



THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – March 2021

Tiverton Beekeepers are a branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association Registered Charity No. 270675

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



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As I sit in the sun trying to think of things not to bore you with, I suddenly realise what a wonderful time of the year it is. There are bumble bees the size of kittens flying around trying to get in and out of the miniature daffodils. The wagtails are queuing up to get at the nuts like a traffic queue at Macdonalds, and yes the honey bees are loving the crocus pollen.

Not all members colonies have made it through the winter, and I feel for them at the loss, but it is more important to discover why the colony did not make it? was it starvation, disease, or predator? if that is known then the replacement colonies will be safer.

I suspect that wildlife does not dwell on the past, but acts on the present and the future. We can learn a lot from them.

Please stay safe and look after each other.

Malcolm

WHY FIT A MOUSE GUARD?



This was the sight that recently met me while I was checking a mates hives. Every thing was so tidy it made my arranging of things look very out of place!
There were a few larger acorns that our little friend couldn't get up through the porter bee hole, but it did seem enough to get him through the winter.
Malcolm

DBKA Website Security Update

Please be advised that passwords for access to the Members Area and Members Directory on the DBKA website were updated in January. The new passwords will be made available to you by contacting Jon Davies, Branch Secretary by email via secretary@tivertonbeekeepers.uk. To avoid breaching GDPR we regret we are unable to broadcast them via the Buzzette.



Tiverton Beekeepers' Branch Members Meeting Programme .

March

Thursday 11th Match @ 7.30pm. Branch Committee Meeting via Zoom

Wednesday 17th @ 7.30pm. Branch Members' Meeting via Zoom.

Following on from last month's talk, this month will focus on some tips & advice to help us process our honey to create a beautiful, desirable & saleable product. Liz Westcott from Torbay who is a good friend of Tiverton Branch, the Chair of Devon Beekeepers' Bees & Honey Show Committee & a very experienced beekeeper will share her knowledge with us. I'm sure there will be opportunity for others to comment as well.

April

Wednesday 21st Branch members' meeting

This meeting is normally dedicated to providing our members with a testing process to identify nosema in their bees, this year we hope to include more opportunity to examine pollen, bees & disease under the microscope. More details to follow depending on Covid restrictions.

May

Thursday 13th May @ 7.30 pm . Branch Committee Meeting via Zoom

Wednesday 19th. Normally by this time in the beekeeping season we will have started practical sessions at our Knightshayes Apiary but keep it on your diary just in case.

When joining a meeting via zoom you will be sent an email in advance with the link .

It might be wise to open up this around five minutes before the start time to sort out the sound level and camera etc. and for everyone to settle in. If you need any steps to this they are all in the December Buzzette or if you have mislaid these email Tony Lindsell on tony.lindsell@btinternet.com or telephone him on 01884 841257



Spring 2021
Convention

16-18 April 2021



The BBKA Spring Convention An Armchair Event

The Spring Convention 2021 will be an on-line 'virtual' event

Speakers include: Keith Delaplane (USA), Steve Pernal (Canada) and from the UK - Steve Martin, Celia Davis, Nicola Bradbear, Marin Anastasov, Jane Medwell, Rinke Vinkenoog, Colin Pavey, Lynfa Davies, Matthew Pound, Shirley & Richard Bond and more – Plus the Virtual Trade Show and Social Activity.

Visit www.bbka.org.uk for more news and event updates

Further information on the convention can be found in February edition of The Buzzette



Due to the present circumstances the Bee Marquee at the show is reduced in size, to save money, and this means there will not be a Stevenson Trophy this Year. Due to our Clubs previous good record in this event at the show we have been invited to make a display for people who may wish to take up Beekeeping in Devon. Details to follow. I understand that most of the usual events will continue e.g. Honey Competition, Honey Tasting, Honey Sales, Candle Making, Observation Hive, etc. If you have any specific questions, please contact Liz Westcott the Bee Marquee organiser via email lizwestcott@me.com.

Derek EVANS, Display Organiser

ASIAN HORNET UPDATE

Asian Hornet Spring Monitoring 12 April to 26 April 2021

The Biology

The Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) is a high apex predator and potential invasive species which aggressively preys upon all pollinating insects. As a food source, honeybees, due to their colony ecology, are a rich source of easily available protein especially when congregated in hives – the Asian hornet equivalent of a wholesale food outlet.



Since 2016 there have been 7 known incursions on the UK mainland. In 2019, 83 nests were discovered and destroyed on the Island of Jersey. In 2020 the first Asian hornet queen of the Jersey season was reported on 5th February. Yet this year all is still quiet on the island. Nevertheless, like the great white shark they are out there somewhere.

The Rationale

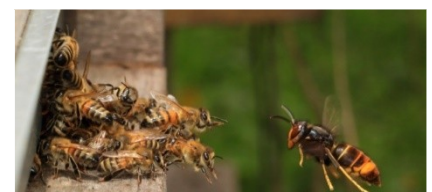
Therefore, monitoring for queens emerging from hibernation is an important step in the process of the Asian hornet programme and not currently a mobilised response to an upgraded threat level. This step is to be seen in the same light as readying the hives and colonies for the forthcoming season.

Using the shark analogy monitoring, is similar to putting a baited fishing line in our particular sea as the water is part of the great ocean where the sharks live. We would like to catch a shark (hornet) but the sea is vast, and we only have one line, so the chances are extremely small. By having more fisherman and putting more lines in the water over a greater distance improves our chances of getting a bite. Yet this assumes that there are lots of sharks and that they are increasingly finding their way into our sea for a positive bite (sighting).

The hornet is ensconced in Northern France yet the reduction in traffic (land and sea) during this Covid year may be a factor in the slowing of the hornets advance as the opportunities for queens to stowaway has been vastly reduced although not with freight. So, the reality for our monitoring this spring is that the chances of observing an Asian hornet queen is extremely unlikely. If we decide not to do anything this year, as the likelihood is close to zero sightings, that is a high-risk strategy as it might be a year where the weather pattern favours increased colonisation and we would never have a warning until too late in September when our bees are pillaged.

How to do the monitoring

The Covid pandemic, vaccination response programme and lockdown constraints mean that the monitoring has had to be re-shaped and refocused to ensure that all taking part are safe. To that end, this Spring's programme is to be done locally, i.e. in your garden and all details and results are to be communicated by email.



The monitoring period is from Monday 12 April to Monday 26 April 2021.

During this 2 week window select a warm sunny day where the maximum temperature is likely to be above 15degree C and little wind (Beaufort scale 0 to 3). The best time of day would be between 12 and 3pm. Using either a saucer or wick style of monitoring station place it near to a flowering plant – camellias are the best as evidence has shown that AH queens are more likely to be attracted to this plant's nectar than any other. Stand the wick or saucer on an upturned bucket (yellow seems to be ideal as the hornet perceives this as a giant yellow flower) so that it is off the ground and the scent of the attractant is more easily wafted on to the breeze. Leave the station for at least 30 minutes for it to do its wafting. Come back and safely observe insect response for ideally 30 minutes but 10 would be adequate. Do not stand near to the monitoring station in such a way that you will cast a shadow over it.

Once your site is set up please email the AHAT coordinator with the following details:

- Date,
- time,
- weather conditions,
- attractant used,
- wick or saucer style of station,
- postcode or map reference or What3words code,
- insects observed – (optional).

Any photos of attracted insects observed may be attached if so wished.

Is it, is it or perhaps.....

Should you observe an insect that gives you cause for concern please try to take a photo – an Asian hornet will be more intent on feeding and so can be safely photographed quite closely. An image is worth a thousand words!

Email the photograph to ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk stating date, time and post code. If you are able to use the What3words app then please provide this code. The image will then be verified and an email sent back to you with an explanation ID. Should it be a positive sighting the email will inform you of the next steps.

The types of monitoring station

The wick model is easily made from a plastic container such as a 250ml butter tub and a rolled piece of J-cloth* or paper towel. Taking the clean tub make a horizontal slit in the centre of the lid approximately 5cm (2 inches) long. Fold a piece of J-cloth / towel cut to a length of 10 to 12 cm (5-6 inches) a number of times just thick enough to go through the slit. Pull the cloth through the lid until approximately 2 cm is sticking out above the lid surface. The wick is placed inside the tub, a small amount of attractant poured in and the lid firmly pressed on. For rainy days or windy conditions, a plastic sheet can be bent over the tub to keep the attractant wick functioning.



*NB. J-cloth has plastic fibres so paper towels for those wishing to be plastic free.

The saucer model is simplicity itself; use a clean plant pot saucer and put 3 or 4 scrunched up sheets of kitchen paper in it. Pour attractant solution in to wet all the paper without leaving a puddle of liquid in the saucer. Weight the paper down with a number of stones as these will stop the paper being blown away as well as provide landing zones for the insects to settle while they feed.



The Attractant

Our intention is to make 50ml of Suterra (highly rated, high efficacy and bee friendly) available to every branch member that requires it for the monitoring. This will be entirely dependent upon pandemic response data, infection rates and primarily safety for everyone involved. It will also be dependent upon government advice for April. Therefore, details about collection will be held over to the April edition of the Buzzette when clarity, hopefully, will be available. If Suterra is not available or members are unable to collect, then some “home-made” attractant recipes will also be published in the April edition.

If there are any concerns or further information required, please contact the AHAT coordinator by email. Keep it local, keep it do-able, make it enjoyable

Gavin Nuttall-Owen, AHAT Coordinator ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk

Ian Duncan's bees enjoying the sugar fondant made with last month's recipe.



They love it despite the fondant being a little runny, probably due to using some caster sugar in the mix (not supposed but I had some to hand and I thought I'd try it!). That said, they seem to be preferring the new runny fondant over the older more solid remnants in their feed bowl. Easy to make and Tony has lots of spare sugar if you need it – give Tony a call as he has more sugar than he can store and see last month's Buzzette for the recipes.



Apis mellifera mellifera on Hellibore Hilary Sanders

Around the apiary in March

By Keith Owers

Well February has lived up to expectation, a mix of everything. Rain, snow, sun and frost, fog. Just as I was told at school, we do not have a climate, we have weather. What did our mixed bag of weather do for our bees? It meant that our bees stayed at home and will not have consumed as much food.

That does not mean that we do not have to heft our hives.

I am sure March will be a very different month. We can still expect more cold weather but also some warmer weather which will bring the bees out looking for an ever increasing number of wild and garden flowers. My flowering currant buds are starting to come into growth, but it will be a week or two before they are in flower.(An indicator of when we can start looking at our bees)

Now that our equipment is all clean and ready to use, you will not be caught out should we start on an early spring in late March and have a need for our first supers.

Late March and early April is the key time for our bees to starve. As the bees become really active the demand for food shoots up. The queen is getting very active laying, young bees to be looked after and old bees dieing off, its all happening. If in doubt, feed must be the watch word, you can still feed with fondant or towards the end of the month you can give a liquid feed the bees will not mind. Bees can withstand very cold weather without being wrapped up by going into a tight cluster. If the weather remains cold the bees will consume all the honey close to the cluster. This sometimes leads to the colony dieing from isolation starvation. Their could be plenty of honey on the other side of the hive. Bees need a rise in hive temperature to move to an area with plenty of honey. The answer has to be don't let your hives become light. KEEP FEEDING and feed if in doubt.

Next month things get better.

Keith Owers