About Somerset Beekeepers’ Association (SBKA)

* SBKA is a volunteer-run members' organisation and Registered Charity that represents the interests of beekeepers in the county.
* Founded in 1906, SBKA educates, advises and brings together more than 850 beekeepers and raises awareness of issues affecting honeybees.
* SBKA is made up of 12 affiliated Divisions; many Divisions run taster days and courses for beginners each year
* Most of our members have just a few colonies producing modest amounts of honey
* SBKA and some of the Divisions take part in annual events including:
	+ Royal Bath & West Show
	+ Taunton Flower Show
	+ Dunster Show
	+ Mid Somerset Show

About honeybees

* A colony of honey bees is a superorganism! All the bees have to work together for the colony to survive; no single bee can survive alone.
* The colony has one queen (who lays the eggs), and, at the peak of summer, approximately 3,000 drones (males) and 50-60,000 female worker bees. Remaining drones are killed in the autumn and the colony has about 5-7,000 workers to keep it going through the winter.
* Honey bees collect pollen, nectar and water to feed themselves and their larvae. By doing so they pollinate one third of our food eg fruit, flowers, vegetables and crops.

Honey

* One colony can produce 60lb (27kg) of honey or more in a good season; however an average season yields around 25lb (11kg) and a bad season nothing at all!
* A strong colony can produce up to three times more honey than it needs.
* Bees fly about 55,000 miles to make just one pound of honey, that’s one and a half times around the world!

Pollination

* About a third of the food we eat has been pollinated by honeybees and other pollinating insects
* The value of insect pollination to the UK is £690 million per year; without the wild pollinators it’s been estimated that it would cost British farmers £1.8 billion per year to carry out essential pollination by hand. The number of honeybees in the UK is only capable of supplying 34 per cent of the country’s pollination needs, falling from 70 per cent in 1984. <https://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/food-security/CFS_Case_Studies_-_Sustainable_Pollination_Services.pdf>

Threats

* Pests and diseases, loss of habitat and pesticides are all giving pollinators a tough time
* The most recent threat is the Asian hornet, which arrived in the UK in 2016; beekeepers are currently monitoring the situation. For the latest news: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208>
* Varroa mites arrived in the UK in 1992 and are still causing a major problem to the health of honeybee colonies; beekeepers manage the problem by using integrated pest management techniques.