

Somerset Bee-keepers' Association NEWSLETTER



bee on blackthorn - courtesy of moorhen.me.uk

Early Spring

The signs of Spring did come early this year, with warm temperatures, winter honeysuckle open from December and Blackthorn appearing in the third week of February. But be prepared. This is the hardest time of year for a lot of creatures. Their winter provisions are depleted or finished and the new season is not yet providing as much as is needed.

Bee Craft have issued a warning, suggesting that beekeepers heft their hives to ensure adequate stores. If not - feed with fondant, which can be bought or made very easily.



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www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

AUCTION

OF SECOND HAND

BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT

RUISHTON VILLAGE HALL, NEAR TAUNTON

SUNDAY 23rd MARCH

COMMENCES 2.00PM - PROMPT

ITEMS RECEIVED FROM 10.00AM - 1.30PM

REFRESHMENTS - AMPLE CAR PARKING AVAILABLE

Spring Auction

This is an ideal opportunity for anybody who is in need of some second hand equipment, maybe because they are just starting out in beekeeping, or they are thinking of expanding. There are bargains to be had. It is also a good place for those, who are reducing the number of their colonies, and want to shed some supers, brood boxes, or other equipment.

If you are in any doubt about the suitability of your intended purchase, or if it will represent value for money, my two pieces of advice are:

- Go prepared - research retail prices or take a supplier's catalogue
- Consult any of the experienced beekeepers who will be there.

This way you can be assured that the pigs are left in their pokes.

Pollen Not an Ingredient of Honey

Conservative MEPs today defeated a bid by eco-zealots to get pollen officially designated an ingredient of honey. The unrealistic and damaging move would have added hugely to the cost of commercial honey production and put many small-scale beekeepers out of business. No beekeeper or producer deliberately adds pollen to honey as an ingredient, but it is unavoidably found in small amounts as a natural constituent.

It is illogical to consider it anything other than a constituent - but the false proposition was championed mainly by far-Left and Green Party activists through blinkered hostility to genetic modification. They were backed by British Labour Party MEPs.

Conservative agriculture spokesman Julie Girling led opposition to the proposal and said: "It is a relief for everyone involved in beekeeping or honey-production that this ridiculous suggestion has been seen off.

It was driven forward by the eco-fanatics without any regard for the practicalities- or even the truth - and would have caused untold damage."



In September 2009, following the discovery of pollen from GM maize in honey, a court case ensued resulting in a ruling from the European Court of Justice that pollen is an ingredient, throwing honey production into a state of legal limbo.

Mrs Girling became the Parliament's lead MEP in drafting a legislative response to clarify matters. She proposed an outright reversal of the court decision in form of legislation to declare pollen a constituent - but militant Green MEPs on the Environment Committee swung a vote to turn her report on its head and make it an ingredient. Today a majority of MEPs supported

Mrs Girling in reinstating her original proposals - although British Labour MEPs opposed her and insisted on backing the damaging "ingredient" court decision.

During a debate in Strasbourg this week Mrs Girling, Conservative MEP for the South West, said: "With all due respect to the court, this isn't true, and any beekeeper will tell you so.

Honey is considered by producers and consumers alike to be a wholly natural product, made entirely by bees and free from human interference. To define pollen as an ingredient would go in sharp contrast to consumers' beliefs and would cause reputational damage to honey by implying that its production is not a wholly natural process. She warned that environmental fanatics wanted some honey labelled as food produced from GMOs. They thought they would score a small victory in the fight against GMOs, despite the honey sector becoming collateral damage. But they would not assist consumers as claimed. And she concluded: "If they truly want transparency - lying to consumers by stating that pollen is an ingredient isn't a good start."

From our press officer



Rare bumblebee at risk on Somerset Levels

Conservationists are anxiously waiting for Spring to see if the very rare shrill carder bumblebee has survived on the Somerset Levels. The current population was teetering on the brink

of dying out on the low-lying moors before this winter's severe flooding. Professor Dave Goulson, founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, told beekeepers at Somerset Beekeepers' annual lecture day held at Cheddar (February 15) that these bees were at risk. He said: "This species used to be

widespread but now they can only be found in small numbers in seven locations in England and Wales. We have to wait and see if the population in Somerset has perished in the water.”

The other speakers concentrated on the honeybee. A British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) examiner and education champion, Gerry Collins, gave two highly informative and entertaining talks about helping the audience to become ‘better beekeepers’.

Husband and wife speakers, Ian and Ruth Homer, who are both trustees of the BBKA and highly experienced beekeepers, kindly stepped into the breach after other speakers were unable to reach Somerset because of the bad weather.

Regional Bee Inspector Simon Jones, along with Seasonal Bee Inspectors Meg Seymour and Eleanor Burgess ran a clinic providing help and advice about bee diseases.



The founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Prof Dave Coulson, was the guest speaker at the annual lecture day of BKA, with David Pearce (second left); Caroline Butter, President of BKA (left) and Jackie Mosedale, Chair of SBKA.

Honeybees rescued from flood water on the Somerset Levels

Somerset beekeepers have been braving the flood water on the Somerset Levels to rescue their colonies. Brian Maskell, from Westonzoyland and a committee member of the Quantock Beekeepers Division, had to launch his canoe in order to check his colonies. He kept his bees on the site of the Battle of Sedgemoor, which has been transformed from a field to an inland



sea this winter. Sadly one of his two colonies has drowned but the other, with a special pedigree queen bee, is battling on.

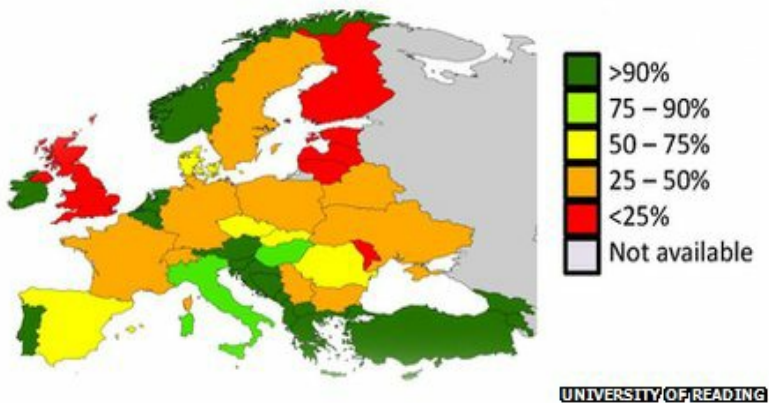
Ken Edwards, Secretary of Quantock Beekeepers, said he was particularly pleased that this colony had survived: "Four years ago Westonzoyland Women's Institute decided to support local honeybees and donated a 'Buckfast' pedigree queen bee to Brian. "The group called the bee Queenie and Brian gave them regular updates about her welfare. Last year she was superseded by one of her daughters and the colony was well prepared for the winter."

The apiary has never been flooded before but Brian will not be able to thoroughly inspect the rescued colony until late March because of the natural over-wintering behaviour of honeybees. Like several other divisions, Quantock Beekeepers are preparing to help members who have lost bees as a result of floods and will run a queen rearing programme to provide replacement bees in late the Spring.

Meanwhile, Chris Harries of Sedgemoor Honey Farm at Creech St Michael, near Taunton, had to put on waders to get to some of his bees kept at West Lyng. He said: "We had to wade waist-deep through the rising flood water to remove five colonies that were under water. At the moment it's too cold to assess brood nest damage, but some appear to be still alive."

In more than half of European countries, there are not enough honeybees to pollinate crops, according to new research. Scientists believe that a boom in biofuels has sparked a massive increase in the need for pollination. The shortage is particularly acute in Britain which has only a quarter of the honeybees required. Researchers believe that wild pollinators including bumblebees and hoverflies are making up the shortfall.

Percentage supply of honeybees relative to demand



Food for fuel

The number of honeybees in the UK and elsewhere has been in decline in recent years, with both pesticide use and disease being blamed for losses. Across Europe though, overall numbers of honeybee colonies increased by 7% across 41 countries between 2005 and 2010. But in the same period, the area of bio-fuel feed crops, like oilseed rape, sunflowers and soybeans, increased by almost a third. "There have been big increases in lots of countries with oilseed rape," said lead author Dr Tom Breeze from the University of Reading. "In Greece in 2005, there were a few hundred hectares grown, but since then it has exploded because they can get bio-fuel subsidies for it." The scientist says that the deficit across Europe now amounts to 13.4 million colonies or around seven billion honeybees.

The research suggests that much of the work is now being done by wild pollinators including bumblebees, solitary bees and hoverflies.

Britain is one of the countries with the biggest shortfall - only Moldova, with an economy 300 times smaller than the UK, has a bigger honeybee shortage.

Little is known about the number of wild pollinating species as they are not being monitored in the UK. The researchers believe this reliance on them could be hampering yields and putting UK crops at risk. "We face a catastrophe in future years unless we act now," said Prof Simon Potts, from the University of Reading, a co-author on the paper. "Wild pollinators need greater protection. They are the unsung heroes of the countryside, providing a critical link in the food chain for humans and doing work for free that would otherwise cost British farmers £1.8b to replace."

The UK apple industry is particularly dependant on pollinators say the researchers. The wild creatures add £37m a year to the value of just two varieties of British apples, Gala and Cox.

The full study is published in the journal Plos One. www.plosone.org

British Beekeepers Association

WORKER BEE



2014 Swarm Collectors – Register Now!

The process has commenced for creating the BBKA Swarm List for 2014 and we need YOU to submit your name and details to your Association Secretary for inclusion on the list to ensure the maximum national coverage.

The BBKA Website Swarm List contains contact details of BBKA members who are willing to assist or provide advice about swarms of honeybees to the public. The system has proved to be a very useful as it is very easy to



use/access by anyone with a computer and Internet access. The BBKA Swarm List covers the whole of the UK and it complements all Association/Branch locally arranged systems or services. In 2013, 35,847 people used this facility, thus proving that it is a valued service.

Whilst the system provides contact information for beekeepers, their contact telephone number and distance from "swarm" no other information is provided. Please have a look at the Swarm List System on the [BBKA Website](#) for more information. All suitably qualified and experienced beekeepers can be included on the BBKA Swarm List

and more information will be distributed to Associations and Branches in mid-February but how you could help in the meantime is to inform your association/Branch Secretary that you would like your details to be included on the BBKA Swarm List.

Since the launch of the new BBKA Website and the revised Swarm List, there have been some reservations expressed by members and Associations so if I can help to clarify any points, address any misgivings or answer questions, I am very willing to either discuss or meet with any member or Association to listen to points and possible solutions because this service is provided by members for the benefit of members. One "sting in the tail" is that whilst the main function of the swarm list was for exactly as stated, whilst talking to an elderly person last year, the person stated that the swarm website was a good place to find local beekeepers and therefore local honey!

Thank you

David Teasdale – ***BBKA Trustee & Chairman of the Website Working Group***

An Important Date for your Diary - Saturday 20th September

The Somerton Division has been asked to host this year's Somerset County Honey Show, which will be held at Long Sutton Village Hall near Somerton on Saturday September 20th starting at 1.00pm. The hall is a spacious facility with plenty of space outside for parking (free) and also for the wide range of stalls, which will make up the outside farmer's market. There will be something for all the family, not just the beekeeper, but at its heart will be bee produce, beekeeping equipment, and bee-friendly plants to name but a few.



Inside will be the traditional County Honey Show with all our old favourites enabling us to show off our honey, wax, mead and all the other classes that make up a Honey Show. There are also a host of other classes for cakes, jams, pickles, and bread so the non-beekeeping members of the family can join in too. There are also Children's Classes.

Our refreshments team will be working hard all through the Show to provide delicious refreshments during the afternoon. The judges are booked, the schedule is virtually ready and will be published soon. Is there anything missing? Only one thing is missing so far, you. This is our chance to come together to show Somerset Beekeeping and Somerset Beekeepers at their best. There will be an award for the Entrant from each Division, who wins the most points in the Show, and we are planning an Inter-Divisional competition for the best decorated hive, and we would be pleased to hear from you with any ideas that you would like to see included. At the moment I am planning to visit each of the Divisions to speak to the members and encourage them to be part of a great day out; if you haven't already seen me then hopefully it won't be long before I appear at one of your meetings. At the time of writing I am half way through my visits, and look forward to meeting you.

If you have any questions or suggestions that you would like to make then please contact me, Joe King, Honey Show Secretary, on 01749 890357. I look forward to seeing you on the day.

Dates for your Diary



March

Sat 8th	Somerset	2014 AGM - Shrubbery Hotel, Ilminster - 2.00pm
Wed 12th	Frome	Restoration of English & German orchards - D. Keech
Thur. 13th	Somerton	X ray vision to research honeybees - Mark Greco - 7.30pm
Fri 21st	Mendip	My beekeeping year - Ged Marshall - 7.30pm - Chilcompton
Sun 23 rd	Taunton	Spring Auction - Ruishton Village Hall - 2.00pm
Sat 29 th	South East	Preparing for showing - Suzy Perkins - Charlton Musgrove - 2.30

April

4 th - 6th	BBKA	Spring Convention - Harper Adams College
Wed 9 th	Somerset	Special Lecture - Hazlegrove School, Sparkford - 7.30pm
Thur 10 th	Somerton	Bee health for the months ahead - Eleanor Burgess - 7.30pm

May

Sat 10 th	Somerset	SBKA Council Meeting - Quantock apiary, Spaxton - 2.30pm
28 th - 31 st	Somerset	Royal Bath & West Show, Shepton Mallet

Members are welcome to attend the meetings of any SBKA division, but it is suggested that you check with the host or secretary as the time or venue may have changed. Further details are often available on the website or divisional newsletters. This list is taken from the Yearbook and may have changed or been added to since it was originally published.

Secure Sites for Hives



Over the last 12 to 18 months I have been working with various partners to improve foraging opportunities for bees in partnership with the corporate sector. What has transpired from this is not only 300+ acres of land being planted for honey bees and other pollinators but opportunities for BBKA Members. ALL of those detailed below are offering secure sites for you to use many have been planted with nectar and pollen rich successional forage.

Whether you seek an apiary for Queen rearing, Quarantine, Association, Overflow or personal use; to take advantage of these opportunities please go to the members area of the BBKA website to find the appropriate contact.

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The newsletter is also available on the SBKA web site www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

Copy deadline for next newsletter: 26th Feb 2014

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