



LBKA NEWS



fera 2013 HONEY SURVEY:

A call for information from our bee inspector

Dear Beekeepers,

As usual at this time of year I'm asking for details of your honey crop, which I have been doing now since 2004 and the information gives an interesting guide to how previous seasons have gone with regard to honey crop.

This year's results will again be interesting as in many parts of the SE the spring crop was non-existent, colonies only catching up when the weather changed half way through the year. As always, please make a return even if you didn't collect any honey as this indicates just how difficult beekeeping can be. Please feel free to add notes either in your email or on the form (sent in the same email with this newsletter), which could include comments such as:

- I collected a nuc this season so wouldn't expect a honey crop (new Beekeeper)
- I would normally expect a honey crop of about xxxlbs
- Any other info that may be of interest that would affect the honey crop

This information is also important to inform Defra about the total honey crop and helps to justify decisions regarding funding for beekeeping from government. No personal details will be given to Defra with this information.

Thanking you in advance,

Alan

Alan Byham

Regional Bee Inspector (South East)

National Bee Unit

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OCTOBER IN THE APIARY

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

Feeding syrup to the bees should have been completed by the end of September as the colony will now 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 dysentery over the winter months. A colony should go into winter with at least 15kgms (35lbs) of stores if possible. This will avoid the possibility of the bees dying of starvation in a cold spring.

The bees will start to cluster as temperatures fall. Clustering starts at about 18C and the cluster becomes smaller and more compact as temperatures continue to fall. They form a complete cluster at 13C. Other than this the colony will continue to operate as usual but on a much smaller scale. The queen will still be laying a few eggs, nurse bees nurturing a small amount of brood and 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 leaves the beekeeper to make final preparations for winter. The objective 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 slightly 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. As a result of this, water vapour is produced. If the hive is not adequately ventilated then dampness will 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 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 and 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 waxmoth.



The bees put a lot of work and resources into making the comb. The beekeeper, as custodian over the winter months, has a duty of care to look after this valuable resource until returned to its rightful owners in the spring! Other equipment such as queen excluders, crownboards should also be cleaned and stored the same way.

education@lbka.org.uk

Howard Nichols



OCTOBER IN THE FORAGE PATCH

This month's from the forage patch comes from USA where Mark is currently on a 2.5 week holiday!

Whilst in America I've been able to see many of our popular late summer and autumn garden plants growing in their natural settings. Goldenrod, Rudbeckia, Gallardia, Michaelmas daisy and echinacea are all flowering in their peak here right now and just like back home in London they are proving to be a magnet for bees. In municipal areas around the White House and capital building in Washington, D.C. I've seen a great many Eastern Bumble bee *Bombus impatiens* foraging on ornamental sages just as the buff tails native to London are in my garden at home. Many North American plants are referred to as near natives for they perform a similar niche to Northern European plants and attract similar pollinators. They are highly beneficial to our bees when planted in our gardens as they continue to flower later into the year than most of our UK natives do.

In a recently restored native prairie meadow in north Georgia I've seen large numbers of bumble bees and leaf cutter bees foraging on plants common in our gardens back home. Plants like golden rod which we plant in our gardens to provide late season colour grow as common weeds here- any bare patch of soil becoming colonised. These plants attract large numbers of bees and wasps such as this beautiful blue winged wasp.

One plant I've not seen much of here but is very common back in London is Ivy. Ivy is hugely underrated as an important forage plant for our bees in autumn and represents the last glut of food as winter approaches. Only the tall mature ivy foliage will produce flowers, plants growing laterally along or close to the ground will almost never flower.

Today I passed by the White House where the bee hive in the White House garden currently has 5 supers on it. Later in my travels I'll be visiting some Georgia beekeepers who will be showing me their hives and how they are coping with a particularly bad year for small hive beetle infestation. I'll also be finding out more from them about what their bees forage on and attending one of their Associations monthly gatherings where I'll be tasting some local honey. More on that next month!

Mark's pictures from USA





BBKA assessments and examinations

With the active beekeeping season now over many beekeepers turn to reading and winter lectures as a means of continuing their beekeeping activities. LBKA has a winter programme of lectures and details will also be announced soon. The BBKA has an education system and part of its charitable activities is the continuing education of beekeepers. For those who have been keeping bees for 12 months or more the Basic Assessment is the first stage and I will deal with this in the November newsletter. This assessment is always in the beekeeping season, usually in May or June.

Modular examinations

For those who have taken and passed the Basic then there is a series of written examinations, known as modules. Each one is 90 minutes and these are held in March. For those wishing to take a modular examination then it will be necessary to undertake some form of study during the winter months. Such studies are not onerous (about 3 or 4 hours per week) and details, including all syllabi, are on the BBKA website. If there is sufficient demand (2 or 3 people) then I will arrange a revision course for modules 1 and / or 2. This is likely to be for 5 nights per module in January 2013. Alternatively, if people wish to take a different module then this can be arranged. The course will be revision based and so it is essential that any person(s) who is interested undertake the 3 or 4 hours per week part time study in November and December. By far the best way to do this is to enrol on a BBKA correspondence course, which will lead you through the syllabus. The cost is modest and you will have the benefit of a tutor who will mark your answers and make helpful comments. It is not difficult but does require a little commitment and full details are on the BBKA website within the education section. The main benefit is that the beekeeper understands aspects of beekeeping they may not otherwise have the opportunity to encounter and so broaden and deepen their beekeeping knowledge. A subsidiary benefit is that the beekeeper continues to be actively involved with beekeeping matters during the winter.

Anyone wishing to enquire about taking a module examination next spring please do email me at education@lbka.org.uk or come along to the October Sunday meeting where I will try to answer your queries or allay your fears. This is the time of year that you should decide. It is likely to be too late to start in January.

Howard Nichols

Hiver beer launches, and is looking for honey

Hannah Rhodes, an LBKA member has just launched her own independent craft honey beer; made with honey from independent beekeepers. The idea came while she was at a workshop about urban beekeeping last year, and thus emerged the idea to showcase the story of independent beekeepers and their produce through a craft beer. It's important to Hannah that the beer be of the highest quality and contain only British ingredients. 10% of profits are to be donated to pollinator charities and urban space development projects.

Many of you will have had the chance to taste it at our Summer party where it went down a storm! She's on the look out for honey so if you have any to sell then email her at honey@hiverbeers.com





DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

October Monthly Meeting: Sunday 13th October

11am at [Fairley House Junior School](#), 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

Tips on preparing colonies for the long winter months followed by chat with coffee and cake.

Friday, 25th October: Where's the buzz? Bumblebee ecology and conservation (free event)

18:30-20:00 at Birkbeck main building (room B33, downstairs, use entrance off [Torrington Square](#)).

Talk organised by the Ecology and Conservation Studies Society by **Professor Mark Brown** (Royal Holloway College) as part of **Birkbeck's Autumn lecture series**: "Invertebrates and us - the good the bad and the ugly."

24th – 26th October: The National Honey Show

St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey KT15 2QS. Visit www.honeyshow.co.uk for information on all events, workshops, lectures and transport details

Sunday 8th November: Bulb planting following on from the monthly meeting

The LBKA's first forage planting event: **crocus and other Spring bulb planting** in Archbishop's Park to provide spring supplies of pollen for all pollinators. **All volunteers welcome** - please email Angela Woods (admin@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like to be part of this

