



## NEWSLETTER: AUGUST 2024

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

### What happened in August 2023

- 106 transects were walked last August.
- While six people spotted more than 100 individual bumblebees on their walk last August, the average number was 33.
- Three people walked their route and didn't see any bumblebees. It is important that you choose a day when bumblebees are flying.
- Even the most diverse walks were only recording 6-7 different species last August. Within these, they did have males, workers and queens, so still plenty to contend with!
- You should still mainly be seeing workers. Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) were the most common bumblebee last August. A total of 2,321 individuals were counted, compared to second placed *B. lucorum* agg. with 418.
- Top recorded last August were:
  - Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) – recorded on 92% of all transects
  - B. lucorum* agg. - 53%
  - Common Carder Bee males (*B. pascuorum*) - 33%
  - Red-tailed Bumblebee males (*B. lapidarius*) - 30%
  - Red-tailed Bumblebee workers (*B. lapidarius*) - 30%
  - Common Carder Bee queens (*B. pascuorum*) - 25%
  - Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*) - 20%
  - White-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lucorum*) - 18%
  - White-tailed Bumblebee males (*B. lucorum*) – 12%
  - Early Bumblebee workers (*B. pratorum*) - 11%
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were: Large Carder Bee queens, workers and males (*B. muscorum*), Heath Bumblebee queens, workers & males (*B. jonellus*), Tree Bumblebee queens and males (*B. hypnorum*), Early Bumblebee queens and males (*B. pratorum*), Garden Bumblebee queens and workers (*B. hortorum*), Red-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lapidarius*) and Buff-tailed Bumblebee males (*B. terrestris*). Shrill Carder Bee queens, workers and males (*B. sylvarum*) were spotted in the Burren. One walk spotted the Barbut's Cuckoo Bee (*B. barbutellus*).
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last August was 3,483 (plus 1,551 honeybees). This was slightly higher than average for August.

## Tips and advice this month

- ✓ July and August are when you tend to see the greatest numbers of individual bees. You should mainly be seeing workers. Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) often overtake *B. lucorum* agg. workers as the most observed bumblebee this month.
- ✓ Typically, the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*) remains common, but you will probably start to see a noticeable drop off in the Garden Bumblebee (*B. hortorum*) and the Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum*) as they begin winding up their season.
- ✓ For those of you lucky enough to have the Large Carder Bee (*B. muscorum*) on your transect, they may reach their peak this month.
- ✓ You should see new queens and males in August.
- ✓ Without experience, it can be difficult to identify males. Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) males can be particularly difficult. You need to check for longer antennae and remember they will never have a pollen basket. Don't worry if you are new to the scheme or if you don't get a clear look – we understand that some are misclassified as workers.
- ✓ Don't forget *Bombus terrestris* workers should be recorded as *Bombus lucorum* agg.

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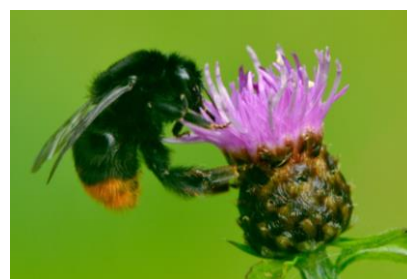
## Common errors last August

- There were very few errors last August.
- Be careful when recording very rare species e.g., Shrilk Carder Bee. 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.
- Be careful with the cuckoo bumblebees. If you're not sure, you can email a photograph and I'm very happy to check for you.

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## Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2023, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 70 different plant species last August. Top plants were Knapweed, Tufted Vetch, Lavender, Spear Thistle, Ragwort & 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

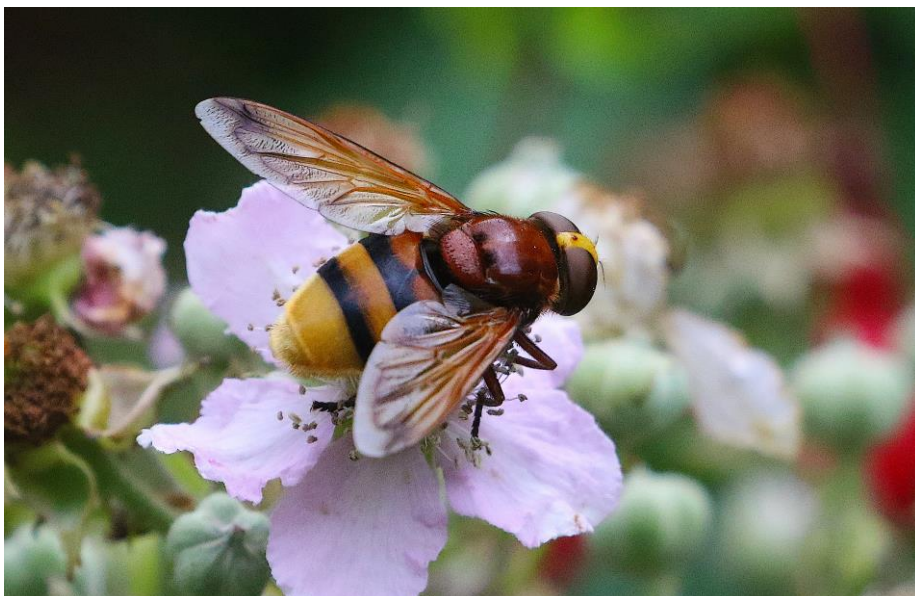
This lovely photo of the Shrill Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) was sent to us by Jamie O'Neill.



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## Other things to keep an eye out for this month

The Hornet Plumehorn (*Volucella zonaria*) was recorded for the first time in Ireland in 2023. It is a very large hoverfly and can be recognised by its yellow and black banded abdomen, where the upper band is chestnut in colour. It can be especially frequent in suburban settings with good populations of Common and German Wasps. The larvae develop as scavengers and larval predators in social wasp nests. In Britain, it occurs from May to November, but peaks in August. Photo: David McAdams. Submit any sightings here: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/hoverflies>



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## Interesting recent research

Hunger gap for bumblebees in March-April

[Resource gaps pose the greatest threat for bumblebees during the colony establishment phase - Becher - Insect Conservation and Diversity - Wiley Online Library](#)

## Workshops and upcoming events

Information on any relevant workshops and events will be released across the year.

Within the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, we will be running a **Wild Bee Festival** in Galway City on the 17-18<sup>th</sup> August in collaboration with Galway City Council. This will include various workshops and walks, including on bumblebee identification. More details here: <https://pollinators.ie/wild-bee-festival/>

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## 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/>