

The Newsletter



Volume no 27 Issue 8 September 2020

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



The Year of the wasp

Honey harvest and swarming questions are always the main topic of conversation among beekeepers, but at the end of this summer, the main topic is wasps. Everybody is plagued by them at the moment, and it has to be as a result of the very warm spring, and hot May. They are everywhere, and plaguing hives. Weaker colonies will succumb if entrances aren't closed down to allow single bee access. Even that may not work. Wasp traps certainly cut down the numbers significantly.

South West Asian Hornet

Although we may be fed up with hearing about Asian hornets, we should not become complacent!

I recently agreed to take over the role of Asian Hornet coordinator for the Somerton division of SBKA when Catherine Fraser decided to stand down.



I spoke to Catherine a couple of weeks ago, and she has brought me up to speed on the position. Catherine agreed to deliver equipment to me that she currently holds for the division, but I have yet to receive it.

I became particularly interested in the Asian Hornet when I accompanied Suzy, who you all know is a senior Honey Show Judge, on one of her judging engagements to Jersey last October. As I am sure you all know, the Asian Hornet has been established in Jersey for several years now. We were incredibly lucky to be able to accompany Robert Hogge, one of Jersey's foremost Asian Hornet "Hunters"

Robert took us out tracking Asian Hornets, where we were able to get "up close and intimate with them" Watching Hornets feeding on bait stations and observing flight lines to facilitate tracking, and hopefully finding nests! We also went to Robert's house, where he showed us a large, dissected Hornets' nest and lots of, I am pleased to say, dead Hornets that Robert was also dissecting, to identify Queens.

Point of interest, unlike Honeybees it is almost impossible to tell Asian Queens and workers apart as there is extraordinarily little noticeable size difference! The only way of identifying them with certainty is by dissection.

I will be attending my first AHAT zoom team meeting with Lynne Ingram and other SBKA divisional AHAT reps this coming Monday and will keep you informed of any developments.

Asian hornet week – September 7-13, 2020

Somerset beekeepers are calling on the public to pick up their smart phones and help defend the county's bees against dangerous Asian hornets. To date we are fortunate there have been no confirmed sightings of the Asian Hornet on the UK mainland this year. It has been the experience of the Jersey AHAT team that the most effective weapon in their armoury to help to combat this invader is "The Public"

Asian Hornet week is an opportunity for us to get the great British public on

Bernie Perkins

Asian hornet week – 7-13th September 2020

Somerset beekeepers are calling on the public to pick up their smart phones and help defend the county's bees against dangerous Asian hornets.

"See it, snap it and send it!" said Lynne Ingram, co-ordinator of Somerset's Asian hornet action teams.

"We need the public's help to save our bees from the Asian hornet which has been wreaking havoc through Europe since 2004," added Lynne, a beekeeper with 30 honeybee colonies near Bridgwater.

Asian hornet week – September 7-13 – is a key time to spot the yellow-legged insects whose sting can be fatal and whose arrival could decimate native pollinators.

"Now is the time to spot the hornets so that their nests can be destroyed before they multiply.

"If you see a hornet take a photo, send it to us and we'll do the rest. Or use the official Asian hornet watch app and report it."

An Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*) is about twice the size of a honeybee, has an orange face and a dark abdomen with a yellow fourth segment. Its thorax is entirely dark brown or black and velvety, and the insect has bright yellow tips to its legs.

"The arrival of the hornet in Britain is especially bad news for bees - a favourite food source - and a single hornet can completely devastate a beehive, devouring up to 60 at a time."

In the autumn Asian hornets can be spotted on flowering ivy, fallen fruit and hawking honeybees outside their hives as well as catching other pollinators.

Asian hornets have been spotted in the UK and are rampant on the Channel Islands, after they were accidentally introduced into southern France from China.



The University of Exeter is carrying out research into the impact Asian hornets are having on honeybees and other pollinators where they have become established.

Research Fellow and behavioural ecologist Dr Peter Kennedy said: “Asian hornets are anticipated to be a significant mortality factor influencing a broad spectrum of insects, including honeybees, on top of existing

stressors (habitat loss, disease, pollution, climate change, etc.) that already impact our beleaguered native pollinator community.

“Worldwide, invasive non-native species are recognised as being a serious threat to biodiversity, and it is consequently important that we encourage the public to be informed, vigilant and proactive in reporting the presence of Asian hornets and other invasive species.”

Report sightings to asianhornet@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk or use the Asian hornet watch app. Photos, posters and even a colouring sheet to help identify the Asian hornet can be found on the Somerset Beekeepers’ website: <https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/resources.html>

It's not a case of 'If they come', it's actually 'when they come'

Asian hornets (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*) are slightly smaller than native European hornets and look like large black wasps with orange face and yellow legs:

An Asian hornet queen is up to 30mm long; workers are up to 25mm long.

Asian hornets are dark brown or black with a velvety body and the abdomen is almost entirely black except for a yellow fourth abdominal segment. Legs are brown with yellow ends.

Asian hornets are active mainly between April and November (peak August/September) and are inactive over the winter.

A single Asian hornet can kill 60 bees a day, with a nest containing up to 6,000 workers and up to 350 queens.

In Jersey, France and large areas of Western Europe they are stripping the environment bare of insects before moving on to prey on managed honeybee colonies.

Asian hornets are a notifiable invasive species and must be reported immediately with a photo (whenever possible) using:

the Asian Hornet Watch app

by email asianhornet@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk or

altertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

online at www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet

FOR SALE

- Thornes 9 frame manual extractor for National super frames
- Recent new stainless frame holder and gears
- Polythene tank

A good reliable workhorse! Cheap at £100, so no offers. Also, some 30lb buckets and a small tank with tap.

Full rrp £387 (light duty) - £525 (Heavy duty)

Contact

Andrew Pugh at andrew@flores-pugh.org.uk

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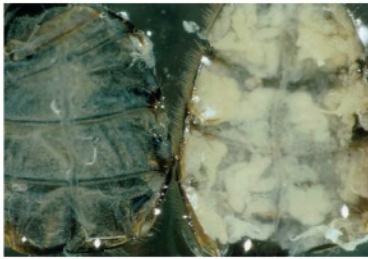
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Winter bees

Eggs laid at this time of year are destined to become winter bees, and should live for 4 - 6 months, as opposed to 6 weeks for summer bees. How do they accomplish this? Autumn larvae are fed a high protein, low fat diet, so that the physical make up of the adult bee is somewhat different from the summer bees. The adults also gorge on pollen while still available. Their abdominal cavities have large pockets of 'fat bodies' which are full of nutrients (very visible in right hand picture). Remember that protein is gained from pollen, and it is the pollen which provides the nutrients in the fat bodies, and in turn, allow the winter bees to survive the long cold months shut up in the hive.



Summer

Winter

Make sure that your colonies not only have a total of 40lbs of stored nectar, but also a good 'stache' of pollen. If you've recently re-homed a colony or transferred a weak colony into alternative accommodation, and they have no stores to speak of, feed them thick syrup, but also some pollen supplement, or substitute. It will significantly raise their chances of surviving the winter.

The nectar sources have nearly all dried up now, so if you took all the supers away when harvesting honey, ensure that you re-stock their larders as soon as possible.

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 bucket 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.

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. 1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 5 x 2.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each

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

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Ramblings from the Chair

Another month has gone by and we are approaching the end of the beekeeping year. Some would claim it is the beginning, as the work we do now will hopefully see our bees safely through the winter.

Whatever treatment you use for varroa should be applied as soon as you can to ensure that the winter bees get as little varroa damage as possible. The bees are also reluctant to take down any supplementary feed during treatment.

One of the advantages of using MAQS strips is the short treatment period which allows for earlier feeding. However adequate ventilation is vital and entrance blocks must be removed. When I first used the strips the colony moved out of the hive and sat on the front. I thought they might be about to abscond but they eventually returned inside. I suspect they find the smell as offensive as we do.

Fortunately the MAQS distribution at the apiary was able to take place in the open air, with social distancing reducing both the stench of formic acid and the risk of Covid.

I united two of my colonies last week. One had not built up well this year, steadfastly remaining on four frames of brood. There were no obvious signs of disease but the Queen was clearly not performing well. It was unlikely to make it through the winter. A spot of Regicide ensued and it was united with a stronger colony using the newspaper method.

After treating and uniting, my thoughts turn to feeding. The colonies will need approximately 40lbs of stores to get through the winter. I estimate what each colony has stored using the rule of thumb that a full brood comb will hold about 5lbs of stores and a super comb about 3lbs. Any shortfall is addressed by feeding 2:1 super syrup. I follow Ted Hooper's guidance that one gallon of syrup is equivalent to 10lbs of honey.

Some of our members have reported exceptional honey harvests this year. Others average. I guess it is all about location and the local crops.

Whatever your crop, I hope you have enjoyed the beekeeping year so far.

Eric McLaughlin



Gardener's Beehive

All detail has been cut and pasted direct from their website, with no alterations.

**Beginners Beekeeping bee hives, with no FAFing!
BEE NEST BOX for sale, Helping you with everything you need get started.**

This is every thing you need to get started. you will get : Hive: body of hive , legs , roof lid, BBSM "Bee Bio Symbiotic Mulch", Lure cent to attract bees to move in, Instructions compleat beekeeping starter kit.

We together are Making the world a beautiful place, with beautiful products that are doing amazing things.

Imagine the wonder and beauty of Honey Bees living in your garden. How would feel if you could give honey bees a home? This is more than just a beehive, or a bug hotel this is a HONEY BEE NEST BOX. Everyday people making a real difference. The GARDENERS BEEHIVE is a simple and safe home for honey bees, Built for what is best for HONEY BEES but also for people.

Gardeners Beehive is a nest for Honey Bees. As a bird-box is nest for wild birds to nest in. A beekeeping system so unique and like no other.

This is a system of natural beekeeping. That almost anyone can have, with or with very little beekeeping experience or training. (Everything you need to know is in the instructions provided with the kit.)

By just giving them somewhere to live, we are helping. Because Bees are struggling in the modern world. WE CAN ALL DO SOMETHING REAL and rite now, to help. By buying a Gardeners Beehive you automatically become part of a club, simply working together for a greater good.

The hive with the three entrance hole. If it is not a Gardeners Beehive with three holes it is a fake, so don't be fooled or get court out.

£235.00 + (£32.00 P&P)

Gardeners Beehive Description of Traditional beekeeping

Just in case you were unaware what we do, the Gardeners Beehive company will tell you.

The hive is open and inspected, every few weeks all summer; this is like having surgery every two weeks, as the hive is the entity rather than the individual bee.

Cutting through the propolis injures the hive every 2 weeks increasing the risk of infection. This is because each bee is like a cell in a body, not a body in its own right. Furthermore, instead of each bee possessing an immune system, the bees mutually defend each other, and secrete propolis round the outside and inside of the hive that is anti-fungal, anti-biotic and therefore helps protect them from infection.

It must also be understood that honeybees appear to have a common consciousness and that the queen is just a member of this common consciousness the same as any other bee.

When opening for inspection, traditional bee-keepers then kill drones, kill queens, import exotic queen bees from other parts of the world, they breed queens, they fill the hives with chemicals, they restrict the queen's movements, they stop swarming, they feed with cane sugar and the list goes on and on. They mate her with specific drones.

They feed sugar, and in Spring they feed pollen to get the queen laying earlier.

They use plastic hives, and foundation. They use wax foundation from all over the place. They guesstimate how much the bees will need over winter if any!

They keep all other bugs out and use pesticides to do this inside the hive! They ship hives about. They heat the honey when processing.

Pick up any bee-keeping book and scrutinise every practice and you will see they are all flawed, for the bees and purely geared for the bee-keeper!

Every one of these practices that are preached as good husbandry have all sorts of implications.

For more amazing revelations click on this link: gardenersbeehive.com

Tidying the apiary

Socially distanced groups in the open air of Somerset don't represent an infection problem, and as the apiary is looking a little untidy at present, we would like to muster the troops on **Saturday September 26th at 10.00am.**

There is strimming, hedge trimming, weeding and all sorts of joyous tasks to get stuck into. Please help us maintain this wonderful resource & bring strimmers, secateurs and any other instruments of mass destruction.

See you all there

Room for a few more

It's been a great year for most insects, and leaf cutter bees have colonised this new bee hotel. Like bird boxes, it's important to keep them hygienic, and the easiest way with bee hotels is to change the bamboo each spring, after the occupants have checked out.



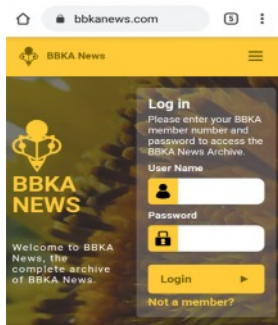
Reading BBKA News online

Did you know the BBKA have a digital version of the BBKA News?

It's accessed via this link BBKANews.COM

The username and password are shared in the paper copy of the magazine that you receive each month. These details are on the contents page at the bottom left. You can read the current edition as well as previous copies of it going back to February 2001!

You can search for articles, or just read through the current issue.



This screengrab shows the log in page for BBKA News. You get the password from inside the cover of the paper copy of the magazine underneath the contents.

This site is accessible on your mobile phone, tablet or computer!

Honey Harvests

Chairman Eric highlighted earlier that honey harvests have been all over the shop this year. One member harvested 250lbs from her two hives, while others have harvested nothing at all. Most of my bees decided that swarming was in their best interests this year, with one hive being the exception - and going on to produce 100lbs, but the rest provided very little.

Rodney White who has now moved down to Devon, has reported very low harvests in the Axminster area, but apparently 30lb per hive is the norm in East Devon. That's slightly more than one super per hive, as an average.

Dates for your diary

Apiary tidy up

Saturday September 26th - 10.00 -12.00

Bring your own trimmer

Online Zoom talks

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

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