

Press Release

19 March 2026

Bumblebee Challenge 2026: Report bumblebees via the app

Members of the public can once again photograph and report bumblebees from 20 March to 9 April. The Bumblebee Challenge harnesses the power of the crowd to record the diversity and distribution of bumblebee species in Germany. From March to April, the focus is on spring-flowering plants.

Braunschweig/Munich (19 March 2026). In recent years, public participation in research has led to a number of important discoveries: rare species such as the moss bumblebee on the North Sea coast, the iron-capped bumblebee and the Pyrenean bumblebee in the Alpine region have been documented in this way. Even more significant was the documentation of the Tonerd bumblebee in the district of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, marking its first confirmed sighting in Germany. “We are very excited to see what bumblebee treasures the public will find this year,” says **Dr Sophie Ogan**, project lead for the Bumblebee Challenge at the Thünen Institute.

The Wild Bee Monitoring in Agricultural Landscapes team at the Thünen Institute is organising the participatory campaign across Germany in cooperation with BUND Naturschutz Bayern. “Spring is queen season. Now in spring, it is mainly the bumblebee queens that are out and about, but they often don’t have it easy,” explains **Martina Gehret**, project manager at BUND Naturschutz Bayern, adding: “Cool and wet weather, as well as a scarcity of flowers and thus food, make the start of the year a real challenge for the queens.”

No specialist knowledge required: anyone can take part

Whether you have prior knowledge or not: anyone can take part in the Bumblebee Challenge. All you need is a smartphone. Simply download the free *ObIdentify* app, create a user account and go out into nature to photograph as many different bumblebees as possible. No knowledge of species is required, as built-in AI identifies the bumblebees based on the photos. Experienced bumblebee experts also review the submissions.

Finding and photographing bumblebees in the wild

Bumblebee hunters have the best chance of discovering different bumblebee species in places where there are many different flowering plants. **Dr Sophie Ogan** describes how to take good photos of bumblebees: “The easiest way to photograph bumblebees is when they are visiting flowers. They pause briefly for a moment whilst collecting pollen and nectar. It is important that the bumblebee is shown in full and in focus. It is particularly valuable for research if the plant on which the insect is sitting is also recognisable.”

A particularly important point concerns the protection of the animals: bumblebees are protected by law and must not be disturbed, captured or killed!

Data basis for research

Bumblebees are among the most important pollinators of our agricultural landscapes and many wild plants. The photos from the Bumblebee Challenge therefore provide a significant data set for scientific research. “We hope that as many interested people as possible will take part and thus help to expand our knowledge of bumblebees,” says **Martina Gehret**.

Members of the public who are interested in getting involved with bumblebees beyond the challenge can also sign up for the Thünen Institute’s wild bee monitoring scheme. The project gives volunteers the opportunity to contribute to research whilst deepening their own knowledge of wild bees. The wild bee monitoring scheme is part of the MonViA joint project, the nationwide monitoring of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.

Further information: <https://wildbienen.thuenen.de/hummel-monitoring>

Information on the Bumblebee Challenge:

The Bumblebee Challenge takes place twice a year: in spring from 20 March to 9 April and in summer from 20 June to 3 July.

Thünen Institute:

<https://wildbienen.thuenen.de/hummel-challenge>

BUND Nature Conservation in Bavaria:

<https://www.bund-naturschutz.de/aktionen/hummel-challenge>



A garden bumblebee queen (*Bombus hortorum* agg.) on a willow flower (*Salix* sp.).
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