



A view from the Blackstairs Mountains, September 2026

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Welcome to the October issue of the Protecting Farmland Pollinators Newsletter!

This month we are excited to launch the Farmland Pollinator Tool. This evidence-based scorecard has been developed alongside farmers and we hope it will provide farmers with an easy way to self-assess just how pollinator-friendly their farmland is.



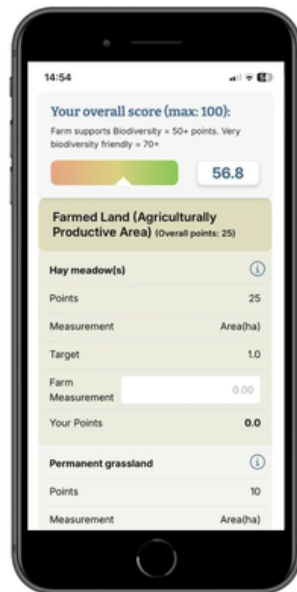
The Farmland Pollinator Tool is freely available so why not give it a go and find out how pollinator friendly your farmland is using the following link: [Farmland Pollinator Tool](https://www.pollinators.ie/farmland-pollinator-tool)

In this issue:

- Learn about using the Farmland Pollinator Tool, and find out how pollinator-friendly your farmland is using the scorecard.
- Hear from Andrew Bergin one of the Farmers who took part in the Protecting Farmland Pollinators EIP.
- Learn about some of the key farmland actions which are being promoted as part of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2026-2030.
- Find out why ivy is so important for pollinators at this time of year.

How to Score Your Farm

- To start the survey enter the area of your farm. You can score your farm in either Hectares (and km) or Acres (and miles).
- The survey is divided into the 4 sections which encompass the whole farm with a score of 25 points attainable in each section.
- To complete the survey you will need to provide details for each action which you implement on your farm within the 'Farm Measurement' textbox.
- The 'Farmed Land' and 'Other Habitats & Non-Farmed Areas' categories will request answers as an area measure (hectares or acres).
- The 'Hedgerow & Other Field Boundaries' category will ask for measurements as distance measures (km or miles).
- The 'Farming Practices' section poses general yes or no questions depending on your pesticide and artificial fertiliser inputs on your farm.
- When you are happy with the answers provided you can submit your score to the National Biodiversity Data Centre to receive feedback on your score and access to additional resources.



Self-assessment tip:

If you do not know the exact measures enter an estimated value to get an approximate score.

Pollinator-Friendly Farmland Accreditation

Evidence shows that farms which score 70+ using the Farmland Pollinator Tool are **pollinator-friendly**. Should your farm achieve a score of **70+**, you may be eligible for **accreditation** through the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.



For further information, contact the Farmland Pollinator Officers at:
farmland@biodiversityireland.ie

Find out how pollinator-friendly your
farmland is, by visiting the following link:

[Farmland Pollinator Tool](#)

www.pollinators.ie
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Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
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This article has been written by Andrew Bergin. Andrew is a tillage farmer from County Kildare and participated in the Protecting Farmland Pollinators EIP 2019-2023. In this article Andrew reflects on his time participating in the EIP, and provides insight on his experience using the Farmland Pollinator Tool.

In 2019 the NBDC coordinated the Protecting Farmland Pollinators EIP across 40 farms in the Kildare area. Covering all farm enterprises, the project measured the real benefits of actions on farms. We looked at things like reduced hedge cutting, arable grass margins, reducing or eliminating different pesticides and including flowering crops.

All the observations were built into a Scoring Tool that allowed farmers to score their own farms for pollinator friendliness. Farmers participating in the EIP received payments based on their scores, which improved dramatically on most farms during the trials.

Farmers scored their own farms and 10% had verification audits before payments were approved. This reduced the cost of monitoring and involved the farmers closely with the scoring process.

When you score your own farm you really see where the points are being accumulated. Nineteen actions were scored, with each action given a weighting so you saw not only which things were important but also how important they were. This focused your work for the following year on the actions that would maximise your score and would benefit pollinators most.



Dandelions provide an important nectar source for pollinators such as this hoverfly.

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The best results were achieved for pollinators and as farmers we educated ourselves almost incidentally. The whole EIP was, uniquely in my experience, a close collaboration between highly-qualified researchers and very experienced farmers, with each party learning from the other. If you want a scientifically sound and really workable solution this is the way to get it.

The EIP finished in 2023 and I am delighted to see that the NBDC is now launching an updated Scoring Tool for public use. It is a very simple tool that really started my education about pollinators on the farm. I am still learning about pollinators and look forward to using the updated tool to monitor my progress.

The Scoring Tool is backed by robust science and is ideally suited to measuring improvements in farmland pollinators and rewarding farmers for their contribution to nature restoration.

To try using the scorecard yourself visit the link below:

[Farmland Pollinator Tool](#)



Andrew speaking during discussion group meeting.



Wide grass margins in arable fields on Andrew farm



Biodiversity surveys being carried out on Andrews Farm (Spring 2020)

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As part of the Pollinator Plan 2026-2030 we will be promoting numerous actions for pollinators, expanding upon those actions advocated for during previous phases of the AIPP. The actions we will promote have been identified alongside farmers during the Protecting Farmland Pollinators EIP, and are assessed within the Farmland Pollinator Tool.

Actions have been divided into four categories, below you can see key actions within each of these categories.

Actions for 'Farmed Land'

Allow grasslands to flower: whether these grasslands are traditional hay meadows, permanent grasslands, clover pasture or multi-species swards, by allowing grasslands to flower you will provide pollinators with an important food source.

Create grass margins: along field boundaries, these margins provide nesting habitat for bumblebees which nest on or just below the surface of the ground in long grass.



Actions for 'Hedgerows & Field Boundaries'

Manage hedgerows on a 3+ year cutting rotation: this will allow shrub species such as hawthorn to flower, providing an important food source for pollinators in spring time.

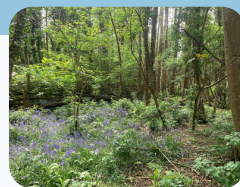
Maintain dry stone walls: as the cavities within these walls can provide solitary bees with habitat suitable for nesting and overwintering.



Actions for 'Other Habitats & Non-Farmed Areas'

Plant pollinator-friendly trees: such as crab apple, rowan, wild cherry, or hawthorn, all of which are an important food source for pollinators.

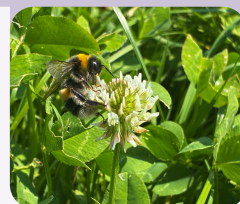
Protect & maintain existing farmland habitats: however small these areas may be. These habitats not only support pollinators but also wider biodiversity.



Actions for 'Farming Practices: Pesticides & Artificial Fertilisers'

Minimise pesticide usage: insecticides can kill pollinators or have sub-lethal impacts on behaviour and reproduction, herbicide use can greatly reduce the availability of wildflower, reducing the use of these chemicals can provide pollinators with safety.

Reduce artificial fertiliser inputs: instead integrate nitrogen fixing clover into grassland swards, clover is also an important food source to pollinators.



Farmland Pollinator Tool

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Ivy and its Importance for Pollinators

Ivy is a common woody climber with glossy evergreen leaves which we will all be familiar with, however, more often than not this plant goes unnoticed around the farm and it's importance particularly at this time of year will be overlooked.

Ivy is an autumn flowering species and is a critical food plant for pollinators late in the year when other food sources are scarce. In September and October ivy takes centre stage providing an abundance of pollen and nectar for bees, hoverflies and other pollinators as they prepare for winter.

Additionally the berries produced by ivy have a high fat content and are an important food source in late winter for birds such as song thrush, redwing, blackbird and wood pigeon.



© Steven Falk

Ivy Bee feeding on flowering ivy.

The Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederae*) is a solitary bee species which heavily relies on the nectar provided by flowering ivy. This species is a late flying species which can be seen on the wing between September and November. The Ivy Bee was first recorded in Ireland in 2021 in the south east of the country, however the species range is expanding quite fast, and on September 26th this species was recorded for the first time at Sixmilebridge in Clare, highlighting the species spread west.

Ivy and the Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederae*) are the two species we are promoting as part of the Biodiversity on your Farm initiative this month, for further details regarding ID and record submission see below.

Management Tip:

If possible avoid cutting hedgerows until at least November, this will allow ivy to flower and provide the Ivy Bee and other pollinators with an important food source at this time of year.

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This month we will be highlighting a rare pollinator; the Ivy Bee, and the plant species which it is closely associated with: Ivy. If you spot either of these species on your farm **submit your records** to us at the NBDC using this [online recording form](#).

This data can then help us track the abundance and distribution of different species, and how this is changing in response to climate change and land use.



Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*)

ID Tips:

- Similar in appearance to the honey bee, and has an orange-brown hairy thorax (mid-section), and distinct black and yellow stripes on its abdomen (tail)
- Flies from September to November, later than many other bees species in Ireland.
- A solitary bee species which nest in light, sandy soils on south facing banks, and is known to feed on ivy.



Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

Irish Name: Eindhneán

ID Tips:

- An unmistakable woody evergreen climber, which may be found growing within hedgerows or up trees.
- Leaves are dark green and glossy, often with 3-5 lobes, however on mature reproductive stems leaves are often more oval or round in shape.
- Flowering in autumn ivy produces small yellow-green dome like umbels, which are an important food source to pollinators.



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