



NEWSLETTER: JULY 2024

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

What happened in July 2023

- 108 transects were walked last July.
- While sixteen people spotted 100+ individual bumblebees on their walk last July, the average number was 58. This is above average for July. Two 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. and Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) accounted for almost 70% of all sightings in July 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 last July were:
 - B. lucorum* agg. - recorded on 90% of all transects
 - Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) – 84%
 - Red-tailed Bumblebee workers (*B. lapidarius*) - 48%
 - White-tailed Bumblebee males (*B. lucorum*) – 39%
 - Red-tailed Bumblebee males (*B. lapidarius*) - 37%
 - White-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lucorum*) - 33%
 - Garden Bumblebee workers (*B. hortorum*) - 31%
 - Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*) - 30%
 - Early Bumblebee workers (*B. pratorum*) - 29%
 - Common Carder Bee males (*B. pascuorum*) - 23%
 - Early Bumblebee males (*B. pratorum*) - 23%
 - Common Carder Bee queens (*B. pascuorum*) - 16%
 - Buff-tailed Bumblebee males (*B. terrestris*) - 15%
 - Red-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lapidarius*) - 13%
 - Large Carder Bee workers (*B. muscorum*) – 13%
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were Tree Bumblebee workers and males (*B. hypnorum*), Garden Bumblebee queens and males (*B. hortorum*), Heath Bumblebee queens, workers & males (*B. jonellus*), Large Carder Bee queens (*B. muscorum*) & Early Bumblebee queens (*B. pratorum*). The Forest Cuckoo Bee (*B. sylvestris*) was recorded on one walk. 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 July was 6,173 (plus 1,621 honeybees). This is considerably above average.

Tips and advice this month

- ✓ In a typical July, you should be seeing much greater numbers of individual bees, and you should mainly be seeing workers. *Bombus lucorum* agg., *B. pascuorum*, *B. lapidarius*, *B. pratorum* and *B. hortorum* workers should be particularly common.
- ✓ Some people are only picking up a small number of species – often *B. lucorum* agg., the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*) and the Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*). Don't worry if that's the case.
- ✓ Males will also be active from now, and it should be easy to spot the more distinctive ones – the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*), the Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum*) & the White-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lucorum*).
- ✓ 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.

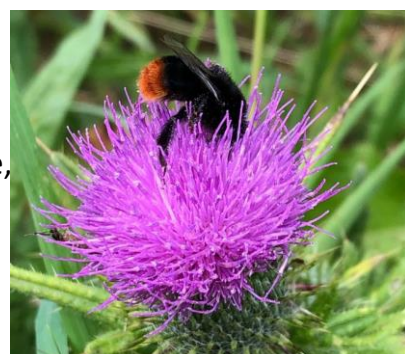
Common errors last July

- Be careful not to confuse *B. pascuorum* and *B. muscorum*. Not too many of us are lucky enough to see the latter unfortunately! With *B. muscorum* all the hairs on the abdomen will be blonde. *B. pascuorum* usually has a gingerish tail and will have some black hairs on the abdomen. Remember that *B. pascuorum* is prone to fading and can look pale. If you're not sure, I'm always happy to check photographs for you.
- Be careful when recording very rare species, particularly the Mountain Bumblebee (*B. monticola*) 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.

Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2023, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 80 different plant species last July. Top plants were Spear Thistle, Knapweed, Ragwort, Lavender, Bramble, & White Clover. 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 great picture of pollination in action was sent to us by Ben Malone. It's hard to tell from the image, but this is the Early Bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*)



Other things to keep an eye out for this month

Keep an eye out for this distinctive hoverfly – *Volucella pellucens*. It's often found in woodland clearings or along hedgerows, where it likes to feed on Bramble and umbellifers. It lays its eggs in the nest of our common wasp and the larvae feed as scavengers on nest debris. Photo: Gillian Stewart. Submit any sightings here:

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/hoverflies>



Interesting recent research

Bumblebees learn to play with Lego!

<https://phys.org/news/2024-05-lego-bumblebees-reveal-insect-collaboration.html>

Workshops and upcoming events

Information on any relevant workshops and events will be released across the year. Thanks to all those who attended the recorders weekend in the Burren (15-16th June). There weren't huge numbers of bumblebees, but we had a fantastic weekend. The Shrill Carder Bee even put in a very late appearance!

Save the date: Within the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, 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. Let me know if you're interested in attending.

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

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