



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

GIRLS ON TOUR TO THE HEATHER



There's a first for everything and having waited patiently we had the news to register an interest with taking "the girls" to the heather. I knew that two of my hives met the criteria of being strong enough, all that was left was to work out the arrangements with our tour operator, Bernard. I informed the girls of their imminent tour and would they please go to bed early as we had a early start in the morning. They obliged and we got them safely strapped for their journey to the heather fields. They were "buzzing" with anticipation.

At 5.30am the royal we, hubby (who was not going in a car with a hive of bees), transported the girl's hives in a wheelbarrow to their waiting transport, aka Bernard's trailer. Even an early neighbour spotted the manoeuvres and was keen to ask what we were doing!

It was a bit wet during the journey, so there was no risk of overheating, and the girls got a free shower ready for their holiday.

We had to manhandle the hive through a small wet boggy area, but Bernard was brilliant with using the "bee mobile" and we soon had the girls set up in their new positions for their holidays. They were very keen to see their new surroundings as we opened the hives up, you could hear the buzz.

As you can see from the photos, the girls on tour have a wonderful vista to appreciate and we were careful siting the hives, so they had the least distance to fly to enjoy the heather that was coming into bloom.

A quick check from our tour operator Bernard followed about 2 weeks into their holidays and the girls were clearly enjoying themselves filling the supers up nicely.

All we have to do now is collect the girls and hopefully the proof will be in the pudding with some tasty heather honey.

Karen Timothy



BEEKEEPING TASKS — SEPTEMBER

It's really quite nice when everything slows down for Autumn. There is still the work of preparing for Winter (uniting, feeding and treating for varroa) but the pace is slowing.

This is also the month to look ahead to Winter activities. Don't forget the upcoming County Honey Show (28th September - you are entering, right?) or even aim for the National Honey Show 12th and 13th October.

Judith has planned a programme of talks at our new venue in Kenilworth (see page 3). We are planning the Introduction to Beekeeping Course (next year), Towards the Basic sessions (next March) and microscopy groups (monthly). The county lectures and BBKA online talks are looking great (the first one was David Bonner on Preparing for Winter - 20th August). We have a County Module 1 study group going on Saturdays.

I look forward to seeing you at branch activities this Autumn, eating cake together and chatting about our bees.

If you need help with your bees, contact me or any other member of the committee at (warleambees@warleambees.org.uk). Our bee inspector is Colleen Reichling and her mobile number is: 07990 138898 (colleen.reichling@apha.gov.uk).

BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

September is really the start of the beekeeping year. The drones have been excluded, the honey is off and we want to protect the winter bees.

- Narrow entrances, avoid spilling syrup and don't keep colonies open too long to try to keep the wasps away from your weakest colonies. If all else fails, move the colony.
- Order your syrup from the co-op if you haven't already.
- Take off any remaining honey and extract it. You might need to book the extraction facility to use the the apimelter or book the boiler- details on the website.
- Get the bees to clean any spun supers and do not store them wet- it invites wax moth.
- Do a disease inspection if you have not recently done one- only unite healthy colonies.
- Decide how many colonies you want to overwinter and unite any small colonies. This saves money on varroa treatments and feed. (If you freeze the unwanted queens, the microscopy group would love to have them).
- Do any remaining Varroa treatment to protect those winter bees and fill in your Veterinary Medicine Record. I used apivar last year, so I am using formic pro this year.
- Feed so that your colonies have around 20kg of stores.
- Consider beginning the "big clean"- but it's not urgent, is it?

Jane Medwell
WLBK chair



COULD YOU BE OUR TREASURER?

We are looking for a new WLBK branch treasurer.
Do you have time on your hands?
Do you like working as a team?
Do you want to be involved with finance?
Do you want to be part of our Committee, involving yourself with many aspects of running our branch, such as training courses, the Co-op, shows and membership?

If you do, please contact me for a chat.

Val Dillon
val.dillon@outlook.com
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ASIAN HORNET UPDATE

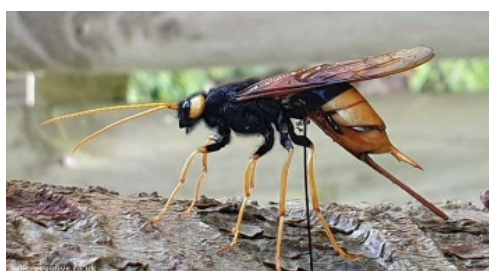
Of course, we all know the dangers of tempting fate, but so far this year only 5 Asian Hornet nests have been destroyed and surveillance to track and trace in 3 further sites in Kent and East Sussex (Hastings) is currently under way. A year ago we were reporting 42 nests destroyed and woe and despondency were rife.

Being still in a "green zone" as far as the risk of incursion is concerned, we are continuing with our public awareness campaign albeit at a lower key. With the kids starting a new school year, a school's pack has been developed and is available for roll out. If you have kids, please mention this to their school.

September 2nd – 8th was Asian Hornet week. An initiative by the BBKA, they have been posting the latest updates throughout the week on social media. In addition,

they organised a zoom talk by Andrew Durham, who gave a very useful one bringing us up to speed last year. On September 4th at 7p.m he updated us on the developments since.

Andrew is a very good speaker, and I can recommend catching up with his talk on YouTube if you missed it. The link for the is [here](#).



I leave you with this photo above of an Asian hornet mimic which was reported to us in mid-August. It is up to 4cm long and, with the yellow legs and colouring, it is easy to see how it can be confused with the Asian hornet, particularly when in flight. With a long stinger-like ovipositor to lay eggs it is typically found in coniferous forests from May to September.

Bernard Brown
WBKA AHAT Co-ordinator



AUTUMN/WINTER TALKS PROGRAMME

On **19th September** we have the first talk in our 2024-25 talks programme. Gerald Collins, Master Beekeeper, will share his knowledge and experience by providing a **Guide to the Successful over-wintering of bees**.

We have a new venue, Kenilworth Senior Citizens Centre, Abbey End, Kenilworth, CV8 1QJ (not to be confused with the Kenilworth Centre). Do join us, our meetings are friendly and follow with bee chat and refreshment, including cake.

All talks are held 7.30 – 9.30 pm, on the third Thursday of each month. Future talks will be held on Thursday **17th October** and Thursday **21st November**.

Judith Masson
Meetings Secretary



HONEY SHOW

WLBK will not be holding a honey show this year. Members who want to show what they and their bees can do can enter the County Honey Show on **28th September** at Kings Hill Nursery. Online entry opened on 23rd August and will close on 21st September. For all details, including how to enter online visit this [link](#).

UN/WANTED SPLITS

It's the time of year when the success of those swarm control splits taken as insurance against re-queening failure becomes apparent and unless you want to increase your number of stocks may well be surplus to requirements. We learned in last month's issue of Bee Talk that it was not a good year for swarm collection and, whilst all those on our swarm wanted list who had no bees now have them, there are others who have been disappointed. Coupled with, anecdotally, poor re-queening results, there is a demand for any unwanted splits.

Again this year, we will be operating a matching service between those with and those wanting splits and you can register for either on the google form at [Wanted and UnWanted Splits 2024](#). While the deadline for registering was originally 31st August, we've extended this cut-off date to 30th September.

Bernard Brown



FROM ICELAND TO KENILWORTH



Clockwise from top left: In Maggie's apiary; Tekla, Sæunn and Maggie making frames; Hildur and Tekla with honey extractor; Tekla uncapping; and having fun at Warwick Castle.

In March 2023, WLBK had two Icelandic delegates join our Introduction to Beekeeping course. Freyr and Saeunn had flown over specifically to attend the course and their reflections of their time featured in the April 2023 issue of Bee Talk. Saeunn came back on her own in April 2024 and then back again this past Summer but this time with a few others in tow - her son, Björgúlfur, Freyr's wife, Hildur, and their daughter, Tekla. Here Saeunn tells us what they got up to while here...

In April 2024, I visited Maggie Curley [who heads up the WLBK training apiary] and got to experience a little bit of everything bee related. I got the chance to enjoy my favourite pastime - talk about bees. An article about that amazing trip will be coming later. But during this trip an idea came about - to visit again with my son and experience many bee related things. That led to Freyr's wife, Hildur, and their daughter Tekla, joining us too.

The four of us visited Maggie and her husband Geoff, who welcomed us warmly into their home. Geoff picked us up at the train station with an Icelandic flag in hand, how delightful!

Maggie and Geoff, with the help of Val and Terry and Lottie and Chris, prepared all sorts of things for us. We visited Val and Terry and saw their apiary. Lottie and Chris took us to Warwick Castle, an exciting

new sight for us. A castle is something you'd never see in Iceland. The kids absolutely adored the bird show as did the adults.

We joined the WLBK presentation team at a display at the local market. Experiencing the market and participating in the WLBK work while getting the chance to talk about bees yet again, was incredibly exciting and fun.

Maggie gave us the opportunity to try extracting honey from the frames straight from the hive, something we had never done before and an amazing experience to have and TASTE. This was Tekla's favourite part of the trip, extracting the honey out of the frames and seeing the golden honey slowly drip into the bucket.

Shortly after landing home in Iceland we went straight to extracting honey from our own hive and did 5 frames in total. We got just about 5kg of delicious honey. The price for Icelandic honey is £66/kg. We're incredibly excited about our first harvest and appreciate learning the right way to harvest honey.

We would like to kindly thank Maggie and Geoff, Lottie and Chris and Val and Terry for the warm and wonderful reception. This is a trip that will stay with us for a long time.

Sæunn Sigvaldadóttir



PICNIC TIME



Over thirty members got together at the Kenilworth Senior Citizen's Club on Saturday 17th August for a picnic to mark the ending of the summer beekeeping season and an opportunity to discuss the highs and lows of the season with friends. Everyone agreed that the wasps were late this year – a blessing and that the Spring was dreadful – no one had been able to extract any spring honey.

The picnic gave us an opportunity to get away from the sticky work of extraction, to learn new tips to make things easier and a chance to explore the facilities, which we will be using for our Winter talks and maybe more. There is a really well-equipped kitchen and large outside space with a beautiful cedar tree, although its hard to see that this will feature in our winter programme.

It was a bring and share picnic, so there were lots of tasty things to try and there seemed to be more food at the end than at the beginning! Special thanks to Marie Whitehouse, Noah and the rest of the family for help in setting up the tables and clearing up at the end, to Leo for his skills in getting the dishwasher to work and finding the plug to remove at the end of the cycle, and to everyone who came and helped to make the event a success.

Judith Masson

WLBK TASTER DAY FEEDBACK

The following comments from 18 of the 21 attendees at our September Taster Day on 1st September 2024, says it all.

- Loved it, very interesting. Great speakers and good timing of talks (not too long or too short). Felt like I got a good overview and honest talks about the delights and difficulties involved.
- Some of the lectures were a little slow – pictures are better than lots of writing.
- I really enjoyed it. Lovely people presenting it.
- Very informative – a good introduction for someone interested in keeping bees. Friendly and knowledgeable presenters.
- It was a great experience. Hosted by very knowledgeable beekeepers.
- Had a lovely time and learned a lot today! Really good introduction to beekeeping.
- Lovely, friendly and knowledgeable instructors. Learnt a lot and feeling very enthusiastic about beekeeping.

- Fascinating course and experience.
- Very informative event. The presenters 'passion for beekeeping came through very strongly.
- Really engaging content and everyone was so welcoming and passionate.
- Lovely honey cake! Very informative. Very friendly.
- Really informative with friendly staff.
- Really good day. Thank you.
- Good to go out and get practical experience.
- A very interesting day which only goes to show there is a lot more involved than I thought.
- Really friendly and personable team. Wonderful to have an introduction to beekeeping from such enthusiasts.
- This event was very interesting and I learnt a lot. Congratulations to the organisers, Jane (Richmond) and Paul (Day), not forgetting the team of presenters who made this an unforgettable day for the delegates and did the Branch proud.

Ivan A Perry

NUTRITION AND AUTUMN BEES



Left: BIG feeders are easy.

Below: A bee marked with the pollen of Himalayan balsam. It may be an invasive species but it yields good flow of nectar.

Winter bees are so different from summer bees that they have been called a different caste! What makes the winter bees different is what they eat. As the protein-rich pollen tails off, the pollen-scarce diet causes the winter bees to develop an extra-large 'fat body' - a special insect tissue that regulates their metabolism and produces vitellogenin, an amazing substance that enhances the bees' immune system and increases its lifespan. Winter bees last six months- not the six weeks of their summer sisters.

The winter bees are responsible for eating the honey stored in the combs and keeping the colony warm by shivering their flight muscles. As the outside temperature drops the colony clusters in a way that keeps the



centre of the cluster warm, humid and high in CO₂. This cluster will move around the combs consuming the stores of honey (or carbohydrate) and bee bread. So, it is very important that the stores of carbohydrate are IN the brood box, not above an air gap or a queen excluder. The cluster will not leave the queen and can actually starve if the whole cluster cannot move onto more stores - so called "isolation starvation".

Aim to get enough carbohydrate into the brood box to get the colony through the winter.

To provide the carbohydrate you have taken off in honey, you can feed your bees syrup. Wooden or plastic syrup feeders are great, but take up space for storage. Clive Joyce's poly bag method of feeding saves a lot of storage space. Basically, Clive puts big, sealed bags of Ambrosia syrup (from the co-op) directly onto the brood box (with a super around) and makes a 7cm slit in top side of the bag. The bees take the syrup down and store it. Alternatively, you can feed big blocks of fondant (available from the co-op). Both syrup and fondant have to be converted to concentrated stores, so if you give a 12.5 kg block of fondant, make sure water is available nearby. Plan to feed before the temperature drops. If bees are fed syrup too late, they will get dysentery.

Get all the feeding done before winter – not through the winter. Some people put a super of combs below the brood box (brood and a half) to make sure there is enough brood space for all the feed. The bee cluster goes down into it in winter and come up through the brood box in spring. The super (the half) can be removed in Spring- empty.

And when you have fed the colony, heft it. Feel what a heavy hive feels like so that you can heft it through the winter and know what you are feeling. A heavy hive is a happy hive.

Jane Medwell, WLBK Chair

Now is the most important time of the year for bee nutrition. We know that bigger colonies, locally reared queens and younger queens overwinter better. So, take your colony losses now by uniting small colonies, so you do not lose colonies in the Winter. It's important to protect the larvae of "winter bees" from varroa and make sure they will have enough feed. The pollen going into the hive now will be preserved as "bee bread" for feeding the larvae of winter bees and for the spring.

COULD YOU DO BETTER?

Did you ever get this comment on your school report? Even more damning was the one I had for Art - "Bernard tries, but obviously has no talent". Encouraging or what! At least I knew where I stood and the time otherwise spent trying to improve on a lost cause was spent far more productively on those activities where I "could do better."

It's not surprising, therefore, that when the Branch display team felt it was about time we updated the 11 year-old design of the current leaflets we pass to the public on a range of our activities, I did not volunteer. But I'm sure that there are, amongst our 249 members, those with the creativity and graphical skills to put a "zing" into this important means of gaining support communicating with the public.

So, we thought that we would invite you clever people to produce a design - something eye catching and exciting - to replace our current leaflets an example of which is below. The wording on this can be accessed by following this link:

Talks to Organisations. A5 - Google Docs

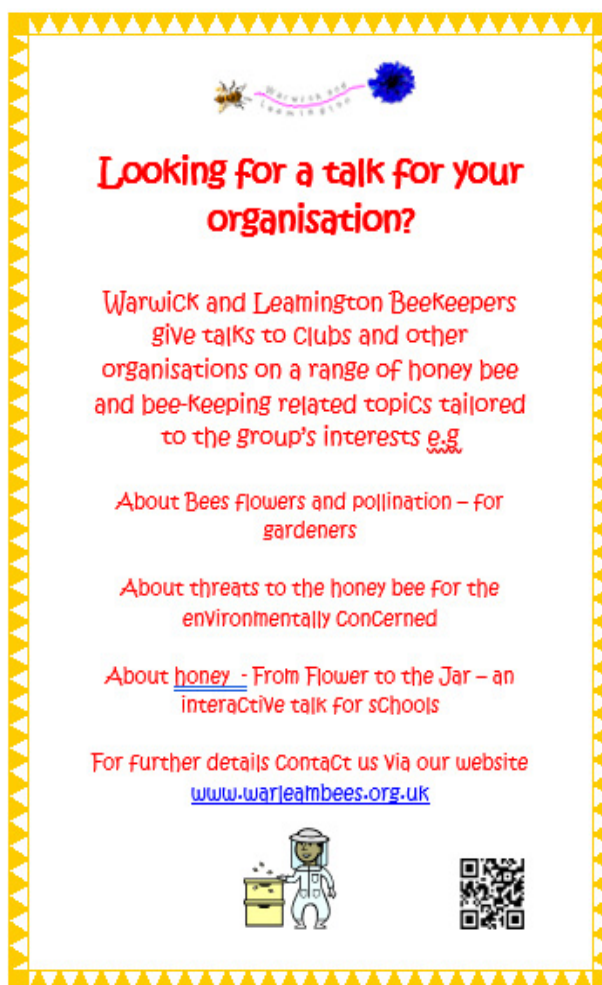
Now do you see why we need to update them?

The leaflets are A5 size and the wording should be capable of being edited by the display team to reflect changes without having to refer back to the designer.

If you fancy having a go, please let us know by alerting Di Hetherington at dihethers@yahoo.co.uk and please submit your design to her by

30th September.

Bernard Brown



Looking for a talk for your organisation?

Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers give talks to Clubs and other organisations on a range of honey bee and bee-keeping related topics tailored to the group's interests e.g.

- About Bees flowers and pollination – for gardeners
- About threats to the honey bee for the environmentally Concerned
- About honey - From Flower to the Jar – an interactive talk for schools

For further details Contact us Via our website
www.warleambees.org.uk

LAST CALL FOR THORNE'S TRIP



Bookings must be made by Thursday 26th September 5pm for day out to the Thorne's Grand Sale on 12th October.

WLBK has booked a 34 seater coach to take members and friends to Thorne's at Rand in Lincolnshire on the day of the Grand Sale. There will be a trip round the factory, opportunities to buy kit in the sale and visit the museum. You can bring a picnic or eat in Thorne's café. Cost £25 per person. Pick up from Johnson's depot in Henley in Arden (free parking) at 7.45 am or Kenilworth Railway Station (parking £2.00) at 8.30am. Return to Kenilworth 5.35, and a bit later at Henley.

Booking via the website. Let's make this a trip to remember for lots of good reasons. If we cannot fill the trip will be cancelled and everyone's payments will be returned.

Judith Masson

DETECTING 'FAKE' HONEY



Honey is a natural substance produced by honey bees. However, in recent years it has become less and less 'natural', with cases of sugar syrup adulteration increasing. What this means is that vegetable-based syrups from maize, corn, rice, sugar beet, wheat, cassava and even potatoes are used to dilute real honey. The resulting concoction can comprise as little as 15% honey.

This 'fake' honey, which is sold for as little as 69p a jar, is flooding our supermarket shelves. Trading data from the UK government found that in 2023 £89.8 million worth of honey was imported into the UK.

According to the Food Standards Agency (FSA), this equates to 51,400 tonnes of honey being imported into the UK, 68% of which comes from China.

Last year a European Commission investigation found that 46% of 147 honey samples tested were likely to have been adulterated with cheap plant syrups.

While honey can be analysed for authenticity – for instance, using nuclear magnetic resonance technology – these methods are expensive, complex and time-consuming, and certainly couldn't be done on every jar of honey that enters the market.

However, researchers at Cranfield University have developed two methods that can be used to authenticate UK honey quickly and accurately without opening the jar.

"Honey is expensive and in demand – and can be targeted by fraudsters, leaving genuine suppliers out of pocket and undermining consumers' trust," said Dr Maria Anastasiadi, lecturer in bioinformatics at Cranfield University, who led the study with the FSA and the UK's Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC).

The research team used a specialist light analysis technique called non-invasive Spatial Offset Raman Spectroscopy (SORS) – originally developed at STFC's Central Laser Facility and more commonly used in pharmaceutical and security diagnostics.

SORS rapidly identified the 'fingerprint' of each ingredient in the product. This data was combined with machine learning to successfully detect and identify sugar syrups from various plant sources.

The advantage of this method is that it is rapid, portable and non-

invasive, and can be used to screen honey at all stages of the supply chain.

Anastasiadi said: "This method is an effective, quick tool to identify suspicious samples of honey, helping the industry to protect consumers and verify supply chains."

The second method involved using DNA barcoding – a technique already used in food authentication to identify plant species in products – to detect rice and corn syrups spiked in UK honey samples.

The team used 17 honey samples collected from bee farmers around the UK, which were sourced with the help of the Bee Farmers Association to ensure they were of known origin and purity to validate the methods. They bought four samples of 'pure' UK honey from supermarkets and online retailers. The samples were then spiked with corn and rice syrups produced in a range of countries.

Dr Anastasiadi said: "To date, DNA methods haven't been widely used to examine honey authenticity. But our study showed that this is a sensitive, reliable and robust way to detect adulteration and confirm the origins of syrups added to the honey."

"The large variation of honey composition makes it particularly difficult to authenticate. So having this consistent technique in the testing armoury could take the sting out of honey fraud."

The researchers have published their results in the paper 'Detection of sugar syrup adulteration in UK honey using DNA barcoding' in the journal Food Control.

Meanwhile, researchers at Aston University in Birmingham are also developing methods to detect if honey is blended with cheap additions.

The Aston Institute for Photonic Technologies announced at the end of last year that it is developing honey authenticity testing technology – Fluorescence Excitation-Emission spectroscopy – combined with machine learning to create a fast and reliable testing method.

Tanya Weaver

This article originally appeared on eandt.theiet.org



WINTER FEEDING – FONDANT

When the temperature drops after Autumn and it's too cold to feed sugar syrup, beekeepers often turn to fondant to ensure their hives have enough stores to see them through to the Spring.

STORING FONDANT

Fondant, being a gooey substance, has a tendency to spread outwards in a bid for freedom unless restrained. It relies on the enclosing cardboard box to halt this southwards march and, in particular, on the strengths of the joins in the said box – some of which have been found wanting in the past. So if you intend keeping your fondant for any length of time, the judicious application of a strip of duck tape on the box's vertical side joint – there is only one and it is about 3 inches long – and along the join in the bottom flaps will bring a little peace of mind and hopefully save a sticky fondant slide. Store the fondant so that the box is fully supported on a solid surface ensuring that it is well wrapped to avoid premature drying out and in a cool, dry, vermin-free place.

A TIP TO HELP CARVING SLICES OF FONDANT FROM THE MAIN BLOCK

Before you start, place a bowl of hot water and one of hand-hot water

within reach. Place a length of cling film on a convenient table or worktop. Place your block of fondant on the draining board of the sink partly overhanging the clean and dampened bowl. Take your knife – we use a stiff, serrated, bread knife – and dip it in the bowl of hot water. Peel back the blue plastic wrapping on the overhanging bit of fondant and saw away at the fondant with the hot knife returning it to the bowl of hot water to reheat it when the sawing gets tough. Allowing the fondant to overhang the bowl causes the cut section to fall away preventing it from re-sealing with the parent block. Place the severed piece of fondant on the cling film. You can pummel it into the desired shape to suit the depth of your eke and wrap it up ready to be transported to the hive.

It is helpful to have the bowl of hand-hot water handy throughout the process to wash sticky fingers in as you go along.

At the hive, score one side of the cling film a couple of times with your hive tool, lift the crown board, add a shallow eke, move the bees away from the top bars and place the fondant scored face down, directly on the top bars over the cluster.

As an alternative to cling film you can squeeze the fondant into a used, but washed, take-away food container and simply invert it over the cluster.

Job Done.

Bernard Brown

MAKING AN IMPRESSION

If you want to impress, try dropping the phrase “temporal polyethism” into a conversation. This term describes that endearing characteristic of honey bees to perform different tasks as they age which many people find intriguing. But how do the bees go about these tasks, often in the inky blackness of a hive and what triggers this behaviour? Over the next few issues, we will be examining these tasks starting with **Heater Bees**.

Some bees are able to raise their body temperatures about 10oC higher than normal bees by using rapid muscle contractions. Each of these “heater bees” then presses its thorax against the top of a developing capped pupa, keeping it warm. Heater bees also use those isolated empty cells commonly found in brood nests. After warming their abdomens, some of the bees climb head-first into these cells where they remain for about 30 minutes, or until their bodies drop back down to a normal temperature. A heater bee tucked down in one of the empty cells is even more effective at distributing heat to the developing pupae.

Pupation temperature may determine roles. The most recent findings about heater bees reveal that they may actually be determining which pupae will perform which functions when they mature into adults. For example, pupae kept at 35°C turn into foragers that search out sources of nectar and pollen, while pupae kept at 34°C

become “housekeeper bees” that perform chores within the brood nest such as feeding and cleaning.

Using this technique, worker bees can assess the state of the hive, determine what types of bees are most needed, and then produce those types. This phenomenon seems less far-fetched when you realize that other species use temperature to influence developmental outcomes. Some fish, turtles, and crocodiles, for example, use temperature to influence the sex of their young. In these examples, as with bees, certain temperatures alter the course of development which yields different types of adults.

These findings about heater bees call into question some of our breeding practices. For a long time beekeepers have been selecting against queens who leave empty cells in the brood area, believing they are somehow inferior to queens who fill up every cell. Now we should reconsider. Perhaps the queens who leave empties are the superior stock, allowing plenty of opportunity for the heater bees to keep the brood warm and raise the kind of bees that are most needed by the colony.

So bees with their heads in the cells may not be starving after all.

Ivan A Perry

Based upon and with permission to publish this article from The Honey Bee Suite.

HINTS AND TIPS

- This month is a good time to have a go at making a Honey Cake. It may disappear so fast that you end up making several! Remember to hide the best one away for the Honey Show and who knows the Rose Bowl could be yours to clean for a whole year.



- If you have heard the familiar loud laughing call of the Green Woodpecker around your apiary then it is a good idea to consider how to protect your bees from them this winter. It can be done by covering the hive with a thick polythene sheet which the woodpecker cannot hold onto. However, this can lead to retention of damp in the wood, leading to rotting and the entrance is not protected. An alternative is to box the hive in with chicken wire but it is not very self-supporting and is prone to collapsing when being lifted on and off the hive. The best way, which was a tip from Julian Routh (sadly no longer with us but his guidance lives on) is to make a cage out of galvanised welded wire mesh. It is more expensive than the other alternatives but is self-supporting and will last several seasons.



Now it is your chance! If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to h.essex211@gmail.com

Helen Essex



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