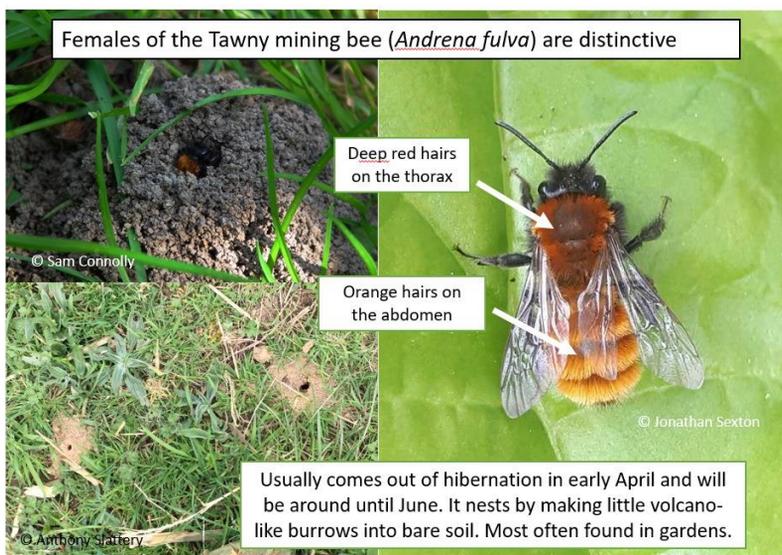
This lovely photo of a *Bombus lapidarius* queen was submitted last year by Matt Smyth.

### Interesting recent research

Too many honey bees in cities can be detrimental for wild bees:  
<https://phys.org/news/2022-02-excessive-beekeeping-swiss-cities-detrimental.html>

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

*Andrena fulva* is another of our most distinctive solitary bees – look out for deep red hairs on the thorax and orange hairs on the abdomen. The Tawny Mining bee was thought to be extinct for 87 years in Ireland, before being rediscovered in 2012. Currently only known from counties: Wicklow, Dublin, Kilkenny, Kildare, Tipperary and Down. In 2021, we had the first sightings from Co Carlow. Can you add a new county in 2022?



## 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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