



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

June, 2023

Summer is here and the flow is on! LBKA and volunteers are busy delivering School Food Matters' programme that link food production with pollination with insect pollinators. We will be at the Lambeth Country show, providing information to the public and selling honey. We also plan to have our Summer Social on 13th August at the amazing [Bell House](#) in Dulwich. Please put the date in your diaries.

Unusually, Sunday's monthly meeting is only for those with intermediate beekeeping skills at Mudchute Farm. Places are limited. If you're not coming, come to the Lambeth Country Show!

This month's newsletter is quite short (and sweet) this month. Thanks to Mary who has written an article on natural beekeeping. Look out for the usual reminder from Howard of what we should be focussing on in the apiary, from Mark on what's flowering at this time of year, and a smattering of photos from members. We are also pleased that Battersea Children's Zoo won a couple of awards from the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), one of which was for their partnership with LBKA. This is a hugely valuable partnership for us. Do visit one day!

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Thank you to this month's contributors: **Will Bunker, Lucie Chaumeton, Janet Evans, Vane Milanov, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Mary Walwyn.** Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me. Please help make the newsletter better by providing content – photos, articles, thoughts, reflections, advice, recipes, poetry...

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

The chair apologises that he is unable to supply his column this month owing to exceptional level of commitments.

Announcements

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

June's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

June's Monthly Meeting will be **replaced** with an "Improver Course" at Mudchute Farm, aimed at more advanced beekeeping, approximating to the level of skill and colony understanding required at the BBKA General Husbandry assessment level. It's only open to people who booked and **we are now full**. If you're not coming, visit our stall at the Lambeth Country Show instead!

Our Pub Social will be on **Tuesday 27th June** at [Market House](#), 443 Coldharbour Lane, London, SW9 8LN.

July's meeting on **9th July** is about "preparing honey for the Honey Show". Our special guest is **John Chap-**



Red-tailed bumblebee. Photo: Will Bunker.



Battersea Children's Zoo won an award for the educational benefits its partnership with LBKA. Thanks to Annie for helping cultivate the relationship and for managing the Apiary there.

ple, former LBKA Chair, long-standing LBKA member and someone who has been involved with the Honey Show for many years. He is very knowledgeable about the extra layers of preparation, presenting, what judges look for, etc. We encourage members to enter honey into the Honey Show this year and attending this talk will be of significant benefit.

Award for Battersea Children's Zoo's partnership with LBKA

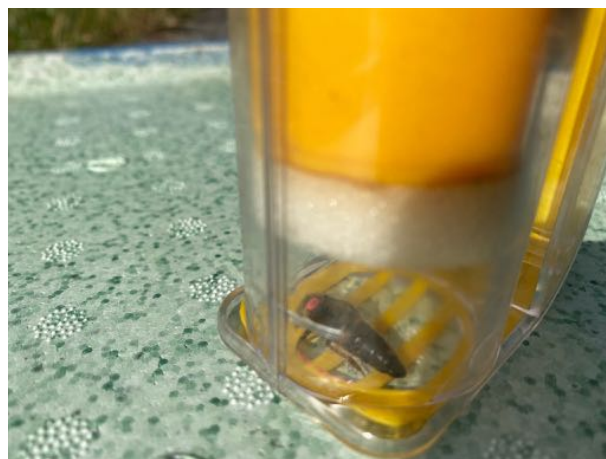
We were delighted to hear that Battersea Children's Zoo **won an educational award** for their **partnership with LBKA** from **British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA)**.

We are grateful for this partnership. They are an excellent partner and very proactive in exploiting the educational benefits of our apiary there. Thanks to Annie for helping cultivate the relationship and for managing the Apiary there.

They also won an award for Animal Husbandary, Care and Breeding. Do visit if you have the chance!

Lambeth Country Show

We will be at the [Lambeth Country Show](#) telling the public about the importance of pollinators and about beekeeping and selling honey. Help is welcome - please contact Annie at events@lbka.org.uk. You're also welcome to sell your honey.



Spotted by Lucie. "In other news, the N2 swarm I collected is finally in lay and her ladyship is now marked and clipped. That took 9 days total she was definitely not mated when I picked her up". Photo and quote: Lucie Chaumeton.

Summer social

Our spectacular Summer Social will be on 13th August after the Monthly Meeting. Continuing a long tradition of summer socials with excellent food from the Delica Sisters. It will be at the amazing [Bell House](#) (27 College Road, SE21 7BG) in Dulwich. It's a bit further out from Central London than usual, but it will be worth it in all respects. Please put in your diaries!

School Food Matters

As for the last few years, we are currently delivering [School Food Matters' Honeybee programme](#). The programme gives city children an insight into how food is produced and the importance of insect pollination for helping providing our food.

It is going well. Thanks to the LBKA volunteers who are running the visits to our apiaries at Mudchute, Battersea Children's Zoo and Brockwell. Other LBKA members are leading the individual food visits this year.

Monthly meetings

This year's monthly meeting will be as follows. Note that some of them will be special meetings with practical and/or social aspects. Please put them in your diaries! As ever, see [our website for details](#) with upcoming events on our [front page](#), all events on our [events page](#) and in the [members services](#) part of the website.

- Sunday 11th June: Improver course
- Sunday 9th June: Honey Preparation for Showing
- Sunday 13th August: Feeding bees and **Spectacular Summer Social**
- Sunday 10th September: Monthly meeting: Winter preparation
- Sunday 8th October: Monthly meeting: Natural History of bees



Spotted by Lucie. Photo: Lucie Chaumeton.

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.

June'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 met in Islington at a lovely venue provided by member Sabine. We will also meet there next month.

With so much going on, much of the meetings we spent on logistics. The Lambeth Country show is in hand, with Richard and David bringing our equipment on the Friday and removing on the Sunday, with LBKA volunteers to whom we are grateful. The Improver Beekeeper Course for this month's Monthly meeting at Mudchute is now fully booked. Tristram reported that the hives to doing well, except one that appears to be queenless.



Spotted by Janet. "Day-flying six-spot burnet moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*). It absorbs toxins so the spots warn predators apparently. We saw one plant with 12 moths". Photo and quote: Janet Evans.

July's Monthly Meeting will be presented by Jon Chaple and we will book the Foundry. We still don't have a venue for August's meeting with the Summer social, but the caterers are booked.

School Food Matters, although a worthy cause, lack the volunteers we need, so the burden is being carried by only a few people so we may not be able to do it next year.

Mark Patterson has been asked to write a series of articles for BBKA news on the data and scientific background to the London Bee Situation about pollinator competition. Richard is looking to write some articles about how beekeepers and the beekeeping world needs to adapt to this reality.

The Pollinator Fund (surprisingly) is still not attracting applications, although there are a few.

The committee agreed that Richard should write to Wandsworth Council on behalf of LBKA to casti-



Spotted by Janet. "I think it is a common blue butterfly, it's on blackberry at the allotment.". Photo and quote: Janet Evans.

gate/educate them for pollarding their Lime trees 3 weeks before they were due to flower.

Elliot started a discussion on how LBKA may need to adapt to recent changes (post-COVID world, London Bee Situation, lower levels of engagement).

June in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Swarm control

This is still the main priority if the colony has not already swarmed. Routine inspections should be made every 7 days to check for queen cells. Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control. Upon finding queen cells, you have sufficient time to close up the colony, go home to think things through and collate equipment. You are unlikely to have time to order equipment from a supplier, have it delivered and make it up. At this time of year it is probably even more important to use the Artificial Swarm (Pagden) method as this will protect your honey crop. For anyone with access to Ted Hooper's Guide to Bees and Honey then Artificial Swarm method is covered extremely well on pages 138 to 140. The Beebase website also has a helpsheet for free download. After artificially swarming the colony do not forget to continue to check the artifi-

Alert! Report sightings of this species to: alertnonnative@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 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 items (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 alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen
 Queens up to 30 mm, workers up to 25 mm long
 Entirely dark brown or black velvety body, hornets have a fine yellow band
 Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends
 Asian Hornet, 'working for honey late June'

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

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 (*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

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

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)
 More extensive yellow and orange coloration 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
www.nationalbeesunit.com

Alert! Report sightings of this species to: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.



Spotted by Vane. Emergency queen cells. Photo: Vane Milanov.



Spotted by Vane. Bumblebees on bramble. Photo: Vane Milanov.

cial swarm (the box with the old queen) to see whether it is producing further queen cells.

Removing honey

Another seasonal task in early June is removing and processing the spring honey brought in by the bees. This year we have had a fairly good spring and members are likely to have spring honey. If spring honey is removed then keep a watch on stores within the hive.

Collecting swarms

If your bees do swarm or you are called out to collect another swarm then personal and public safety should always be the overriding priority. Do not attempt to climb trees or use ladders beyond your capabilities. A basic, simple order of action may be as follows:

- Make sure they are honeybees.
- If on someone else's land then obtain permission to enter from the landowner. If a branch of the tree needs to be cut then, again, make sure you have permission.

- Ensure any bystanders are moved away to a safe place.
- Put on bee suit and light smoker. Spraying the swarm with a fine mist of water is a refinement which will help keep the swarm in a cluster.
- Place a large sheet (an old bedsheet is ideal) on the ground underneath the swarm.
- After making sure that you are safe then deposit as much of the swarm as you can in a box or large bucket. Try to aim for 90% of the bees as you then have a 90% chance of including the queen.
- Turn box or bucket containing most of the collected swarm upside down on top of the middle of the sheet with a stone or piece of wood wedged between the box (or bucket) and the sheet. This allows access for the remaining bees.
- Come back at dusk to collect up the swarm by removing the stone and tying the sheet around the box. It can then be hived.

Other action to be taken this month

Add supers. Add supers as necessary, adding another in advance of it being needed by the bees. This may be either a brood super or a honey super, depending upon circumstances. When the bees are on the outer frames then it is time to add a super.

Varroa. Check varroa mite drop if not done in April or May.

Asian Hornet. Finally, continue to be vigilant for the Asian Hornet. If you think you may have sighted one then it is essential to take a photo for submission to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. See page 4 for identification details.

Natural Beekeeping in London

Mary Walwyn
LBKA member

Mary on Natural Beekeeping.

It is worth noting that one of the reasons that LBKA advocates managing colonies is in order to intervene to reduce swarming. Swarming can be disruptive in an urban environment.

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

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

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

Early summer – June in particular – is a time of the year which brings uncertainty for many a beekeeper, and for those in rural areas in particular. June is the beginning of the summer season when the spring flowering plants and trees shed their blooms having been pollinated and now begin to form seeds, but the main flow of summer flowering blooms has yet to begin. Beekeepers refer to this period of change as the June Gap.

At this time of year honey bee colonies are approaching their peak in worker population in readiness for the summer flow, queens are laying at a prolific rate and colonies have many larvae to feed. A reduction of incoming nectar and pollen as the spring flowers cease



Red tailed bumblebee on bramble blossom.



Sedums blooming on a roof top in Chancery Lane.

but the summer flowers are yet to peak can leave large colonies struggling to feed themselves or to fill supers with surplus honey for the beekeeper.

Fortunately in urban areas like London the June Gap is rarely felt because our towns and cities contain an abundance of exotic plants which bloom throughout June, filling the gap in forage availability.

Early summer flowers like **lime**, **sweet chestnut**, **oriental chestnut**, **pseudo acacia**, **bramble** and many of our flowering **hedgerow herbs** and **meadow flowers** have already begun to bloom. In the meadows around Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Mile End Parks in East London, **weld**, **scabious**, **sainfoin**, **lucerne**, **bugloss**, **rest-harrow** and **bird's foot trefoil** are in full bloom attracting **honey bees**, **cuckoo bumble bees**, **flower bees** and **leafcutter bees**.

Last week whilst inspecting my city centre roof top bees I noticed that the **sedums** on the green roofs are just starting to come into flower. Whilst of limited usefulness to bees generally the sedums' brief few weeks of bloom do provide some much needed respite to pollinators in the very heart of the city where good forage is hard to come by. **Honey bees** and tiny **short-tongued solitary bees** are particularly frequent visitors to sedums on green roofs. Other plants important to



Foxgloves are out now.



A bumblebee on field scabious.

city centre bees include **pyracantha (fire thorn)** **cotoneaster** and **ceonothus** which are often grown as amenity shrubbery, the blooms of which provide much needed pollen and nectar.

In urban parks and gardens **privet** hedges are coming into bloom. Beekeepers loath privet because its nectar produces a bitter tasting honey that is unpalatable to most, but for the bees privet is a good source of forage. Other garden shrubs important as sources of nectar in urban areas include **hebe**, **choisya**, **pyracantha** and **cotoneaster** – all are popular with bees and are widely planted in urban car parks, and amenity areas around housing developments. The latter two have already by-and-large finished flowering now, but **choisya** and **hebe** often have a second flush of blossom and will continue to bloom well into summer.

Urban areas contain many exotic trees which flower after our native species have ceased flowering. These include **sweet chestnut**, **pseudo acacia**, and **Tree of Heaven**. Along railway embankments, **fire weed**, **this-tles** and **teasel** are also blooming.



Honey bee on sedum ocre



Campanula blooms

Right now in my garden, **nepeta**, **geraniums**, **campanulas**, **thyme**, **sage**, **valerian**, **perennial corn flower**, **wall flowers**, **escalonia**, **osteospermums**, **teucrium**, **lamb's lugs**, **oriental poppy**, **knifophia**, **eremus** and **giant echiums** are in bloom attracting large numbers of bees. Soon the **lavender**, **echinops**, **cardoon** and **echinacea** should follow.

This month is a good time to 'Chelsea chop' late flowering perennials to extend the flowering season later in the year and ensure there are still flowers well into autumn for bees. Plants like **helenium**, **belianthus**, **golden rod (solidago)**, **asters**, **dahlia**s and **leucanthemum** can be chopped back by about half. This will encourage multiple new flowering shoots from lower down the stem producing a larger mass of slightly smaller flowers later in the season, extending the forage for the bees and ensuring there is colour in your garden late in the season. Now is also a good time to take green cuttings from plants like **penstemon** which will root fast as long as they are kept moist – their deep tubular flowers are popular with longer tongued bumblebees.

Other plants like **perennial cornflower**, **oriental poppy**, **cat mint**, **sage** and **teucrium** can be chopped back very close to the ground once flowered at the end of this month, fed, watered and mulched they often produce a second flush of new growth and later flowering

blooms. Other plants can be encouraged to continue flowering for longer by simply dead heading – removing the fading flowers before they have an opportunity to set seed. The plants desire is to reproduce so it will keep on sprouting new blooms until it does so or the season ends.

etc. We encourage members to enter honey into the Honey Show this year and attending this talk will be of significant benefit.

Upcoming events

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

Sunday 11th June: Monthly meeting: Improver course

11:00-14:00 at Mudchute Park and Farm, Pier St, London, E14 3HP (limited to 20 booked members)

An "Improver Course" that will consist theory, a practical session at the apiary and then a round up to discuss what we have found in the colonies and what we should do.

It is aimed at a level beyond the Basic and approximating to the level of skill and colony understanding required at the BBKA General Husbandry assessment level.

This will be limited to 20 members so booking will be essential. A booking link will be circulated to members.

Saturday/Sunday 10th/11th June: Lambeth Country Show

All day at Brockwell Park, Brockwell Park Gardens, London, SE24 0NG

Come to our stall at the Lambeth Country Show find out about bees and beekeeping and to buy honey and other related items.

Tuesday 27th June: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at Market House, 443 Coldharbour Lane, London, SW9 8LN

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at the Market House, 443 Coldharbour Lane, London, SW9 8LN

Sunday 9th July: Monthly meeting: Honey preparation for Showing

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

July's meeting is about "preparing honey for the Honey Show". Our special guest is John Chapple, former LBKA Chair, long-standing LBKA member and someone who has been involved with the Honey Show for many years. He is very knowledgeable about the extra layers of preparation, presenting, what judges look for,

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.

