



NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2024

Welcome to the fourth month of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme for 2024.

What happened in June 2023

- 114 transects were walked last June.
- While seven people spotted 100+ individual bumblebees on their walk last June, the average number was 35. This is typical for June. Three people walked their route and didn't record any bumblebees. Where possible, you should try to choose a day when some bees are flying.
- You should mainly be seeing workers now. *Bombus lucorum* agg. was by far the most common taxa recorded in June 2023.
- Many people spotted a good diversity of species. The most common combination seems to have been *Bombus pratorum* (Early Bumblebee), *B. pascuorum* (Common Carder Bee), *B. lapidarius* (Red-tailed Bumblebee), *B. hortorum* (Garden Bumblebee), and *B. lucorum* agg.
- Top recorded in order for last June were:
 - B. lucorum* agg. - recorded on 88% of all transects
 - Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) – 66%
 - Early Bumblebee workers (*B. pratorum*) - 44%
 - Red-tailed Bumblebee workers (*B. lapidarius*) - 40%
 - Garden Bumblebee workers (*B. hortorum*) - 32%
 - White-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lucorum*) - 22%
 - Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*) - 18%
 - Early Bumblebee males (*B. pratorum*) - 17%
 - Common Carder Bee queens (*B. pascuorum*) - 13%
 - Garden Bumblebee queens (*B. hortorum*) - 11%
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were Tree Bumblebee queen, workers and males (*B. hypnorum*), Heath Bumblebee queens and workers (*B. jonellus*), Large Carder Bee queens and workers (*B. muscorum*). Occasional queens of the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*) and the Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum*). Males of the following species were also spotted in small numbers, especially later in the month: Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*B. terrestris*), White-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lucorum*), Garden Bumblebee (*B. hortorum*), Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) & the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*). One Shrill Carder Bee worker (*B. sylvarum*) was spotted on a walk in the Burren.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last June was 3,986 (plus 856 honeybees). This is slightly above average.

Tips and advice this month

- ✓ In a typical June, you should be seeing much greater numbers of individual bees, and you should mainly be seeing workers. *Bombus lucorum* agg., *B. pascuorum*, *lapidarius*, *pratorum* and *hortorum* workers should be particularly common.
- ✓ For some early emerging species, you will now start seeing males and new queens as they produce a new generation. This is particularly the case for the White-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lucorum*), the Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*B. terrestris*) and the Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum*); but can also occur with the other more common species.
- ✓ Without experience, it can be difficult to identify males of the Garden Bumblebee (*B. hortorum*), the Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) and the Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*B. terrestris*) as they don't have a different banding pattern to the females. You need to check for longer antennae & remember they will never have a pollen basket. Don't worry if you are new to the scheme – we understand that some are misclassified as workers in the early years.
- ✓ Don't forget *Bombus terrestris* workers should be recorded as *Bombus lucorum* agg.

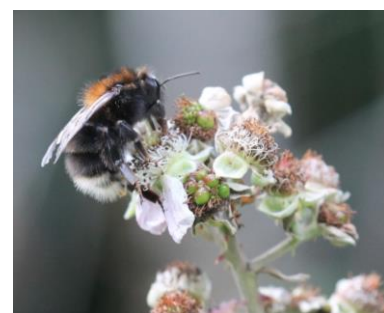
Common errors last June

- There were relatively few errors last June
- Take care with males. Males of the later emerging species are unlikely to be spotted yet.
- Be careful when recording very rare species, particularly the Shrill Carder Bee (*B. sylvarum*) and the Red-shanked Carder Bee (*B. ruderarius*). Often, they are habitat specific or restricted to a particular geographic area. If you're not sure, I'm always very happy to check photographs for you. You would have to be in a particularly nice habitat to see either of these.

Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2023, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 90 different plant species last June. Top plants were Bramble, Lavender, White Clover, Bush Vetch, Catmint, Red Clover & Bird's-foot-trefoil. 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>



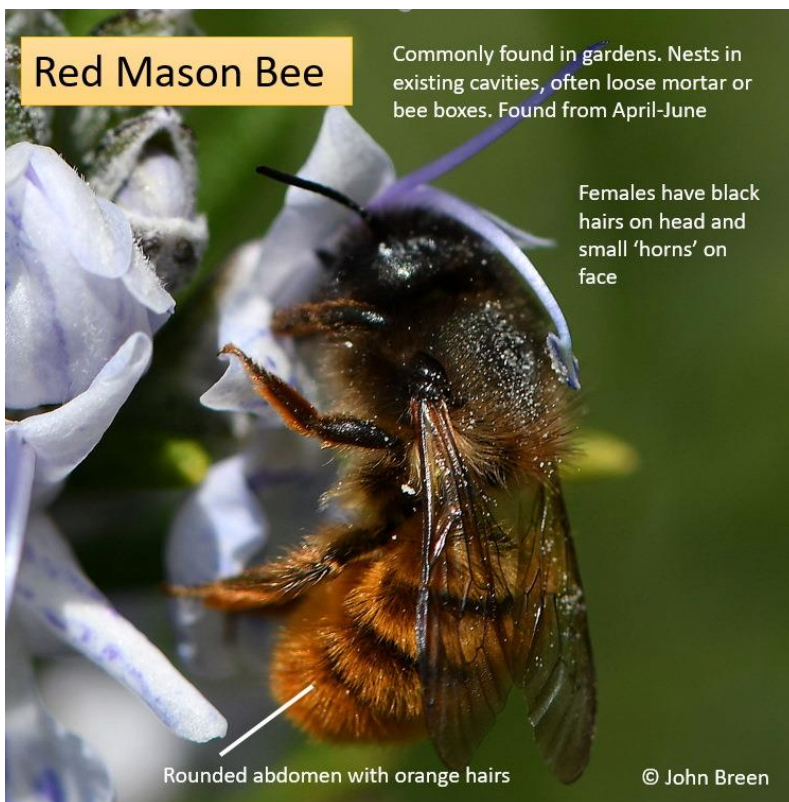
<https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/bumblebee-monitoring-scheme/>

Photo of the month

This lovely photo of *Bombus muscorum* (Large Carder Bee) was sent to us by Joe Curtis.



Other things to keep an eye out for this month - Red Mason Bee



Osmia bicornis is another distinctive solitary bee species. June is a good time to spot these, often in gardens.

They are excellent pollinators. It's estimated that one female can carry out the pollination work of a hundred honey bees!

Interesting recent research

Bumblebee Nests May Be Overheating With Rising Global Temperatures
<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2429636-rising-temperatures-are-cooking-bumblebee-nests-and-killing-larvae/>

Workshops and upcoming events

Information on any relevant workshops and events will be released across the year. We are planning to have a **recorders weekend in the Burren (15-16th June)** for bumblebee and butterfly monitoring scheme volunteers. We'll be based at the Michael Cusack Centre in Carron for a series of walks and talks. This is now fully booked unfortunately.

Save the date: we will be running a wild bee festival in Galway City on the 17-18th August in collaboration with Galway City Council. This will include various workshops and walks, including on bumblebee identification and monitoring. Booking will open shortly.

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

2023 was our most successful year to date, with 92 transects that were walked at least 6 of the 8 months (this was up from 90 in 2022). Some new volunteers joined the scheme during the year and their data will hopefully come fully on board from 2024. **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

Dr Úna FitzPatrick, All-Ireland Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme Coordinator
ufitzpatrick@biodiversityireland.ie

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