

# THE HIGHLAND BIG POLLINATOR COUNT

2025 RESULTS



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Pellucid Hover Fly - *Volucella pellucens*. Ullapool



# INTRODUCTION

Pollinator populations, essential to biodiversity and ecosystem health, continue to decline globally, including across the Highlands. This trend threatens agriculture, natural habitats, and food security, highlighting the need for monitoring and conservation to understand and support local pollinator species.

The second Highland Big Pollinator Count, held from 9–16 August 2025, mobilised people to record pollinator activity at 56 meadows across Highland. This was 17 more than in 2024, and half of the sites were the same as last year. Many were among the 101 meadows created by High Life Highland Rangers in 2023. Participants submitted observations across categories to guide habitat protection.



# ENGAGEMENT

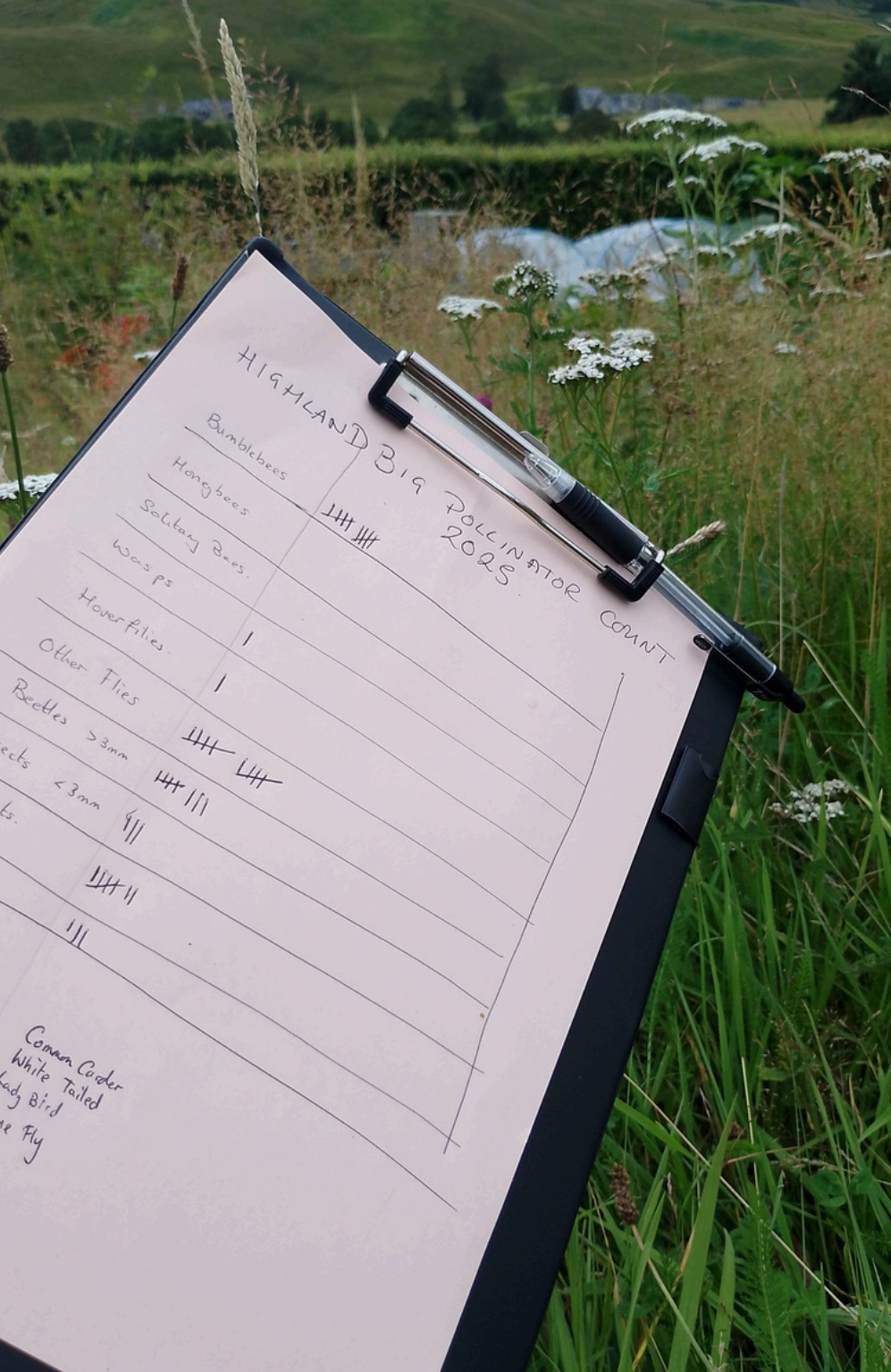
This year's pollinator count showed a clear rise in the time people dedicated to watching their local wildflower meadows, up 41% from last year. A total of 26.75 hours of observation were recorded. This growth reflects not only continued enthusiasm, but a deepening commitment from the 130 participants who took part (up slightly from 123 last year). Each count lasted 30 minutes or less, ensuring a consistent approach across all sites.

Observers monitored 2,148.5 m<sup>2</sup> of meadow, from tiny 1 m<sup>2</sup> patches to larger 810 m<sup>2</sup> community spaces, with most meadows under 10 m<sup>2</sup>.

Across the Highlands, 56 sites were surveyed, with strong engagement in Caithness, followed by Sutherland, Wester Ross, and Ross-shire.

**All observations were submitted through our simple online form, helping us build an increasingly detailed picture of pollinators in the region.**





# METHOD

The method was kept simple. Participating citizen scientist were asked to watch a site for 30 minutes and count all the pollinating insects they saw visiting. The results were submitted on our easy-to-access online form, taking around 2 minutes to complete.

People were also asked to record when and how long they counted for as well as the location and area in metres of the wildflower meadow.

Insects were recorded only **SITTING** on or **LANDING** on any of the meadow flowers, not whilst in flight.

Participants were asked to divide their observations in to ten categories.

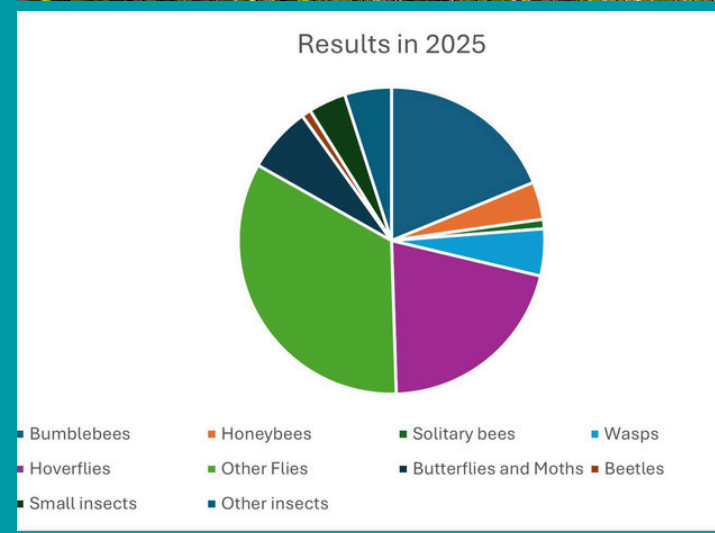


# RESULTS

A total of 2867 insects were recorded over all the sites (compared to 1312 insects in 2024). The greatest category was hoverflies with 312 hoverflies.

The category that was most recorded was hoverflies again with 594 hoverflies seen (21% of all recorded insects). 538 Bumblebees were seen, which comprised 19% of all records, butterflies and moths 7% and honeybees 4% (in 2024 honeybees made if 7% of records). Wasps this year were 5% (this was up from only 2% last year).

This equates to 1.79 insects being recorded every minute of the survey which is significantly more than last year's 1.17 insects per minute. However, due to the larger area of meadow sampled this year compared to 2024, the number of insects per square meter was roughly the same. (1.33 per m<sup>2</sup> in 2025 and 1.30 per m<sup>2</sup> in 2024)



# KEY SPECIES RECORDINGS

Citizen Scientists were asked to identify down to species level if possible or submit photographs of insects to the Ranger Service for identification.



## BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

9 species recorded

- 11 small tortoiseshell – *Aglais urticae*
- 9 red admiral – *Vanessa atalanta*
- 4 green-veined white – *Pieris napi*
- 3 peacock – *Aglais io*
- 2 speckled wood – *Pararge aegeria*
- 1 small white – *Pieris rapae*
- 1 Scotch argus – *Erebia aethiops* (Glenfinnan)
- Grey dagger moth caterpillar – *Acronicta psi?* (Newton Hill)
- Mint moth / common purple and gold – *Pyrausta nivalis* (Invergordon Leisure Centre)

## BUMBLEBEES

5 species recorded

- 108 common carder – *Bombus pascuorum*
- 28 white-tailed bumblebee – *Bombus lucorum*
- 11 garden bumblebee – *Bombus hortorum*
- 11 buff-tailed bumblebee – *Bombus terrestris*
- 5 heath bumblebee – *Bombus jonellus* (Farr Glebe)





## HOVERFLIES

Of the numerous hoverflies (a very difficult family to identify at species level)

- Tapered drone fly – *Eristalis pertinax* (Fort William)
- Pellucid hoverfly – *Volucella pellucens* (Ullapool)

## DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES

- 13 emerald damselfly – *Lestes sponsa* (Newton Hill near Wick)
- Additional range of species noted but not identified to species level.  
(No other Odonata confirmed at species level.)

## BEETLES

- Chrysolina beetle species (Glenfinnan)
- Seven-spot ladybird – *Coccinella septempunctata* (Inverness Botanical Garden)

## FLIES & OTHER INSECTS

- Fungus gnat – *Sciara hemeroboides* (Porrin, Mid Ross)
- Froghoppers (nymphs producing cuckoo-spit) – several at Clachtoll
- Red-thighed St Mark's fly – *Bibio pomonae* (numerous reports)
- Craneflies – multiple reports
- Beefly (Family Bombyliidae) – one record at Ullapool
- Greenbottles – several reports (Inverness Botanical Garden)

# CONCLUSION

The number of volunteers, including families and children who part in this project was greatly appreciated. It was fabulous to see so many people giving of their time to help and demonstrating that they care about Nature. It was heartening to see more people taking on more sites this year as the success of this project starts to grow.

Despite the poorer than average weather during the chosen Big Pollinator Count week, the results were again impressive. More insects were recorded with more variety. The results demonstrate just how important wildflower meadows, no matter how small, are to insects and the health of Nature in the Highlands. Thanks to everyone who took part in this year's Big Highland Pollinator Count and we hope to repeat it in August 2026.



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# THANK-YOU

Thanks to everyone who took part in this year's Big Highland Pollinator Count and we hope to add more sites and build on this success over the next few years.