



NEWSLETTER: JULY 2022

News

Welcome to the fifth 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 July 2021

- 93 transects were walked last July.
- While one person spotted over 300, and another six people spotted more than 100 *individual* bumblebees on their walk last July, the average number was 33.
- You should mainly be seeing workers now. *Bombus lucorum* agg. predominated last July with a total of 1,566 individuals recorded across all transects. *B. pascuorum* workers were next with 488.
- I haven't picked winners for most variety on their July 2021 walk, as there were many people who all spotted a good diversity of species. The most common combination still seems to be *B. pratorum*, *B. pascuorum*, *B. lapidarius*, *B. hortorum* and *B. lucorum* agg.
- Top recorded in order for last July were: *Bombus lucorum* agg. (recorded on 90% of all transects), *B. pascuorum* workers (75%), *B. lapidarius* workers (42%), *B. hortorum* workers (31%), *B. lucorum* males (27%), *B. pratorum* workers (24%), *B. terrestris* queens (24%), *B. lucorum* queens (20%), *B. lapidarius* males (17%), *B. pascuorum* males (11%), *B. terrestris* males (11%), *B. hortorum* males (10%), *B. hortorum* queens (10%) & *B. lapidarius* queens (10%).
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were *B. jonellus* (queen, worker and males), *B. muscorum* (queen, worker), *B. pratorum* (queen, male), *B. sylvarum* (queen, male), *B. hypnorum* (worker), *B. monticola* (worker). A few of the cuckoo bees were also spotted – *B. bohemicus*, *B. barbutellus*, *B. sylvestris*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last July was 3,074 (plus 749 honeybees).

Tips & advice this month

- ✓ In a typical July, 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.
- ✓ Some people are only picking up a small number of species – often *B. lucorum* agg., *B. lapidarius* and *B. pascuorum*. Don't worry if that's the case.
- ✓ Males will also be active from now, and it should be easy to spot the more distinctive ones – *B. lapidarius*, *B. pratorum* & *B. lucorum* especially.
- ✓ 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

- We didn't receive many errors last July.
- Be careful not to confuse *B. pascuorum* and *B. muscorum*. Not too many of us are lucky enough to see the latter unfortunately! With *B. muscorum* all the hairs on the abdomen will be blonde. *B. pascuorum* usually has a gingerish tail and will have some black hairs on the abdomen. Remember that *B. pascuorum* is prone to fading and can look pale. If you're not sure, I'm always happy to check photographs for you.
- Be careful about recording the rare species e.g., *B. sylvarum*, *B. monticola*. 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 July 2021, we received 114 casual bumblebee records that also stated what the bee was feeding on. Based on this data, bumblebees were foraging on over 70 different plant species last July. At this time of year, there isn't one predominant species. Knapweed, Lavender, Bramble, Buddleia, Field Scabious & Thistle 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 lovely photo of a *Bombus hortorum* queen desperate to get some nectar was taken by Shona Macdonald.

Interesting recent research

Bats pretend to be bees to seem more dangerous!

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2319148-bats-buzz-like-bees-and-hornets-to-scare-off-hungry-owls/>

Other things to keep an eye out for this month

Keep an eye out for this very common hoverfly. It's called the Marmalade hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*). There are ~180 different hoverflies in Ireland and many are black & yellow striped, but no other species has this exact banding pattern on the abdomen. Once you get your eye in, its very easy to spot. Photo © David Brennan





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.

There will be 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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