



## NEWSLETTER: AUGUST 2022

### News

Welcome to the sixth 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 August 2021

- 95 transects were walked last August.
- While five people spotted more than 100 *individual* bumblebees on their walk last August, the average number was 34. Two people walked their route and didn't see any bumblebees.
- Even the most diverse walks were only recording 6-7 different species last August. Within these, they did have males, workers and queens, so still plenty to contend with!
- You should still mainly be seeing workers. *Bombus pascuorum* workers were the most commonly observed last August.
- Top recorded in order for last August were: *B. pascuorum* workers (recorded on 86% of all transects), *Bombus lucorum* agg. (77%), *B. lapidarius* males (39%), *B. lapidarius* workers (38%), *B. pascuorum* males (29%), *B. lucorum* queens (28%), *B. pratorum* workers (27%), *B. pascuorum* queens (26%), *B. terrestris* queens (26%), *B. lucorum* males (25%), *B. hortorum* workers (23%), *B. terrestris* males (13%), *B. hortorum* queen (11%), *B. pratorum* male (11%), & *B. lapidarius* queens (9%).
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were *B. jonellus* (queen, worker and males), *B. muscorum* (queen, worker and males), *B. sylvarum* (queen, worker and males), *B. pratorum* queens & *B. hortorum* males. There were also a small number of sightings of *B. sylvestris*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last August was 3,244 (plus 1,212 honeybees). This is slightly higher than average.

### Tips & advice this month

- ✓ July and August are when you tend to see the greatest numbers of individual bees. You should mainly be seeing workers. *Bombus pascuorum* workers often overtake *B. lucorum* agg. as the most commonly observed this month.
- ✓ Typically, *B. lapidarius* remains common, but you will start to see a noticeable drop off in *B. hortorum* and *B. pratorum* as they begin winding up their season.
- ✓ For those of you lucky enough to have *B. muscorum* on your transect, they may reach their peak this month.
- ✓ You should see new queens and males this month.
- ✓ Without experience, it can be difficult to identify males. *B. pascuorum* males can be particularly difficult. 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 or if you don't get a clear look – we understand that some are misclassified as workers.
- ✓ Don't forget *Bombus terrestris* workers should be recorded as *Bombus lucorum* agg.

### Common errors last August

- There were very few errors last August.
- 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.
- Be careful with the cuckoo bumblebees. If you're not sure, you can email a photograph and I'm very happy to check for you.

### Important food plants

In August 2021, we received 250 casual bumblebee records that also stated what the bee was feeding on. Based on this data, bumblebees were foraging on over 80 different plant species last August. By far and away the most important was Knapweed. This was then followed by Ragwort, Lavender, Bramble, Buddleia, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Devil's-bit Scabious. 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 bohemicus* was taken by Martin Molloy.

### Interesting recent research

UK monitoring scheme shows that saving bumblebees in Britain needs a range of habitats

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2022/may/saving-british-bumblebees-needs-range-of-habitats.html>

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

Keep an eye out for this distinctive hoverfly – *Volucella pellucens*. It's often found in woodland clearings or along hedgerows, where it likes to feed on Bramble and umbellifers. It lays its eggs in the nest of our common wasp and the larvae feed as scavengers on nest debris. Photo: Gillian Stewart. Submit any sightings here:

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



### Workshops and upcoming events

There will be a recording weekend in Skerries on the 27-28<sup>th</sup> August. This will be focussed mainly on *Bombus muscorum*. They are carrying out excellent work in Skerries to create habitats to protect the bee into the future. There are various different events across the weekend. To keep numbers manageable, all have limited places.

More details and booking forms here:

<https://www.fingal.ie/wildbeefestival>

### 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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