

NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2026

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

What happened in June 2025

- 113 transects were walked last June.
- One walk recorded a massive 383 bumblebees last June, and another eight walks had 100+ individuals. However, average number spotted was 35. This is typical for June. Three walks recorded no bumblebees. At this time of year, you should try to choose a day when bees are flying.
- You should mainly be seeing workers now. *Bombus lucorum* agg. was by far the most common taxa recorded in June 2025.
- 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 87% of all transects
 - Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) – 73%
 - Red-tailed Bumblebee workers (*B. lapidarius*) - 45%
 - Early Bumblebee workers (*B. pratorum*) - 36%
 - Garden Bumblebee workers (*B. hortorum*) - 35%
 - Early Bumblebee males (*B. pratorum*) - 15%
 - Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*) - 15%
 - White-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lucorum*) - 12%
 - Common Carder Bee queens (*B. pascuorum*) - 12%
 - Garden Bumblebee queens (*B. hortorum*) – 10%
- 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*), Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) & the Red-tailed Bumblebee (*B. lapidarius*). Shrill Carder Bee workers (*B. sylvarum*) were spotted on one walk in the Burren. A small number of males of the Forest Cuckoo Bee (*B. sylvestris*) were also found.
- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last June was 3,882 (plus 926 honeybees). This is very slightly below 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.
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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 Great Yellow Bumblebee (*B. distinguendus*). 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.
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Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2025, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 70 different plant species last June. Top plants were Bramble, White Clover, Lavender, Red Clover, Catmint, Comfrey, Bird's-foot-trefoil, Kidney Vetch & Buttercup. 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 a *Bombus lucorum* queen (White-tailed Bumblebee) was sent to us by Geraldine Nee



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

Much as it pains me to share (!), a recent study has shown that male bumblebees are more adaptable than females

<https://sheffield.ac.uk/news/busy-bees-male-bumblebees-prove-more-active-and-adaptable-females>

Workshops and upcoming events

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

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. 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/>