



NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2023

Welcome to the second month of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme for 2023. We are still number crunching the 2022 data but will release an annual report with the 2012-2022 trends over the coming months.

Remember new volunteers can join at anytime!

What happened in April 2022

- 105 transects were walked last April. This was our highest total ever in the monitoring scheme!
- While the maximum number of *individual* bumblebees spotted on a walk last April was 41, the average number was 12 (this is higher than average for April).
- Many people were still seeing only queens – not workers yet. This is very normal.
- Three 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.
- A few people were lucky enough to spot 6 different queens: *B. lapidarius*, *B. lucorum*, *B. pascuorum*, *B. pratorum*, *B. terrestris* & *B. muscorum*. Most people spotted 2-5 species.
- April 2022 was unusual because the weather was exceptionally good in mid-late March. This seemed to speed the season up a little. Top recorded in order were: *Bombus terrestris* queens (recorded on 82% of all transects), *B. pascuorum* queens (57%), *Bombus lucorum* queens (55%), *B. lucorum* agg. (36%), *B. pratorum* queens (34%), *B. lapidarius* queens (27%), *B. pascuorum* workers (24%), *B. hortorum* queens (16%), *B. pratorum* workers (13%). We also had small number of sightings of queens of *B. muscorum*, *B. monticola*, *B. hypnorum* & *B. jonellus*, as well as two of the cuckoo bumblebees (*B. bohemicus* and *B. sylvestris*). The following other workers were spotted in small numbers last April: *B. hortorum* & *B. lapidarius*.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last April was 1,233 (plus 258 honeybees). This is almost double what is typical for April, and reflects very good weather in March/early April 2022.



Tips and 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.
- ✓ Typically you start seeing more variety this month as widespread species like *B. lapidarius*, *B. hortorum*, *B. pascuorum* and *B. pratorum* come out of hibernation. Remember that April 2022 was unusual. Given how poor the weather has been in March 2023, it is likely that we will still see a lot of queens this month and may not see many workers yet.
- ✓ 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 2022, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 35 different plant species last April. Dandelion was by far the most common, followed by Rosemary, Berberis, Bush Vetch and Flowering Currant. 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 sent to us by Jamie O'Neill. You can clearly see the black hairs on the hind leg.



Other things to keep an eye out for this month - Grey Mining Bee

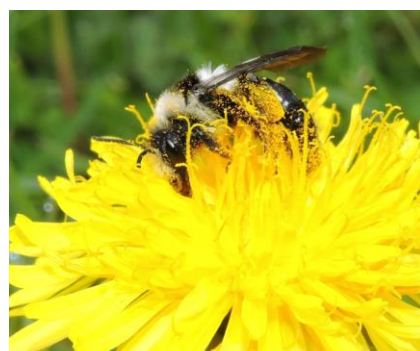
Keep an eye out for the Grey (or Ashy) Mining Bee (*Andrena cineraria*). This is one of our most distinctive solitary bees. It nests by making little burrows into bare soil. It is the only solitary bee that is black with two grey bands. Photos from left to right show the bee itself, its nest sites and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



Jonathan Derham



Liz Gabbett



John Cullen

Interesting recent research

Earlier take-off could lead to fewer bumblebees and less pollination
<https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/article/earlier-take-could-lead-fewer-bumblebees-and-less-pollination>



Workshops and upcoming events

Information on any relevant workshops and events will be released across the year. There will be a National Biodiversity Data Centre workshop on bumblebees for beginners on Sunday the 16th April in Harold's Cross, Dublin. This is part of the main workshop programme and can be booked here: <https://events.eventzilla.net/e/monitoring-and-identifying-bumblebees-for-beginners-2138597571>

Save the date: we are hoping to run a wild bee festival in Tralee on the 12 & 13th August. This will include various workshops and walks, including on bumblebee identification and monitoring. Booking will open closer to the time.

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 still need more volunteers

2022 was our most successful year to date, with 90 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 2023. **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 your generosity in taking part in this scheme

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<https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/bumblebee-monitoring-scheme/>