

# — 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: Grey (or Ashy) Mining Bee

Scientific Name: *Andrena cineraria*

Irish name: Beach Tholltach Liath

### Group

1 of 80 solitary bee species in Ireland.

A solitary bee female lives alone creating their own nest. Check out our Solitary bee poster:

<https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Solitary-Bees-Poster-2022.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 Grey Mining Bee was recorded on four of the 40 farms.



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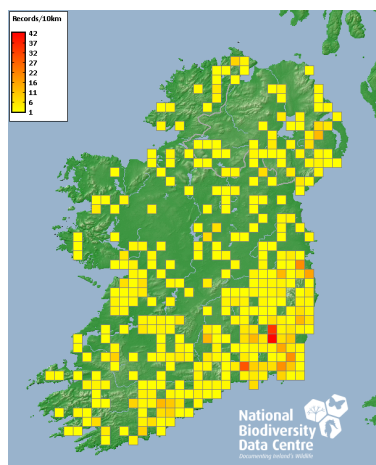
Grey mining bee. Note: Two grey hair bands around the thorax. Females have a black body.

### Identification Tips

- The Grey Mining bee is a large sized solitary species (13-16mm).
- The females are black and have two distinctive grey bands across the thorax (there are no other solitary bees like this in Ireland).
- The male is smaller than females, with pale hairs on its face.

### Distribution

Widespread and fairly common.



Source: The Grey mining bee records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2022.

## Biodiversity Tip No. 2 Make a solitary mining bee nest

Scrape back a small area of soil on a suitable bank (well-drained south or south-west facing bank).  
[https://biodiversityireland.ie/app/uploads/2022/05/ActionSheet\\_Solitary-Bees-WEB-2.pdf](https://biodiversityireland.ie/app/uploads/2022/05/ActionSheet_Solitary-Bees-WEB-2.pdf)



## 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 Grey Mining Bee was not threatened with extinction from the island of Ireland. Based on the Red List, it is 'Least Concern'.

The report also noted that the Grey Mining Bee was not common in Ireland as expected, considering an abundance of suitable hedgerow habitat and soil bank scrapes for nesting.

## Management Tips

### Food for the Grey Mining Bee:

On the farm:

- Encourage spring-blossoming shrubs and flowers, including Willow, Dandelion, Gorse, Blackthorn and Hawthorn/Whitethorn.
- Later in the season, encourage Hogweed, Cow Parsley, Buttercup, Oxeye Daisy and Dog Rose.

In the orchard and garden:

- Plant fruit trees, such as pear, cherry and apple.

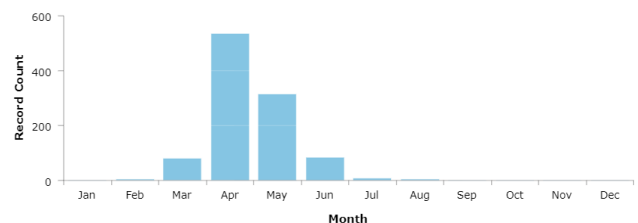
Nest sites:

- Check sunny hedgerow banks for existing nest sites and protect.
- Create small new nest site/s, see Biodiversity Tip No 2.

## When?

A spring species, generally be seen between March and June. The earliest it has been recorded in Ireland is 22 February (2019).

### Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Grey Mining Bee, *Andrena cineraria*, image, accessed 20 March 2023, <<https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Species/55600>>

## Where on the farm?

Found in a range of habitats, including woodland edges, hedgerows, orchards and clay banks.

Females are particularly fond of foraging on Willow and Dandelion.

A farm in Co Limerick discovered a wonderful group of nesting Grey mining bees, known as an 'nest aggregation'. See [https://youtu.be/lw2\\_32jN6Xs](https://youtu.be/lw2_32jN6Xs)

## Value

- Solitary bees provide valuable 'pollination service'.
- An excellent pollinator of fruit trees and Rape.
- Peak activity coincides with the flowering periods of fruit trees such as Pear, Cherry and Apple.
- Cross pollination of our wildflowers, helping them to be resilient, and boosting their fruiting ability for wildlife and the next generation.



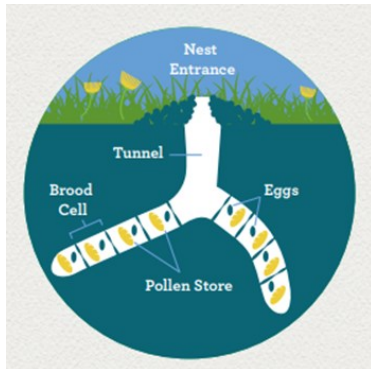
## Further Info

The Grey mining bee has a single flight period each year and is on the wing from March to June; the males emerge well before the females.

They nest by making little burrows into bare soil and can occasionally be found nesting in large groups, but are also found as small groups or as single females.

Grey mining bees close the nest entrance over when they've finished foraging for the day, and also when it rains, or if they are disturbed.

When the female makes its underground nest, she leaves a food parcel for the eggs, called a pollen store. Each egg and pollen store is sealed off and is known as a brood cell.



## Similar species

There are no similar solitary bees in Ireland.

## 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

There are also other free resources here:

<https://pollinators.ie/record-pollinators/id-guides/>

Some images can be found on BWARS

<https://www.bwars.com/bee/andrenidae/andrena-cineraria>

## Record here

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

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

or

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

*Smart phone App:*

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

*Apple App:*

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

The Farmland Pollinator Officer post is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara**  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



**An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht**  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage



**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council**



**An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta  
agus Fiadhúlra**  
National Parks and Wildlife Service

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