



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## March, 2020

Welcome to this month's newsletter! We have a few important announcements this month. There's the **LBKA Pollinator Fund** (p2) to support small community groups for planting for pollinators. Do encourage suitable groups to apply. Also, as Richard mentions opposite, **we'd like you to read and comment** on the preliminary report of the "London Bee Situation". The link is in Richard's article on page 2 and we're looking for your comments by the end of March, so we can take these into account when finalising it next month. As well as these announcements, Simon has provided an update on our "Bees and Flowers go Together" message (p6), Essex BKA have invited us to a lecture on the Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (p3), new contributor Wilf shows us the joys of building our own hives by showing how to build open mesh floors (p9). There are also the usual regular pieces from Richard (p1) and Howard (p6). Thanks to Martin for proof-reading the whole thing and to Mark for his forage article from last year (p7).

<a href="#">From our Chair</a>	1
<a href="#">Announcements</a>	2
<a href="#">March's Committee meeting</a>	4
<a href="#">Last month's Monthly Meeting</a>	5
<a href="#">Developments in our "Bees and flowers go together" story</a>	6
<a href="#">March in the Apiary</a>	6
<a href="#">Focus on Forage</a>	7
<a href="#">Making your own Open Mesh Floors</a>	9
<a href="#">Members' marketplace</a>	12
<a href="#">Upcoming events</a>	12
<a href="#">Committee</a>	13

A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Richard Glassborow, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Simon Saville and Wilf Wood**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

## From our Chair

It is no secret that the LBKA has been concerned by certain aspects of beekeeping in London for some years, the high density of registered colonies in some areas in particular, and issues that may arise from that.

In recent months it has become apparent that, contrary to what we had thought, numbers of colonies in Greater London are still rising. This has prompted us to undertake a formal review of the situation based on as much existing evidence as we could find.

Though we are still in the process of checking and seeking further clarification of some of the evidence, we are confident that the basic elements are established, and we would like to share the findings so far.

At this stage, because we are still in the process of clarifying evidence, the report takes a cautious view of the situation and does not go much further than has



*Bee on mimosa in South London. "When your bees survive winter and feast on your mimosa tree, everything makes sense". Photo: Sergio Climber.*

been our informal understanding and position for some time. But the Trustees believe that it is important to formalise our position, based on what we already know, and lay the foundations for the long term sustainability of beekeeping in London.

We are therefore sharing this preliminary report to members to give them the opportunity of making suggestions and comments – [you can find the document here](#).

We draw your attention to the fact that it is important to recognise that London is not a homogeneous environment, and that our particular concern is the density of colonies in some areas that we are now calling hotspots. We have not gone so far as to name them, as this is one of the areas where we are seeking further clarification and data.

Because these findings – if supported by LBKA members – will influence our responses to enquiries and the content in our Guidelines, courses, events and outreach, etc. this year, we ask that you respond with any comment to Richard at [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk), Simon at [development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk) by the end of March or through the link supplied above.

Once we have your feedback it is our intention to share an updated and revised report with our neighbouring London BKAs and other relevant bodies. In the meantime, it would be preferable to keep discussion amongst ourselves.

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## Announcements

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

### March's Monthly Meeting: Microscopy for Nosema testing (followed by Schools Food Matters session)

Howard and Richard will lead March's Monthly Meeting "**Microscopy for Nosema testing**" on **8th March** at **11:00** at **Fairley Junior School Hall** (218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, SE1 7JY). As usual, there will be tea, coffee and chat afterwards. We'll be diagnosing nosema in bees. If you'd like to test your bees, collect 15-20 flying bees, kill them humanely in the freezer overnight and bring them along.

**After the meeting** – from 13:00 to 15:00 – there will be a session on how to deliver the Schools Food Matters programme of 20 visits to schools throughout Greater London in May, June and July this year, together with logistics of transporting the observation hive and equipment safely. This is **open to all**, whether or not you're



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

involved in the 20 school visits. Bring a packed lunch if you're staying! The second run-through will be on Wednesday 25th March at Walworth Garden at 18:30. You would be welcome then, if you cannot stay on Sunday.

April's Monthly meeting will be on **Sunday 5th April** at **11:00-13:00** about **Making up nuclei** at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY. Note that this is the first Sunday (instead of the usual second Sunday) of the month, so as to not to clash with Easter.

### Natalie's pub pick

March's Monthly Social will be on **31st March** at the **The Sekforde**, [34 Sekforde St, Clerkenwell, EC1R 0HA](#) at **18:30**. Hope to see you there.

### LBKA Pollinator Fund

The LBKA Pollinator Fund aims to support small community groups to improve their local environment for the benefit of bees and other pollinators. LBKA will offer grants of up to £500 from this fund for small stand-alone projects, or as match-funding or seed-funding towards larger projects. In the latter case the larger projects must aim to benefit pollinators.

Proposed projects need to be delivered in London and should help promote better beekeeping, better public understanding of bees, and/or a better London environment for bees and Londoners. While forage planting projects have been favoured in the past, applicants need not be confined to that particular activity – other suggestions would be welcome. And a suitable project need not be fully funded, as LBKA's charitable status and growing profile offers greater opportunity for donors with similar aims as ours to be matched with projects requiring modest funding.

Project proposals which promote the conservation of wild bees and other pollinators through provision of improved forage and breeding habitats will be of particular interest. Projects that include planting early and late season forage for honey bees will be assumed to benefit other pollinators too.

Priority will be given to projects in publicly accessible

spaces. If your space is on a housing estate, allotment or other site with restricted public access, you might consider how receipt of a grant could enable you to increase public access to the site in future. Greater public access to improved pollinator habitats is an opportunity for public education and information-sharing, so installing interpretation boards explaining the project and its aims, or providing more general information about London's pollinators, would be seen as a significant public benefit of any project.

If you belong to another organisation, know of a local group, or are aware of an opportunity that might fit the above criteria, please contact [treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk) for further guidance and an application pack.

## Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture: Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus

Essex BKA have invited us to the Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture which is being held in the afternoon of March 21st at the Essex Wildlife Trust, Maldon Road, CR5 7RZ. We are pleased to announce Professor Giles Budge will be talking about his vital research work on Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus, and there will be a presentation on Asian Hornet Hunting in Jersey.

For tickets (£8 with light refreshments available) and more details [see this Eventbrite link](#).

## 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.

## Looking for beekeeper(s) near Brockley to share an apiary on an unusual site

*Natalie Cotton*  
[admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)

"An unusual opportunity has come up to establish a small apiary (two hives at most) in a large, sheltered garden near Brockley, for one or more beekeepers who want to interact with some of the community services provided in the area. I'm hoping to find a local beekeeper to take the lead on this, and am happy to set them up with bees by moving my own hive there – it would suit my increasingly demanding work schedule to play a secondary role and support another beekeeper."

"The garden belongs to a property which provides short

to medium term accommodation for young adults who have experienced mental health issues. It is a stepping stone before they go on to their own accommodation, so has staff on site at all times to support the residents. It also has a garden project manager who works across a number of these sites in the area. The garden manager, along with the site staff, will be the main contact for the beekeeper. They are looking for beekeepers who, in the longer term, would be happy to show interested residents what is involved in beekeeping. "

"This site will require a risk assessment carrying out and an agreement drawn up between the beekeeper(s) and the service providers, which I'm happy to draw up. The service providers suggest that they cover the physical apiary set up costs, such as fencing, slabs and storage; the beekeepers will be responsible for providing the hives and bees. A small rent could be payable in honey, if the bees are productive!"

If you'd like to find out more please contact Natalie Cotton for more information at [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk).

## Old announcements from February

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

**Volunteers:** If you're able to help at any of our events including the Introductory courses (18th-19th April and 2nd-3rd May), "A Taste of the World of the Honey Bee" (Sunday 5th July), Lambeth Country Show (18th-19th July), Ascot Racecourse's 'Family Day' (Sunday 29 March) and Battersea Park Children's Zoo's "Honey Bee Day" (Thursday 16th April).

**Mark Patterson is LBKA's Forage Officer:** His email will continue to be [forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk). Thanks to Mark for taking on this role!


## Old announcements from January

**Consider getting more involved:** Join our members' only "Bee Banter" WhatsApp group, come to our Monthly meetings, [the dates of which are on the website](#), join our members' only "LBKA-Forum" Facebook group, opt-in to sharing details with members, volunteer, read the newsletter. Contact Aidan on [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you need any help with this.

## 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 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



www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Curran, Claf Bony (NNS), Guy Harris, Mia 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](mailto: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 other 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](mailto: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

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




Asian Hornet



European Hornet

Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment




Asian hornet 'hovering' for honey bees prey

**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

Roger Burgeon

**Giant woodwasp (*Ducerus 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 (*Vilucella zonaria*)**

- 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

Dider Devoetere

**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](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)  
[www.nationalbeehiveunit.com](http://www.nationalbeehiveunit.com)

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:  
[alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

you wish to continue being a member of LBKA. Contact Aidan at [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you need help rejoining.

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

**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](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk), no obligation.

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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

## March'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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

We started with a few administrative matters, including to note that our accounts have now been independently audited and are ready to be submitted to the Charity Commission.

We discussed the “**London situation document**”, mostly prepared by Richard and Simon. It represents an LBKA position, from which we may develop advice and policy in future. The Committee and Trustees approved this LBKA position for circulation amongst members to get their views by the end of March (p1). It will be discussed at the subsequent committee meeting and will inform changes to the way we present our message, starting with the beekeeping courses over the next couple of months.

We discussed the ‘**pop-up**’ stalls at Facebook headquarters. We will be selling honey from our Mudchute Apiary. We discussed the kind of information boards we would need to ensure that our “bees and flowers goes together” message is clear, noting that the small sizes of the stalls will make this a challenge.

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: [BBKA website](#).

4



There was good attendance this month.

**Swarm collection** arrangements will be similar to last year, in that we will use the WhatsApp 'Swarms' group. We will try and establish more micro-quarantine apiaries for newly-collected swarms by asking course attendees and others if they can volunteer and providing clear guidance about the pros and cons of doing so. We will keep better track of LBKA-owned nucs used by swarm collectors this year. We also need to come up with a low-effort mechanism for recording the locations of collected swarms by swarm collectors.

Tristram reported that he has asked **apiary managers** to tell him what new equipment they need and has also encouraged them to try to advertise to members when doing particular beekeeping manipulations in the season.

Elliot reported on **mentoring-related issues** and also announced the LBKA mentors' barbecue to which all mentors will be invited.

We discussed our **Small Grants initiative** for helping create forage, which we announce on p2.

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## Last month's Monthly Meeting: Bailey Change and Shook Swarm

What happened at our meeting last month.

Howard Nichols  
[education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)

It was pleasing to note that we had about 50 members attend the February meeting. This was despite a cold and wet morning. The subject was frame changing. Here is a brief summary of the meeting content.

Replacing all old frames with new ones, should be done when:



Bailey Change in process.

- Most of the brood comb is old, black, distorted with excess drone cells and needs replacing
- Combs are clogged with old and mouldy pollen
- Varroa count is high and the bees are showing signs of Deformed wing virus. Changing all the combs can remove most of the Varroa and allows you to treat the colony more effectively
- If a colony is dwindling or has signs of dysentery then it is good practise to get the bees off Nosema contaminated comb onto clean comb

Frame change may be carried out in 3 ways: **gradual replacement**, **Shook Swarm** or **Bailey Frame Change**.

**Gradual replacement** consists of simply replacing about 3 or 4 frames each season which means all brood frames are changed over about 3 years. The NBU recommends that brood frames in a hive be no older than 3 years of age so as to minimise pathogens. This appears to be a very simple method but experience shows it to be difficult. Often bees will not draw the frames out and this results in undrawn and subsequently distorted and chewed frames. The queen then has insufficient space to lay. Experience shows that Shook Swarm and Bailey are superior methods.

**Shook Swarm** has the benefit of removing a lot of varroa mites but it is harsh on the bees. A queen excluder must be placed under the brood box for at least a week after the manipulation then removed. This is to stop the bees absconding due to the absence of brood pheromone. Feeding is essential until the frames have been drawn. Shook swarm is often used by the Bee Inspectors to treat for EFB.

**Bailey Frame Change** is a much gentler method for the bees but does not remove any varroa as it allows the brood to emerge. The manipulation is carried out over 21 days to enable all old brood to hatch. Bailey method can be modified and used to treat for Nosema. This

variation was covered at the meeting. Feeding is again essential until the frames have been drawn.

Finally, we touched upon *Nosema* and the simple differences between *Nosema apis* and *Nosema ceranae*. This will be dealt with at the forthcoming March monthly meeting.

Both Shook Swarm and Bailey were practically demonstrated and also the methodology supported by an illustrated Powerpoint presentation.

At the end of the meeting Robin Yearwood was presented with his BBKA Module 1 certificate. Well done to Robin!

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## Developments in our “Bees and flowers go together” story

How our “Bees and flowers go together” thinking is evolving.

*Simon Saville*  
[development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk)

Richard Glassborow and I have been talking to a number of external experts about our Bees & Flowers story, and our thinking continues to evolve.

For example, we have known for some time that the distribution of (registered) honeybee colonies in London is highly variable, some areas have very few colonies, while others have over 30 colonies in one square km. We are beginning to think these variations may be very significant in terms of sustainability, animal welfare and wildlife conservation. We don't know the full implications of this yet (we are making enquiries at credible scientific institutions), but it is obvious that forage is likely to be in short supply. More on this in future Newsletters, I hope.

We have been speaking to some large companies in London who have approached LBKA “wanting to help the bees” and asking for help to keep honeybees on their premises (usually the roof).

One good example is Facebook, which has three large offices in central London (5,000 staff in total). After discussion with us, they decided not to introduce honeybees on their roofs. They remain keen to help bees, and we are in discussion with them about:

- How to improve the planting on their sites to make them more pollinator friendly (not just honeybees),

- Possible “Bee Experiences” for staff at our Holland Park teaching apiary,
- Whether they might direct some funds from their “Social Good” initiative in London to projects that improve habitat for pollinators and wildlife.

These are still in discussion, but we have agreed that LBKA will host pop-up booths in all three of their offices outside the staff restaurants. We are excited that they want to use honeybees to celebrate the opening of new staff facilities in their offices.

We have some volunteers already, but more might be helpful – and there could be an opportunity to sell your local honey. The dates are:

- Mon 23rd March at Brock St, Regent's Place, near Euston
- Wed 25th March at Rathbone Square, near Oxford Circus
- Fri 27th March at the Shaftesbury Avenue office

The booths will be 12 noon to 2pm (approx), with time beforehand to set up and take down afterwards.

Please get in touch with me if you are interested.

Finally, LBKA member Charmian Martin has written an article that will go in the All Saints Fulham Parish Magazine called “[Everybody wants to help bees](#)” based on our “Bees and Flowers Go Together” narrative. Thanks Charmian!

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## March in the Apiary

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

*Howard Nichols*  
[education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)

March is a time of increasing activity within the hive but it all depends upon the weather. For the beekeeper it is also a month of increasing anticipation. At the time of writing it is still very cold and (as usual) rainy but assuming the weather improves then the colony at the end of March should be substantially different from the one at the beginning. The intervening days can include warm, sunny days, which encourage plants to flower early, and bees to forage. The weather can just as easily revert back to cold. The former causes the bees to produce more brood and the latter to retreat back to a cluster.

The main job of the beekeeper is still to keep an eye on stores. Old “winter” bees are starting to die off and new bees are being born. Food reserves are decreasing but demand for food will substantially increase. The bees will be using energy flying on warmer days but mainly

bringing in pollen, not nectar. They also need to keep the brood at a higher temperature (about 35°C) which also uses more energy. Stores can quickly be depleted in March and early April.

## First inspection

The first warm day from the start of March is an opportunity to have a quick look inside the hive. If so, then this will constitute the first inspection of the new season. The new colony card should be made up and inspection details recorded. Minimum temperature should be 10°C for a quick look but without taking out brood frames. If there is an exceptionally warm day with the temperature 14°C or more then a detailed colony inspection may be made. Otherwise, leave this until April.

If an inspection is not possible, then observing the colony entrance will provide invaluable information. If the bees are bringing in pollen, purposefully entering and leaving (flying a beeline) then these are always good signs. If the bees are aimless, listless or without purpose on a warm day then all may not be well.

## Monitoring varroa mites

This is a good time to monitor the mite drop. Leave the inserts in for a week and count the mite drop. If >2 mites per day then some action will be needed in Spring. If > 7 mites per day then action is immediately required. The National Bee Unit produces an excellent booklet "Managing Varroa" which is available for free download. There is also comprehensive information about varroa on the NBU website, including an on line varroa count calculator. [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

## Siting your bees

Those who were on the LBKA mentoring schemes last year and have not yet acquired bees (but will do so) should prepare the hive and site. If acquiring bees by means of the purchase of a nucleus from a supplier then the order should have been placed by now. Demand often exceeds supply.

## Formulate a beekeeping plan for the season

This need not be elaborate and may be such as improving swarm control, attempting a new manipulation, maximising honey production (ensuring there is the maximum number of flying bees in the colony when the honey flow starts), etc. The opportunities are endless but it is good to have a basic plan.

## Death

Finally, on a sad note, if you find your bees have died out then it is imperative to close the entrance to pre-

vent robbing. Make a note of what you observe then remove and destroy dead bees and frames. Sterilise the hive parts. It is important to try to find out why the bees have died. Winter and early spring colony losses seem to average 20% to 30% so you are not alone. It does not always mean it's the beekeeper's fault but it is essential to analyse and learn. Examples of reasons include, but are not limited to, the varroa mite (the number 1 offender), lack of stores, damp/inadequate hive ventilation, site situated in a frost pocket, failing queen, poorly mated queen.

## Looking forward

On a more optimistic note, the beekeeping season arrives in March. We have several eventful months ahead. I sincerely hope that all of us have a productive season and achieve whatever aims and goals we aspire to!

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# 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](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk)

March is officially the first month of spring for us in the UK. Although we've had some warm days, it's been pretty wet and cold recently. The first of the spring flowers are already putting on a colourful show of yellows, purples and shades of white. **Snowdrops** are starting to pass their best, having flowered in large numbers since late January. The early flowering **crocus** species are currently looking at their best across most of London. The later flowering large flowered crocus varieties are just starting to join the display too. These and other spring bulbous plants include **Winter Aconite**, **Anemone blanda**, **Squill** and **Muscari**. These are valuable early sources of pollen for bees.

Garden plants important to bees this month include the **Hellebores** (the hybrid Hellebores in my garden are particularly popular with bees at the moment), **Pulmonaria** and **Wallflowers**. Both the biennial bedding wallflowers and short lived perennial varieties are attractive to bees, but it's the Everlasting Wallflower *Bowles Mauve* that is flowering best at present; the others will put on a fantastic show towards the end of March and into April.

Several Spring flowering trees are important to bees and these include **White Poplar**, **Willow**, and **Hazel**. The large Hazel tree in my apiary has been flowering since January but is at its peak now. The willow and **white beam** catkins are just starting to open. One of the best



*Primrose.*



*Buff tailed queen on crocus.*



*Winter aconite.*



*Honey bee on crocus.*



*Wild damson.*

small willows for gardens is **Salix caprea Kilmarnock** which is a pussy willow type with large fluffy catkins which become covered in bright lemon yellow pollen. All manner of bees adore it. Last spring whilst cycling through Archbishops Park *en route* to the LBKA monthly meeting, I passed a trio of these dwarf weeping trees which were covered in **honey bees, Ashy Mining bees, Painted Mining bees** and several **bumblebees**. These trees all have pollen with a high protein and fatty acids content valuable to bees rearing brood and for queens fattening up ready to begin laying.

Shrubs flowering this month attractive to bees include **flowering currant, Sarcococca, blackthorn, flowering quince** and **camelia**. At last month's RHS early Spring Flower Show I bought 2 new camelias for my garden, a light pink one and a dark pinkie red one called "Adeyaka". Both are open single flowered varieties which flower from Late February through to Early May and are "self cleaning" varieties which mean the blooms drop as soon as they are pollinated, or if the blooms become frosted resulting in a neat looking shrub without the tainted frost damaged petals which can look unsightly.

Other flowers making an appearance include **lesser celandine, sweet violet, cowslip, primrose, white deadnettle, bugle, ground ivy** and the first of the





*Buff tailed queen on winter heather.*

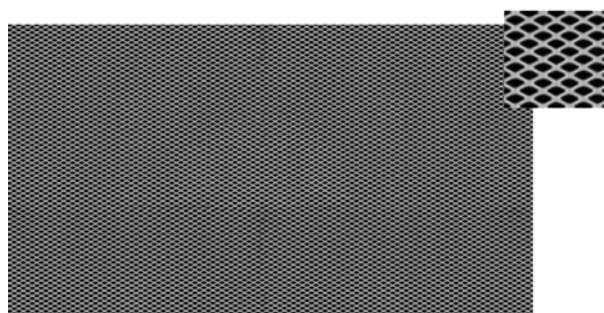
**Spanish bluebells** (*Hyacinthoides Hispanica*) whose blue-green pollen Honey bees will collect. white dead-nettle in particular is a valuable wild plant for bumble bees and some of the longer-tongued solitary bees. Its pollen is rich in protein and fats.

## Jobs in the garden

This time of year presents us with the last opportunity to lift and divide herbaceous perennials before they start to put on significant growth. I've just lifted and split my **Helleniums**, **hardy geraniums**, **Japanese anemones** and **sedum spectabile**.

Plant out herbaceous perennials that were grown from seed or cuttings last year. Get them in the ground now so they have time to spread out their roots ahead of the coming growing season. Less hardy plants may still require protection with fleece. Have fleece available to protect the blooms of soft fruits. My **peach** and **nectarine** buds are starting to open – will I get any fruit this year?

Early March is the last opportunity to prune apples and pears. Stone fruits such as peach, plum and apricot should be pruned in late summer. When pruning apples and pear resist the urge to cut back too much growth which the trees respond to by putting on excess vigorous regrowth. Unlike plum and other stone fruits which flower on the previous year's wood, Pip fruits require 2 year old material to develop flower/fruit buds.



*The mesh*

# Making your own Open Mesh Floors

Wilf builds his own hives and wants to spread the joy.

*Wilf Wood*  
*LBKA member*

A part of the pleasure that I get from keeping bees is in the construction of my own hives. I have some basic woodworking tools and about the same in skill level, so the end results are functional but not necessarily pretty. (comments have been made by other beekeepers!)

Having just finished making another two floors for myself, I have taken some pictures and put together the process I went through. I thought this might help or encourage anyone else who would like to do the same.

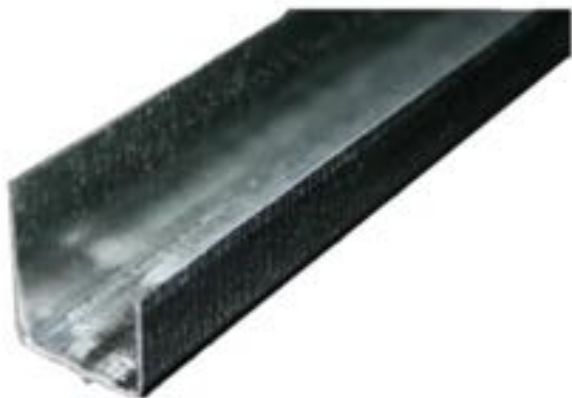
## Sourcing materials

### The Mesh (or Expanded Metal)

I purchased the mesh back in 2012 and it has taken me eight years and about 13 floors to use up the sheet of flattened, stainless-steel mesh I purchased.

I started looking for alternatives to the mesh that the bee suppliers had, or the very poor-quality mesh I found in the local DIY store. The supplier I found is in Pershore, Metal Mesh UK Limited, Reet House, Keytec East Business Park, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 2NX. They have a [website](#) and the part code is 06-28SFL for 6mm, flattened, stainless steel, mesh. I purchased a sheet (1250×1625) which they rolled up into a tube for me, wrapped it in a bit of cardboard and helped me put it into my car.

I found out when I was there that they could have cut it up for me which would have made it much easier. This mesh is high quality, thicker than I have seen from



*The runners*

bee suppliers, stainless steel is better than the normal galvanised and mesh is better than woven wire.

### The Runners

I have experimented with several different ways to hold the varroa inspection board and the conclusion is to use U shaped galvanised metal channels. I get mine from a local builders merchant, Builder Depot, Station Road, New Southgate, London, N11 1QJ. They also have a [website](#) and their part description is "Speed Pro Metal Track" which is used with dry lining systems.

### The Wood

I get most of my wood from skips. There seems to be always some building work going on in the nearby streets and I just help the environment by reducing the amount going to landfill or to be burnt. I chose treated wood, the wood that is used in constructing roofs, which has a slight green colour. For the sheet materials, I also get this from Builder Depot but you can also get this from skips as well, it is just I had some left over from other projects in my garage.

### The Rest

Well the rest is glue, screws and staples.

## Basic principles

I make my floors from 1" square wood, which is sawn down from whatever size I have retrieved from the skips. The basic floor consists of two 'U' shaped frames, the square of mesh is then sandwiched between them with the top 'U' is rotated 180 degrees to the bottom 'U'.

The size of the floor for National sized hives is  $18\frac{1}{8}$ " square. I quote the sizes in inches, for no other reason than the hives were designed in imperial measures so to avoid mistakes and to make it simple I stick to this.

The mesh I cut into 18" squares, slightly smaller than the floor so I do not get any sharp edges sticking out.

For the floors shown in this description the mesh was smaller as it was the last piece that I had, and cut into two, this gave me two pieces  $18" \times 16"$  so I made a slightly different version to my normal floors, adding a landing board as shown.

## Step 1

Gather the basic materials and tools for the project, I have cut down the wood that will make the frames into 1" square strips of at least  $18\frac{1}{2}"$  length. The plank shown in the picture I will use for the landing board.



## Step 2

Construct the two 'U' shaped frames. A variation as shown in the picture is that one of the frames has the cross-member inboard, this is due to the mesh floor being short in one direction. The space will be filled with the landing board, that will also protrude from the floor. This frame will become the bottom frame of the floor. As you can now see I am not the finest carpenter but the joints just need to be functional as the strength comes from the sandwich construction and the forces on the floor are compression forces.



### Step 3

Detail showing the attachment of the landing board



### Step 4

The mesh is then stapled onto the lower frame. These are staples used for attaching wire fencing to wooden posts and not holding bits of paper together.



### Step 5

Screw the upper frame into place. You will notice that the length of the lower frame side bars is slightly longer than the upper frame bars, this is to give additional support to the landing board, they could have extended to the full depth of the landing board but the wood I had was not long enough. The length of the upper frame side bars is  $18 \frac{1}{8}$ " , which is the same dimensions as the brood box.



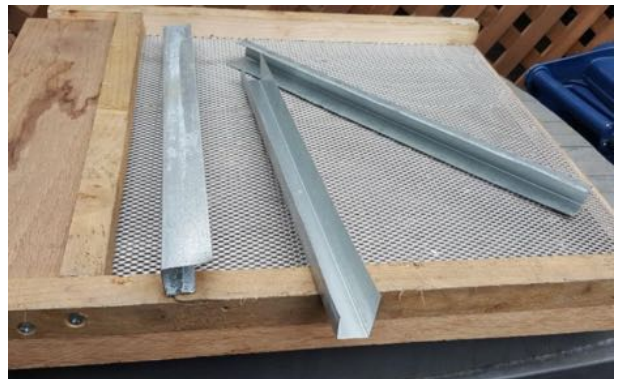
### Step 6

Turn the floor over and staple the mesh to the back crossmember of the upper frame. This then completes the main floor construction.



### Step 7

The next step is to put the runners for the inspection board. Cut three pieces of the metal channel. One piece is the full width of the floor and the two others slightly shorter than the sides; this is so you do not get any sharp edges protruding from the floor.



### Step 8

Screw the channels to the lower frame with the channel on the crossmember first and the two side channels pushed into the cross-member channel so that the inspection board will not catch on any raised edges.



## Step 9

The inspection board is next. This is made from ply, slightly narrower than the distance between the runners, so it is easy to insert, with the length so that it just reaches the end of the floor. Then make a baton the same width as the board and deep enough to fill the gap between the floor and the board when it is inserted into the runners, but not too tight so it is easy to insert and remove when you are wearing gloves. Screw and glue the baton to the board.



## Step 10

The entrance block is made from another piece of 1" square wood but I take a bit more off so it is slightly undersized. The reason for this is so it is not too tight a fit when the brood box is on top, to allow you to remove or insert the entrance block when the hive is in situ. I also only make one cut-out in the entrance block so that I can close up a hive by rotating the entrance block by 90°. I have recently started to make the cut out in the entrance block just at one end after reading a theory in a bee magazine. I have found it makes no difference to the performance of the hive but does make the woodworking simpler. I put two staples (or screws) into the inner sides of the floor as stops for the entrance block. After losing entrance blocks inside a hive whilst trying to manoeuvre them, this small detail just makes your life easier.



## Step 11

Final action is to just give the whole floor a sand to take off any rough spots.



## Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) to add something here.

**Martin Kunz:** I own [Diversity Honeys Ltd](#), that supply certified organic cotton bee suits (with/without ventilation). There's a discount for LBKA members in the [members' area](#).

## Upcoming events

### Sunday 8th March: Monthly meeting: Microscopy/Nosema testing

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

This month will be a practical session where we'll be diagnosing nosema in bees. If you'd like to test your bees, collect 15-20 flying bees, kill them humanely in the freezer overnight and bring them along. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. After the meeting, we will hold the first of two run-throughs of the Schools Food Matters presentations and logistics. The second run-through will be on Wednesday 25th March at Walworth Garden at 18:30. You would be welcome then, if you cannot stay on Sunday.

### Saturday 21st March: Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture

*13:00-16:30 at Essex Wildlife Trust, Maldon Road, CR5 7RZ*

Essex BKA have invited us to the Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture. Professor Giles Budge will be talking about his vital research work on Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus, and there will be a presentation on Asian Hornet Hunting in Jersey. For tickets (£8) and more details, [see here](#).

### Tuesday 31st March: Pub social

*18:30-22:30 at The Sekforde, 34 Sekforde St, Farringdon, EC1R 0HA*

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at The Sekforde.

Catch up with all the latest news over a pint in a nice food-serving pub.

## Sunday 5th April: Monthly meeting: Making up nuclei

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

This month will be about making up nuclei, the reasons for doing so, practical issues and as a method of swarm prevention and control. 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](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, [treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)
- **Secretary:** Natalie Cotton, [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)
- **Education:** Howard Nichols [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)
- **Development:** Simon Saville, [development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk)
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk)
- **Events:** Martin Hudson, [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)
- **Resources:** Mark McDonnell, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)

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

