



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

June, 2022

This month's monthly meeting will be an in-person meeting on how bees forage. We are planning a number of in-person events in the coming months. Please do make an effort to come as these take an effort to set up. We are also pleased to announce our intention to organise the first summer social in two years on 14th August at which we hope to see many of you.

This month, we have the good news that Georges Mikhael, Pip O'Byrne, Larry Osei-Kwaku, Valentine Boissinot, and Antonio Rebordao all passed their BBKA Bee Basic Assessment (p3). Congratulations and also thanks to Howard for helping them through it and setting up the assessment.

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Thank you to this month's contributors: **Will Bunker, Lucie Chaumeton, Martin Hudson, George Kozobolis, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Sara Ward**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me.

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

Announcements

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

June's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

June's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 12th June** at The Foundry (17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR), a fantastic venue (that even has an apiary on-site) on how bees forage, including details about undesirable nectars. Please do come if you can.

The Pub Social this month will be on **Tuesday 28th June** from 18:30 onwards at The Faltering Fullback (19 Perth Rd, Finsbury Park, N4 3HB), a great pub near Finsbury Park.



Honey bee on a blackberry flower (alongside an aphid-strewn rose)." Photo: Aidan Slingsby.



Spotted by George: *“Wild and honey bees – as well as other pollinators – will be spoiled for choice this summer as millions of wildflowers come into bloom in the moat of The Tower of London. The ‘Superbloom’ forms part of the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations and features a sound installation composed by Erland Cooper. Erland Cooper is in turn releasing these compositions as an album called “Music For Growing Flowers” and has also produced packs of wildflower seeds to accompany the album.”* Photo and caption: George Kozobolis.

July’s Monthly Meeting will be on honey extraction on 10th July. The venue is yet to be determined.

Summer Social on August 14th

Good news – we are reinstating our spectacular Summer Social this year!

It will be after August’s Monthly Meeting on 14th August. Please put the date in your diary and we will provide more details when we know them.

LBKA’s presence at the Lambeth Country Show is CANCELLED

LBKA won’t be at the Lambeth Country Show this year after all. We did not have enough volunteers to ensure that we’d be able to deliver the stall.

Of course, the show will go ahead without us, so do go!

LBKA’s Pollinator Fund

Don’t forget about LBKA’s Pollinator Fund!

The LBKA Pollinator Fund operates all year round, with grants of up to £1,000 available for full- or part-funded projects that have London pollinators at their heart. Applications are sought from groups such as schools, allotment organisations, tenant & residents associations, horticultural societies, and other small charities. So if you are a member of such an organisation which is developing plans, or just has a “wish list” of projects that might align with LBKA’s aims, **please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk for a Pollinator Fund guidance document and application form** or see https://www.lbka.org.uk/pollinator_fund.



Caroline with her bees in Holborn. Photo: Mark Patterson.

LBKA videos

Just a reminder that videos of many of our Winter Lectures, Monthly Meetings and various other stuff can be found in the [Members’ Area of the website](#).

Instagram

Please keep sending your bee related pictures to Lucie at instagram@lbka.org.uk or share them with your authorisation to publish on the Bee Banter WhatsApp group. And if you are on Insta do follow [@londonbeekeepersassociation](https://www.instagram.com/londonbeekeepersassociation).

Old announcements from May

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

Exciting opportunity at Battersea Park Children’s Zoo. If you’re interested in volunteering to help set up the apiary and then manage it, please contact Simon Saville at admin@lbka.org.uk.



Caroline in the Bee Collective honey house in Victoria.
Photo: Mark Patterson.

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.

Remembering Caroline Birchall

Mark remembers LBKA member and Caroline Birchall and passionate bee conservationist.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

It's with a heavy heart that I report on the death of LBKA member Caroline Birchall last month.

I first met Caroline some 17 years ago when I moved to London to work for environmental charity "Groundwork". We worked together for several years at Groundwork before she went on to work for Natural England, the Government's statutory nature conservation body. In 2013 Caroline went on to become the biodiversity

officer at Camden Council where she focused on making green spaces better for bees. She was passionate about the environment and bee conservation in particular.

Caroline was best known among the beekeeping community for the charitable entity the "Bee Collective" which she established in her spare time in 2012. Based out of a building near Victoria coach station the Bee collective offered a honey extraction service to London based beekeepers and used the proceeds to plant for pollinators.

In 2012 Caroline met with myself, then Secretary Angela Woods, scientists from Sussex University and the London Wildlife Trusts GIGL team to discuss how we can map bee forage in London. She was instrumental in acquiring funds to pay for the forage mapping work that is an integral part of our London Bee Situation report which also influenced Kew Gardens' report on sustainability of beekeeping in London.

Caroline was the leading figure behind the "Bee Line for London" initiative which aimed at creating a 1km wide swath of habitat from Enfield in the North to Croydon and the North Downs in the South of the city. Unfortunately the ambitious bee line never gained the funding needed to make it happen but encouraged lots of smaller Borough wide initiatives like the RBKC Bee super highways, pollinator pathways in various boroughs and a new proposed East London Bee Roads project.

Caroline had been battling with cancer on and off for a number of years and after a lengthy period of remission her health began to deteriorate earlier this year. Due to her failing health she decided to disband the Bee Collective as she realised she could no longer continue to run a charity largely on her own.

Caroline was one of the finest examples of a passionate bee conservationist and will be sorely missed by those who knew her.

BBKA Basic Assessments

Congratulations to Georges Mikhael, Pip O'Byrne, Larry Osei-Kwaku, Valentine Boissinot, and Antonio Rebordao for passing their BBKA Bee Basic Assessment.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

This year a total of 5 LBKA candidates took part in the BBKA Basic Assessments. The BBKA Basic is both a practical and oral assessment and lasts about 1 hour.



Spotted by George: "The latter part of May has been terrible weather wise forcing me to delay the usual weekly hive inspection. On the first opening of good weather, Thursday 2nd June and what a gorgeous sunny day it was, one hive could no longer wait and around midday they took off en masse into the air and I happened to spot them circling a pear tree in the garden. Not too long afterwards, they formed a huge cluster in one of the branches. Got all the gear ready and collected the major part of the swarm. Within 30 minutes or so all the rest of them descended and surrounded the hive. The rest was history as they all entered the hive and settled nicely in their new home!" Photo and caption: George Kozobolis.

Each candidate is asked to assemble a frame, light the smoker (including observing health and safety issues) then open a colony and demonstrate to the examiner that he or she can control the bees whilst, at the same time, answering a few straightforward questions about the colony contents. After going through the brood frames the candidate reassembles the hive and goes on to the 2nd part of the assessment which is answering a series of straightforward questions about beekeeping, bee biology and diseases. The syllabus is broad in its range but not particularly deep. The full syllabus is available for download on the BBKA website and within the education section. Both the BBKA and the LBKA actively encourages its members to take this assessment as it is recognised as a substantial step forward in beekeeping education. Many allotment committees and other public bodies also now require the beekeeper to have this certificate before they are allowed to keep bees on the establishment's land.

The process started back in November with potential

candidates being given electronic course notes for light Winter reading. These notes cover the syllabus from beginning to end. Formal study is not required, just a reading of the course notes over the winter months. In April we had 1 x 2 hour revision session on zoom followed by a 1 x 2 hour face to face session at Simon Saville's house and went through the syllabus item by item. By the last session we had the assessment dates arranged with the assessor and each candidate was allocated a date and time.

So, on to the actual assessments. These were held over 2 successive Saturdays in May at the LBKA Mudchute apiary in Crossharbour.

The 1st session was on Saturday, 14th May and we had 3 candidates prepared and waiting. The weather was good, no rain and warm sunshine. So far so good. Then it all started to go wrong. No sign of the assessor and the start time has passed. Phone calls from me were fruitless as he had changed his number and the message



Spotted by Sara: "Here are the families that I've introduced to bees this week". Photo and caption: Sara Ward.

coming up was invalid number. I have arranged these assessments on behalf of the LBKA for at least 15 years and this had never happened before. Fortunately, I am also a BBKA Basic assessor and I had actual assessment papers with me. I decided to conduct the assessments myself and declare the potential conflict of interest to the BBKA in due course. I subsequently undertook the assessments on behalf of the BBKA and we were all done by 2.00pm.

The remaining 2 assessments were conducted the following Saturday and by the original scheduled assessor, not by me.

So, what went wrong with week 1. The short answer is that the assessor had lost his phone, had computer issues (was not receiving emails) and believed the assessments were to be in June, not May. Still no response to my attempts to contact him on Sunday caused me to contact another member of his beekeeping association whom I know. His efforts to contact the assessor also failed and on Monday night 2 members went to his home, concerned about his welfare, only to find him alive and well and oblivious as to the dramas. All a genuine error, just one of those things.

How did we do: All 5 candidates passed the assessment. The successful candidates were: **Georges Mikhael, Pip O'Byrne, Larry Osei-Kwaku, Valentine Boissinot and Antonio Rebordao.**

A major reason for this success rate is undoubtedly due to the commitment of all candidates. Another significant reason is the LBKA mentoring programme. Each year more experienced members freely give of their time to teach new members the craft of beekeeping. The newer member (mentee) assists the more experienced beekeeper (mentor) and so starts to learn a variety of skills during the course of a beekeeping season. This provides a solid foundation to the newer beekeeper.



Spotted by Will: "Bumblebee in action" from Eden Community Garden in Clapham. Photo and caption: Will Bunker.

The LBKA would like to thank all its mentors for participating in this invaluable service.

On behalf of the LBKA, I would like to thank the following:

- Irek Gajowaiczek for travelling to Mudchute to conduct the assessments.
- Simon Saville for use of his home for tuition.
- Tristram Sutton for ensuring the apiary was of sufficient standard to perform the assessments.

Finally, anyone who has kept bees for a minimum period of 12 months and wishes to undertake this assessment in 2023 can register by sending an email to education@lbka.org. Further details will be given in an autumn newsletter.



From [@londonbeekeepersassociation](#) on Instagram: "Happy World Bee Day 2022! What better way to celebrate than to spend the day showing the observation hive for LBKA and School Food Matters, talking all things pollinators and pollination". Photo and caption: Lucie Chaumeton.

May's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discusses 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

Richard reported his short (5 min) World Bee Day talk entitled "The over-hiving of London – A cautionary tale of good intentions, a little knowledge, and some band-wagons". Aligned with our [London Bee Situation](#) view, he called for a better understanding of how we can keep bees more sustainably and influence others to do so, changing the decline in honey bees narrative and challenging beekeeping orthodoxy. His message was well-received by those present, including the Chair of BBKA. We discussed the challenge of how to address issue: what to change and our level of proactiveness. Richard will write this up so that we can share with members and restart the conversation.

The School Food Matters programmes is going well,



From [@londonbeekeepersassociation](#) on Instagram: "A lovely day out showing bees and talking pollinators and pollination with the younger age groups at a school in E1 for LBKA and School Food Matters, with the always inspirational Geoff Hood". Photo and caption: Lucie Chaumeton.

but the workload is falling on a small number of people and we need to re-think how we run it next year. We revisited the issue of the lack of volunteer capacity to do the things we need to do and discussed how we can get more members involved. This was one of the reasons we decided to cancel our stall at the Lambeth Country Show.

We did decide that we need a Summer Social and are planning it for 14th August, so are looking forward to that.

June in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Swarm control

This is still the main priority. Routine inspections of colonies which have not yet swarmed this year should be made every 7 days to check for queen cells. Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control. Upon finding queen cells, you have sufficient time to close up the colony, go home to think things through and collate equipment. You will not have time to order equipment from a supplier, have it delivered and make it up. For anyone with access to Ted Hooper's "Guide to Bees and Honey" then the Artificial Swarm method is covered extremely well on pages 138 to 140. After artificially swarming the colony do not forget to continue to check the artificial swarm (the box with the old queen) to see whether it is producing further queen cells. The "swarming mindset" continues for a couple



From @londonbeekeepersassociation on Instagram: "Delighted to have taken delivery of this, quite the Rolls Royce of an observation hive. Not only does it look amazing, it is going to travel from E1 to the farthest reaches of North London on the joint LBKA and School Food Matters education programme telling children all about pollination and pollinators and why we need lots of different ones. Many thanks to LBKA's chair Richard for adding many security features such as fully lockable clips between parts and safety glass and insulated protection panels. Can't wait to start showing the bees tomorrow!". Photo and caption: Lucie Chaumeton.

of weeks after the beekeeper has performed the manipulation. Regarding the other box (the one with queen cells), I usually reduce the queen cells down to 1 but also need to check this box once a few days later (if no further queen cells then it cannot have the eggs or small larvae to make new queen cells after that and should be left alone). The box containing the queen will need further checks for a couple of weeks.

Removing honey

Another seasonal task in early June is removing and processing the spring honey brought in by the bees. This year we have had an exceptionally good spring and some members may have spring honey. If spring honey is removed then keep a watch on stores within the hive during June. Nucs and single box colonies should always be monitored for stores as such entities are a "work in progress", not the completed article.

Collecting swarms

If your bees do swarm or you are called out to collect another swarm then personal and public safety should always be the overriding priority. Please do not attempt to climb trees or use ladders beyond your capabilities.

This Spring there has continued to be reports of EFB across London, although in my area, south east London, there seems to be fewer NBU notifications than in the



From @londonbeekeepersassociation on Instagram: "Having a wild Saturday night over in N12 tonight. This swarm is a good size and seems quite gentle but I am still going to quarantine it as there's so much EFB doing the rounds at the moment". Photo and caption: Lucie Chaumeton.

last 2 years. If collecting a swarm from elsewhere then it should be quarantined and checked before transferring on to an apiary containing other hives. The swarm should not be immediately housed in an apiary with other bees until the beekeeper is reasonably sure that it is free from foulbrood diseases.

Other action to be taken this month

Add supers. Add supers as necessary, adding another in advance of it being needed by the bees. This may be either a brood super or a honey super, depending upon circumstances. When the bees are on the outer frames then it is time to add a super.

Prepare for the anticipated Summer honey flow. Ensure you have enough equipment to deal with this.

Check varroa mite drop if not done in April or May.

Continue to be vigilant for the Asian Hornet. If you think you may have sighted one then it is essential to take a photo for submission to alrtonnative@ceh.ac.uk. Elliot Hodges (mentor@lbka.org.uk) is our Asian Hornet monitoring representative.



Spotted by Janet: "Two bees met in a bar..." Photo: Janet Evans; caption: Sara Ward.



Red tailed bumblebee on bramble blossom.



Sedums blooming on a roof top in Chancery Lane.



Foxgloves are out now.

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

Early summer – June in particular – is a time of the year which brings uncertainty for many a beekeeper, and for those in rural areas in particular. June is the beginning of the summer season when the spring flowering plants and trees shed their blooms having been pollinated and now begin to form seeds, but the main flow of summer

flowering blooms has yet to begin. Beekeepers refer to this period of change as the June Gap.

At this time of year honey bee colonies are approaching their peak in worker population in readiness for the summer flow, queens are laying at a prolific rate and colonies have many larvae to feed. A reduction of incoming nectar and pollen as the spring flowers cease but the summer flowers are yet to peak can leave large colonies struggling to feed themselves or to fill supers with surplus honey for the beekeeper.

Fortunately in urban areas like London the June Gap is rarely felt because our towns and cities contain an abundance of exotic plants which bloom throughout June, filling the gap in forage availability.

Early summer flowers like **lime**, **sweet chestnut**, **oriental chestnut**, **pseudo acacia**, **bramble** and many of our flowering **hedgerow herbs** and **meadow flowers** have already begun to bloom. In the meadows around Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Mile End Parks in East London, **weld**, **scabious**, **sainfoin**, **lucerne**, **bugloss**, **rest-harrow** and **bird's foot trefoil** are in full bloom



A bumblebee on field scabious.



Campanula blooms



Honey bee on sedum ocre

attracting **honey bees**, **cuckoo bumble bees**, **flower bees** and **leafcutter bees**.

Last week whilst inspecting my city centre roof top bees I noticed that the **sedums** on the green roofs are just starting to come into flower. Whilst of limited usefulness to bees generally the sedums' brief few weeks of bloom do provide some much needed respite to pollinators in the very heart of the city where good forage is hard to come by. **Honey bees** and tiny **short-tongued solitary bees** are particularly frequent visitors to sedums on green roofs. Other plants important to city centre bees include **pyracantha (fire thorn)** **cotoneaster** and **ceonothus** which are often grown as amenity shrubbery, the blooms of which provide much needed pollen and nectar.

In urban parks and gardens **privet** hedges are coming into bloom. Beekeepers loath privet because its nectar produces a bitter tasting honey that is unpalatable to most, but for the bees privet is a good source of forage. Other garden shrubs important as sources of nectar in urban areas include **hebe**, **choiysia**, **pyracantha** and **cotoneaster** – all are popular with bees and are widely planted in urban car parks, and amenity areas around housing developments. The latter two have already by-and-large finished flowering now, but **choiysia**

and **hebe** often have a second flush of blossom and will continue to bloom well into summer.

Urban areas contain many exotic trees which flower after our native species have ceased flowering. These include **sweet chestnut**, **pseudo acacia**, and **Tree of Heaven**. Along railway embankments, **fire weed**, **this-tles** and **teasel** are also blooming.

Right now in my garden, **nepeta**, **geraniums**, **campanulas**, **thyme**, **sage**, **valerian**, **perennial corn flower**, **wall flowers**, **escalonia**, **osteospermums**, **teucrium**, **lamb's lugs**, **oriental poppy**, **knifophia**, **eremus** and **giant echiums** are in bloom attracting large numbers of bees. Soon the **lavender**, **echinops**, **cardoon** and **echinacea** should follow.

This month is a good time to 'Chelsea chop' late flowering perennials to extend the flowering season later in the year and ensure there are still flowers well into autumn for bees. Plants like **helenium**, **belianthus**, **golden rod (solidago)**, **asters**, **dahlia**s and **leucanthemum** can be chopped back by about half. This will encourage multiple new flowering shoots from lower down the stem producing a larger mass of slightly smaller flowers later in the season, extending the forage for the bees and ensuring there is colour in your garden late in the season. Now is also a good time to take green cuttings from plants like **penstemon** which will root fast as long as they are kept moist – their deep tubular flowers are popular with longer tongued bumblebees.

Other plants like **perennial cornflower**, **oriental poppy**, **cat mint**, **sage** and **teucrium** can be chopped back very close to the ground once flowered at the end of this month, fed, watered and mulched they often produce a second flush of new growth and later flowering blooms. Other plants can be encouraged to continue flowering for longer by simply dead heading – removing the fading flowers before they have an opportunity to set seed. The plants desire is to reproduce so it will keep on sprouting new blooms until it does so or the season ends.

Upcoming events

See our [website](#) for an up-to-date version

Sunday 12th June: Monthly meeting: How bees forage (and undesirable nectars)

11:00-13:00 at *The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR*

Our second in-person meeting this year in an incredible location (with bees!)

Howard will lead this meeting on how bees forage including details about undesirable nectars. We will also be able to see the bees at The Foundry.

The COVID-19 situation is ongoing and we will be taking precautions. Please do not come if you are feeling unwell, please wear a mask, disinfect your hands when you arrive (we will provide disinfectant) and we will expect people do keep their distance from each other.

Tuesday 28th June: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at *The Faltering Fullback, 19 Perth Rd, Finsbury Park, N4 3HB.*

Our monthly trip to the pub will be heading to the Faltering Fullback a great pub near Finsbury Park.

Sunday 10th July: Monthly meeting: Honey extraction

11:00-13:00 at *TBC*

This in-person meeting is planned to be a practical demonstration of honey extraction.

The COVID-19 situation is ongoing and we will be taking precautions. Please do not come if you are feeling unwell, please wear a mask, disinfect your hands when you arrive (we will provide disinfectant) and we will expect people do keep their distance from each other.

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:** Simon Saville, admin@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 <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

