



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

May, 2024

Welcome to the midst of the beekeeping season! There's a lot going on, so see our announcements. Perhaps our most exciting announcement is that we are inviting members to visit our apiaries in their weekly opening hours. You can find out more about our apiaries [here](#).

Earlier this month we ran two weekend beekeeping courses. Thanks to all those who helped and to Larry who helped host the event at Brockwell and also for writing it up (p6). Tristram tells us about a visitor to Mudchute (p10) and some of our apiary managers tell us what's going on in the apiaries they manage (p12). We also have our regular articles on what to do in the apiary (p8) and what's in flower (p11).

As usual, we have an upcoming pub social and our monthly meeting will be replaced by our stall at the Lambeth Country Show next month. Do come along.

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Thank you to this month's contributors: Howard Nichols, Annie McGeoch, David Hankins, Larry Osei-Kwaku, Pip O'Bryne, Mark Patterson, Andrew Slade, Tristram Sutton, Mary Walsh and Luke Whyatt. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me.

Please help make the newsletter better by providing content – photos, articles, reflections, advice, recipes...

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

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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!

May's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

We had to cancel May's Bee Health day. However, we plan a **full disease inspection evening** with Bee Inspector Danyal Conn on **25th June** – venue to be confirmed.

The **Pub Social** on **28th May from 18:30** will be at **The Prince of Wales** (Cleaver Square, Kennington, SE11 4EA) who describe themselves as a "cosy pub overlooking a Georgian square with its own boules area, for British classics and real ale."

June's Monthly Meeting falls on the same weekend as **our stall at the Lambeth Country Show**, a valuable opportunity to showcase our work, spread the knowl-



Bee and ladybird on a wild rose. Photo: Aidan Slingsby.

edge we're acquiring about Asian Hornet, and provide an opportunity for members to sell honey and other hive products to what is usually a very engaged South London family crowd. So the June monthly meeting is replaced by an invitation to come along to Brockwell Park on Saturday or **Sunday 8th/9th June at some point between 13:00-21:00** to visit the LBKA stall, meet other members, give an hour or so of your time helping sell honey, rolling candles with children, showing bees in an observation hive, and maybe engage with other Londoners on issues relating to bees and other pollinators. For more information (and if you want to sell honey) please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk.

Members welcome to visit LBKA's Apiaries

LBKA currently has four (operational) apiaries: Battersea Children's Zoo, Brockwell Park, Hyde Park and Mudchute Farm. They are overseen by Tristram but each is managed separately. Beekeeping activity happens weekly during the opening hours below. All members welcome but we recommend you check with the Apiary manager before travelling in the [members' area](#) of the website [on this page](#).

- **Battersea Children's Zoo:** Saturdays, 14:00
- **Brockwell Park:** Sundays, 12:00.
- **Hyde Park:** Thursdays, 15:30.
- **Mudchute Farm:** Mondays, 14:00

See updates from apiary managers on page [12](#).

Honey selling opportunity

If you have honey for sale, either left over from the 2023 harvest or from a spring flow in 2024, LBKA's stand at Lambeth Country Show (8th & 9th June), is the opportunity you've been waiting for. In return for this opportunity LBKA will take a very small commission on all sales and you will be expected to help staff the stand for a few hours during the show, but we may be able to arrange transportation of honey to the show for you. Honey sold at the show will need to be jarred and labelled in accordance with the current regulations. See details below if you're unsure.

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/food-standards-labelling-durability-and-composition>
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/1348/made>

If you'd like to sell honey at Lambeth Country Show, please contact David at treasurer@lbka.org.uk ASAP.

Tristram on ITN

Tristram was interviewed for ITN for International Bee Day at our Mudchute apiary. He appeared on the ITV news, talking about bees and the threats that pollinators face from the Asian Hornet. Tristram did an excellent job at helping get an accurate message out (unfortunately, they showed a picture of wrong type of hornet!).



Mudchute is amazing just now. It looks beautiful with the cow parsley in full bloom, with so many honey and other bees foraging there just now - butterflies too. Photo and caption: Pip O'Byrne

BBKA Basic Assessment

Some LBKA members did their BBKA Basic Assessment at our Mudchute apiary last week. Good luck to them!

Mary Walsh bringing Asian Hornet news to Ireland

Mary Walsh has been taking LBKA's message to the Ballina and Westport Beekeepers in Ireland. They are learning about the potential impacts of the Asian Hornet and examined traps lent by Sharon and Luke. They reported:

What a great day and evening we had at the monthly meeting we had 3 most excellent speakers. With a most informative talk about the Asian Hornet delivered by Mary Walsh. David Lee gave a great talk about swarming and Mark Wallace gave us some nice tips. A



"Mudchute all set for assessments. Fingers crossed the weather holds!" . Photo and caption: Tristram Sutton.

special thank you to the hotel who delivered a lovely meal for nearly 60 beekeepers.

School Food Matters

This year LBKA is again partnering with educational charity School Food Matters, taking bees into 20 London schools and hosting school visits to 3 of our teaching apiaries.

To deliver this program we're looking for volunteers to help with the apiary visit days - talking to children about the roles bees and pollination play in feeding us, showing bees in an observation hive, conducting a walk through the edible garden at Brockwell Park or around the animal enclosures at Mudchute Farm, and taking children into an apiary to open up hives.

The dates and venues for visits are as follows:

- Monday May 20th: Battersea Park Children's Zoo
- Thursday June 6th: Battersea Park Children's Zoo
- Monday June 10th: Mudchute Park & Farm
- Monday June 17th: Mudchute Park & Farm
- Thursday June 20th: Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses
- Friday June 21st: Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses
- Monday June 24th: Mudchute Park & Farm
- Wednesday June 26th: Battersea Park Children's Zoo
- Thursday July 11th: Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses
- Friday September 20th: Battersea Park Children's Zoo

These are really rewarding days, and great opportunities to introduce a younger generation to bees and beekeeping. They also provide LBKA with a valuable income stream, helping keep our membership fees low. But we need 3-4 volunteers to help out on each day, so please consider giving some time to support this program.

For more information and to offer your support please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk.



"Some of our members are preparing to take the BBKA Basic Assessments". Good luck! Photo: Luke Whyatt.

Instagram

Thanks to Lucie who recently "retired" from looking after our [Instagram account](#). Yohanna, Rebecca, Annie and Aidan have been discussing how we get more members involved. The aim is to put up great images and give insightful beekeeping context about them.

We would love members to get involved in suggesting content and will be setting up a Whatsapp group (details via email).

We would simply like members to **post suggestions for nice images and captions**. Please ensure that anything you post is **suitable for sharing on social media** (all permissions secured), but we'd ideally like original content; i.e. pictures you've taken.

Categories of post might include:

- Nice pictures of flowers and pollinators.
- Bee behaviour (washboarding/swarming)
- Apiaries and beekeeping
- Things that are in the news.
- Things that align to LBKA values
- Things that promote LBKA.

Please post your Insta handle with your submission if you have one. We may not use all the content suggested and may edit comments. We look forward to seeing your submissions!



Beekeepers in Westport Co Mayo, examining the traps. Thanks Sharon and Luke for the loan of the traps . Photo: Mary Walsh.



"With a most informative talk about the Asian Hornet delivered by Mary Walsh". Photo: Mary Walsh.



Article in Mayo News.

Asian Hornet Verifiers

This is the time of year when we're putting out traps for Asian Hornet queens. If you'd like to be an Asian Hornet Verifier, let us know. See the map of our current Asian Hornet Verifiers. You will shortly get an email if you are registered as an Asian Hornet Verifier.

Swarm list

Now it's swarming season we need to make sure our lists are up to date.

Swarm list: Experienced beekeepers with the inclination and means to be "on call" and have the public contact them directly can have their phone number on the [public swarm map](#). You will shortly get an email if you are.

Swarm Whatsapp: We use a Whatsapp group internally to coordinate swarm collection. Any member can join. It's also a good place to get swarms if you're willing to take them at short notice and you're experienced enough to deal with bees of unknown provenance.

We do not recommend beginners to start with swarms.

Volunteers needed for Asian Hornet Roadshow

Annie and Sharon are doing fantastic work setting up stalls and talking to the public about the Asian Hornet. There is one more date:

- Sunday 26th May, Herne Hill market

Your help at these events would be much appreciated - please contact Annie on events@lbka.org.uk.



Annie is one of those showing bees to children as part of our partnership with School Food Matters. "A good day at Battersea apiary. 60 children in 8 groups held a frame of bees today". Photo and caption: Annie McGeoch.

See "members' area" for members' goodies


LBKA members can log in via the members' area on the website and see videos of past talks and meetings

LBKA Asian Hornet Roadshow. Annie reported back on her LBKA Asian Hornet Roadshow, the first of many.

Old announcements from February
Luke Whyatt has just become a BBKA Trustee. Luke Whyatt has been elected to BBKA as a Trustee. Amongst his many duties, he is to Chair the Asian Hornet Committee and also he will be the BBKA London representative.

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.



www.nonnativespecies.org
Produced by Lucy Cornwell, Claf Booy (NNESS), Gay Morris, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Flynn (National Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BWNSS)

Report sightings of this species to: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.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 tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.


Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or iron 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.

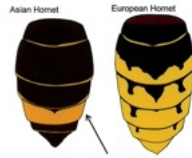
Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.




Key ID Features



Asian Hornet Queen
Queens up to 30 mm, workers up to 25 mm long
Entirely dark brown or black velvety body, bordered with a fine yellow band
Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends



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



Asian hornet 'hawking' for honey bee prey


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

Similar Species

Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison

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

Actual size




Q. Rome

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

Actual size




Roger Burgess

Giant woodwasp (*Urocerus gigas*)

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

Actual size




Q. Rome

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

Actual size




Didier Descouens

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

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


Actual size



Q. Rome

Field Signs

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

Alert!

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

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.



LBKA's Asian Hornet Roadshow at Goose Green. Photo: Annie McGeoch.



Photo: Maurizio Palomba (official Brockwell Apiary Photographer).



Photo: Maurizio Palomba (official Brockwell Apiary Photographer).

Our Beekeeping course

Larry writes up two memorable weekends of our beekeeping courses.

*Larry Osei-Kwaku
Brockwell apiary manager*

Our recently concluded Introduction to Beekeeping course, organised by the esteemed beekeeper Annie McGeoch, was indeed a hive of activity, spanning over two immersive weekend sessions.

Tristram Sutton renowned for his passion and expertise in apiculture, opened the course with an inspiring introduction, setting the stage for an enlightening exploration of beekeeping basics.

On the first day of both weekends, participants had the privilege of learning under the guidance of Tristram. Topics ranging from hive components, the honey bee colony to bee behaviour were expertly covered, laying a solid foundation for the budding beekeepers.

William Bunker, who had participated in the same course two years ago, gave a talk on swarming.

He demonstrated the importance of swarming and decision-making by engaging attendees in a swarming ice-breaking game. This interactive activity offered participants a unique perspective on the complexities of swarm behaviour and the crucial role of quick and effective decision-making in beekeeping.

Will also shared insights from his firsthand experience as a novice beekeeper during his first year in beekeeping. In his presentation, he candidly discussed the challenges he encountered and the mistakes he made along the way. By sharing his journey, Will provided valuable lessons learned and practical tips for navigating the initial stages of beekeeping. His openness and willingness to reflect on his experiences resonated with fellow beekeepers, fostering an environment of learning and mutual support within the association.

Guillaume Tremorine, a botanist, who had also participated in the course last year, led an enlightening section on the interplay between botany and beekeeping. His experience and knowledge from the previous course provided valuable insights into the relationship between plants and pollinators, emphasising the importance of floral diversity in supporting bee populations.

As well as organising the whole course, Annie Mcgeoch also delivered a comprehensive talk on bee diseases and the ongoing efforts to combat the threat posed by the Asian hornet, an invasive species, in the UK. Her presentation provided valuable insights into the various diseases that afflict bee populations and the importance of early detection and management strategies. Annie also highlighted the collaborative initiatives undertaken to monitor and control the spread of the Asian hornet, emphasising the critical role of beekeepers and the wider community in safeguarding native bee species and their habitats.

Elliot Hodges, who oversees mentorship within the LBKA, delivered a focused presentation on the importance and structure of mentorship programmes. Drawing on his expertise in guiding new beekeepers, Eliot outlined the benefits of mentorship within the associa-



Photo: Maurizio Palomba (official Brockwell Apiary Photographer).



Swarm collection. Photo: Maurizio Palomba (official Brockwell Apiary Photographer).

tion, emphasising the support and guidance provided to newcomers during their initial year of membership. He elaborated on the process of pairing mentees with experienced mentors, ensuring personalised support tailored to individual needs and skill levels. Elliot's presentation underscored the commitment of the association to fostering a nurturing environment for beekeepers at all levels of experience.

Richard Glassborrow, the chair, delivered a compelling talk on the London Bee situation and the importance of communal beekeeping. His extensive experience and expertise in urban beekeeping provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by bee populations in urban environments. Richard emphasised the crucial role that collaborative efforts, spearheaded by the LBKA, play in supporting bee health and biodiversity. Attendees gained valuable knowledge about the importance of creating bee-friendly spaces and fostering community involvement to ensure the well-being of bees and the ecosystems they inhabit.

The unexpected often presents itself in the realm of beekeeping, and the first week's session was no exception. As attendees enjoyed a lunch break, they were astonished when a swarm of bees descended on the boysenberry plant adjacent to the apiary. This spontaneous event provided a serendipitous opportunity for participants to witness firsthand the natural phenomenon of swarming and the subsequent collection. Although not part of the planned schedule, the impromptu experience

enriched the learning journey, highlighting the dynamic nature of beekeeping.

Interestingly, last year there was also a bee swarm in the teaching apiary during a practical session during the introductory course. A few of the attendees sprang into action, attempting to catch the swarm. Despite their best efforts, the swarm eventually took flight, disappearing into the horizon. While the outcome may not have been as anticipated, the experience served as a valuable lesson in adaptability and resilience, qualities essential for any aspiring beekeeper. Perhaps "Practical experience of swarming" should be included in the next iteration of the introductory course.

Facilitating the practical sessions was the seasoned beekeeper, Sharon Basse. With several years of experience tucked under her belt, Sharon guided participants through hands-on activities at the Brockwell teaching apiary. Her practical wisdom and patient demeanour provided invaluable insights, empowering attendees to confidently interact with the bees and their hives.

As the final session of this year's course drew to a close on Sunday 5th May, participants bid farewell to LBKA volunteers with gratitude for their guidance. Armed with practical skills, theoretical knowledge, and unforgettable experiences, they departed with a renewed sense of purpose and determination to embark on their own beekeeping adventures.

The Brockwell Teaching Apiary stands as a beacon of



Photo: Maurizio Palomba (official Brockwell Apiary Photographer).

learning and camaraderie, welcoming all who seek to explore the intricate world of bees and the vital role they play in our ecosystem.

May'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

In the Trustee part of the meeting, Richard led a discussion about the role of trustees in LBKA, asking "are we providing leadership or merely managing the requirements of our members?" and "do we need to better differentiate what needs to be done from what is nice to do?". This was based on the observation that the committee doesn't have the capacity to deliver all that we would like and there isn't the member engagement to deliver more than the basics.

In the Executive part of the meeting, we planned upcoming events:

May Bee Health Day. We decided we had to cancel the May Bee Health Day due to lack of capacity, promoting the Asian Hornet Roadshow at Dulwich Park instead.

Lambeth Country Show. David offered to organise logistics of the Lambeth Country Show, organising volunteers, equipment, transport, communication with members and liaising with organisers. Members have already been notified by email with a further notice due



Photo: Maurizio Palomba (official Brockwell Apiary Photographer).

in the May newsletter and final email in late May to advertise hive product sales opportunity.

July monthly meeting. Sharon offered that the July monthly meeting be at Ruskin Park Community Garden. No topic was selected. Aiming for relaxed atmosphere to encourage members into the apiary.

Summer Social. This is planned on Sunday 11th Aug. We agreed we try and secure the same venue and caterer as last year, but that we investigate an alternative venue north of the river for 2025. We plan to have a speaker and will approach a couple of people

Intro Courses 2024 review. This item will be deferred to the next meeting, but the feedback and mentoring preference forms have been sent out.

May in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

May (and June) is all about swarm control. The weather has been poor but the sudden burst of warmth is likely to trigger an upsurge in swarming. Routine inspections should continue to be made each 7 days to



Photo: Maurizio Palomba (official Brockwell Apiary Photographer).

check for queen cells. If 2 brood boxes are used (brood and a half or double brood) then the bees nearly always build some of their queen cells between the 2 boxes. A simple routine check may be made by lifting / tilting the upper brood chamber to inspect the bottom of the frames in the upper box. It is not necessary to remove all frames using this quick method but neither is it foolproof. The only way to be entirely sure there are no queen cells in the colony is to remove each individual frame then carefully and systematically inspect each one.

Signs of swarming. Swarm control action is only needed when 1 or more queen cells are seen. Build up of drones or drone brood is not a sign of swarm preparations. Neither is the building of queen cups unless containing larva and royal jelly.

Action to be taken. Quick but not immediate action is required. Do not feel intimidated into taking immediate action. There is time to close up the colony, think matters through and collate the necessary equipment. Do not attempt to destroy the queen cells, as this will not remove the swarming impulse. Best solution is Artificial Swarm method but this does depend upon finding the queen. Most beekeeping textbooks cover this method. On a personal note, when I find queen cells I always then find the queen and put her in a cage between 2 frames of brood and then close up the hive. They cannot swarm with the queen in a cage and this gives me time to think the matter through, collate the equipment I need then go back later in the day or the following day to perform the operation. The hardest part, which is locating the queen is already done and



Mary Walsh took some traps lend by Sharon and Luke to show to Beekeepers in Westport Co Mayo. Source: Mary Walsh.

I hen can give my full attention to the swarm control manipulation.

What if the queen is not marked? If the queen is unmarked and you cannot find her then shook swarm is an option. An empty (no frames in it) spare brood box is needed. All bees on the brood frames are shaken into the empty brood box on the same site. A queen excluder is then placed above the empty brood box (now containing all the bees) and the original brood box with frames and brood is placed above the queen excluder, then crownboard and roof as usual. A couple of hours later the bees have reorganised themselves with the queen and some bees below the queen excluder and brood and some bees above the queen excluder. The 2 elements can then be separated. It is disruptive for the bees but not harmful. Again, textbooks cover this method.



From the Ballina and Westport Beekeepers: "What a great day and evening we had at the monthly meeting we had 3 most excellent speakers. With a most informative talk about the Asian Hornet delivered by Mary Walsh. David Lee gave a great talk about swarming and Mark Wallace gave us some nice tips. A special thank you to the hotel who delivered a lovely meal for nearly 60 beekeepers". Source: Mary Walsh.

Other action to be taken this month

Brood disease inspection. A specific brood disease inspection should be carried out if not already done in April. This involves shaking all the bees from each brood frame, one frame at a time, into the bottom of the hive and carefully checking each brood frame for signs of any abnormality. As with any disease or pathogen, the sooner it is detected and a course of rectification commenced then the more the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Add supers. Add supers as necessary, adding another in advance of it being needed by the bees. A super may be required either below the queen excluder or above it.

Draw out foundation. Use May nectar flow to draw out some foundation into drawn frames.

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

Spares. Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control.

Enjoy. Most of all, enjoy your May month of beekeeping. It is usually the most intense month. Once the swarming is over the bees turn their attention elsewhere and beekeeping becomes more serene for the beekeeper.

Willkommen bei einem deutschen Imker

Tristram reports on a visitor to Mudchute.

Tristram Sutton
apiaries@lbka.org.uk

LBKA were happy to welcome **Magdalena Arnold** to the inspection at our Mudchute apiary on 29 April. Magdalena is a beekeeper from Germany and a reporter on the national beekeeping magazine in Germany, the *Deutsches Bienen Journal*, the equivalent to *Becraft* and *BBKA News* here.

After we had made the inspection (including the first sighting of the new queen resulting from an early season split and the mangled remains of her rivals' cells), Magdalena confirmed that the same issues faced beekeepers in Germany as we face here including agricultural practices, varroa control, and the Asian Hornet which has now reached Hamburg (i.e. as far north as Manchester).

Magdalena was quite surprised to learn that the registration of hives was voluntary in the UK as it is mandatory in Germany where also many more permissions are required before hives can be set up. Germany has similar requirements to inform the authorities of notifiable diseases although treatment of colonies with other diseases is mandatory.

The visit ended with an inspection of one of the Guard



Magdalena (centre) with some of the Mudchute crew, Andrew (Manager), Naome, Monika, and Tristram at our Mudchute Apiary.

Apis asian hornet traps set up at Mudchute (thankfully empty!).

I wish we had had longer to learn more about beekeeping in Germany, not least to help consider whether what we could do here might be improved.

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

Bees struggling to build up in April should now have an easier time as the spring nectar flow improves. One or two of my colonies are not doing so well this year whilst others are booming. The good weather and improved availability of forage is helping them to recover – though I will be unlikely to get a honey crop from these recovering colonies this year.

Plants important to bees this month include **Horse Chestnut** (dark red pollen), **Sycamore** (pale yellow pollen), Sorbus trees such as white beam and **Mountain Ash**, **Bird Cherry** (pictured) and **Elder**. In parks,



Rowan blooms.



Ceanothus up close.



Honey bees visiting my apples.



Bird cherry.



Green alkanet.

gardens and municipal areas **Choisyia**, **Cotoneaster**, **Ceanothus** and **prunus laurocerasus 'lunken'** are all shrubs visited by bees.

Herbaceous perennial plants important to bees this month include **Dandelions** which are coming to the end of their main flowering period in London, **Green Alkanet** (pictured; now at its peak), **Forget-me-nots** and **Spanish Blue bells** with their green-blue pollen.

Starting to make an appearance are the first of the summer flowers which will become much more important later in the season when the trees have ceased blooming. These include **Scabious**, **Knapweeds**, **Centurea**, **Valerian**, **thistles**, **milkweeds** and the simple flower of **umbellifers** and composite flowers.

Right now in my garden the bees are visiting my **Bowles mauve wall flowers**, **apple blossom**, **Pulmonaria** and **strawberries**.

As we transition from spring into early summer the flowers change guard and so do the wild bees.

Many of the early emerging solitary bees will by now have built nests, provisioned for their offspring and are beginning to die. Their offspring will emerge next March to begin the cycle again. Some are bivoltine meaning they have a second generation later in the summer but for many including the hairy footed flower bees their time for this season is coming to an end, the males now bleached grey by the sun instead of their fresh gingery blonde.

As the early *Andrena* bees and flower bees disappear, a new batch of pollinators will take over, equipped to forage on a different set of later emerging plants. Soon we'll see the yellow faced bees, wool carder bees and leaf cutters visiting the flowers in our gardens.

Jobs to do in the garden

- Dead head spring flowering bulbs
- Plant out non hardy plants such as **tomato**, **runner beans**, **cucurbits** and **peppers**.
- Continuous weeding
- Water if dry
- Sow biennials now to ensure you have flowering plants for next spring. These include **foxglove**, **honesty** and **echiums**.

LBKA Apiaries in May

What's happening in LBKA's apiaries. This section makes a welcome return

Battersea Children's Zoo

Annie McGeoch
events@lbka.org.uk

There are two WBC hives behind an insect mesh through which the public watch every move the beekeeper makes at 2pm on most Saturdays. There are many questions. People stay different times to watch and ask questions ranging from "whatya doin luv" to "how do you extract propolis". I think the bees are getting used to a running commentary as I take the WBC to pieces to inspect.

On the left the queen had been doing very well. Large colony and loads of brood. Lots of sealed brood last week and a supercedure cell in the middle of the middle frame of 14x12. This week it's that awful time when you cannot see a queen or an egg or larvae and there's

a queen cell with the lid open. Hopefully she is out getting mated. It's beautiful weather not wet or windy. There is honey around the empty polished cells all ready and waiting for her return. Wait and be patient. They have plenty of room and loads of stores so let's see next week if she returned safely and starts laying. The bees were calm which makes me think they think all is well even if I can't see her.

On the right they were split as an artificial swarm. The queen is doing well in a nuc away from the zoo. She will go to Stewart Kennan who kindly lent us equipment and bees until we were up and running at Battersea. She will go and live in Edinburgh. The weather up there is much like we have just had the last few months of so hopefully she will make it. I left the hive with brood and eggs and trusted the bees to make themselves a new queen. Today I found two empty queen cells but no queen so she maybe out getting sorted. I have read queens go out in the afternoons!. Like the neighbours the cells are ready for eggs and bees calm, loads of stores and pollen stored.

A strange limbo time in the hives. If you want to know what happens come at 2pm most Saturdays or by arrangement if that doesn't suit. I won't be there 25/5 but will go Monday 27th instead.

Mudchute

Andrew Slade

The Mudchute Apiary group meet regularly at the apiary on Monday afternoons at 14:00. There is free parking in the Asda Store carpark and the apiary is a short walk away. Alternatively there is the DLR Mudchute and Crossharbour stations nearby. The apiary is visible on Google Maps if you zoom in along the northern bank boundary. The What3Words address is mops.files.bowls.

The apiary suffered considerable losses over winter but we are rebuilding from the surviving hive. We have made two splits from the hive and received a swarm from Brockwell Park (thanks Larry). We look forward to increasing the size of the apiary and the LBKA membership on the WhatsApp Mudchute Apiary Crew.

Upcoming events

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

Tuesday 28th May: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at Prince of Wales, Cleaver Square, Kennington, SE11 4EA.

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at Prince of Wales, Cleaver Square, Kennington, SE11 4EA who describe themselves as a "cosy pub overlooking a Georgian

square with its own boules area, for British classics and real ale."

Saturday/Sunday 8th/9th June: Lambeth Country show

12:00-21:00 at Brockwell Park

The Lambeth Country show" is the long-running annual event in Brockwell Park. Come and see our stall. This will replace our Monthly Meeting this month.

Trustees

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
- **Asian Hornet:** Sharon Bassey, asianhornet@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.

