

Newsletter
February 2019

Sustainable bees for everyone

A small group of us attended this event in Frodsham the other day. It was a full day seminar delivered by Roger Patterson . The basic premise was that we would all benefit by producing our own queens and bees when we need them rather than importing. While there are arguments in favour of the practice of importing bees in certain circumstances the BBKA is officially against it, the concerns relating to:

Possible import of pests and diseases

Imported bees may not thrive in our climate

Brexit!

Here are a few useful tips I picked up from the day -

- If you have a strong colony, place an extra brood box full of foundation **above** the queen excluder and under any supers early in spring. The bees will draw the foundation better here and the comb and any stores you will get can be used in nucs to make quick increase or the stores can be given to struggling colonies or to bolster overwintering colonies. Or, as the honeycomb will be flat and even and without brood, it can be easily extracted.

- Keep a support colony for every four honey producing colonies, consisting of a brood box, floor etc, but no supers. You will have comb, stores, a queen available for re-queening or can split the support colony to make increase.

And Roger's way of making rapid increase of colonies:

- Starting around late April select a strong colony with good traits - '**A**'. It should remain queen-right at all times. Move it about 10 ft from its position.
- Place two nuc boxes, **B1** and **B2**, either side of the original position of **A**.
- From **A** take one frame of sealed brood with adhering bees and one frame of stores and place these into **B1**. Repeat with **B2**, again with frames and bees from **A**. The stores can come from another colony, without the bees, to avoid depleting **A** too much. Fill the spaces left in **A** with drawn comb.
- Place drawn comb either side of the two frames in each nuc to fill the boxes.
- Returning foragers from **A** will not find the hive so will divide between **B1** and **B2**.
- Place a ripe, protected queen cell in each of the nucs.
- After about three days, has the queen emerged? Look for her to check her wings are complete.
- Once the new queens are mated the nucs can be moved gradually if necessary. They can be transferred to full hives to allow them to build up.

- If you want more colonies you can split the **B** colonies once they have built up sufficiently or you can repeat the exercise using **A**, moving it again, back to its original position if necessary.

You can mix bees and stores from three or more colonies - Roger's advice was if you mix bees from two colonies they will fight, mix bees from three or more and they won't!

For more details on this process as well as advice on anything and everything honeybee-related check out this website, which Roger took over some years ago after the death of Dave Cushman: www.dave-cushman.net

Get Ready for Asian Hornet Monitoring!

Cliff Porter and John Mooney gave us a fantastic meeting earlier this month about the Asian hornet and monitoring traps. We are constantly bombarded with information on this subject these days, but the concise update and scary statistics that Cliff gave us about the hornet's progress made us all sit up (all twelve of us). John's follow-on demonstration of two different kinds of monitoring trap, and when and how to use them, was invaluable and reminded us that we **can** and **must** do something. The 'simple' bottle trap looks easy to make. It's not. But John has done the groundwork for us and showed us the right materials, pitfalls to avoid, and what bait to use when.

Meanwhile, Viki Cuthbertson, the Education Officer for Lancashire BKA, has gallantly volunteered to be the Asian Hornet representative for the Lancashire Region. No doubt her contact details will be circulated soon, but do also report

any sightings without delay via one of the following:

- The 'Asian Hornet Watch' app, download free from Apple and Android app stores.
- By email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk . Please provide a photo along with details of where you spotted the hornet and a contact number.
- The online submission form on the Non-native Species Secretariat website, again with a photo.
- Our Seasonal Bee Inspector, John Zamorski (April until end of September) - Works mobile: 07775 119446 Email: john.zamorski@apha.gov.uk

Next Branch Meeting

Saturday 9th March 7.30pm

Moor Lane Methodist Church, Crosby

How to build your flat-pack brood box

and other useful bits

John McCann and Peter Wass

Upcoming meetings in the wider area:

- Friday 15th February, 7.30pm – Wirral, Plants for Bees, Stuart Hatton, Thornton Hough Village Hall, CH63 1JB (not located properly on google maps)
- Friday 15th February, 7.30pm – Preston, What Type of Hive Shall I Buy?, Vicki Cuthbertson, The Intact Centre, 49 Whitby Avenue, Ingol, Preston PR2 3YP.
- Tuesday 26th February, 7.45pm – Ormskirk Beekeepers, Bee Products, Vicki Cuthbertson, Church House, Church Street, Ormskirk L39 3RD.
- **Saturday 2nd March, 9am – 4pm – L&NWBKA Spring Convention,** ArchBishop Temple School, St Vincents Rd, Preston. Tickets £16 Early Bird (by 15th Feb), £21 Full, £11 for under 18s. Cheques payable to “L&NW BKA”; send to V Cuthbertson, 18 Highgate Av, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 8ll.
- Saturday 9th March, - Bee Tradex, Stoneleigh, [http:// www.beetradex.co.uk](http://www.beetradex.co.uk)
- Friday 15th March, 7.30pm – Preston, Varroa Control and Treatments, Paul Noblett, The Intact Centre, 49 Whitby Avenue, Ingol, Preston PR2 3YP.
- Sunday 17th March, 2pm - East Lancs, Maximising Honey Production, Dave Heaton, Hanson Cement, Ribblesdale Works, West Bradford Road, Clitheroe BB7 4QF.
- Tuesday 26th March, 7.45pm – Ormskirk Beekeepers, Honey Bee Dances and Spring Management, Margaret Murdin, Church House, Church Street, Ormskirk L39 3RD

Best Plants for Pollinators

Rosi Rollings, of Rosybee Plants, has just completed a five year study into which plants best suit which pollinators. She has looked into honey bees, bumble bees and solitary bees and has come up with a list of the 30 best plants for all of them. Some of the results are quite surprising. You can read about the research here: <http://www.rosybee.com/research/>

Committee Members wanted

We would like to recruit some new members to the Committee. We meet about four times a year on a Monday evening at St Helens Bowling Club. It's a great

way to get to know who's who and what's what. It would be particularly useful to have someone to represent new beekeepers. Please let us know if you would be interested in joining our gang.