



Forest Beekeeper

The monthly newsletter of the Epping Forest Beekeepers

April 2013

www.eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk

Swarm control

The last monthly meeting saw a practical (well, without the bees!) demonstration of how to conduct an artificial swarm, and this was useful both for beginner beekeepers and for more experienced members who may not have had to perform this procedure yet. The 'classroom' sessions of the Beginners Beekeeping Course concluded on 21 March with a talk about

where to site an apiary, and potential problems with different sites, and an explanation of the relationship between the BBKA, the Essex Beekeeping Association and the Epping Forest Division. Participants proved their abilities by drawing a sketch of a National Hive and naming all the parts – perhaps we should introduce this at monthly meetings and see how many regular members could do this! There are two apiary sessions at which all the beginners will have a chance to see inside a hive, and then further meetings including one on honey extraction later in the year. The course has been well received and we hope that all those who have taken part are going to continue to participate in the Divisional meetings. ☘



Exam Success

We've written about the BBKA exams before and Division member Chris Branch has taken this to heart and is rapidly becoming one of our best-qualified members. Having completed four Modules (with Distinction in each) he is close to being awarded the Intermediate Theory Certificate. In addition Chris (pictured here at last year's queen-rearing course) was awarded the Ted Hooper Award and the Microscopy Award for the results in his most recent exams. He modestly says it's all down to flashcards. ☘

The debate on Neonicotinoids

Some researchers believe that these commonly-used pesticides, which have been shown to damage bees' ability to locate forage and to return to the hive, have contributed to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). In March the European Food Safety Agency voted on a ban on the three most common ones. Britain and Germany abstained from voting, and although 13 nations voted for the ban, with nine opposing and five abstentions the vote could not be passed. The chemicals are not only used as sprays, but are commonly used as seed treatments on crops such as oilseed rape, and farmers argue that banning them from use would lead to devastation of crops by aphids and other pests. They also say that there is no direct evidence that the pesticides have caused CCD. Around 90% of oilseed rape grown in the UK is treated with neonicotinoid coating.

Further research and trials are continuing and Bayer and Syngenta, who are two of the main manufacturers of neonicotinoid based pesticides, have proposed an action plan to improve the environment for pollinating insects, including increased planting of wildflower margins and careful controls on spraying.

In February Homebase, B&Q and Wickes all voluntarily agreed to stop selling products containing these chemicals, but they are still available from other sources. If you are using Bayer Lawn Grub Killer or Provado Bug Killer at home, be aware of their potential to injure and kill honey bees as well as other insects. ☘

New Divisional Apiary site

The Division has been offered the use of a new site at the Redbridge Fishing Lakes – a lovely site with good access, this will be particularly useful to members in Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and surrounding areas. Anyone using the site will have to undertake to make regular inspections and to keep hive records available – but as this is what we should all be doing, that shouldn't be a problem! If you would be interested in making use of this site please contact Robin Harman or Ted Grad. ☘



Chair's Corner

The extreme weather conditions (it feels as if we've been saying this for a year now!) go to show why it's so important to understand beekeeping, you can't just follow a book and every year is different. It's not until the weather really warms up that we will know how many colonies have been lost this year. I hope our summer meetings will have something for everyone, experienced and beginners because as beekeepers, we never stop learning! ☘

Ted Gradosielski

Next meeting – Thursday 18th March – Preparing Honey for Exhibition

We will meet at the Chingford Horticultural Hall Chingford E4 6NH on Thursday 18th March when Joe Chadwick and Ted Grad will explain the mysteries of preparing honey and other products for showing. Even if you are not expecting to get any honey this year, this is an invaluable opportunity to gather some tips from the experts and we would love to see more entries in the Divisional Honey Show this year. Please be there at 7.30 for the meeting to start promptly at 8.00 pm. This is the last indoor meeting until September. ☘

Essex AGM

Thanks to all those who assisted with the Division's hosting of this event, and in particular Mary West for her cake-making. We will need help again in September for the Essex Show and Conference so please be ready to help out. ☘

The Spring Convention

It's not too late to attend the BBKA Spring Convention held from 12-14th April. It's at Harper Adams College in Shropshire, a long drive but worth it if you want to see what's new in beekeeping, look at different equipment and attend some lectures. Tickets can be bought online via the BBKA website and are discounted for BBKA Members – you will need to quote your membership number when purchasing. ☘

Tips from the Bee Man

Your bees may have got through the winter but they could still starve before summer comes, especially with the recent cold spell which has prevented them from flying and held back a lot of forage plants. The queen is likely to have begun laying, possibly stimulated by the few warm days last month, and it is still too cold to feed syrup. Ensure that your bees have fondant available – sometimes a colony will still fail because the bees will not leave the brood to fetch food, but at least you can give them every opportunity to survive until they can begin foraging again. ☘

Contacts

Chairman – Ted Gradosielski

Tel: 01992 890 986

chairman@eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk

Secretary – Robin Harman

secretary@eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk

Treasurer – Mark Chambers

treasurer@eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk

Newsletter – Olivia Burren

editor@eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk

Tel: 020 8504 0664

Website – Kevin Cook

Tel: 0208 532 1584

webmaster@eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk