



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

January, 2020

Happy new year! If anyone is short of new year's resolutions... how about getting more involved in LBKA? This is the theme of this month's newsletter with tips on how to make the most of what LBKA has to offer (p3), this year's list of Monthly Meeting topics (p5), and ways in which you can "give back" (and have fun at the same time) by volunteering to help at events (p8) including helping run our schools visits (p6). Thanks as usual to Richard, Howard for their regular contributions and also to Martin for writing a fair bit this month and proof-reading the whole thing. Mark's (p10) contribution is how to make your garden more wildlife-friendly.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Richard Glassborow, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Mary Walwyn**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

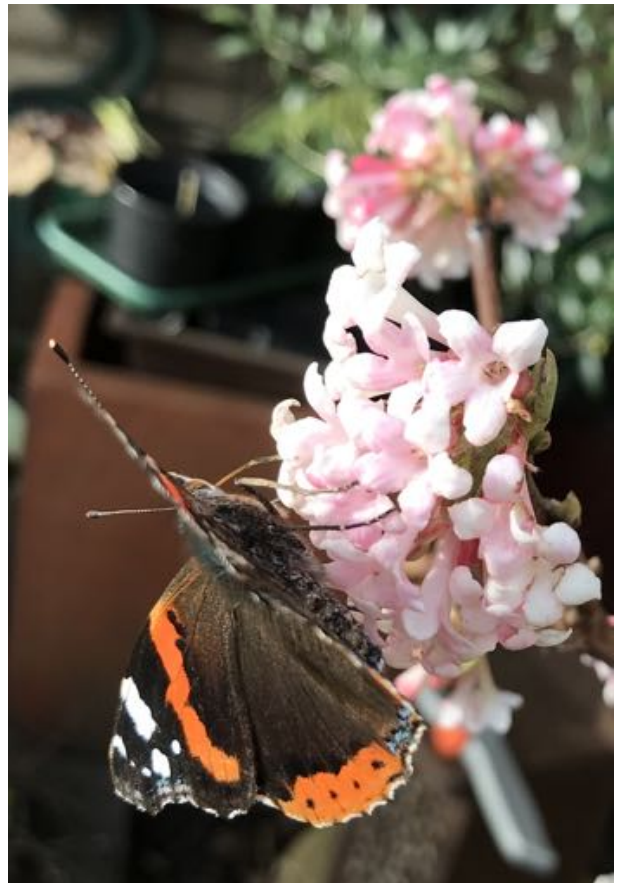
From our Chair

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

And it is not just a new year but a new decade. What will it bring I wonder?

Right now the Committee is focused on more immediate tasks to ensure delivery of the LBKA's core offer to members throughout the coming year. As with all things to do with bees, every year is the same and every year is different.

Looking back at the past year, there are a number of things we would like to improve and there are also new opportunities arising out of decisions and actions already taken. These include, we hope, helping us all become better more Responsible Urban Beekeepers, whether currently novice, intermediate or experienced level.



A butterfly in January! Photographed by Mary Walwyn.

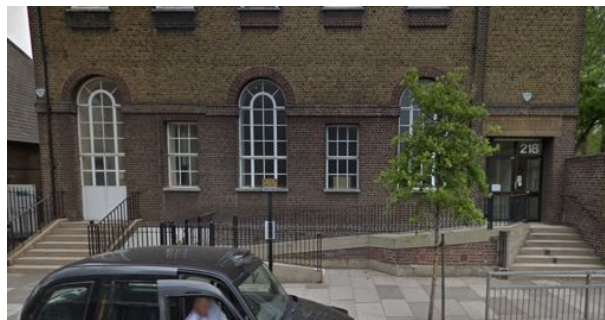
This involves adjustments to our training courses, mentoring, monthly meetings, and the way we use our teaching apiaries. We will focus particularly on aspects and practices of beekeeping which have particular emphasis in our Guidelines for Responsible Urban Beekeeping and which seem to feature regularly in requests for help or clarification on our WhatsApp group, Bee Banter. e.g. swarm prevention and control, disease, hygiene, etc.

We have noticed that attendances at monthly meetings were quite variable last year. Maintaining attendance levels has always had its challenges. There has always been a tendency for new beekeepers to start hungry for further knowledge and help but as they become more experienced they are less inclined to want to hear the same topics repeating every year (even if they need to!). We try to counteract this by extending the topic range and level to hold the more experienced members' interest. Maybe that doesn't work, maybe it puts new beekeepers off, maybe low attendance at some meetings is just random. But it is also possible that we are diluting attendance because we now have, alongside monthly meetings, our Monthly Pub Social fulfilling some of the social aspect, and Bee Banter providing much of the knowledge exchange in real-time. If you have any thoughts, preferences (or moans) please email me at chair@lbka.org.uk.

As it happens, there are other planetary motions involving monthly meetings: we have been notified of a charges review by the school we hire the room from and, at the same time, Holland Park Apiary is now up and running and we have the opportunity to hold meetings in their purpose-built Ecology Centre – at no charge. The only downside to moving Monthly meetings to Holland Park would seem to be the uncertainties of change – we have no traditional connection with that part of town. But the facilities and apiary are to die for so we are in the process of arranging some of our meetings there this year (Bee Health Day and Honey extraction) as a trial. The facilities will allow us much greater scope to cover topics like these (and others if it works out) in practice as well as theory. We also intend to make more use of the teaching apiaries by running improver programmes and inviting members when certain practices are being carried out so they can attend and observe if they wish. We wanted to do this last year with queen rearing but for reasons outside our control it did not work out.

Good communications is central to facilitating these ideas. Experience shows that WhatsApp is a really useful tool in this respect.

WhatsApp has proved to be something of a game changer for our Association. First it transformed the operational logistics of swarm collection, facilitating spontaneous notification, collection and redistribution as well as helping would-be collectors learn the ropes of swarm collection, either by joining someone to assist and learn on the job or, on occasion, being talked through their first collection in real time.



The venue for our monthly meeting – the white door on the left.

Then we started Bee Banter as a forum for all the bee-talk that was happening on the swarm group during down time. It has been a huge success in so many ways. Let's make the most of it before the owners start monetising it!

Along with interesting and entertaining posts and the real-time practical helpline it has also proved to be the most effective two way communication tool we have – apart from the fact that not everybody is on it.

We try not to bombard members with communications. Hither to we have used email and the Newsletter as our main noticeboards. But time and again, whether it is notice of events, courses, lectures, opportunities for members or calls for volunteers, the response rate to notices on Bee Banter is far greater and faster than any of the other platforms

Only a third of our members are signed up with Bee Banter. Whilst being aware that there are some members who do not have internet access or smartphones, and there are no doubt some who just do not want to use social media platforms (there are good reasons for not wanting to), we suspect the most prevalent reason for members not being on Bee Banter is that they do not know about it. If you are in that category, I urge you to contact Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk. It is very easy to join: please just give it a go. If you really do not like it, it is also easy to leave.

Announcements

This is our official place for announcements. If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

January Monthly Meeting: All about Wax Moth

Howard will lead January's Monthly Meeting "**all about wax moth**", the two different types, their lifecycles and the damage they can do. This will take place on **12th**

January at 11:00 at Fairley Junior School Hall (218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, SE1 7JY). As usual, there will be tea, coffee and chat afterwards.

February's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday, 9th February** and will be about Bailey Change and Shook Swarm techniques for changing frames and varroa control (the latter technique).

Attendance has been low in recent months. If you have any feedback about why this might be and whether we need to consider doing something different, please contact us.

Natalie's pub pick

This month's Pub Social will be at the [Somers Town Coffee House](#) (60 Chalton St, Somers Town, NW1 1HS). This month, we go to a pub that's resided in this old community near Euston for many years, despite the name. Has healthy and non alcoholic options for those still recovering from the festive season, as well as a good selection of beer and wine.

Consider getting more involved

The theme of this month's newsletter is **member involvement**. Being part of an association brings many benefits. These benefits are more pronounced the more involved you are. Read your **membership welcome email** (with the subject "LBKA membership confirmation", this has some tips including how to join our Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Ways of getting more involved are:

- **Top tip: WhatsApp:** Join our members' only "Bee Banter" WhatsApp group. This has around a third of all members on it and enables members to message each other for questions, advice, observations and coordinating practical beekeeping activity. We are hoping that apiary managers and members might use this to invite members to come along to help or watch some beekeeping technique (such as shook swarm) in action.
- **Monthly meeting (and pub socials):** Come to our Monthly meetings, whose [dates are all on the website](#). **Put the dates in your diary**. There's a lot of useful beekeeping information and the opportunity to discuss issues and share your experiences with the group. There's nothing like meeting other members in person. Social media is often a poor substitute for getting to know fellow members. See Howard's article on page 5.
- **LBKA-Forum:** Join our members' only "LBKA-Forum" Facebook group (see membership confirmation email)
- **Opt-in to sharing details with members:** Opt-in to sharing some of your details with other members. If you opted-in when you joined, you'll see a list of other opted-in members in the [members' area](#), where they live and how they would like to engage with other members.

- **Volunteer:** See our opportunities to volunteer (p8) and commit early. We have a diverse set of opportunities and it is very rewarding. As an entirely volunteer-run organisation, it is essential that we have the volunteers to enable us to do our important work.
- **Newsletter:** Read the newsletter (perhaps I'm preaching to the converted here). It's the main way with **advertise opportunities** to members. Consider contributing articles so it can better represent the views and experiences of all types of LBKA member. The newsletter is a lot of work to produce monthly and it would be a shame if members don't read it.

Contact Aidan on services@lbka.org.uk if you need any help with this.

Introductory Beekeeping Courses and Taster Sessions

Please spread the news about our [Beekeeping courses and Taster sessions](#). Our weekend Introductory Beekeeping course, which includes a season's mentoring, is one of the most comprehensive courses that exist in London. For those who are not so interested in keeping bees but want to know more about pollinators, see our half-day Taster sessions.

Old announcements from December

Check our [previous newsletters](#) or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.


BBKA Module 1 preparation: If you want help preparing for the BBKA Module 1 examination (which covers Honey Bee Management), contact Howard at education@lbka.org.uk. These will be at Walworth Garden Farm, 18:30-20:30 on 4th, 11th and 18th February.

Old announcements from November

2020 dates for volunteers' diaries: beekeeping courses and taster sessions will be held over the weekends of 18-19 April and 2-3 May, and on 30th May and 5th July in Clapham, and the Lambeth Country Show – LBKA's main publicity effort of the year – will take place on 18-19 July 2020 in Brockwell Park, Lambeth.

Membership renewals: our membership year has ended, so you will need to renew your membership if you wish to continue being a member of LBKA. Contact Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk if you need help rejoining.

Register your bees: please remember to update your apiary records on BeeBase; [here's why](#).



www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Curran, Cliff Bony (NNS), Guy Harris, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Han (National Biodiversity Data Centre) and Stuart Roberts (BBKA)

Asian Hornet

Alert!
Report sightings of this species to:
alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Species Description

Scientific name: *Vespa velutina*
AKA: Yellow-legged Hornet
Native to: Asia


Habitat: Nests usually high in trees and man-made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.

Not easily confused with any other species. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or Asian untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.


A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.



Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen




Queens up to 30mm long, workers up to 25mm long

Entirely dark brown or black when fully developed with a fine yellow band

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Asian Hornet vs European Hornet



Asian-Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for the abdominal segment



Asian hornet 'hovering' for honey bees prey

Photos from: J. Haslam, Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones, Richard Bell

Similar Species

Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison



- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 25mm long
- Legs yellow at the ends
- Dark brown / black abdomen with a yellow / orange band on 4th segment
- Head dark from above, orange from front
- Dark coloured antennae
- Entirely black velvety thorax
- Never active at night

Actual size

European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)



- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 30mm long
- Legs brown at the ends
- Yellow abdomen marked with brown on the upper part, not banded
- Head yellow from above, yellow from front
- Yellow antennae
- Thorax black with extensive brown markings
- May be active at night

Actual size

Giant woodwasp (*Dacnusa gigas*)



- Larger than Asian hornet, female up to 45mm long
- Legs yellow
- Distinctive yellow and black banded abdomen
- Long cylindrical body unlike Asian hornet which has an obvious waist
- Long yellow antennae
- Female has an obvious long sting-like appendage (ovipositor) which it uses to lay eggs in trees

Actual size

Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Vespa velutina*)



- Abdomen has more yellow stripes than Asian hornet
- Legs darker than Asian hornets
- Only one pair of wings (hornets and wasps have two pairs)
- Large, globular eyes

Actual size

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)


- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet

Actual size

Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbours – underneath tree bark in cavities left by beetle larvae, in soil, on ceramic plant pots – potentially any small, well-insulated refuge. Makes very large nests in tall trees in urban and rural areas, but avoids pure stands of conifers. Will use man-made structures (garages, sheds etc.) as nesting sites.



For more information visit:
www.nonnativespecies.org
www.nationalbeehive.com

Alert!
Report sightings of this species to:
alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Register for BBKA Basic Assessment preparation: we encourage members to do the BBKA Basic Assessment. It is fairly straightforward (see syllabus). We will help you prepare by running a revision course in the spring, likely to last for 3 evenings (2 hours per evening). If you have been managing bees for at least 12 months and wish to take this assessment please confirm by email to education@lbka.org.uk, no obligation.

Old announcements from October

LBKA wins award for its championing of bees: delighted to have won a DEFRA Bees Needs Champions Award as part of the Year of Green Action.

Thanks for bee suit donations: We thank Partizan and adam&eveDDB for donating 5 beesuits to us.

Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk.

January's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discuss at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

This month's committee meeting was largely about planning for the coming year.

We've released the [programme of Monthly Meetings](#) for the coming year. As last year, we've tried to have a mixture of new and old content and a mixture of basic and intermediate topics. This year, we are planning more practical 'hands-on' sessions. The low attendance in recent months is of concern and we are trying to think of ways to encourage more people to attend. We're also planning to make more of our training apiaries by having more practical sessions there, open to all members throughout the year.

We discussed our equipment. Mark McDonnell, who recently became resources officer told us about his plans for updating the inventory, replacing equipment where it is needed and working out which equipment is needed

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.

for which event. This includes our “library” which is currently being looked after by a member. The committee agreed that more money needed to be spent on equipment and storage. We also agreed to buy an additional observation hive to reside in North London for use at show, schools and talks and are looking for someone to host it.

We also discussed our participation in the School Food Matters (SFM) programme, in which LBKA volunteers will visit 20 schools over 10 weeks in late Spring and spend the day talking to school children about bees. We will need plenty of volunteers to help us deliver this (Martin is asking for some on page 8).

We discussed the “London situation” – problems connected with the large number of bee colonies in London actions. We are collecting data and building an evidence-base to support information, guidance and guidelines for managing bees in dense city environments. See last month’s newsletter.

Last month’s Monthly Meeting: Christmas quiz

What happened at our meeting last month.

Martin Hudson
LBKA member

At the Christmas Quiz we had a ball – and everyone won!

It was just a shame there were so few of us there. Howard Nichols hosted the quiz, and put what became a single team of the four of us through our beekeeping paces with some straightforward and some more difficult questions. The team scored 16 out of 25, which we were quite pleased with, but that meant that, between us, we still got 9 answers wrong. . . more learning is clearly needed! However, we all enjoyed the winner’s prize – a box of chocs! Sincere thanks to Howard, LBKA’s Education Officer, who not only hosted this event, but has provided us with so much bee information at monthly meetings he has run throughout the year. Thank you Howard.

The matter of Monthly Meetings

Your association needs you! An appeal to our members to support our monthly meetings.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Over the last 6 months attendance at the Sunday monthly meetings has fallen away. There seems to be several reasons for this including the success of both the monthly pub social and the Bee Banter WhatsApp group. Both these are valuable resources for our members but the monthly meetings are unique in the sense that they are both social and structured in an educational way. They have always been invaluable to newer members with under 3 years beekeeping experience. However, the primary function is a social meeting place in a relaxed atmosphere where we get to know each other. This cannot be achieved via a WhatsApp group. By attending monthly meetings you will meet other beekeepers, be able to talk in more depth about bee matters and start to form friendships with a variety of people from all walks of life. Some of these will live close to you.

Below is the list of monthly meeting topics for 2020. Our aspiration is to “try to please all of our members all of the time”. This is not actually possible to achieve but is the direction we try to go. At any monthly meeting there should be information for all beekeepers to learn and take away, regardless of their experience. More importantly, you will meet and converse with others.

- All about Wax Moth (12th January)
- Bailey & Shook Swarm techniques (9th February)
- Microscopy/Nosema testing (8th March)
- Making up nuclei (5th April)
- Bee Health Day (10th May)
- Bee Nutrition, foraging and feeding (14th June)
- Honey extraction and properties of honey (12th July)
- Pollen, Pollination and **Summer Social** (9th August)
- Preparation of bees for winter and feeding (13th September)
- Fumigation of equipment and Apiary Hygiene (11th October)
- Flat pack assembly (8th November)
- Christmas quiz and social (13th December)

These are subject to change, so do [check the website](#), where more information is available.



Talking to School Children: Honeybees as a Window onto Wildlife

Martin tells us about our exciting collaboration with School Food Matters that will see LBKA visit 20 schools to tell 2000 school children about honeybees "as a window onto wildlife".

Martin Hudson
events@lbka.org.uk

LBKA has entered into an agreement with School Food Matters (SFM), a charity promoting food education in London's Schools, to introduce honeybees to London's children on the theme of "Honeybees as a Window onto Wildlife", by taking an observation hive of about 15,000 honeybees and information about bees as pollinators of their food into 20 London schools in 2020. The observation hive is always the star of the show!

Several schools which have already been visited over the last two years are keen to move on to keep bees on their premises, and we have encouraged them to ensure that at least three members of staff are fully trained before they start to do so. We ran a taster course for school staff last autumn, and some of these are signing up for training with us, or with other BKAs in the Greater London area, before taking on bees of their own later.

The school visits – which involve up to 100 children in each school – were started by Richard, our Chair, and Mark Patterson, in 2018, and this programme was expanded last year (2019) by visiting 12 schools from Wembley to Rotherhithe, and Forest Gate and Ilford to Twickenham during the summer term. We welcomed several extra LBKA members who stepped in as volunteers to assist with the logistics of getting an observation hive and a trolley-load of display equipment from Balham, where Richard looked after the hive in his garden, to all parts of the Greater London area, and they assisted showing the children the observation hive, finding the queen, tasting different samples of honey, and taking home a bee-friendly plant.

For 2020, SFM has asked us to visit 20 schools – so to talk to up to 2,000 children – between the end of April and the beginning of July – that's two schools per week – so we need to provide the increased logistics



that such a programme of visits requires. Elsewhere in this Newsletter is an appeal for an “Observation Hive Keeper” – ideally based somewhere in North London and with space in their garage or shed for a trolley-load of display equipment, so that we do not need to rely on the single hive & equipment kept in Balham alone, but can share the load of visits north and south of the river between them – so reducing the strain on the bees!

We will also need several ‘Leaders’ and ‘Assistants’, including people with estate cars, for each of the visits, so we are asking volunteers to offer 2 or 3 dates of Tuesdays to Fridays between 28 April and 17th July on which they might be able to devote to a day leading or assisting on one of these school visits. Once we have their suggested dates, we will allocate an appropriate school as near as possible to them on that date. Travel expenses (including public transport costs or a mileage allowance for the one carrying the equipment by car) will be paid by LBKA.

If you are interested in helping this project in any of the above capacities, please get in touch with me, and we will do our best to ‘fit you in’ to one (or more) of the visits.

December in the Apiary

Where we should 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 green woodpecker – *Picus viridis* – is the main culprit. Woodpeckers frequent my

apiary and have been seen sitting on my hives. They have never been a problem as not the green woodpecker variety.

Varroa strategy

If not already done in December then Oxalic Acid should be administered early January. The time taken to open the hive and administer is all done in less than 1 minute as the bees are in a cluster. As always, it is essential to wear a veil when opening the colony to treat. Do not take chances. The application sets the colony back and should not normally be administered after mid-January as the colony is then rapidly building up for Spring.

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!

Wax Moth damage

Check stored frames for evidence of wax moth infestation (see picture which shows the extent of damage that can be found together with wax moth larvae, pupae, distinctive black faeces and frass).

Food stores

If the colony went into the winter with the recommended 35lb of stores then feeding will not be nec-



Wax moth

essary. 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 may have a January sale so it is still worth checking out the websites. Late autumn and winter 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.

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 at our monthly meetings and winter lectures. 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. Those members who are already BBKA members will receive a free and informative monthly newsletter (BBKA News) by post.



Volunteers Needed

Martin is planning for the events that LBKA will be running or attending this year and provides details what help we need and when.

Martin Hudson
events@lbka.org.uk

LBKA is gearing up to a busy 'Events' Year in 2020! First – the timetable. Please get your diaries out!

- **March 29th:** 'Family Day' at Ascot Racecourse
- **April 18/19th:** First Introductory Beekeeping Course, Clapham
- **May 2nd/3rd:** Second Introductory Beekeeping Course, Clapham
- **April 27th to 16th July:** 20 visits to schools in Greater London to tell 2,000 children about pollination
- **May 30th & July 5th:** 4 x Half-day 'A Taste of the Honeybee' sessions
- **July 18/19th:** Lambeth Country Show – our biggest publicity event
- ... and there will be others during the year!

Ascot Family Day – Sun 29th March

Ascot Racecourse run this 'Family Day' and this is the third year that we have been invited to have a stall there. As usual, the observation hive is always a big draw, and a few volunteers, who could probably travel there together, would be most welcome. Please let me know if you can help on this date.

20 x 'School Food Matters' School Visits 28th April to 17th July

Elsewhere in the Newsletter (p6), I describe the background of this project and, to start with, we are looking for someone, preferably living in North London, who can

'host' an observation hive for the period from 28th April until 17th July so that it, and the accompanying equipment, can be collected on about 10 occasions within that period to be taken to a school elsewhere in North London. This 'Observation Hive Keeper' will preferably have some experience of keeping bees, be able to house the observation hive in their garden, be available for the hive to be collected after nightfall (11 pm-ish) or early on the day of the visit, and have space in a shed or garage to keep a trolley loaded with the display equipment for the School visits. Our plan is that once the School Visits have been completed in July, the observation hive will be moved to one of the training apiaries. If you, or someone you know, might be able to take on this role, please contact me at events@lbka.org.uk, so that we can explore the possibilities of using you as a base for the hive's visits to North London Schools. If you have storage space, but not space for the temporary hive, please also contact me, in case someone else only has the garden space!

We already have 'props' available for a lesson plan which we used last year (for example, we invite the children to show us how the bees do the waggle dance ? always fun!), but you are welcome to adapt this plan to your own strengths. We are planning a couple of training evenings prior to the start of the visits (dates to be announced next month), in March and April, at which Richard and I will run through the messages that we need to get across for those Leaders and Assistants who would welcome this.?

Second, we are looking for Leaders and Assistants to talk to up to 100 children during one (or more) days in schools throughout Greater London on 20 different occasions on Tuesdays to Fridays from April to July. There will always be at least two of you, plus a representative from 'School Food Matters' on hand to deal with nervous children or other issues, and it is such a delight to see their expressions when we show the kids the bees for the first time! We hope to get offers from people so that we can pick schools and dates which are convenient to them, and transport costs will be paid. DBS clearance is not required, because the schools always have someone in attendance during the day. If you have not done it before – no problem! We will pair you up with a more experienced Leader, so that you can learn the ropes as an Assistant for a day, after which you could perhaps take on a Lead role on a later visit yourself.

Thirdly, we need drivers, preferably with estate-type cars, who can collect the observation hive and the trolley of equipment from its base and deliver it the following day to a school, and return it at the end of the school day. These drivers could either be Leaders or Assistants, or could be extras. A mileage allowance will be paid for the full distance that they have to travel from their home to collect and return the hive and equipment to its base.

The Introductory Courses – 18th/19th April and 2nd/3rd May

As usual, we are gearing up for the usual Introductory Beekeeping Courses, being held on two separate weekends in April and May in Clapham. They are filling up fast! We will once again need volunteers to present the various elements of the course to the beginners, and also others to provide refreshments, assist with suiting them up to visit hives each afternoon, or simply answer the myriad of questions they always have in-between sessions. If you are able/willing to help on any of the four days of these two weekends, please contact me as soon as possible.

'A Taste of the World of the Honeybee' – 5th July

We are trialling two separate half-day taster sessions on 5th July – also in Clapham – aimed at people who just want to know more about the world of bees, rather than wanting to keep them themselves. These sessions may not all run, but we will need presenters and helpers on these days also. If you are free to assist on either of these days, please let me know.

Lambeth Country Show – 18-19 July – Brockwell Park

This is LBKA's biggest outreach and publicity event of the year, with lots of members' honey being sold, and the observation hive the star of the show (we might even have two there this year). Help will be needed to set up on the evening of Friday 17th, and the Show is open from 12 noon to 8 pm on each day, with clearance at the end of Sunday. Refreshments including drinks and meals will be provided. We will need presenters and helpers for these sessions on this date also, so if you are free to assist, please let me know. I will be asking for volunteers to cover the following sessions:

- Setting up – Friday 17th: 18:00 – 21:00
- Saturday early – 18th: 11:30 – 16:00
- Saturday late – 18th : 15:30 – 20:00
- Sunday early – 19th: 11:30 – 16:00
- Sunday late – 19th: 15:30 – 19:30
- Clearance – 19th: 19:00 – 21:00

Other Events

If you know of any other local/community events taking place where you would like LBKA to assist with promoting the world of the honeybee, do get in touch with me on events@lbka.org.uk.

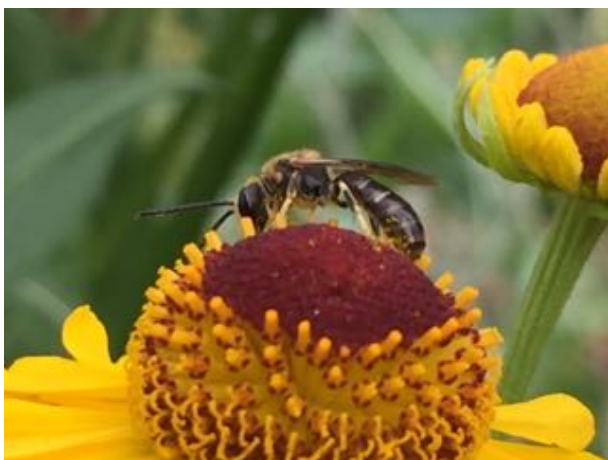
If any of the above has grabbed you and you are willing to offer assistance, do please contact me on events@lbka.org.uk – I'm sure I can fit you in somewhere!



Helenium, the best garden plant for attracting bees



Oregano, the best butterfly plant. The awesome bee-attracting plant also supports other common and scarce species



Bellflower, the sole pollen source for Bell Flower Scissor Bee and Harebell Blunthorn Bee



Knapweed, one of the highest yielding nectar plants. Its cultivated cousin Montana is equally as good and has a very long flowering period lasting all spring through to autumn.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is reprinted from last year.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Bee friendly gardening New Year's resolutions

This month's forage blog takes a different direction. There's not much to write about in terms of seasonal forage for bees in the depths of winter when little is in flower and our bees are dormant so for a change my blog takes a look at what we can do to make our gardens better environments for bees all year round going forward into a new year.

Create Habitat for bees

Bees need places to forage and find pollen, nectar, water and propolis and this can be done by planting the right types of flowers for them and incorporating a small water feature into your garden where bees can gather water.

Another sort of habitat bees need is nesting habitat where they can raise their offspring. For Honey bees this is a hive but for other bees this can be piles of decaying logs in which they excavate a nest burrow, a patch of sandy soil or clay bank for mining bees to dig out a nest tunnel, or bundles of hollow plant stems and cardboard tubes for the likes of mason and leafcutter bees. These nesting habitats can be conveniently catered for in the form of the many pre-fabricated bee nesting boxes available from garden centres and online shops or you can make your own [see my guide](#) how to make homes for solitary bees here.

Other ideas you could try include making a nesting cylinder for ground nesting bees. You need to invest in a sheet of perforated metal sheeting which you bring



Cirsium (thistles) are the highest yielding UK native nectar plants and super-important bee forage. Here one is being visited by a male longhorn beetle *Retpela maculata*.



Holly, the Male plants are coming into flower now and will continue through spring when the separate female trees also bloom.



Golden rod Solidago, the only plant I've ever seen *Sharp Tailed Bees* frequent

together at the ends and fasten together with nuts and bolts to form a cylinder. This is then filled with sand or free draining soil to provide a medium which bees can burrow into. This design allows bees to nest in the top of the planter by burrowing downwards but they can potentially also excavate lateral burrows entering through the many perforated holes in the metal sheet. Try using soft and sharp sand, cactus compost or John Innes loam based soil with added sand. You can plant drought-tolerant flowering plants in the top too to provide cover as some bees prefer some vegetation cover near their nests whilst others prefer a more open aspect.

Lastly the final habitat that bees need is over wintering habitat. For bumble bees this is often a shallow hollow excavated in dry soil beneath tufts of grass or piles of decaying vegetation, compost heaps or hollow plant stems for solitary bees. Try not cutting back all your herbaceous perennials in autumn, so leaving some stems intact for insects to hibernate inside the hollow stems. Many solitary bees over winter in their nest chambers.

Plant useful things in your garden

My gardening mantra is either the bees can eat it or we can. If a plant can't fulfil either of these two requirements then it doesn't get a look in! Of course most of the things that we can eat are also beneficial to bees and other pollinators as the majority of vegetables do also flower and the fruits we eat need the bees to pollinate them.

Plant the best plants for bees

Not all flowers are equally attractive or beneficial to bees and other pollinators. Attractiveness and benefit to pollinators varies a great deal with some plants being 100 times more attractive and useful than the worst. To complicate things not all plants are equally beneficial to all insects due to the shape and morphology of the blooms which may prevent all but a few dedicated visiting bees whilst others contain toxins, the effects from which only certain bee species are immune. Great examples are the foxglove *Digitalis Purpurea*, Comfrey *Symphytum officinalis* and Everlasting Pea *Lathyrus latifolia* which are among the top 10 UK plants for sugar content in their nectar and the amount of nectar produced per hectare (kg of sugar/ha/year). These 3 plants should be a magnet for all bees having the greatest rewarding nectars among British plants. However Fox Glove and Comfrey are plants with deep tubular flowers which prevent all but the longest tongues from accessing their nectar, meanwhile Everlasting Pea has both a deep nectary and tightly lipped flowers which require a long tongued bee with a robust body to enter.

Bulking up your gardens by planting the most attractive and beneficial plants for a broad range of insects will provide the most benefit to pollinators, whilst adding plants which are attractive or of benefit to only a small number of species helps provide food for more fussy specialists – often the species most at risk. There are many bees which are not generalist and will only feed

| Plant variety | Flowering period | Pollinators attracted |
|--|-------------------|--|
| Helenium autumnal ^a | July to October | Honey bee, Lasioglossum bees, Hoverfly, 4 species of Butterfly |
| Oreganum vulgare ^b or Oreganum onites | June to October | Honey Bee, Lasioglossum bees, Andrena bees, Bumblebee, Melitta bees, Hylaeus bees, Hoverfly, 9 species of Butterfly |
| Agastache foeniculum ^c | July to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebees, 4 species of Butterfly, Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Hoverfly, Flower Bees |
| Calamint | July to August | Honey Bee, Bumble Bee, Megachile Bees |
| Lavender Gross Bleu | July to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebees, Lasioglossum Bees, Butterfly |
| Nepeta | June to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebees, Megachile Bees, Wool Carder Bee, Flower Bees, Butterfly, Mint Moth, Osmia Bees |
| Echium vulgare | June to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebees, Megachile Bees, Osmia Bees, Wool Carder Bee, Flower Bees, Hoplitis adunca, Lasioglossum, Pollen Beetles |
| Veronica spicata | June to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees, Hylaeus Bees, Hoverfly, Butterfly |
| Teucrium hiricanum | June to October | Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Flower Bees, Lasioglossum Bees, Hoverfly, Butterfly, Mint Moth, Swollen Thigh Beetles, Pollen Beetles, Wool Carder bees |
| Sedum Spectable | August to October | Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees, Butterfly |
| Solidago ^d and Golden Rod | July to October | Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Xylocopa Large Carpenter Bees, Coelioxys Sharp Tailed Bees, Lasioglossum Bees, Butterfly, Beetles. |
| Hyssopus | June to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees |
| Eryngium | June to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bee, Hylaeus bees, butterfly, hoverfly, pollen beetles, Solitary wasps |
| Echinops | June to September | Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees, Hylaeus Bees, solitary wasps |
| Centaurea ^e (Napweeds and Perennial Cornflower) | May to November | Bumblebees, Lasioglossum Bees, Megachile Bees, Osmia Bees, Hoverfly, Butterfly, Pollen Beetles |
| Cirsium (thistles) ^f | June to September | Bumblebees, Honey Bee, Andrena Bees, Halictus Bees, Colletes Bees, Flower Bees, Long Horn Beetle, Swollen Thigh Beetle, Pollen Beetle, Butterflies, Solitary wasps |

Examples of some of the best plants to attract a broad variety of pollinators. Suggestions based on several years of data collection in studies into flower attractiveness to pollinators conducted by LASI and Rosybee Plants supplemented with results from the Agriland Project along with our own observations over the years in our London Garden.

^aThe most attractive garden plant for bees in 4 years of trials By Rosybee

^bThe most attractive plant for butterflies by LASI and top 10 plants for bees by both LASI and Rosybee trials.

^cThe most attractive plant for bees in trials by LASI.

^dShown by Rosybee trials not to be very attractive to bees however in my own garden I have 3 varieties which attract large numbers of predominantly solitary bees, blue butterflies, solitary wasps, hoverflies and pollinating beetles. On regular visits to the prairie plantings in London's Burges Park and on my regular travels around North America I have witnessed Golden Rod visited by an extraordinary range of pollinators. Solidago is the only plant in my garden on which I have seen sharp tailed bees visit.

^eCentaurea nigra (black napweed) ranked 4th by Agriland project for abundance of nectar produced per Ha and Centaurea montana (perennial cornflower) consistently in top 20 most attractive plants by Rosybee – in addition Centaurea species have long flower season and prolonged usefulness to bees.

^fUK native Plant producing the most nectar according to Agriland Project.



Solitary bee nest planters.

their offspring pollen from a small number or a single species of plant. Plant a mixture of broadly attractive and specialist plants and choose plants which will offer flowers over a long season or plan a succession of flower types throughout the season. See the tables on pages 12 and 14. There are lots more planting suggestions on my [plants for pollinators](#) pages along with download guides for plants for different types of bees. There are also lots of resources on the [LBKA website](#).

Reduce your reliance on pesticides

Pesticides do have their place but only as a final resort once other means of defeating pests and disease have been exhausted. Try mulching with compost and recycling garden waste to feed plants rather than chemical feeds, try companion planting to ward off unwelcome pests and attract beneficial insect predators over chemical sprays. Pesticides find their way into pollen and nectar and accumulate in social bee colonies where they can exhibit a wide range of symptoms including reduced reproductive success, decreased life span of the individual insects, compromised immune response and tolerances to environmental stressors and increased mortality rates. When buying plants for your garden try and find out from the seller or the grower whether neonicotinoid pesticides have been used in the plant's production – these pesticides are harmful to bees and long lived in



Tim Lover awarded MBE in the Queen's New Year Honours (last year).

the plant and surrounding soil meaning they can have effects on wildlife for many years to come.

Stop being so tidy in the garden

Try not to be too much of a compulsive tidy upper in your gardens. Try leaving small hidden away messy areas where vegetation is not cut back and things are left a little wilder. This will act as a refuge for invertebrates which are less tolerant of disturbed areas.

Learn to plan ahead

If you want to provide for pollinators in summer then the time to plan your planting activity is now. Decide what space you have, plan what you intend to grow and start placing orders now so that come spring you can have plants delivered and planted that will flower come summer. Planning ahead is especially important for spring bulbs which are best planted when dormant in autumn, 5-6 months before they will come into flower.

Give no dig gardening a try

Spreading composts and biodegradable mulches onto your soil and allowing worms and other detritivores to take nutrients down into the soil is much more beneficial to most soils over conventional digging in. By refraining from deep digging and only adding organic material to the soil surface we replicate what occurs in nature by creating a nutrient rich, moisture retaining top layer above increasingly mineral based layers of soil. Most plants have the majority of their roots within the top 30cm of soil, even very large trees seldom have

| Plant variety | Flowering period | Main benefitting pollinator |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Everlasting Pea | May to August | Megachile Bees |
| Stachys | May to September | Wool carder bee (collects hairs from the plant to carder its nest) Fork tailed flower bee |
| Bell flowers | May to September | Chelostoma campanularum, Melitta haemorrhoidalis Bumblebees, Honey Bee |
| Achillea (Yarrow) | May to September | Colletes davisianus wool carder bee (collects hairs from the plant to carder its nest) |
| Alliums | April to September | Hylaeus Bees Honey Bee, Bumble Bee |
| Lamium maculatum | March to November | Bumblebees and Hairy Footed Flower Bee |
| Pulmonaria | March to May | Hairy Footed Flower Bee |
| Astrantia | April to August | Hylaeus Bees |
| Asteraceae | April to October | Hylaeus Bees, Colletes bees, Swollen Thigh beetles |
| Foxglove | April to July | Garden Bumble Bee |
| Yellow Loosestrife | June to August | Yellow loosestrife Bee Macropis europaeus |
| Hawksbeard | June to September | Pantaloone bee Dasypoda hirtipes, Red Tailed Bumblebee, Honey Bee, Andrena bees, Osmia Bees |

Some examples of plants which are beneficial to specialist species and are a good way to provide for fussy flower visitors to your garden.

roots penetrating deeper than 2-3 feet and they are mainly for anchorage rather than water and nutritional absorption. The benefit to bees in no deep digging is that solitary species nesting in the soil don't have their burrows disturbed and plants flower better. Digging frequently disturbs the buried seed bank meaning weed species can take hold, whereas no dig gardening results in far less seed bank disturbance and therefore a reduced weed problem. In the United States it has been found that many ground nesting solitary bee populations can triple on no dig farms compared to conventionally tilled crop fields as a result of fewer nest burrows being damaged.

Upcoming events

Sunday 12th January: Monthly meeting: All about Wax Moth

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY

This month will be "All about Wax Moth" - the two different types, their lifecycles, the damage they can do, and a whole lot of other things. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Tuesday 28th January: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at Somers Town Coffee House 60 Chalton St, Somers Town, NW1 1HS

Our monthly trip to the pub. Catch up with all the latest news over a pint in a nice food-serving pub. This month, we go to a pub that's resided in this old community near Euston for many years, despite the name. Has healthy and non alcoholic options for those still recovering from the festive season, as well as a good selection of beer and wine.

Sunday 9th February: Monthly meeting: Bailey & Shook Swarm techniques

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY This month will be about Shook Swarm and Bailey Change methods for replacing brood frames (and varroa control in the former case). Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Natalie Cotton, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Martin Hudson, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Mark McDonnell, resources@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

