

# — BIODIVERSITY — on your Farm

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.

Are you up for the challenge?

## Species: Early Bumblebee

Scientific Name: *Bombus pratorum*

Irish name: Bumbóg Luath

### Group

1 of 21 bumblebee species in Ireland. The Early Bumblebee is one of our six most common bumblebees.

Check out our Bumblebee poster:

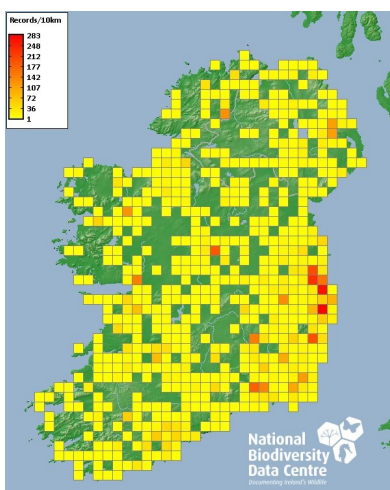
[https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SE-29-NBDC-Bee-Poster-2019\\_EMAIL.pdf](https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SE-29-NBDC-Bee-Poster-2019_EMAIL.pdf)

### How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. The Early Bumblebee was recorded on 27 of the 40 farms.

### Distribution

Widespread and very common.



Source: The Early Bumblebee records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2022.



Early Bumblebee. Note yellow band on abdomen and red tail

### Identification Tips

- The Early Bumblebee is the smallest of the Irish bumblebees, queens up to 16mm in length. Workers are often the smallest bumblebee you'll see.
- Red tail and a yellow band on the abdomen.
- The red tail can be difficult to see and confined to the last segment of the abdomen.
- Some workers have a reduced or absent yellow band on the abdomen.

### Biodiversity Tip No 1

Leave some Dandelions to flower around the farm. Dandelions are a valuable native plant for pollinators in early spring.

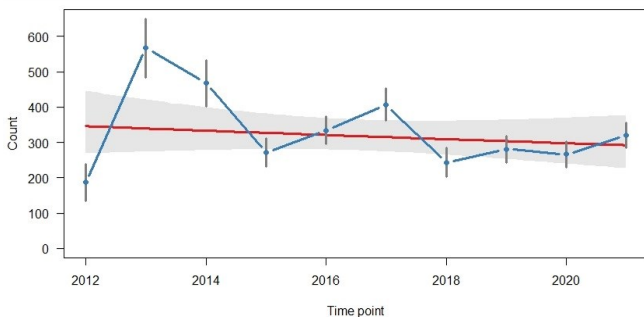


## Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status. An Irish Bee Red List was published in 2006. It found that the Early Bumblebee was not threatened with extinction from the island of Ireland. Based on the Red List it is 'Least Concern'.

Data from the All-Ireland Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/bumblebee-monitoring-scheme/>) suggest that the Early Bumblebee remains relatively stable. Volunteers within this citizen science scheme have been helping assess changes in bumblebee abundance since 2012.

### *Bombus pratorum*



Source: Report on the All-Ireland Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme. 2012 to 2021.

## Management Tips

### Food for the Early Bumblebee:

#### On the farm:

- Encourage spring-blossoming shrubs and flowers, including Willows, Blackthorn, Dead-nettles, Ground-ivy and Dandelions.
- Later in the season, encourage Bramble, Knapweed, Thistle, Clovers, Scabious, and Dog and Field rose.

#### In the orchard and garden:

- Plant Cherry plum, flowering currant, apples, Rosemary and heathers.

#### Nest sites:

- Leave some areas of long grass or bracken at the base of a hedgerow, where bumblebees make their nest. They generally have between 50-200 workers in a nest.

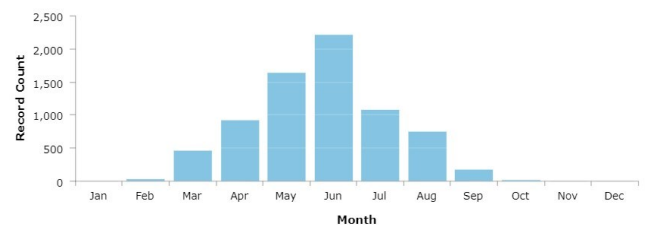
## When?

One of the earliest bumblebees to emerge from hibernation each year, usually in March.

Males can be seen as early as April or May.

The new mated queen will go into hibernation in autumn.

### Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Early Bumblebee (*Bombus (Pyrobombus) pratorum*), image, accessed 23 February 2023, <<https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Species/56009>>

## Where on the farm?

Found in most habitats, hedges, field margins, non-farmed areas, meadows and pastures, woodland edges, glades, and gardens.

Tends to avoid the most exposed locations.

Usually most abundant where brambles and other rose family shrubs are present.

## Value

- Provides valuable 'pollination service'.
- An excellent pollinator of soft fruits.
- Cross pollination of our wildflowers, helping them stay resilient and boosting their fruiting ability for wildlife and the next generation.
- Health and wellbeing: There's nothing better than hearing a bumblebee buzzing or watching it move from flower to flower while feeding. So, it's fair to say, it give us that 'feel-good' factor.

## Further Info

A relatively recent arrival, having first been recorded here in 1947.

Bumblebees have a short life cycle. Only the mated new queen hibernates over the winter to emerge in spring. The old queen, the female workers and the males all die off as the colder weather approaches.

## Similar species

Males of the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*) can be similar, but have much more extensive red tails.

## Affected by a change in climate?

They may be affected by a change in flowering periods.

## Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:  
[pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie](mailto:pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie)

## Useful Links

Try our free online course on how to identify common bumblebees. It includes activities and quizzes to test your progress, and get feedback on answers: <https://learn.biodiversityireland.ie/courses/commonbumblebees>

There are also other free resources here: <https://pollinators.ie/record-pollinators/id-guides/>

## Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your Early Bumblebee identification, you can submit your record:

- On our website at the National Biodiversity Data Centre: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm>

or

- You could also download our free smartphone App for recording in the field

*Android App:*

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=nbdc.mobile.biodiversity>

*iPhone App:*

<https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/biodiversity-data-capture/id906361120>

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