Introduction to Beekeeping

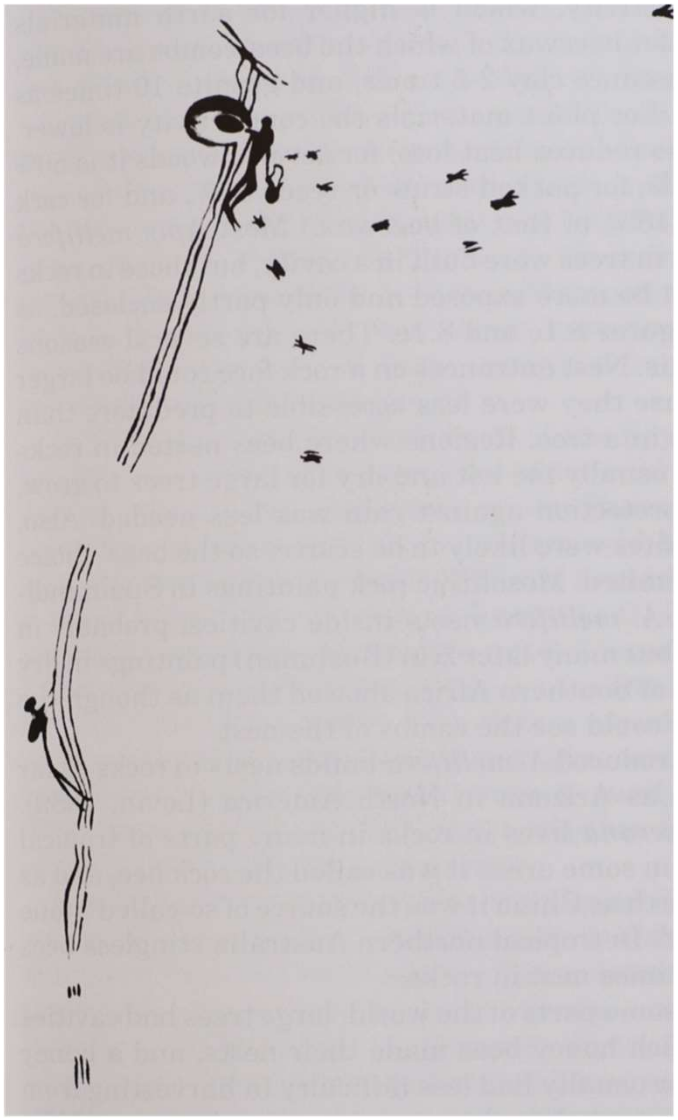
Session 4 - History

Order of play tonight

- Pre-history
- Egyptians
- Greeks
- Romans
- Dark ages
- Middle Ages
- Recent history

Pre-history

- Returned after ice age
- 20,000 years
- Cavity dwellers
- Honey hunters
  - No ownership
  - Robbing hives



Archeology

- Wasps
  - 120 million years
  - Omnivores
- Solitary bees
  - 50-60 million years
  - Vegetarians
  - Evolved with flowers
- Social bees
  - 20-30 million years
  - Large colony
  - Over winter

Misconceptions!

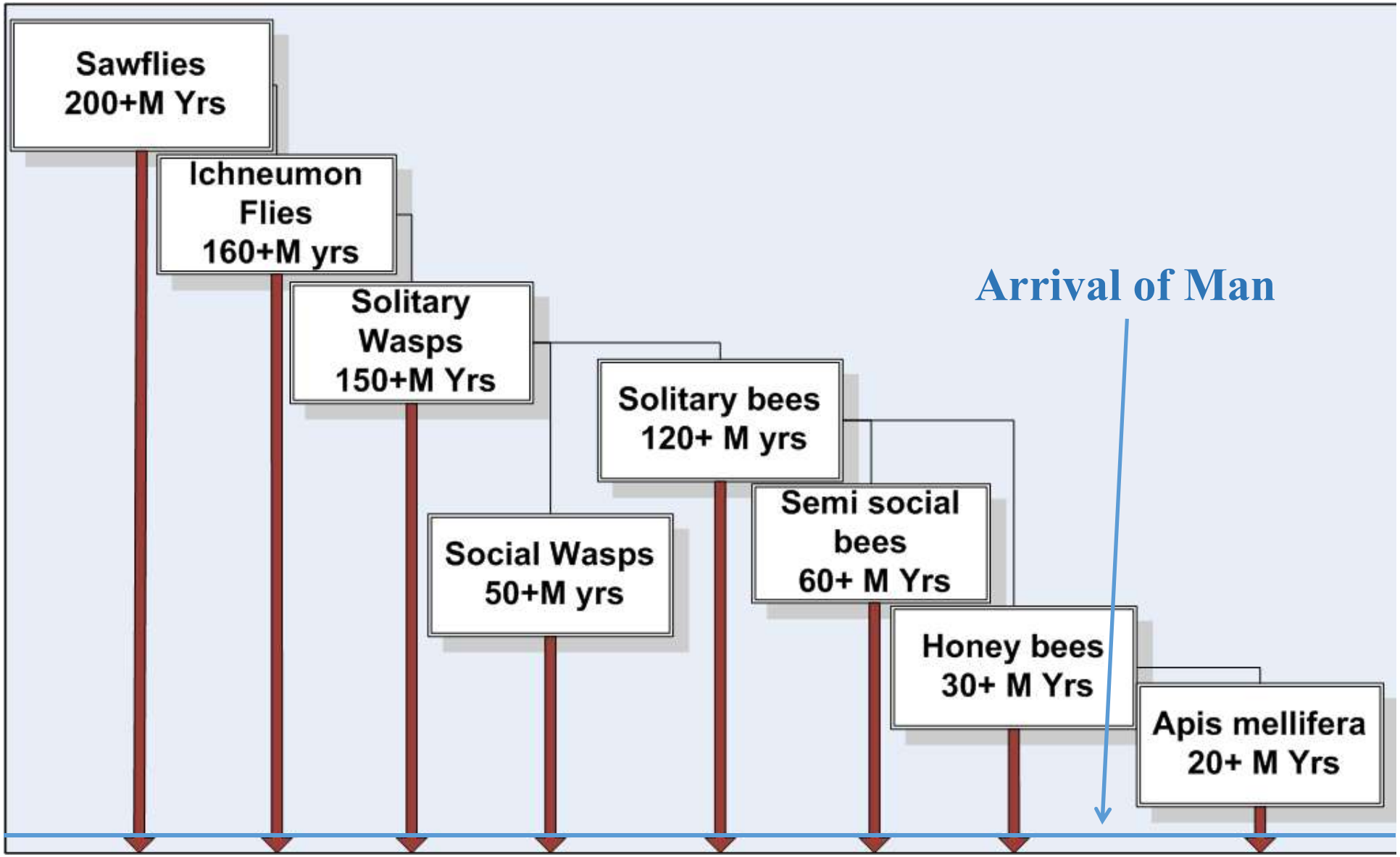
- Bugonia
- Atistotle
  - Bees gather honey
  - Live for 6 years
  - Bees carry wax
  - Carry stones in high wind

And he (Samson)turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey.

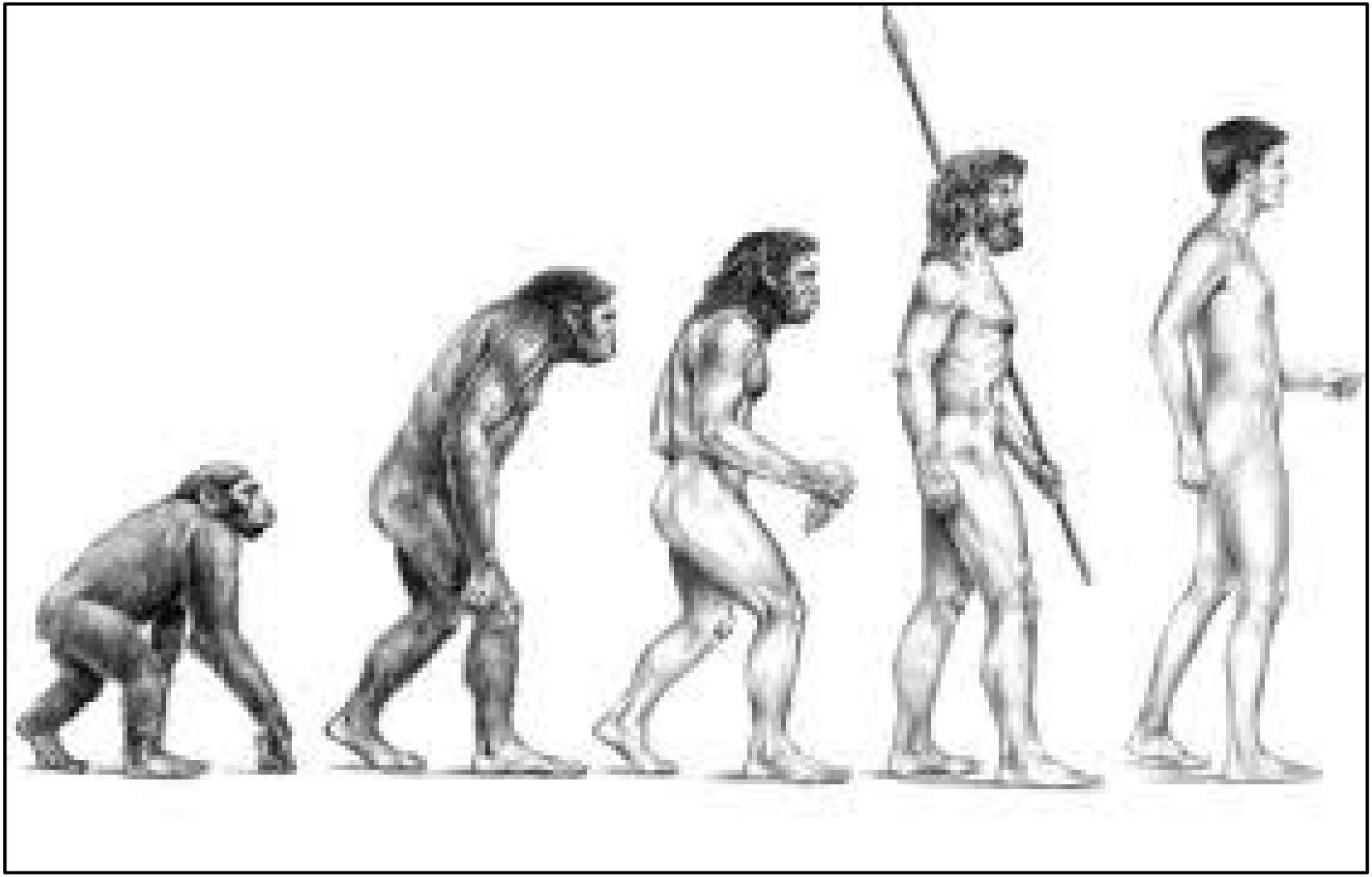
And he came to his father and mother and gave some to them, and they ate.

But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion. (Judges 14:8-9

Ancestry of honey bees



Picture from Georgics 4 29 BC



Egyptian. Loaded boats with hives and stones

The bee was the sign of the king of Lower Egypt during the First Dynasty (3,200BC).

In Aristotle's time they did know the bee vomited the honey into the cell in the comb. The boys at the dinner table would gross out their mothers by demanding some “bee vomit” to spread over their breakfast toast!

Detail from the previous

Classic bee bole

Romans

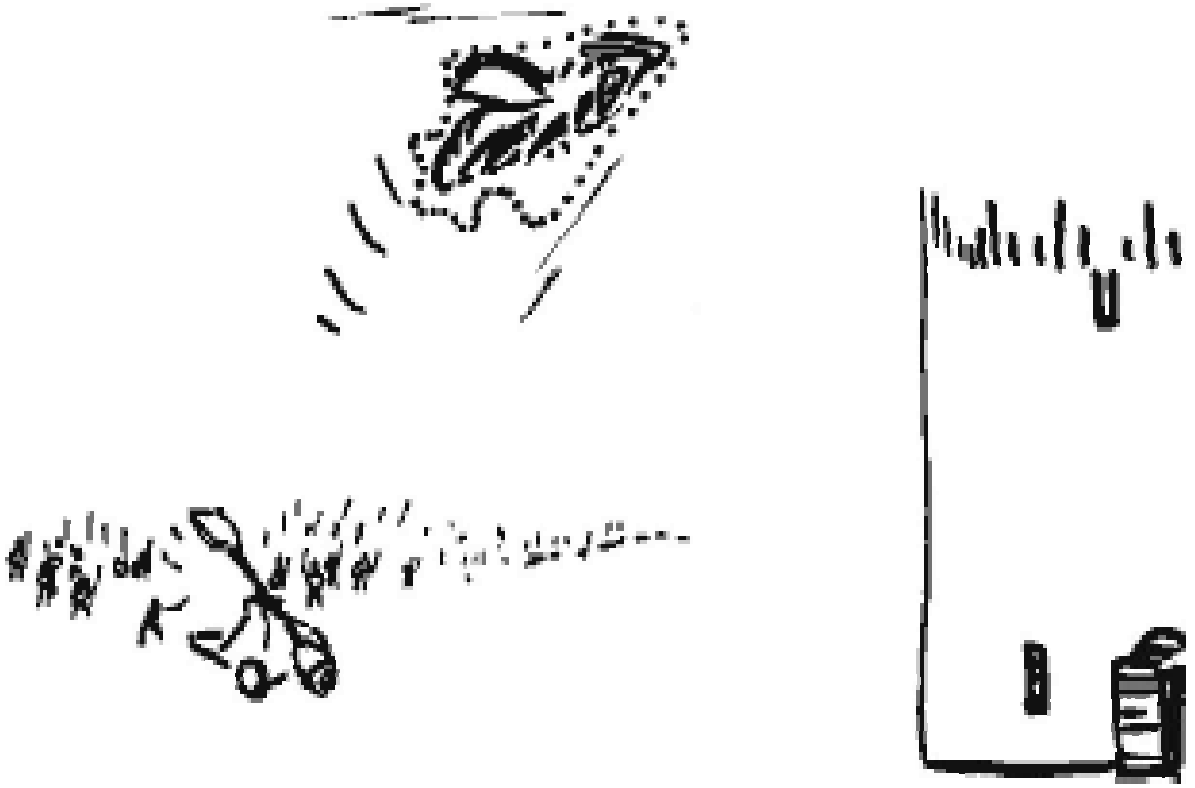
- Virgil thought queen bees were kings and warned of finding king cells in hives. The art of beekeeping declined with the fall of the Roman Empire.

Like a lot of beautiful things…..

Ponticum

Bees as Emblems

Bees used in warfare too numerous to do here



Trebuchet

Origins of honey bees

British bee

Apis mellifera mellifera

Grey bee - also popular

Apis mellifera carnica

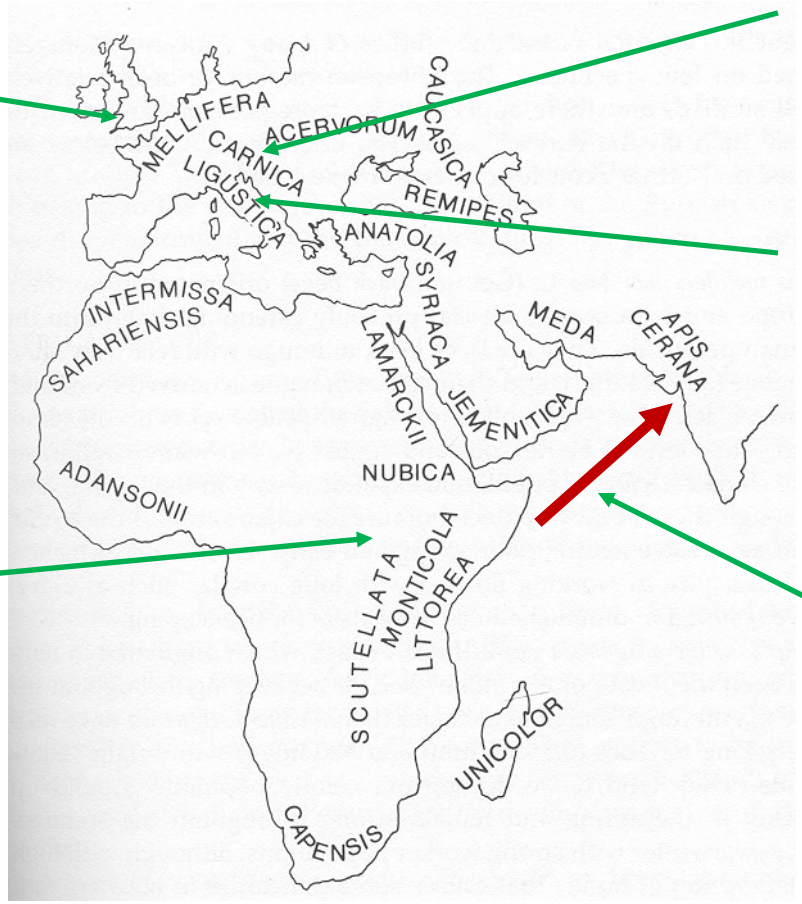
Italian bees – most popular world wide

Apis mellifera ligustica

Bees originated near here

Asian honey bee
Apis cerana

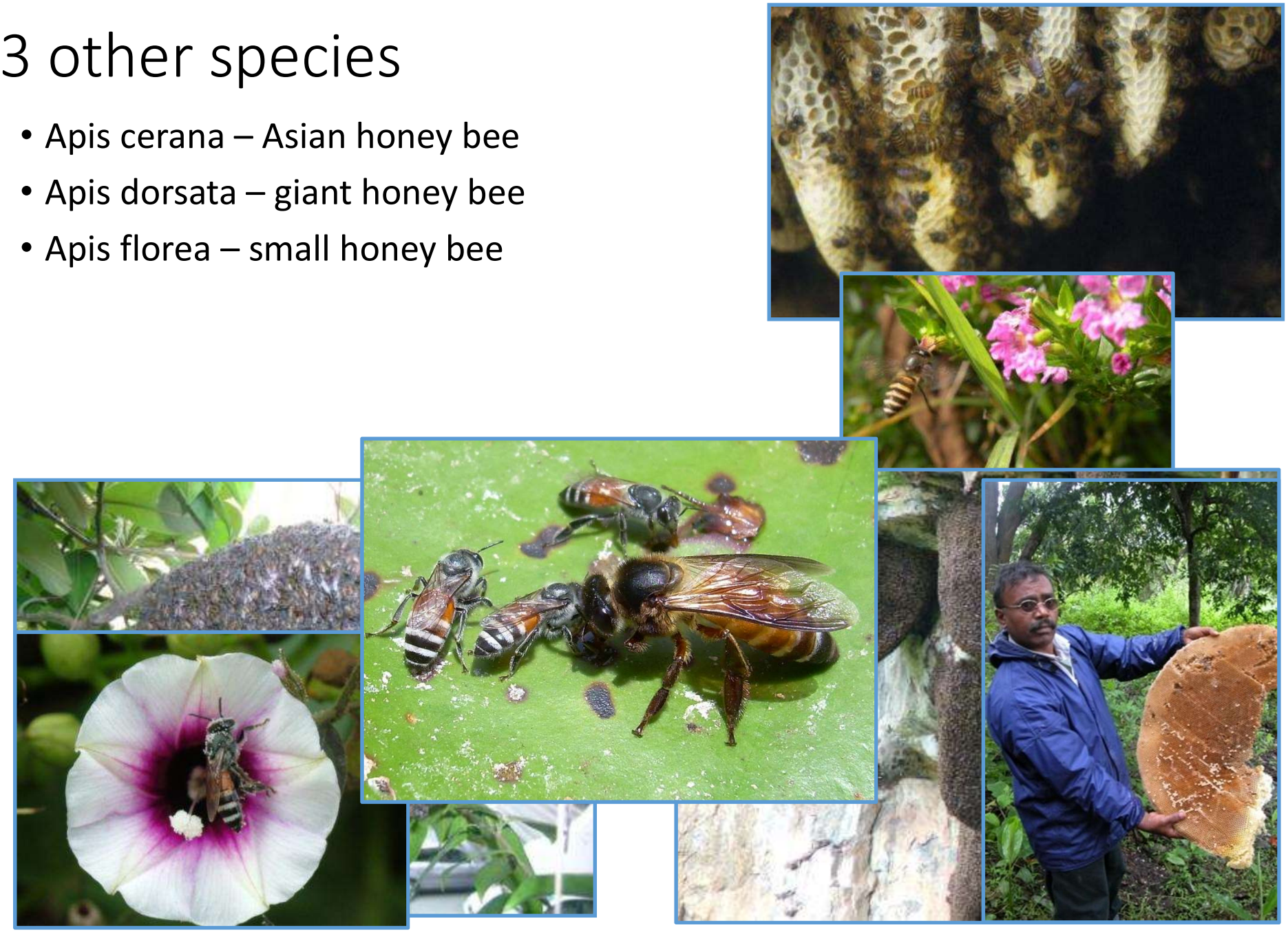
Apis *mellifera* spp



Ex: Biology of the Honeybee by Mark Winston

3 other species

- Apis cerana – Asian honey bee
- Apis dorsata – giant honey bee
- Apis florea – small honey bee



Pictures © Bees *for* Development

Honey Bees in Britain

Some British bees

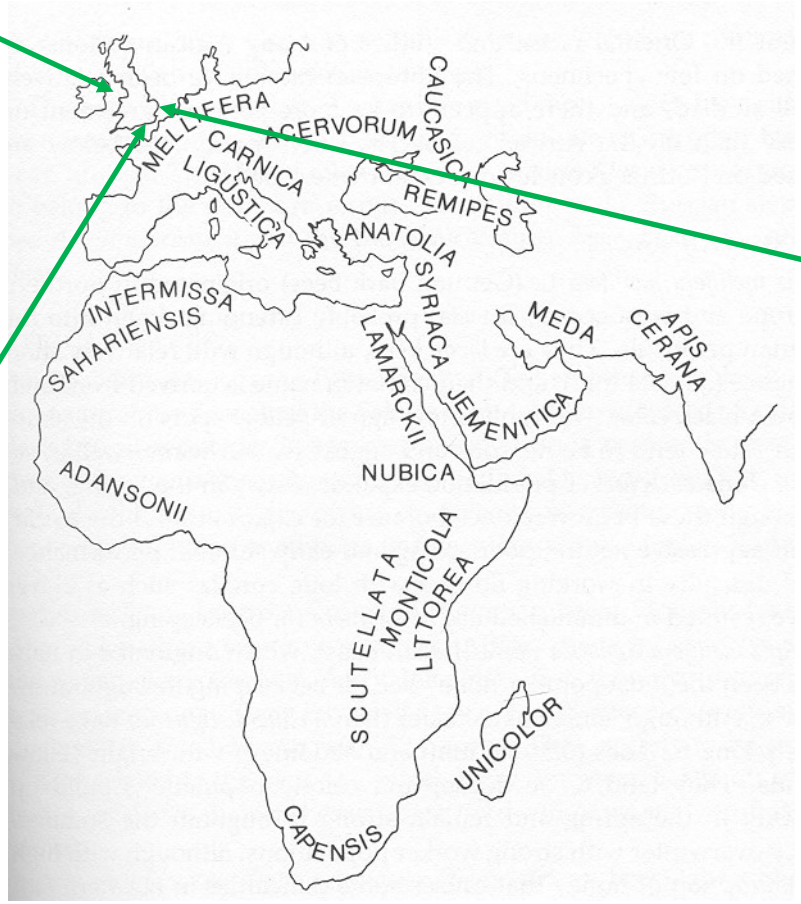
Apis mellifera mellifera

Most British bees

interbred from different European strains

Buckfast bee

'selectively' bred from many strains



Apis *mellifera* spp

Ex: Biology of the Honeybee by Mark Winston

Beekeeping begins

- Log hives
- Easier access
- Near settlements

~500 AD nest ownership in Europe

Middle Ages

- Bee laws
- Little influence by Romans
- Bees owned by
  - Lord of manor
    - Bee ceorl(Anglo-Saxon)
  - Monasteries
- Wicker skeps
- Straw skeps

Apis mellifera in New World

- From 1550s
- Settlers take bees with them
- America & Australasia
- Not suitable in tropical regions

Monasteries

- Beeswax
- Honey
- Mead

1540 Dissolution of Monasteries

Jan Swammerdam 1658

Father of dissection, proved the King was actually a Queen.

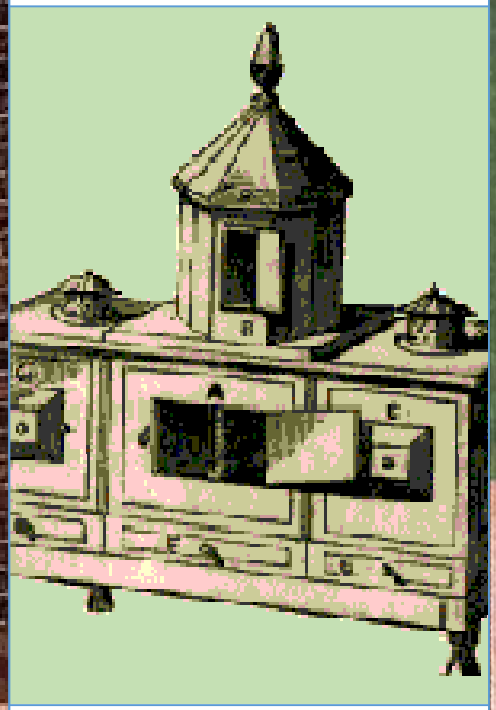
1659

Bee Boles

- Skep beekeeping
- Weather protection

Hive development

Stewarton



Nutt Collateral

Neighbour

Other developments

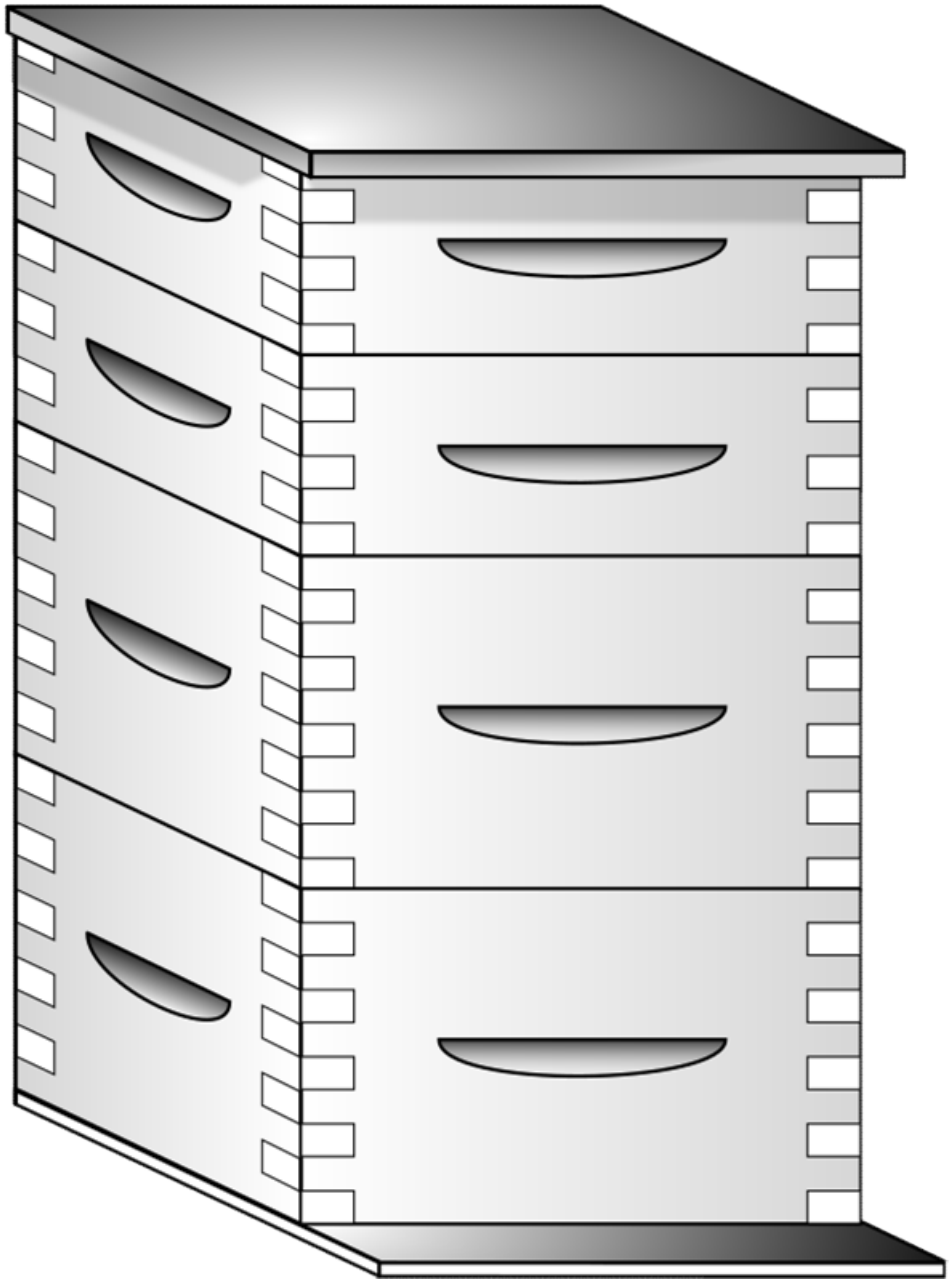
Pictures © Bees *for* Development

Probably from time so far back

1792 - 1851

- Manage colonies
- Huber leaf hive
- Lorenzo Langstroth
- Bee space
- Movable frame hives
- Replace skeps slowly

Langstroth built his hive using a champagne box.



Killer bees - bad name

- 1957 Brazil – Dr Kerr
- Tropical strain
- Now from Buenos Aires to San Francisco
- Defend nest at a distance
- Very good honey producers
- New management techniques
- Not as bad as believed

Modern beehives

Nucleus hive

- Small colonies
- Collect swarms
- Mating queen
- Temporary storage

The Value of Nucleii

Queens	Increasedly	Saw	Helpful	Swarms
Storing spare Queens	For Sale	Education	Comb building	Small swarms
Mating Nucs	For beginners	Observation	Boost anther colony with their brood	Swarm control
To test a Queen	Increase stocks			
Queen introduction	Package created for a starter colony			
Retirement home for a Queen	Overwintering			

That's all Folks!

Any questions……