

# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

### October, 2021

Welcome to this month's newsletter. As summer passes, we are looking ahead to our winter lecture series which starts on 3rd November and the next season with membership renewals (members should have already had their membership renewal emails) and upcoming Annual General meeting.

We make the usual plea to consider helping us out, either by serving on the committee or simply contacting us to tell us how you would like to help. We need volunteers who are reliable, enthusiastic, good organisers, good at writing, and/or good with people (and you don't have to be all those things!)

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Thank you to this month's contributors: Sharon Bassey, Will Fry, Richard Glassborow, David Hankins, Martin Hudson, George Kozobolis, Howard Nichols and Mark Patterson. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

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

### From our Chair

Richard Glassborow chair@lbka.org.uk

I am repurposing here a short piece I send out on various community email and WhatsApp groups at this time of year when I see the inevitable requests for a recommendation for a good pest control company to kill wasps. It is also "traditional" for beekeepers to hate wasps.

Yes, they will rob out vulnerable honey bee colonies – but so will honey bees. In general, a good strong colony should be able to defend itself and I put it to members of this beekeeping association that this is one of those areas we need to reconsider in the context of responsible and sustainable beekeeping in a biodiverse ecosystem.

Here is what I send to those seeking recommendations on killing wasps.

### In defence of wasps!

I know wasps get a bad press but wasps are actually a beneficial insect, both as pollinators and very important natural pest controllers. I have heard they also play some kind of role with yeast though I don't know more



**Spotted by Richard:** "Time for a quick Autumn sunbathe I think..." Photo and quote: Richard Glassborow.

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than that. But, no yeast, no bread, no beer, no wine, etc...

I know they can also be a nuisance, especially at this time of year. There is a reason for that. Most of the year we don't notice them because the workers are busy preying on things like aphids to feed their larvae. In return they get a sweet sugary secretion from the larvae. But wasps over-winter as a hibernating mated queen. The colonies (and nests) come to an end in late summer. As the brood numbers decline the workers turn to other sources for their sugar fix. That's when we start to notice them as those other sources will include things like jam sandwiches considerately laid out at picnics, etc. And, as autumn approaches, fruit is ripening on trees and we all know how wasps like to feed on fruit. What they really like is over-ripe fruit. That's when wasps can really be a nuisance because over-ripe fruit is rotting or, to put it another way, fermenting. The wasps are, for want of a better word, pissed: they are either fighting drunk or hung-over and grumpy!

But that doesn't last long. The nest comes to an end (and they don't get reused) and we stop noticing them again.

Of course there are circumstances where the position of the nest means that period is a very real nuisance and there is no alternative but to remove it. But pest control companies do very well out of what is often a knee-jerk reaction to kill wasps "just because", when a little understanding and pause for thought may help us recognise that these are beneficial insects that just need a bit more "social distance" at certain times of the year.

Incidentally, there is no such thing as "wasp killer" as it says on the tin, only insecticides. The poisons used to kill wasp nests are, like all  $\mathbf{pest}$  icides, inevitably indiscriminate: they do what they are designed to do – kill insects.

Insects make up 90% of all known species of life on this planet. They are not just essential to life, they are most of it. That's quite some collateral damage to risk.

So if you realise that actually, the social behaviour of your stripy neighbour is, on balance, tolerable just for a few weeks, you can save yourself a bit of money by waiting for nature to take its course.

#### Silent Earth

Some of you may remember a very important book published in the early 60s: Silent Spring by Rachel Carson. That book led to the banning of DDT but it did not stop us killing insects. This has quietly led to a scale of biodiversity loss some scientists believe may be as or more dangerous as climate change. A new book has just been published, "Silent Earth" by Professor Dave Goulson. It kind of picks up Rachel Carson's mantle. Let's hope it is proportionally as influential.

### Announcements

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

# October's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

October's Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 10th October at 11:00. It will be led by Vlad Zamfir on the effects of pathogens on honey bees. The first part will be an overview of the diseases and pests which facilitate disease. The second part will be details on how how each disease kills bees, and how we can help bees to withstand them. The final part will be about how certain diseases impact bee behaviour and development. Followed as usual by Q&A and chat. The meeting will be at the usual Zoom link (in the Members' Area and in your email).

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 26th October** from 18:30 (Zoom link in the Members' Area and in your email).

November's Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 14th November – topic to be confirmed.

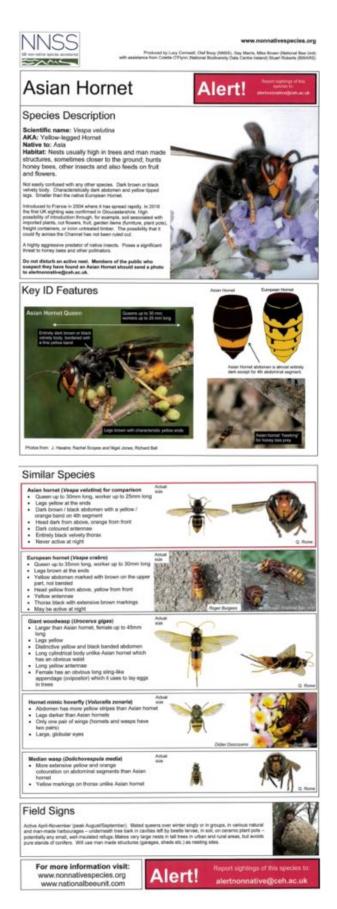
#### Membership renewals

Our membership year ended last month and members will have had an **email telling them how to renew their membership**, if they wish. Note that renewals are **not** automatic, but it is **very easy** to renew. Thanks to the 89 members who've already renewed.

We hope that you wish to remain being part of LBKA. We rely on a large and active membership to enable us to do our work in helping promote better urban beekeeping, helping us influence policy, helping with our outreach and education work, and helping build a supportive beekeeping community. If you didn't get the email, please check your spam folder or email services@lbka.org.uk.

#### Winter Lectures

This year we are aiming to deliver a number of lectures via Zoom, some of which will be particularly relevant to the time of year, others of more general interest to the beekeeping community. The first lecture on Wednesday 3rd November will be delivered by Martin Hahn and Clare Densley of Buckfast Abbey, on the subject of "Feeding bees – How, when and why? Different systems explored and a deeper understanding of how what we do affects the bees' development and survival". This lecture and ensuing discussion may go some way to answering some of the recent questions that have been asked on the BeeBanter WhatsApp forum! Further details will be emailed to all members closer to the time.



Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.

We hope to record all of these lectures and add them to a library of resources for members. We'd like to include material from other sources in this library, so if anyone has identified quality beekeeping resources on YouTube or elsewhere, please pass the relevant details to treasurer@lbka.org.uk so we can make them accessible to the entire membership.

#### Corrine Edwards

We are sad to announce the death of Corrine Edwards. Sharon has written an obituary on page 7.

# Buy LBKA honey from our Mudchute apiary

Members are offered previous years' honey from our Mudchute apiary at £5 per 8oz jar. We have quite a few jars remaining and proceeds will go towards upgrades and equipment for the LBKA apiaries. Collection will be from the LBKA store in Big Yellow, 120 Stewarts Road, Battersea. Please let Tristram (apiaries@lbka.org.uk) have your order.

#### London Bee Situation

We've put details of LBKA's official position on the "London Bee Situation" at <a href="http://www.lbka.org.uk/london.html">http://www.lbka.org.uk/london.html</a> with our report, other reference documents, and further reading. Do take a look and feel free to share with others.

#### AGM and new committee

The AGM will again be an on-line meeting on **10th November**. You will get to find out what LBKA has been up to and have the chance to comment and help set the agenda for the coming year.

As we hope you're aware, we are a very active association and have the potential to be more active to the benefit of public understanding about bees and beekeeping, better trained beekeepers, and the pollinator environment in London. We need people to help make some of this happen and we need a wide spectrum of people, including those with ideas, those with organisational skills, those with time to volunteer, those with skills that would help us and those willing to learn more about bees and about outreach. Being involved in a small and influential charity led by an active and committed set of trustees, committee members and members is a great opportunity to meet others, learn lots and make a difference.

If you are interested in joining the committee please talk to any of us. But you don't need to join the committee; you can simply register your interest with one of the committee. We would like to be able to draw on as many members as possible for maximum enjoyment and benefit. See Annie's personal reflections on this in last month's newsletter.



Spotted by George: "For some time lately, I have noticed unusual behaviour in one out of our three hives. Whilst the bees of the other two hives are very busy going in and out, in this particular hive very few bees will fly out for foraging and a substantial bunch of them spend all day loitering by the entrance (which is now reduced to eliminate wasp attacks). Strangely enough they perform little front and back body movements and appear to be chewing on to something but there is no sign of that on the wooden entrance. If it was springtime, I would have assumed that there was congestion in the hive and they were making preparations to swarm. However, it is October now and the colony is not overcrowded! I wonder if anybody has ever observed something similar and has a reasonable explanation for this strange/unusual behaviour". Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.

### National Honey Show

The National Honey Show will be on **Thursday 21st** to **Saturday 23rd October** at **Sandown Park Race-course**, **Portsmouth Rd**, **Esher KT10 9AJ**, with international classes, lecture convention, workshops and beekeeping equipment trade show. More details on their website.

### Hiring extractors

We have extractors which can be borrowed by members. We charge £10 to hire for up to 3 days and we ask for a £20 deposit which you'll lose if you don't bring the extractor back clean!

Please email resources@lbka.org.uk for more information

# Do you have spare wax to donate to a school?

One of our members looks after bees at a school in SE15. Someone associated with the school has asked if anyone has wax that is surplus to requirements that they could donate so they can make wax products.



**Spotted by George:** "First Sunday of October and the sun came out after the deluge of the recent torrential rain and stormy weather so I hoped to get some pictures of bees by the wide leafed ivy blossom but all I could find was lots of wasps (Dolichovespula media) hurrying from flower to flower sucking the delicious ivy nectar!" Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.

They are happy with unfiltered wax. Please email elsowitsch@yahoo.co.uk if you can help.

# Old announcements from September

Check our previous newsletters or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

**Contribute to the Newsletter:** Please consider contributing meeting writeups, articles, photos, and/or recipes to the newsletter.

### Old announcements from August

Congratulations: Congratulations to members – Rachel Dewhurst (distinction), Karlis Briedis (credit), Kyle Moreland (pass), Luke Wyatt (credit), Katharina Bielenberg (pass), Rodney Phillip (credit), Sergio Ramos (credit), Anna Gaudion (credit), Annette Pearson (credit), Sue Irani (credit), Deborah Blythe (credit), Khevir Jettoo (distinction) and Andrew Hinton (credit) – who passed the BBKA "Bee Basic" Assessment. Well done!

Paid opportunities for members. LBKA occasionally receives invitations or requests to undertake paid work such as apiary management, ecological/planting design/consultancy or educational consultancy. If you have the skills that may make you suitable and you would be interested in being considered to take on such work, please contact Simon Saville at development@lbka.org.uk. Once we've verified your skills, we'll start to push suitable opportunities your way when we get them. Seemore details in last few month's newsletters (link above).

We need to help run our social media. If you are good at communicating with social media, then we need your help. Our social media channels already have an impressive reach, but we aren't using them



**Spotted by George:** "Despite the strong windy day (making it very difficult to take a sharp photograph), a wild bee ventures out hanging on for dear life collecting its load of nectar from a Caryopteris clandonensis (Heavenly Blue - Bluebeard) beautiful blue flower". Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.

very proactively to manage our communications. This is a good opportunity to help develop a profile of a local charity and its charitable objectives. Please contact Simon Saville at development@lbka.org.uk to find out more.

#### 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.

# October'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

The meeting was structured into Trustee-related business (strategy) and Executive-related business (operational).

In the Trustee part, we discussed the future character and direction of LBKA, and how we might reconfigure what we do to prioritise sustainable urban beekeeping, including focussing on this in our new beekeeper training, doing separate "bee-experience" sessions, getting the London Bee Situation message out, and more "beekeeping improver" training. We also discussed mentoring capacity next year, the Trustees' Annual Report, and the state of the accounts. We also discussed how to get more members involved in the running of LBKA.

In the Executive part, we reviewed the School Food Matters programme, the upcoming winter lecture programme (we aim to have 6 winter lectures), the Christmas Quiz, the Monthly Meeting topics and when we might restart in-person Monthly Meetings and Pub Socials.

# October in the Apiary

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

## Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk

Feeding syrup to the bees should have been completed by the end of September as the colony will now start to find it difficult to process and cap the syrup due to the colder temperature. If left uncapped then there is the risk of fermentation and subsequent dysentery within the colony over the winter months. A colony should go into winter with at least 15kg (35lb) of stores. This will avoid the possibility of the bees dying of starvation in a cold spring or the necessity for the beekeeper to feed in spring.

The bees will now start to cluster as temperatures fall. Clustering starts at about 18°C, albeit very loose, and the cluster becomes smaller and more compact as temperatures continue to fall. They form a complete cluster at 13°C. Other than this the colony will continue to operate as usual but on a smaller scale. The queen will still be laying eggs, nurse bees nurturing a smaller amount of brood and the bees should still be flying in the day throughout October. Bees should be foraging on Ivy, which is the last flowering plant of the year. This is currently in flower at my own apiary. Another reason that feeding should now be completed is that subsequent collection of lvy nectar will then be stored on the flanks making it easier to remove in spring if necessary. (If Ivy nectar is brought in whilst feeding then many more frames may become clogged with Ivy honey/syrup.) If Apiguard was diligently applied in August and a feeding programme undertaken in September then the colony will be in optimum condition to face the harshness of the next few months. This leaves the beekeeper to make final preparations for winter. The objective for October is to put the bees in the best position to deal with winter by trying to do small things to tip the scales in their favour.

Check that hives are secure, straight and stable. If using a wooden floor then the colony should be tilted slightly forward. Bees have evolved over millions of years to deal with cold temperatures and do this with relative ease. They cannot deal with damp and condensation. During winter they need to uncap and metabolise honey to keep warm, resulting in production of water vapour. If the hive is not adequately ventilated then dampness may build up leading to fungi growth. It is essential that the hive interior remains dry throughout the winter. This is another advantage of using an open mesh floor.

Mouseguards. Once the night frosts commence then mice will look for a dark, warm place to hibernate. The smell and disturbance will upset the bees and, in more extreme instances, the colony can die out. Use of a mouseguard is essential as it is extremely effective but there must be no way the mice can bypass it.

**Gardening measures**. Check there are no branches grown up over summer and now overhanging the hive. If so then prune to remove. Also check that grass and weeds have not grown up around the hive as these will both reduce ventilation and promote damp. A quick trim with a strimmer or garden shears should be sufficient for the winter.

Other jobs. Make sure that spare brood and super boxes are cleaned and put away in a cold place for the winter to deter wax moth. Placing combs in a deep freeze for 24 hours if possible kills all 4 stages of wax moth. Other equipment such as queen excluders, crownboards should also be cleaned and stored the same way.

Finally, October is the month for the National Honey Show. It is back at Sandown Park at the end of this

month. It is always more enjoyable to go with someone else if possible.

## Last month's Monthly Meeting: the science and medicine behind bee stings

What happened at our meeting last month.

Will Fry resources@lbka.org.uk

For the August monthly meeting I was lucky enough to talk to the LBKA about the science and medicine behind bee stings.

This important and, for some of us, all too relevant topic is something I find fascinating. I am a South London Beekeeper but also a Junior Doctor working in anaesthetics and have some experience managing anaphylaxis.

The science behind our immune response to bee venom was discussed, providing the basis for the remainder of the talk. We went on to discuss prevention (always better than cure) and bee sting first aid which can be utilised easily by our members.

Importantly, we looked into the recognition of more severe reactions and when to seek medical help. This was really the take home message and I hope this information remains with our Beekeepers in order to help themselves and others in the future.

We were lucky enough to have LBKA members Natalie and Adam discuss their personal accounts of bee sting reactions, investigations and subsequent bee venom immunotherapy. The talk stimulated some excellent discussion around the topic and was a pleasure to present.

### Corrine Edwards

We are sad to announce the passing of long-standing member Corrine Edwards. Sharon – one of her LBKA friends – remembers her here.

Sharon Bassey LBKA member

My friend Corrine was a quirky bird! Just ask the crows, which she fed regularly on the south bank where she lived.

Many of the older LBKA members will remember Corrine. She made lovely bee based jewellery which many beekeepers don today, she was a regular at the National Honey Show, Skylark Gallery and kept bees at Roots and Shoots the former home of LBKA.

Corrine was a true eco warrior and tree hugger. Corrine campaigned relentlessly to prevent the 'Garden Bridge' vanity project from going ahead, she worked tirelessly to save the trees that were due to be torn down to make way for this private enterprise. She stood by her beliefs.

I don't think we will ever appreciate her worth because she did things because they were just the right thing to do. I shall miss her.

### 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

October signals the end of the active foraging season for our bees. By the end of the month our colonies must ensure they have sufficient stores of honey and pollen to last them through until spring. Pollen becomes available again when the crocus and snow drops bloom but the weather is often too cool for the bees to fly to take advantage of it. Nectar is an even longer wait. It's usually April when the first substantial nectar sources begin to flow so October really is a "make-orbreak" month for our bees if they still need to pack away winter stores.

Apart from ivy, substantial blooms of any particular plant are becoming rare this month. In gardens **Dahlias**, **Echinacea**, **Rudbeckia** and **Cosmos** persist but they will soon begin to keel over as the first frosts hit

Winter flowering shrubs like **Viburnum tinus** are however starting to bloom and will peak at around New



Autumn crocus

Year. These offer the bees pollen and sometimes nectar when winter days are mild enough for them to fly.

In about a month's time we should see the first **Mahonias** begin to bloom. These are frequented by honey and buff tailed bumble bees on mild winter days.

Jobs to do in the garden this month include propagating semi ripe cuttings from your favourite flowering shrubs. Lavender, rosemary, hebe, flowering currants are all easy to propagate in this way. Push 6" cuttings into gritty compost and keep cool and moist over winter.

If you're planting bulbs for bees, October is the best time to do this.

As leaves start to drop from trees, collect and bag to make leaf mound to mulch plants next year. Mulching helps prevent plants drying out in dry weather and helps to keep them flowering and your bees well fed.

As perennials begin to die back you may want to begin clearing the old stems. Some plants benefit from having their core exposed to the cold over the winter whilst others benefit from the insulating properties of their dead stems and leaves.



Golden rod



Ivy blooms

# 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 to add something here.

**Dominique Bernard** (melies104@yahoo.co.uk) has five  $14 \times 12$  standard wired frames for sale (bought by mistake from Thornes) for £50 in total. Can deliver if local to SW2.

Julian Lush: Is (regrettably) giving up beekeeping and



Sedum Autumn joy

has a job-lot of "pretty old, due a clean-up, but still serviceable" kit to sell all in one go. The list of items is: stands (low; x3), brood box (x2), brood frames (x12), queen excluders (x3), supers (x5), 3x12 frames (x36), crown boards (x3), 9cm ekes (x2), thin Ekes (x2), feeder boards (x2), hive kit box, smoker, hive tools (x2), medium bee suit, jackets with veils (x2), head veil , gloves (x3), super frame kits (x12). super foundation sheets (25), swarm catcher stocking and sheets (x2). Please contact him directly if you're interested on 07815 637706.

### Upcoming events

Sunday 10th October: Monthly meeting: Effects of Pathogens on

Honey Bees

11:00-13:00 at Same zoom link as usual (in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email). This month's Monthly Meeting will be led by member Vlad Zamfir on "effects of pathogens on honey bees". The first part will be an overview of the diseases and pests which facilitate disease. The second part will be details on how each disease kills bees, and how we can help bees to withstand them. The final part will be about how certain diseases impact bee behaviour and development. Followed as usual by Q&A and chat.

# Thursday 21st to Saturday 23rd October: National Honey Show

All day at Sandown Park Racecourse, Portsmouth Rd, Esher KT10 9AJ

Promoting the highest quality honey and wax products with international classes, lecture convention, workshops and beekeeping equipment trade show. We sponsor some classes in the show. More details on their website.

### Tuesday, 26th October: Pub Social

18:30 onwards at via Zoom (see your email for a link)

Our ONLINE pub social in the historical surroundings of your own home. Bring your own beer. Using the usual Pub Social Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

Wednesday, 3rd November: Winter lecture: Feeding bees: How, when and why?

18:30 at via Zoom (see your email for a link) Our first lecture on will be delivered by Martin Hahn and Clare Densley of Buckfast Abbey on the subject of "Feeding bees - How, when and why? It will explore different systems and give a deeper understanding of how what we do affects bees' development and survival.

### 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/Development: Simon Saville, development@ lbka.org.uk
- Education: Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- Membership: Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- Events: Annie McGeoch, events@lbka.org.uk
- Apiaries: Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- Mentoring: Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- Resources: Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk
- Stuart Kennon, stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk

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



















