



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

In this issue...

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Winter is a good time to brush up some theory and our announcements are dominated by courses and workshops. Please do consider doing BBKA Basic if you haven't already done so. As I found out last year, I learnt a lot and Howard is good at preparing us to take it. LBKA will even refund the exam fee! As well as the usual newsletter features, Mark continued writing up his US beekeeping travels, Paul reviews a book, Mark gives us his oxalic acid observations and Emily has thinking about beekeeping and mental health.

Thanks to those who have contributed to this months' newsletter: Cerys Harrow, Richard Glassborow, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Emily Scott (via her excellent blog) and Paul Vagg.

Please contact Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk if you'd like to discuss writing an article. We hope you enjoy the newsletter.



Cropped from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Viburnum_tinus.jpg

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk



As we all know, January is a quiet month for beekeeping. In spite of New Year resolutions to this year keep ahead of the bees, spring still seems too far off to worry about doing anything just yet. But again the winter is mild and many colonies are quite big. By March (7 weeks away) we may need to be performing shook swarms! The Thornes Winter Sale is also on (ends January 23rd) so maybe now is a good time to be ordering equipment in readiness for another busy season.

The committee have been busy too. In spite of a minor delay over venue availability, the courses for this year are now up on the web site and bookings are already being taken. If any members would like the benefit of a free refresher course, we are always looking for help in delivering these courses, from speaking to helping with refreshments. Volunteers welcome.

Dates for other events now confirmed on the website include two winter lectures and the monthly meetings. The content of the monthly meetings is still being fine-tuned but the winter lecture on 21 January is Beekeeping through the camera lens by Simon Croson. Simon has some remarkable photographs of the bee world to his credit and it should be fascinating to hear how he achieves them whether you consider yourself a photographer or not.

On 11 February the lecture is by Dr. Stephan Wolf; we have not yet received the extract for his talk but he is involved in some leading research into bee diseases and their effects on behaviour and this research involves some extraordinary fieldwork. We are constrained on numbers for the Winter Lectures so do book early if you are interested.

Meanwhile, the committee has co-opted two new members: Tristram Sutton has joined to further develop his work on Charitable Status for the LBKA. This is a process and we will keep members informed of key issues and seek approval before any decisions are made.

Emily Abbot has also joined the committee to continue the work she has been carrying out

managing volunteers and events, but from inside the committee. This is to reflect the more central role we see for volunteers to help carry out the work of the LBKA, especially in responding to the many requests that we get from the public, attending events and delivering talks, etc. Being involved in such things can be very rewarding and the committee is planning to support volunteers with training and other resources so please do consider putting your name forward. You can contact Emily on events@lbka.org.uk.

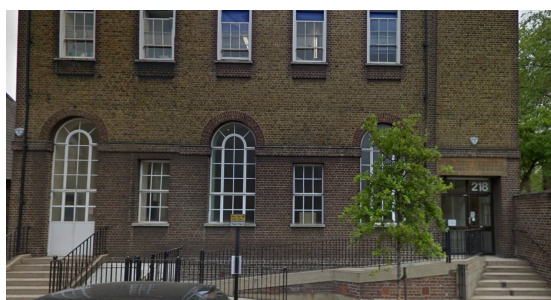
Finally, we are currently carrying out an annual inventory on all LBKA equipment. If you happen to be in possession of any please do contact Paul Vagg, our resources officer resources@lbka.org.uk. No questions will be asked! Technically, it belongs to all of us but it is more effective if we know where it is.

I shall be attending the BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM) on Saturday 10 January, so hopefully I shall have something to report on that in the next News Letter.

Announcements

Next monthly meeting

The next monthly meeting will on **Sunday 11th January** be about **bee diseases and brood disorders**. Not the most cheery subject but it's good to use winter to brush up on theory! As usual, it will be at 11:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, SE1 7JY. Hope to see you there!



Meeting venue from Google StreetView – it's the white door on the left!

New co-opted committee members

The committee have added two more to their number. Emily Abbott (events@lbka.org.uk) will be overseeing LBKA's events including recruiting volunteers. She's the one to contact if you want to help out at events. Tristram Sutton (mentoring@lbka.org.uk) will again oversee our mentoring programme and will also

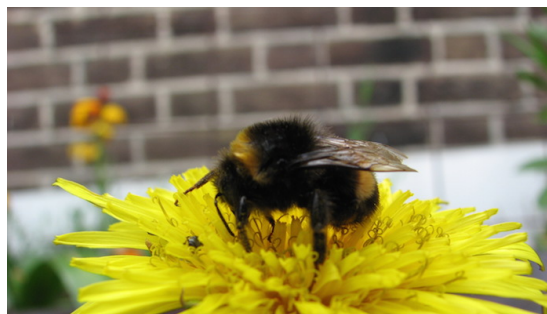
continue to investigate our wish to become a charity. The committee now numbers nine: Richard Glassborow (chair), David Hankins (treasurer), Emma Nye (secretary), Howard Nichols (education), Aidan Slingsby (membership services), Mark Patterson (forage officer), Paul Vagg (resources), Emily Abbott (events@lbka.org.uk) and Tristram Sutton (mentoring@lbka.org.uk).

Next winter lecture: Beekeeping through the Camera Lens by Simon Croson

Wednesday 21st January see our first Winter Lecture: **Beekeeping through the Camera Lens** by Simon Croson. The abstract has provides follows:

Whether for pleasure, competition or educational uses, photographs are a key part of education and enjoyment. By following a few simple principles mediocre photographs can be improved to become treasured memories. Simon intends to motivate and inspire fellow Beekeepers into taking better beekeeping photographs using a variety of devices through a narrated display of rewarding and award winning photographs, each of which has its own story.

This fascinating talk will be at **19:00** (for a 19:30 start) at Roots & Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, London, SE11 6DN.



Improve your bee photos

Our second Winter lecture will be on **11th February** by Dr Stephan Wolf on his bee-related research – details to follow.

Provisional meeting topics

The committee are planning next year's activities. Here's a provisional list of the main basic topics of our Monthly Meetings that Howard has put together. They are based on members' feedback from the Survey a few years ago and from the meetings last year.

We'd like comments from members:

- Are there any other topics you'd like to see covered? Either as the main topic or as an addition more advanced topic?
- Are you willing to help deliver some content at these meetings?

March: Microscopy with Nosema and Acarine testing. This is a practical session using microscopes.

April: Swarm prevention and swarm control (Artificial Swarm method and use of a Snelgrove Board)

May: Swarm collection, both practical and legal issues.

June: Queen rearing for the small-scale beekeeper

July: Honey extraction and labelling.

August: Summer Social at Walworth Garden Farm, including use of and sale of Apiguard

September: Any ideas?

October: Preparation for winter

November: Oxalic Acid treatment

December: Talk on treatment and uses of Beeswax or, alternatively, a Christmas quiz

Please email any comments, suggestions or offers of help to education@lbka.org.uk.

2015 BBKA Basic Assessment – Act Now

London Beekeepers Association encourages its members to take the BBKA basic assessment and we will run a course for this in April 2015. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been keeping bees for a minimum period of 1 year. The assessment is fairly straightforward and the syllabus can be downloaded free of charge from the BBKA website.

Each year at least one member decides to take this assessment after all the arrangements have been made with the BBKA. They are disappointed as we cannot undo and rearrange everything just to accommodate an extra individual. **The time to decide to take this is now**, not in April or May.

The timetable is as follows:

- **Winter reading** – now
- 3 evening (2 hour) **revision sessions** in late March and April, probably at Roots and Shoots.
- **Assessments** to be taken in south London in May.


Any LBKA member who has been keeping bees for a minimum of 12 months and wishes to take this assessment please confirm by email to education@lbka.org.uk. I will then be able to let you have some electronic course notes to read at your leisure. **Please register your interest now, not when it is too late.** You do not need to commit yourself to anything at this stage.

The BBKA website should be sufficient to deal with any queries regarding the assessment. Alternatively, ask another LBKA member who has taken it. Preparation for the Basic is an interesting way of continuing your beekeeping activities through the winter months. It is also often a requirement to keep bees in a public place such as on an allotment.

If you pass, we'll even refund your exam fee!

Our beginners' course dates confirmed

We have finally confirmed our course dates as the weekends of **25/26th April** and **9/10th May**. Full details and booking information are on our website: <http://lbka.org.uk/courses.html>.



The screenshot shows the website header for 'The London Beekeepers' Association' with a logo. Below is a navigation menu with links: Home, Bees, Beekeeping, Flowers for bees, Member services, Join, Courses. The 'Courses' section is highlighted, showing a course titled 'An Introduction to Beekeeping (£150)'. A description below the course states: 'This two-day weekend course is one of the most comprehensive beginners' courses available, covering husbandry skills, bee disease and pests, siting apiaries, keeping bees'.

Spread the word! If any member wants to volunteer for helping out, please contact Emily at events@lbka.org.uk, with details of what you could help with and when.

We will charge the same as last year (£150) for the course, which **includes a season's mentoring, a book and membership of our association**. After the course and the mentoring, you should be able to keep your own bees, should you wish to.

General Husbandry Session

BBKA is coordinating some General Husbandry sessions, with our closest session being in Barnet. We would encourage all members to consider doing this. There are two sessions, one in winter and one in summer and it costs £50. More details are in BBKA's web page:

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/shop/product/general-husbandry-initiative/>



The BBKA website's colourful courses graphic.

Making Beeswax Products

West Sussex Beekeepers' Association are organising beeswax workshop lead by Jim Ryan on **Sunday 1st** and **Monday 2nd February** at **09:30** for 10:00 prompt start and finishing around 17:00. It will be at **Hampers Green Community Centre, Petworth, West Sussex, GU28 9NL**. It costs £10. **Booking is essential:** contact Maggie Turner on maggie501@btinternet.com, 01243 545696 or 07752 847631.

They provided the following information:

Most beekeepers accumulate beeswax, either from cappings or melted combs, which could be sold or exchanged for foundation, but many only have a small amount, so they just store it in the shed and don't know what to do with it.

There are a number of products that can be simply made with quite small quantities of beeswax. These can be used by you and your family or can make useful and unusual presents. The good thing is you know what the ingredients are.

The demonstrator will be Jim Ryan who we are bringing over from Thurles, Co Tipperary. Jim is a very good demonstrator of making beeswax products. His methods are simple and he has a very good way of showing you how easy these items are to make, using minimal equipment.

The content of each day may be different, but Jim will begin both by cleaning wax, then making such things as furniture polish, furniture cream, lip balm, skin cream, moisture bars, soap, etc. He will also look at using honey in recipes – honey lip balm, honey soap, etc. There may also be some alternative recipes that do not contain nut oils.

We are expecting this to be popular and as places are limited you will need to book early. If you are available on Monday we would prefer you took that option, to make more spaces for those who work and may only be available on Sunday. This is a rare opportunity to see a top demonstrator.

Refreshments provided, but bring your own lunch.

Wax workshop

Harrow beekeepers are also running a Wax Workshop on **Saturday 24th January**. See their website more details:

<http://harrowbeekeepers.co.uk/content/wax-workshop-2>



Old honey

Someone has a tub of old honey that would perhaps be used for making mead or cooking with. If anyone is interested in it, please contact services@lbka.org.uk.

Honey sales

If any member has any honey left to sell, you can email services@lbka.org.uk about these two opportunities:

- Ask for your details to be sent to anyone enquiring to us about buying London Honey
- Sell them to Stepney City Farm who are looking to stock our members' honey. You'll need to write a short description about you and your apiary.

Last month's meeting: no quiz but nice chat

Cerys Harrow
LBKA member

The meeting advertised a quiz, coffee and biscuits between 11 and 12 o'clock. By popular consent, the quiz was abandoned as people were far too busy happily chatting – and we were still at it long after midday. The coffee was supplemented by a generous selection of other drinks and the biscuits turned out to be an amazing variety of Christmas goodies – loads of mince pies, stollen and Christmas cake. Many thanks to those who laid on this delicious spread. It was a very cheerful, friendly and festive end to the year.

January in the apiary

Where should we be with our colonies at this time of year

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

January is a quiet time for beekeepers but an eye must still be kept on the apiary. Make sure that the roof has not been blown off by winds or that woodpeckers have not taken an interest in the hive. Woodpecker damage is more likely to occur when the ground is hard as they cannot find insects in the earth and so can turn their attention to beehives.

The queen should now have started to lay again, albeit in a small way.

Varroa strategy

Treatment in autumn with Apiguard may not have been enough to deal with the mite. Treatment with oxalic acid in late December or early January is a standard treatment for varroa. Oxalic acid is cheap to buy and the time taken to open the hive and administer is all done in less than 1 minute if bees are not flying. As always, it is essential to wear a veil when opening the colony to treat. Do not take chances.

Check ventilation

If the air vents are blocked then ventilation will be impeded, leading to internal damp. Cold does not kill bees but damp does!

Check stored frames for evidence of wax moth infestation.

Food stores

If the colony went into the winter with the recommended 35 lbs. of stores then feeding will not be necessary. If stores are light then only candy or fondant should be used at this time of year. (Sugar syrup should be avoided as it will excite the bees and so disturb the cluster. The bees are also unable to process syrup in winter and it is then liable to fermentation). Feeding is not usually necessary in January, more of a March task as the bees are then flying and consuming stores at a considerably faster rate than in January.

New equipment

Those who have purchased equipment during the winter sales can assemble frames, etc. It is surprising how quickly events can move when the bees get going in spring and ready assembled equipment keeps the beekeeper ahead of any eventuality. Some suppliers have a January sale so it is still worth checking out the websites. January is a far better time to buy equipment than in May or June.

Site location

Those members who are looking to acquire bees for the first time this spring should try to find a suitable site now so that all is in situ for when the bees arrive. It is not a good idea to have bees on their way and still be trying to find a suitable location.

Site relocation

January is a good time to relocate a hive as the bees are not flying. Relocation within the apiary or within a 3 mile radius can be done at this time but better to check the weather and do this when there is going to be a severe cold spell for at least 1 week after the move.

Cleaning old equipment

Best time to do this is immediately after it is taken out of use in autumn. If still not done then winter is preferable to cleaning in the spring immediately before re use. Attention to general cleanliness and maintenance of old equipment is part of apiary hygiene strategy.

Candles and honey recipes

For those who process beeswax then winter is the usual time of year for this activity. Honey foodstuffs can, of course, be prepared and eaten at any time of year.

LBKA events

Keep in touch with others through monthly meetings and winter lectures. We have our winter programme of events and it is well worth making the effort to attend. We have lectures on Wednesday, **21 January** and Wednesday, **11 February**. Full details are on the website.

Education

Education and practical experience are the 2 routes through which beekeepers develop their skills. Education may arise from a variety of routes but Beecraft is a substantial resource. If you do not currently subscribe to Beecraft then January is a good month take out an annual subscription.

January in the forage patch

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

January is usually the coldest month of the year but despite the cold there are often still some blooms around for our bees to take advantage of on mild days. Mahonia, Viburnums and winter honey suckle continue to flower until early spring. Christmas rose *Helleborus niger* are now out in bloom and soon their cousin *Helleborus orientalis* will also bloom - these are good early sources of pollen for bees. Later in January we should see the first snow drops appear alongside winter aconite. Wall flowers will also begin to bloom and these are attractive to honey bees, the perennial everlasting varieties like *Bowles mauve* seem to be more attractive to bumble bees. Right now in my allotment my Hazel tree is coming into bloom, soon its catkins will be dripping with pollen which my bees may collect.



From top left to bottom right: Mahonia, Snowdrops, Winter Aconite and hazel (pollen)



From top left to bottom right: Christmas rose, wallflowers, Sarcococca confusa and Viburnum tinus.

Mark's beekeeping travels in the US (part 2)

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

One of the things I have been very interested in during my travels throughout the United States was investigating how different urban areas compare to London in terms of forage availability. To begin my comparison we first need to understand what we have here at home in London.

Here in London we have very high hive densities in some parts of the city. According to 2014 figures from the National Bee Unit Greater London has around 5000 hives and around 1400 beekeepers. The exact number is unknown as not all beekeepers register. NBU

figures also suggest that in some central London areas hive density is as high as 10 hives per square kilometre – greater than many rural areas. Unlike many rural areas which have vast swathes of agricultural crops which provide a limited variety but seasonal abundance of nectar, London has less abundance of forage but a greater variety due to the wide range of exotic plants grown in the city's parks and gardens. What this means for bees and beekeepers in London is that our bees have a much more balanced and varied diet offering them a wider range of nutrition but our honey crops generally fall 30% short of the UK national average. According to the BBKA honey survey results for the past decade London has consistently been the lowest yielding region in the country in terms of average volumes of honey produced.

London is 61 percent green space by land area. Of this 14% is domestic garden green space, 38.4% is public green space and the remaining is made up of commercial green space, railway sidings, brownfield land and green roofs according to data from Green Space Information for Greater London (GIGL), The General London Assembly (GLA) and the 2012 World Culture report. London also has an abundance of trees with tree canopy covering 21.87% of the city. In 2003 London had around 7 million trees – almost as many trees as there are people and there are targets to increase this by 5% by 2025. Under the Mayors RE:LEAF initiative 75'000 new trees are planted in the City each year.

On the surface London is a pretty green city but when we look more closely at the available data we begin to see that some parts of the city's green areas are little more than green deserts. According to Kew Gardens around half of London's half a million street trees are sterile London plane trees, as are many of the trees in central London parks. These sterile hybrids offer no pollen or nectar for pollinators and much of our parks these trees grow in are also largely short cut grass with few flowers for bees.

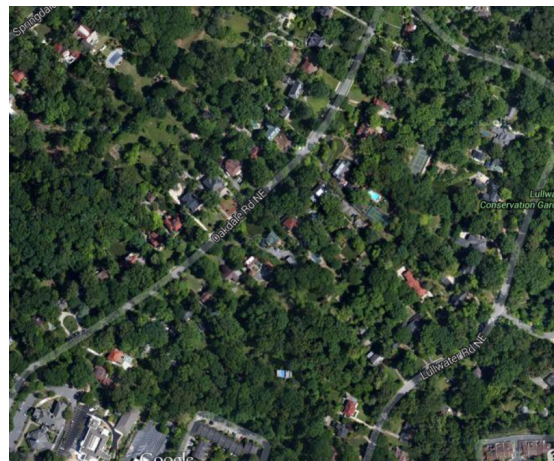
Generally speaking the green spaces closer to the city centre tend to offer less foraging opportunities than those further out which are often more wild and rugged and contain more wild flowers. Further out we have more large habitats including heaths and commons which are less intensively managed. Also further out into the London suburbs more of our railways are above ground and lined by thickets of Bramble, avenues of trees and more of the road verges include green buffers. There are exceptions, the gardens at Buckingham palace for example are known to have a rich diversity

of flowering trees including wilder areas. For some time there has been a growing concern that in some areas of the city we may have reached saturation point where numbers of hives has reached the limits of what local forage can support. It is this concern which is leading many organisations including LBKA to promote the planting of flowers and trees for bees. There are now a number of initiatives such as river of flowers and bee lines project which aim to create landscape scale bee friendly corridors of suitable flower habitat through parts of the city to link up pollinator populations and help provide forage for bees.

On the whole though London is a good place for bees, and is by no means a bad habitat for bees but as I discovered on my travels there is much room for improvement and some of the US cities I visited put us to shame when it comes to providing habitats for pollinators.



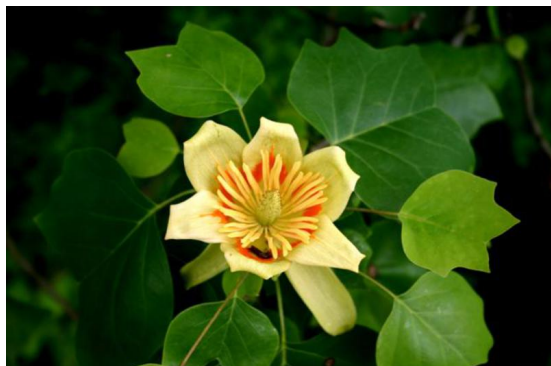
Atlanta



Atlanta from the air

Many US cities contain far more green space than London. Much of the green space in US cities is private, few cities in the US can match London's 38.4% public accessible green areas. Some cities like Atlanta have very little public green space at 6%, New York has 14% and Washington 19% but overall when you include domestic gardens and privately owned land the amount of green space within most US cities is substantially larger than what we have here in London, largely because US houses tend to have

enormous back gardens. If you look at the City of Atlanta from the air for example you see a vast sprawling city made up of extensive suburbs, the house surrounded by vast gardens containing many mature trees. There are also numerous golf courses, country clubs and wooded plantations.



Tulip-poplar bloom

It's not just the amount of green space that matters but the quality of the green space and this is what in my opinion makes many US cities far more desirable habitats for bees than London. The vast majority of US cities have much higher tree canopy percentages than London, the US average for a typical city being 27% tree cover. They also contain very few plane trees. New York has some, DC very few and Southern states even fewer still. In place of Plane trees we find Native Maples, Tulip Poplar, Linden and Locust bean trees. All of these trees are native to the Eastern United States and are prolific sources of forage for bees. New York for example, despite having less green space than London overall and being far more densely built up contains far more trees per square mile than London with tree canopy covering 24% - almost all of these trees are flowering trees useful to pollinators. Washington DC is 36% tree cover, also mostly flowering species and at the top of the list is Atlanta with 36.7% tree canopy. Much of Atlanta's urban tree population are Tulip Poplar which provide a banquet of nectar in spring. Of course these cities are not all the same size as London so my comparison here is focussing on canopy % as gleaned from the US Parks Score Index and world culture report 2012.

Trees make a huge difference to bees in terms of the amount of honey they can produce. A large mature tree when in bloom can contain the flowers equivalent to an acre or more of ground level blooms. For example a mature Cherry can produce 2 litres or more of nectar per day.

Americans appear to be much more relaxed about having large trees growing close to their houses. There is far less tendency in the US to heavily surgeon and prune trees growing close

to residential properties, people are far less worried about the shade cast by trees - possibly because during the long very hot summers there, shade provided by trees dramatically helps to keep urban areas cool. Americans are also much less concerned about the autumn leaf fall these trees produce. Here in London we butcher our urban trees on a regular basis so they don't grow to their full potential or produce the same abundance of blooms that trees in US cities do.

So it is the greater abundance and the choice of trees planted in US cities which I think makes many US cities much more desirable places to keep bees than much of London.



Cindy Hodges, master beekeeper and Chair of the Atlanta Beekeepers

Another element which makes US cities desirable places to house bees is that most have far fewer urban beekeepers than what we experience here in London. As mentioned in last month's instalment, keeping of bees in urban areas is often strictly regulated in America and many cities until recently banned the keeping of bees so the number of keepers in most cities in America falls well below that of what we have in London. In New York the New York City Beekeeping Association estimates that there are around 50 keepers and a combined 400 hives within the city, most of which belong to just 2 individuals. Washington DC has even fewer still at around 200 hives as their ban was only lifted in 2013. One exception is Atlanta Georgia. According to conservative estimates from the main beekeeping equipment supplier for the area there are around 2000 beekeepers in the greater Atlanta area and around 5000 hives. This increases if you go further out to include the entire Metropolitan area and surrounding counties. Atlanta is a very green city with plenty of forage for bees but like London has recently witnessed a dramatic increase in number of new hobbyist beekeepers. The association there takes on twice the number of beekeeping students on its spring courses as LBKA does and they are also keen to spread the word that the public can help bees the most by planting for them. Even still Atlanta is no comparison to

our situation In London because it is a much greener city with substantially more forage. From what I have seen no US urban centre compares to our situation in London regarding forage availability vs numbers of hives.

Urban Pollinator habitat initiatives in the US

During my travels I came across some great examples of urban greenspace regeneration that is contributing to conserving urban pollinators and providing substantial urban forage for bees. My favourite, purely because of its high contrast of lush greenery and tranquillity against the surrounding canyons of sky scrapers is the New York High Line.



High Line

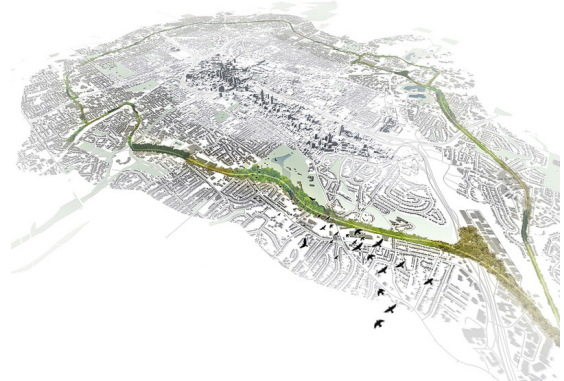


High line



High line

The high line is a 2.3km stretch of elevated railway line that had been abandoned and transformed into the City's newest public park. It floats 1 storey above street level above the hustle and bustle of the city's Lower west side and forms a strategic green corridor from Chelsea to Hell's Kitchen. The entire park has been designed and planted with native planting in mind and features many prairie plants almost all of which are beneficial to bees. Sections of the high line include prairie meadows, grasslands, scrub and pioneering woodland. During my visits to the Highline in 2011 and 2014 I saw an abundance of honey bees, Native Bumble bees and Leafcutter bees visiting the flowers. Alongside them were Monarch butterflies heading south to their wintering grounds in Mexico. The highline is a fantastic example of how a disused space in one of the most populated cities in the world can be transformed into a beautiful urban oasis for both people and wildlife. The park has a really useful website which includes a calendar showing visitors what is in flower at any month of the year. Several beekeepers keep hives close to the park and their Italian bees can be seen in abundance on the flowers gathering forage. <http://www.thehighline.org/>

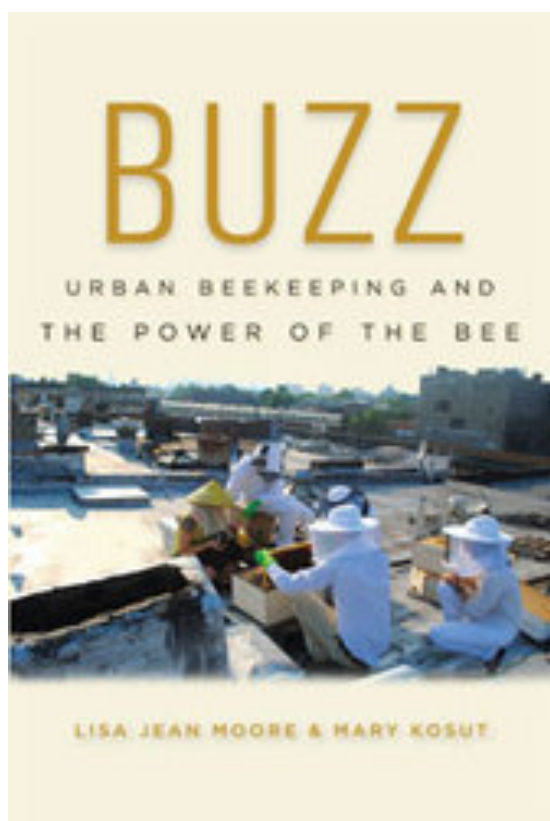


Belt line

In Atlanta I discovered a similar but much larger urban greenspace project. It's called the Belt Line and it's a 22 mile long disused railway encompassing the entire city centre. Still under construction it will be some time before the entire park is completed and open to the public but once finished it will provide green transport links, affordable housing on former brown field land, new urban greenspaces providing a valuable outdoor leisure resource for local people but also form a strategic wildlife corridor for city pollinators and other wildlife. The belt line will link almost all of the city's existing green spaces together by passing either through them or very close to them linking isolated habitats to one another. Much of the length of the new park is being planted with native prairie plants and new native woodlands. I visited a recently completed section to the

north of Piedmont park where the Atlanta Botanical Garden staff have recreated native meadows full of plants which to me were very familiar as I grow them in my Garden. Flowers like Perennial Sunflower, Echinacea, Rudbeckia, Gallardia, Liatris, Monardia, Coreopsis and verbenas. The entire park is to be designated as a regional arboretum. <http://beltline.org/>

Book review: BUZZ - Urban Beekeeping And The Power Of The Bee



The publishers asked us to review this book. The official description of the book is:

Buzz is a fascinating exploration of urban beekeeping in New York City. The authors meet a passionate and dedicated group of people who tend to their bees with an emotional and ecological connection that many find restorative and empowering. The authors also examine the role and perception of bees in popular culture such as children's books and films. Buzz is a wonderful account of the interconnections between humans and insects, and is a great read for any beekeeping enthusiast.

The publishers have offered LBKA members a discount code to get the book for £11.99 (instead of £15.99) from <http://www.combinedacademic.co.uk/buzz>. **Please contact**

services@lbka.org.uk if you'd like the discount code. Now for the review...

Paul's review

Paul Vagg
resources@lbka.org.uk

When I was first asked to review this book, it is fair to say that I was expecting the usual tuition style material, giving the standard explanations of Urban Beekeeping techniques and basics, but I couldn't have been more wrong!

With 'Buzz' the authors Lisa Jane Moore and Mary Kosut both eminent American sociologists have created a fascinating insight in to the emotional and environmental fields of animal and human interaction, and in particular how individuals interact with insects, arguing convincingly that nature is in its self-cultural.

Far from being a simple narrative, 'Buzz' on the contrary, is a complex and wonderfully blended mixture of the author's personal journal accounts, as we join them on their investigation and journey as complete novice beekeepers into the world of beekeeping in the most urban of environments, New York City.

What is apparent is that the authors are both extraordinarily passionate in their hands on approach to their research, and their fascinating three year journey from first putting on a bee suit, to braving New York's rooftops to tend colonies makes for an enthralling read. The honest and in-depth accounts of urban beekeepers explores the current rapid growth of managed colonies throughout the city, with significant emphasis on the question of whether the diversity of nature is compatible with the diversity of human nature, ultimately raising the question, Is nature cultural? And one finds that I could be easily convinced by their compelling arguments. The urban beekeepers encountered, are a passionate, multifarious group whom tend their colonies with an oddly ecological and emotional connection, which many of them seem to find empowering.

'Buzz' is an interesting mix, on one hand contemplating the very nature of human- insect relations, and how the way in which we interact with bee's mirrors our constantly changing ecological and social landscapes, while on the other providing an in-depth ethnographic study, presented by two capable and ultimately extraordinarily talented authors and researchers.

That said it could hardly be described as a perfect book, and my singular criticism is that it is obvious from the opening that the content was created by two talented academics, and as

such the book is written and presented in a style accordingly, which in my humble opinion is definitely not easy reading for all, and some may in fact find it quite challenging or a little laborious. It's not the content itself that I have issue with, just the style of writing and vocabulary in which its presented, and it is most definitely quite a trying read in that respect, and it's fair to say that at times it reminded me of the type of reading material one ploughed through many years ago whilst doing my dissertation, so be prepared!!

However, overall I would recommend 'Buzz' to our membership as an interesting read and recommended addition to your bee related bookshelf, although it is perhaps more suited to those members who have attained higher levels of qualification and experience in their beekeeping careers.

Just be prepared to read it at least twice or more in order to fully appreciate its wonderful complexity.

Oxalic acid treatments update

Mark Patterson
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Have you treated your colonies with Oxalic acid yet? For the past 2 years I have followed the advice from the scientists at University of Sussex bee Lab and treated with Oxalic acid in mid December – not January as the National Bee unit often recommend.

This year I treated on the 11th of December trickling 5ml of the mixture per seam of bees. Before administering I gently prized apart the frames to look down the seams and checked for brood. Oxalic acid treatments are most effective when there is no sealed brood present in the hive and all the mites will be on the bodies of the adult bees and therefore exposed to the acid treatment.

A week later I checked my inspection boards and counted the mite drop. The colony I treated with Apiguard in august had around 1000 mites on the tray. Colonies which I had frame trapped during the summer had far less. These colonies all had fewer than 50 mites each.

One colony I did not treat because they were still very active and contained 3 frames full of brood at all stages including eggs – I quickly lifted these frames to get a good look. Providing its not too cold and your swift winter one off winter inspections shouldn't cause any lasting harm to the colony. The colony with brood I will

check end of the first week of January and check again for brood before treating.

Thoughts on beekeeping and mental health

Emily Scott's regular guest articles from her excellent blog: <http://adventuresinbeeland.com/>

"You are all mad!", one of our apiary visitors declared, shaking his head in wonder. He had just listened to John and Andy talking about how to painstakingly prepare honey entries for the National Honey Show, including the best ways to air-dry jars so that no pesky water marks remain.

Plenty of non-beekeepers probably think the same thing, but for a different reason – the famous bee sting. Who knows what they would make of the Ealing member who is highly allergic to stings, yet continues beekeeping due to her love of the bees. Or the sight of Ealing members gathered outside at the apiary to drink tea and talk bees with drifts of snow around us.



Beekeepers in the snow

But I am going to make a different argument – that beekeeping and similar hobbies could actually be good for your mental and physical health.

This Christmas I was able to do some reading and one of the books I found in my local library was 'Crow Country' by Mark Cocker (2008). It's all about his love of corvids and rooks in particular, which thrive around his home near Norwich.

Towards the end of the book, Mark talks about how birders and others with a single obsession are often viewed as 'sad' by the general public.

"Why is it that people who are absorbed by something are seen as sad? I can't explain it. But for me it reverses the true state of affairs. To be engaged is to be a part, to be absorbed and fulfilled. To be cool, to be detached from things and to have no passionate feeling is the real sadness. At the heart of depression, that

quintessentially modern malaise, is a deep sense of separation from the rest of life.

At its fullest, studying the life of another living creature is a way of engaging all of your faculties. In short, it's a way of being intensely alive, and recognising that you are so. At the same way it is a form of valuing life and of appreciating the fundamental tenet of all ecology: that every thing is connected to everything else."

(Mark Cocker, Crow Country, p.186-187).

As Mark puts it, "enquiring becomes a way of loving". So I shall continue loving my bees by watching them, talking about them, reading about them and learning more about life through them.

Beekeeping, or indeed any other hobby or obsession, is a chance to become connected to others and the world around us. I have met so many fascinating people both at the apiary and online through the bees. And there is something physically satisfying about being outside with the bees, taking in rain, wind, sunshine and fresh air, being surrounded by nature.

Beekeeping can inspire creativity too, perhaps in the form of a beautiful piece of carpentry, a delicious honey cake, melliferous mead, or stunning wax creations like those made by Judy Earl. These acts of creation can bring us a sense of achievement, of having made something real and tangible, that can often be shared with others to bring them joy also. That can only be good for our mental wellbeing.

We are truly lucky to have access to so many wonderful products produced by the bees and so many potential crafts and skills that naturally spin off from beekeeping. Skep making, microscopy, photography, baking, cosmetics, candle making....the list is long and vibrant. To paraphrase a comment I made in an earlier post, we need the bees much more than they need us.

What do you think – is beekeeping good for your health? Even when you're sweating buckets in your beesuit and hopping around in pain after the bees found some particularly delicate spots? I hope so!



Bee sponge cake



Display by Judy Earl

Upcoming LBKA events

Sunday 11th January: Monthly meeting: Bee disease and brood disorders

11:00-12:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

Identification, advice and discussion about bee disease and brood disorders, based on BBKA slides, plus other topics. Followed by chat with coffee and cake. Non-members are welcome to come and find out more about LBKA.

Wednesday 21st January: Winter lecture: Beekeeping through the Camera Lens by Simon Croson

19:00 at Roots & Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, London, SE11 6DN.

Whether for pleasure, competition or educational uses, photographs are a key part of education and enjoyment. By following a few simple principles mediocre photographs can be improved to become treasured memories.

Simon intends to motivate and inspire fellow Beekeepers into taking better beekeeping photographs using a variety of devices through a narrated display of rewarding and award winning photographs, each of which has its own story.

Please email admin@lbka.org.uk if you'd like to come. LBKA members only.

Sunday 8th February: Monthly meeting: Early Spring preparation

11:00-12:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

Early Spring preparation including details about the Bailey Change and Shook Swarm. Followed by chat with coffee and cake. Non-members are welcome to come and find out more about LBKA.

Wednesday 11th February: Winter lecture: Bee research

19:00 at Roots & Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, London, SE11 6DN.

Winter lecture by Stephan Wolf on his bee research. More details to follow. Please email admin@lbka.org.uk if you'd like to come. LBKA members only.

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions (and offers of help!), but remember that we are all volunteers with busy lives.

We are **Richard Glassborow** (chair and apiary manager; chair@lbka.org.uk and apiaries@lbka.org.uk), **David Hankins** (treasurer; treasurer@lbka.org.uk), **Emma Nye** (secretary; admin@lbka.org.uk); **Howard Nichols** (education; education@lbka.org.uk), **Aidan Slingsby** (membership services and web; services@lbka.org.uk and webmaster@lbka.org.uk), **Mark Patterson** (forage officer; forage@lbka.org.uk), **Paul Vagg** (resources; resources@lbka.org.uk), **Emily Abbott** (events@lbka.org.uk) and **Tristram Sutton** (mentoring@lbka.org.uk).

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/>