



LBKA NEWS

LBKA SUMMER SOCIAL: SUNDAY 18TH AUGUST

The 2013 LBKA Summer Social is next weekend at **Walworth Garden Farm (pictures below)**.

The Members' Survey told us how important meeting and chatting to other beekeepers is to you all, and the Summer Social is a great opportunity to do just that.

We'll have professionals on the **BBQ, entertainment** for the family, and the Committee behind a **free bar!** **Tickets £6 on the day.** Email Emily at communications@lbka.org.uk to give us an idea of numbers and so we don't run out of baps on the day!

IMPORTANT: The August Monthly Meeting is at Walworth Garden Farm at 11am, Sunday 18th August, selling Apiguard, with the party straight after so get your family and friends along and indulge in bee-talk with others who understand your passion!





AUGUST IN THE APIARY

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

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 from now on in 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 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 15C. Early August is the optimum time to treat as the honey has been removed and temperatures are still above 15C. This year a new alternative is on the market, MAQS strips, using formic acid as the miticide.

Other winter preparations that may be dealt with in August are:

Sound and stable hive.

Hives can be checked that they are on a stable and level surface. There should be no leaks or gaps as the hive must be waterproof and draught proof 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 will stimulate the queen into continuing her egg laying whereas, otherwise, she will be decreasing this activity.

Other action to be taken this month include the following:

- Use entrance blocks to help bees defend the colony against attacks from wasps and other bees.
- Check that bees still have sufficient food reserves after the honey has been removed.
- Uniting colonies where appropriate. A large colony has a better chance of coming through the winter months than 2 small ones.
- Reuniting colonies. If you successfully artificially swarmed a colony then the artificial swarm and colony of origin can be reunited.
- 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 waxmoth 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.





AUGUST IN THE FORAGE PATCH

August is usually a lean time of year for our bees. Almost all the nectar producing trees have long since gone out of flower, most of our native wild flowers have completed their reproductive cycle and gone to seed and the autumn flowers are yet to emerge. The absence of substantial forage is made worse by the fact August is usually a dry month. The recent heat wave lasting several weeks has seen many areas of wild flowers and garden flowers alike either with them their pollen and nectar. When soil moisture is in short supply plants will simply cease nectar production as they attempt to conserve precious water.

Deeper rooted wild plants like spear thistle, knapweeds, Burdock offer a life line to our bees. In damp areas along canals, rivers and ponds Purple loosestrife, hemp Agrimony, water mint and Marsh Woundwort may attract bees.

August is the month when bees rely most heavily on our domestic gardens and public planting areas to find their forage. Garden plants such as Verbenas, heleniums, echinacea, echinops, salvias, penstemon and lavender will attract bees in droves.

At this time of year bumble bee colonies are producing new Queens and drones which you may spot visiting your garden flowers. Many solitary bees such as the plasterer bees of the colletes family, leaf cutter bees of the Megachile family and wool carder bees are most active this month. These bees not only rely on plants for pollen and nectar but many rely on very specific plants for materials used in their nest construction. Watch out for the highly territorial wool carder bee which collects plant hairs from garden plants such as Stachys ' lambs lugs' and is fond of flowers such as catmint, red dead nettle and other plants of the laminacea family.

Water is also crucial to bees in August and foragers may travel very far to reach water if non is available nearby. Make sure you provide your bees with a shallow dish if water.

My favourite plants of the month are Agashachi black adder - the undisputed no.1 favourite among bees and globe thistle Echinops 'ritro'.

Going into September heleniums, penstemons, cosmos, single Dahlia's and Michaelmas daisy become increasingly important.





BBKA Basic Assessments: How did we do?



This year a total of 16 LBKA candidates took part in the BBKA Basic Assessments. This is both a practical and oral assessment and lasts about 1 hour. The candidate is asked assemble a frame, light the smoker 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 questions about the colony contents. After going through the brood frames the candidate then puts the hive back together 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. LBKA members are actively encouraged to take this assessment as it is recognised as a substantial step forward in beekeeping education. The entry fee is £15 and we will even refund this to all successful candidates.

The process started by potential candidates being given electronic course notes in November. 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 3 x 2 hour revision sessions at Roots and Shoots and went through the syllabus item by item. By the last session we had the assessment dates arranged and each candidate was allocated a date and time. By this time a candidate had discovered a far superior set of electronic notes produced by another beekeeping association and these were also circulated.

So, on to the actual assessments. These were held over 4 days in May and June at an apiary in Streatham, south London. Each day 4 candidates were assessed.

The 1st session was on 11th May. The day before the temperature was an unbelievable low 2 Centigrade but the forecast was for a substantial rise to 15 Centigrade the following day. The day before involved an intense behind the scenes discussion with the assessor as to whether to cancel the following day's assessments. It was decided to leave until the day of the assessments and in the hope that the forecasts would be correct and the temperature would rise. The meteorologists were correct and the following day was 10C early on and rising to 15C later. It was difficult to believe the weather had been so cold only a few hours before.

Candidates arrive and depart throughout the day; each candidate arriving 1 hour before the allotted time so as to ensure the assessor will not be kept waiting if anyone is delayed. The 1st candidate arrived and, upon opening her allotted colony found a sealed queen cell. This colony had been checked for queen cells 4 days earlier but only by checking between the upper and lower brood boxes. 9 times out of 10 this is sufficient but this was an exception and 2 queen cells were on the bottom of the lower frames. As the cell was sealed the concern was whether the colony would swarm during the assessments, the bees having been waiting for the weather to improve. Both candidate and assessor then each managed to get stung as they sat next to a small pond adjacent to the apiary for the oral part of the assessment, without realising this was the bees' water source.



BBKA Basic Assessments: How did we do?

At 12.15pm the colony with the queen cell decided to swarm. Apart from the drama of the event it provided the next candidate with an opportunity to practice collection of a swarm. Each candidate's oral questions are predetermined on a computer generated list (not chosen by the assessor) and this particular candidate did, by co-incidence, face a question on collection of a swarm. From then on the day and subsequent days went smoothly and without drama or incident. In fact, one candidate brought along a copy of the just published BBKA News to show another candidate that the other had an article printed in the issue. Not a thumbnail article by the way, but the best part of 3 pages about bee forage in London. This caused much interest amongst candidates and assessor alike. The first day had commenced at 10.00am and finished about 5.00 pm. It was repeated a further 3 times and by mid – June all candidates had been assessed (continued...).

“In the end is my beginning”! How did we do? As already stated a total of 16 candidates took this assessment. A total of 16 candidates passed. 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 and the LBKA would like to thank all its mentors, past and present, for participating.

On behalf of the LBKA, I would like to thank both of our assessors, Pam Hunter from Sussex and Bob Smith from Kent. Both travelled a considerable distance and freely gave of their time and expertise so that all candidates could be assessed. It is greatly appreciated by all of us.

Finally, anyone who has kept bees for a minimum period of 12 months and wishing to undertake this assessment in 2014 can register by giving his or her name and email address to any committee member. Further details will be given in an autumn newsletter.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

August Monthly Meeting: Sunday 18th August

11am at Walworth Garden Farm, Braganza Street, London SE17 3BN

We'll be selling Apiguard , and talking about preparing for winter.

Sale of Apiguard:

This will be on sale at £2.50 per sachet, and each colony requires 2 sachets as treatment.

The cost to us works out at £2.38 per sachet. It is not practical to sell this in quantity at exactly £2.38 and so we charge a round £2.50 with the small surplus being donated to Bees for Development, a registered charity supporting beekeepers in the third world. The LBKA purchases this as a service to its members, not as a profit making venture.

LBKA Summer Social: Sunday 18th August

1pm at Walworth Garden Farm, Braganza Street, London SE17 3BN

Let us know you're coming so we get enough food in! Email communications@lbka.org.uk

Thames Festival : 14th & 15th September

The LBKA will have a stand where members are able to sell their honey or other products of the hive. We'll be Near Tower Bridge. We're looking for volunteers as well as people to sell their honey - please email communications@lbka.org.uk if you can help or want to sell anything.

2013 Essex Conference: Saturday 21st September.

Epping Forest Beekeeping Association are hosting the conference this year and have extended the invitation to LBKA members too. Here's a link to all the details:

<http://eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk/conference/>