

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

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Chair Chat

We have a very autumn feeling at the apiary and winter is on its way.

We will have the same problem as last year with the roads flooding; the ditches are already full and overflowing. Keep a check on emails to see if the apiary has had to be closed and car share as much as possible.

It is still very warm and the bees are out collecting pollen and stores at every opportunity. We are not so busy, most of our jobs are done, and there is nothing better than to stand with a hot cup of coffee and watch the bees fly in and out.

We had our last committee meeting before the AGM and, as the road was closed because of road works, we were forced to hold it in the pub! We might have all our meetings there, the Rising Sun made us very welcome.

There will be a lot of changes to the committee next year and anyone who wishes to stand in any position needs to contact Martin as soon as possible.

I hope to see you all at the AGM, please remember this club cannot run without your help and support.

Barbara

Events 2013-14

Sun 17 November	14:00 - 16:00	Branch AGM, Castle Centre, Barnstaple
Fri 29 November	19:00 onwards	Skittles Evening, The Plough Inn Bickington
Thurs 16 January	19.00 - 21.00	Talk 'Bee Bits' by Chris Utting, Castle Centre, Barnstable
Thurs 13 February	19.00 - 21.00	Talk 'Nosema' by Glyn Davis, Castle Centre, Barnstable
Thurs 13 March	19.00 - 21.00	Talk 'Predator Mites' by Richard Ball, Castle Centre, Barnstable

First Winter Lecture

Leila Goss a member of East Devon Beekeepers who looks after 6 colonies at Exeter University as well as her own bees gave us a wonderful talk on **Bees and Plants** on 3 October.

Leila began by refreshing our memories of the structure of flowers and how they have developed so many ways to encourage the insects they need to pollinate them efficiently with colour, scent and guides to the source of the reward, the nectar. Some have cunningly placed anthers so the so the bee is coated with pollen even when it is only intending to collect nectar eg the Himalayan Balsam. Also how when the pollinating has been done they tell the bees by a change of floret position or colour change as in the Horse Chestnut and the Forget me Not. She reminded us of the importance of choosing single varieties of flowers as all those extra petals are there at the expense of the nectaries.

The importance of pollen as the bees sole source of protein and the need for a regular and varied supply especially early and late in the year was emphasised. While we as beekeepers and gardeners cannot make a significant difference to our bees nectar supply we can do a lot to help the pollen supply at the critical times of late winter /early spring with early flowering crocus, snowdrop, aubrietia & poached egg flowers and late in the year by letting that ivy flower, probably the last foraging opportunity of the autumn.

The crude protein content of pollens was interesting and although we don't know to what degree bees can tell the difference between the levels they and we know they need a wide range of pollen sources to supply all the amino acids they and the larvae need.

(Continued on next page)

First Winter Lecture [continued]

Examples of crude protein % are: Low - sunflower 12, maize and weeping willow 15.

Average - goat willow 22, OSR 24 & pear, gorse & white clover 26

High - viper's bugloss 35.

It is generally considered that 20% is the minimum level that justifies the bees efforts to collect it.

Leila's beautiful photographs took us through the bees' floral year and reminded us that there are always more plants both native and cultivated that must be found a space in the garden.

In addition to the floral nectaries, some plants provide extra floral nectaries on the stem, underside of leaves and in leaf axils

eg cherry, laurel and broad bean even though there is no obvious benefit to the plant from this offering.

If you find mowing your lawn a tedious chore then sow it with wild white clover, it will look good, smell good, the bees will love it and you only need mow it when the flowers fade.

The talk also emphasised the pleasure and interest there is in watching our bees foraging and knowing what they are working although most of us probably won't find the time to trap pollen every hour to find out what they are bringing in.

The next lecture is in January so make a New Year Resolution to come and support the branch and the Speakers, you might learn a thing or two and the cakes are good too.

Julie



Member's Apiary: Mave Dowling at an Allotment in Bideford

As I had two hives in a field ten minutes drive from Bideford, I was interested in the offer of an allotment site in the town.

Last summer Chris U and Martin P had spoken to the allotment representative who was enthusiastic about having bees on the site. He spoke about an area with a six foot fence, a border of donated plants and possibly a shed. I went to look at the area and it looked fine. What could be better? Possibly too good to be true as only the representative eventually, in December, put up the fence as

required by the Council. This was after I had bought the chicken wire. No plants, no shed, no enthusiasm from the other plot holder who merely kept asking me 'where are the bees'.

After much to-ing and fro-ing from the Town Hall regarding insurance, risk assessment, warning notices, contract etc, I was in a position to move the bees. Now it was winter and I realised that, although the site had a wonderful views north along the estuary and northeast towards Exmoor, the position was very exposed. This was particularly the case as we had persistent cold northeast winds in the New Year. I put a mesh wind brake onto the fence, erected a hive stand, dug a bed for wild flowers, and planted a border of plants which I hoped would also act as a wind break and I sowed grass seed.

Again many enquiries about the absence of bees and a comment from Mr Grumpy about the bee garden being a b.... eye sore. I did not move the bees. I lost one colony in February so my remaining hive was very precious.

In June I made up a nucleus and moved this to the allotment. This nuc was slow to develop but in the meantime I had met a life-long beekeeper who had recently moved to live next door to the allotment. He was looking for a place near home for his bees so now I have an experienced keeper to give me advice and confidence.

The colony has expanded. Most allotment holders say they enjoy seeing the bees around the hive and no comment from Mr Grumpy.

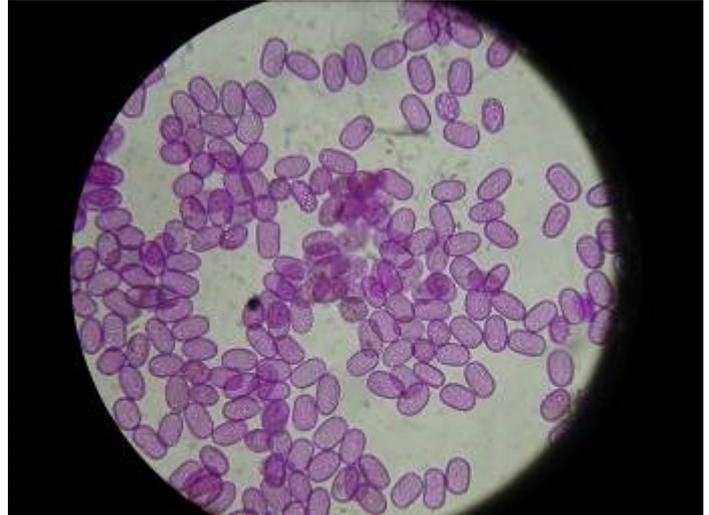


Mave

Mystery at Horestone



At the beginning of October on the insert under the WBC hive at Horestone we found a deep layer of fine greyish/fawn powdery debris, an amazing amount. The photos are taken the following week when this was repeated but in a lesser quantity. We were all mystified by this, none of us had ever seen debris like this before.



Chris and I took samples home and looked at it under the microscope when it became obvious it was pollen debris. A slide examined under 400x magnification revealed it to be Himalayan Balsam in vast quantity, very few other pollen grains were present. The amount on the insert would have reared hundreds of larvae but was all going to waste, possibly on a solid floor the bees would have picked some of this up and used it. The interesting fact about this was that the bees were very busy foraging that day with other pollen going in on their legs but I didn't see a single bee that had actually collected Balsam pollen, the only balsam pollen was on their backs where the plant cunningly places it as the bees squeeze

into the flower and this had brushed/fallen off as they entered the hive. They were obviously working the balsam just for the copious amounts of nectar it provides.

Julie

Branch AGM

The AGM will be held at the Castle Centre, Barnstaple at 2pm on Sunday 17th November.

At this meeting the new committee will be elected and the administration positions filled.

If you would like to be nominated for any position, please contact Barbara Carlyle (baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk) or Martin Pollock (tola7@talktalk.net) as soon as possible.

Bee Quotes

‘For so work the honey-bees, creatures that by a rule in nature teach the act of order to a peopled kingdom.’

William Shakespeare

Plant of the Month

IVY *Hedera helix* Araliaceae



This native plant is also common throughout Europe and Asia. It is an evergreen plant, clinging to its support, producing masses of bright yellow flowers at this time of year when little else is around for the bees to forage on. They avidly collect both its pollen, providing a good source of protein for the winter; and the foul smelling nectar to boost the carbohydrate stores.

Apart from its usefulness to the bees is it good to have around? Well it damages buildings by leaving unsightly footprint trails up walls, which area very difficult to remove and it's rapid growth soon takes it into gutters causing blockages, onto roofs lifting tiles, cutting out light from windows etc.

No doubt you've seen trees covered in it and wondered if it damages them either? As usual, Yes and No. No intrinsic damage is caused, but death occurs when the huge rain soaked mass pulls down the tree in our winter gales.

Ideally the plants should be dug out or better still removed as seedlings - that is always a job for tomorrow! Walking past my hives yesterday I observed masses of bees out foraging for its nectar and could smell it yards away.

Recently we have experienced the problem of crystallized stores in the spring blocking the combs, preventing the Queen from expanding the brood area. In wild colonies this is of little consequence, but it matters to us, we cannot have a honey crop without the bees to gather it! So we want a large foraging force. As this is a fairly new phenomenon I'm not sure what to advise, but I always remove these combs during my spring inspection, giving them one new comb at a time and feeding until they have another full complement of combs. I have never extracted honey from the supers because of the smell, but am assured that it disappears after 12 months; this raises the vexed issue of the HMF values.

We should remember that 90% of the time "bees know best" - that still leaves 10%!

Kay

Honey Recipe - Apple and Hazelnut Pudding

2 medium eating apples
3oz plain flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Nutmeg to taste
Pinch of salt
1 egg
3oz soft brown sugar
2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon vanilla essence
2oz hazelnuts, chopped
2oz raisins

Heat oven to 180°C, 350°F, Gas Mark 4. Grease an 8" pie plate. Quarter and core the apples. Slice thinly and place in a bowl of cold water. Sift flour, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt into a bowl. In a second bowl beat the egg with the sugar, stir in the honey and essence. Add drained apples and stir together, then blend into the flour mixture, mixing well. Stir in the hazelnuts and raisins. Turn mixture into the prepared pie plate. Cook for 35-40 minutes until risen and cooked through. Serve hot with cream.

Edited by Jeff Orr, e-mail jeffjorr@aol.com. The views expressed in the articles are the author's and not necessarily those of the North Devon Branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association.

Member's contributions are extremely welcome: by 23rd of the month prior to publication please.