

# NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

MARCH 2011

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



## Chairman's Chat:

March has arrived so Spring is here but the temperatures are so erratic at the moment that although I've been feeding my bees over the last few weeks, I tend to err on the side of caution when it comes to opening up a colony. I prefer to wait until it's at least 5 degrees C.

I've been observing them flying out in search of pollen and perhaps some nectar too and it's great to see them starting to forage again - a sign that all is well and they have come through the winter. If there's no sign of flying bees on a warm, sunny day the colony may be dead so do some detective work to find out why they died.

If there are dead bees on the floor, have them checked for disease.

If there's no brood, check to see if the colony has a queen.

If they're dead with their heads in the comb, did they die of starvation? If there's signs of dysentery, have them checked for disease.

I hope none of this applies to you and all your colonies are thriving.

Good luck for the forthcoming season.

*Chris*

## Membership Renewal

Any one who has not renewed their membership this year and wishes to do so please ensure that their renewal reaches either the Membership Sec or my self before the 28<sup>th</sup> of Feb

As after that date any memberships not renewed will be deemed to have lapsed bring to an end receipt of all magazines and more importantly your Public Liability, Product, and Bee Disease insurance

*Derek Hunter*

*Treasurer*

## BDI Insurance Certificates

- these have now arrived for all those that have renewed their membership. Now that we cannot post them in with the Beekeeping magazine - it would be very helpful if you could arrange to pick them up or for someone to pick them up for you. All the certificates will be held at Horestone until the 30th March, please call in on a Tuesday or ask one of the regular team to pick them up for you. We will also take them to the Queen rearing talk on 25th March. If this is difficult for you a stamp addressed envelope to one of the committee. From March 30th those remaining will be kept at Bitz4Bees till collected.

*Denise Oldaker* Membership Secretary

**Apiary Update** Many thanks to all those that have braved the rain and turned up at Horestone to help get ready for the season.

Ian and Barbara have repaired the steps that had crumbled away and put up some fencing along the path and around the flower beds. When we have some more wood we plan to finish it and possibly add a gate.

Two weeks ago we had a strong gale which blew the roof of one of the colonies and ripped the felt of the roof of the honey shed. What with that and a broken window the Honey Shed was looking rather sad, but Jeff came to the rescue and repaired it.

We had our 2nd Apiary Support Team meeting on the 15th Feb. It was surprising that it was so well attended considering the large notices each end of the lane saying Road Closed. Obviously beekeepers ignore road signs!! The council have put in a large drain on the road outside the apiary so hopefully we wont be quite so flooded.

We have continued to keep an eye on the bees during February. The hive inspection boards cleaned and varroa counts done. Fondant has been replaced when consumed. Sugar syrup will be given later in the month to the colonies that are to be part of the queen rearing programme. We have been keeping an eye out for woodpecker damage as several of our members have had problems this winter. We have checked the entrances and made sure they are still mouse tight and that they haven't become blocked with dead bees.

Last Tuesday the bees were out foraging on winter honey-suckle and hellebores. Pollen was being taken in to most of the hives. It was a heart warming sight. Lets us hope that this augers well for the spring.

And finally a very big thank you to everyone for all their help this Tuesday. We had a large and willing work party and it was amazing how much we achieved. The paved areas under the colonies looks very professional.

The bees behaved well despite the noise of shovels and spades all around them.

# North Devon Beekeepers Association

## Winter into Spring lectures 2011



### March

#### Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March

**Adam Vevers, Regional bee Inspector, will be inspiring us to start:-  
Queen rearing**

All talks begin at 7.30pm and are held at the Castle Centre, Castle St, Barnstaple and we are pleased to welcome anyone interested in these talks to join us. Charge of £1.50 per person, refreshments included.

#### ***March: what is happening in your colonies this month.***

As the days get longer the bees are beginning to stir. After several months of confinement on a mild day the bees leave the hive for a cleansing flight. There may have been dead bees accumulating on the floor of the hive over the winter as the undertaker bees wont break the cluster to remove the bodies. As the weather improves the bees can be seen removing them. If the weather is warm enough you may see the bees bringing in pollen from crocus, hellebores, snowdrops and hazel. Fresh pollen is always better than stored pollen and it is always a positive sign to see the first foragers laden with pollen.

The worker bees will be feeding the queen a little honey. She will respond by laying a few eggs at the centre of the cluster. The bees closest to the eggs will vibrate their wing muscles to keep the eggs at 35C so that they will hatch into larvae. Until the weather improves the only food available is their stores of honey and pollen, or fondant if it has been provided. The larvae are fed with royal jelly, pollen and honey. The honey is diluted with condensation collected from inside the hive as the larvae cannot digest undiluted honey.

From now until the end of the month the last of the winter bees will gradually die and be replaced by the early brood rearing. By the time of the first inspection in early April, all the bees will be young ones. These young bees can be seen practicing their flying around the entrance. They face their hives and remain in this position for some time before distancing themselves tracing increasingly wider circles. This is how they orient themselves.

**Beekeeping tip: which way up is your hive entrance block?** having your entrance block upside down ie with the cut out bit at the top rather than the bottom, helps prevents the entrance from becoming blocked by dead bees.

#### **It's a White Year.**

White is the colour you should use to mark your new queens in 2011.

It is one of 5 colours used in sequence to identify the year of emergence of queens. The complete list of colours is:

Blue - years ending in 5 or 0      White - years ending in 1 or 6      Yellow - years ending in 2 or 7  
Red - years ending in 3 or 8      Green - years ending in 4 or 9

## **Flower sharing may be unsafe for bees**

*(Source: Science News December 24 2010 by Susan Milius.)*

### **Wild pollinators are catching honeybee viruses, possibly from pollen**

Eleven species of wild pollinators in the United States have turned up carrying some of the viruses known to menace domestic honeybees, possibly picked up via flower pollen.

Most of these native pollinators haven't been recorded with honeybee viruses before, according to Diana Cox-Foster of Penn State University in University Park. The new analysis raises the spectre of diseases swapping around readily among domestic and wild pollinators, Cox-Foster and her colleagues report online December 22 in *PLoS ONE*.

Gone are any hopes that viral diseases in honeybees will stay in honeybees, she says. "Movement of any managed pollinator may introduce viruses."

A pattern showed up in the survey that fits that unpleasant scenario. Researchers tested for five viruses in pollinating insects and in their pollen hauls near apiaries in Pennsylvania, New York and Illinois. Israeli acute parasitic virus showed up in wild pollinators near honeybee installations carrying the disease but not near apiaries without the virus.

In domestic honeybees, such viruses rank as one of the possible contributors to the still-mysterious malady known as colony collapse disorder that abruptly wipes out a hive's workforce, Cox-Foster says.

Now she and others are looking at what the viruses do to wild pollinators. Preliminary results of ongoing lab tests show some disturbing effects, Cox-Foster says. "Is this part of the reason why we've seen the decline of native pollinator species in the U.S.?" she muses.

Surveys show that wild bumblebees, for example, are dwindling in numbers, and the new study raises further concerns. "We recognize that those viruses likely pose a major threat to wild bumblebees," says Sarina Jepsen of the Xerces Society, an invertebrate conservation group in Portland, Ore.

One of the most interesting results in the study is the detection of deformed-wing virus and sacbrood virus in pollen carried by foraging bees that weren't infected themselves, comments Michelle Flenniken of the University of California, San Francisco, who has studied bee viruses but was not involved in the new work.

Healthy foraging insects carrying virus-laden pollen are one of the pieces of evidence that Cox-Foster and her colleagues use to argue that pollen by itself can transmit viral infections. "Knowing that viruses are found in and can be transmitted from pollen is an important finding," says Flenniken.

This raises concerns about possible virus transmission through the 200 tons of honeybee-collected pollen used to feed bumblebees in bee-raising operations worldwide, Cox-Foster says.

## **Evening Talk Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February**

John Breeds of the Devon Wildlife Trust gave us a fascinating talk opening our eyes to the vast range of pollinating insects all around us in N Devon.

Worldwide 80% of plants are pollinated by animals and insects and of the rest 98% are pollinated by wind and 2% by water.

Of the estimated 15 – 30 million species of insects just 1 million species have been fully described and each year around 7000 'new species' are found.

100 food plants provide 90% of the food for 146 countries many of these being grown on ever vaster acreages necessitating beehives to be taken in to pollinate them. In the US 1 million beehives spend their lives being trucked from crop to crop.

John emphasised how important it is to maintain overall biodiversity with so many plants 'engineered' to fit particular species of insect for pollination but all so interdependent on one another.

We think our honeybees are efficient but 30 leafcutter bees can do the work of 300 honeybees and we all know how vital Bumblebees are with their longer proboscis and 'buzz' pollination for so many plants. Butterfly proboscis vary from 7 – 15 mm long and pollinate many flowers out of reach of the honeybee.

John showed us wonderful slides of a huge range of butterflies and reminded us to look out soon for our earliest one, the Brimstone which is our longest lived butterfly.

We are fortunate not to have the Death Head Hawk Moth here as on the Continent it is known to rob hives!

Don't miss the next and last talk for the winter when Adam Vevers will be starting us off on our Queen rearing programme.

*Julie*

## **New NBU booklet - Hive Cleaning & Sterilisation**

**This is something useful we should all do over the winter -**

**Ten pages of good advice, free - see:**

**<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/downloadDocument.cfm?id=423>**

## **Warm salad of green beans, red pepper, chorizo and goats' cheese with honey mustard dressing**

Ingredients

*For the salad*

1 tbsp olive oil

1 medium chorizo sausage, chopped

½ red pepper, seeds removed, flesh cut into strips

55g/2oz green beans, trimmed, blanched and drained

*For the dressing*

3 tbsp olive oil

1 tbsp white wine vinegar

1 tsp wholegrain mustard

1 tbsp clear honey

salt and freshly ground black pepper

*To serve*

55g/2oz slice goats' cheese

2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

*Preparation method*

For the salad, heat the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat, add the chorizo and fry for 2-3 minutes, or until the oil is released from the chorizo.

Add the pepper slices and fry for a further 2-3 minutes, or until softened.

Add the cooked beans and stir until heated through.

For the dressing, mix together all of the dressing ingredients in a bowl until well combined.

To serve, spoon the salad into the centre of a serving plate and drizzle with the dressing.

Crumble over the goats' cheese and sprinkle over the chopped parsley.

## **DIARY DATES**

**Friday 25th March: Talk by Adam Vevers, Regional bee Inspector: Queen Rearing.**  
7.30 Castle Centre, Barnstaple.

### **Spring Convention, Stoneleigh**

15th - 17th April (workshops, courses and seminars).

**May 19/20/21 2011 - Devon County Show** - help needed for all kinds of things for the show. Contact Barry Neal 01805601715

### **National Honey Show - Weybridge**

**27th October – 29th October 2011**

International classes and beekeepers' lecture convention



**Derek**

**01769 561033**

The shop will be open on Tuesdays each week from 10.30 am to 12.30. Also in order to help those unable to call on Tuesdays it will be open the first Sunday in April and May at the same times. Should you have any queries or require further information please contact me.

The Oldies are the oldest

A man was driving down the road and ran out of gas. Just at that moment, a bee flew in his window.

The bee said, 'What seems to be the problem?'

'I'm out of gas,' the man replied.

The bee told the man to wait right there and flew away.

Minutes later, the man watched as an entire swarm of bees flew to his car and into his gas tank. After a few minutes, the bees flew out.

'Try it now,' said one bee.

The man turned the ignition key and the car started right up. 'Wow!' the man exclaimed, 'What did you put in my gas tank?'

The bee answered, 'BeePee'.

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