

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



You know it's hot when.....

wasps go straight to the source. This photo was taken when the temperature was 30°C. It was too hot to inspect bees. Does this drought mean that the bees are eating their stores again, or are they still finding forage somewhere?

Plenty of Himalayan balsam and meadowsweet about, but is there any nectar?

For those who collect statistics, this was the hottest and driest June since 1976, and the temperatures and lack of rain continued well into July, with only a shower for the in the entire time.



Fake News

A Facebook post seemingly written by Sir David Attenborough that encouraged people to leave a teaspoon of sugar water in their garden to help struggling bees quickly went viral. However, it has been revealed that the post was fake, and could even do the bee population more harm than good.

The post was deleted after the BBC confirmed the advice did not

come from the the 92-year-old broadcaster and naturalist. Experts said the advice can be harmful and discourages pollination.

The now deleted post said: “If bees were to disappear from the face of the earth, humans would have just four years to live.

“If you find a tired bee in your home, a simple solution of sugar and water will help revive an exhausted bee.”

The situation wasn't helped by very well intentioned detractors adding their own brand of ill-informed 'fake facts'. Apparently sugar is not good for bees because it is filled with carbohydrates (Isn't honey primarily carbohydrate?) What's more, one post claimed that bees don't actually eat honey at this time of year. Well I'm blown! Tell that to mine, who seem to determined to empty the supers at the moment.

Want to know how far your bees go?

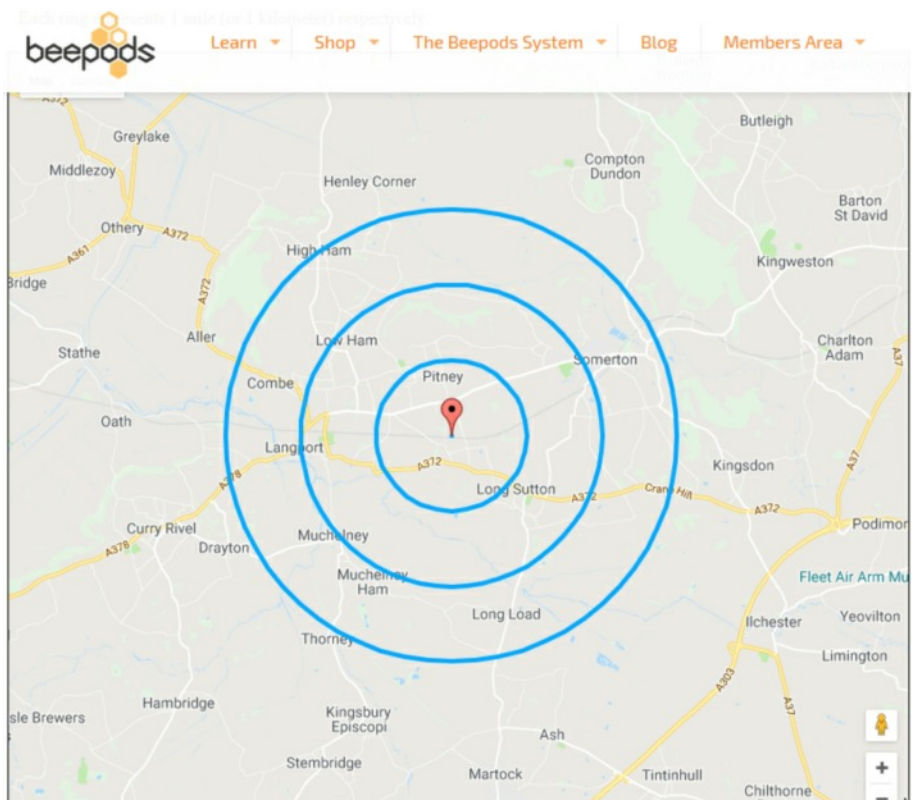
Thanks to Bec of Bec's Beehive in Kallista in the beautiful Dandenong Hills, just outside Melbourne, for this one.

This is a useful little tool. Simply find your hives on the map, by choosing a country and then zooming in. The program will then give radius rings at 1,2 and 3 miles.

The illustration shows our apiary at the centre, but with EFB not so very far away, you can see where the association's bees might meet other bees.

We all have a guess as to where the 3 mile radius is in relation to our colonies. If you need to move your bees to the other side of the garden, or across the road, you will have to move them away more than 3 miles for 4 weeks, or they will fly back to the original site. This little app. will put your mind at rest - or not.

<https://www.beepods.com/honey-bee-forage-map/>



Honey Ale – CLASS 38 (A possible recipe for an excellent honey ale)

100g (3½oz) crushed crystal malt
200g (7oz) honey
450g (1lb) liquid malt extract (light or amber)
Ale or Brewer's yeast
15g (½oz) hops (made up of two-thirds bittering
and one-third aroma hops)
½ teaspoon white sugar per bottle for priming



Put the crushed crystal malt into a pan with 2.25l/79floz water (a grain bag or a straining bag can be used to hold the crushed malt but isn't necessary). Heat the water until it reaches 65–72°C (150–160°F) then cover and steep for 15 minutes maintaining this temperature and stirring occasionally.

Remove the grains and add the malt extract. Bring to the boil until the liquid rapidly foams, then turn the heat down to prevent it boiling over.

Add around two-thirds of the hops and continue with a steady boil for around 40 minutes.

Add the honey and remaining hops. Continue to boil for a further 5 minutes.

Remove from the heat and mix with 2.25l/79floz of pre-boiled and cooled water to help bring the overall temperature down. Give it a good stir to aerate it and when it has sufficiently cooled to below 24°C/75°F) strain the liquid into your fermentation vessel of choice.

Add the yeast according to the instructions on the packet and leave to ferment somewhere warm, around 15–24°C/60–75°F is ideal.

When fermentation has finished sterilize your bottles and then add ½ teaspoon of sugar to each one and top up with the beer. Put the bottled beer in a warm place for two days and then transfer to a cool place to mature for at least two weeks.

This recipe will make approximately 4 litres (140floz).

These are general instructions and the type of malt and hops you choose to use will vary its colour and flavour.

There is a very useful booklet entitled 'How to win points at honey shows' attached to the email that this newsletter will go out with.

Scary Moment

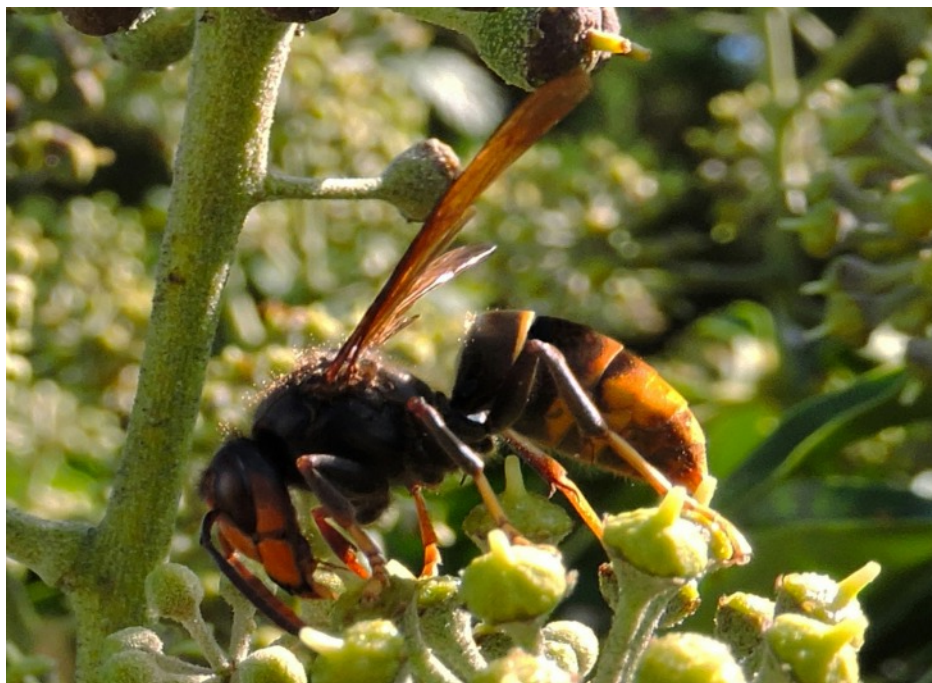
Three of us had agreed that we would like to take bees to the heather this August, but Exmoor is such a long way to go, and if the bees need feeding, then repeat visits can be expensive too. We set about looking for somewhere closer to hand and thanks to the kind offices of Mike Sealey, contacted the #general manager of The Quantocks AONB, who was very helpful and put us in touch with a land owner who has land adjacent to the common.

The hives will be going down to the Quantocks in the next few days, but while talking to the land owner he asked what I thought of an insect he had in a glass jar. Unfortunately it had died, so I presumed that its colour had faded, but I wasn't sure of identification. What's your opinion?




I wasn't entirely sure. It had 2 pairs of wings and therefore wasn't a fly, but what about that ovipositor? I considered that there was enough doubt to contact a Bee Inspector. After I had described it, Simon Jones reassured me that it was in fact a giant wood wasp. It's the ovipositor which seals it. Wood wasps bore into pine tree bark and use that ovipositor to deposit eggs. Consequently they have no sting.

Asian hornets can and do sting, and it is coming up to the time of year when they have been sited in the past, so be alert, and report any possible sightings to the Bee Inspectors or the Non Native Species Secretariat at <http://www.nonnativespecies.org>. There is a picture of an Asian hornet on the next page



Asian hornet - vespa velutina



National


BS Deep wired foundation £1.25 each

BS Super wired foundation 80p each

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Bee of the month

Not a bee at all, but this is a pretty good mimic of the white tailed bumblebee. The give away is the fact that it only has a single pair of wings, like all true flies. It's quite a large one too, coming in at an impressive 15mm. There is a colour variant too, which mimics the red tailed bumblebee. Pretty impressive stuff for a single species. You have to admire their ingenuity. You like them already, but you'll love them when I tell you that their larvae thrive as scavengers in wasp's nests.



Apiinvert. A syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted by the bees, less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

Apifonda. If you are venturing on a Queen rearing project this fondant is what you need. Very similar to Apiinvert, it is a paste not a liquid. If a colony becomes light through the course of the winter a dollop of fondant could well be the answer between life and death of the bees.

The Apiinvert can be fed as a 'gee up' in the spring, emergency feeding during the 'June gap' and of course at the end of the season when preparing for winter.

Apiinvert. 1 - 4 boxes @ 16 Kg £23 each, 5 + boxes £22 each

Apifonda. 1 x 2.5 Kg bag £4.75, 1 box 5 x 2.5 Kg £22, 2 + boxes £21 each

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood, 16 x 10 brood

Eddie Howe. email:- redrascal@tiscali.co.uk Mobile 07812 738793 Telephone 01458 2721144

Good News on MAQS

Once you have taken your honey, you will need to treat your bees for varroa before you feed them for the winter. Many treatments are available, but most of the ones which can be used at this time of year need to be on the hive for at least 4 weeks. There is only one treatment which only takes 7 days and that is MAQS (Mite Away Quick Strips). It is also one of only two treatments, at present, which can be used while there is harvestable honey in the hive. On top of that, it will kill varroa mites in sealed cells.



We have secured a bulk buy deal for our members, which represents significant savings on this product. If you were to buy treatments for 2 hives, it would normally cost you around £13.50 + £6.00 p&p. That's just under £10.00 per hive. If you bought a tub of 10 treatments you would pay £49.00 + p&p of £8.00 (£5.70 per colony). **Provided we buy more than 100 treatments in total**, the price to our members will be £4.70 per hive. That includes VAT and p&p, but must be collected from our apiary. You may order for one colony, or as many as you like, but we must have payment in advance. In previous years some members have not collected treatments which they have ordered, leaving the person who arranged and paid for the purchase, out of pocket.

If you would like to take advantage of this offer please contact Steve Horne by email at: steve.horne1@btinternet.com. He will co-ordinate payments. The deadline for ordering is **Friday August 3rd. That's just 7 days away.** Provided we have a minimum order of 100 treatments, the order will be placed immediately after that.

Given the recent hot weather, please be aware that **MAQS should not be used at temperatures exceeding 29.5°C. Loss of queens and brood may occur.**

Whatever happened to Varroa Gate

First shown to the public in around 2012 as Bee gate. This product from Bayer Chemicals reared its head again in 2014 at the National Honey Show, but had been renamed Varroa Gate. Its mentor, Nikolaus Koeniger spent an hour singing its praises, and proclaiming it as the way forward in the control of

varroa, but what does it do and what does it look like. It is a sheet of plastic with a series of reduced entrance holes, resembling pollen trap. VIt is impreg-



nated with a miticide, which the bees pick up as they exit and enter the hive, but, and there are a couple of big buts, Bayer don't appear to be giving away what the chemical is that the plastic is impregnated with, although they claim that it is safe to use in the presence of honey. Mmmm! Secondly, although bees will transmit small amounts of the miticide to each other on contact, it will primarily be the forgers who will gain any benefit, and they will be treated each and every they leave the hive, and again on their return. Meanwhile, those mites hidden in cells will be bomb proof, or will they?.

Whatever became of this. It all seems to have gone very quiet. It doesn't appear as an approved treatment for varroa destructor in the APHA/NBU document 'Managing Varroa', and the only two Bayer products mentioned both contain Flumethrin, which can't be used. The chemical Amitraz, which is the main constituent of Apitraz and Apivar can be used in the presence of honey, but they aren't Bayer products.

If you Google Varroa Gate you will come up with current Bayer information, but not the name of the chemical.

Extraction Equipment for hire

This was included last month, but as we have some keen new beekeepers, it has been repeated. Every year three or four people enquire as to if we have extraction equipment available to our members, and the answer is a simple YES. In fact, it's publicised on the back of this newsletter each and every month. The equipment can be loaned via John Speirs, who lives in Long Sutton. There are extractors, uncapping trays and a settling tank or two.



Now is the time to extract for most of us, so if you want to borrow some equipment, remember to contact John on 01458 241831. There is a small deposit, to ensure that you bring the items back, rather than to make a profit

Wasps

With high summer comes the honey harvest, but it also brings wasps and they are a clear and present danger to your bees. For those who don't know, wasps will kill bees. They take the thorax of insects back to their nest to feed the larvae their dose of protein. In return they get a sweet sticky reward, which they crave. In high summer queen wasps start to reduce



their egg laying, which means that the large population of adult wasps aren't needed to feed the larvae as they hatch. No larvae, no reward.

With no reward in the nest, the adult wasps look elsewhere for sweetness, and they find it in ripe fruit, sweet drinks and **BEEHIVES**. They will rob a weak colony and are capable of wiping out a complete hive's worth of bees.

Don't risk disaster. Insert entrance blocks, and if necessary reduce the entrance to about 20mm in width. It makes the hive easier to defend.

Driving the bees

In Victorian times, it was common practice to drive the bees from one skep into another, so that the honey could be harvested, without killing the bees. It still cost all the brood and the bees were weakened going into winter. There are very few exponents of this art these days, as removable frames and queen excluders have made it redundant, but it still goes on.

If you would like to see a demonstration of this dying art, David Charles is proposing a small demonstration in the next few weeks.



Give David a call on 01458 831011, or email him at pennardbeeman@talktalk.net and given enough interest, he will arrange a date convenient for all.

Dates for your diary

Candle & Wax Workshop

Saturday July 28th
At the Apiary
10.00am

**Beginners' Practical Course
Fourth Session**

Saturday August 4th - 10.00 am
Divisional Apiary
Downslade Lane, Upton

Beekeeping Taster Day
At the Apiary
Downslade Lane, Upton

Sunday August 5th
10.00am

Wax Recovery and Exchange
Marin Anastasov

Thursday September 13th - 7.30pm
Somerton Parish Rooms

Somerton Divisional Honey Show

Saturday September 22nd
1.00 - 5.0 pm
Long Sutton Village Hall
Martock Road
Long Sutton
TA10 9NT

Somerton BKA AGM
Thursday November 15th

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Extraction Equipment Loan

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