



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

WE'RE OFF ON A BEE SAFARI

Didn't we have a lovely time the day we went to Jane and Bernard's Beautiful day, we got lost on the way We were off on a Bee Safari!

We had quite an adventure getting to the apiary. We were delayed as we had to trundle through Langley following a herd of white heritage breed cows being taken to summer pasture. A calf got spooked and ran towards us, then into a garden, so we had to be patient until it was returned to the herd.

There were nine adults and two budding child beekeepers. We split into two groups, Jane leading one and Bernard the other. They explained that their hives in their garden were "bee-having" as they should, and it would be much more interesting to inspect the apiary hives. The first colony our group



All kitted up and ready for a Bee Safari



Beekeeping gadgets: a spring device for putting closed queen cells into a new hive and a long queen catcher tube

inspected, Bernard was hoping to put into an inspection hive, so we were glad to find it was queenright and good to go on an outing at the weekend. The nuc we inspected was not viable and Bernard thought he would unite with another hive using the newspaper method. The last hive we looked at we found two sealed queen cells so one will have to be removed.

I was very interested to learn about some gadgets, one a long queen catcher tube and the other a spring device for putting closed queen cells in to a new hive. It was a very hands on session each of us taking it in turns to lift the frames and look for queens, brood and stores.

We went back to Bernard and Jane's house for tea, coffee and cake. Jane had made two delicious honey cakes.

The conversation turned to swarms, bait hives, honey and lack of it this year. Mike Townsend told us a story of when his bees swarmed while he and his wife were away. A neighbour phoned him to tell of the swarm and Mike said it would have to wait until his return. When he arrived home the neighbour (not a beekeeper) said that the swarm was in a box waiting. He had taken down his net curtains to fashion a makeshift veil, put on overalls and collected the swarm. That's the sort of intrepid neighbour you need!

Sue Cooper



BEEKEEPING TASKS FOR JULY

In some apiaries, our bees are going great guns and collecting record amounts of honey - these members are panicking about extraction. In other apiaries, the bees have risked starvation and are now surviving on bramble. It's fair to say that this season is "variable". Some members are experiencing late swarming and feel almost as if it is May. This July, it is not safe to assume any of those queen cells are supersedure.

After a wet spring it is not surprising that there are record amounts of bee disease about. Chronic bee paralysis virus is a disease of confinement, and many colonies experienced long periods of confinement this spring. If you have a big pile of dead bees at the entrance, look out for shaky shiny bees, especially on the top of bars. This is not something we can cure but we can give lots of space and feed, to reduce stress.

It has been two years since we cleared EFB from the branch apiary (and the team worked SO hard). Nationally, there have been large amounts of European Foulbrood this year, and that may be because of the spring, so I want to remind everyone about the importance of how to do a brood disease inspection (turn to page 7 to find out how). The NBU have updated the leaflet about foulbrood this year and the new version is [here](#).

If you suspect you may have EFB, contact your bee inspector. Ours is Colleen Reichling. Her mobile number is: 07990 138898 and email is: colleen.reichling@apha.gov.uk

BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

- Do a full brood disease inspection- looking JUST for brood disease by shaking each comb. If you suspect EFB, send photos to the bee inspector. (For how to do a full brood inspection turn to page 7).
- Maintain regular hive inspections.
- Enjoy the blackberry flower flow.
- Make sure you are still supering as space pressures can still cause swarms.
- Re-queen or unite where swarm control has left you with small colonies.
- A demaree might be good swarm control to keep the foraging force together this month.
- If the wasps start at the end of the month, close down entrances as small as possible.
- You may be extracting this month, so get your clearing kit ready and book the extraction room.
- Stay calm - it is a funny year - but so many are. The bees are remarkably resilient and survive a few mistakes.

Jane Medwell, WLBK chair



Chronic bee paralysis virus.
Photo courtesy of NBU/
APHA © Crown copyright

SUMMER CELEBRATION

Our Summer Celebration is a bring and share picnic in the garden of Kenilworth Senior Citizen's Club.

Saturday 17th August 3 – 8pm

Do join us. Bring plates and cutlery and something to share.

There will be friends, chat and drinks. No need to worry about the weather – leave that to the bees. We can use the hall if it's wet. All welcome, partners and children included.

A STICKY BUSINESS

Propolis is hard to get out of beesuits and can gum up the whole hive. However, it is really an almost magical substance, which has a key part to play in the beehive.

Propolis is a resinous substance composed of a complex mixture of wax, sugars, and other chemicals collected by the bees from buds and exudates of certain trees and plants. The colour of propolis and its composition depends on what trees are available and it varies from red to pale yellow. Some colonies collect a very little and some colonies collect a huge amount - a trait which seems to be heritable.

The bees apply the propolis to the interior of the nest and to the points of comb attachment, to add structural strength. Indeed, there has been research recently which suggests that a very fine layer of propolis on honeycombs makes the wax stronger - like a coating on concrete.

Propolis is not only a structural characteristic of honey bee colonies, the bees coat the interior of their cavity to form what has been called a "propolis envelope", which supports the worker honeybee immune response and confers a social immunity that reduces the stress of individual immunity of worker bees. This propolis envelope reduces the pathogen burden in colonies. Studies that compared colonies with a propolis envelope "painted on" and colonies with no propolis envelope have found that the propolis has an antimicrobial effect on chalkbrood and EFB.

A recent paper compared ways of encouraging bees in hives to create the pollen envelope. They compared using plastic grids stapled to the sides, cuts made into the sides and wire brushing the inside of the hive after cleaning (with a wire brush on a drill). All these methods worked but the wire brush was best.

So now, after flaming my wooden hives, I'm going to wire brush them. But I shall still be cursing as I try to wash it off my beesuit.

Jane Medwell

SWARM UPDATE

No sooner had I surveyed the swarm collectors and reported back that the overwhelming consensus was that it had been very quiet, things got decidedly busy for a few days when the sun came out.

Most of the activity, up until then had taken place at the start of May when we briefly saw the sun.

The wise and experienced amongst the collectors did say that it's just delayed and might be made up for in July with some good weather.

In this last bit of sunshine, a few on the Swarms Wanted list with no bees currently, did receive bees. So if you are interested in swarms then go to the branch website, "Members Area" then "Swarms Wanted" and fill in your details.

Of course it's never too late to join in the fun and become a Swarm Collector, it lightens the load for other collectors and is a way to make contact with the general public. You will find them interested in the topic and, of course, very grateful for your help. You then get to keep the bees or pass them on to other grateful beekeepers. To join, go to the branch website, "Members Area" then "Swarms Collector" and fill in your details.

Richard Pierce, Swarms Co-ordinator



WHAT A WHOPPER



How is that for a prime swarm? It was retrieved in Burton Green by a member of WLBK's swarm collecting team. Little surprise that it took up a whole brood box PLUS a super.

EFB ALERT

EFB has been detected in the Snitterfield area just as we were within a day of members taking a total 38 hives to the Borage fields, which are within the high-risk zone. A chance comment by a Stratford beekeeper and quick response to our enquiry by Colleen, our seasonal bee inspector (currently on Asian Hornet duties in Kent) saved the day but it was a very close call. Now what can we do to supplement the disappointing spring honey crop? A trip to the heather perhaps!

OUT APIARY

There is an opportunity for an out apiary on a 6 acre wildflower meadow and adjacent farmland near Byfield. The site has good security and access and there is excellent forage potential. The site will accommodate one beekeeper and up to 4 colonies. For further details contact Alistair Walker: alistair.walker@btinternet.com. A schedule of all available out apiaries is on the WLBK website.

MAKING ASIAN HORNET TRAPS

Despite an unexpected road closure, 12 members clutching empty pop bottles still made it to the Asian Hornet trap-making workshop held at the Kenilworth Senior Citizens' Club, in Kenilworth on Sunday 16th May. A presentation by Liz Bates, branch Asian Hornet Action Team Co-ordinator, provided a steer to what to do. Soon the room was full of chatter as pop bottles were being attacked with stanley knives, scissors and drills until they submitted to being transformed, by the addition of correx roofs and suspension wires, into quite passable traps which, with the addition of a suitable attractant, would capture Asian Hornets whilst still enabling any attracted by-catch to escape.

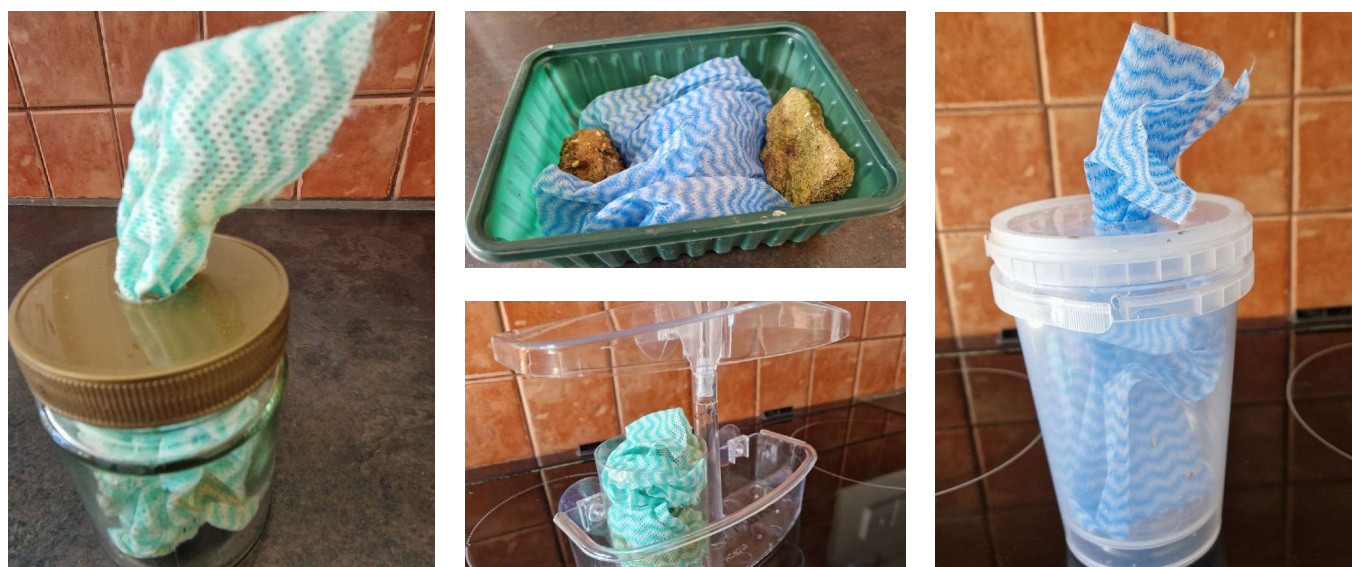
This was followed by a discussion on where and when to put the traps into operation.

The talk then moved on to the current stage in the lifecycle of the Asian Hornet, which prompted a change in the monitoring methods to be adopted.

In July, the first few clutches of workers have pupated and secondary nest building is underway. The Queen, meantime, will shortly be confined to barracks to lay up brood. As worker numbers increase so does foraging, which means more sightings are expected.

This is the time, therefore, when the emphasis of our control methods switches away from trapping foundress queens to tracking down their secondary nests by deploying bait stations. Bait stations do not capture the visiting Asian Hornet nor, importantly, other insects, but provide the facility for us to spot the arrival, record the location of the sighting, the direction of its departure, take a photograph and report it to the Non-Native Species Secretariat, preferably via the [Asian Hornet Watch App](#). To put it in their words: See it. Snap it. App it.

Bait stations are very simple to provide as the following photos show.



The jar type bait stations are better than the saucer type which needs weighting down, is more vulnerable to being knocked over, requires a level surface and is more difficult to position.

The principle is to provide a container in which a wick (Jeye Cloth) soaked in attractant enables the Asian Hornet to land, imbibe the liquid and return to the nest to offload and return. Fortunately, once Asian Hornets locate a bait station, they return to it repeatedly so constant surveillance is not required. Once a day for around 15 – 30 minutes should be sufficient.

The window mounted bird feeder bait station is very convenient for surveillance but only provides a 0 – 180 degree arc in which the hornet can depart rather than the 360 degrees provided by other types of bait station. It does have a role in detecting the initial appearance of an Asian Hornet but thereafter, a 360 degree bait station located close by should be used.

There are proprietary baits available such as Trappit and Vespa Catch in various bottle/sachet sizes or home recipes utilising sugary liquids with a dash of leftover beer or white wine but NOT honey, have proved effective.

There are some Do's and Don'ts regarding the location of bait stations. They clearly need to be somewhere convenient for observation but definitely NOT in the apiary as you don't want to attract them there. Also, they should be located where children and other animals can't access them, away from open doors and windows and away from human trafficked routes to avoid stings, not only from the hornets themselves, but from other attracted insects such as wasps etc. A full list of Do's and Don'ts, produced by BBKA, can be found at this link:

[Asian Hornet Bait Station/Trap Deployment - Google Docs](#)

Warwickshire is vulnerable to the arrival of stowaway Asian Hornets, so the deployment of bait stations now is appropriate.

Bernard Brown, County AHAT Co-ordinator



SUCCESSFUL SWARM COLLECTION

After losing our colony of bees over the winter, we had registered on the WLBK Swarms Wanted list.

On the morning of Thursday 20th June 2024, we received a call from Mike Townsend explaining that he had been asked to remove a swarm in Kenilworth – just the news we had been waiting for! We met with Mike at the location of the swarm which was hanging on a tree branch around 20ft high. Mike removed the bees into his skep and took them down the ladder, to a sheet on the ground. They were left in situ for the rest of the day to ensure the bees that had been left on the branch had chance to move into the skep before they were taken away.

After a cup of tea and chat with the house owner, we observed the remaining bees start moving down into the skep. We made our move, with arrangements to meet up later that evening.

At around 9pm we met up again and Mike showed us how to wrap the skep in the cloth and tie up ready for transporting. The skep was then taken in the back of Mike's Landrover to our land in Dalehouse Lane ready for relocating.

When we arrived, Mike suggested moving our hive to a better location where it would get more daylight and sunshine. Once the hive had been moved, Mike shook the bees into the hive and together with 3 partly drawn frames, we filled the brood box with frames.

The following day, Mike kindly arrived with a frame of brood in all stages and put this into our hive to encourage the bees to stay in their new hive.

We are pleased to say that the bees are still with us, appear very active and are settling into their new home well.

We would like to thank the WLBK and especially Mike for the swarm collection service, without which we would not have been able to replace our bees and hopefully go on to enjoy many years of beekeeping!

Jackie and David Whordley



FOR SALE

BB Wear Beesuit

Fencing Mask Style veil.

Size Large. Sage green colour, with extra pockets. In very good condition. Comes with 2 pairs of cuffs. £40

1 Pair of genuine Hunter Wellingtons

Like New. Size 10. £10

Contact Ray summers.

Raysummers81@gmail.com

07538 444481

JULY BEE SAFARI

David Blower from Shiptsone BKA is hosting our next safari at his apiary in Brailes on Thursday 25th July, 7 – 9 pm. The safari will focus on seasonal tasks – varroa monitoring and possibly practising queen clipping (using drones). Booking via the website - the big green button on the front page! Numbers are limited – only the first 12 people to sign up get a chance to go.

ROAD TRIP



WHAT: A grand day out to Thorne's

WHEN: Saturday 12th October 2024

TIME: 7:45am or 8:30am

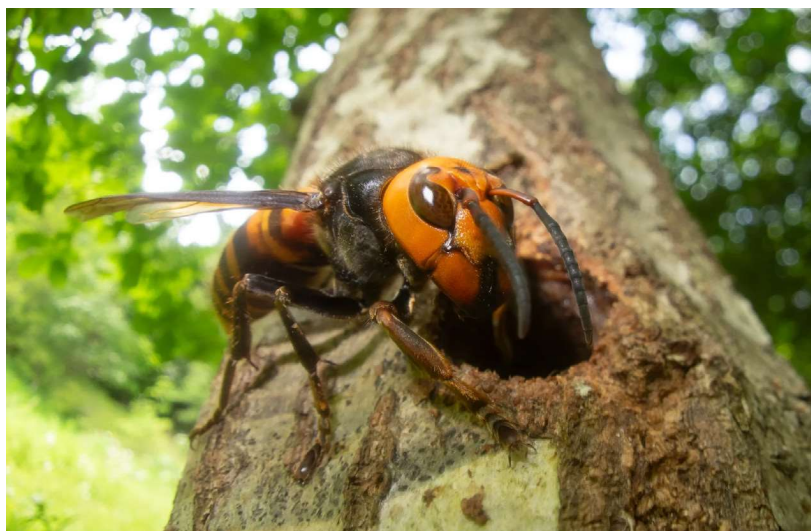
WLBK has booked a 34 seater coach to take members and friends to Thorne's at Rand in Lincolnshire on the day of the Grand Sale. There will be a trip round the factory, opportunity to buy kit and a visit the museum.

Bring a picnic or eat in Thorne's café.

Cost is £25 per person.

Pick up from Johnson's depot in Henley in Arden (free parking) at 7.45am or Kenilworth Railway Station (parking £2.00) at 8.30am. Return to Kenilworth 5.35pm, and a bit later at Henley. Booking via the website.

ASIAN HORNET SIGHTINGS



two were located in the southeast, Romford and Preston being the other two.

Back in Warwick and Leamington, our public awareness campaign continues albeit at a slightly reduced intensity because of pre-occupation with managing our own hives but talks to schools and at an ecology themed festival have taken place.

An initiative to contact the BBC with a view to building on Jill Archer's involvement with beekeeping resulted in a phone call from Sybil Ruscoe, the Archers programme countryside and agricultural advisor. She had already been in touch with the NBU and was planning an Asian Hornet storyline for September.

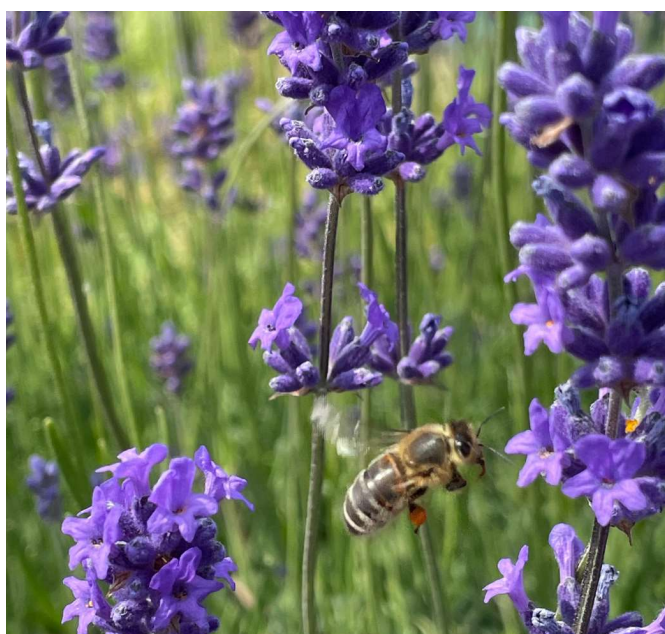
However, she was not aware of the local Asian Hornet Action Teams' involvement, so we offered to assist wherever possible. Who knows? – fame at last!

Actually, this is not the first time WLBK has been involved with the programme. At the beginning of Jill's beekeeping career and to this day, the buzzing sound effects used were recorded at Mike Townsend's apiary.

A rolling update on Asian Hornet sightings can be found [here](#).
WLBK Asian Hornet Action Team

Compared with May when 19 confirmed sightings of Asian Hornets had been recorded, June has been a quieter month with just one. Whether this is the result of an increase in control methods or the unseasonal weather has yet to be determined. However, we must not relax our vigilance. All but

PLANT OF THE MONTH: LAVENDER



We think of lavender as the quintessential English fragrance, but the plant was only introduced into England in the 1600s - apparently Queen Elizabeth I enjoyed it as a jam. It is native to the Mediterranean, with its dry, warm climate and hence flourishes well in dry, sandy soil – and certainly doesn't like getting its feet wet in waterlogged ground. A plant of many uses, it is cultivated widely for its oil, as a culinary herb, as an ingredient of cosmetics and in traditional, herbal medicine.

And what about the bees? Bumbles bees, with their longer proboscis, are more frequently seen on the bushes, especially in the early mornings, but the honeybees will visit later in the day.

Fun fact – in Roman times, lavender flowers were so prized, they sold for the equivalent of a farm worker's monthly wage!

Maggie Curley



HOW TO DO: BROOD DISEASE INSPECTION

This is a brief step-by-step guide to doing a brood inspection. The most important thing to remember is that this is a BROOD inspection. It is not inspection for deformed wing virus, CBPV or other things afflicting adult bees- look for these another time. Focus on the brood.

Make sure you know the characteristics of healthy brood and the signs of brood disease. The newly updated NBU publication **Foulbrood Disease of Honeybees** is excellent and I have taken two photos from there to show you how to hold combs when looking into cells.

Wearing protective clothing, light the smoker, remove the hive roof and place it on the ground by the hive. Place any supers on the upturned roof (cover to prevent robbing), remove the queen excluder and examine the underside for the queen (return her to the colony). If you have double broods, examine the bottom box first (put the top one on a stand or empty super).

Examine each comb in the brood box: Remove the outside comb (if there is no brood on it) and lean it against a front corner of the hive, giving you room to work. You need to be able to see the brood- so remove the bees using a sharp downward shake. Hold each comb by the lugs within the brood chamber, give it a sharp shake- or sudden "stop".

Examine each brood comb looking closely at both sealed and unsealed brood. Start at a fixed point on the comb and look round the comb in a decreasing spiral. Look for abnormalities like as discoloured larvae, sunken cuppings or perforated cappings. You should also look at the brood pattern, and if it is unusual or spotty, look closely at individual cells.

Look for EFB scales by rocking the comb from side to side a bit to catch the light. Look for discoloured or melted larvae in open cells. If you see strange larvae, use tweezers or a matchstick to take out the larvae and put it on your glove to examine it. EFB larvae might have a very visible gut. Sacbrood will be more liquid (dispose of the remains in the smoker). The dead larvae rot down and the liquid remains congeal at the "gravity bottom" of the cell- so angle the frame around to look right down. The bees can remove this scale- which makes EFB hard to spot.

For AFB (which is very, very rare) look inside any sealed cells with abnormal looking cappings after opening the cell with a corner of the hive tool. Probe these with a match or cocktail stick (dispose of the used matchstick in the smoker). The scales for AFB are much more "lumpy" because the bees died older and have a solid exoskeleton. These scales will be along the bottom rib of the cell and the bees can't remove them. They are intensely black.

If you suspect EFB or AFB may be present, take photos of the suspicious cells and send to the local Bee Inspector by text or whatsapp. Notification is statutory- not a choice- and you should not try to treat or destroy combs yourself. Our bee inspector is Colleen Reichling and her mobile number is: 07990 138898 (colleen.reichling@apha.gov.uk)- she will instruct you on further actions like putting a voluntary standstill on your apiary. Make sure you wash your beesuit, dispose of your gloves and clean all equipment in the apiary. Colleen has asked us to suggest that if you have concerns about your colonies you should send her photos of cells you think might be affected by text or whatsapp, so that she can see them when she is out and about and contact you quickly.

Jane Medwell, WLBK Chair

Figure 18: With the bees removed the brood is clearly visible



Figure 19: When examining comb for scales it helps to stand so that the light comes over your shoulder

