

# The Newsletter



Vol no 29 Issue 10 November 2022

SBKA website [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)



## Wildlife Photographer of the year 2022

The US photographer Karine Aigner has been declared Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2022 for her remarkable shot of a buzzing ball of cactus bees spinning over the hot sand in Texas.

The beautifully composed close-up (main image) captures the moment a group of male bees compete with each other to mate with a single female. After a few minutes, the pair at the centre of the buzzing ball flew off together.

The bees seem to have it, as 4<sup>th</sup> place in a similar contest run by Euronatur was gained by Rudolf Lenhart for his photo of a pollen laden honeybee. The photo is at the head of page 2.



### **Europnatur photo competition - 4<sup>th</sup> place - Rudolf Lenhart**

I'll let you pick the bones out of the explanatory notes that went with this photo

Do you know how many kilometres a honey bee covers to find a single drop of its sweet food? It can be as many as 1000 kilometres. We don't know whether the bee depicted here travelled round whole of Germany before returning to its own beehive, but its "saddlebags" (the insides of its back legs with fine, specially adapted hairs) are certainly stuffed full.

### **Additions to the library**

Our librarian, Sarah Kent is constantly finding new and relevant books for our library. All these books are available to all members for no charge, simply contact Sarah by email: [translation@lawsonkent.co.uk](mailto:translation@lawsonkent.co.uk) or call her on 01749 670423.

### **The latest addition to the Somerton & District divisional Library is "Varroa Management" – as reviewed in the October BBKA News.**

This book is by Kirsty Stainton, who describes herself as a bee scientist. The review is by J Hill, President of the British Bee Veterinary Association. He describes it as 'an easy to read and user-friendly guide' to the subject.

Although there are many articles and on-line talks on varroa management, this book deals with the topic thoroughly and systematically and should prove a useful reference manual where all the information is together in one place.

To browse the full list of Divisional Library books go to the Somerton & District Division page on the Somerset BKA website:  
<https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/somerton-library.html>

**SOMERTON AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPER'S ASSOCIATION**  
**AGM**  
**7.00pm - Thursday 10th November 2022**  
**Somerton Parish Rooms**  
**TA11 7NB**

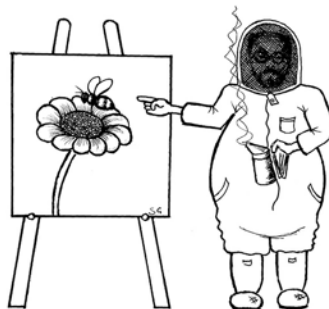
Never the most charismatic date in the beekeeping calendar, but it is one of the most important. This is your chance, as a member, to vote for the new officers, to replace those who have served their three year term.

Notice of the AGM was sent to all members by email well before the 14 day deadline, along with an agenda and the chairman's report, containing suggestions for new committee members and a new chairman, as Eric McLaughlin has served his maximum three year term.

Members should bear in mind that any officer or committee member can be replaced by a vote, at the AGM.

**Beginners' Course 2023** After 3 years of having to run our courses via Zoom and the internet because of COVID restrictions, we are finally able to return to face to face sessions.

Thanks to the kindly people at Tor Rugby Club in Glastonbury, we'll be back in the comfortable surroundings of their club-house in Lowside Lane, just off the bypass.



The take up was slow to start with, but we now have nearly 50 people prepared to listen to Joe and I rabbiting on about bees over a six week period. All sessions will be held on Wednesday evenings and start at 7.30pm. The dates are:- **January 25<sup>th</sup>, February 1<sup>st</sup>, February 8<sup>th</sup>, February 15<sup>th</sup>, February 22<sup>nd</sup> & March 1<sup>st</sup>.** The total cost for all 6 sessions is £40 which includes a copy of the Haynes Bee Manual and associate membership of Somerton Beekeepers. Followig on from the theory sessions, there will be 7 practical sessions at our apiary, which are (hopefully) timed to coincide with key events in the beekeeping season. If you know anybody who would like to join in, they should express their interest wit an email to me at [somertonbees@internet.com](mailto:somertonbees@internet.com)

***Stewart Gould***

### **Australian 2 dollar coin**

Having seen it in a national beekeeping magazine (not sure which one) I was determined to get my hands on one, and thanks to my daughter in law, who sends information under the guise of our Australian correspondent, I now have one.



It is a pretty little coin, but the emphasis is on little. At only 20mm diameter, it is fractionally smaller than a 20p. There is some beautiful detail, but you have to look extremely hard to spot the two bees, one at 11.00 o'clock and the other at 4.00 o'clock.

## Report from the apiary

All is looking good at the apiary, although two of the team are in some considerable discomfort. Eric has a wedge fracture to one of his vertebrae as the result of a fall from height, and Joe is suffering from severe back problems, possibly as the result of an injury sustained by falling out of a pear tree a few years ago. Whenever I contemplate doing anything at height these days, I remember that Rod Hull (of Emu puppet fame) just climbed on to his roof to adjust his television aerial during a football match. He came down much quicker than he went up, and died of his injuries.



Apart from that, both Joe and Eric have been active at the apiary, if only directing operations. The rare high autumn temperatures have meant that feeding thick syrup continued during October, but has now been concluded with all colonies holding at least 40lbs of stores.

If temperatures drop during November then mouse-guards and wire netting will be placed on hives to prevent rodent intrusion and attack by woodpeckers. Wasp traps are still in use as the unusually high temperatures have meant that, although diminished, they are still active.

The team work on the principal that a hive needs at least 5 - 6 frames of bees at this time of year for them to be strong enough to make it through the winter. All but one hive meets this yardstick and may well have to be united with another.

Site maintenance continues with the meadow having been 'topped' and the 'mowings' have been left in place for a while to allow seeds to drop, but have now been removed, so that the soil won't be enriched to much. Wild flowers don't like rich soil. The 'Golden Hornet' crab apple has produced a bumper crop, and Joe says that anybody is welcome to call into the apiary on a Tuesday morning to harvest some, if they would like to make crab apple jelly. They will be welcomed to a cup of coffee and the strong possibility of joining the TMKKAS - also known as the Tuesday morning Kit-kat appreciation society.



## **Bumblebees in Tasmania**

Researchers are attaching radio transmitters to bumblebee queens in Tasmania's far south to learn how they could be interacting with native species, and to test the limits of insect-tracking technology.

Tasmania is the only state with bumblebees after they were introduced 30 years ago, and they're reproducing far quicker than in Europe and North America. Invasive bumblebees in Tasmania have been fitted with radio transmitters in a trial of insect-tracking technology.

Bumblebees could have broad appeal for pollinating Australian crops, but researchers are wary of unintended ecological consequences.

Queen bees are captured while foraging for nectar, then chilled in a freezer to allow for 3D-printed saddles to be glued to their backs and fitted with 0.18-gram radio transmitters. As they defrost — a sensation the bees, native to Europe, North America and parts of Asia are accustomed to — they are released back into the wild and tracked for five days using a radio receiver before the saddles come off.

***Western Sydney University (WSU)***

## Recipe for fondant

No apologies for including this again, as bought fondant costs at least £25.00 for 12 kgs. This is, basically, a recipe for fudge, but without butter or flavouring. The addition of citric acid or lemon juice will invert the sugar, turning it into fructose and glucose. This will slow down the speed at which it spoils. It will take 1gm of citric acid, which is the amount contained in 20g of lemon juice.

You will need 1 large saucepan 1 hand or electric mixer, a Cooking thermometer & moulds (semi transparent take away food containers are ideal)

1. 1 kg granulated sugar, 300ml water, 20g of lemon juice. Pour sugar, water and lemon juice into saucepan and bring to the boil, stirring occasionally.
2. Remove lid and check temperature with cooking thermometer, continue on a rolling boil with lid off until temperature reaches 234°F (112°C).
3. Remove from heat and cool to around 160°F (71°C).
4. Whip with mixer (preferably electric) until mixture begins to become opaque and creamy in colour.
5. Mix until it becomes difficult to do so.
6. Pour into containers and replace lid, otherwise it will attract moisture.
7. Allow to cool undisturbed. If you can remember sugar mice, that is what it should look and feel like.
8. To feed bees, remove lid & place inverted tubs over the feed hole in crown board, immediately above brood chamber. Place an eke on crown board and replace roof. An eke is a frame about 50mm high and the same outline as the hive. It simply ekes out a little room to put things in.

It is the stirring while cooling that ensures it doesn't set like a rock. Just like soft set honey, stirring stops the crystals from bonding to each other.

**Note: If you intend to store your fondant, keep it in tightly sealed containers in a cool and dry place. Don't feed too much to the bees at one time, as it will attract moisture, become goeey and run through the feed hole.**

**If you are buying fondant, make sure that it contains no additives which**



**Click & Collect**  
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 T: 01278 445158

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 Hives  
 Suits  
 Jars  
 And more!  
 Bakers Fondant  
 12.5kg

Find us at  
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 Wembdon  
 Bridgwater  
 Somerset.  
 TA6 7PZ

**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

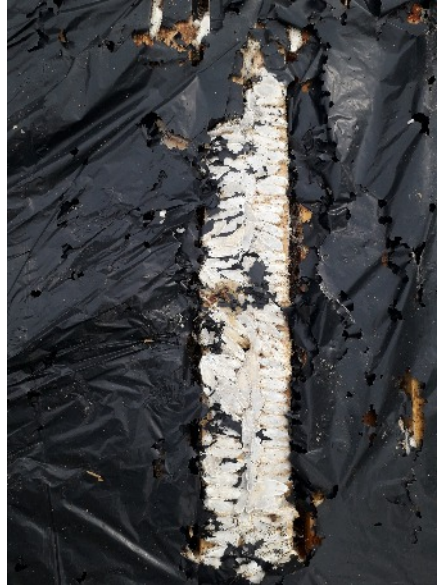
**Eddie Howe email:- [redrascal444@gmail.com](mailto:redrascal444@gmail.com) Mobile 07812 738793**

**Tel. 01458 272114**



## Plastic eating wax moth larvae

We all know the damage that wax moths can wreak on the woodwork of a hive, but recently, as highlighted on National news and in Beecraft magazine, it has been established that the larvae can actually eat and digest plastics with no ill effects. In fact, the scientists are advocating the use of wax moth larvae (wax worms) to reduce the plastic waste problem. Beekeepers will, of course, be delighted with the idea of people wittingly breeding wax moths.



I have to admit that I doubted some of the claims but as I interleave my unused brood boxes with bin liners over the winter, I thought I thought to check, and look what I found, a brood box with a healthy colony of wax moth pupae, which had chewed their way through a black bin liner (double thickness) before pupating.

## Poppy bees (*Hoplitis papaveris*)



Pretty much confined to a small area of Germany, this mining bee does what most mining bees do. It excavates a tunnel and lays its eggs there. These eggs over winter and hatch the following Spring, but poppy bees are so called because they line their burrows with the petals of common wild poppies.

November's issue of the BBC Wildlife magazine has a wonderful portfolio of poppy bee photos taken by German photographer Solvin Zankl. If you want to see more, [click on this link](#).

Zankl's work is primarily centred around insect photography, and is really worth having a look at.

**Dates for your diary**

**Somerton Beekeepers AGM**

Somerton Parish Rooms  
TA11 7NB

Thursday November 10<sup>th</sup>  
7.00pm

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07910 764069

**Vice Chairman**

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jrbarrxv@btinternet.com

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**Alison Clewes**

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**Membership Secretary**

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**Deputy Delegates**

Sally Lye  
Suzy Perkins

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