

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter March 2015

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Calendar at-a-glance

24 th March	Simon Crosan talk on "Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal"
28 th March	BCBKA practical training session, Wendover
30 th March	Anaphylaxia course
13 th April	Social event at Shoulder of Mutton Public House
28 th April	Richard Smith talk on "Extracting the Crop"
7 th July	Honey show preparation, Rectory Cottage
27 th Sep	Honey show

News in brief

Beginners' apiary visits.

We are aware how difficult it is for beginners to commit themselves to a visit at a set time to one of the Associations' apiaries week in week out throughout the Summer . So we are going to try to set up the following . There will be a visit for beginners to our Cosgrove apiary once per week starting late April/early May and less frequently after July. But on top of that we hope and ask that experienced beekeepers will act as Bee Buddies to Beginners allowing Beginners to visit their apiaries. In case you have not tried it keeping bees with another is immeasurably easier than keeping bees on your own. Some have already signed up to help -may I make a plea for more volunteers .Names to me please: Tel 01525240235.

Honey show and its preparation.

Well this year you will be because at 7.30PM on Tuesday 7 July at Rectory Cottages Sue Lang , our Honey Show Secretary, will be on hand to show you all the tricks of the trade. And our Honey Show will be on 27 September .It should be a fun day. Please note these dates carefully.

Anaphylactic Course.

Monday 30 March 5pm to 9pm, Methodist Chapel Hall, 103 High Street South Stewkley. By order of the committee the cost per person has been reduced from £38 to £25. Those who have paid at the higher rate will get a refund. The committee is doing this because it is essential that we know what to do in the event of an accident where seconds can count and for a condition which is sadly often fatal.

Many have said they are coming. However, only three bookings have been received. I can only take bookings if you write and tell me you are coming and pay the enrolment fee (cheque payable to NBBKA). Anaphylactic shock is something which we should all take most seriously, so I do urge you to participate. Please remember, too, that classes are limited to about 15 people.

Beeswax sought

We received the following enquiry:

I was wondering if you could help with a contact for a local beekeeper in Milton Keynes/Northampton area. My husband recently started a small business making natural skincare for men and is looking for a local supplier of a bees wax for his products. So far his search was unsuccessful, but I do believe there are beekeepers in our area. Could you please help to put us into contact with anyone?

Many thanks in advance

Kristina and Phillip Laubscher

07872924107 djcovee@yahoo.co.uk

Basic Assessment training

Last year the Eelbecks had a group of 12 taking the basic assessment and all passed. This year again we would like to run again some training sessions for those interested in taking the basic assessment. The Eelbecks are kindly offering to train members at no cost. Fiona is a master beekeeper, to this opportunity is not to be missed. Please contact Andrew & Fiona Eelbeck. Email: andrew@eelbeck.fsnet.co.uk.

For Sale

- 150 SN5 super frames (Thorne's 2nds) which are surplus to requirements. Happy to break down into packs of 10. Cost is £35 for 50 or £3.50 for ten.
- Queen rearing hive box with 4 entrances and compartments (no frames). £30

Contact: Andrew Eelbeck tel: 01908 551886

Chairman's and Seasonal Notes

At the apiary

It is time to make an assessment of each colony's health. This does not mean we can, or should, rampage through each and every comb in the colony (or nuc) or try to find the queen, or even look for queen cells (although they could appear, given mild weather, by the end of the month!), but we should do just enough to establish the colony's or nuc's health. Timing is terribly important. With a bit of luck we will get several days of mild sunny weather at some stage in the month. Resist any temptation, however great, to carry out the check on the first day of the mild period. If you do give in to this you will probably find that the bees in the hive are still clustered, and in this state bees become highly irritable if disturbed, and loss of the queen through balling may be the result. Healthy bees soon become active in mild weather, and after three or more days of good flying conditions, an inspection to check all is well may be undertaken. In some years, of course, March can be the coldest month - in which case the inspection needs to be delayed as necessary - in 2013 to late April!

The Inspection: Gently ease off coverboard, using a little smoke. Bees can be quite crabby on the first inspection, and smoke enables you to get the "aggro in first"! N.B. As previously advised, it is so much easier accessing the combs if you have put an empty eke above the brood box and the coverboard and use dummy boards. Now remove one of the unoccupied frames closest to a hive wall. Next, with your hive tool, push frames in turn into the space you have created, checking each frame (without removing it from the box) until you see brood. What you want to see is a slab, or slabs, of good, clean, sealed worker brood. If you see that (even a slab as little as 2 inches in diameter), you have a queen and she is laying. Further examination may do more harm than good. Restore frames to their former positions, note food supplies (check by looking down frames and hefting hive), and replace coverboard. If you need to feed, put the eke over frames, coverboard above eke. Once you have returned the coverboard, use a little more smoke and puff at the hive entrance. Now lift brood box off floor. Normally, with a wire floor, all that will be necessary will be to brush the floor clear of dead bees, debris, etc. If you use solid floors, then give each colony a clean disinfected floor.

All May Not be Well: Your inspection may reveal one of the following problems:

- No brood:- If March has been preceded by harsh weather, it is not unusual for laying by the queen to have been delayed, or after starting, to cease. If the colony looks healthy, check a fortnight later or when conditions allow, and take matters from there.
- Slabs of raised drone brood:- The queen has become, or is becoming, a drone breeder. On a mild day find and kill her, and unite by the newspaper method to a queenright colony.
- Raised drone brood laid haphazardly across combs:- This means no queen but laying workers. Laying workers could kill any queen introduced, so they have to be eliminated. Early on a good flying day, proceed as follows. Place troubled colony

at least 15 ft away, entrance at 90 degrees to its former direction. Open troubled colony and remove two frames. Knock off all bees into the brood chamber of the troubled colony. Now put new brood chamber/new hive onto original site of troubled colony, and place removed two frames plus, say, two more into new hive/brood chamber and close new hive. Go back at tea time. You will find the flying non-laying bees in the new brood chamber. When flying for the day stops, unite by newspaper method the flying bees in the new hive with a queenright colony of your choice. Next good flying day, go to the remains of the troubled colony and chuck all bees onto ground in front of the troubled colony, and then remove its hive. The incumbents are left to their own devices to find new homes where they can.

- Unhealthy-looking bees or signs of disease:- For example, evidence of heavy varroa infection or faecal deposits on frames or other hive parts. If you are uncertain what to do, take advice by speaking to another beekeeper. NEVER UNITE BEES IF DISEASE OR PEST IS SUSPECTED.

Feeding: If the coasts of Britain are a graveyard for ships, the lack of feed in March is a killer for bees. Don't be fooled by an abundance of pollen being brought into hives in March. At this time of year breeding is starting in earnest: the old bees are, well, getting older and frankly until the oilseed rape is in flower, the nectar sources are numerous but not heavy. There is nothing more misleading than to think all is well when you see bees piling in the pollen. Never rely on evidence of stores from entrance activity, but go by hefting and ensure that the colony is in actual contact with stores. And if short of stores, feed fondant during periods of hive inactivity and sugar syrup feed (I use the 2 lb sugar to 1 pint water mix, never anything weaker) when things warm up. Feeding must be by inverted bucket, as bees in coldish conditions will not move up into rapid-type feeders.

Change of Brood Combs: We are now advised to change all brood combs over a two-year period. At inspections the following steps help towards achieving that. Year-date all brood frames '15', '16', '17' etc. Move manky combs during the season to the edge of the brood area for later removal. During spring inspections, remove any unoccupied manky combs and replace with fresh frame/foundation.

Away from the apiary

Beekeeping in Nepal. A final reminder that our much-awaited talk by Simon Croson: Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal, takes place on Tuesday 24th March at The Longueville Hall, Newton Longville (NOTE not the Village Hall). Address of Longueville Hall: Hammond Park, Whaddon Road, Newton Longville, Bucks MK17 0AT, tel. 01908 367 788. Time: 7.30pm for 8pm. Teas, coffees etc. from 7.30pm onwards. If I can have a couple of people to help with this, that would be very useful. Can you please let me know: tel. 01525 240 235.

Jenni Tibble

Jenni sadly is going back to hospital for more treatment, and has decided to stand down as Secretary. Jenni, we wholly understand how you feel; we wish you the very, very best

for a full recovery, and I'm sure if you want any help with your insects, i.e. bees, we shall all be lining up to weigh in!

Secretary

With Jenni's withdrawal I am delighted to tell you that Jeff Martens has agreed to step up into the role, at least for the interim. It is very good to have you on board, Jeff, and I am very grateful.

Best regards,
Andrew Beer