



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

A SWARM IN MAY IS WORTH...

This beekeeping year seems particularly special. The BBKA Spring Convention was back 'in real life' for the first time since 2019. The new intake of BBKA Trustees (including our very own Jane Medwell) have met face-to-face and are taking forward a number of ambitious initiatives - more in future Bee Talks. A bonus for me locally is that our village has reserved a verge for wildflowers which should help with the 'June Gap'.

Our Taster Days and Introduction to Beekeeping sessions are also welcoming new and potential beekeepers to the craft (read more on page 6). I know that our apiary manager Maggie Curley and the team are on top of the health and safety risks related to handling and being in proximity to bees. On Maggie's advice I now have an EpiPen after a consultation with my doctor. My bee buddy Rachel and I have had a dummy run to make sure we're confident in using one.

Lots to discuss when we meet over the summer.

Suzanne Bennett, WLBK Chair



This photograph was taken at our Kings Hill Nurseries training apiary on 26 April. There were more queen cells in this hive besides this amazing frame. A total of 45/44 were removed. Fingers crossed for the remaining queen cell!
Photograph courtesy of Alice Hodson

SWARMS COLLECTORS

If you are up for collecting swarms and wish to receive swarm calls from the public, register your details on the enrolment form at this [link](#). This will put your details on the BBKA's swarm collectors' map whereby the public can enter the postcode to get the details of local collectors. When you receive a call try and obtain as much information from the caller, a photo might help as you do not want a wasted journey for a wasp's nest. On arrival take time to assess the risks involved and only collect swarms that are safe to do so. As reported in last month's Bee Talk, the branch has purchased a bee vac that can be used for the more difficult collections. If you have any interesting collections throughout the season and would like to include them in Bee Talk please contact me on the email addresses on the right.

SWARMS WANTED

The swarms wanted register for 2022 is now live and it can be accessed on this [link](#).

After submitting your details please be ready to receive a call from a Swarm Collector. The size and quality of swarms may be variable and collectors will give preference to members that do not have bees. You may be asked to contribute up to a maximum of £20.00 towards the collector's expenses. When you have received your swarm, please contact me on either of the below so I can remove you from the list.

swarms@warleambees.org.uk

price_chris@btinternet.com

Chris Price, Swarm Co-ordinator

DALEHOUSE LANE APIARY UPDATE

By the time you read this, the phase of the road works on what was our Dalehouse Lane training apiary site will have commenced. Those of you who did training in this apiary will not recognise it at all. The area in the top meadow barely exists now. The line of Dalehouse Lane approaching the new roundabout on Stoneleigh Road cuts a swathe right through the middle of it. At a recent site meeting with the contractors and two representatives of Warwickshire County Council we asked many questions and I'm pleased to say the answers we received were more than helpful. It is not possible at this time to go into detail, but we left the meeting feeling relaxed about our future use of the site, albeit in a slightly reduced state, but hopefully with an extra area of land that will enable us to site some colonies to compensate. The images below show the difference two years makes!

I am hoping that I will be able to update you all on a fairly regular basis, but from what we have learned thus far, we remain optimistic about a return to the site that we have enjoyed for many years.

Mick Smith, DHL Site Manager

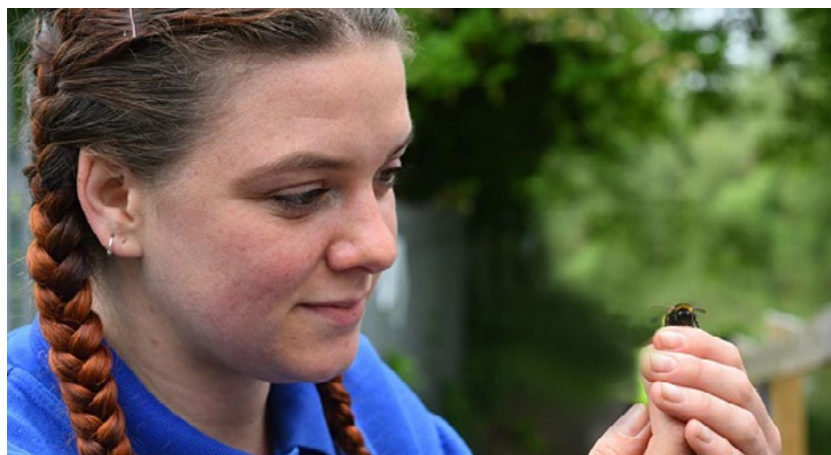


BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

- Maintain regular hive inspections (weather permitting, of course)
- Prepare spare brood frames for making up nucs or artificial swarms.
- If you see queen cells- don't panic. Think it through before you remove them - or call a friend.
- If you want to increase your colonies do Pagdens. If not, why not do a demaree?
- Kick yourself if you didn't mark your queens whilst the population was low
- Do a full brood disease inspection- looking JUST for brood disease by shaking each comb (but not the queen).
- Do a varroa drop test (though your treatment options are now getting limited by your supers).
- If you replace your combs gradually, replace the four mankiest now.
- Now is the time for Bailey comb changes or, even shook swarms. If you do a shook swarm, use a sacrifice comb to break the varroa lifecycle.
- Add supers as needed- or just before.
- If you have OSR make sure you are vigilant as a strong flow will need to be removed very quickly.

Jane Medwell

WORLD BEE DAY



World Bee Day is on the 20th May and in celebration of this event, The Canals and Rivers Trust are organising a family fun day out on the following day, **Saturday 21st May** with a Bee Workshop providing a fantastic learning experience for the younger generation at Hawkesbury Junction, Coventry (near the M6). Link to the event [here](#).

This will include activities such as naming the parts of the bee's body, making 'Bee hotels' (with materials safe to bees and larvae), and to top the day off they would really like a beekeeper to come along with an observation hive for a couple of hours from 10.a.m. to 12p.m. They are offering an appearance fee of £50 plus mileage at 45p/mile and are happy for the beekeeper to sell honey if he or she so wishes.

Coventry Branch are unable to offer support and things will have come to a sorry pass if we beekeepers, of all people, were unable to support this event and on such an auspicious occasion. We can supply an observation hive and some supporting kit. We just need a couple of bods to make things happen. If you can help save the embarrassment were this event to go unsupported, please let me know and we can set things in motion. Contact me at bernardnbrown@outlook.com

Bernard Brown

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Thirty five new members have joined our branch this year and 23 of these members have joined following our recent Introduction to Beekeeping course, which was held in April.

Among the new beekeepers we have 2 Junior Members, bringing our total to 5. We welcome Martha Earl and Anna Kirkman to the Branch. They are the daughters of two of our trainees from the Introduction to Beekeeping course. It is always good to have new members and Junior members are particularly welcome.

Many of these new beekeepers have also joined the weekly training sessions at our Kings Hill Nurseries training apiary.

Currently we have 201 Registered members, 26 Partner members, 5 Junior members and 20 Local members. A total of 252.

Val Dillon

Liz Gurney

NO MOW MAY

We are once again being encouraged to take leave of our lawn mowers during May to allow the wild-flowers in our lawns to grow and flower, which are welcome forage for pollinators. Neatly manicured lawns so beloved in this country cover a vast area but are nothing less than a desert to pollinating insects. Those of us who followed "No Mow May" last year not only enjoyed a welcome break from this chore but were also treated to a totally unexpected arrival of a colourful, largely low growing flowers and a range of butterflies, moths and bees etc. If you could leave only a patch of lawn or, if you must mow, raise the cut to 3"(75mm) it would help, and you too can enjoy this spectacle.

TIME FOR ASSEMBLY

No, not a flash back to old school days, but a request for a member with the requisite skills to assemble a flat pack WBC hive for our project to introduce bees at Kenilworth Castle. This attraction for the visiting public will get underway in the next month or so. The contact is bernardnbrown@outlook.com if you can offer to help.

TRAVEL COSTS

The Branch has always been prepared to reimburse member's mileage costs incurred on Branch business and the recent hike in fuel prices has prompted this reminder. The rate is 45p/mile and claims should be made to our treasurer, Val Dillon preferably by e-mail, stating the activity involved, date incurred, distance, total claimed and your bank details.

ASIAN HORNET

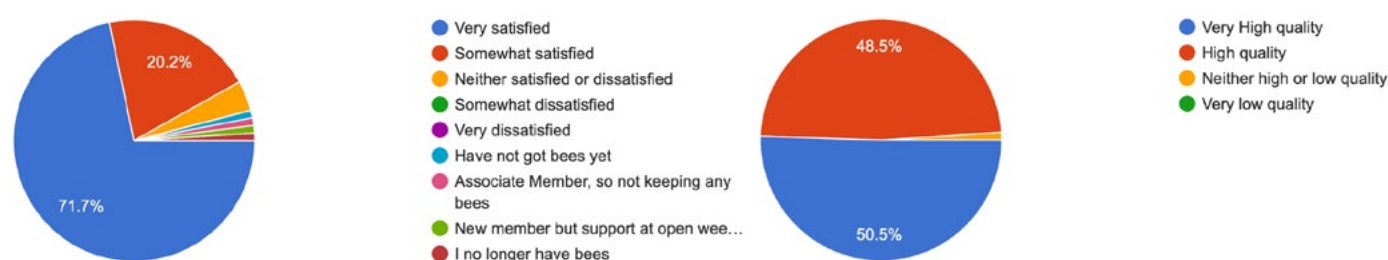
The BBKA has reported that the first Asian Hornet of 2022 on the British mainland has been captured and confirmed at Felixstowe in Suffolk. Local beekeepers (and those further afield) are asked to be on alert for hornets hawking their hives. To read more, click [here](#).

2022 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

As we were about to start the new season of active beekeeping, your committee decided in March that we would conduct a brief survey of the current membership. The aim of the survey was twofold, (a) to ascertain how we are performing; and (b) to pick up on individual's practical training, study and those offering to support Warwick and Learnington Beekeepers activities and its running.

In the short time window of the survey, approximately half of the current membership (some 100 members) completed the survey. Answers to (a) provided, in the main, to be a "pat on the back" for the current way we are supporting the membership, whereas (b) will be followed up with individual members where possible to practically support their beekeeping or involve them in supporting the Branch.

The pie chart, shown below left, shows that over 70% of the responses were from members who were very satisfied, and nobody was very dissatisfied. In response to the question on the quality of information provided by the branch, shown below right, the picture was glowing with 99% rating the information in the high and very high category.



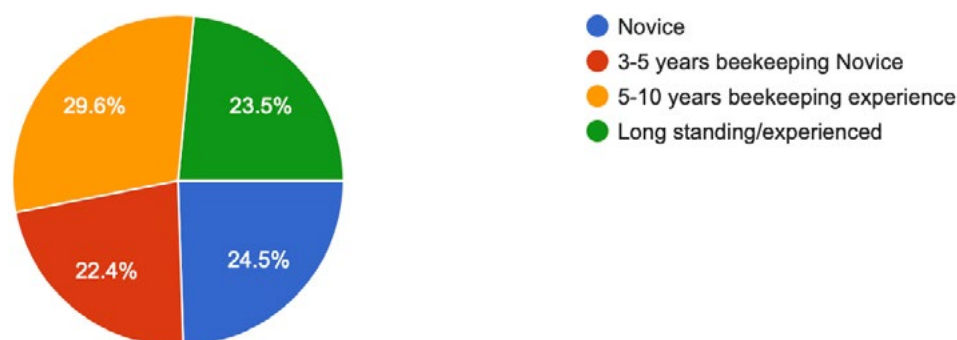
The committee were curious as to the means the membership received the information about upcoming branch activities. This was a multiple answer question and it appears nearly all (98%) used email, with 60% picking up information from BeeTalk and 20% either by word of mouth or from the branch web diary. Note: account needs to be taken of those who did not respond to the email originated survey and this information will only be used as a broad indicator.

As things stand, early this month we'll post out an "At a Glance" reference leaflet to all members as a "one off" exercise to connect with any of our members who are more reluctant in using email etc. The question relating to this leaflet would appear to indicate that from those responding only 6% were of the view that this was necessary but again the note concerning those not partaking is relevant.

For some time now we have not supported the branch having a Social Media presence, Facebook and Twitter. From the responses, it appears most of the membership either don't use social media or cannot see the branch needing one. The committee will re-visit Social Media in the future but the issue of effective management of both Twitter and Facebook considering recent experiences will have considerable bearing on any decision. There was little to no interest in the likes of Instagram, TikTok etc amongst the membership.

We were conscious that the make-up of our annual subscription, spread as it is between the British Beekeepers Association (£21), Warwickshire Beekeepers (£5.50) and ourselves (£14.50), prompted the question as to the "value for money" of each element. In the responses there was very little difference in the spread of the results with a clear indication that our membership in the main considered all "value for money".

The make-up of the experience of our membership would appear to be evenly spread. If we reflect that this is a branch that has grown significantly over the last 10 years, we appear to have supported our members equally over a considerable time and, more importantly, retained them.



Finally, a slight concern is the fact that 15% of the membership keeping bees were not registered on the NBU BeeBase.

Many thanks to all who completed the survey.

Chris Cox
WLBK Secretary

PLANT OF THE MONTH: DANDELION



Ah, the humble dandelion! I don't think I've ever seen so many as there are this year. Verges are thick with them, they are popping up in every flower border and as soon as you've mowed the lawn and your back is turned, there they are again! We mostly consider them to be weeds but our bees do love them for their nectar and their bright yellow pollen. The botanical name is *Taraxicum* which is a large genus of plants in the Asteracea family. Did you know that the study of dandelions is known as "Taraxacology"? The English name Dandelion is a corruption of the French "dent de lion" meaning lion's tooth which describes the deeply toothed leaves.

They are thought to have evolved some 30 million years ago and have been used by mankind as both a food and medicine for millennia. There are records of dandelions being used in traditional Chinese medicine and also by Native American Indians after the plant was taken to North America on the Mayflower. In France, it is known as "pissenlit" (translated – "wet the bed") due to the potent diuretic effect of eating the roots. Dandelion "coffee" is made by roasting and grinding the roots. In fact, the entire plant is edible. The leaves can be used much like spinach though they are very bitter and not to everyone's liking. Victorian aristocracy however regarded them as a delicacy. Later, in more humble households, the plant was enjoyed as an ingredient of Root Beer and in the traditional fizzy drink Dandelion and Burdock.

Enjoy your dandelions everyone!

Maggie Curley & Barry Meatyard

TRAINING & EDUCATION ROUND UP

It's both pleasing and rewarding that circumstances are now allowing us to get back to more face-to-face training and education and we have had a good response from potential and established new members to what's on offer. The report elsewhere in this issue on our 'Introduction To Beekeeping' (page 6) is very encouraging and it's a pleasure to be part of the tutor team for that.

In parallel with this we have started our 'Towards The Basic' training that has attracted 10 members who are keen on consolidating their experience. This ranges from having kept bees for several years to those who have just completed their first year cycle (a criterion for enrolling on 'TTB'). We have completed two one-day theory based sessions and are now planning for the

important 'hands on' good practice. All 10 are signed up for the Assessment and we have a lively WhatsApp group full of ideas and advice – and some great pictures!

Our ability to successfully run training sessions depends on the excellent facilities offered by the Branch Apiary, which is meticulously managed by a dedicated team led by Maggie. After the bounce back from EFB we probably have one of the healthiest and most productive apiaries in the County.

We recently asked in a questionnaire for suggestions as to what aspects of beekeeping members would like to 'Bee Better At' and are looking at how we can build the responses into our programme. There is also a growing interest from a number of local schools intent on developing the beekeepers of the future!

Barry Meatyard

INTRODUCING THE 'NEWBEES'

Considering I do events planning as my day job (I'm an Events Manager at the University of Warwick), after playing a small part in the 2021 'Taster Day', I was asked if I would mind helping organise this year's ITB on 2nd/3rd and 9th/10th April (talk about a busman's holiday!).

Several meetings, email exchanges and some fine-tuning we were ready to go with a whopping 25 people for each weekend and a waiting list for both courses, should anyone drop out. Armed with biscuits, beverages and not forgetting Helen Essex's honey cake as a welcome bonus on each Saturday morning we were raring to go. There were a few hiccups along the way, the A46 presenting delays and COVID doing what it does best, however the presenters stepped up at a moment's notice to ensure the smooth delivery of the course. Attendees came from far and wide, as did some of the presenters.

Both weekends were a resounding success, having received both positive and constructive feedback, as well as an amazing twenty attendees becoming a member of WLBK since.

Having reviewed feedback there are some favourable comments, to highlight but a few:

- 85% of attendees deemed the courses to be 'excellent', with another 12.5% judged them to be 'good'.
- Course content was rated as 'excellent' by 77%, with the remaining 23% regarding it as 'good'.
- In general, 58% of attendees found the facilities to be 'excellent', whilst 42% stated that they were 'good'.

Some attendees felt that the course could be improved with the following:

- Streamlining presentations
- Introducing more practical activities
- Striking a balance between the amount of time sitting down and moving around.

Hopefully attendees went away with confidence and equipped with the basic principles of beekeeping. Moving forward we shall look to further enhance the learning experience for future attendees.

Well, enough of me droning on, but before I sign off, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all those members that gave up their time to ensure the courses were a success, both in the lead up to and during.

Special thanks to Maggie and Val ably supporting behind the scenes.

Marie Day



WLBK EXTRACTION UNIT UPDATE

If you go down to Hurst Farm today, you're sure of a big surprise!

If you go down to Hurst Farm today, you'd better protect your eyes!

Well! That ditty dates me, as members of a certain age will attest.

But if you do go to Hurst Farm, make sure you take a look at, and into, the Extraction Unit. Phase 1 of the refurbishment is virtually complete and both the outside and inside have been transformed under the supervision of Clive Joyce and the skill and sweat of beekeeper member, Chris Fisher of Fisher Maintenance.

Externally, the metal parts have been de-rusted, treated with a rust inhibitor and the dirt and grime on the external walls washed away followed by the whole of the outside painted in NATO green. Why NATO green you may ask? We may never know but, at least, should NATO ever need to requisition it, it will be ready.

Incidentally, bees have a long history of involvement in warfare from using their hives in which to secrete weapons etc. to their honey being laced with poison and left in caches to tempt marauding armies to imbibe. Hives have also been used as bombs, giving a whole new dimension to the subject of shook swarms!! However, back to the extraction unit.

When you go inside make sure you put your shades on. The new white PVC panel ceiling and similar cladding to the warming cabinet both Inside and out, is simply dazzling. Re-sealing of joints and trims complete what is now the cleanable, hygienic surfaces required of a food preparation area.

There are still a few bits and pieces to finish off and the unit will need its usual annual sparkle clean but it will be ready for operation to deal with the spring nectar flow which, of course, will be the best ever!

Bernard Brown



BBKA SCHOOLS PROJECT



A generous legacy has provided the BBKA with the resources to develop a programme for children from primary schools to learn about pollinators, including, of course, honey bees. WLBK members have volunteered to help children to understand what pollinators do, why they are important and what they can do for them, through a day of fun activities at BBKA HQ and the new garden next to the apiary.

The first children, twenty-seven energetic Year 2s (aged 6 or 7) came to Stoneleigh at the end of March amid blustery winds and hail – definitely not a day to open a hive. It fell to Margret Murdin to capture the children's attention with an illustrated lesson on pollination. All the children's favourite foods (except chicken nuggets) depended on pollinators, so unless we all looked after them there would be no strawberries, apples or pizza! The children learned how scout bees show the workers where to find flowers, and how bees see where flowers hold nectar. They tried on bee suits (some rather too big for them) watched bees on a display frame and had the opportunity to taste real honey.

After elevenses – pieces of apple – the children, helped by the volunteers, did craft activities. They made mosaic flowers which in ultraviolet light showed bees where to find the nectar, used wax foundation to make candles and made models of the bee life cycle and of bees.

Lunch was a rather shivery picnic in the garden and then more activities – pond dipping, seed sowing, a quiz trail to identify the homes of different pollinators and making a bug hotel. The children returned to school with what they had made, pots of seeds to water and new words – pollinator and pollination. 'All of it' was the resounding response to a question of what they liked best. The volunteers had great fun too and look forward to ten more visits through the summer term.

Judith Masson

THE HAIRY FOOTED FLOWER BEE

In recent weeks members may have noticed two 'new bees on the block' in addition to our girls and a few bumblebees.

One is superficially similar to a worker honeybee but hairier and with a distinctive whitish-yellow face. It will spend some time hovering like a hoverfly

and makes rapid short dashes between hovers, often aggressively warding off other bees on what it obviously thinks of as 'its patch'. The other looks more like a small black bumblebee with distinctive ginger patches on the back legs.

I noticed both on some grape hyacinths in the front garden and it took me a while, and a bit of research, (thank you Steven Falk!) to work out that they were both of the same species.

So these are the male and female of the 'hairy-footed flower bee' (*Anthophora plumipes*) – the male with the white face, and the black ginger legged female. The photo on the right clearly shows the male bee – getting a female to stay still long enough for a good 'mug shot' is still work in progress!

The females nest in old walls and holes in cliffs and occasionally on the ground in old rabbit burrows. The favourite forage plants include tube shaped flowers such as comfrey and lungwort – and clearly, grape hyacinths!

The species has a predominantly southeastern distribution but records are increasing further north, even as far as Scotland and possibly in response to climate change.

There are around 270 species of bee that share the UK with our honeybees, of which 27 are colonial bumblebees and the rest solitary with some being very small. Despite their status and having individual nests, some solitary species like the ivy bee (*Coletes hederae*) nest communally – often in great numbers. Keep your eyes open for them. The most comprehensive bee guidebook is Steven Falk's Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland, published by Bloomsbury.

Barry Meatyard



ANOTHER FINE MESH WE'RE IN

The acquisition of a new Beekeeping Demonstration tent brings the number of Marquees accumulated by the Branch dangerously close to rivalling the number of sheds that have proliferated over recent years! Thanks to the generosity of Midlands Co-op shoppers, from whom we benefited to the extent of £1,985 from their Local Community Fund, we now have a 3m x 3m marquee with 4 mesh walls from which we can give the public a safe, close-up view of how fascinating our girls are. As well as providing oodles of space in which to dismantle the WBC and parade

our frames of bees in front of our audience without risking tripping, the visibility through the mesh is far superior to that of our previous tent. We opted for this size of tent so that it would be compatible with our other marquees enabling it to be used either in conjunction with these or on its own for other display purposes.

This is by far the best designed and fabricated marquee in our collection and we can't wait to put it through its paces. Its debut will be at this year's Kenilworth Show on 4th June so do swing by for a close-up look.

Bernard Brown

STRUTTING OUR STUFF IN 2022

Coming up shortly are the Kings Hill Nurseries Spring Craft Fayre on **Saturday 28th May** and the Kenilworth show, being held at Stoneleigh showground the following week on **Saturday 4th June** and this is a call for volunteers to help out on our stand promoting bees and beekeeping. In other words, it is an opportunity to have some fun in the company of beekeeper colleagues whilst giving full rein to showing your knowledge and enthusiasm for our craft to the public.

If you've not volunteered before, the sort of questions we get asked are easily answered by anyone who has been on our training course and you can extend your skills base by selling honey, supervising honey tasting sessions, showing the kiddies how to roll candles, explain what is going on in the observation hive and watching skep makers at work not to mention the beekeeping sessions with live bees.

The days are divided into two shifts, morning and afternoon at Kings Hill, and three at the Kenilworth show. Volunteering at the Kenilworth Show will also give you free entry and, of course, after your shift you are free to savour the delights of the rest of the show.

To volunteer, please click on the following links:

[Kings Hill Nurseries - Craft Fayre - 28th May \(google.com\)](#)

[The Kenilworth Show 4th June 2022 \(google.com\)](#)

Bernard Brown



SAFEGUARDING THE VULNERABLE

Along with most organisations, we are required by law to address the issue of how to protect vulnerable members of the Branch and of the public with whom we interact. Both children and adults can be considered vulnerable and, as the governing charity, of which we are part, the Warwickshire Beekeeping Association (the County) have produced a safeguarding policy, which now needs to be cascaded down to the branches. This should be accompanied by an explanation of what safeguarding involves and how implementation of the policy can

be integrated into the organisation of our activities. A designated safeguarding officer for the County is also required.

They would really welcome some informed assistance with this task, if not to undertake the roles themselves, then to advise on appointing an external provider to undertake the training and safeguarding roles on behalf of the County.

Do you have an interest in or experience of safeguarding vulnerable people? Would you be willing to share your knowledge?

If this is you, please contact Jane Nimmo on secretary@wbka.org.uk to discuss things further.

HINTS & TIPS

This winter has been a mild one and swarming preparation is likely to be early... So be prepared and here are some tips to help with thanks to Clive Joyce.

When carrying out your weekly inspections in May, June and July keep a close eye out for the signs that may indicate swarming preparations are taking place. Look out for these signs and you will be better prepared:

1. An increase in the number of drones or drone cells.
2. Play cups (vertical, empty hemispherical wax cups) suggest the colony is practicing the art of making queen cells.
3. During swarm preparation the young bees stay in the centre of the frame and the older bees collect around the outer parts.
4. The number of bees around the queen increases as she is fed more. This leads to increased egg laying and eventually the space is not available so possibility of swarming increases.
5. Scout bees will be out about 14 days before a swarm. They will be looking for a favourable site for the swarm to go to. Look out for bees with no pollen doing a waggle dance on the comb, these will be the scout bees communicating their findings.
6. Set up a bait hive and look for interest being taken.
7. Look out for bees zig-zagging across the comb. This recruits bees and stirs up the colony to prepare for swarming.



..... BUT after all this, if they still swarm then collect them up and rub carbolic soap on the area they chose to swarm to. Then they will not all abscond back to that place as soon as your back is turned!

Mike Townsend has a brilliant tip about finding the queen- he sent it in an email about the branch bees he's looking after:

There had been difficulty in finding the queen and I was having the problem too as it was rammed full of bees. I decided to add a second brood box and moved almost all the brood into the top one after shaking the bees off. Then put excluder below, above the remaining couple of frames with brood in the lower box. On the next inspection most of the bees had moved up so the queen was easy to find in the bottom box.

HELEN ESSEX

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to Helen on h.essex@virgin.net

The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver.
Please send content for the newsletter to her by the 28th of each month:
tanyaweaversa@yahoo.co.uk

WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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