

— BIODIVERSITY — on your Farm

Species Profile # 14

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: Red-tailed Bumblebee

Scientific Name: *Bombus lapidarius*

Irish name: Bumbóg Earr-Rua

Group

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

Check out our Bumblebee poster:

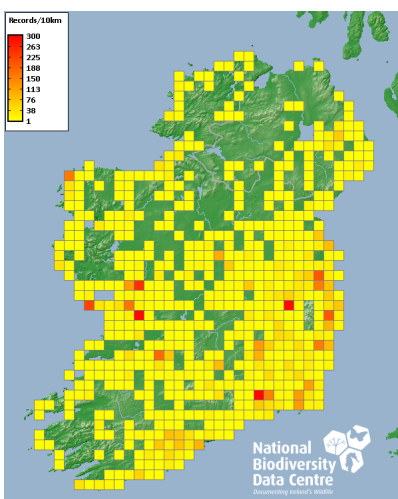
https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SE-29-NBDC-Bee-Poster-2019_EMAIL.pdf

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 Red-tailed Bumblebee was recorded on twenty eight of the 40 farms.

Distribution

Widespread and common, has declined from the agriculture landscape.



Source: The Red-tailed Bumblebee records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2023.



Red-tailed Bumblebee (Queen). Note: Females and workers are jet black with a red tail. They have black on their hind legs.

Identification Tips

- A large bumblebee, queens can be 20mm in length.
- Queens and workers have a jet black body with a bright orange-red tail.
- Black hairs on their hind legs (pollen baskets).
- Males have distinct yellow facial hairs and a yellow band on the thorax. They have red hairs on their hind legs.

Biodiversity Tip No. 14

Leave some grassy tussocks and undisturbed areas around stone walls.

They make great bumblebee nests.

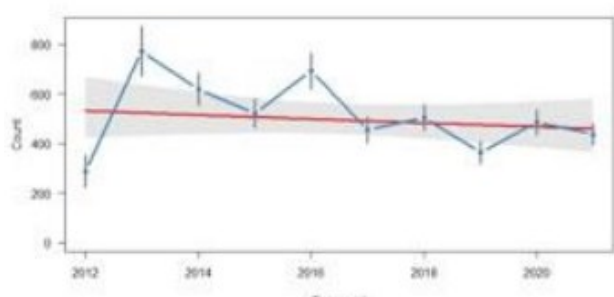


Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status. An Irish Bee Red List was published in 2006. Based on the Red List the Red-tailed Bumblebee is 'Near Threatened'.

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

Bombus lapidarius



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

Management Tips

Food for the Red-tailed Bumblebee:

On the farm:

- In spring encourage: Dandelion, Willow, Gorse.
- Later in the season encourage: Clovers, Vetch, Hawkweeds, Knapweed, Bird's-foot trefoil and Thistles.

Nest sites:

- Leave some areas of tussocky grass and undisturbed areas, especially around stone walls.



@ Steven Falk

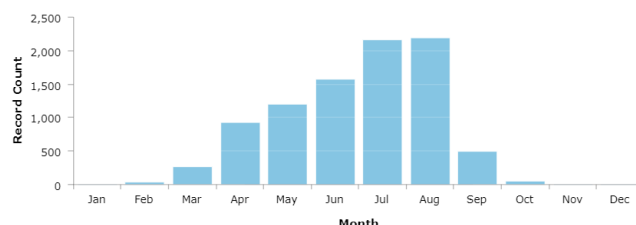
Red-tailed Bumblebee worker.

When?

Flight period is March to October. Queens can appear by March, workers in May and males and new queens by June.

The new mated queen will go into hibernation in the autumn.

Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Red-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*), image, accessed June 2023, <<https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Species/55990>>

Where on the farm?

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

Value

- Provides valuable 'pollination service'.
- An excellent pollinator of oil seed rape.
- 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.



Red-tailed Bumblebee male.

@ Ruth Wilson

Further Info

The Red-tailed Bumblebee are a social bee, nesting underground in old burrows, or under stones and colonies can be large with 300 workers.

As with other social insects, the queen emerges from hibernation in spring and starts the colony by laying a few eggs that hatch as workers; these workers tend the young and nest. Males emerge later and mate with new females who are prospective queens. Both the males and old queen die in the autumn, but the new queens hibernate.

The Red-tailed bumblebee is a host of the cuckoo bumblebee *Bombus rupestris*.

Similar species

The cuckoo bumblebee (*Bombus rupestris*) can look similar, but is much rarer.

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

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 Red-tailed 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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Department of Housing,
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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
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An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta
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