



The London Beekeepers' Association LBKA News

February, 2023

Spring is coming and it's time to be thinking to the beekeeping year ahead.

Our Monthly Meeting on Sunday will be information and discussion on getting your hive ready for spring and Howard has also written up something this on page 6. Don't forget our Winter Lecture – "The mind of the bee" by Lars Chitka on Wednesday (15th February). [Book here](#).

Consider the the beekeeping training we are providing: the beekeeping course, our help with BBKA modules and exams (p2) and BBKA's training days (p4). Also, look out for the beekeeping talks organised by ourselves (p2) with one on Wednesday and the day of talks organised by Cambridge Beekeepers (p4). It's also a good time to be planning forage creation projects - see our newly-emphasised Pollinator Fund (p2). Mary is starting a natural beekeeping group – more details on page 2. And, of course, thanks also Richard for his introduction and Mark for his seasonal forage summary.

From our Chair	1
Announcements	2
February's Committee meeting	5
Education Matters	6
February in the Apiary	6
Focus on Forage	7
Upcoming events	9
Committee	10

Thank you to this month's contributors: **Will Bunker, Richard Glassborow, David Hankins, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Mary Walwyn**. 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

Something happened at the Annual Delegates Meeting of the BBKA last month which I did not expect but which may turn out to be significant.

There was a proposal on the Agenda to make beekeeping more sustainable. It was really asking beekeepers to consider their carbon footprint in the light of climate change. When I first saw the proposal I did consider tabling an amendment to align the focus more with wider environmental issues such as habitat, forage and the biodiversity crisis. It seems to me there is much more relevance here to beekeeping practices than the limited opportunities of reducing our carbon footprint – not that that isn't important: it's just that beekeeping isn't characterised by high carbon use whereas it is explicitly involved with the environment.

In the period leading up to the ADM I wasn't sure if BBKA members were ready for that position. But when the proposal came up I did rather casually point out on the delegate Chat that environmental sustainability was probably closer to beekeeping than climate change. Live chat amongst multiple participants can move very fast and be very confusing and so it was on



Spotted by Will. "Back to work. She was just having a bit of a clean up in the sunshine outside the hive before dropping off all that pollen. So nice to see the winter bees all furry and getting out and about!". Photo and caption: Will Bunker.

this occasion. Someone tabled an amendment, adding a paragraph calling on beekeepers to strive to be more sustainable. I and others tabled, that is all you need – drop the original wording. This was challenged on procedural grounds as being a substantive change not an amendment! The voting system started to crack and the vote had to be retaken several times. Really quite exciting for an ADM!

Eventually, we got there and it is now BBKA policy for beekeeping to strive to be more sustainable. I am pretty sure there were many different understandings of what that means, which is not a bad thing. But I do think it will make it easier to talk about beekeeping sustainability elephants!

Stay well, have a great year.

Announcements

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

January's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

Howard will lead this month's Monthly Meeting about Preparing for Spring on **Sunday 12th February** at 11:00-13:00 at The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR.

Our Pub Social will be on **28th February** at [The Two Brewers](#) (114 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UJ).

March's Monthly Meeting on **12th March** will be Swarm Control at 11:00-13:00, probably at The Foundry.

Winter Lectures

Here are our upcoming Winter Lectures. All start at 18:30, will be via Zoom and will probably be recorded (subject to permission from the speaker).

- **"The mind of the bee"** by Lars Chitka on Wednesday 15th February. [Book here](#).
- **"Different plants for different bees: the interdependency"** by Rosi Rollings on Thursday 23rd February *organised by North London Beekeepers – we'll post a URL when we know it*.
- **"Queen rearing"** by David Evans on Monday 20th March. [Book here](#).

Pollinator Fund Grants – Update

The recent member's survey indicated strong support from members for LBKA to invest resources in creation of forage & habitat for pollinating insects.

Over the last 3 years LBKA has piloted a grant making

scheme to support pollinator-friendly planting, creation of habitat for beneficial insects, and the education of visitors to London's open spaces.

While the Pollinator Fund has been moderately successful, we appear to have exhausted the demand for relatively small grants advertised solely through our membership base. Management of the Fund has been undertaken by a panel of Trustees and co-opted LBKA members, and the experience gained has been valuable. However, we do not feel confident in advertising to a wider public audience or significantly increasing the value of individual grants we offer – we would prefer to partner with another organisation with similar charitable objects and greater experience of grant-making, in the hope that combining resources will deliver significantly greater outcomes without further taxing our limited human resources.

To this end we are asking members to introduce LBKA to organisations, (or people who are influential in organisations), that already have a track record in successful grant making and share at least some of LBKA's charitable objects or aspirations. Such organisations may include:

1. charitable organisations owning land in the Greater London area;
2. national conservation charities with a London branch;
3. organisations making grants for heritage/conservation work undertaken in London;

If you are able to guide us toward any organisation that might prove a suitable partner for LBKA in creating forage & habitat for pollinating insects in London, please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk Please note: we are NOT requesting ideas about what type of organisation to approach – rather, we'd like introductions to such organisations/individuals who may already also be looking for partnering opportunities.

Further information about LBKA's Pollinator Fund in its current form is available at https://www.lbka.org.uk/pollinator_fund


LBKA beekeeping course

We will be running our "Introduction to Beekeeping course" this year. As last year, it will include four 1-hour theory sessions delivered via Zoom, followed by a 3-hour apiary visit. Theory sessions will be on Tuesday 18th April, Wednesday 19th April, Wednesday 26th April and Thursday 27th April at 19:00-20:30. You can choose from a choice of six practical sessions which are across three of LBKA's apiaries.

It's now on sale to the general public for £150. Please direct anyone who might be interested to [our website](#).

Natural Beekeeping in London


A year ago, members were fortunate to join a Zoom meeting with Torben Schiffer, who studied under Jur-



Produced by Lucy Cornwall, Chaf Bray (NNS), Gay Morris, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Corrie O'Hagan (National Beekeeping Centre Ireland), Stuart Roberts (BIBKA)

www.nonnativespecies.org

BOOK NOW!



Friday 21 - Saturday 22 - Sunday 23 April 2023

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts

Bumper Trade Show Saturday 22nd

Speakers and Tutors include: Randy Oliver (virtually), Samuel Ramsey (virtually), Marin Anastasov, Martin Bencsik, Shirley & Richard Bond, Giles Budge, Stephen Case-Green, Julie Coleman, Michael Collier, Lynfa Davies, Stephen Fleming, Mike Garratt, Fani Hatjina, John Hendrie, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Tom Pope, Sara Robb, Anne Rowberry, Debbie Smith, Victoria Soroker, Sean Stephenson, Oliver St-John, Jane Stout, Jim & Val Vivian-Griffiths, Alison Wakeman and more.....

For further information, and to book from 30th January see the Spring Convention pages of www.bbka.org.uk

Asian Hornet

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 topped 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 lamps, furniture, plant pots, freight containers, or even 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.



Key ID Features


Asian Hornet Queen

Queens up to 30mm, workers up to 25mm long


Entirely dark brown or black with a few yellow bands

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Photos from: J. Haines, Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones, Richard Bell



Asian Hornet



European Hornet


Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment

Asian Hornet 'swarming' for honey bee prep

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



© Raine

European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)


- Queen up to 30mm 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



Roger Burgeant

Giant woodwasp (*Dacnusa 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



© Raine

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



Dexter Deacon

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet



© Raine


Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made hollows – 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
www.nationalbeehiveunit.com

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:
alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk



gen Tautz, author of "The Buzz about Bees – Biology of a Superorganism". His particular interest is the habitat of bees in Berlin, a city of similar appearance and size to London. As well as managed honeybees, he studied wild colonies, and compared their behaviour with research by scientists in other European countries and with Dr Tom Seeley, who has been studying wild colonies in the huge Arnot Forest, New York State. Torben was saddened to find that, in Berlin, wild bee numbers were diminishing as a result of the rising number of honey bee colonies.

From the mid 19th century, when Crist in Germany and Abbe Warré in France developed similar hives that were simple to make by impoverished country people, hive design has been experimental. There has been an increased interest by scientists in many countries to learn how bees like to operate and why, confirming Tautz's enthusiasm "A bee colony – surely nature's most wonderful way of organizing matter and energy in space and time." Scientists have been publishing their findings - on 'nest scent' (J. Wirz), colony behaviour (T Seeley), humidity and temperature in the hive (D. Mitchell), and countless other bee topics.

So we have formed a Natural Beekeeping group to pursue low-intervention methods of bee care, replicating as much as possible the lifestyle of bees in tree nests. Between us, we have different hive types – horizontal top bar, vertical top bar (Warré), Golden hive, and skep hive, and hope in time to attract a Schiffer Tree owner! We expect to be spending time observing responses by bees to different situations, as well as listening out for developments inside the colony. Faced with a forage crisis in London, we plan to focus on learning how best to serve our managed and wild colonies.

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.

For more information on the Natural Beekeeping Group of London, contact Mary Walwyn (marywalwyn@gmail.com).

3

Cambridgeshire Beekeepers' Association One Day Seminar

The theme for the day is 'Healthy bees and happy beekeepers' and we will have 5 speakers giving 4 talks, all in person, and a film. There will be trade stands and lots of opportunities to talk to other beekeepers. It will cost £35 and you can book [here](#).

This allows you access to all the 4 talks as well as a recording of all the talks and a link to the acclaimed Martin Dohrn film 'my garden of a thousand bees', for 2 weeks after the event, a cold buffet lunch with dessert, lots of cakes, coffees and teas throughout the day.

The talks are:

Marin Anastanov: Honey: 130 million years in the making

Honey bees and flowering plants co-evolved over millions of years, to be completely dependent on each other. This talk will cover aspects of flower and honey bee evolution in particular:

What makes a flower and what makes a bee? What were the earliest flowers like? What were the early bees like? How did flowers and bees become what they are today? Photosynthesis and use of sugars in both plants and animals. Nectar secretion, factors affecting it and how bees make use of it.

Professor Robert Pickard: Nutrition in honey bees and humans: Life in the balance

Life is a slow-burning fire. Honeybees and humans both oxidise hydrogen to obtain the energy necessary to fulfil the chemistry determined by our genes and facilitated by our environment. A honeybee shares 60% of its genes with humans. Because of our common ancestry, much of our basic chemistry is the same. In addition to oxygen, both species require water, minerals, vitamins, amino acids, sugars and lipids. The balance of these nutrients in our diets determines our ability to make the molecules that each of us needs for our species-specific lives. We both need to resist disease, grow and reproduce. To do this, we have to care for one another, build a safe refuge, gather food, excrete toxins, survive in difficult times and defend ourselves. Both species require mental and physical activity to remain healthy and long-lived. Honeybees are thirty million years older than humans. They have a society that we can learn from but not necessarily would wish to emulate.

Lynne Ingram: Honey adulteration: The truth about honey

Honey fraud is the 3rd biggest food fraud in the world. This talk lifts the lid on the how, why and wherefore of honey fraud and the way that it impacts on the livelihoods of beekeepers around the world. We will also take a look at what is happening in the UK.

Clare Densley & Martin Hann: How and when to feed the bees: remember we are responsible for them.

The talk explains the importance of knowing how, when and why to feed your bees. A look at different types of feed and supplements and what to use and when. A closer look at what bees actually do with the feed that is given to them in terms of storage and utilisation.

BBKA Training

These courses can be purchased at the [BBKA Web Shop](#) by following this link. For any queries please contact Sarah Snelson, Deputy Manager/Examinations Officer at sarah.snelson@bbka.org.uk/All applicants must be BBKA Registered or Partner Members.

Bee Handling and Husbandry Course: Stoneleigh, Warwickshire: 15th-19th May 2023

This is a 5 day residential course for improver beekeepers, the course is designed to meet the needs of beekeepers who have been keeping bees for at least three years and preferably hold the Basic Certificate. This course is designed to encourage wider knowledge and expertise. It is not suitable for beginners or novice beekeepers in their first season. The course will cover queen rearing, microscopy, disease, as well as basic handling techniques such as Bailey comb change, shook swarms, combining colonies, creating nucs and feeding bees alongside setting up an apiary and pitfalls to avoid. Swarm prevention, control and dealing with swarming colonies will also be well covered.

The evening lectures will offer an opportunity to extend knowledge and will be valuable to all beekeepers. The course will have a large practical element and provide opportunities to ask questions and discuss matters concerning bees.

- Location: Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2LG.
- Course dates: Monday 15th May - Friday 19th May 2023
- Course fee: £695 per person including accommodation and meals
- Maximum number of participants is 12

Queen Rearing Course: Stoneleigh, Warwickshire: Saturday 17th June 2023

This course is aimed at improver and experienced beekeepers. The course is suitable for those who have learnt the basics of colony management and want to learn more about queen rearing. The course will seek to equip the beekeeper with the knowledge and skills to raise sufficient queens for their own colonies and potentially improve their own stock, possibly having surplus queens to share with others in a small breeding group. The course will cover queen marking, queen cell selection, selecting breeding material, setting up cell raising colonies and the set up and management of Nuclei and mininucs for mating Queens. It will also cover Queen

introduction and different simple methods of producing your own good queens.

- Location: Stoneleigh, Warwickshire
- Course date: Saturday 17th June 2023
- Start: 0930 hours
- Finish: 1630 hours
- Course fee: £75.00 per person - Lunch is NOT provided
- Maximum number of participants is 12

Advanced Husbandry Assessment Preparation Training 2023: Stoneleigh, Warwickshire: Friday 14th July, Saturday 15th July and Sunday 16th July 2023

This course is aimed at experienced beekeepers. A programme of three days will cover both theoretical and practical aspects of the Advanced Husbandry Assessment, aiming to give the participants an understanding of what the assessment entails and what they need to do to be successful.

An intensive residential course, with high tutor to student ratio, providing time and space for both tutor to student, as well as student to student interactions. The participants are required to hold the BBKA General Husbandry Certificate and to be eligible to take the Advanced Husbandry assessment in the near future.

- Venue Location: Stoneleigh, Warwickshire
- Course Dates: Friday 14th July, Saturday 15th July and Sunday 16th July 2023
- Course Fee: £350.00 per person - including accommodation and meals
- Maximum number of participants is 12

Honey Bee Health Training for Tutors Course: Stoneleigh, Warwickshire: Saturday 29th July 2023

This course is aimed at improver beekeepers, preferably those who have the BBKA Basic Certificate and kept bees for at least 2 years. The course is for beekeepers who wish to take the assessment in 2024 and train others after this.

This course is tailored to the BBKA Honey Bee Health Assessment and will be delivered by Master Beekeepers; tutors who have expertise in this area. It is designed to give beekeepers confidence in their skills and knowledge which will be useful for the assessment. The course aims to prepare candidates for the Honey Bee Health Certificate and equip them with activities to train other beekeepers in their branch. Candidates who participate in this course and deliver training in their own area association in 2024 will have their course fee refunded. The course will equip individuals with an understanding of the management of honey bee diseases that may affect colonies. It will provide practice in manipulations, training activities, a forum for discussion; and recommend

relevant reading. In addition it will improve individual recognition of honey bee pests and disease.

- Date: Saturday 29th July 2023 (1 Day)
- Venue: Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2LG.
- Cost: £35.00
- Participants must provide their own lunch.
- Please bring a clean bee suit and boots.
- Maximum number of participants is 12

Old announcements from December

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

AGM. Last year's committee members, all of whom agreed to stand again, were unanimously accepted at the AGM. Trustee Officers are Richard Glassborow (Chair), David Hankins (Treasurer) and Simon Saville (Secretary). Trustee Committee Members are Elliot Hodges, Stuart Kennon, Annie McGeoch, Howard Nichols, Aidan Slingsby and Tristram Sutton. Richard confirmed that the Trustees will co-opt Will Fry as a Trustee again for the coming year.

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.

February'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

This month, we had a hybrid meeting with three of us at Jack Hobbs Club and the rest via Zoom.

In the trustee part of the meeting, we discussed our delivery of School Food Matters and the pollinator fund (as advertised on page 2).

In the executive part of the meeting, we put together a calendar of our events for this year. Howard has put together a list of the planned monthly meetings. So far, in-person meetings have been poorly attended despite members in the survey preferring in-person meeting. We will see how many people come on Sunday and will decide whether to continue with the in-person meeting. Winter lectures are all planned, thanks to Annie. A

summary of work needed in some of our apiaries was given. Mary Walwyn has proposed setting up a Natural Beekeepers' Group and wishes to promote this via the Newsletter page 2. Richard met a Kenyan beekeeper who was visiting London and we agreed to offer him the old extractor we have no use for. Sharon Basse had offered to manage an LBKA stand at the Lambeth Country Show in June.

Education Matters

LBKA's education opportunities for the coming year.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

2023 BBKA Basic Assessment

Both the BBKA and London Beekeepers Association encourages members to take the BBKA basic assessment where possible. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been keeping bees for a minimum period of 1 year and is a BBKA member. The assessment is fairly straightforward and the syllabus can be downloaded free of charge from the BBKA website. Follow the dropdown menu for "Members" then "examinations and assessments". The cost is £20 and entry forms can also be downloaded at the same time.

Any LBKA member who has been keeping bees for a minimum of 12 months and wishes to take this assessment please confirm by email to education@lbka.org.uk. I will then be able to let you have some electronic course notes to read at your leisure over the winter months. One member has already notified his interest. The BBKA website should be sufficient to deal with any queries regarding the assessment. Alternatively, ask another LBKA member who has taken it. Preparation for the Basic is an interesting way of continuing your beekeeping activities through the winter months. Even if you have been keeping bees for several years but not previously taken the assessment then please do seriously consider taking it in 2023. It is well worth the effort.

London Beekeepers Association will also run a revision course in the spring for members wishing to take the examination. This is likely to last for 3 evenings (2 hours per evening) in early April. The assessment is both practical and simple oral questions. It lasts about 1 hour. We cover the theory on the revision nights and, for those wanting it, also offer a practical session at an apiary beforehand.

The assessment is not difficult, is within the capabilities of anyone who has been handling bees for 12 months and who is willing to download the syllabus and un-

dertake some background reading. We also supply free course notes in electronic format.

2023 BBKA Modular examinations

Minimal interest has been shown by our members. No tuition is in place.

The BBKA deadline for submitting the application form for the March 2023 modules is 10th February 2023.

2023 Microscopy Course: Anatomy of the honey bee and pollen analysis

Unfortunately, we had to cancel this due to lack of interest from members.

February in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

February is a time of increasing activity for bees. Although cold, bleak and rainy on the outside, and, to all appearances, it appears to be very quiet on the inside, a lot is happening inside the cluster. The main job of the beekeeper is to keep an eye on stores. Bee colonies are more likely to die out in February or early spring due to starvation, not due to the cold. Those who ensured their bees had at least 35lb of stores in the Autumn need not worry about starvation.

The queen will now be laying at an increasing rate. The empty cells inside the cluster will have been prepared by the workers and eggs are now being laid. The temperature of a broodless cluster is maintained at 20°C but a cluster with brood requires a 35°C temperature. This also consumes more stores and it is this time of year that stores start to be depleted at a faster rate.

If feeding is necessary then fondant is probably still the best bet. If stores are not required then it is better not to feed so not to cause any disturbance.

On a warm February or early March day the bees will fly for forage. Sources in February include snowdrops, crocus and early flowering hazel. The latter is very useful when it flowers as it provides an abundance of pollen. If your bees have been foraging hazel then they will be coming back to the hive drenched in surplus bright yellow pollen. All these sources provide pollen only. Not nectar.



Willow

Dead bees about! Late February and early March is a challenging time for bees. The winter bees are old but now need to work at an increasing rate to feed larvae and young bees. Many of these older bees will be dying off and a disproportionate number will die in the hive. It is not unusual to find a large quantity of dead bees in front of the hive or behind the mouseguard. Just lift the mouseguard and brush out. This should not normally be cause for concern and does not mean that the colony is dying out. If you keep your hive on a concrete or stone floor then the quantity of dead bees may appear quite alarming. If kept on grass then there may well be just as many dead bees but they will appear to be a lot less.

Another job to do is to assemble frames and other spare equipment to ensure you have sufficient for the season. I find it a pleasure to be able to take and use a piece of equipment as it is needed but a chore to have to make it up first in an emergency.



Hellebore

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

There are valuable pollen sources that are making an appearance in February.

Winter Aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*) are beginning to appear. Their bright lemon yellow flowers are attractive to bees which will collect their pollen. They are members of the Buttercup family.

In gardens **hellebores** are also flowering, offering much needed pollen. Hellebores come in a wide variety of colours. The hybrid hellebores are particularly hardy and easy to grow as are the native stinking hellebores (*Helleborus foetidus*) which can be found in gardens and in wild areas too.

Winter heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) is a relative of our native Butterbur but flowers much earlier. It's not a UK native and can be quite invasive when established in the wild but is a great garden plant for bees in late winter. The flowers are shaped like a toilet brush and pink in colour.

The first **daffodils** (*Narcissus sp.*) are beginning to bloom. Despite their attractive flowers, daffodils and other narcissii are poor forage for bees. I have never seen a Honey Bee visit them and only occasionally have I seen desperate Bumblebees alight on them.

Wallflowers (*Erysimum*) are flowering now and will continue to do so right through till late spring. Bees will visit both the popular bedding type wallflowers as well as the longer-lived everlasting perennial types. Their purple and orange 'bowls' are particularly good for bees as they have a very long flowering period and will bloom almost continuously all year round.



Viburnum tinus



Mahonia.

Off the ground there are several shrubs and small trees which are now flowering and these may offer rewards of nectar on warm days alongside the pollen they produce. These include **Mahonia** or **Oregon Grape** which grows in our towns and cities in abundance and flowers throughout the winter providing nectar and pollen for bees. In southern towns and cities **Buff Tailed bumblebees** (*Bombus terrestris*) continue to be increasingly active throughout the winter, surviving largely on this plant. Around 75% of winter flowers visited by bees are Mahonia. The variety 'winters sun' is particularly attractive. Bees taking advantage of Mahonia blooms in winter have few other insects to compete with and can fare better than some colonies active in summer.

Viburnum shrubs include a number of deciduous and evergreen species which flower during the winter months. They are relatives of our native **Guelder Rose** (*Viburnum opulus*). Some of bees' most popular Viburnums include the evergreen *Viburnum tinus* whose sweetly scented cream blooms flower from November through to March, and *Viburnum bodnaatense* whose pink flowers bloom from around Christmas to March.

Several **Clematis** species are useful forage sources to bees in winter. *Clematis amandii* and *Clematis cirrhosa* both have creamy white flowers and bloom in winter. Honey and winter active bumble bees will visit them for pollen.

Winter Flowering Cherry (*Prunus subhirtella*) flowers from late November to February producing pale pink flowers. I've very rarely seen any bees on the blooms but

have often seen flies on them. In the absence of better forage like Mahonia bees will visit the flowers.

Sweet Box (*Sarcococca confusa*) is a short growing evergreen shrub which produces extremely fragrant blooms (reminiscent of hyacinths) from late winter into early spring. It's one of those plants that you almost always smell long before you see it. **Winter Heather** (*Heaths Erica sp.*) produce tubular blooms in shades of white to pink throughout the winter. They are coming to the end of their flowering period now but still providing forage for bees brave enough to venture out.

Winter flowering Honeysuckle flower during winter, some of which are climbers and some are shrubs. One of the best is *Lonicera fragrantissima*.

Daphne shrubs are beginning to flower now and their intense perfume-like scent will attract bees to collect their pollen.

Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) is flowering now and the long male catkins drip with pollen. On warm days Honeybees may visit the catkins to collect pollen, though the plants are wind pollinated and do not need the bees to reproduce.

Other trees that produce catkins may start to make an appearance in February include **willows** (*Salix sp.*) and **poplars** (*Populus sp.*) though they are usually a little later flowering.

Upcoming events

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

Sunday 12th February: Monthly meeting: Spring preparation

11:00-13:00 at *The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR*

Spring preparation.

Wednesday 15th February: Winter Lecture: The mind of the Bee by Lars Chitka

18:30 at *Via Zoom* - [book your free ticket here](#).

Most of us are aware of the hive mind - the power of bees as an amazing collective. But do we know how uniquely intelligent bees are as individuals? In this lecture I will explore the bees' remarkable cognitive abilities. You will learn that they are profoundly smart, have distinct personalities, can recognise flowers and human faces, exhibit basic emotions, count, use simple tools, solve problems, and learn by observing others. They may even possess consciousness. I will take you deep into the sensory world of bees, and illustrate how bee brains are unparalleled in the animal kingdom in terms of how much sophisticated material is packed into their tiny nervous systems. I also examine the psychological differences between bees and the ethical dilemmas that arise in conservation and laboratory settings because bees feel and think. Exploring an insect whose sensory experiences rival those of humans, I will explore the singular abilities of some of the world's most incredible creatures. [Book your free ticket here](#).

Thursday 23rd February: Winter Lecture: Different plants for different bees: the interdependency by Rosi Rollings

18:30 at *Via Zoom* (*email us if you'd like to attend*)

Organised by the North London Beekeepers who have invited us - thanks!

I have been a business woman all my adult life, in roles such as Customer Service, Marketing and latterly in Financial Services consultancy. But I have also been a passionate amateur gardener for 30 years which led to a love of plant propagation and a dream to run a plant nursery. Then in 2009, my husband and I took up beekeeping and, very naturally, I found that I wanted to grow plants to support them. I quite quickly found that both information and the supply of plants was a little lacking. Now 10 years on, there is much better information available but it can still be tricky to source

the right plants and be confident that they provide the best support for the bees.

Rosi and Dave Goulson published a paper [quantifying the attractiveness of garden flowers for pollinators](#).

Tuesday 28th January: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at *The Two Brewers, 114 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UJ*).

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at the [Two Brewers](#).

Sunday 13th March: Monthly meeting: Swarm control

11:00-13:00 at *The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR*

Swarm control

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.

