

# NORTHERN LIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH DEVON BRANCH  
OF THE DEVON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

**JULY 2011**

[www.northdevonbees.org](http://www.northdevonbees.org)



## Chairman's Chat

On Friday 10th June, Jean Morris and I travelled to the apiary to meet with Sylvie Barber and Julie Elkin and to plant a tree in memory of Jean's beloved husband and our dear friend, Dave. In a quiet spot beside Mel Browne's seat was a carefully prepared plot and the tree waiting at the side to be planted - a Sorbus Cashmiriana which, Julie told us, is a small tree reaching to about ten feet after ten years. It has early pale pink blossoms for the bees and white, marble-like fruits later in the year. Jean planted the tree herself. Needless to say, it was a sad time for us all and especially for Jean but, as always, she coped with great fortitude, as is her way.

The apiary looked beautiful as we walked around, especially the pond with pink water lilies and insects darting over it. After we had drunk tea and talked for a while we left the apiary but it's good to know that Dave's tree is growing there, in a place so strongly linked with him.

Later in the year we will be setting a plaque by Dave's tree and planting aconites around the base to form a carpet of yellow flowering early bulbs, much loved by the bees.

*Best wishes* **Chris**

## **BBKA Basic Assessment**

### **Last call for applicants.**

Have you been keeping bees for more than a year? If so you should consider completing the BBKA Basic Assessment. This is a practical assessment of competence of your ability to examine a colony of bees. There is a syllabus on the BBKA Website [http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations\\_assessments/basic\\_assessment](http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations_assessments/basic_assessment)

I will organise an assessment day, probably in mid to end of July, on a weekday at Horestone. If you are interested please complete the application form [http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/appform11\\_1303984126.pdf](http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/appform11_1303984126.pdf) and post it to me with a cheque made out to BBKA for the fee which currently is £15.00, please ensure you give your BBKA membership number on the form in the appropriate box. I will forward the forms and cheques to the County Examinations Secretary and arrange a date. If you would like to complete the assessment let me know by 'e' mail as soon as possible.

Jack Mummery [jackmummery@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:jackmummery@mypostoffice.co.uk)

*Education Officer*

## Apiary Report

June has had its ups and downs.

The weather has been particularly wet and horrible - some sunshine now would be most welcome. But despite the weather we have had more success with the apideas and queen rearing than expected. Queen rearing is very weather dependent—but despite this our first batch of apideas have produced some new queens.

The poor weather has not helped with our swarm prevention and we have unfortunately lost 2 swarms. To prevent this happening next year we are in the process of clipping the wings of the queens—and from now on all our queens will be clipped. Some of our members don't like this practice and prefer to use good colony management to prevent swarming but when we can only check the bees once a week to clip is an extra measure to discourage swarming. If the queen cannot fly because her wings have been clipped any swarm that forms will return to the colony.



Queen clipping at Horestone

Our other problem this month has been a colony that became aggressive. Having caused us all problems over the last couple of Tuesdays—it has now been removed and taken to an isolated out apiary. It has been requeened but will not be allowed back unless the problem is completely resolved.

Our work at the apiary continues and Ian and Barbara have repaired the ceiling of the Honey Shed and it has been given a lick of paint. It now looks great as well as being in a hygienic condition for extraction and bottling to take place.

All we need now is a good nectar flow!!

## **GO WITH THE FLOW or the beginners guide to Supering.**

The weather has been awful, cold, wet and windy for most of us for the last month and stores laid down in the earlier warmer weather and good spring flow have been largely consumed by the numerous mouths needing food in recent weeks. Some people have taken some early honey off but probably more have been feeding syrup to keep large colonies from starvation.

Hopefully the main flow is coming, warmer weather is forecast and the Willow herb, Clover and Blackberries are blossoming. Be prepared for the flow, it might be brief but hopefully it will be a good long one this summer.

Your boxes of super comb (if you are a very new beekeeper you will be starting with foundation unless the bees drew some out in the early spring flow.) should be in place on the hives. If in doubt as to whether supers are needed, super early rather than too late but the general guide as to when the next super is needed is when the bees are covering all but the 2 outer combs of the previous super. Again if in doubt over super rather than under but remember that too many piled up may encourage the bees to use them in a chimneying funnel shape through the middle ignoring the outer combs.

The bees do need a lot of space to 'hang out' the ripening nectar to dry, nectar varies from 30-90% water and the honey must be reduced to 17-19% water if it is to store without fermenting.

Top or Bottom Supering? It is quicker to add another super on top but if only frames of foundation are available bottom supering where there will be more warmth for the wax builders is better. The super immediately above the brood box may have pollen stored in it which is unattractive and bitter tasting in cut comb so for this place the super above another one. For cut comb use thin unwired foundation, either a whole sheet per frame or just a starter strip at the top and place in a super with a drawn comb or one for extraction at each end of the box as the end combs are rarely drawn well enough for good cut comb.

If foundation has to be drawn out start the frames on narrow spacing (37mm) and widen up to 51mm as they are drawn. Wide spacing to start with encourages bees to build brace comb.

Manage those combs as they fill ie. when the middle combs in a super are full and nearly sealed move them out towards the edges of the box bringing emptier combs in. Turn the end combs around to ensure both sides are sealed.

Individual combs for cut comb are best removed as they are sealed and placed in a freezer ( wrap in plastic) for a few days or until needed for packing to kill wax moth eggs.

Combs for extraction should be 95% capped when removed for extracting or the moisture content will be too high resulting in fermenting honey in store later on. Yes I know some people take off combs less well sealed and some, mainly larger /commercial producers have warm dry rooms with fans to help dry out combs.

On a small scale sealed combs can be taken out and any bees brushed off but for whole supers it is better to use a clearing board with Porter bee escapes , there are other devices but PBEs are most widely used. After extracting return supers either for refilling or above the crown board ( holes open) for cleaning before storing.

The branch extractor can be borrowed ( for a donation ), contact Sylvie, Barbara or Julie to book it and remember to return it promptly please.

*Julie*

## **£1 m cost of ripping out plant invader** From Daily Telegraph 25th June, 2011

Himalayan balsam, a non-native plant introduced into Britain in the 19th century, is now so rampant that it costs £1 million a year to remove.

The plant, which can fire as many as 2,500 seeds up to 20ft is among a number of non-native species which pose a growing threat to eco-systems in Britain. The annual cost of battling these species is now in the millions, say experts, and the bill is rising as more species invade the countryside.

Himalayan balsam has become such a problem in a wetlands reserve at Fairburn Ings, West Yorkshire that the RSPB is taking a group of volunteers to destroy "jungles" of the plant this weekend.

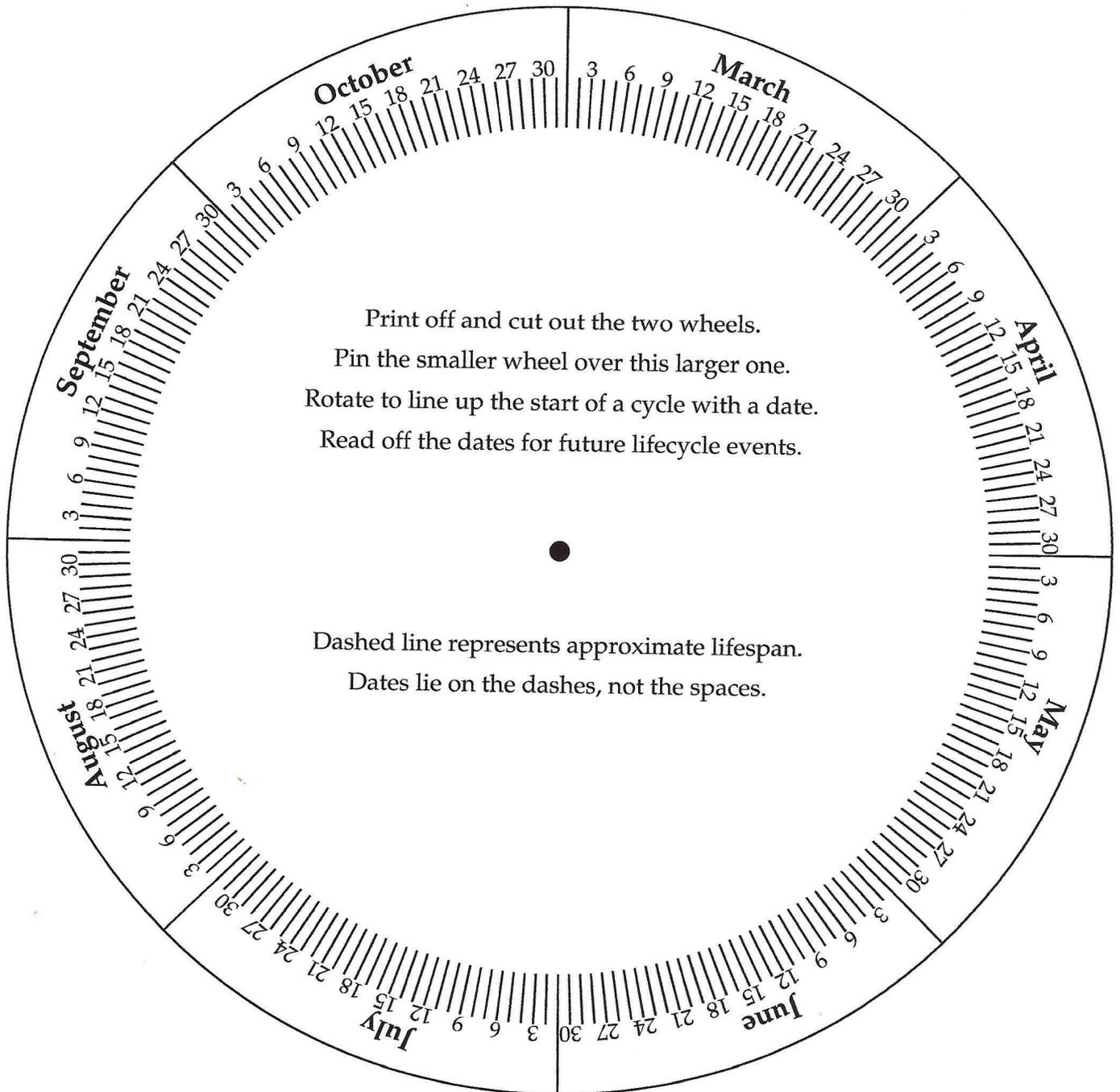
The cold winters followed by warm springs have created perfect conditions for the plant to thrive.

Karen Swaffield who will be leading the volunteers, said: "Left unchecked this plant could spell disaster for the reserve's native plants and flowers. It has pretty pink flowers, with a strong smell and sweet nectar, which attracts bumblebees, butterflies and other insects. Unfortunately, this means they spend less time pollinating our native wildflowers."

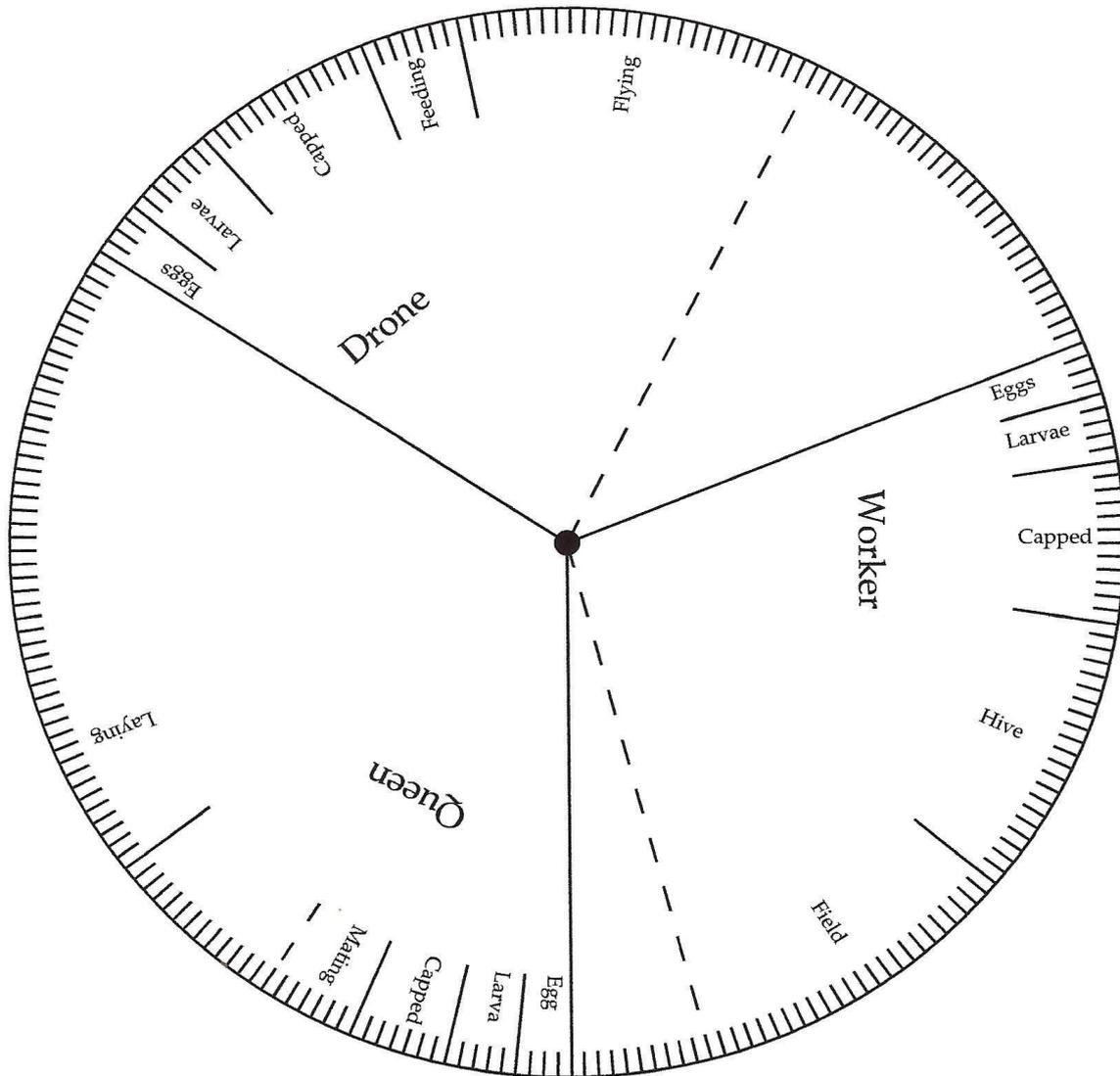
John Day, an urban adviser at the RSPB, said most of the non-native plants that are causing problems in the wild originate from gardens and ponds. "The impacts of invasive non-native species are one of the highest threats to global biodiversity," he said. "When buying plants for the pond in particular, it is important that they are native."

He said plant waste should be composted or burned, and material from garden ponds should never be allowed to reach the countryside.

# Bee Life-Cycle Ready Reckoner



## BEE LIFE-CYCLE READY RECKONER



**DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** Our next event is the North Devon Show on 3rd August. The shows are great fun and many hands make light work. If you would like to help us on any of the events below - please contact Barbara Carlyle on 01271 882303 or [baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk).

Your help would be greatly appreciated. Of special importance is our own Branch Honey Show in October which gives us all the opportunity to work together and show our products and craft to its best. So don't hold back, give Barbara a ring and join in the fun. And don't forget to keep your best products for show - keep that special jar of extracted honey - keep the clean wax cappings and have a go at making candles.

- **North Devon Show - 3rd August** - held at Umberleigh Barton Farm, Umberleigh EX37 9DX
- **August 13th - Nosema Testing Day at the Castle Centre, Barnstaple.** This is your opportunity to have your bees tested for Nosema and give you time to treat them if necessary, before the winter preparations are complete.
- **Rosemoor 23rd August** - Great Garden Adventure: All Creatures Great and Small.
- **BRANCH HONEY SHOW 22—23 October** - St John's Garden Centre, Barnstaple.
- **Social Event in December - Skittles by popular request. Further details next month**

Do you have honey, wax products including candles that you would like us to sell at the shows. We will do this for you for a small commission of 10%. Contact Barbara.



**Extract from the Soil Association Website - [www.soilassociation.org/](http://www.soilassociation.org/)**

### **Household pesticides**

Neonicotinoid pesticides have been linked to the dramatic collapse in bee numbers over the last decade, which is why we'd like to see them banned in the UK. However they are not only found on farms. Many domestic gardening products on sale in hardware stores and garden centres also contain these chemicals. We've identified some of the commonest products containing these pesticides, and anything in the table below should be avoided. This list isn't exhaustive but illustrates how easy it is for consumers to unwittingly buy and start spreading these chemicals around their gardens.

If you're buying any kind of pest control check the ingredients—anything that contains acetamiprid, imidacloprid, thiacloprid or thiamethoxam should be avoided. On the back of our research we've also written to retailers, asking them to withdraw this type of pesticide from their shelves. You can read our letter, and if you see this type of product in your local store feel free to borrow the text to contact them directly.

### **Common products that contain neonicotinoids**

Westland Plant Rescue Bug Killer for Flowering Plants  
Thiamethoxam

Bayer Baby Bio House Plant Insecticide Thiamethoxam

Bayer Provado Vine Weevil Killer Thiamethoxam

Scotts Bug Clear Ultra Vine Weevil Killer Acetamiprid

Scotts Bug Clear Ultra for Flowering Plants Acetamiprid

Scotts Bug Clear Gun! Acetamiprid

Bayer Provado Ultimate Bug Killer Spray Imidacloprid

Bayer Provado Lawn Grub Killer Imidacloprid

Bayer Provado Ultimate Bug Killer Ready to Use Thiacloprid

Bayer Provado Ultimate Bug Killer Concentrate Thiacloprid

### **Lime and Honey cheesecake with strawberries**

Biscuit base: 175 g digestive biscuits, 75 g butter, 2 tbsp clear honey.

Cheesecake: 350g mascarpone cheese, 3 tbsp clear honey, 2 large limes, grated rind and juice, 300 mls double cream.

Topping: 1 tpsp clear honey, 1 lime, juice only, 250g strawberries sliced, 150 g raspberries.

#### **Method**

1. To make the base, crush the biscuits in a plastic bag until fine crumbs. Heat the butter and honey in a medium saucepan, stir in the crumbs and mix well. Tip into a buttered 9 inch springform tin and press over the base firmly. Chill while making the cheesecake.

2. Add the mascarpone cheese to a large mixing bowl and soften with a whisk. Add the honey then gradually whisk in the lime rind and juice. Gradually whisk in the cream until the mixture has just thickened. Spoon into the biscuit-lined tin, spread into an even layer and chill for 4 hours or overnight.

3. To make the topping, bring the honey and lime juice just to the boil in a medium saucepan. Add the berries, cook for 2 mins, gently stirring until the juices just begin to run then leave to cool.

4. Run a knife around the edge of the cheesecake, remove the tin sides and base and transfer cheesecake to a serving plate. Spoon the berries on top.

### **Low priced sugar from Bookers Wholesalers**

Members of beekeeping associations can shop at any of Booker's Cash and Carry stores.

Bookers is a trade-only wholesaler and each member can register individually with their local store.

When registering each member should present their current BBKA membership card.



**Bitz4Bees**

**Derek Hunter**

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