



NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2024

Welcome to the seventh month of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme for 2024. New volunteers can join at any time!

What happened in September 2023

- 104 transects were walked last September.
- Ten walks still recorded more than 30 *individual* bumblebees, but the average number spotted was 13. As expected, this is significantly down from last August's average of 33.
- Thirteen people walked their route and didn't find any bumblebees last September. This is normal, particularly if walks take place later in the month.
- You should still mainly be seeing workers. Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) were, by far, the most common bumblebee last September. A total of 967 individuals were counted. This is up on previous Septembers: 2022 – 556 individuals; 2021 – 831 individuals).
- Top recorded last September were:
 - Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) – recorded on 73% of all transects
 - Common Carder Bee queens (*B. pascuorum*) - 26%
 - B. lucorum* agg. – 22%
 - Common Carder Bee males (*B. pascuorum*) - 21%
 - Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*) - 16%
 - White-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lucorum*) - 9%
- Species diversity is now lower – a total of 8 species were spotted across all walks last September. Spotted in smaller numbers were: Red-tailed Bumblebee queens, workers & males (*B. lapidarius*), Garden Bumblebee queens, workers & males (*B. hortorum*), Early Bumblebee queens, workers & males (*B. pratorum*), Large Carder Bee workers and males (*B. muscorum*), Tree Bumblebee males (*B. hypnorum*), and White-tailed Bumblebee males (*B. lucorum*).
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last September was 1,300 (plus 1,130 honey bees). As expected, this is a big drop from the previous month last year (3,483 bumblebees).

Tips and advice this month

- ✓ For me, September is generally the month of the *B. pascuorum* worker, and that is what many of us might see in greatest abundance.
- ✓ Numbers are substantially down, as bumblebees begin hibernating again. The later in September you leave your walk, the less bees you are likely to see.
- ✓ There will still be males around this month, so keep an eye out for those. You are also likely to see new queens as they fatten up before going into hibernation.
- ✓ If you're lucky enough to have rarer species like the Large Carder Bee (*B. muscorum*), the Shrill Carder Bee (*B. sylvarum*) or the Great Yellow Bumblebee (*B. distinguendus*), you may still see them in September, especially earlier in the month.

Common errors last September

- There were very few errors last September.
- Be careful with rarer species like *B. muscorum*. *Bombus pascuorum* can become quite faded and cause confusion. If you're not sure, I'm happy to check photographs for you.
- Bear in mind that the season is drawing to a close for bumblebees so if you're spotting something outside the very common species, double check to be sure.

Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2023, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 25 different plant species last September. Top plants were Devil's-bit Scabious, Heather, Red Clover, Sunflower. 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>

Photo of the month

This lovely photo of the Mountain Bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*) was sent to us by Lilian Ferguson.



Other things to keep an eye out for this month - Furry Peat Hoverfly

This hoverfly is an amazing bumblebee mimic! It's called *Sericomyia superbiens* and mimics *Bombus muscorum*. Hoverflies differ from bumblebees in having one pair of wings, being able to hover, and having very large eyes that take up most of the head. This is a hairy hoverfly with ginger hairs on the thorax & blonde hairs on the abdomen. It flies from the end of July to October, with a peak in September. It was previously known as *Arctophila superbiens*.



Submit any sightings here:

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

Interesting recent research

Age dominates flight distance and duration, while body size shapes flight speed in *Bombus terrestris*

<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/abs/10.1098/rspb.2024.1001>

Workshops and upcoming events

We don't have any additional events planned for 2024, but I hope to be back out in 2025 running Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme workshops. You are very welcome to submit ideas for future locations to me over the winter.

We had a fantastic *Wild Bee Festival* in Galway City (17-18th August), in collaboration with Galway City Council. Huge thanks to Paula Kearney, the Biodiversity Officer, for hosting us. Thanks to all those who made this weekend of workshops, walks and talks possible.

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/>