



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## July, 2022

Welcome to the midsummer issue of the newsletter!

We are putting together a summer of in-person meetings. Please do come to our monthly meeting on Sunday at Mudchute and please put the date of our Summer Social (14th August) in your calendar.

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Thank you to this month's contributors: **Richard Glassborow, Howard Nichols and Mark Patterson**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me.

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

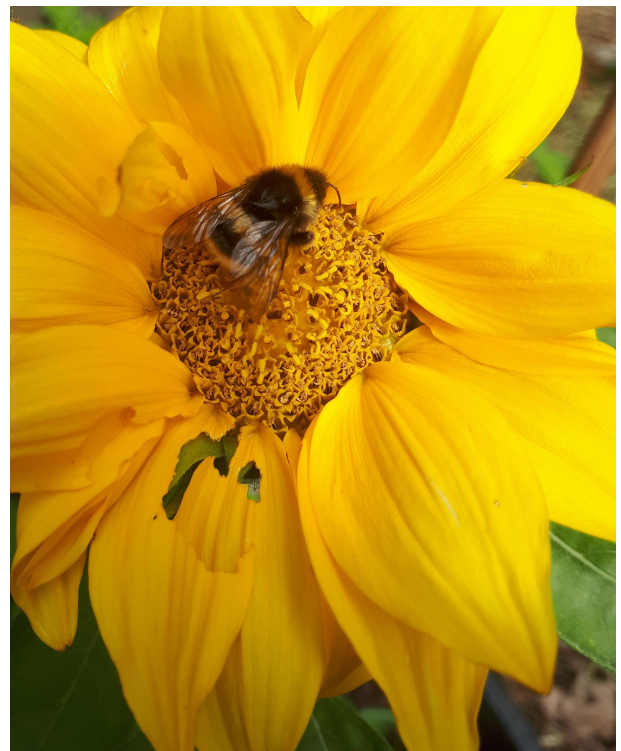
## From our Chair

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

It may seem paradoxical to some that the LBKA appear to be promoting responsible urban beekeeping and training beekeepers on the one hand whilst highlighting the issue of over-hiving in some parts of London on the other. Our position is clear: responsible beekeeping requires acknowledging the issues and trying to do something to correct them.

The alternatives are: carrying on regardless in the knowledge that there is both an animal welfare issue for honey bees and a biodiversity issue for the wild bees and other pollinators, or for all our members to give up beekeeping. The numbers alone suggest that if all our members gave up keeping bees tomorrow it would not have a significant impact on the honey bee density in some parts of the city but it would remove our voice from the beekeeping world – and we are gaining a voice.

For some the answer lies in regulation. That may have



*Bumble bee on a sunflower." Photo: Aidan Slingsby.*

a role to play at some point – many cities around the world do regulate, restrict or even ban beekeeping. But, leaving aside questions of what regulations, who decides and would they work, does regulation really get to the heart of the matter? Is the London Bee Situation not really another expression of the human condition, our sense of place in the world and our characteristic species behaviour?

Arguably, that the London Bee Situation is a microcosm of a wider situation: globally, the most harm to the environment is done by farming. No one is going to suggest we stop farming but we are going to have to learn to farm without harm.

The first step, at any scale, is to recognise the interdependence of the living world and that we too are part of it. Many of our prevailing practices, including beekeeping, are unsustainable partly because of our sense of dominion.

So, what is to be done?

LBKA does not claim to have any solutions – yet. But we have acknowledged the issues, we are committed to sharing them and to influencing the “bees” narrative to stem the inexorable upward drive of honey bee colonies in London and we are actively seeking ways to reduce colony densities to sustainable levels. It would be unrealistic to believe this can be achieved overnight but we have started the journey.

If you haven't already read the LBKA Position Statement please take a look on the website. It starts: “LBKA formally confirms its position to promote responsible and sustainable beekeeping in London. We use “sustainable” as both (1) supporting the continued practice of beekeeping in London, and (2) sustainable interactions within London’s urban biodiversity.”

Discuss!

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!

### July's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

As part of an effort to move around and visit different apiaries, July's Monthly Meeting on **Sunday 10th July** at 11:00 will be a **practical demonstration of honey extraction** at Mudchute Park and Farm (Pier St, London, E14 3HP). We will be meeting near the place marked on Google Maps as "Mudchute Kitchen". Get tips of honey extraction and share your tips and experiences with others. You will also be able to see

one of our apiaries which on-site. We hope we will be tempted to come.

The Pub Social this month will be on **Tuesday 26th July** from 18:30 onwards at The Three Stags (67-69 Kennington Rd, Lambeth, SE1 7PZ). It's near Lambeth North Tube Station and we were last there in 2018!

August's Monthly Meeting on 14th August on **bee space and other practical considerations** will be followed by our **spectacular summer social**. Both will be at Roots and Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, London, SE11 6DN.

### Summer Social on August 14th

Our spectacular Summer Social will be 14th August following the August's Monthly Meeting. Please put the date in your diary. You will need to purchase £10 tickets (per person) in advance and details will be emailed you nearer the time. It's a members-only event, but you can bring guests along.

Food will be provided by our favourite caterers “DelicaSisters” and drink will be provided. It promises to be an unmissable event that is especially welcome after the two-year break.

### LBKA's Pollinator Fund

Don't forget about LBKA's Pollinator Fund!

The LBKA Pollinator Fund operates all year round, with grants of up to £1,000 available for full- or part-funded projects that have London pollinators at their heart. Applications are sought from groups such as schools, allotment organisations, tenant & residents associations, horticultural societies, and other small charities. So if you are a member of such an organisation which is developing plans, or just has a “wish list” of projects that might align with LBKA's aims, **please contact [treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk) for a Pollinator Fund guidance document and application form** or see [https://www.lbka.org.uk/pollinator\\_fund](https://www.lbka.org.uk/pollinator_fund).

### LBKA videos

Just a reminder that videos of many of our Winter Lectures, Monthly Meetings and various other stuff can be found in the [Members' Area of the website](#).

### Instagram

Please keep sending your bee related pictures to Lucie at [instagram@lbka.org.uk](mailto:instagram@lbka.org.uk) or share them with your authorisation to publish on the Bee Banter WhatsApp group. And if you are on Insta do follow [@londonbeekeepersassociation](#).

### 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).

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## July's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discusses 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.

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

A large amount of the meeting was devoted to planning our upcoming in-person events: July's Monthly Meeting and extraction demonstration at Mudchute, August's Monthly Meeting on bee space, practical issues and the Summer Social (£10 a head; guest allowed) at Roots and Shoots, and September's Monthly Meeting which we hope will be at the apiary at Battersea Zoo in Battersea Park. These meetings are quite a lot of work to set up, we think it's an important service to members. However, we need to find out what members think, particularly that attendance has been poor. Will set up a survey that we will send to members to find out views on monthly meetings. For the moment we plan for autumn/winter meetings to be online, but this will depend on what members want.

We also noted that the annual needs to start to be prepared and we set the date for the AGM as 9th November which we hope will be in-person and at Roots and Shoots.

We also discussed purchasing new equipment for our apiaries, the various repairs that are needed for our apiaries, and the fact that our Pollinator Fund that has fewer applications than we anticipated.

The financial report highlighted that we have a considerable surplus of money and need to review our strategic objectives and how we can spend the money to meet them. The committee will put together a discussion document to share with members about the nature and character of LBKA.

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## July 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)

July beekeeping work has 2 distinct parts. These are dealing with the remaining nectar flow in early July then, later in the month, removal of honey. My hives

are in south London and the main flow seems to have now stopped but colonies are still bringing in a surplus, albeit at a much slower rate.

There is now a lot less inclination to swarm as the bees direct their attention towards capturing the flowing nectar from the summer flowers. I have 1 colony that has not attempted to swarm and so I need to continue with my weekly inspection for queen cells. It is also important to ensure there are enough supers on hives as, otherwise, they will be forced to store nectar in the brood box and so inhibit egg laying.

### Nectar flow

The exact timing of the nectar flow depends upon weather and locality but is usually late June and early July in London. Rain does wash secreted nectar from the flowers but this year we have had little rain during the flow and it appears to be a better than average year for honey in London.

Regular inspections are still needed but the beekeeper's attention should now be directed towards checking there is enough room in the supers. A cursory glance in the top super should be sufficient. When the frames in the top super are covered with bees then it is time to add another. Many beekeepers move the frames around a little by putting a few combs of honey and nectar into the newly added top super as this encourages bees to continue onwards and upwards. The nectar flow can also be used to draw out new combs from foundation.

How do I know when it has stopped? The first is to watch the colony entrance. The coming and going becomes a lot less purposeful when the nectar flow stops. The second is, of course, that the supers are not filled at the same fast rate although a surplus may still be coming in. A third, for reasons I do not know, is that the flying (queen) ants appear. This occurrence usually coincides with the cessation of the nectar flow in London.

### Removing honey from the hive

A comb of honey should only be removed when it is at least 75% sealed by the bees. This is to avoid fermentation of the final product. There are several methods of clearing the bees from the supers. These can be grouped into physical methods (bee escapes, etc), chemical methods (repellents available for purchase from bee equipment suppliers) and mechanical methods (blowers which blow the bees off the frames). Some beekeepers have concerns relating to the use of chemicals and mechanical methods are more akin to commercial beekeeping, not hobbyists. It is only the physical methods detailed here. The 2 most common physical methods are Porter bee escapes and shaking the bees off the frames.

- **Porter bee escapes.** Most of us use Porter bee escapes incorporated into a clearing board. These work well provided they are used properly and the

metal escapes are clean and not stuck with propolis. After about 48 hours most of the bees have gone down through the valve and there are relatively few bees in the super. Better to use a crownboard with 2 bee escapes. If 1 malfunctions then the other is still in use.

Make sure there is plenty of space for the bees below the supers. If necessary then insert another empty super with frames below to house the bees. Ensure the bees cannot come back up into the supers being cleared. Ill fitting, non bee spaced equipment or defective Porter bee escapes are the usual reasons for failure. It is also essential to ensure that the super being cleared has no gaps as they honey contained therein is unprotected by the colony and, in the event of a gap, is susceptible to robbing by another colony.

- **Shake and brush.** Another method is shaking the individual frames to remove as many bees as possible then brushing off the remainder. An extra super is needed to hold the shaken frames and this should be placed on the upturned hive roof and covered with a sheet or large cloth.

This method causes a certain amount of disturbance to the bees and may not be suitable for a hive in close proximity to people. Its advantage is that it is quick and only involves 1 visit to the apiary.

## Other action to be taken this month

**Brood disease inspection.** The nectar flow is a golden opportunity to undertake a brood disease inspection. As the bees are so busy with the nectar then removal of dead larvae from the brood chamber is not their number 1 priority. Leaving the brood disease inspection to autumn may leave insufficient time to take corrective action. Optimum times for a specific brood disease inspection are early spring and in summer whilst the nectar flow is in progress.

**Reduce colony entrances.** Reduce colony entrances when the nectar flow ceases.

**Plan your varroa treatment for next month.** Decide your strategy and buy any supplies you will need.

**Extractor.** Reserve your use of an extractor next month if you usually hire LBKA equipment. Contact Will at [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk).

**Come along to our monthly meeting on Sunday, 10th July.** We will be discussing honey properties, treatment and extraction. It is at our LBKA Mudchute apiary and a longer than usual meeting as we will also be removing honey from a hive and then uncapping and extracting. It is a good opportunity for us all to meet up with each other as we continue to emerge from the Covid lockdown.



*Privet*

## Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is reprinted from last year.

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

As we pass from June into July, all our hopes for a decent harvest now rely upon the **Lime** trees. Limes are blooming. There are 3 species of limes native to the UK: Large Leaved Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), Small Leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and a naturally occurring hybrid of the before mentioned two (*Tilia × europaea*). The small leaved Lime is common throughout England but in the south west it is largely replaced by the large leaved lime which thrives better on the lime-rich soils.

Be aware of the Silver Lime (*Tilia tormentosa*) which is an exotic introduction and flowers a bit later than our native limes. Its nectar is toxic to bees and when there is a dearth in forage the bees may mistakenly collect its nectar and in the process become intoxicated before falling comatose beneath the tree.

Limes are capable of producing copious volumes of nectar but only if the weather conditions are just right. High soil moisture content from spring rains followed by very warm sultry weather is needed to trigger a good Lime flow.



*Bird's Foot Trefoil*

Lime honey is highly sought after as it has a minty aftertaste and tangy tone to it. It's also high in fructose sugars and low in glucose meaning it stays liquid for a long time and resists crystallisation prolonging its shelf life and makes an attractive looking jar of honey for the sales stall.

We are fortunate in urban areas to have an abundance of lime trees growing in our parks and side streets. In London limes represent our biggest potential for a bumper honey crop but as mentioned earlier this only becomes a reality when the weather conditions come together at the right time. During a strong lime flow a healthy colony of honey bees can fill a super in a matter of days so it's important you have spare boxes at the ready.

Other plants which are important for our bees this month include **bramble** which should now be in peak flower. Like lime nectar, bramble is mostly fructose which leads to a light fruity honey which seldom crystallises. I am lucky that all my apiaries are bordering over ground railway lines which have an abundance of bramble growing along the sidings.

Around water and damp ground **Himalayan Balsam** is now flowering and will continue to do so right up until late August. Balsam is loved by many Beekeepers for its flowers providing forage in bulk at a time when there is often little else around. It's a contentious plant though, being a non-native plant and highly invasive. It's listed under schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as illegal to plant, knowingly aiding it, or allowing it to spread. The penalty if found guilty can exceed a £5000 fine and a criminal record. So please beware of those beekeepers on Internet forums advocating its spread as a plant good for bees! Far better plants suited to damp ground include Water Mint, Purple Loosestrife and Hemp Agrimony which are all loved by bees.

Other good sources of forage joining the summer flow this month include **Tree of Heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*), **Indian Chestnut** (*Aesculus indica*), **Chinese Privet tree** (*Ligustrum sinense*) and **Indian bean tree** (*Catalpa Bignoniodes*). All are abundant in urban parks

and provide pollen and nectar after all our native trees have ceased flowering. Last year one of our members in north London had their honey analysed by a forensics lab and most of the pollen was from Tree of Heaven.

In urban areas shrubs including **Choisya**, **Cotoneaster**, **Privet**, **Philadelphus**, **Escalonia**, **Abelia**, **Santolina** and **Hebe** will continue to attract bees.

**Elder** is just coming to an end along with **Dog Rose** meaning few native shrubs continue to flower into July.

As July progresses our bees become more and more reliant on ground level flora for their forage. Wildflowers like **Bugloss**, **Birds Foot Trefoil**, **Vetches**, **Knapsweeds**, **Thistle**, **wild Thyme**, **wild Marjoram**, **Scabious**, **Teasel** and **Umbellifers**. Plants which many of us associate as 'weeds' and try our best to eradicate are often plants important to bees in high summer – among them **Ragwort**.

July and August are the months of the year when most Beekeepers remove their honey harvest but it is also the time of year when our honey bees are flying the furthest to find profitable flower patches. Research undertaken at Sussex University has shown that during July and August Honey Bees are regularly flying as far as 12 km away to forage and their decoded waggle dances indicated that the bees were making a bee line for nearby towns and villages where they can find abundant blooms in our domestic gardens.

We can all help make life a little easier for the bees in late summer by making better plant selections in our gardens. You can find planting suggestions on my website <http://www.apicultural.co.uk/> along with some good suggestions for plants suitable for balconies and window boxes.

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## Upcoming events

See our [website](#) for an up-to-date version

### Sunday 10th July: Monthly meeting: Honey extraction

11:00-13:00 at Mudchute Park and Farm (Pier St, London, E14 3HP), labelled as "Mudchute Kitchen" on Google maps.

This in-person meeting is planned to be a practical demonstration of honey extraction.

The COVID-19 situation is ongoing and we will be taking precautions. Please do not come if you are feeling unwell, please wear a mask, disinfect your hands when you arrive (we will provide disinfectant) and we

will expect people do keep their distance from each other.

## Tuesday 26th July: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at *The Three Stags gastropub* at 67-69 Kennington Rd, Lambeth, SE1 7PZ.

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at the Three Stags gastropub near Lambeth North Tube Station. We were last there in 2018!

## Sunday 14th August: Monthly meeting and Spectacular Summer Social

11:00-16:00 at *Roots and Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, London, SE11 6DN.*

This month's meeting (on bee space) will be followed by our Spectacular Summer Social. The highlight of our Social Calendar will include food from our favourite caters "DelicaSisters" and drink. Members only, but members can bring guests. You will need to purchase a £10 ticket in advance (detailed emailed to members)

## 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:** Simon Saville, [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)
- **Events:** Annie McGeoch, [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@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)
- Stuart Kennon, [stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk](mailto:stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk)

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

