

KENT'S PLAN BEE

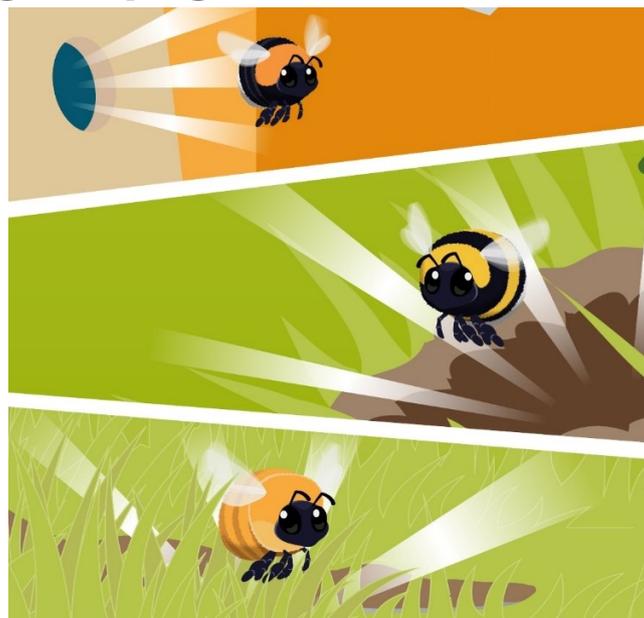


March 2023 Summary Newsletter

March was a dull and grey month, but it saw the launch of lots of great campaigns ready for Spring and the arrival of this year's pollinators. Read on below to find out more about each one and how you can get involved.

Bumblebee Conservation Trust Nesting Campaign

In March, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust launched their new campaign on how to provide bumblebee nest sites. This campaign is centred on looking at the other needs of bumblebees, not just their flower food needs. Spring is the best time to see newly emerged bumblebee queens searching for nest sites to set up a new colony. Check out the great resources from [Bee The Change](#), including their bee-rilient [video](#), to get started on creating great nesting spaces for bumblebees in your garden. For more information on how to provide nesting and shelter for all pollinators, check out our latest [posts](#) on our Facebook page.



Help bumblebees by providing boxes, messy untouched patches, and long grass. Image Credit: Bumblebee Conservation Trust

BBC Radio 2's Let It Grow Campaign



Image Credit: BBC Radio 2

Inspired by Sir David Attenborough's Wild Isles series and the call to support British nature and wildlife, BBC Radio 2 is working with CBBC and BBC Teach to encourage everyone to get planting and bring nature to your neighbourhood. Their [website](#) has lots of gardening tips and tricks, plus a great podcast with more information on how to get your garden going. And best of all, there is the chance for you to pick up some [free seeds](#) to get you started! We love this idea as you can plant some flowers that support the pollinators in your garden or local community. Plus, gardening is great for your mental health, so it's a win-win!

Are you ready for No Mow May?

It won't be long until we are in May, so now is the perfect time to start thinking about No Mow May. From the 1 May, Plantlife are encouraging you to put your lawnmower away and let your lawn bloom. These naturally occurring flowers in your lawn can provide extra food for pollinators, plus lots of other ecosystem services.

You can sign up on the [Plantlife website](#) to receive more information and to let them know you are taking part. We will also be launching our No Mow May Pledge again in May on our [Let's Talk page](#) to find out who is taking part in Kent. Finally, we'll be letting you know how Kent County Council is taking part in No Mow May on our Facebook page, plus lots of tips for helping you, so make sure to follow us.



Image Credit: Plantlife

PoMS FIT Count – How to carry out a pollinator survey

The UK PoMS recording season started from the beginning of April. As a citizen science project, this is something that everyone can take part in. Whether you're completely new to the survey, or need a little reminder after the winter period, here are a few tips and resources we posted on our Facebook page at the end of March to get you ready to head out and monitor pollinators.

What is a PoMS FIT Count?: The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) designed a simple monitoring method called a Flower-Insect Timed (FIT) Count. This 10-minute simple survey involves watching a small patch of flowers and counting how many insects land on these flowers. Here are the 10 steps to carrying out a FIT Count:

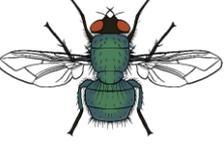
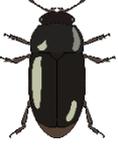


1. FIT Counts take about 10–15 minutes, where you count every insect that lands on the flowers of your chosen target flower species.
2. You can complete a FIT Count in good weather between 1 April and 30 September.
3. "Good weather" is dry, and with a minimum temperature of 13°C when sunny/ 15°C when cloudy.
4. Choose just one type of flower as your target flower – try to use one of the FIT Count target flowers, but you can choose a different flower if that is not possible.
5. Mark out a 50 × 50 cm patch containing your target.
6. Count the number of individual flowers for your target species that are within your patch.
7. Set a timer for ten minutes and count all insects that land on the target flowers within the patch (ignore other flowers and do your best to count each individual insect once only!).
8. Identify the insects into their broad groups (bumblebees, hoverflies etc.) – any that you don't recognise should be counted as "other insects".
9. Fill in some simple weather details.
10. Send in your results via the FIT Counts form or app.

Target Flowers: Below is a list of the 14 target flowers to look out for. Ideally when carrying out a count, try to focus on these target species where possible to enable consistent, comparative evaluation of the data. However, any flowering plant can be used if the target species are not available to survey.

						
Buttercup – <i>Ranunculus species</i>	Dandelion - <i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Hawthorn – <i>Crataegus</i>	White Dead-nettle - <i>Lamium album</i>	Bramble Blackberry) - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Lavender - <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Hogweed - <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
						
Knapweed - <i>Centarea nigra</i> or <i>scabiosa</i>	Ragwort - <i>Senecio jacobaea</i> and relatives	White Clover - <i>Trifolium repens</i>	Buddleja	Heather - <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> or <i>Erica</i> sp.	Thistle - <i>Cirsium</i> or <i>Carduus</i>	Ivy - <i>Hedera helix</i>

The Insect Groups: The FIT Count only requires you to narrow down the insect into specific groups, and not down to species. Here is a list of the groups you need to record, and as a bonus page this month, we will put all our infographics on how to tell the groups apart at the end of the newsletter, so you have them all to hand.

				
Bumblebees	Honeybees	Solitary bees	Wasps	Hoverflies
				
Other flies	Butterflies and moths	Beetles	Small insects	Other insects

Why monitor pollinators?

By collecting flower-insect data from across the nation, this huge dataset will form an invaluable resource from which to measure trends in pollinator populations and target conservation efforts.

The loss of pollinators is a direct threat to our ability to feed ourselves as human numbers globally increases towards nine billion by 2050. Without bees, hoverflies and other insects visiting flowers, crops such as strawberries, apples, pears, and plums, would not produce fruit. There would also be fewer flowers in our gardens or countryside.

With reports of dramatic losses of insects occurring across the globe as a result of habitat loss, pesticides and climate change, and concern about what this means for wider biodiversity and ecosystem health, there has never been a more important time to document evidence of change in populations of pollinating insects.

The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme website has all the information you need to get going. Just visit their [website](#) to download their detailed guides and to submit your results.

Photo and illustration credits: Hannah Simmons (unless otherwise stated)

Pollinators to see in April

It's April and hopefully pollinators will be Springing into action with the warmer weather. Adults will be on the wing looking for their first forage of nectar and opportunities to mate.

Bees: Red Mason Bee (*Osmia bicornis*), Fringe-horned mason bee (*Osmia pilicornis*), Orange-legged furrow bee (*Halictus rubicundus*)

Moths: Early Thorn moth (*Selenia dentaria*), Garden Carpet (*Xanthorhoe fluctuata*)

Butterflies: Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*), Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)

Beetles: Thick-legged Flower Beetle (*Oedemera nobilis*), Hawthorn Leaf Beetle (*Lochmaea crataegi*), Common Malachite Beetle (*Malachius bipustulatus*)

Wasps: Median Wasp (*Dolichovespula media*), & Argogorytes mystaceus

Flies: Dark-edged Bee Fly (*Bombylius major*), St Mark's Fly (*Bibio marci*), Narcissus Bulb Fly (*Merodon equestris*)

Wildflowers to spot this month include Bugle, Cowslips, Lesser Celandine, Primrose, Violets, Wood Anemone & Wild Garlic.

Spotted any of these or any other pollinators and wildflowers? Post them on our [Facebook page](#), tag us in your photos @KentsPlanBee or [email us](mailto:planbee@kent.gov.uk) your photos.

POLLINATORS TO SEE IN APRIL



Holly Blue
Celastrina argiolus



Red Mason Bee
Osmia bicornis



Thick-legged Flower Beetle
Oedemera nobilis



Dark-edged Bee Fly
Bombylius major



St Mark's Fly
Bibio marci



Spotted any of these? Why not share them on our Facebook page @KentsPlanBee



Upcoming Events and Resources

Wild About Open Gardens

The Wild About Open Garden events are back! The first event is taking place on 22 April in Maidstone. Book onto this and other events through the [Kent Wildlife Trust website](#).

- Sat 22 April 1-5pm: The Roundels, 45 Mill Lane, Watlington, Maidstone, ME18 5PE
- Sun 14 May 1-5pm: 26 Cliff Gardens, Minster, Sheppey, ME12 3QY
- Sun 4 Jun 1-5pm: Bapchild, Sittingbourne
- Sun 11 Jun 1-5pm: 68 South Hill Road, Gravesend, DA12 1JZ
- Sat 17 Jun 1-5pm: 1 Victoria Close, Edenbridge, TN8 5BT
- Sat 24 Jun 1-5pm: Myrtle House, Headcorn Road, Grafty Green, Maidstone, ME17 2AR
- Sun 25 Jun 1-5pm: Endymion, Perry Wood, Selling, Faversham, ME813 9SF

Bumblebee Conservation Trust Free Online Identification Training

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust are hosting several free online events to improve your bumblebee identification skills. Book your free place through the Trust's [events calendar](#) on their website.

Entry-level sessions: 12 May

Intermediate-level sessions: 24 April and 23 May

Learn pollinator ID FOR FREE!

During the rainy days of March, our Plan Bee Officer Hannah struggled to get outside to help pollinators. Instead, she put her time to good use and pulled together a list of websites that can help you to identify pollinators. You can find this list on our [Storyboard](#), plus lots of other ideas on how you can help pollinators this year!

So, whether you have been inspired by our PoMS FIT article above, or you are just curious to know which species are using your garden, hopefully this list of websites is a great place for you to start. And best of all, these resources are online and free, so you can always refer to them when you need them!

Keep up to date with the latest news via our [Kent's Plan Bee Facebook page](#)

If you received this email indirectly and would like to subscribe to our mailing list, please email us on the address below with the subject line "Sign Up". If you wish to unsubscribe from this mailing list, please email us on the address below with the subject line "Unsubscribe".

Do you have a Kent pollinator news story or event that you would like featured in our newsletter? Have you created a pollinator friendly community space? Got your neighbours together to create a row of pollinator friendly gardens? Or do you have an event about Kent's pollinators you would like advertised? Email it to the address below and we will be in contact about a potential space in the Newsletter.

planbee@kent.gov.uk

All the previous editions of the Newsletter have now been added to our webpage. You can download them as PDFs or share the website address on your social media. Find all the Newsletters on the [Pollinators section of Kent County Council's website](#).

Edited by Hannah Simmons, Graduate Biodiversity Officer, Kent County Council.

For a Pollinator Friendly Garden of England



PoMS FIT Count – Insect Groups

Bumblebees

(Order Hymenoptera)



Buff-tailed Bumblebee - *Bombus terrestris*

- Two pairs of wings
- Long antennae, often angled or 'elbowed'
- Small eyes
- Large, dense furry/hairy bodies
- Pollen baskets/brushes to collect pollen (females only) - no flattened segment below the pollen basket

Honey Bees

(Order Hymenoptera)

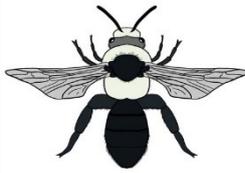


Honey Bee - *Apis mellifera*

- Two pairs of wings
- Antennae may be 'elbowed'
- Pollen basket (flat shiny areas surrounded by long hairs) present in hind legs of females - Flattened segment below pollen basket
- Hairy eyes
- Very long and narrow marginal cells on wings

Solitary Bees

(Order Hymenoptera)



Ashy Mining Bee - *Andrena cineraria*

- Two pairs of wings
- Antennae more likely to point straight out
- Generally smaller than bumblebees, and a more elongated body shape
- Some with little/no body hairs
- Pollen brush (long hairs with no flat shiny area) instead of basket (only on females again).
- Some pollen brushes are on the hind leg, but some can be underneath the bee on its abdomen

Wasps

(Order Hymenoptera)



Common Wasp - *Vespa vulgaris*

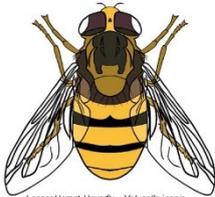


Ichneumon Wasp

- Two pairs of wings
- Long, slender bodies, distinctive narrow waist, and generally not hairy
- When flying, their legs hang down
- Includes Ichneumon wasps (long, very thin parasitic wasps)

Hoverflies

(Order Diptera : Family Syrphidae)

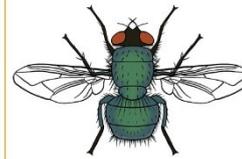


Lesser Hamlet Hoverfly - *Volucella inanis*

- One pair of wings
- Large eyes
- Short antennae with three segments
- Often mimic bees and wasps through appearance, behaviour, and sound – but no pollen basket
- Have a false vein (Vena spuria) that runs through the wing which is unique to hoverflies
- Have a false margin to wing
- May be furry but are never bristly

Other Flies

(Order Diptera)



Common Green Bottle Fly - *Lucilia sericata*

- One pair of wings
- Large eyes
- Compared to hoverflies bodies are broader and wing venation different. Moves slowly in comparison, doesn't hover
- Includes bee flies, midges (over 3mm), mosquitos, and crane flies

Butterflies and Moths

(Order Lepidoptera)



Red Admiral - *Vanessa atalanta*

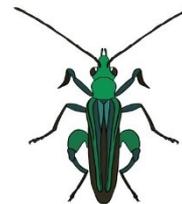


Six-spot Burnet - *Zygaena filipendulata*

- For the count, there is no need to distinguish butterflies from moths
- Two pairs of wings with scales
- Long antennae
 - Butterflies have a "club-shaped" end. No UK butterfly has feathery antennae
 - Most moths have feathery or tapering antennae

Beetles

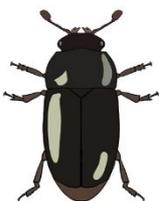
(Order Coleoptera)



Thick-legged Flower Beetle - *Oedemera nobilis*

- Wings are hidden under a hard and protective case, which meet in a straight line down the back, making a T shape
- Not hairy
- They have biting mouthparts
- Not to be confused with True Bugs

Small Insects



Pollen Beetle - *Meligethes aeneus*

- 3mm (two pennies thick) or less 
- Includes pollen beetles, small wasps, midges and aphids
- There is no need to distinguish which insect group these tiny insects belong to

Other Insects

- Anything that does not fall into one of the previous categories
- True bugs (Order Hemiptera)
 - Includes shield bugs
 - Wing cases meet in an X or Y shape
 - Have a long, narrow rostrum (snout-like projection from the head), contains piercing mouthparts
- Grasshoppers and crickets (Order Orthoptera)
- Sawflies (Order Hymenoptera)
 - In the same order as bees and wasps, not true flies
 - Look like wasps and bees but no narrow waist, not hairy and slower, weaker flight
- All insects you cannot identify
- Ignore any spiders, snails or other non-insects that may occasionally be seen on flowers