

Protecting the rare Shrill Carder Bee

The Shrill Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) is a rare bumblebee that is in decline across Europe. It is associated with open flower-rich grassland habitats and emerges from hibernation slightly later than other species to coincide with this food source becoming available.



The Shrill Carder Bee is found across Europe but is rare at very northern latitudes. Historic records show that prior to 1980, it had a widespread but localised distribution in the southern half of Ireland. It has never been recorded further north than County Roscommon. Currently, populations are known only from the Burren Region, with occasional sightings in nearby areas such as south Galway.

In Britain, the Shrill Carder Bee was once widespread but has experienced a major decline in range and is now known from a small number of isolated populations in Wales and England.

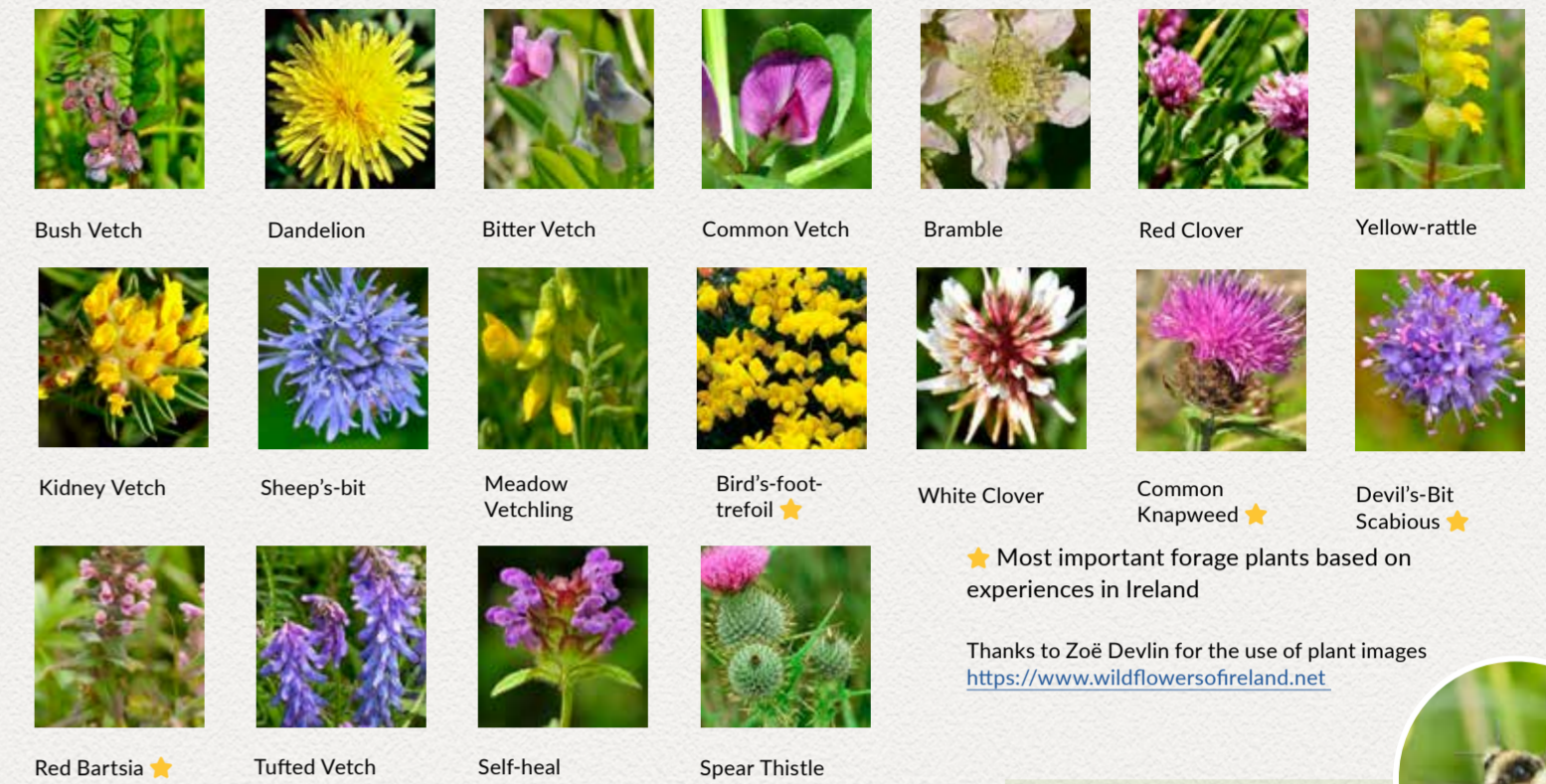
Conservation status

The Shrill Carder Bee is listed as Endangered in the Irish Regional Red List of Bees. Although listed as Least Concern in the European Red List of Bees, populations are experiencing declines throughout its range. It is listed as a priority species of conservation concern in England and Wales and is Endangered in Belgium and Denmark.

"In Ireland, the Shrill Carder Bee visits a variety of grassland plants with Devil's-Bit Scabious being one of its favourites".



Native food plants



★ Most important forage plants based on experiences in Ireland

Thanks to Zoë Devlin for the use of plant images <https://www.wildflowersofireland.net>



Identifying the Shrill Carder Bee

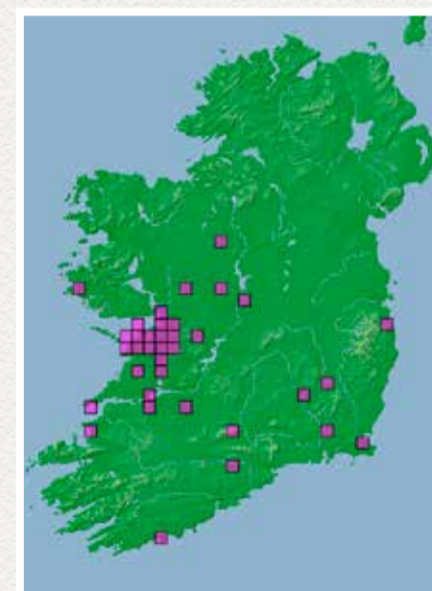
Shrill Carder Bee queens can be up to 1.8cm in length, while males and workers are smaller. It has a reddish-orange tail and greenish grey/yellowish-grey hairs. The thorax has a distinctive band of black hairs between the wings. Queens, workers and males all have this banding pattern.

How does its life cycle differ from other bees?

Small nest size: The Shrill Carder Bee has a relatively small nest size with less than 100 workers.

Later emergence: The Shrill Carder Bee is strongly associated with flower-rich grassland habitats. It emerges from hibernation later than other bumblebee species to coincide with when this food source will be available.

Late emergence means the bees have a shorter timeframe in which to complete their life cycle and are exposed to a greater risk of failing to produce sufficient offspring if floral resources are not available.



All records 1921 - present



Records 2013 - present

Source: <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map/Terrestrial/Species/56033>



Records 2013 - present

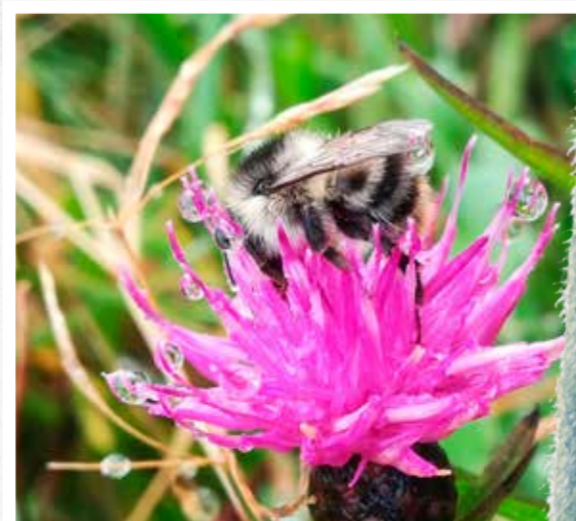
What the Shrill Carder Bee needs:

A supply of pollen and nectar throughout the season

Its foraging habitat is extensive flower-rich grassland, limestone pavement and flower-rich dunes characterised by an abundance of Vetches, Clover, Bird's-foot-trefoil and other legumes in May and June, followed by Common Knapweed, Devils-Bit Scabious and Red Bartsia in later summer and autumn.

Suitable nest sites

The Shrill Carder Bee generally nests on the ground or underground using sheltered areas with slight hollows or disused small mammal burrows. Nests are typically in areas of rough vegetation with a litter layer, such as tussocky grasslands or along stone wall and scrub boundaries.



An tSeirbhís Páircanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service



Find out more

To find out more about the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, and to download our Guideline document 'Protecting rare pollinators: Shrill Carder Bee', see

www.pollinators.ie/helping-endangered-pollinators/

