



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

September, 2022

The beekeeping year is ending and we have one more apiary visit this year. Sunday's Monthly Meeting at Battersea Children's Zoo will be well-worth going to. Subsequent Monthly meetings are likely to be back on-line for the next few months, but please let us know your preferences. The popularity of our in-person events is affecting our planning.

The Members' Evening and AGM is on 9th November, which will incorporate another social. Please considering volunteering to join or help-out with the committee and speak to another committee member if you'd like to discuss.

Again, this month's newsletter is a bit thin. Please help by providing content – photos, articles, thoughts, reflections, advice, recipes, poetry. . . . Thanks to Richard, Howard and Mark for their regular and excellent contributions, without which there would be no newsletter.

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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

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Those of you who have been members for more than two years may remember we held a long period of consultation on The London Bee Situation, culminating in a debate amongst the membership before publishing our report and the subsequent Position Paper in 2020. Members who have joined since, or for some other reason have not seen these papers, or would like to refresh their memories, might like to visit the above links now or visit the London Situation page to browse other related documents and articles in preparation for our October Monthly Meeting when we will present and debate current thinking with respect to the long-term Character and Direction of the LBKA.

Briefly, it is LBKA objective is to respond to the London Bee Situation and the growing evidence of honey bee interactions with floral resources and consequent impact on wild bees and pollinators. We cannot unknow what we now know and neither can we ignore it.

My personal position is that the London Bee situation is a microcosm of a much much wider, and not unrelated issue: globally, the greatest harm to the environment



Honey from LBKA's Mudchute apiary. Photo: Pip O'Bryne.

comes from farming. Clearly, to stop farming is not the solution. But we must learn to farm without harm. Is this not also the challenge with beekeeping? Perhaps ironically for a subject already famous for being mind-blowingly fascinating, making it more ecologically sustainable makes it even more interesting!

So, ultimately our goal is to continue beekeeping in London, responsibly and sustainably within biodiverse ecosystems, without causing undue stress to the honey bees themselves or harm to wild bees and other pollinators. This is clearly a sensitive issue for a beekeeping club and involves examining some orthodox beekeeping paradigms as well as established media narratives and commercial interests. London's environments are not homogeneous: some areas are probably reasonably in balance now, some could become so by improving habitat and forage but colony densities in others are beyond rebalancing simply by improving the environment.

This is nothing if not ambitious for a small organisation representing a relatively small number out of London's estimated 1,700+ beekeepers (NBU). If all our members gave up beekeeping tomorrow it would have negligible effect on the situation. But, if we can develop more sustainable practices we might set an example for others to follow.

We have identified the situation. Now it is time to ask what is to be done? Regulation is often suggested. There may be a role for that but regulation requires enforcement and does not change the driver. This is about how we see our place in the natural world. It is also about the Character and Direction of the LBKA.

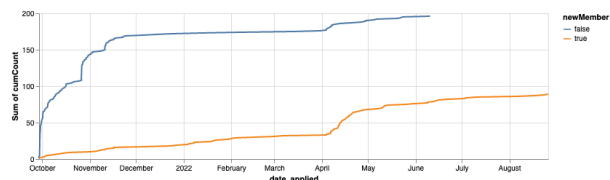
Whilst we do not claim to have answers yet we have begun a journey: we have begun to evolve strategies such as, shared apiaries: some of our beekeepers are voluntarily reducing the number of colonies they keep; some are looking at ways of reducing colony size; do we make gardening part of beekeeping practice? (AKA feeding our stock!).

I do urge members to engage with this debate. I hope to see you on the 9th October but of course we can discuss before then, collectively (on BeeBanter), amongst ourselves, at the Pub Social on September 27th, or by directly contacting me chair@lbka.org.uk.

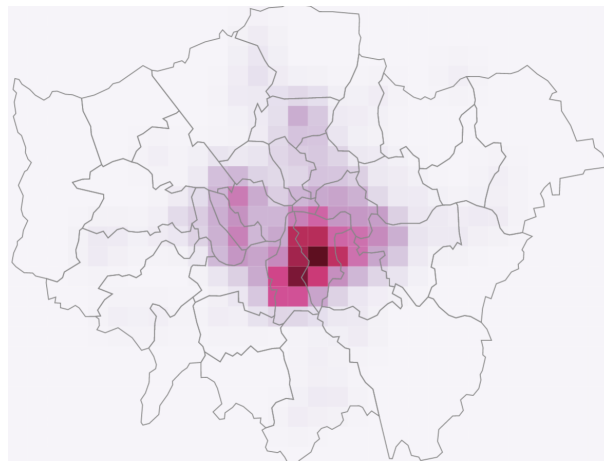
Stay well.

Announcements

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



What time of year people join LBKA.



Where LBKA members live.

September's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

September's Monthly Meeting on Sunday 11th September at 11:00 will be at **Battersea Park Children's Zoo**, (Battersea Park, London, SW11 4NJ). Just go inside and say you're here for the meeting. This will be another hands-on meeting. It will be led by David and will be about **preparing colonies for winter**. Do try to attend this interactive meeting (and see the zoo too).

The **Pub Social** this month will be on **Tuesday 27th September** from 18:30 onwards at The Lamb (94 Lamb's Conduit St, London, WC1N 3LZ) in Central London. A nice food-serving pub.

October's Monthly Meeting on 9th October will be an update and discussion on the **Character & Direction of LBKA**. It will probably be online, will have it in-person if we think enough people will attend.

Simon Saville on Channel 4 News

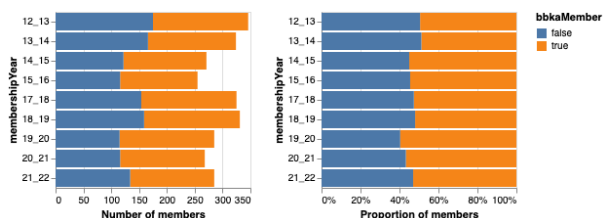
Secretary Simon Saville featured on a Channel 4 News piece [stresses to bees caused by Climate Change](#). Well worth a watch.

Membership survey

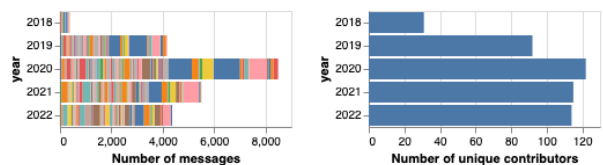
We will be sending you a **survey** in the next couple of weeks to find out more about what LBKA's members want from LBKA. In the meantime, here are some statistics based on our membership records.

Membership renewals

It's almost the end of the membership year, so in a few weeks time we will be inviting you to **renew your mem-**



Beekeeping members (people that take out BDI insurance).



Messages and contributors on the Bee Banter Whatsapp group.

bership of LBKA. We've provided a few graphs showing the composition of members, including that around half are beekeeping members, many of our members live in South London but we have plenty in North London too and that Bee Banter (which includes around 40% of our members) is hugely active with thousands of messages from over 100 members (around 75% of those in the group).

Members' Evening and AGM

Please put **Wednesday 9th November** in your diaries as this will be our **Members' Evening and AGM** which will include a social. We are hoping that members volunteer to join the committee. Please consider doing this and help make LBKA (even) better! Please talk to any current committee member to discuss.

National Honey Show

The 91st National Honey Show (Thursday 27th to Saturday 29th October) at Sandown Park Racecourse (Essex, Surrey, KT10 9AJ) is three days of talks, workshops, trade fairs and [honey competition](#). LBKA sponsors 3 classes (321, 322, and 323) so we'd encourage you to go for them, particularly as they are often won by non-LBKA members based in London. Class 321 is unusual as it's purely on taste and aroma, so worth going for.

Old announcements from August

Check our [previous newsletters](#) or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

South of England Honey Show

South of England Honey Show: see their [website](#) and their flyer on page ?? for more details.

Honey Labelling Petition: If you'd like to sign the petition, do so [here](#).

Thanks to School Food Matters volunteers: without volunteers such as these, LBKA would not be able to do anything.

LBKA's Pollinator Fund: See https://www.lbka.org.uk/pollinator_fund for details.

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 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.

August'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

We started to plan the AGM which will be on Weds 9th November. We are hoping that members will stand for committee positions and will try and get a speaker and make it into a "Members' Evening and AGM" that includes a social event.

The October Monthly Meeting will be used to ensure members have the opportunity to understand the direction that the current trustee body is taking the Association. This will probably be online, but we will take opinions from members at August's meeting. We hope that voting at the AGM will be an endorsement of this direction. We also agreed that November's Monthly Meeting will be on "Winter varroa treatment", and December's will be at The Foundry and will be a quiz with mince pies, mulled wine, etc.

We are finalising the member survey which we hope to send out in the next couple of weeks. This will help us plan for next year.

David summarised his internal financial controls review, got the committee's input on these and also gave some other updates. We will also be reviewing the success of the School Food Matters programmes and will make firm proposals for 2023, which will be presented to the Trustees for agreement in October.

We agreed that next year's membership will remain at £15 and we will manage renewals in the usual way.

September in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The bees' techiness subsequent to the end of the honey flow should now have ended and colonies are likely to be a lot calmer and easier to inspect. The bee population will continue to decline in September but the new bees now being born will need to live for up to 6 months through to next April, instead of 6 weeks. They need to be healthy, free of varroa mites and associated viruses and with plenty of stores. Those members who diligently applied Apiguard or some other such varroacide throughout August should now be the proud custodians of newly born healthy bees.

Feeding the colony

This is the main job for September. A full sized colony needs to have at least 35 lbs. of honey to see it through to next April. Given the warmer winters we have now I have found my bees consuming more stores as they are flying more during the winter and so depleting stores at a faster rate. A National brood frame holds 5 lbs. and so the equivalent of 7 frames is needed. If, say, you estimate 5 frames of honey is currently in the hive then this is 25 lbs. and a further 10 lbs. is required. 1 lb. of sugar will make 1.25 lbs. of stores (stores are 80% sugars and 20% water). Therefore, using this example syrup should be made from 8 lbs. of sugar to complete the stores. Any surplus will not be wasted as it will be used by the bees next spring. Other points about feeding include:

Avoid winder feeding. Feeding fondant in winter causes the cluster to break up and is an unnecessary disturbance. It is preferable to feed in September and so ensure that there are sufficient stores for the winter. Fondant in winter should only be used as an emergency feed, not part of a planned strategy. The best time for winter and spring feeding is in the preceding autumn!

Feed before October. If feeding is left until October then the bees may be unable to evaporate down the water content to less than 20% and then cap the stores. This is likely to lead to the syrup fermenting over the

winter period. All feeding should be completed by the end of September.

Sugar must be white granulated sugar. Any other sugar is harmful to the bees. Sugar prices in some of the discount supermarkets is currently 65p per kg, one of the few food substances without a significant price rise.

Use a thick syrup. A stronger syrup should be used at this time of year as this means the bees have less work to do in evaporating off the water. This syrup is not for immediate consumption but for winter and early spring stores. 1Kg of sugar dissolved in 660ml of warm water is the desired strength.

Wear your veil. If the feeder needs to be topped up then it is essential to wear a veil. Bees may not appear to be very active if late in the month and cooler but they will surge through the feedhole if the feeder is disturbed or taken off.

Feed at dusk. Better to commence feeding all colonies in the apiary at the same time and in early evening or dusk which should prevent an outbreak of robbing.

Other action to be taken this month

Marking the queen. If the colony has a new queen born this summer then now is the best time to find and mark her. The colony is contracting with the brood limited to just a few frames and this makes it a much easier proposition. If the queen is marked then next season's swarm control will be so much easier.

Checking the hive. Hive body should be draught free and the roof should be waterproof. Now is the time to repair or replace any defective or ill-fitting equipment before the onset of winter.

Protecting against wasps and robbers. Entrance blocks must be in situ. Many beekeepers reduce the entrances to as little as 2 or 3 bee spaces. If a colony is being robbed it is extremely difficult to stop.

Fumigate supers. These should have been fumigated immediately after having been returned to the bees for cleaning and removed again. Fumigated supers should be put in a place secure from wax moth and vermin.

Mouseguards. If it starts to turn cold then these should be fitted late in the month or in early October.



Luke's wax processing and handiwork. Wax Photo: Luke Whyatt.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is the one we used last year.

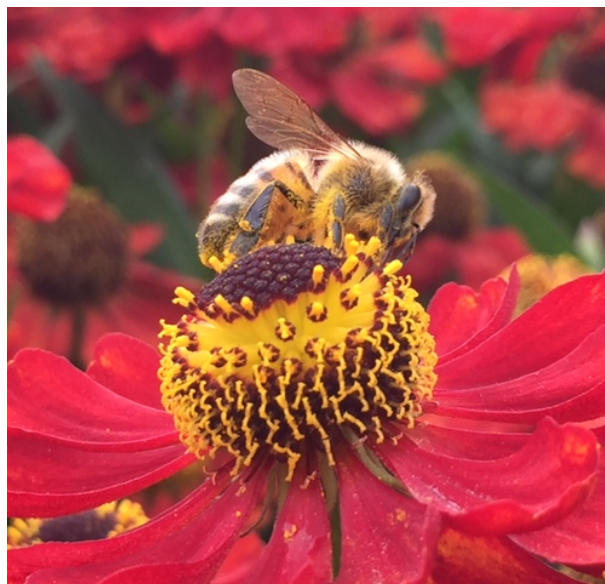
Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Flowers out this month include many North American prairies species. Many varieties of **Rudbeckia** are in flower. Rudbeckia 'Prairie glow', Rudbeckia speciosa, Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum', Rudbeckia 'Little gold star' and Rudbeckia 'Summerina yellow' are just a few of the varieties which are great for bees. Similar in appearance to Rudbeckia and equally attractive are the **coneflowers** in the genus Echinacea. Varieties 'Magnus', 'Purpurea', 'Flame Thrower' and 'Sundown' are among my favourites.

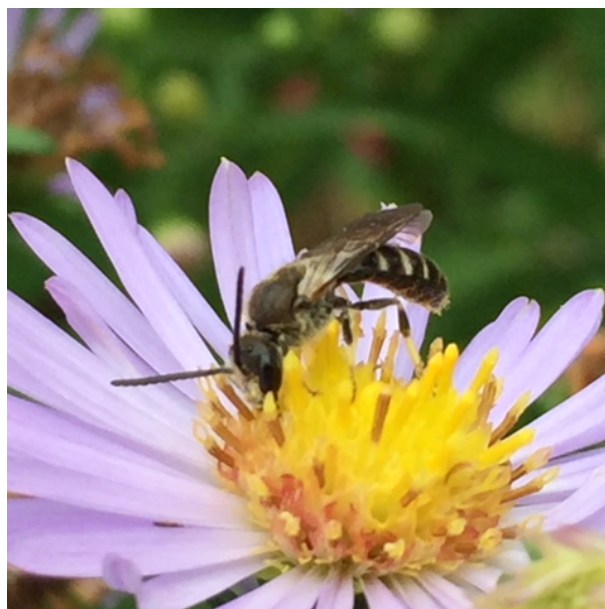
In scientific trials the **North American daisy** (Helenium) regularly comes out on top as the best garden bee plant for late summer and into autumn. The variety 'Autumnal' is the best but 'Moerhiem beauty', 'Gold', 'Sahins Early' and 'Chelsea' are also very good. Other good bee plants for autumn include Aster Twilight, Aster 'Amelia', Most of the Solidago Golden rods are good for bees particularly solitary bees, any of the single flowered Coreopsis, Kalimeris madiva, Sedum 'Spectable' and Sedum 'Purple Emperor,' Saffron Crocus, Japanese Anemones, Hebe 'Autumn Joy,' and Symphyotrichum novi-belgii.

By far the most important flower for pollinators this season is **ivy** (*Hedera helix*). It is one of the most important late season sources of forage for our pollinators and is greatly underrated. It's not just honey bees which rely on the ivy blooms, a whole host of insects rely upon the them to stock up before winter. Bumblebees and social wasp queens rely on ivy flowers to fatten up before their long winter hibernation, Hoverflies and butterflies also rely on the ivy to feed up before their winter sleep. Honey bees will bring back the nectar and store it as honey to feed on during the cold winter.

Several of our pollinators are migratory and rely on ivy to fuel their long autumn migration south to warmer climes. One of the most spectacular examples of autumn insect migration is that of the Painted Lady Butterfly. For decades their migration was a mystery and scientists assumed that butterflies migrating north in spring climaxed and then perished before they could return south leading to a dead end population. Thanks to advances in modern radar technology the mystery has now been solved. Using sophisticated radar, scientists have been able to track the butterfly's migration from central Africa through sub-Saharan Africa, across the Mediterranean and through Europe where 6 million butterflies cross the English Channel into the UK. Some of these butterflies make it as far north as Greenland. Us-



Helenium.



Aster.



Hebe.



Cosmos.



Coreopsis.



Anemone.



Sunflower.



Ivy bee on ivy blooms.

ing radar technology, scientists were then able to track 29 million butterflies making the return journey south in late September. The butterflies fly at an altitude of 500-1000 feet and are propelled south by high altitude wind currents enabling them to make the journey to Africa in under a month. The longest insect migration in the world is fuelled largely on ivy nectar.

Another insect which relies almost exclusively on ivy is the Ivy Mining Bee (*Colletes hederæ*). This attractive stripy bee is a relatively new addition to the British Isles. 40 years ago this was a very rare vagrant but in the past few decades it has expanded its territory north into the UK and is now increasingly common throughout southern England. This bee emerges from its 9 month hibernation in late August/early September and when it emerges it seeks out ivy blooms to collect nectar and pollen to provide for its offspring. They nest underground in burrows often in large congregations. You can help map their expansion in the UK by [submitting your sightings](#) to the Bee Wasps and Ants Recording Society

Whilst ivy is loved by many of our pollinators, it is not universally loved by beekeepers. Ivy honey is rich in Glucose sugars which means it readily granulates and can turn very hard as set honey in the comb. It can be difficult to extract. It also has a flavour which is

unpalatable to many but to a few who find the strange flavour a welcome change. Personally I quite like ivy honey, once it has aged a little the flavours mellow and it's much nicer to eat. It makes good seed honey for creaming.

Upcoming events

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

Sunday 11th September: Monthly meeting: Winter Preparation

11:00-13:00 at Battersea Park Children's Zoo, Battersea Park, London, SW11 4NJ (meet at the main entrance)

This month's meeting will be about Winter Preparation.

Tuesday 27th September: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at The Lamb, 94 Lamb's Conduit St, London, WC1N 3LZ

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at The Lamb in Central London. A nice food-serving pub.

Sunday 9th October: Monthly meeting: The London Bee Situation

11:00-13:00 at Via zoom

This month's meeting will be a chance to find out more about how LBKA is responding to the London Bee Situation and to get your views.

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
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Simon Saville, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Annie McGeoch, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk
- Stuart Kennon, 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.

