

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Stores are getting lower

Towards the end of winter, stores in the hive are getting lower while the queen is starting the build up of the colony for the coming season. As the winter hasn't been that cold - so far. Foragers are going out and looking for food which simply isn't available, and using up energy in the process. Therefore they need more food.

Gone are the days when feeding fondant as a 'top up' was considered bad beekeeping. Warmer winters means increased consumption of food, and adding fondant above the crown board is a useful guide to how much food the bees have left in their larder.

Somerton Beekeepers January committee meeting

The meeting was again held via Zoom, but several committee members were still unable to attend, for very good reasons.

The electricity supply to the apiary is still in abeyance as Western Power Distribution are waiting for way-leave permission from one land owner. They have done nothing to chase it up however. Chairman Eric did just that, and within the space of an hour got assurance that consent would be given to Western Power immediately. Nobody is holding their breath.

At the AGM, several suggestions had been made regarding improvements at the apiary. These were discussed, and the installation of septic tank was discounted, as there is so little use of the existing facility that it would be an unwarranted expenditure.

Other propositions were made. Surfacing the car park with permeable tarmac would inhibit weed growth and obviate the use of harmful substances to control the weeds, while allowing rainwater to soak through. Prices will be obtained from two recommended contractors. The other suggestions were to add a ramp to facilitate disabled access to the building, and a hard surface to enable disabled and wheelchair access to the hives. Both of these suggestions will also be followed up and considered for financial feasibility.

The bees at the apiary seem to be doing well, although they are consuming fondant at a steady pace, and it is hoped to make a few nucleus colonies for new beekeepers. The coming season will tell if this is possible.

Membership renewals are, as usual, coming in at their own chosen pace, but members should remember that if memberships are not renewed reasonably swiftly, insurance policies can expire, and will then take 6 weeks to be reinstated.

In light of the decision to charge for the hard copy of the Somerset BKA yearbook, a decision was taken to supply it to all those who require one and don't have internet conductivity. It is, however, available to all members on the Somerset BKA website.

On Somerset Beekeepers county matters the New Leaf Award was highlighted at the last county meeting, and there have been 5 nominations to date.



New planning requirement - Brighton & Hove City Council

A planning law introduced by Brighton and Hove City Council calls for new buildings to include special bricks that provide nests for solitary bees. The policy stipulates that all new buildings above five metres should include bee bricks, as well as bird nesting boxes suitable for swifts.

These bee bricks are the same size as regular bricks, but integrate a series of narrow openings like those where solitary bees are known to nest. The aim is to increase opportunities for biodiversity. With solitary bees making up nearly 250 of the approximately 270 bee species in Britain, they play an important role in the natural ecosystem. "Bee bricks are just one of quite a number of measures that really should be in place to address biodiversity concerns that have arisen through years of neglect of the natural environment," said Robert Nemeth, the councillor behind the initiative. "Increased planting, hedgehog holes, swift boxes and bird feeders are all examples of other cheap and simple ideas that, together, could lead to easy medium-term gains,"

Taken from DeZeen online



Beginners Course 2022

The new intake of potential beekeepers seem to be enjoying the second session with Joe King holding court. There are actually 53 taking part this year, so this screenshot represents about 40% of the total, and although probably the best decision, Zoom sessions are never the same as face to face teaching. The practical sessions through the spring and summer will be a different kettle of fish, with the abundant space available at the apiary providing a very safe environment. Suiting up 53 individuals is going to be a challenge though.



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Membership Renewals

This is taken straight from December's newsletter, because membership renewals are slow as usual.

Membership runs from January 1st - December 31st each year and renewals can be made before that. Membership forms and Gift Aid forms have been sent to all members.

BBKA have decided to increase their charges to, all full members, by £2.00 per annum and Somerset have increased their take for the first time in at least 13 years. It may be more than that but that is as far back as the membership secretary can go in the records. It was pointed out that the total increase amounts to no more than 2 cups of coffee in most coffee shops.

Don't delay in renewing as if your insurances are lapsed because of non renewal, it will take 6 weeks for them to kick back in again, once you renew.

Derogation of Neo-nicotinoids - AGAIN

Some of the most deadly chemicals used in farming are about to be used in the UK again. Neo-nicotinoids have been banned in the European Union since 2018 in part due to the devastating effect these chemicals have on the bee population. The UK's departure from the EU "red tape" means already the government has approved the use of neo-nicotinoids for sugar beet farming. However, while a third of the UK bee population is thought to have vanished in just a decade, is this the right move by the government? This is worrying for many because studies have shown that up to three-quarters of crop species grown in the UK are pollinated by bees. Which should be a great concern to farmers when numbers are declining at such a rate. The derogation is for use on sugar beet, which is not pollinated by bees, but chemicals run off of the plants they are sprayed on and contaminate the soil in the immediate vicinity before running off into water courses and polluting them.

Over the past 2 years, the UK has submitted applications for derogations to the EU and for the most part, these have been denied. But there has been ongoing pressure from the UK sugar beet industry to allow the use of neo-nicotinoids in certain circumstances.

Environment secretary George Eustice has agreed to let a product containing the neo-nicotinoid thiamethoxam to treat sugar beet seed this year in an effort to protect the crop from a virus.

But this decision to allow temporary use of the pesticide prompted anger from nature-lovers and environmentalists, who accused ministers of bowing to pressure from farmers and putting fuel to the flames of our ongoing biodiversity crisis. The government should be doing everything it can to save all species of bees, and not allow them to be killed purely for short-term profits.

I am not a great advocate of online petitions, and some of the logic expressed above by Greenpeace, is a little shaky. There are so many for infinite 'good causes' and although well meaning, the sheer number of them does water down their efficacy, but this one is close to my heart, so I ask you to sign the Greenpeace petition. There are already 398,000 signatories. Just follow this link.

[Greenpeace petition to UK Government](#)

Also see the article on page 9

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



Somerset BKA Online Lecture Day 2022: Saturday, February 12

We're sorry not to be getting together in person but, in view of the number of Covid cases and widespread caution about socialising indoors, we've decided to hold our annual Lecture Day online this year. We have a great programme of speakers and there will be lots of bee chat and fun quizzes (optional!):

10.00: 'An Introduction to Bumblebees and Solitary Bees' with Bridget Strawbridge - Howard (pictured left)

Brigit is a wildlife gardener, amateur naturalist, and advocate of bees. She is author of *Dancing with Bees: A Journey Back to Nature*.

11.30: 'Oops my bees have swarmed!' with Clare Densley and Martin Hann from Buckfast Abbey (pictured second left)

Both are self-confessed "Beeks" and share a passion for understanding the nature of the honey bee and colony life.

14.00: 'From Buckfast to Buckingham Palace' with Richard Rickitt , Co-editor of *BeeCraft* (second from right)

This talk begins at Buckfast Abbey and ends at Buckingham Palace, but there are many and varied locations in between – ranging from the bees on the roof of Manchester cathedral to hives in the militarised zone of Salisbury Plain.

15.30: 'Live honey bee removals' with Peter Higgs, Beegone live bee removal (right)

Passionate about educating people and businesses on correct honey bee identification and removal, Peter employs a full time team of 14 and offers services to both businesses and homes nationwide.

To register for the event [click here](#)



What have wasps ever done for us?

Just for those who hate wasps, and Marmite it would seem. Considering this was sent to me from Australia where they actually consider **Vegemite** to be edible, I think it's ironic - and I like Marmite anyway.

BOOK NOW!



Spring 2022
Convention

Friday 8 - Saturday 9 – Sunday 10 April 2022

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts. Bumper Trade Show Saturday 9th

Speakers and Tutors include; Marin Anastasov, Mark Barnett, Shirley and Richard Bond, Norman Carreck, Lars Chittka, Celia Davis, Joyce Nisbet, Juliet Osborne, Julian Parker, Sara Robb, Nigel Semmence, Jo Widdicombe, Geraldine Wright, and more...

For further information, **and to book** from 31st January see the Spring Convention pages at www.bbka.org.uk

Tickets on sale from January 31st



More fuel regarding Neo-nicotinoids

Just like us, many insects need a decent night's sleep to function properly, but this might not be possible if they have been exposed to neonicotinoid insecticides, the most common form of insecticide used worldwide, suggests research by academics at the University of Bristol.

Two studies by scientists at Bristol's Schools of [Physiology](#), Pharmacology and Neuroscience and Biological Sciences have shown these insecticides affect the amount of sleep taken by both bumblebees and fruit flies, which may help us understand why insect pollinators are vanishing from the wild.

Dr Kiah Tasman, Teaching Associate in the School of Physiology, Pharmacology and Neuroscience and lead author of the studies, said: "The neo-nicotinoids we tested had a big effect on the amount of sleep taken by both flies and bees. If an insect was exposed to a similar amount as it might experience on a farm where the pesticide had been applied, it slept less, and its daily behavioural rhythms were knocked out of synch with the normal 24-hour cycle of day and night."

The fruit fly study published today [21 January] in *Scientific Reports*, allowed the researchers to study the impact of the pesticides on the insect brain.

Auction of second hand Beekeeping Equipment



Every year Taunton Beekeepers hold an auction of used equipment. Sometimes there are bargains galore and on other occasions there are relatively few. It is a case of 'pot luck' but really worth having a look to see what you can bag. For those with limited experience and knowledge there will be some knowledgeable people who will be only too willing to advise.

It is always timed so that you can use any purchases to start your season, and it's invaluable for new beekeepers.

This year it will be held on Sunday April 3rd, starting at 2.00pm, but you can browse from 10.00am. The address is on the back page of this newsletter.

Wasps and bees cause cancelled take offs

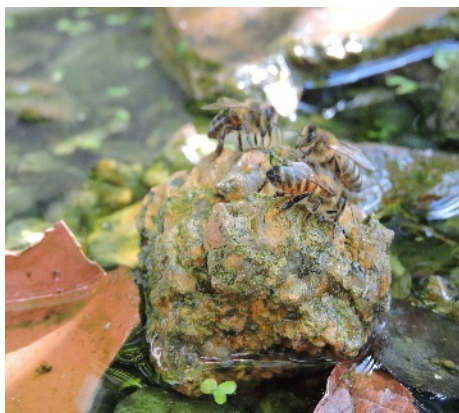
Eight passenger planes were infested by insects which caused abandoned take-offs at Heathrow Airport last summer. Wasp and bee nests blocked speed-measuring pitot probes (whatever they may be) on six British Airways aircraft and one Virgin Atlantic jet, according to the Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB).



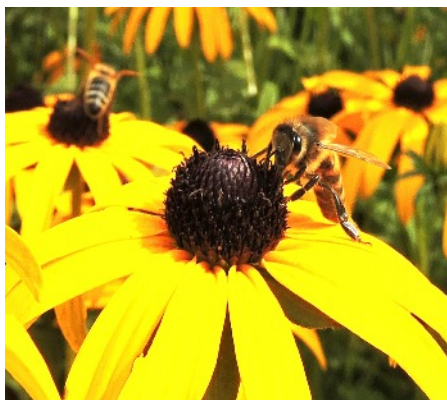
A wasp was also spotted inside a probe on another British Airways plane during the same three-week period. The "temporary surge" was due to fewer flights during the pandemic.

Aircraft remaining on the ground for longer periods between flights created an "attractive opportunity" for insects as pitot probes are an "ideal construction site for nests", the AAIB report said. British Airways crews on board two of the planes were forced to abort take-offs while speeding down runways because the blockages caused inaccurate speed readings on cockpit displays. Unreliable speed indication is a "serious hazard", investigators warned.

Photographs to brighten up the cold winter days



All images by Stewart Gould



Dates for your diary

2022 Beginners' Course
Broadcast via Zoom

1st Session - Wed. Jan. 19th

2nd Session - Wed. Jan 26th

3rd Session - Wed. Feb. 2nd

4th Session - Wed. Feb 9th

5th Session - Wed. Feb. 16th

6th Session - Wed. 23rd.

Somerset BKA Annual Lecture Day

Saturday 12th Feb
Online

Taunton BKA - Spring Auction

Sunday 3rd April
Viewing from 10.00am
Auction starts at 2.00pm
Ruishton Village Hall, Cheats Rd,
Ruishton, Taunton
TA3 5JD

BBKA Spring Convention

8th - 20th April
Harper Adams University,
Newport, Shropshire

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