

NEWSLETTER: OCTOBER 2026

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

What happened in October 2025

- 89 transects were walked last October. This is a great total but is down from October 2024 (104 walks).
- While three people recorded over 10 *individual* bumblebees, the average number spotted was two. Forty-eight walks recorded no bumblebees last October. This is very normal, especially if you leave it later in the month.
- Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) were still recorded on 29% of walks. The only other worker still around was *Bombus lucorum* agg. which was found on 2% of walks.
- Common Carder Bee workers were the most abundant bumblebee last October. Spotted across all walks were:

Common Carder Bee workers (*B. pascuorum*) - 85 individuals
Common Carder Bee queens (*B. pascuorum*) - 19
Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*) – 12
Common Carder Bee males (*B. pascuorum*) - 8
Red-tailed Bumblebee male (*B. lapidarius*) – 4
Red-tailed Bumblebee queen (*B. lapidarius*) – 3
Red-tailed Bumblebee worker (*B. lapidarius*) – 3
White-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. lucorum*) – 3
Bombus lucorum agg. - 2
Large Carder Bee queen (*B. muscorum*) – 1
Early Bumblebee queen (*B. pratorum*) - 1

- The total number of individual bumblebees spotted by everyone last October was 141 (plus 166 honey bees). This is below average.

Tips and advice this month

- ✓ It can be difficult to find suitable weather conditions to do your last walk of the year. Don't forget it should be above 13°C and at least 60% sunshine. If this simply isn't possible, try your best and record the conditions you did have.
- ✓ Remember, the key target for your data to be of maximum use is to walk at least 6 of the 8 months. **Please don't be tempted to stop early – it's very important to also complete your October walk.**
- ✓ It is normal to walk your route and not record any bumblebees in October. If that happens it's still very important to submit the other data (date, weather etc.). Those 'zero abundance' walks at the beginning and end of the season are equally as important as those with bumblebee sightings.
- ✓ The Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) seems to be the last of the Irish bumblebees to wind up its season and go into hibernation. For many of us, it'll still be spotted when the weather is suitable in October. You might also spot a few *B. lucorum* agg. Occasional males may still be around. It's still possible to see queens of most species, making sure they have sufficiently fattened up for hibernation.

Common errors last October

- Be careful not to confuse Early Bumblebee queens (*B. pratorum*) and Buff-tailed Bumblebee queens (*B. terrestris*). Early Bumblebee queens will be smaller and have a reddish tail.
- The season is now drawing to a close for bumblebees. You may still see workers of the Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*) and *B. lucorum* agg., but it would be more unusual to see other workers at this stage.
- Watch out for very faded individuals of the Common Carder Bee (*B. pascuorum*), and don't confuse with the Large Carder Bee (*B. muscorum*).

Important food plants

Based on the casual bumblebee data submitted to us across 2025, bumblebees were spotted feeding on around 10 different plant species last October. Top plants were Ivy, Michaelmas Daisies, & Verbena. If you're seeing something important or unusual on your walk this month, please submit a casual record and filling the foraging box:

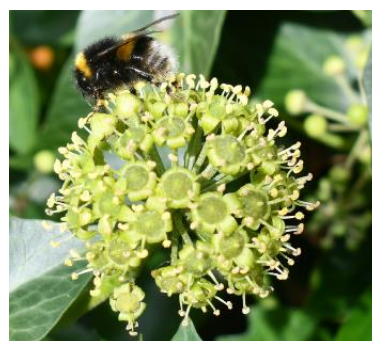


Photo of the month

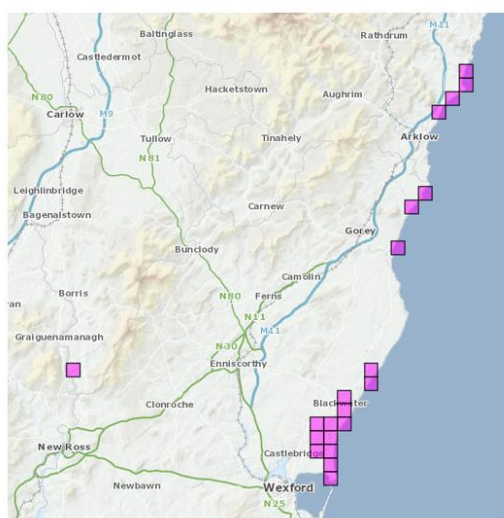
This photo of a Tree Bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*) foraging on Crocus was taken by David McCormick. Now is a good time to think about adding Crocus bulbs to your garden for next spring. They can be an important food source for queens that emerge early from hibernation.



Other things to keep an eye out for this month

The Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*) was first spotted at the Raven Nature Reserve (Wexford) in October 2021. It's a solitary bee with an autumn flight period, to match the flowering of its favourite plant - Ivy. It nests in south facing banks of light soil. Within the National Biodiversity Data Centre, we've been keeping an eye on its spread each year (current distribution below).

The Ivy Bee is quite large and has very distinctive bands of white on the abdomen. It is likely to be around from mid-September until mid-October. Particularly check in areas along the east and south coasts.



Submit any sightings here:

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/solitary-bees>

Interesting recent research

Flower power: bumblebees ferry natural protection from bloom to bloom
[flower-power-bumblebees](#)

British *Bombus muscorum* populations face severe genetic declines
[Threatened British bumblebee populations face severe genetic declines | Natural History Museum](#)

Workshops and upcoming events

Please feel free to get in touch with suggested locations for workshops in 2027.

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/>