



The London Beekeepers' Association LBKA News

September, 2024

After the social of summer... it's honey extraction season! We ran a honey extraction workshop last week and we continue the honey theme this week with Claire O'Brien showing us how to show honey and a honey tasting of each others' honey. For those with bees and honey, we hope it is going well. The other aspect of honey is nectar. We've reinstated our pollinator fund where we providing funds for applicants to plant flowering plants for pollinators. Do consider applying or passing onto someone else who has the space for such forage.

The AGM is coming up and we are looking for more help either on or off the trustees and committee. Please read the section on page 2.

In the newsletter this week, Richard's monthly piece makes a welcome return (page1), Mark recounts a severe case of honey robbing (p6), we have updates on LBKA's apiaries (p11) and regular items on what to do in the apiary (p8) and Mark telling us what's in flower (p8).

From our Chair	1
Announcements	2
September's Committee meeting	5
Daylight Robbery	6
September in the Apiary	8
Focus on Forage	8
LBKA Apiaries in September	11
Upcoming events	12
Trustees	12

Thank you to this month's contributors: Sharon Basse, Annie McGeoch, Richard Glassborow, Alessio Imperato, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Andrew Slade, Ian Shackleton, Monika Szolle. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me. Please help make the newsletter better by providing content – photos, articles, advice, recipes...

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Ask ten beekeepers a question and you will get eleven answers. It's an old joke but how true is it?

If we turn the joke into a hypothesis how would we devise a fair test? what would our methodology be? Blind randomised sample or open discussion? And is there any significance to finding out?

Of course, this is just a bit of fun but there is a point worth consideration. The joke characterises beekeepers as an almost curmudgeonly individualistic lot. But are we?

Well, here's a question that may cast some light: why do we keep bees?



Carpenter bee covered in pollen. Photo and caption: Annie McGeoch.

Without going to the lengths of a sociological study, I think it is probably safe to say that there will be a lot of answers. But more than the number of beekeepers? No! In fact, my guess is, the dominant outcome, even in a group as diverse as the LBKA, would be a degree of common ground and shared interest in every sense of those two words.

We live in an age where we humans are discovering (or perhaps re-learning) that nothing on this earth exists in a bubble. Everything interacts, everything is part of a system and not acting accordingly leads to harm and imbalance. whether deliberate or unintended.

Beekeeping historically has been a bit of a honeybee-centric bubble with surprisingly little regard being paid to what goes on “outside the box”.

There is a price for this and it is paid in varying amounts by all in the system, the honey bees, beekeepers, the general public, wild bees. Like taxes, some are obvious, some are hidden.

So maybe it is worth finding out a bit more about shared interests in the interests of mitigating some of those costs. For methodology, I suggest debate. Our starter for ten is [LBKA's Guidelines for Responsible Urban Beekeeping in London](#). This has been around for some time and is in need of development. It would be good to hear the thoughts of a wide range of our members.

- Be considerate of the social context, other beekeepers, all bees and other wildlife
- Good training
- Keep nice bees
- Practice swarm prevention and control
- Manage bee health
- Prioritise apiary hygiene
- Register and insure
- Join a Beekeeping Association
- Prepare contingency plans for adversity (absence, disease control orders, onsite destruction orders, etc)
- Plant appropriate flowers

Announcements

This is our official place for announcements. If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

September's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

Our Monthly Meeting will be on **honey showing and tasting**, on Sunday (8th September) at 11:00 at the swish Royal Lancaster London (Lancaster Terrace, London W2 2TY; thanks to member Jo Hemesley for organising this). It will be in the “The Chestnut Suite” meeting room.

For the **showing** part, Claire O'Brien (a BBKA certified Honey Show Judge) will be our guest speaker. Claire will lead members in a blind tasting of their own and each other's honey, exploring flavour, aroma, colour and all the other attributes of honey generally, with particular reference to the showing of honey. Additionally Claire would like to delve into the area of Honey Labelling regulations and offer advice on preparation of honey for showing.

For the **tasting** part, we will be mostly relying on members to bring honey! We expect much to come from members' bees. This should be a lot of fun, tasting each other's honey and celebrating the rich diversity of honeys produced by LBKA members' bees. We will provide tasting sticks.

So **only if you can** please **bring honey** from your bees. Jars don't need to be properly labelled, but it would also be good to have some examples of good (and legal) labels. If you have interesting honey from elsewhere (e.g. Buckwheat honey) you're welcome to bring that along too.

We hope to see as many of you as possible (whether or not you have honey to bring). And certainly don't feel you have to bring anything.

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 24th September from 18:30** will be at the **Tufnell Park Tavern**, 162 Tufnell Park Rd, London N7 0EE.

October's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 13th October** on **thermal regulation of the hive and insulation** at **The Barn at Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses** (Brockwell Park, London, SE24 9BN) lead by member Vlad Zamfir.

LBKA events

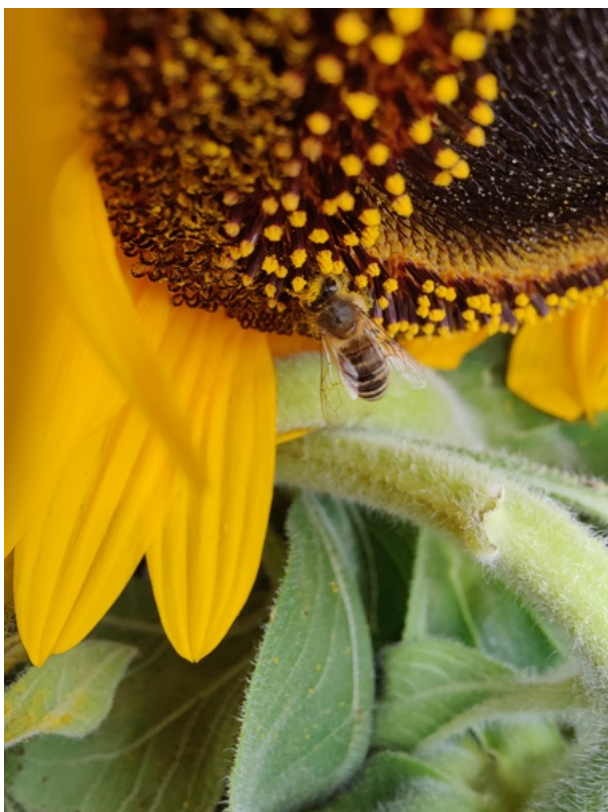
Thanks all those that came to the Summer Social at Bell house and the Honey Extraction day.

Your association needs you!

Much of the committee has been in post for a long time and some will be standing down this year or next. So when we say **your association needs you**, it's not just cliché! There are too few people active carrying out the various necessary executive functions.

Being involved in a small charity like LBKA is a **great opportunity** to make a difference. It gets you involved in setting its strategic direction and to help make things happen. It can also give you experiences that can be helpful in your workplace. You can also put your professional skills to good use, such as social media, engagement, event organisation, web etc.

LBKA has **trustees** (responsible for the charity and setting strategic direction) and **committee** members (day to day running) of the association. Much of the current committee are both trustees and committee, but you don't need to do both. You still help us even if you're not on the committee.



Spotted by Alessio Imperato. Bee on sunflower.

Committee and non-committee

The committee is responsible for implementing/delivering the association's activities. The committee make decisions about implementation and different committee roles are responsible for different activity areas. We **need new people on the committee** to push forward new ideas and make them happen. You **don't need to be on the committee to help out** (but it often helps).

Whether on the committee or not, examples of things you could do to help include:

- organising hiring equipment to members
- helping manage social media (producing content, answering comments, connecting to other relevant accounts)
- producing videos
- editing and writing for the newsletter
- communicating to members
- outreach
- pollination activities (e.g. running LBKA's pollinator grant, writing to councils and landowners)

However, this list is **not** exhaustive. We would welcome people with ideas who can help make them happen. You might have ideas and skills that we don't know we need!

Trustees

You might stand as a Trustee if you're interested in influencing strategic direction. However, we also need a new **treasurer** and a new **secretary** (without which

we cannot function). Anyone interested in such roles would have a long handover period with plenty of support.

Please talk to any trustee or committee member, if you want to know more.

Pollinator Fund

Good news - we're reinstating our Pollinator Fund as part of our commitment to help make London a better place for pollinators

Over the past few years, we have helped support pollinator-friendly planting, creation of habitat for beneficial insects, and the education of visitors to London's open spaces, including:

- Eden Community Garden, SW4: £500.00 toward herbaceous border project in St Paul's churchyard, Clapham.
- Friends of Hillside Gardens, SW2; £438.89 toward pollinator hedging project at Hillside Gardens community allotments, Streatham.
- St Mary's Secret Garden, E2; £480.00 for development of a wildflower meadow. (Project completed but grant not drawn down.)
- Friends of Westcombe Woodlands, SE10: £993.00 toward pollinator hedging & wetland garden creation in Westcombe Woods, Maze Hill
- Friends of Colliers Wood Parks & Greenspaces, SW19: £914.50 toward mixed pollinator border development and bug hotel provision at the Recreation Ground, Colliers Wood
- Prospect Walk Allotment Association, E1: £459.05 toward pollinator hedging, wildflower meadow & bee bank creation project at allotment site, Mile End
- Bell House, SE21: £1,000 toward creating new pollinator beds adjacent to lawn below terrace - as seen at the recent LBKA summer social, Dulwich.

We welcome applications from members. We also welcome applications from individuals or organisation known to members that already have a track record in successful grant making and share at least some of LBKA's charitable objects or aspirations. Such organisations may include:

1. charitable organisations owning land in the Greater London area;
2. national conservation charities with a London branch;
3. organisations making grants for heritage/conservation work undertaken in London;

Further information about LBKA's Pollinator Fund in its current form is available at https://www.lbka.org.uk/pollinator_fund. Please contact David on treasurer@lbka.org.uk for more details and an application form.



LBKA's Honey extraction day at Brockwell Community Greenhouse. Photos from Monika Szolle.

The Yellow Legged Asian Hornet (YLAH)

Sharon Bassey
asianhornet@lbka.org.uk

The Yellow Legged Asian Hornet (which is what the AH is now being referred as) week kicks off with lots of news items on the television and articles in both local and national papers. It's important that we inform the media when they post the wrong photos! The correct identification is key.

Although the AH still poses a problem it has not thankfully been as prolific as last year, good tail winds and hornets hitching lifts on ferries and vehicles highlights the need for us to remain vigilant.

Empty nests found late last year was a worry and it seems further nests in those areas have been found this year.

The BBKA has now rolled out its mapping and monitoring system and the AH committee are waiting to meet to make sure we have got this right before we bring this to members.

We need more volunteers/verifiers to monitor 1km grids across London. Everyone can help with this by putting monitoring traps in their gardens or even their places of work - what will be important is that monitoring stations are checked twice a week.

Workshop dates to be confirmed.

Find bee buddies!

Members who "opted-in" to sharing their details with other "opted-in" members can see which members are local to them and their level of expertise. Feel free to use this to help establish local beekeeping buddies! See [the page in the Members Area of the website](#). This facility has been available for the past six years or so.



Bell House's pollinator-friendly border, partly funded by LBKA's Pollinator Fund. Photo: Tristram Sutton.



LBKA's summer social. Photo: Simon Saville

Extractors

We rent out manual extractors to members – email us at resources@lbka.org.uk to reserve. If you came to our honey extraction day, you will be able to hire an electric extractor.

Members welcome to visit LBKA's Apiaries

LBKA currently has four (operational) apiaries: Battersea Children's Zoo, Brockwell Park, Hyde Park and Mudchute Farm. They are overseen by Tristram but each is managed separately. Beekeeping activity hap-

pens weekly during the opening hours below. All members welcome but we recommend you check with the Apiary manager before travelling in the [members' area](#) of the website [on this page](#).

- **Battersea Children's Zoo:** Saturdays, 14:00
- **Brockwell Park:** Sundays, 12:00.
- **Hyde Park:** Thursdays, 15:30.
- **Mudchute Farm:** Mondays, 14:00

See "members' area" for members' goodies

LBKA members can log in via the members' area on the website and see videos of past talks and meetings.

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.

September's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discusses 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.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk


Trustee business

We discussed the future of the association, capacity, succession, trustee roles vs committee (executive) roles. A number of trustees are planning to step down now or in a year's time (Will, Stuart, David, Simon and Aidan). There are currently too few people currently active carrying out the various necessary executive functions. Sharon is happy to lead on the theme of "better beekeeping", focusing on the practical aspects of beekeeping. Sharon suggested that the Monthly Meetings should fall under this remit and that this would include practical training in beekeeping. Richard is keen to continue to deliver the theme of "better public understanding of bees" and to be more active in promoting the Pollinator Fund in support of "better environment for bees".

We started planning the AGM on 6th November. We plan for this to be a social that incorporates the AGM, agreed that there would be a presentation about what the LBKA has been up to in the last year, and agreed that we needed to try and get more members involved in Trustee and/or Committee roles.

www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Cornwell, Claf Booy (NNESS), Gay Marris, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Flynn (National Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BWNSS)



Asian Hornet

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to: 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 in/on 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.




Key ID Features


Asian Hornet Queen

Queens up to 30 mm, workers up to 25 mm long


Entirely dark brown or black velvety body, bordered with a fine yellow band



Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends




Asian Hornet



European Hornet

Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment




Asian hornet 'hawking' for honey bee prey

Photos from: J. Haxaire; Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones; Richard Ball

Similar Species


Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison Actual size

- 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



European hornet (*Vespa crabro*) Actual size


- Queen up to 35mm 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



Roger Burgess

Giant woodwasp (*Urocerus gigas*) Actual size


- Larger than Asian hornet, female 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



Q. Rome

Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*) Actual size


- 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



Dieder Deocouens

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*) Actual size


- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet



Q. Rome

Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbourages – 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
www.nationalbeeunit.com

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:
alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: [BBKA website](#).

5

We also agreed revision of our reserves policy and that we need a 5 year expenditure plan. Ideas include ensuring that LBKA apiaries are exemplars of best practice, that we stay on top of the Asian Hornet situation, that we continue to offer high quality member services, that we reintroduce the Pollinator Fund, that we revamp the website.

Executive business

Our guest speaker for Sunday's monthly meeting can no longer come, so we are seeking an alternative. Vlad Zamfir will to be approached to run the October Monthly Meeting on hive insulation.

We will resume the Pollinator Fund and will advertise to members.

We also agreed to have a "thank you volunteers" evening as last year for all those who've involved for LBKA in the past year.

Daylight Robbery

Mark witnesses one of the most serious cases of Honey Bee robbing behaviour he's ever seen.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

In late August I witnessed one of the most serious cases of Honey Bee robbing behaviour I've ever seen. I've seen some horrendous robbing whilst visiting other apiaries but never suffered from it myself.

On the last Tuesday afternoon in August I was called by one of my clients in the City whose neighbour reported a swarm on their 12 floor roof garden on the opposite side of the street from my clients 3rd floor apiary. Their staff had reported aggressive bees bothering them as they carried out maintenance and window cleaning.

I was sure it wasn't my clients bees as they were checked a few days previously and weren't in a state where they could produce a swarm.

The behaviour the neighbour described also didn't sound like a swarm but I decided to put the neighbours concerns at ease and said I'd come take a look. I wanted to be seen as being responsible and responsive for the sake of my reputation as a city beekeeper and for my clients reputation as a socially responsible business.

Before visiting the neighbours roof I stopped by my client's 3rd floor apiary to grab a nuc box in case it was a swarm in need of collecting. As I ventured out into the roof terrace I could see the smaller of their 2 WBC hives was being raided by hundreds of robbing bees. I quickly reduced the entrance to make it easier for the guard bees to defend. I had just finished treat-

ing these hives with formic pro so the entrance reducers had been left wide open as this treatment requires ample ventilation and these colonies are on solid floors. This appeared to help and the guard bees looked to be holding the invaders at bay. Instead the robbing bees began hovering around the roof investigating cone eaves and joints where the lifts touched. They didn't appear to be able to get inside so I left to go check on the reported swarm.

Upon arriving at the 12th floor roof garden I didn't find a swarm. What I found was hundreds of honey bees in a feeding frenzy desperately trying to forage off a 6 metre stretch of lavender hedge which had just been trimmed.

Honey bees have good long term memory and works by the likes of Lars Chittka at Queen Mary a university (read his book 'mind of a bee') demonstrates that bees can remember profitable patches of flowers they have visited up to 3 weeks ago and they will return to them making a direct flight if in need of food.

These bees clearly remember they're being flowers here recently but they were now gone as the gardeners had trimmed them the day before as the bloom was pretty much over.

Bees were crawling and swarming all over the lavender. Where there was the odd flower bees were fighting over the blooms. There were many bees locked in combat on the floor, many more dead bees littered the floor. There were several scums of bees, multiple individuals balling a bee in the centre of the scum.

On some nearby *Erigeron karvinskianus* blooms I saw several bees pin down another honey bee and scrape pollen off its legs. Other bees were being held down and forced to regurgitate their crop contents. This was bee robbing at its most desperate and violent. I have read reports of direct honey bee robbing of other bees on flowers before but never seen it myself.

Last year a paper published by Sauberer *et al* (2023) "pollen theft by honey bees from wild bees" described honey bees stealing pollen from bumblebees and solitary bees. The observations were made in Austria in an area of high honey bee density in late summer – a time when beekeepers have removed the summer honey crop, colonies are at their most populous but flower availability has become scarce putting honey bee colonies under stress for food and forcing them to rob from other bees.

A previous studio in North America made similar observations of honey bees stealing pollen from bumblebees, in one instance they observed 2 honey bees working cooperatively to pin down a bumblebee and forcibly take its pollen from its leg baskets.

Earlier this year Italian scientists also reported pollen robbing by honey bees from bumblebees.

Alarmed at what I'd witnessed but confident it was not a swarm I went back to check on the clients apiary. In



Pollen-seeking honeybees sometimes turn to theft. Source: <https://www.snexplores.org/>



The neighbouring 1km² squares have registered hive density of 12, 16 and 24 colonies. My client owns 36 acres of well planted flowery green space around their premises, non of these other hive owners/business premises contribute to any forage provision. Not only are they reaping the rewards of my clients planting efforts but now they have taken out one of my colonies and stolen all its food reserves.

the hour since I'd been gone the smaller of the 2 hives had been massacred and the super full of honey I left them the week previous was gone. Completely robbed out. The robbing bees had beaten the guard bees despite leaving the entrance as wide as a bee space, killed almost all the bees inside and looted almost all the stores of honey and pollen. All that was left was a handful of newly hatched bees wandering around hopelessly. The robbing bees were pouring in through the front entrance as well as the cone escapes in the WBC roof.

I quickly reduced the entrance to a single bed space on the other hive and blocked the fine escapes as I could see robbers were now beginning to investigate that hive as well. I dare not open the colony to inspect as the robbers would pour inside. I left them to return early the next morning. So far they are ok.

My strong suspicion is another beekeeper nearby has very recently took **all the honey** off their bees leaving them starving and they have gone on a violent spree robbing and looting other hives in the neighbourhood.

This neighbourhood has 3 other apiaries within 100 metre radius of my clients building that I know of. These other bees are managed by a multi national rent a bee hive vendor and one by an amateur beekeeper who works in the building they are on.

The bee base data shows there's at least 9 registered hives in this 1km² square but I know there are more.

There were also lots of bees in a nearby park bothering people with sweet drinks and food. People thought they were wasps but they were in fact honey bees that were bothering them.

These were some desperate bees.

Beekeepers who take every drop of honey off their hives with no care for the welfare of their **bees piss me off**. Even if you're going to feed them sugar syrup as a replacement of stores you've removed this is not sustainable beekeeping and has no place on corporate premises in the city. No business keeping bee hives and claiming they are saving the environment or helping pollinators should be taking a crop off their hives if it means they have to feed afterwards because the bees hadn't make a true surplus to their own survival needs.

This is really bad husbandry. These bees were most certainly from a hive on a nearby business premises which begs the question. How is this contributing to their sustainability goals? It's simply not.

Not only has one of my clients hives been wiped out, but other people were affected by the bees violent behaviour. People were stung, businesses were disrupted and distress was caused to members of the public. Robbing also spreads disease. Whilst cases of foul brood have subsided since 2019 when we had 111 cases in London, we remain an area of high foul brood risk and need to do what we can to prevent or at least discourage robbing bee behaviour.

This was urban beekeeping at its least responsible.

This tale is exactly why LBKA needs to keep banging the drum for responsible and sustainable beekeeping in London because clearly there are still those who haven't got the message or just don't care about the consequences of their poor husbandry.

September in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

September work should be about putting the bees in the best position to survive through winter.

The bee population will continue to decline in September but the new bees now being born will need to live through to next April, for 6 months instead of 6 weeks. They need to be healthy, free of varroa mites and associated viruses and with plenty of stores. Those members who diligently applied Apiguard or another proprietary varroacide throughout August should now be the proud custodians of newly born healthy bees.

Feeding the colony

This is the main job for September. A full sized colony needs to have 35lb of stores to see it through to next April. A National brood frame holds 5lbs and so the equivalent of 7 frames is needed. If, say, you estimate 5 frames of honey is currently in the hive then this is 25lb and a further 10lb is required. 1lb. of sugar will make 1.25lb of honey (honey is 80% sugars and 20% water). Therefore, using this example syrup should be made from 8lb of sugar to complete the stores. Any surplus will not be wasted as it will be used by the bees next spring.

Feeding fondant in winter causes the cluster to break up and is an unnecessary disturbance. It is preferable to feed in September and so ensure that there are sufficient stores for the winter. Fondant in winter should only be used as an emergency feed, not part of a planned strategy. The best time for winter and spring feeding is always in the preceding autumn!

If feeding is left until October then, due to cooler temperatures, the bees may be unable to evaporate down the water content to less than 20% and then cap the stores. This is likely to lead to the syrup fermenting over the winter period. All feeding should be completed by the end of September.

Sugar must be white granulated sugar. Any other sugar is harmful to the bees.

A stronger syrup should be used at this time of year as this means the bees have less work to do in evaporating off the water. This syrup is not for immediate consumption but for winter and early spring stores. 1Kgm of sugar dissolved in 660mls of warm water is the desired strength.

If the feeder needs to be topped up then it is essential to wear a veil. Bees may not appear to be very active if late in the month and cooler but they will surge through the feedhole if the feeder is disturbed or taken off.

Other action to be taken this month

Marking the queen. If the colony has a new queen born this summer then now is the best time to find and mark her. The colony is contracting with the brood limited to just a few frames and this makes it a much easier proposition. If the queen is marked then next season's swarm control will be so much easier.

Checking the hive. Hive body should be level, draught free and the roof should be waterproof. Now is the time to replace any defective or ill fitting equipment before the onset of winter.

Protecting against wasps and robbers. Entrance blocks must be in situ. Many beekeepers reduce the entrances to as little as 2 or 3 bee spaces. If a colony is being robbed it is extremely difficult to stop.

Fumigate supers. These should have been fumigated immediately after having been returned to the bees for cleaning and removed again. Fumigated supers should be put in a place secure from wax moth and vermin.

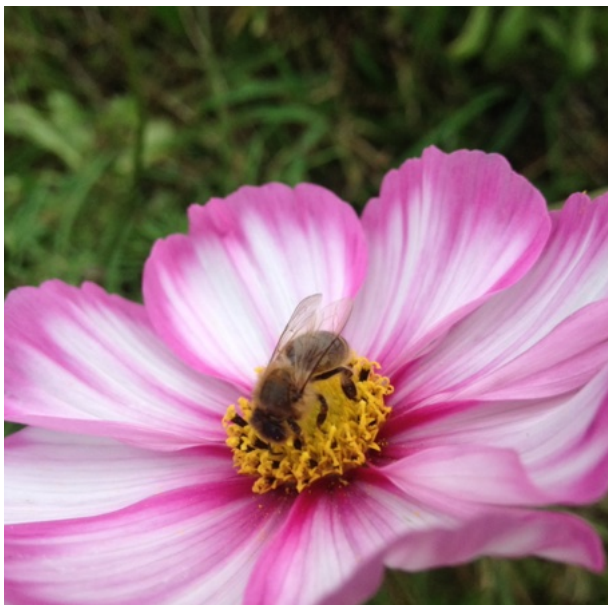
Mouseguards. If it starts to turn cold then these should be fitted late in the month or in early October. However, this is usually an October job.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is the one we used last year.

Mark Patterson
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 if 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



Cosmos.



Helianthus.



Sunflower.

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 all colonies are 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.

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 lime-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 pokers 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**, **dahlias** 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 dahlias. 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 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.



Echinacea.



Golden rod.



Rudbeckia.

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.

LBKA Apiaries in September

What's happening in LBKA's apiaries. This section makes a welcome return

Battersea Children's Zoo Apiary

Annie McGeoch
events@lbka.org.uk

Battersea Park Zoo apiary has yielded two supers of honey. It's been a tricky season and the left hive has had several incarnations. The successful combining of a colony from one of my other apiaries added strength and vitality and now both colonies are well and calm. Varroa treatment is on and will be repeated. The zoo staff have given a short daily talk about pollination and bees every day in the school holidays which have been successful. Saturday afternoons for inspections have become less frequent as the bees are settled with their varroa treatment. Anyone welcome to visit just what-sapp me.

Mudchute Apiary

Andrew Slade

Mudchute Apiary extracted a small crop of honey this year, enough to pay the Mudchute Farm the rent and still have a few jars left over. At present we have five occupied hives which may well be reduced going into winter to strengthen the colony. One small hive has been given some thin syrup to encourage the queen to lay more eggs for winter bees.

Hyde Park Apiary

Ian Shackleton

Hyde Park Apiary took delivery of two nucs in May. One was on 14x12 frames the other on standard deep frames (SD). We rehoused the SDs onto 14x12s, and after the brood had hatched out moved the frames above the crown board expecting the bees to bring the honey down into the nest. This they did not! So at harvest time we were left with SD frames full of honey which we can't spin out. We will use it for winter feed for the bees and sort out frames in the spring. The other nuc expanded rapidly, so rapidly we had to do

an artificial swarm on the colony. We are about to reunite the colonies for the winter. We only managed to harvest one super, but the year was a great learning year for us. Varroa treatment continues. We expect to be closing up for winter by the end of September with winter feeding ongoing.

Upcoming events

See our [website](#) for an up-to-date list.

Sunday 8th September: Monthly meeting: Honey shows and tasting

11:00-13:00 at Royal Lancaster hotel, Lancaster Terrace, London W2 2TY

We will have special guest, honey judge Claire O'Brien who will talk about showing honey at shows. We will also have honey tasting and ask members to bring some of their honey to share. The diversity in taste and colours of honey from across London is wondrous! We will supply wooden tasting sticks.

Tuesday 24th September: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at Tufnell Park Tavern, 162 Tufnell Park Rd, London N7 0EE, a short walk from Tufnell Park Station (Northern Line)

We're back in North London this month. A nice pub with lots of space that serves food.

Sunday 13th October: Monthly meeting: Thermal regulation of the hive and insulation

11:00-13:00 at The Barn at Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses, Brockwell Park, London SE24 9BN.

Vlad Zamfir will talk about how honey bees regulate the temperature of hives and how we can most effectively help by insulating our hives.

6th November: Social and Annual General Meeting

To be confirmed

A social and Annual General Meeting. Please put in your diaries.

Trustees

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
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Simon Saville, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Annie McGeoch, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Asian Hornet:** Sharon Bassey, asianhornet@lbka.org.uk
- Stuart Kennon, stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk
- Elaine Ellis

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

