

THE NEWSLETTER

Somerton
& District Beekeepers' Association



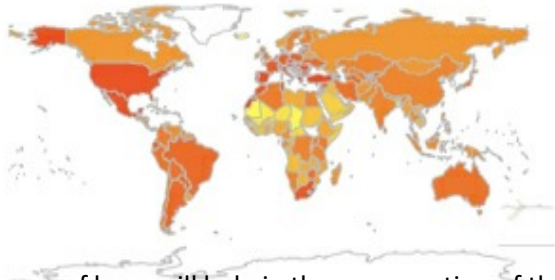
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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



With some of the earliest swarming recorded in years (April 17th), 2020 will go down in history for many reasons, but we thought we'd try to claim the latest in the year too. Trump that! Sorry.

Scientists have mapped the distribution of all 20,000 bee species on earth.



The new global map of bees will help in the conservation of the insects we rely on to pollinate our crops, say researchers in Singapore and China. Bee populations are facing pressure from habitat loss and the use of pesticides, yet little is known about the array of species living on every continent save Antarctica, ranging from tiny stingless bees to bees the size of a human thumb. Bees provide essential services to our ecosystems and are the major pollinators of many of our staple foods, said Dr Alice Hughes of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Yunnan. Yet, until now, we have not had the data to show where on the planet most species are. "Here we combine millions of records to create the first maps of global bee richness, and understand why we see these patterns," she told BBC News. "These maps, and our framework, can then form the basis of future work, enabling us to better understand patterns of bee richness and ensure that they are effectively conserved into the future."

Some bee populations, such as bumblebees in Europe and North America, are well studied, but in other regions, such as large parts of Asia and Africa, documentation has been sparse.

While there remains a lot to learn about what drives bee diversity, the research team hopes their work will help in the conservation of bees as global pollinators.

Dr John Ascher of the National University of Singapore said by establishing a reliable baseline we can characterise bee declines and "distinguish areas less suitable for bees from areas where bees should thrive but have been reduced by threats such as pesticides, loss of natural habitat, and overgrazing".

Mind you, some countries are a little miffed - New Zealand for instance, because although their bee species are included in reports, they don't feature on some of the maps used.

Hefting hives

I'm not clever enough to guess the weight of a hive, and then remember that until the next time I check up on my bees, so I employ a cheap set of luggage scales, and using the built in hook, lift one side and take the reading, then lift the other and add the two weights together. Screwing an eyebolt into each side of the floor will help.



As a guide, a single brood National hive should weigh in at around 55 lbs, a brood and a half at around 65 lbs, and a double brood at 75 lbs. If any of them drop 10 lbs below those weights, you will need to feed fondant at this time of year. You can buy fondant from many outlets, including both our advertisers, but it is considerably cheaper to make your own. The recipe was in last month's newsletter.

Be careful though, hives do put on weight in very damp weather, as the timber absorbs water.

Mikes Bee Supplies

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Christmas Greetings from the Chair

2020 has not been the best of years. I hope this newsletter finds you all in a good place and as cheerful as possible under the circumstances. Covid has severely restricted both our teaching activities at the apiary and our attendance at external events promoting beekeeping to the general public. For 'severely restricted' read stopped.

However, we will be running our beginners' theory course via zoom. The course has been offered to the other Somerset divisions and some will be taking up the offer. Thanks are due to Joe King and Stewart Gould who have been the tutors for the past six years. The course is due to start in January. Hopefully by the Spring we may be able to offer practical sessions at the apiary. Failing that we might seek volunteers to mentor new beekeepers on a one to one basis. Despite Joe and Stewart's best efforts they (new beekeepers) will need guidance and you all know more than a beginner!

We did have a socially distanced work party of six at the apiary to cut hedges and some groundwork.

There is now a mains water supply to the apiary thanks to Mike Brake a local farmer. Hopefully there will be a standpipe and connection to the Beespace sink by Christmas. Given that the water supply is almost complete thoughts turn to a power supply. I will be meeting Western Power on site in January and have requested an updated underground quote and asked that they explore the possibility of an overhead connection. I have requested a quote from Mike Mitchell to lay the trench for the cable should it have to go underground and am meeting the owner of the field to discuss way-leaves for the cabling.

Some of you may have seen an e-mail from NBU warning that some bees seem low on stores. It is worth double checking your hives and, if in doubt, add fondant. The apiary hives have all been fed approximately 40lbs stores and will be checked regularly. One hive appears to be suffering from CBPV. It will be interesting to see if it survives the Winter.

Finally can I thank all who have helped during the past year, your assistance much appreciated.

Stay safe and enjoy the holiday season.



Apibioxal Distribution

This proved a slight problem this year, as we are obviously trying to be ultra careful, in the light of COVID 19. Some people got as little exercised over having to pay trivial sums by bank transfer, but handling 50 cash transactions could have been seen as slightly unsafe, so thank you for your understanding.

In normal circumstances, people bring their own bottles to the apiary and we fill them, but the same thinking was applied as had been used on cash transactions, so we had to source 50 bottles. We have them now, and the alchemy will soon be done.

We are aiming to distribute the the treatments on the morning of Saturday December 12th. As has been done all year, we will allocate timed collection slots throughout the morning, and bottles of treatment will be distributed around the car park by our helpful Christmas elves.

An email regarding time slots will be sent out at the beginning of week commencing 7th December.

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

13kg 1 - 4 boxes £24 each, 5 + boxes £23 each

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 difference between life and death of the bees.

1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 12.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each

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.

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

Eddie Howe email:- redrascal444@gmail.com Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114

Every year, Roy White teases us with a bee related Christmas quiz, and here is this year's offering



Christmas Quiz 2020

1. How many stomachs has a worker honeybee?
2. How many frames in a full National brood chamber?
3. What is the optimum (fine) granulation temperature for floral honeys?
4. What is the name of our Regional Bee Inspector?
5. What defines a flying insect?
6. What is the colour of the pollen of Willowherb *Epilobium angustifolium*?
7. Name 5 natural substances that may be taken by the bees.
8. What is noteworthy about the honeybee *A. mellifera* Caucasia?
9. Does blackberry honey granulate easily?
10. Moveable frame beekeeping was invented by the Rev. L. L. Langstroth.
What was
his Nationality?
11. What is the queen colour for 2021?
12. What are the approximate dimensions of the Small Hive Beetle?
13. How many times does a drone mate?
14. What is likely to be the last available wild forage for honeybees in our district?
15. Apart from propolis, what other ingredients make tincture of propolis?
16. What is the predominant colour of the honeybee *Apis mellifera* Ligustica?
17. In what region of the South West did Brother Adam develop the Buckfast bee?
18. What, approximately, are the cross-sectional dimensions of the National brood chamber?
19. What dilution of household bleach is required to sterilise bee equipment?
20. What, in Dorset dialect, is a Dumbledore?

Happy Christmas.

Roy White



Answers at the bottom of page 8 - no cheating



The Annual Report of the Somerton Division Apiary Manager November 2020.

2020 has been a curious year, responding to the challenges set for us by Covid 19. Fortunately with our large and willing membership we have very successfully ridden out the storm, and hopefully, 2021 will see a gradual return to normal.

Our apiary is very much a teaching apiary, but because of the social distancing regulations, it has not been possible to run our usual teaching courses and taster days this year. Usually our inspection teams inspect the bees on a weekly basis under the direction of an experienced leader and these too are an important teaching opportunity for the less experienced members of the teams. However, these too could not continue under the covid restrictions.

Catherine Fraser kindly volunteered to manage our colonies during the early lock down period, which coincided with the all-important swarming season. Richard Longworth continued in cutting our grass for us, in a wild flower friendly manner, so a big thank you to both of them.

Later in the year as lock down eased, a three- man team of our Chairman, Eric Mclaughlin, Nigel Gregory, and myself took over from Catherine to manage the hives. Our honey crop was taken and extracted and prepared for sale, the bees were treated for varroa, and prepared for the winter ahead. All of the hives have gone into the winter with an estimated 40lb of stores, mouse guards have been fitted, and wire netting placed around the hives as an anti-woodpecker measure.

We have been able to hold a small socially distanced working party with membership limited to six to cut all the hedges around the apiary and do other necessary ground work. Importantly after negotiating with the local farmer, who has been extremely helpful to us we have successfully had water installed to our building “the Beespace”. It should be connected to our sink very shortly. We are beginning to look towards 2021 and the future, we have cleared the turf from a sizable patch in the apiary itself and will shortly be sowing it with a wild flower mix. We are making plans for some queen rearing next year, and hopefully once the covid 19 vaccine has successfully been distributed we will be able to return to our usual pattern of teaching at the apiary. We are also beginning the process of finding out the best and most cost effective way to have an electricity supply installed to the Beespace.

Once again, a big thank you to all those who have helped.

Joe King - Apiary Manager

Membership Renewal Forms

The forms are attached to the email in which you receive this newsletter. Subscriptions are due from January 1st, but it makes life much easier for the treasurer if they are paid sooner, rather than later. Several members have already paid.

Please read the swarm information sheets very carefully. Selling swarms is frowned on by all responsible beekeepers, Somerton BKA and the BBKA



From notes in the United States Geological Survey

You might have thought that there aren't many new species left to find, considering we're killing them off at such a rate, but this extract from USGS web page Mourecotelles thinks differently.

Unknown Hairy eye Bee, collected in Argentina. What an attractive bee? Unfortunately, that is about all we can say about this species other than it is found in the western temperate regions of South America. It belongs to a little studied group and most of the work that has been done comes from museums where 22 species have been described from various collections. There is one note that a few nests were found in wooden trap nests that mimic naturally occurring beetle holes or cavities in plant stems, whether that holds true for all species is unknown.

Christmas Quiz Answers 2020.

1. 2. - 2. 11. - 3. Around 13 °C - 4. Simon Jones. - 5. 3 parts to the body, (head, thorax, abdomen) - 6 legs - 1 or 2 pairs of wings, 1 pair of antennae, external skeleton - 6. Blue/black. - 7. Nectar, water, pollen, propolis, honeydew - 8. An exceptionally long proboscis. - 9. No. It is low in glucose content. - 10. American. - 11. White. - 12. 5-7mm long, 3-4.5mm wide - 13. Once. He disembowels himself in the process - 14. Ivy *Hedera helix*. - 15. Alcohol (normally grain alcohol ethanol) and water - 16. Yellow. - 17. Dartmoor - 18. 18.125" (460mm) square. - 19. 5 parts water to one part bleach. - 20. A bumblebee.

BBKA Modular Exams - 2021

Unfortunately we have no way of knowing what the situation will be next March so the Exam Board has been looking at an alternative solution. Even before Covid-19 the board had been considering the use of online facilities to aid with the delivery of exams. For various reasons, not least suitability and cost this was not a priority but events as well as the rapid development of the on-line invigilation as service have opened opportunities for us to consider an invigilation system which will allow candidates to sit the exam in their own home.

The education sector as a whole has had to embrace this technology and it particularly suits our geographically spread cohort. We recognise that we will have candidates who do not have the confidence or computer skills for online exams and we will continue, when possible, to offer the handwritten option albeit at a reduced number of venues.

The Board has investigated a number of companies and found the one to offer a suitable service for our needs is called Inspira. Extensive research and trials by the Board resulted in the decision to offer the Module exams online in the Spring. This decision and the financial support needed has been approved by the Trustees.

In order to do this successfully, a number of changes will be needed in this first year. I will summarise the main factors and hopefully answer your most immediate questions

- The exam papers will not change, they will have the same layout and type of questions
- **Only** online module exams will be available in the Spring 2021. We hope to offer some hand written opportunities in the Autumn. Candidates will be allowed to sit a maximum of **2** modules.
- **The closing dates for new entries will be January 31st 2021.** To allow more time for setting up and training. **The date for the exams will move to 24th/25th April 2021** Candidates and invigilators will receive training on the system and computer access will be checked beforehand. We will be keeping you up to date on developments.

Regards

Val Francis

Divisional Library Update

The Somerton & District Divisional Library is still open for business despite Covid, though with a few adaptations.

The list of library books can be emailed (or posted) to anyone who asks. If you don't want to bother with the list, the Librarian can advise on the books available for specific topics, for example microscopy, bee-friendly plants, or the health-giving properties of the products of the hive.

Handover of books can take place where the Library is kept (close to Wells) or at a mutually-agreed location; often it's possible to arrange a meet-up point to save a journey. Before handover the books are put in a carrier bag and quarantined to avoid infection risk.

Finally, if you've got books out on loan please don't delay in getting in touch to arrange their return as soon as you've finished with them.

How to contact the Divisional Library:

Email: translation@lawsonkent.co.uk

Text: 07986965320

Phone: 01749 670423

Cheap honey jars

While wandering around a local 'bargain basement' shop in Glastonbury recently, I spotted some of these jars: dead ringers for the 12oz round jars that we bought in bulk back in the summer. They were passed on to our members for 33p each. In the xcheapest shop in town they were on sale in for just 79p each. That's just £63.36 for a box of 84 jars - Bargain!



Somerton BKA AGM

Most of the events of the Zoom AGM have been mentioned elsewhere, but it is worth mentioning that 35 people attended - about the same as a normal meeting, and whereas a glass of festive cheer is usually raised after the meeting, many brought a glass of seasonal joy to the meeting, and some even had mince pies.

Alison Dykes, membership secretary reported that our membership is at its highest level ever - approximately 280, which means that we are without doubt, the largest Division of Somerset Beekeepers Association.

All committee members have agreed to remain in post and were - re- elected en masse.

It was also reported that the Beginner's course this year, will be a Zoom Experience. Numbers from the Somerton area are down slightly, but as it is being thrown open to other divisions, the total number will exceed last year's. Both Exmoor and Central Divisions are sending new beekeepers along.

Perhaps most importantly of all, David Charles, who has been extremely unwell recently, and was rushed to Musgrove Park Hospital in mid November, rallied enough to attend the Zoom meeting and was given a hearty greeting by several of those attending.

STOP PRESS

Electricity

Eric McLaughlin has just rung me to say that Terry Russell, the owner of the field to the north of the apiary, has agreed in principal, to an electrical cable being run across his land, at virtually no cost for a way-leave. He has also offered to do the groundwork, but at a cost.

There are also some buildings being placed in a car parking area to the north of the apiary, which will be connected to the mains, and we can T off that, reducing the overall cable length significantly.

The overall expenditure will be a lot less than initially thought.

Dates for your diary

Online Zoom talks

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

Beginners Introductory Beekeeping Course 2021

Zoom Sessions January 20th, 27th and February 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th.
At 7.00pm

All sessions are on Wednesdays

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