



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## August, 2019

It's August already, main nectar flow has stopped and many beekeepers are in the midst of honey extraction. This month's newsletter looks back at last month, reporting on the Lambeth Country Show (p5) and the BBKA Basic Assessment from a candidate's point of view (p6). Mark continues his blog post on bee nutrition and foraging (p11). And regular items of what to do in the apiary (p7), focus on forage (p8) and a Facebook roundup (p10).

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, David Hankins, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Andrew Slade, and Margaret Wilson.** Thanks to **Martin Hudson** for proof-reading it. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me.

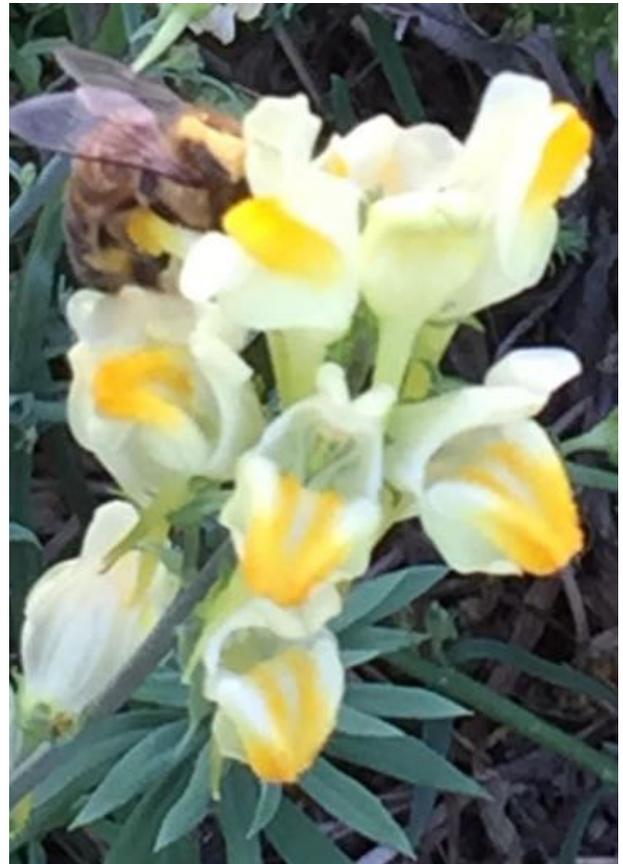
Happy beekeeping.

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

## From our Chair

*Richard Glassborow*  
[chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)

The core purpose of supporting members in their beekeeping activities will always be the core purpose of LBKA. But I dare to suggest the Association's outward facing activities, primarily at this stage, public awareness but also promoting the natural world and environmental improvement, are becoming increasingly visible. If we so choose, there is more to do in all respects but, for me, our stand at the Lambeth Country Show this year was an important marker. We looked good, we looked confident. I don't think it is just bias that made me think we had a real presence on the show-ground.



*Toadflax, popular with honey bees in August especially those on city centre roof tops and brownfield sites as it's often the only thing still in flower. Photo: Mark Patterson.*

But what actually really impressed me more than the swanky new LBKA gazebos was the turnout of members who volunteered to help run the stall: we have never had so many. This didn't just happen of course and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Martin Hudson who, in his first year holding the Event Officer baton, has worked really hard and effectively, recruiting and managing volunteers. And my thanks also to those of you who volunteered, without you LBKA cannot do what it does. Having so many people is not just about practical help or about capacity. It confirms and supports what the Association is and is a tangible reflection of our values. I am sure that will have come across to the public. It certainly felt good to me and I hope you all enjoyed it too.

We have also to thank Martin and again more volunteers, for delivery of another of our growing activities – school visits. Some have been arranged and carried out by individual members and we are looking at ways of further supporting these more in future. During June and July we doubled the programme this year with our partners, School Food Matters, and visited twelve schools. The School Food Matters programme is sponsored by the Wholefood Foundation (this year's fee went a long way towards meeting the cost of the new gazebos unveiled at The Lambeth Show) and SFM are confident it will be supported again next year.

As I pointed out in last month's newsletter, our message is not promoting more beekeeping in London: we take a semi-wild animal into schools and present awe and wonder. We are essentially using honey bees as ambassadors for the natural world. Those of you who have taken part in these visits will know they can be very hard work! But the response from children and teachers is very positive and I hope we can grow our team to provide these visits again next year.

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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!

### August Monthly Meeting: Wax Processing and Summer Social

**August's** Monthly meeting will be at 11:00 on 18th August at **Walworth Garden**, will be on the subject of **wax processing** and will be followed by our **Summer Social** at 12. Entry is by ticket only, but we **may** be able to sell you a ticket on the day if you haven't already got one.

September's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 8th September** back at Fairley House Junior School. It will



*Walworth Garden, the venue for August Monthly Meeting: Wax Processing and Summer Social*

be the new topic of **defensive behaviour in honey bees and how to minimise the chances of being stung**.

### Natalie's pub pick

This month's Pub Social will be from **18:30** on **Tuesday 27th August** at the [Queen's Head](#) on [Theobold Road](#). Don't be put off by the long list of cans and bottles. Also a good range of ales on tap in this little known and friendly pub.

### Exams successes

**Frank Ryan** passed the BBKA Module 2 examination and **Robin Yearwood** passed the BBKA Module 3 examination. **Mark Patterson** passed the BBKA General Husbandary. Well done all!

### Old announcements from July

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

**Congratulations to Andrew Slade, Alison Kings, Adela Vavrecka, Annie McGeoch, Kathy Jo Stevenson, Raphael Larizza, Jeremy Rosie and Rosemary Danielian** for passing their BBKA Basic Assessment.

**Extractors** We have extractors which can be hired 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). Email [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk).

**Beekeeper wanted:** The local vicar at St John's Church (W10) is interested in a beekeeper keeping bees at the Church. Contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) for the contact details.

### Old announcements from June

**Success in Modules 2 and 3:** Congratulations for Frank Ryan (Module 2, Honey Products and Forage) and Robin Yearwood (Module 3, Honeybee Diseases, Pests and Poisoning).



www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Curran, Claf Bony (NNS), Guy Harris, Mia Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Hara, National Biodiversity Data Centre (Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BKAUK)

## 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 sand  
Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends




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 Burgess

**Giant woodwasp (*Ducerus gigas*)**

- Larger than Asian hornet, females 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 (*Vespaula 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 Deceuninck

**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)

**Paid beekeeping opportunity at Ally Pally.** Details are up for discussion, but the proposal is that the beekeeper would train on-site staff, so they can manage the bees in the long term. More details from [development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk).

### Old announcements from May

**Summer Social:** will be on Sunday 18th August at Walworth Garden – put this date in your diaries!

**“Buzzin project”:** If you know young people in Hackney, Islington, Tower Hamlets or City of London aged 10-21 years old who are not in full time work or education and/or suffer from mental health problems, and are interested in getting involved with bees, refer them to [info@apicultural.co.uk](mailto:info@apicultural.co.uk). Mark Patterson is looking for such people to recruit onto a **free** therapeutic beekeeping project he is delivering in Hackney with a local wellbeing charity funded by the Mayor’s Office.

**Bee-vac:** Thanks to **Jon Harris** for his donation of a Bee-vac, which has been added to the list of equipment that LBKA members can hire.

### 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).

## August'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.

*David Hankins*  
[treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)

The August committee meeting was very positive, and almost finished on time – well, sort of!

There was great feedback on LBKA’s attendance at the Lambeth Country Show, and on delivery of the School Food Matters school programme for the year – warm thanks to Martin Hudson and Richard Glassborow for those successes. There were also positive updates on our claiming of Gift Aid on membership subscriptions, and on the purchase of new honey extractors for hiring out to members.

Changes in management at 2 of the 4 LBKA teaching apiaries was discussed, and thanks offered to depart-

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: [BKA website](http://BKA website).

ing managers, Carla Midcap Ramiro and Vlad Zamfir for their hard work and dedication in often difficult circumstances.

Planning for the summer social was completed and preparation for the AGM was started. Winter lecture speakers and dates were unable to be finalised, but that planning should be completed at next month's meeting along with planning for a major update of the LBKA website.

On the trustee side, draft policies on management of volunteers and on acceptance of donations were adopted, and a review of internal financial controls was undertaken – not exciting work, but necessary to the responsible running of a charitable organisation.

## Last month's Monthly Meeting: Foraging including Undesirable Nectars

What happened at our meeting last month.

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

The subject matter of the July meeting was "Foraging including Undesirable Nectars". We started by considering in outline the 4 items that bees forage: nectar, water, pollen and propolis. The textbooks are all in agreement with this but, in fact, there is a 5th item which is honeydew. Honeydew is quite different from nectar and is the sugary secretions by aphids and scale insects. These insects suck the sugar from the phloem of the plant and leave sugary deposits on the outer surfaces which the honey bee forages, usually in the early morning. If honey is viewed as an amazing product produced by an insect then honeydew is an amazing product produced by 2 insects! In the UK it is generally regarded as inferior to honey but in some other countries honeydew is considered to be a superior product. Germany for example has a very large honeydew industry of which it is very protective. As beekeepers find this an interesting subject we examined the foraging of honeydew in depth and also compared the chemical and physical properties of honeydew honey with floral honey as they have different compositions.

We looked at each of the other 4 items that a bee forages, how she goes about this, communicating the sources to other bees in the colony, the apparatus used to bring it back and its processing. For example, all

### Main plants of UK importance to the bees throughout the year, giving details of flowering times

We should know the main forage sources around our apiary

Plant	Flowering period	Pollen /Nectar
Oil seed rape	April/May	P + N
Field Beans	May/June	P + N
Rose bay willow herb	June/July	P + N
poppy	June-August	Pollen only
Lime	June	P + N
Clover	May/June	P + N
Balsam	July/Aug	P + N
Borage	June/July	P + N
Ling heather	August/Sept	P + N
Ivy	October	P + N

A slide from the meeting: pollen and nectar sources throughout the year.



A slide from the meeting: sap-sucking insects produce honeydew that can be collected by bees.

### Examples of poisonous nectar Digitalis(Foxglove) Deadly Nightshade



Slide from the meeting: poisonous nectar (it won't be present in honey in toxic quantities).

the apparatus for collecting pollen is on the tibia and basitarsus of a bee's legs. Collection of nectar, inversion of the sugars and processing and storage in the hive was also covered. 10 of the main foraging plants in the UK were considered along with a typical migratory beekeepers cycle. The latter part of the meeting dealt with undesirable nectars and then poisonous nectars. These nectars are unlikely to cause a problem for the beekeeper as the bees do not forage them in sufficient quantities but they can cause the honey to have a bitter taste, particularly privet (undesirable but not poisonous) which can be foraged in larger volumes. Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) may also be foraged in quantity. There are 2 recognised poisonous nectars in the UK. These are Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*).

The final part of the meeting consisted of a quiz whereby we, as a colony, tested our own foraging skills. We had a series of 25 Powerpoint slides of flowers in bloom, each with a clue. The objective, as a group, was to identify the flower. Our bees would have been impressed with us as we identified 23 out of 25. The meeting finished at its usual time of about 12.15pm whereupon we had our social part which involved not only drinking teas and coffee and eating homemade cake but a tasting of both Honeydew honey and Acacia honey. The Honeydew had a very distinct malt like taste (although some are a lot stronger) whereas the Acacia honey is generally regarded as sweeter than multi floral honeys due to its higher fructose level. At the end of the formal part of the meeting Howard presented certificates on behalf of BBKA. **Frank Ryan** was successful in the March 2019 Module 2 examination and **Robin Yearwood** successful in Module 3. Well done to both!

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## LBKA at the Lambeth Country Show

LBKA were again present – and very busy throughout – at the popular Lambeth Country Show over the weekend of 20-21 July in Brockwell Park. Martin describes our activities over the weekend.

*Martin Hudson*  
[events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)

Lambeth Council has been supporting the Lambeth Country free-to-enter Show in Brockwell Park since 1974, and it now attracts more than 100,000 visitors over the weekend, with hundreds of different stalls offering food, drinks and every imaginable combination of goods, interests and services.



*Opening up on Sunday (putting pegs into the ground).*



*Our smart new gazebos in action.*

The Show has been one of LBKA's main publicity events for a number of years, and this year saw the first outing for our three new very eye-catching white and yellow gazebos, branded with our logo and our message to the public. Richard's research into the best replacements for our somewhat decrepit old gazebo was definitely most worthwhile, because with only four of us, these new ones were a dream to put up – and take down – and were said by many to be the star of the Show!

Despite an ominous downpour just as the Show was 'declared open' by the somewhat incessant guy on the loudspeaker system at 12 noon on the first day, the rain only lasted about 20 minutes and the rest of the weekend was dry, with the stall being incredibly busy throughout both days.

Members' honey and other bee products, as well as LBKA's seed packets were sold throughout the weekend, with honey sourced in very local postcodes proving the most popular. The observation hive again proved the highlight of our attendance, and children (and some adults!) enjoyed rolling nearly 300 beeswax candles during the weekend. Probably over 2,000 of our leaflets about London bees and forage were given away, so we definitely got our message across, once again.



*Always busy...*

Probably thousands of questions about bees were asked of the wonderful army of volunteers who pitched up on Friday night to help set up our stall, who staffed the stall throughout both days from midday until 8 pm, and those who helped to pack up at the end of Sunday and return our equipment to our storage space at Nine Elms.

So – a very big thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who rallied round to help us get our message about the importance of bees across to the public! You know who you are, but a BIG THANK YOU to Philip, Mark, Richard, Julia, Mary, Jean, Charmian, Lisa, Andrew, Annette, Giovanni, Miko, Annie, Helen, Simon, Eugene, Aidan, Angie, John, Jeni, Georges, Craig and Petros. Apologies to anyone I have missed. You ALL did a great job! Thank you.

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## Bee Basic (from a candidate's point of view)

Andrew Slade was one of those who passed the BBKA Basic Assessment. He has written up his experiences.

*Andrew Slade  
LBKA Member*

The BBKA Bee Basic Course gives you a rewarding way to enter the fascinating world of beekeeping. It focuses the mind onto the essential elements of setting up the hive and keeping the bees healthy and productive. It also gives you a little extra confidence. But as all beekeepers will tell you “bees don’t read books”.

Talking to other beekeepers is a great way to learn and all of them will have a tale to tell that defies the textbooks. The initial jumble of jargon and multiple methods begin to fall into place and you start to learn by osmosis.

The LBKA format for the Bee Basic course is tried and tested:

1. Show an interest in the course when the newsletter comes around. There is no commitment at this stage. You will be sent the Reading List and some Course notes for self study over the winter.
2. Start your file with the downloaded pamphlets from the DEFRA website and the course notes. Purchase the recommended BBKA Basic Beekeeping Study Notes and go through them. LBKA Sunday meetings are always helpful with a range of relevant topics. See the Newsletter for details.
3. In Spring LBKA hold three training sessions to go through the syllabus line by line where you get the chance to iron out all those unanswered questions about the course.
4. Finally the Practical Assessment at one of the LBKA training apiaries by a BBKA examiner who is always very kind and helpful.

If you have a year's experience with bees and can fit everything into your schedule it is really worthwhile. Not only does it improve your Beekeeping Cred, it can also open doors when you are looking for a place to keep bees. Some places require it before they allow you to keep bees on their site.

I enjoyed the course and if you are in a position to take it next year just go for it.

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## August 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)

The calendar year commences in January but many beekeepers view the new beekeeping year as commencing in August. The honey has been taken off and the beekeeper is now starting to prepare the bees for winter. The objective for August (and September) should be to put the bees in the best possible position to go into winter.

### Preparing the colony for winter

A significant risk to the colony in winter having too many varroa mites in the hive. The most common form of treatment at this time of year is a Thymol based product such as Apiguard. This needs to be in the colony for a minimum of 4 weeks and is most effective when the outside temperature is greater than 15°C. Early August is the optimum time to treat as the honey has been removed and temperatures are still above 15°C. Other miticides are available. Apiguard has a high efficacy rate for killing mites but it does need to be administered properly to be effective. It is also a veterinary product and so it's essential to follow the application procedure.

### Other winter preparations that may be dealt with in August

**Sound and stable hive.** Hives can be checked to ensure that they are on a stable and level surface. There should be no leaks or gaps as the hive must be waterproof and draughtproof to withstand the extremely testing conditions of winter. August is also a time of robbing by other bees as the nectar supply is scarce. Wasps may also be a nuisance and so there should not be any gaps in the woodwork where they may gain entry.

**Strengthen colony with young bees.** Worker bees

produced from eggs laid in August and September need to live for up to 6 months rather than 6 weeks. A feed of sugar syrup after the honey has been removed and a varroa treatment effectively completed will stimulate the queen into continuing her egg laying whereas, otherwise, she will be decreasing this activity.

### Other action to be taken this month

**Entrance Blocks:** Use entrance blocks to help bees defend the colony against attacks from wasps and from robbing by other bees.

**Stores:** Check that bees still have sufficient food reserves after the honey has been removed.

**Uniting:** Uniting colonies where appropriate. A large colony has a better chance of coming through the winter months than 2 small ones. Beekeepers are often tempted to overwinter 2 smaller colonies with the view to having 2 honey producing colonies next year. This is sometimes a mistake.

**Reuniting colonies.** If you successfully artificially swarmed a colony then the artificial swarm and colony of origin can be reunited. Alternatively, if both are large enough to overwinter then you may choose to leave and so increase your stock.

**Protect and store supers against wax moth.** If you have the opportunity to put super frames in a deep freeze for 48 hours then this will kill all 4 stages of the Wax Moth lifecycle. Take care when removing the frames as they are very brittle until the wax reaches ambient room temperature again. Acetic acid may also be used but special care is required as it is corrosive. Burning of Sulphur strips is another method. These 3 methods may be summarised as follows:

- Freezing: effective against all 4 stages of Wax Moth
- Acetic Acid: effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not always against pupae)
- Sulphur strips: effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not always against eggs)

My own viewpoint is that used brood combs should be burnt and that retention is not compatible with running a hygienic apiary. Conversely, super combs are an extremely valuable resource and the beekeeper should make every effort to look after these on behalf of the bees until next spring.

## Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is from a couple of years ago that we also printed last year.

*Mark Patterson*  
[forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk)

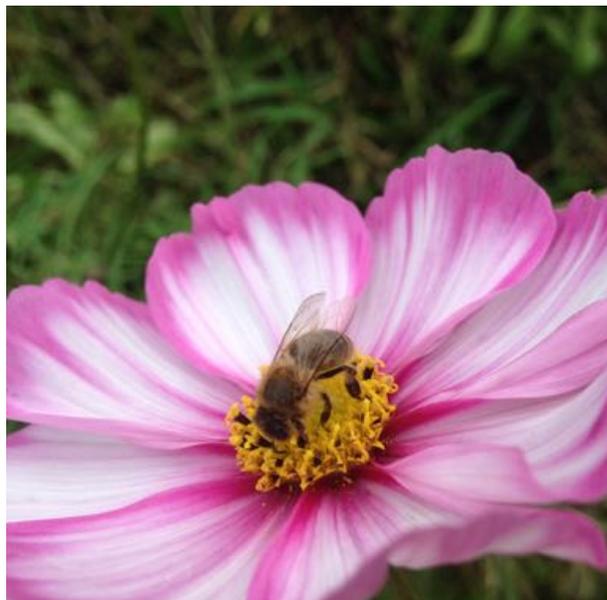
Late summer for the bees is one of the most desperate times of the year when they can struggle the most to find enough food to eat. Many people find this fact difficult to believe as the weather is often hot and sunny and presumably great for the bees but it is in fact often one of the leanest times for the busy insects. At this time of year colonies are large with many mouths to feed and as the beekeeper has removed the honey crop the flowers are also diminishing in abundance meaning the bees can struggle to replace honey which has been taken off. For this reason it's crucial not to be over-greedy and take all the honey leaving the bees with no stores for themselves.

Come late summer the majority of our nectar rich native wild plants have ceased flowering and gone to seed, especially woodland and meadow flowers whose flowering period is in rhythm with the closing of the woodland canopy and cutting of meadows for hay. **Bramble** and all our native trees have also long since finished flowering and are now sporting fruits and seeds leaving little for the bees.

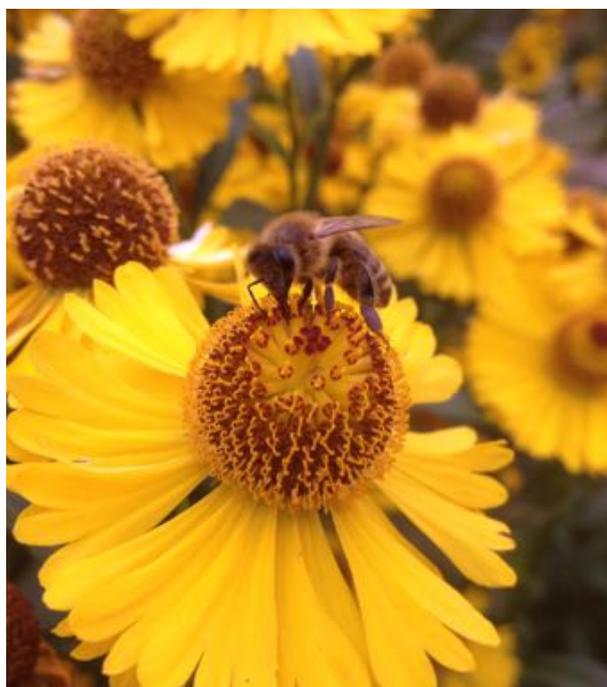
Away from **heather** moorland and **heath**, the only real bountiful sources of forage from native wild plants are **Greater willow herb**, **thistles**, **ragwort**, **bindweed** and **hogweed** – though many of these are early this year and already going over. Along water courses **purple loosestrife**, **marsh woundwort**, **water mint** and the invasive **Himalayan balsam** provide welcome relief but not everyone is in range of such localised sources of forage.

Late summer is one of the largest gaps in forage during the beekeeping season and ends with the brief glut of nectar provided by **ivy** flowering in the autumn. Ivy is the last opportunity for our bees to stock up for winter and for wild pollinators a chance to fuel migrations south to warmer climates or for females to fatten up in readiness for hibernation.

Research conducted by our friends at the University of Sussex has demonstrated that honey bees fly furthest to find forage in late summer with record flights of 12km being undertaken in August. In the case of the Sussex research it was found that honey bees were flying 12km to visit gardens in town centres where domestic gardens and public parks planted with bee friendly summer flowers were providing much of their forage needs. This goes to show just how important our urban gardens are for bees at this time of the year.



*Cosmos.*



*Helenium.*



*Sunflower.*

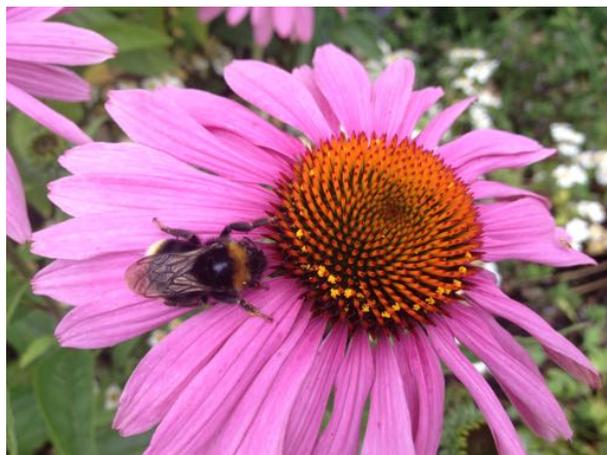
Many garden plants that are great for bees in late summer originate from North America where they grow in prairie habitats and have evolved to flower late in the summer and autumn avoiding the extreme heat experienced earlier in the season. Some good examples include **rudbeckia**, **echinacea**, **solidago** (Golden Rod) of which there are hundreds of varieties, **gallardia**, **penstemons**, **helianthus** (perennial sunflowers), **verbena** – particularly the species *bonariensis* and *hastata*. Probably the most attractive of all the North American plants grown in gardens for bees are the **heleniums**. Known as sneezeworts these late summer flowering perennials come in a variety of colours ranging from yellows, orange and intense reds. They are a magnet for bees and very easy to grow even on relatively poor soils. If 'Chelsea-chopped' in June they can provide a succession of blooms from late July right through to the first frosts of autumn.

Other plants attractive to bees include the **South African Eucomis** or "Pineapple Lily". These plants are bulbous sporting a rosette of fleshy green leaves in summer followed by spikes of pineapple looking flowers in late summer and autumn. They come in a variety of colours from time-green to pink and purple, some with flecks of red on the petals and flower stalk. Bees relish the pollen and nectar they provide and they are very easy to grow, being surprisingly hardy for such an exotic looking flower. Other South African plants attractive to bees include **knifophia** – the red hot poker and Agapanthus. Knifophia have very long flower trumpets which have evolved to be pollinated by sunbirds. The flowers are hot shades of yellow, orange and red specifically to attract these birds which have very long bills and tongues equipped to pollinate the flowers. Whilst none of our native bees have the equipment needed to pollinate the blooms they can still extract the rich nectar from the flowers as it often drips and runs out of the flower trumpet and down the flower stem. **Agapanthus** are of limited usefulness to our native bees but the Common Carder Bumble Bee does seem to like them and I have often seen them foraging on Agapanthus in my own garden.

From South and Central America **cosmos**, **dahlia**s and **zinnia** flowers are very attractive to bees providing nectar and pollen. The best varieties of course are the single open flowered types such as the Bishop series dahlia. My person favourite is "Bishop of Llandaff" with its bright red petals and dark centre covered in bright yellow pollen.

From New Zealand one of the best garden plants this month and widely planted in amenity spaces are the shrubby veronicas we know as **hebe** bushes. Right now hebe "Great Orme" is in flower on housing estates all across London and you can seldom walk past a specimen that's not covered in pollinators. Later on nearer autumn the variety "Autumn Glory" come into its own with its darker purple blooms that persist well beyond the first light frosts of autumn.

From China the *Sedum spectabile* "Autumn Joy" is a



*Echinacea.*



*Golden rod.*



*Rudbeckia.*

staple of gardens across the country in September when its cheerful pink heads of flowers brighten up the garden attracting bees, butterflies and hoverflies in abundance.

Another source of forage for bees in late summer comes in the form of overripe fruits. I have on several occasions witnessed honey bees sipping the sweet juices from bird damaged figs, **blackberries** and **plums** on my allotment alongside wasps and flies. This is probably not a widespread habit among honey bees nor a substantial source of forage for them but it's interesting to see how the bees do take advantage of the most unsuspecting resources during lean times.

This past week whilst walking down a south London street I came across a tall **hibiscus** bush in bloom that was covered in foraging honey bees. This was the first and only time I've ever seen a bee on a hibiscus bush. I have a beautiful purple flowered variety planted in my garden (on the burial site of my long deceased parrot who had purple wings) which fails every year to attract any bees at all and elsewhere I've never seen any bees on hibiscus. This bush I saw the bees foraging on was a white coloured variety with semi double blooms. The bees appeared to be collecting nectar but were getting a good dusting of pale pollen at the same time.

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## Facebook (In)digest(ion)

Some of the highlights from LBKA's [public facing Facebook page](#).

*Eugene Fahy*  
LBKA Member

To begin at the end, Ramazon Bergu [shared a post](#) from Beekeepers World claiming that "76% of all honey sold in the US is fake" which may or may not be #fake news as the statistics do not seem to have been based on a rigorous scientific survey. However, it did elicit some interesting comments about the quality of urban honey in general and London honey in particular. Mark Anthony Patterson (MAP) has had honey samples tested and it seems that most of the contaminants in city hives are not from air pollution but rather from heavy metals and other particles thrown up by construction activities and the contamination is in the pollen rather than the nectar. Since honey is mostly nectar and contains very little pollen, any pollution residues are only trace levels. There is comparatively little pesticide use in cities whereas most rural honey contains pesticide residues, including glyphosate.

There was a timely reminder from Frank Ryan about

the [danger of robbing](#). He removed a few frames from a super and temporarily stored them near the hives in a bin liner. He returned three days to find honey being robbed.

Ismir Malsor [asked about pricing for honey and about selling honey with "bits" in it](#). MAP pointed out that the Honey Regulations 2015 require honey to be sold in grams and honey with "bits" of dead bee or other hive debris is not compliant so needs to be filtered. The typical price charged by members is £8 per 227g jar - that works out at £1 per oz in the imperial world.

If you have ever wondered what a honeybee hive would like [scaled up to human size](#) (and who among us hasn't?) then a post shared by MAP provides some clues. There is an exhibition at the Field Museum in Chicago entitled Fantastic Bugs which features the work of Weta Workshop, who have contributed to films such as Lord of the Rings. Insects were scanned and digitally adapted and the results reviewed by scientists for accuracy. The scans were then used to produce large-scale, realistic models – a painstaking process as the hairs on the bees alone took about two hundred hours to complete.

Angela Woods [shared a story from The Independent](#) about an initiative in Utrecht to plant sedum on the roofs of bus shelters. It is a perennial plant which is highly attractive to insects and the aim is to increase biodiversity, store rainwater and capture dust to improve air quality. The city also runs a scheme which allows residents to apply for funding to transform their own roofs into green roofs.

Geoff Hood [posted a link about the findings of a joint Exeter University and Berkley research project](#) which indicate that "intensive" beekeeping practices do not raise the risk of bee disease or harm the bees but the results only apply to existing diseases and also suggest that intensive beekeeping could accelerate the spread of new diseases.

Finally there were some requests for advice and help and the beekeeping community responded in typical fashion. Rodney Philip asked for suggestions on what to do [if bees build comb under the base of the hive](#). Jono Paynter suggested cutting it out and place inside the hive while Jon Harris said it was a space issue and suggested taking some full frames out of the super and giving them some empty ones to fill, rather than adding another super, which may only end up being half-filled this late in the season.



*Andrena labiata*, a nationally scarce species found in many of London's parks.

## Guest Blog: The Need for Adequate Forage and Nutrition for Honey Bees, part two

This month, our guest blog post is from Mark's "["Agricultural"](#)" blog. This is part 2 of his [blog post](#) about honey bee nutrition.

Mark Patterson  
[forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk)

### How much area of forage does a honey bee hive need to support it?

This is a question I'm asked often and its one without a straightforward and uncomplicated answer.

How big an area depends on the quality of the forage available and the percentage of the area containing quality habitat. Different plants produce nectar and pollen resources at different volumes and the amount they produce changes from area to area with variables including localised weather and climate, soil type, aspect and local plant genetics.

Thanks to recent research by the Welsh Agricultural College, Agriland Project and other academic institutions, we now have available known average pollen and nectar yields and sugar concentration in nectar figures for many of our most important flowering plants. For example we know that Marsh Thistle has one of the highest sugar concentrations and produces one of the largest crops of nectar per hectare and from this you could calculate how much of that one plant variety



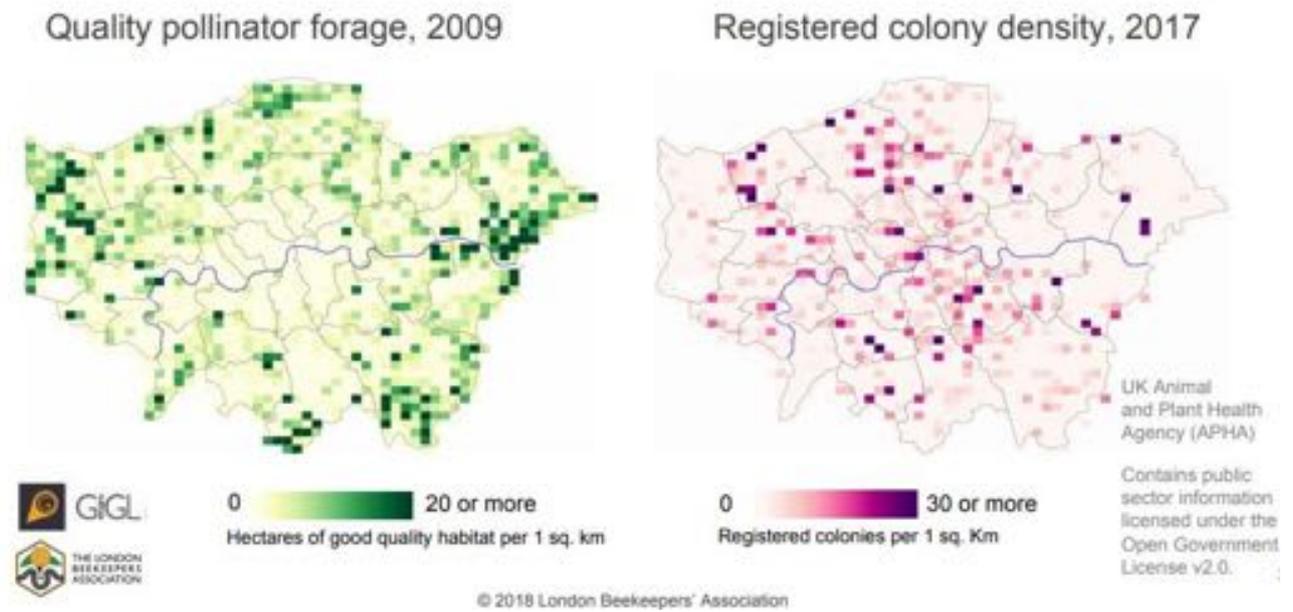
London loses green space twice the size of Hyde Park (outlined in red) each year.

you'd need to supply a hive with its nectar requirements. We also know that Comfrey, Foxglove and Everlasting Pea are similarly in the top ten list for nectar per hectare and sugar content per hectare – yet these are underutilised by honey bees due to the flower morphology which gives them an increased handling cost. We know that an acre of borage will support a honey bee hive whilst it is in peak bloom and similarly that around 800m<sup>2</sup> of Lavender will support a hive whilst in peak bloom.

But these statistics on their own are not very helpful as seldom in the landscape do we find solid blocks of habitat consisting mostly of these plant varieties. More usual is for those plants to be dispersed among many others within a varied plant community in the habitat they occupy. We do not yet have access to typical nectar and pollen yields per hectare for different habitat types which match with the national vegetation classification system. Furthermore even if these plants did occur in large blocks they are typically only in bloom for a short window, whilst with a mixed species assemblage there will likely be something in bloom all year round but they won't all flower in tandem. So answering the question of how much area a hive needs to meet its nutritional requirements is no easy feat.

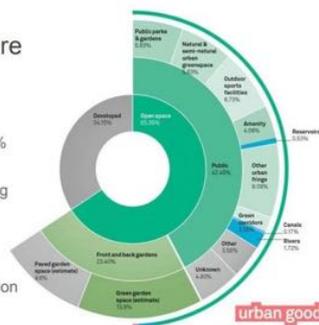
A few organizations have in the past announced publicly that they have cracked the 'bees to flower' ratio

# Comparative distribution of forage and honeybees in London



## How much forage is there in London?

- About 47% green space
- 3.8 million gardens, but only 60% green
- Around 8.3 million trees, covering 20% of Greater London
- 30,000 parks
- Over 1,500 SINC's, covering 31,000ha - 19% of Greater London



Source: GIGL  
Note: "forage" = nectar plus pollen

© 2018 London Beekeepers' Association

A breakdown of green space in London.

but under scrutiny have back-pedalled on their pseudo-scientific statements.

## The state of London's pollinators

London fares quite well in terms of species diversity among bees. About half of the nation's 275+ bee species are found in the capital's parks and gardens. Among them many rare and declining species like the Red Girdled Mining Bee *Andrena labiata*, Priority BAP species like Brown Banded Carder Bee, Moss Carder Bee and several species unique to London within the British Isles. Many of the new species of bee recently added to the UK list have been found in London, among them Vipers Bugloss Mason Bee unique to Greenwich peninsula, Hawksbit cuckoo Bee found on Blackheath Common and European Orchard Mason Bee. Bees are surviving well in London because of the micro climate, extended flowering season, Lower pesticide usage and wide variety of flowers for bees to forage on.

Unlike the Honey bee which is a generalist feeder and

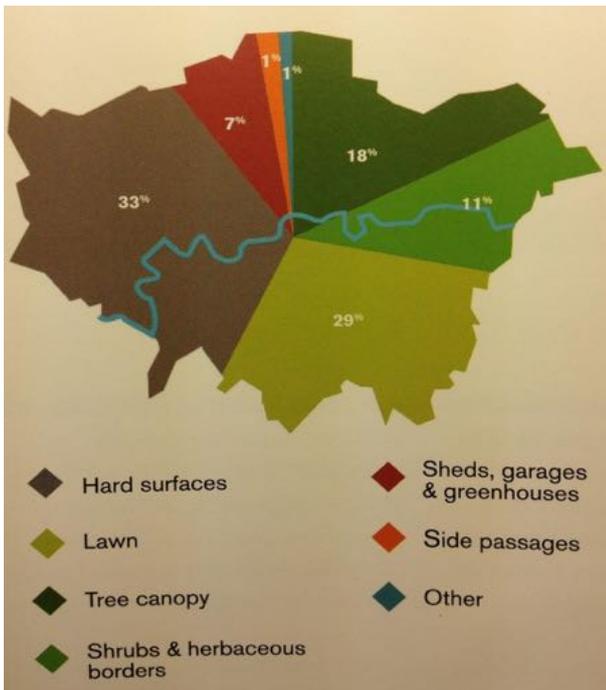
will forage on a very wide range of blooms, many of our wild bees have narrow preferences and some only feed on a single genus of plant or even a single species. These wild bees tend not to travel as far as honey bees to forage and are reliant on smaller more localised patches of habitat to survive. Competition from a greedy super organism like the honey bee can negatively impact them.

To ensure competition is kept to a minimum its important to provide a wide range of flora for these bees to forage on allowing individual species to seek out their own niche. In a healthy environment with high flower diversity wild bees and honey bees will often avoid competition through behavioural or physical adaptations which enable them to dominate a particular set of flower resources but when options are restricted due to low flower diversity competition can increase.

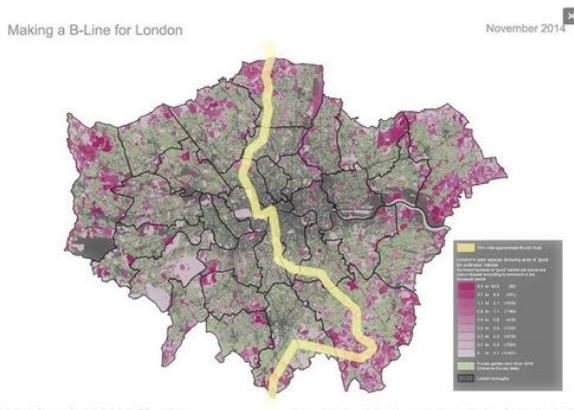
## London's Green Space under the microscope

Whilst London is on the whole a pretty green city much of the green space is of little to no use for pollinators. Much of our parks and green space is shortly mown grass and sterile London Plane Trees offering nothing for bees. An analysis of London's gardens alone tells us that less than 30% of garden surface area is potentially good habitat for bees. Increasingly garden space is covered in impermeable surfaces, gravel, decking or paving.

Pressure on affordable car parking means more and more households are digging up their front gardens and turning it into drive ways to provide parking for cars.



A breakdown of London's gardens shows less than 30% of gardens are herbaceous planting, shrubs and trees which may be of usefulness to pollinators. Taken from London garden city report published by GIGL.



Making a Bee Line for London.

Paving your front garden and adding a driveway can increase a houses value by £20,000.

Every year in London the city loses green space equivalent to an area twice the size of London's Hyde Park.

A breakdown of London's gardens shows less than 30% of gardens are herbaceous planting, shrubs and trees which may be of usefulness to pollinators. Taken from London garden city report published by GIGL.

### What's being done to answer questions about sufficient forage for bees and other pollinators in London?

In 2012, I and other representatives from London Beekeepers Association met with GIS experts from GIGL,

London Wildlife trust, bee scientists from Sussex University, the Bee Collective, Be line for London project and Natural England to explore how we could investigate this subject.

By compiling datasets from green space condition surveys, habitat surveys, known locations of, age and species of London's mapped Trees, records for plants and insect pollinators the partnership were able to create an algorithm that helps us to map London's quality pollinator habitats across the greater London area. A series of maps have been produced which indicate the number of hectares of quality foraging habitat per km<sup>2</sup>.

What the maps tell us is that the city centre is desperately poor on quality habitat to support pollinators. Hyde Park, Regents Park and St James Park barely even register on the maps. Battersea Park, Tower Hamlets Cemetery and the Lea valley offer very high quality foraging areas. Further out Richmond Park looks pretty bleak for pollinators but the upper Thames Valley, m<sup>2</sup>5 western section, Enfield in the North, Thames Gateway and North Downs offer the most abundant foraging area in the capital.

Alongside these maps, LBKA has produced a series of maps showing registered hive density per km<sup>2</sup> which have been created using data received from the National Bee Unit / DEFRA under a licensed information usage agreement. The maps illustrate that despite having the least amount of foraging habitat for bees the centre has very high numbers of bees hives, begging the question where and how far are these colonies having to fly to meet their requirements.

The maps are being used to lobby local authorities and the Greater London Assembly to plant for pollinators where it is most needed and advise beekeepers on areas of the city to avoid placing additional hives. Several 1km squares within the greater London area have over 100 hives per 1km square. The data also helps LBKA decide on which areas to give priority attention for receiving forage planting projects the association delivers.

The message is not about there being too many bees in the city but more about 'are there enough flowers' particularly closer to the city centre.

### Creating Habitat for Pollinators in London

Having studied the disparity between numbers of hives in parts of the city and forage distribution LBKA have been working hard to push their agenda of bees and flowers go together. With both my LBKA forage officer hat on and as a professional ecological consultant, I've been advising lots of London land owners on how to manage land for pollinators, helping them to better manage and improve habitats as well as helping to create new ones.

Some of the projects I've worked on since 2012 include:

- A £12,000 meadow restoration project on Isles of Dogs with LBKA funded by Tesco
- A £4000 bee friendly garden project in Ealing funded by Heathrow Communities for Tomorrow
- A £50,000 bee friendly community project in Ealing funded by Heathrow Fund and HLF
- A number of Wild flower meadows in Hammer-smith and Fulham
- Creation of an Orchard and wild flower meadow for Catalyst homes in Ealing
- Designing and planting bee friendly amenity planting on social housing estates for Catalyst homes
- A £69,000 habitat restoration project in Wandsworth funded by HLF.
- Transforming school gardens into bee friendly spaces
- Creating a £6,000 biodiverse green roof in Ealing.
- A £1000 project in East London planting bee friendly spring bulbs
- Creation of an Urban meadow in Oval
- Management and biodiversity improvements to 2500m<sup>2</sup> green roof for pollinators for a central London client
- Advising LBKC, LBTH, LBS and royal parks on creating pollinator habitats.

One of the more large scale and ambitious projects which is still attempting to gain funding support is the "Bee Line for London" project led by my former colleague Caroline Birchall. This ambitious project aims to establish a 1km wide swath of pollinator planting through the city linking key pollinator habitats in the north with the North Downs in the south. The project has recently been declined a multi-million pound HLF grant with the funders asking to see a smaller scale pilot project delivered successfully before they reconsider the full funding application. Watch this space.

Everyone can help pollinators by doing their own little bit. Pots to parks, every little well-thought through contribution collectively will help pollinators find enough food.

Here are a few things we can all do at home:

- mow our lawns less frequently and raise the cutting height of the blades. This allows lawn flowers like Daisy, Common Geranium, Speedwell, Bugle, Self Heal, Dandelions and Bittercress a chance to flower which provide food for many solitary bees.
- Not closely trim our hedges and shrubs into neat shapes but instead prune more selectively allowing them to flower. hedge plants like Privet and Box Leaf Honeysuckle can be great forage for urban bees if they are allowed to bloom.
- Refrain from heavily pruning street trees like Lime - they take years to recover and bloom after being butchered.
- Plant our window boxes, hanging baskets and other containers with varieties of plant that are

better for bees. There are suggestions on our [web-page](#).

- Stop grubbing up our front gardens to instal non permeable driveways. Not only does this remove potential habitat for pollinators but it also contributes to urban flooding risk and climate change.
- Make better plant choices when planting our gardens - choose simple open type flowers and generally speaking avoid highly bred hybrids and flowers with double blooms (they are all petals and no nectar/pollen).
- Choose plants that bloom early in the season (march to April) and late summer (late July to late August) which is when insects struggle hardest to find enough food.
- Plant a green roof on your shed or bin store roof and plant it with drought tolerant wild flowers and sedums.
- Ditch your neatly mowed lawn and instead create a wildflower meadow which will feed pollinators from March to July.

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## Positive Thinking

This month's edition (issue 24) of BBKA's "Positive thinking" newsletter. Find out the latest news in BBKA's world.

*Margaret Wilson*  
BBKA Chair

It is August already and I do not know where this year has gone, we have had both heat waves and floods last month so I hope that everyone's bees have been kept safe, out of the heat and floodwater.

On Monday the 5th August the Executive Committee met to go through next year's budgets, it is always difficult trying to guess which organisation will be increasing their charges and managing that within the anticipated income. Will the membership increase, decrease or stay as it is, sometimes a crystal ball would be good to help with this however we do this every year and the past few years we feel that we have managed to keep the reigns tight on expenditure so here is hoping that we can do the same next year.

One item that I take responsibility for is the 'Third Party' Insurance for our members, in my first year as a Trustee I managed to get a rather large reduction on previous years costs and thankfully the quotation for 2020 will not show an increase in these costs. Can I also mention at this point that the third party insurance does not cover your equipment, that is available through [Buckland Harvester Insurance](#).

We also have a link on our web site for it and you can

insure up to £5,000.00 of equipment for just £12.00 per year. Your Branch Apiary would also benefit from that type of insurance as well. For the peace of mind this is very little outlay.

This year we have changed our Auditors, we had asked for quotations ready for the budgets but Baldwin's had doubled their costs so we went to the market place, interviewed other firms and have selected Harrison Beale & Owen who are local to Stoneleigh with a much more competitive rate for the audit, they will also be available for advice as and when it is needed.

I would like to add a small item to this newsletter which is nothing to do with the BBKA, but I think is very interesting, my neighbour is always trying new things in his greenhouse and garden and his latest project was to use Honey to get cuttings of shrubs and bushes to grow well. He had heard that if you take a hardwood cutting from a bush and dip the end in Honey and then push it into a potato and bury this into compost or soil then the cutting will grow quite strongly, he did take out all the 'eyes' in the potato to prevent that from growing but every cutting taken that way has been successful. Yet again another fantastic result for beekeepers and Honey.

Back to BBKA. . . we have appointed the design team for the Apiary at Stoneleigh, Isola Garden Design Ltd, they are situated in a building to the rear of our offices and their quotation was by far the best. I believe they have taken into account that future clients will be able to see the results of their work when they visit their offices as the apiary is just a couple of minutes away from their own establishment. In some ways they had to make sure to get the contract otherwise their future clients would wonder why not as they are so close to us.

I recently wrote about the fantastic Schools who want to be our 'Beacon Schools' so that they can help other schools to start beekeeping, sharing their experience and knowledge, the two schools are Ashbrow and Heron Hill. Both Stephen Barnes and Anne Rowberry have agreed to develop a beacon school criteria for other schools. Also at the last committee meeting it was agreed to offer a donation of £500 to these two schools in order that they can provide transport for their pupils to come to the Spring Convention. It is so important that we encourage youngsters to learn about beekeeping as they will be part of the future beekeepers of the UK.

Finally I have been asked to circulate the information below, I hope you find it interesting.

*For the sixth consecutive year, we are organizing the European Bee Award. For this 2019 edition, we are again looking for individuals, farmers, landowners, research institutes, private or public organizations with an innovative project that aims to protect pollinators and help on reducing the impact of farming operations on bees.*

*Two categories are rewarded with a €4,000 prize and one with a diploma of recognition. You can find more information [here](#). Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested or have any questions. Kind regards,*

*Athéna Lefebvre, Award Coordinator*

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## 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.

**Emily Abbott:** I run Hive & Keeper Ltd a company that sells single apiary/harvest honeys from small scale beekeepers around the country. Jars are labelled with the honey's main flavour, the name of the beekeeper and where the apiary is. Hive & Keeper currently works with about 30 keepers and your honey would be enjoyed by people across the country. Let me know if you have honey you want to sell, but don't want to jar and sell it yourself. We buy 30lb buckets (a minimum of 3). Check out <http://www.hiveandkeeper.com/> or email [emily@hiveandkeeper.com](mailto:emily@hiveandkeeper.com).

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## Upcoming events

### Sunday 18th August: Monthly meeting: Wax processing and Summer Social

*11:00-16:00 at Walworth Garden (206 Manor Pl, Braganza St, SE17 3BN)*

Wax processing followed by the spectacular Summer Social. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association. The social is for members only and will be selling tickets.

### Tuesday 27th August: Pub social

*18:30-22:30 at The Queens Head, 64 Theobalds Rd, Holborn, WC1X 8SF.*

This month's Pub Social will be at the Queen's Head.

Don't be put off by the long list of cans and bottles. Also a good range of ales on tap in this little known and friendly pub.

## Sunday 8th September: Monthly meeting: Defensive behaviour in honey bees

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

New topic, where we will learn more about defensive behaviour in honey bees and how to minimise the chances of being stung. 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)
- **Resources:** Tristram Sutton, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@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)

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

