



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## December, 2020

In winter, 'tis the season to attend Winter Lectures. We have one on Wednesday and others planning in the coming month. We also have some live-streamed beekeeping planned in a week's time with more planned. And our annual Christmas quiz is on Sunday. Ho, ho, ho!

As well as regular contributions from Richard (p1) and Howard (p5), we reprint Mark's (p7) homage to bees' contribution to our Christmas food and we have two articles about urban beekeeping (p5 and p]pagerefmark.

As last month, you'll see a few gaps in our regular contributions. If you can help with any of these (not necessarily every month) please drop me line. We'd welcome contributions from more members. Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Richard Glassborow, Martin Hudson, Eugene McConville, Howard Nichols and Mark Patterson**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

## From our Chair

*Richard Glassborow*  
[chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)

Midwinter is that time of year when it is not unusual to reflect back on the year going out and forward to the year ahead.

This year there is more than usual to look back on and, while the future can really never be certain, there do seem to be quite a few known unknowns in 2021.

Against that backdrop, beekeeping is a sanctuary of certainty!

So, we are making a plan.

Whilst Covid constraints on face to face meetings are undoubtedly a great loss, there have been some positive outcomes, firstly by prompting a rethink on just about



*The Autumnal leaves of a Maidenhair tree (Ginkgo biloba) behind a flowering Paperplant (Fatsia japonica) in Hornsey's Priory Park. Late season forage. Photo/caption: Eugene McConville.*

everything and also specifically, by bouncing us into online beekeeping which, we discover, has much to offer and will remain a tool in the box as and when we are able to meet again.

As always, the first item on the agenda for 2021 is delivering the core offer to members: educational support, knowledge exchange, newsletter, social network, etc.

This coming year, unrelated to Covid, there are two additional significant items on the agenda: the follow-up on the London Bee Situation report and what can be done about the unprecedented number of Foulbrood outbreaks in London in 2020 – double the previous worst year.

Both of those are related, because population density is a factor in infectious disease transmission. And, whilst beekeeping practices also play a part, the LBKA is just one of fourteen BKAs in London and there are 1707 registered beekeepers (not including bee farmers), so if there is anything we can do, we cannot do it alone: hence, we share our paper.

The level of disease last year, combined with the general rethink made necessary by Covid restrictions has also prompted us to ask the question: “What does better beekeeping look like” – in general and in a Covid world.

BeeBanter (and we know not all our members are on it) can be revealing of members’ needs. The main ones seem to be, swarm control, disease recognition, varroa control, and winter feeding. It would be good to hear from any member who feels there is an area of beekeeping where they need or would like help or more effective help. As always, please get in touch with me, about this or anything else: [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk).

I hope to see you at the Christmas Quiz on Sunday 13th and or at any of our increasing number of online events.

On behalf of the committee, I wish you all a good and safe Christmas. Stay well.

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## Announcements

**This is our official place for announcements.** If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

### December’s online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

This month’s Monthly Meeting will be our **Christmas Quiz** on **Sunday 13th December**. This will be on

the usual Monthly Meeting Zoom link in the [Members’ Area](#) and in your email. We will be using the “SpeedQuizzing Live” phone app. You can prepare by searching for it on the AppStore or Google Play and download for free. Make sure it’s “SpeedQuizzing Live” with the orange icon.

The next Monthly meeting will be 10th January – topic to be determined.

There will be **no Pub Social this month**. The next one will be on **Tuesday 26th January** from 18:30 (Zoom link in the [Members’ Area](#) and in your email).

### New committee... and welcome Annie

We have a new committee! The committee is the same as last year, except that Annie McGeoch is the new Secretary **and** events coordinator and Natalie and Martin have both stepped down. A big welcome to Annie and thanks for agreeing to take on two role. Also big thanks to Natalie and Martin for the work they did whilst on the committee.

### AGM

Thanks to those who joined our AGM on 11th November. The previous AGM minutes, Annual Statement of Accounts, and the Trustees’ Annual Report were presented and accepted by the meeting.

A new committee was confirmed with all posts being unopposed. Two of the three Officers required by the constitution were confirmed (Richard Glassborow for Chair and David Hankins for Treasurer). The other members of the committee confirmed were Aidan Slingsby, Howard Nichols, Tristram Sutton, Elliot Hodges, Simon Saville, and Annie McGeoch. The post of Secretary was not filled at the meeting, but the committee has accepted Annie’s offer for this role which she will be doing in addition to being events coordinator – big thanks! See page 11 for the full list.

Richard Glassborow presented the draft “LBKA Position on Sustainable Beekeeping in London” document that was previously circulated to members and outlined a process of ongoing consultation with members, neighbouring BKAs and other interested groups. The meeting formally expressed support for the draft documents and instructed the Trustees to finalise the paper and disseminate it to all BKAs and any other interested bodies in Greater London.

### Winter Lecture Schedule

The third of our Winter Lectures will be delivered via Zoom on **16 December at 18:30**. The lecture will be delivered by **Trisha Marlow**, Master Beekeeper, who is a member of the Learning and Development committee of the Welsh Beekeepers Association and Basic assessor for the BBKA, WBKA and the BBKA certificate

in Modern African Beekeeping. Trisha also works for Bees Abroad, the foremost practical beekeeping charity in the world. The lecture is titled "In to Africa: Bees, Beekeeping and the Reason Why", and is aimed specifically at beekeeping groups such as LBKA. The lecture will provide a virtual, highly visual, window into Trisha's work in Ghana and Liberia, and an overview of the activities of Bees Abroad. Zoom Invitation will be emailed to all members a few days in advance of the lecture.

Lectures currently scheduled for the New Year include :

- **"What the Books Don't Tell You and Why Bees Change Their Minds"**: to be delivered by Clare Densley & Martin Hahn of Buckfast Abbey on 20 January;
- **"Reading the Colony"** - to be delivered by Clare Densley & Martin Hahn of Buckfast Abbey on 3 March.

## Apiary Demonstrations

We plan to hold a series of demonstrations of topical beekeeping procedures at our teaching apiaries throughout the beekeeping year.

These demonstrations will be live-streamed so members can participate and interact with the demonstrator(s). The livestream will be recorded and made available once it has been edited to make it more suited to recorded viewing.

The first live-streamed demo, on alternative oxalic acid treatment methods, will be held on 19 December (subject to weather) at each of our teaching apiaries. The specific time will be confirmed on the Whatsapp Bee Banter page closer to the date. Please let me know your email address if you are not on Bee Banter and would like to be informed when to log on to the livestream.

The topics we have identified so far are listed below.

- December: Oxalic treatment (dripping/ sublimation)
- March: First inspection
- April: Shook swarm
- May: Health inspection
- May: Bailey change
- May: Artificial swarm / split

Other topics planned are:

- Queen rearing
- Honey harvest
- Summer/Autumn varroa treatment
- Winter preparation and feeding

We are open to suggestions if you can think of another or an alternative topic of interest. Please send your comments/ideas to Tristram at [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk).

## Membership renewals

Our membership year ended last month and members will have had an **email telling them how to renew their membership**, if they wish. Note that renewals are not automatic, but are **very easy** to do.

We hope that you wish to remain being part of LBKA. We rely on a large and active membership to enable us to do our work in helping promote better urban beekeeping, helping us influence policy, helping with our outreach and education work, and helping build a supportive beekeeping community. If you didn't get the email, please check your spam folder or email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

If you're not sure if you are a member, try logging into the [Members' Area](#) (you'll probably need to reset your password). If you can, you're a member.

## Consider joining our "Bee Banter" WhatsApp group

Our "Bee Banter" WhatsApp group for LBKA members has an interesting and useful mixture of questions, answer, thoughts, experiences, good practice and articles. Sometimes members do impromptu zoom beekeeping session that are announced here. Members should **consider signing up**. The join link is in the [Members' Area](#) and in your welcome email and **you can turn off notifications, if the traffic become too much for you**.

## Contribute to the Newsletter

You'll see a few gaps in our regular contributions. If you can help with any of these (not necessarily every month) please drop me line. We'd welcome contributions from more members and would love it if you could propose a new regular feature. We usually end up with 300 or so members and the newsletters are [available to all on our website](#). Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

**We're looking for members to summarise the issues discussed in a digestible way. Please contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you may be able to help in some months.**

## Honey for sale?

Ask [service@lbka.org.uk](mailto:service@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like your honey for sale to be added to [our honey page](#).

## Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).





www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Cornwell, Olaf Booy (NNSS), Gay Marie, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Flynn (National Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BWA/RS)

# Asian Hornet

**Alert!**

Report sightings of this species to: [alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Vespa velutina*  
**AKA:** Yellow-legged Hornet  
**Native to:** Asia

**Habitat:** Nests usually high in trees and man made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.

Not easily confused with any other species. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

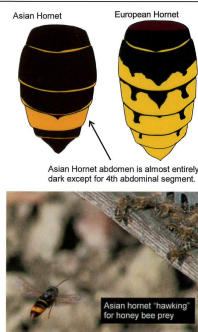
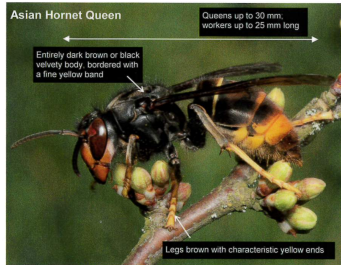
Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or in/on untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.

A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to [alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk).



## Key ID Features



Photos from: J. Haxaire, Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones; Richard Ball

## Similar Species

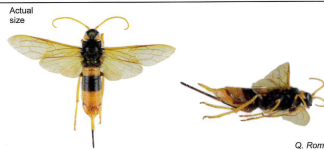
- Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison**
- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 25mm long
  - Legs yellow at the ends
  - Dark brown / black abdomen with a yellow / orange band on 4th segment
  - Head dark from above, orange from front
  - Dark coloured antennae
  - Entirely black velvety thorax
  - Never active at night



- European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)**
- Queen up to 35mm long, worker up to 30mm long
  - Legs brown at the ends
  - Yellow abdomen marked with brown on the upper part, not banded
  - Head yellow from above, yellow from front
  - Yellow antennae
  - Thorax black with extensive brown markings
  - May be active at night



- Giant woodwasp (*Urocerus gigas*)**
- Larger than Asian hornet, female up to 45mm long
  - Legs yellow
  - Distinctive yellow and black banded abdomen
  - Long cylindrical body unlike Asian hornet which has an obvious waist
  - Long yellow antennae
  - Female has an obvious long sting-like appendage (ovipositor) which it uses to lay eggs in trees



- Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*)**
- Abdomen has more yellow stripes than Asian hornet
  - Legs darker than Asian hornets
  - Only one pair of wings (hornets and wasps have two pairs)
  - Large, globular eyes



- Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)**
- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
  - Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet



## Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbours – underneath tree bark in cavities left by beetle larvae, in soil, on ceramic plant pots – potentially any small, well-insulated refuge. Makes very large nests in tall trees in urban and rural areas, but avoids pure stands of conifers. Will use man made structures (garages, sheds etc.) as nesting sites.



For more information visit: [www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org) [www.nationalbeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeunit.com)

**Alert!**

Report sightings of this species to: [alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

# December's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discuss at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

David Hankins  
[treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)

As this was the first committee meeting after the AGM, Annie McGeoch was welcomed as an elected trustee and appointed to the position of Secretary. Will Fry was co-opted as a trustee, welcomed back to the committee and appointed to the position of Resources Officer.

The annual strategic agenda of the committee was agreed and responsibility for progressing key items was delegated to individual trustees.

The annual budget was agreed, subject to a couple of spending proposals yet to be received, and with the caveat that changes in pandemic response guidance may allow activity not currently planned or budgeted for. It was agreed all decisions on activity would be reviewed regularly, together with the monitoring of any financial impact.

The winter lecture schedule was reviewed and additional guest speaker suggestions made.

The Christmas Quiz was successfully trialed.

There were updates on BeeBanter activity, the School Food Matters outreach programme, an LBKA YouTube channel for storage and viewing of beekeeping videos, and the wider use of teaching apiaries for generating educational content.

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## Last month's Monthly Meeting: "Hygiene Matters: the end of season cleanup"

What happened at our meeting last month.

*We need volunteers willing to help write these sections. Please contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you may be able to help in some months.*

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## The London Bee Situation

*Richard Glassborow*  
[chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)

LBKA is a membership organisation and the core activities concern the promotion of responsible beekeeping in London. Our report, The London Bee Situation, has confirmed that the exceptional and continuing rise in interest in beekeeping has created issues in London which appear to be having a negative impact on the social context, honey bee welfare, and London's biodiverse ecosystems. All of these could in turn contribute to a negative impact on the long-term viability of beekeeping in London.

It is therefore deemed to be in our members' best interests, as well as those of bees and Londoners, to address this. Nothing is as yet being suggested that the Association has not been doing for at least the last 4 years but it is felt that the time has come to make a clear Statement of the LBKA position to help us share our concerns and seek solutions with other beekeeping interests in the city.

Read the [Position Statement here](#) and you can send comments to [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk).

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## December in the Apiary

Where we should be with our colonies at this time of year.

*Howard Nichols*  
[education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)

December is a quiet time for beekeepers but an eye must still be kept on the apiary. Most items detailed in the November newsletter still apply and are not repeated here. If you have been diligent and have gone into winter with a full super of stores above the brood chamber, then feeding bees should not be necessary in December.

**Keep an eye on the apiary:** Those members with an out apiary should still visit about once a fortnight to ensure all is in order. Ensure the mouseguards are secure and check behind for a build up of dead bees, etc. Check there has been no vandalism, whether of the four legged or two legged kind. Check that nothing is adrift and roofs are in situ. Placing a house brick on top of the roof is probably all that is needed, even in strong winds.

**Varroa treatment:** Varroa treatment with Oxalic Acid is the main task. Oxalic Acid only deals with mites on the adult bees and so must be applied when the colony is broodless or virtually broodless. Late December is the usual time for treatment. It is a strong chemical and manufacturer's instructions should be followed. Misapplication can be harmful to the bees and / or beekeeper. Please carefully dispose of unused contents after use.

**Woodpeckers:** Woodpeckers are unlikely to be a problem in December unless it becomes very cold. It is the green woodpecker, *Picus viridis*, which is the main culprit. As the ground becomes harder due to the cold they find it more difficult to dig for insects and can turn their attention to a beehive. If becomes an issue then it is usually in January or February when the ground is harder.

**Water supply:** Ensure there is a water supply close to the colony. Bees become immobilised and die when the body temperature falls to or below 7°C. They will make quick flights at outside temperatures below 7°C for toilet purposes or to bring in water. They do this by warming their bodies up beforehand then making a dash for it and returning to the hive before they cool down. The nearer the water supply the better.

**Moving the colony:** If it is essential to move the colony less than 3 miles then winter is the preferred time. It is better to do this when the weather is forecast to remain cold for at least a week.

**Education:** Winter is a good time to read your bee books. Even better is to download the Basic syllabus from the BBKA website with a view to taking the assessment next summer. Winter reading is a useful beekeeping bridge between seasons. If not already a subscriber, then take out an annual subscription for Bee Craft monthly magazine. It is available in both digital and hard copy forms. The latter subscription is delivered to your door and also includes the digital copy anyway. At the time of writing it is expected that both the BBKA Basic assessments and the modular examinations will go ahead in 2021.

**Review the year:** What have I got right? What mistakes have I made? How will I approach my beekeeping next spring in the light of this review?

**Keep in touch:** Finally, and importantly, keep in touch with other LBKA members. We continue our monthly meetings by Zoom on the 2nd Sunday of each month and all are welcome. You can also join our WhatsApp group. This is moderated with a light touch only so please do remember to be respectful to all other users. We post and share our failures as well as successes and many members find this a useful beekeeping resource.

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## Sustainability of Beekeeping in central London

*Mark Patterson  
forage@lbka.org.uk*

The LBKA Position on Sustainable Urban Beekeeping recognises that there are different types of beekeeping activities in London ranging from individual beekeepers with generally a relatively small number of colonies to commercial beekeeping activities that include being paid to look after bees for a client or managing apiaries for honey production. None of these categories have a monopoly on contributing to the issue of colony density identified in the LBKA report, The London Bee Situation. However, corporate clients wanting to put bees on their roof to promote environmental or some other commercial branding credentials is certainly one of the drivers.

My own professional activities include both environmental consultancy and keeping bees for corporate clients. There is an obvious potential for conflicting interest here and some may regard it as hypocritical. But I believe, if the situation is going to improve, all the categories of beekeeping have to find ways of becoming more sustainable.

Here is an example of my own approach.

Some members may have heard that I am setting up and running an Apiary at the new honey themed restaurant called 'Hive', opening in Selfridges this December.

The restaurant features 2 hives of bees situated outside the dining area windows. These will be used to host bee experiences during the summer followed by Honey tasting and honey beverages. I will also be delivering talks on wild bees and workshops on planting for bees. Obviously, all these plans are subject to Covid19 pandemic restrictions.

The client initially wanted a larger sized apiary and there are plenty of examples in London where that would not have been questioned, not least because, traditionally, the beekeeper's fees would be related to the number of colonies.

But, to their credit, the client in this case wanted an experienced professional beekeeper with an ecology and horticultural background to properly advise on appropriate planting as well managing bees.

Having discussed the sustainability of beekeeping in central London, I was able to persuade the restaurant management to cap the apiary at 2 hives and, in addition, make a substantial commitment to planting for bees. We are planning to install a rooftop meadow on their 4th floor and planters on the 3rd floor terrace featuring flowering herbs. Meanwhile, I have removed 3 hives from another site in the west end before introducing the 2 hives at Selfridges.

Had this project gone ahead without an informed understanding of the London situation it would almost certainly have contributed to the continuing rise in colony density in central London. As it is, this particular venture in fact represents a small net decrease in colonies in the area and an increase in pollinator friendly forage. It is not going to solve the honey bee density issues overnight by itself but it is a step in the right direction and hopefully a model others can follow.

Hive restaurant opened on the 4th December. It can be found on the third floor of Selfridges. The menu incorporates a range of fresh dishes, all creatively incorporating the highest-quality natural honey.

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## Banter (In)digest(ion)

Some of the highlights from LBKA's members' WhatsApp group, with an interesting and useful mixture of questions, answers, thoughts, experiences, good practice and articles.

We're looking for members to summarise the issues discussed in a digestible way. Please contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you may be able to help in some months.

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## The Bees that make Christmas

We're wheeling out Mark's festive tribute to bees, a tradition for our December newsletter.

Mark Patterson  
[forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk)

### The Christmas Wreath

Christmas wreaths predate Christmas and Christianity by several thousand years. Originally ancient Britons and other northern Europeans would have made loose hanging wreaths (basically just a bundle of greenery tied at the top and hung from the walls of their home) as a means to ward off winter spirits. It is only later with the rise of the Christian churches that wreaths adopted a circular shape mirroring the crown of Christ. Our ancestors believed that evergreen plants were magical because unlike other plants they didn't die back and shed their leaves in winter. Additionally many evergreen plants like **holly** produce long lasting berries which were a symbol of life and fertility. Plants like **ivy** whose berries persist long into winter as well as being evergreen climb and entwine representing matrimony and togetherness. Strongly scented sprigs of conifer would have hidden the foul odours of winter (no fridges back then, so perishable foods would not last long even when dried and salted and would produce a pungent smell)

Key items used in wreaths include holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) which is pollinated by honeybees as well as *Andrena* mining bees whose short tongues are well equipped to manipulate the strongly scented but visually insignificant flowers. Ivy flowers are pollinated by



a wide variety of insects and are a valued autumn forage source, but it has its own special pollinator, the Ivy Mining Bee (*Colletes hederæ*) which only collects pollen from ivy and times its emergence to the opening of the ivy flowers.

### Christmas candles

Candles bring warmth and festivity to the home at Christmas. It's not just the wax used to make candles which comes from bees, Christmas candles are often scented with festive spices such as **vanilla**, **frankincense** and **myrrh**. Vanilla comes from the pod of a tropical climbing orchid and is pollinated by stingless Meliponini bees whilst frankincense and myrrh are both derived from the resin of exotic trees native to the horn of Africa. These trees are insect pollinated and visited by bees.

### Turkey

You may be surprised to learn that turkeys need the assistance of bees to even exist. turkeys in the wild are omnivores feeding on a variety of seeds, fruits and invertebrates which exist in a natural food web reliant on bees and other insect pollinators to assist plants at the base of the food chains.

Domestic turkeys live on large farms and are fed on a ration of poultry pellets made up predominantly of **maize**, **wheat** and other **cereals**. These pellet foods also contain significant quantities of soya and or field peas as a source of protein. These are both legumes highly reliant on *Megachile* and *Osmia* bees for pollination. In addition free range turkeys will graze and forage on fields of flowering crops and among orchard fruit trees where they can peck at fallen apples. These crops are heavily reliant on honeybees, *Andrena* and *Osmia* bees for pollination.

### The Stuffing

No turkey would be complete without stuffing.

Stuffing typically contains **onions**, **herbs** and **spices** all pollinated by bees.





The Onion Yellow Faced Bee (*Hylaeus punctulatus*) collects its pollen exclusively from onions. Still common in parts of continental Europe this species is sadly thought to now be extinct in the UK. London appeared to be the species' last stronghold in the UK prior to its extinction and the last specimen was seen foraging on cultivated onions in a Chelsea garden in 1827. In the US a small mining bee called *Andrena prunorum* is one of the most efficient pollinators of commercially farmed onions.

### Roast Carrot and Parsnips

As root crops, these vegetables don't require pollination for us to enjoy the vegetable itself but pollination by bees is required for the seed growers to produce seed each year to provide to the growers. Parsnips are pollinated by many small solitary bees from *Andrena*, *Colletes*, *Hylaeus*, *Nomada* and *Lassioglossum* species. Hoverflies and pollinating beetles also play a significant role in pollinating these vegetables. Larger pollinators like honeybees and bumblebees are poor pollinators of these crops. Carrots such as parsnip are visited by a variety of small solitary bees but also have their own special pollinator: the Carrot Mining Bee (*Andrena nitidiuscula*) which is solely reliant on carrot for pollen to feed its offspring.

### The Roast Potato

The humble **spud** has been a winter staple in the UK since the late 1600s when the Spanish brought it to

Europe from the Andes. It is the world's fourth most eaten foodstuff. Potatoes roasted in goose fat have become a Christmas tradition. The part of the plant we eat is the tuberous root and not a pollinated fruit as with other *Solanum* crops but bees are necessary to breed new varieties of potato. Potatoes belong to the *Solanum* family and have flowers bearing cylindrical pollen-holding apparatus which very few bees can access. In order for the flowers to shed their pollen they must be sonically vibrated at a specific frequency. Bumblebees and a select few solitary bees have evolved the ability to do just this by revving their flight muscle to vibrate their bodies.

In the Americas, solitary *Anthophorula* and *Exomalopsis* bees work alongside native bumblebees to pollinate wild Potato whilst elsewhere in the world commercially-reared Buff Tailed bumblebees are used to pollinate breeder plants.

### Cherries

**Cherries** are an important ingredient in the traditional Christmas pudding and pollinated by a variety of bees including *Andrena* Mining bees, bumblebees and Mason Bees. The Red Mason Bee (*Osmia rufra*) is particularly important in the pollination of UK cherries. Honeybees are often used commercially to pollinate cherries but are not very efficient at pollinating early flowering varieties which often bloom when the temperatures are too cool for honeybees to venture far from their hives.



## Christmas nut mix

**Brazil nuts** are pollinated by colourful Orchid Bees of the *Euglossini* genus. The females of these bees pollinate a variety of tropical plants as they collect pollen to feed their offspring. The males pollinate orchid flowers which they visit to collect scented secretions which they use to attract the females, hence their common name Orchid Bees. Only Euglossini and larger Carpenter bees of the *Xylocopa* species can access the flowers of Brazil nut trees as a robust body is needed to force entry into the tightly lipped flowers.

**Almonds** are pollinated by honeybees, bumblebees and Osmia Bees such as *Osmia cornuta*. Almonds are the single biggest export of the US state of California which grows over 90% of the world's crop, around 810,000 acres in vast orchards in the Central Valley. Each year 81 billion honeybees from 1.6 million hives pollinate over 2.5 Trillion Almond blooms in what is the largest insect migration on the planet. Beekeepers truck these bees from all across the United States on 6000 lorries.

## Apples and Oranges

Ancient Britons gave sacrifices of apples and oranges around the time of the winter solstice. The ripe fruit were the colour of the sun and a symbol of the return of spring and warmer weather which brought relief to the cold northern winters. It is traditional to hang dried apple and orange slices in the home around Christmas and they are used in mulled wine. Whilst honeybees are used to pollinate commercial apples by far the most efficient pollinator of apple trees is the Orchard Mason Bee (*Osmia lignaria*) which is so much more efficient at pollinating Apples that just 300 female bees can perform the pollination role of 90,000 honeybees.

Oranges are pollinated by a variety of bees and commercially are reliant largely on honey bees and bumblebees. Whilst some varieties of citrus are self-fertile and capable of pollinating themselves without bees, fruit set and yields are greatly improved by the presence of bees.

## Christmas Sprouts

Leafy vegetables in the cabbage family which include Collard Greens, cauliflower, sprouts and broccoli feature heavily in Christmas feasts and are pollinated by a variety of insects including bees, beetles, hoverflies and lepidoptera. Though the parts of the plant we eat are not reliant on pollination, bees are required to produce seed from which the crop is grown. In the UK farmers often rely on managed honeybees for pollination but there are a number of solitary bees which are also efficient pollinators. Recent research suggests that wild bees and not honeybees are actually our most important pollinators of these crops.

## Roast Chestnuts

The smell of chestnuts roasting on an open fire is a sure sign that winter and Christmas have arrived. Chestnuts can be boiled or roasted and are often used in stuffing mixtures. Many British bees visit the flowers which communicate to the bees by means of a visual colour change to the petals to inform the bees when the individual blooms have been pollinated and the nectar exhausted.

## Cranberry

No turkey dinner is complete without cranberry sauce. Several species of wild bee are commercially important in the production of cranberries which are mostly grown in the northern USA and Canada. This fruit requires 'buzz pollination' which only a select few bees are capable of achieving. Among them The Rusty Patch Bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*) and the solitary bee (*Megachile addenda*) but it is the Cranberry Melitta bee (*Melitta Americana*) which is most important in the production of commercial Cranberries. The Cranberry Melitta feeds its offspring exclusively on cranberry pollen and is often the most numerous wild bee on large cranberry farms. Unlike the honeybees which are shipped in to pollinate cranberry fields these bees are flower-faithful and therefore are far more efficient at pollinating the cranberries. The honey bee is incapable of buzz pollination and inefficient at pollinating cranberries. When introduced to fields to pollinate cranberries the crop must be saturated with hives to make up for the inefficient pollination which can then push out the more efficient wild bees.

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## Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) to add something here.

**Frank Ryan:** I make beehive stands from strong premium-grade materials, painted an attractive holly colour using bee-friendly paint. Each stand is made to measure a for comfortable working height and has the option to expand from a single stand to a double. The dimensions allow for ratchet-strapping. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or [frankryan60@hotmail.com](mailto:frankryan60@hotmail.com).

**Frank Ryan:** I have Langstrough equipment for sale as I now use national hives. Brood boxes, supers and



Frank's hive stands.

one solid floor and queen excluders. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or [frankryan60@hotmail.com](mailto:frankryan60@hotmail.com).

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## Upcoming events

### Sunday 13th December: Monthly meeting: Christmas quiz and social

*11:00-13:00, ONLINE at the usual monthly meeting link (see members' area of website)*

Annual Christmas quiz, followed by social. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

### Wednesday 16th December: Winter Lecture: In to Africa: Bees, Beekeeping and the Reason Why.

*18:30, ONLINE, link will be emailed to members*

The lecture will be given by Trisha Marlow, Master Beekeeper, who works for Bees Abroad. She will provide a virtual, highly visual, window into her work in Ghana and Liberia, and an overview of the activities of Bees Abroad. Zoom Invitation will be emailed to all members a few days in advance of the lecture.

### Saturday 19th December: Live-streaming: Oxalic treatment (dripping/sublimation)

*ONLINE, weather-dependent, and will be announced via the Bee Banter WhatsApp group*

Live-streamed oxalic acid-based treatment against Var-

roa. Weather dependent. Time and link will be posted on our (members-only) Bee Banter WhatsApp group. If you're a member without access, tell us and we'll try to email you.

### Sunday 10th January: Monthly meeting

*11:00-13:00 at ONLINE*

Using the usual Monthly Meeting Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

### Wednesday 20th January: Winter Lecture: What the Books Don't Tell You and Why Bees Change Their Minds

*18:30 at ONLINE*

The lecture will be given by Clare Densley and Martin Hahn of Buckfast Abbey on 20 January.

### Tuesday, 26th January: Pub Social

*18:30 onwards via Zoom at the usual pub social link (see members' area of website)*

Our ONLINE pub social in the historical surroundings of your own home. Bring your own beer. Using the usual Pub Social Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

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## Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, [treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)
- **Secretary/Events:** Annie McGeoch, [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)
- **Education:** Howard Nichols [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)
- **Development:** Simon Saville, [development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk)
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk)
- **Resources:** Will Fry, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

