



NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2026

Welcome to the second month of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme for 2026.

What happened in April 2025

- 124 transects were walked last April. This is one of our highest totals ever!
- While the maximum number of *individual* bumblebees spotted on a walk last April was over 100, the average number was 10.
- Many people were still seeing only queens – not workers yet. This is very normal.
- Eight people walked their transect without seeing any bumblebees last April. It is possible to walk a zero bumblebee transect in April, depending on the weather conditions. However, where at all possible, you should try to choose a day when some bees are flying.
- A few people were lucky enough to spot 6 different queens: Typically, *Bombus pratorum* (Early Bumblebee), *B. pascuorum* (Common Carder Bee), *B. lapidarius* (Red-tailed Bumblebee), *B. lucorum* (White-tailed Bumblebee), *B. terrestris* (Buff-tailed Bumblebee) & *B. hortorum* (Garden Bumblebee). Most people spotted 2-5 species.
- Top recorded last April were:
 - Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*) - recorded on 68% of all transects
 - Common Carder Bee queens (*B. pascuorum*) - 56%
 - White-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lucorum*) - 43%
 - Early Bumblebee queens (*B. pratorum*) - 24%
 - B. lucorum* agg. workers - 22%
 - Red-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lapidarius*) - 17%
 - Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) - 11%
 - Garden Bumblebee queens (*B. hortorum*) - 9%
 - Early Bumblebee workers (*B. pratorum*) - 8%
- Also spotted in smaller numbers were Tree Bumblebee queens (*B. hypnorum*), Heath Bumblebee queens (*B. jonellus*), Large Carder Bee queens (*B. muscorum*), and Forest Cuckoo Bee queens (*B. sylvestris*). A very small number of Heath Bumblebee workers (*B. jonellus*) and Garden Bumblebee workers (*B. hortorum*) were also spotted.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last April was 1,226 (plus 457 honey bees). This is above average, and reflects the good weather last spring.

Tips and advice this month

- ✓ It can still be difficult to find suitable weather conditions to do your walk this month. Don't forget it should be above 13°C and at least 60% sunshine. If this simply isn't possible, just try your best and record the conditions you did have.
- ✓ Typically, you start seeing more variety this month as widespread species like the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*), the Garden Bumblebee (*B. hortorum*), the Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) and the Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum*) come out of hibernation. The weather in March 2026 hasn't been good, so it's likely that we will still see a lot of queens this month and may not see many workers yet.
- ✓ Cuckoo bumblebees can start to appear towards the end of April on some sites, but don't worry if you don't see them (I've never found them on my own walks). They are very rare overall. If you see something unusual, you can always try to get a photo and send it to me to check.

Common errors last April

- It would be very unusual to see males already, so be careful not to mistakenly identify these.
- Depending on the weather, you might start seeing workers of *B. lucorum* agg., the Early Bumblebee (*B. pratorum*), the Garden Bumblebee (*B. hortorum*) and the Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*). Workers of other species are possible, but less likely.
- Be careful with rare species. Remember the Mountain Bumblebee (*B. monticola*) is only found in upland areas and the Shril Carder Bee (*B. sylvarum*) is largely restricted to the Burren.

Data submission system: <https://bumblebee-monitoring.biodiversityireland.ie/>

Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2025, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 55 different plant species last April. Dandelion was by orders of magnitude the most common. It was followed by Currants, Bush Vetch, Rosemary, Cotoneaster, Apple Blossom & Berberis. If you're seeing something important or unusual on your walk this month, please submit a casual record and fill in the foraging box:

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



Photo of the month

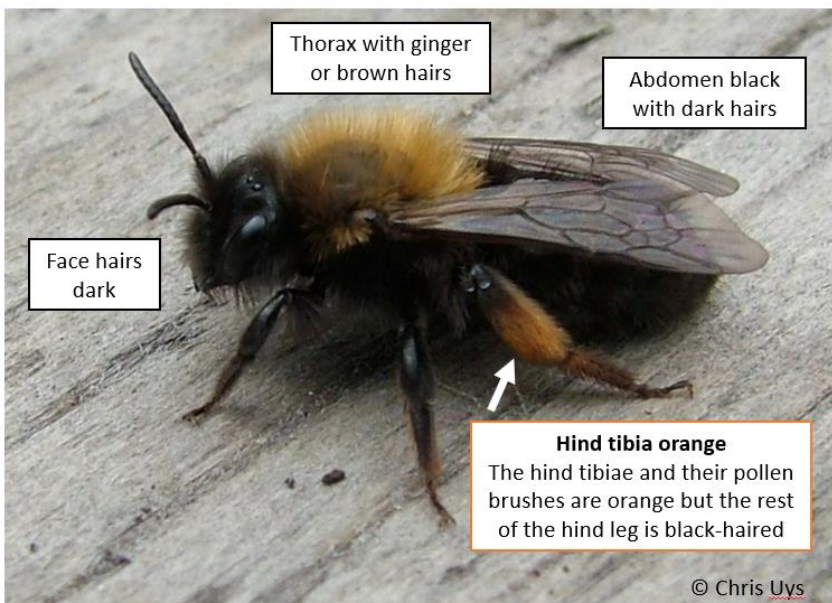
This lovely photo of an Early Bumblebee queen (*Bombus pratorum*) was taken by Grace Clinton.



Other things to keep an eye out for this month - Clarke's Mining Bee

Keep an eye out for Clarke's Mining Bee (*Andrena clarkella*). This solitary bee is distinctive, but a little tricky as you need to check for the various features below to be sure. It nests by making burrows into bare soil. It forages almost exclusively on Willow and is most often recorded in April.

Females of *Andrena clarkella* are distinctive



- ✓ Large solitary bee (11-15mm long)
- ✓ Spring flight period (March-June)
- ✓ Ground nesting
- ✓ Feeds on Willow



Interesting recent research

Submerged bumblebee queens breathe underwater

<https://www.science.org/content/article/how-bumblebees-survive-days-underwater-without-drowning>

Workshops and upcoming events

Information on any relevant workshops and events will be released across the year. More details in coming months.

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

2025 was our most successful year to date, with 104 transects that were walked at least 6 of the 8 months. Some new volunteers joined the scheme during the year and their data will hopefully come fully on board from 2025. **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 at least **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/>