



Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk

Things to do and see

Author Andy Willis - June 2010

The good weather returned the first week in June just to finish off the last of the spring flowers. Still my best hives have managed to fill two supers of spring honey – mostly holly and multi-floral spring flowers. It's very pale and mild in flavour. Once fully capped it will be extracted in the next few weeks.

Some of the new queens have been slow to start laying but the recent good weather will have meant matings will now be done and eggs and brood will soon be visible.

Those of you with bees in urban areas will now be seeing the start of the main summer honey flow, from garden shrubs and some trees. The lime trees have a huge amount of flower buds on them at the moment and white clover has started to flower in some lawns. We desperately need some rain soon if these are to yield any nectar this year. The Limes normally start to flower as Wimbledon starts its tennis tournament and warm humid thundery weather with sultry nights are ideal for its nectar production. The early blackberries are also starting to flower. Dry, sunny weather will favour these. Sweet chestnuts also have a huge number of flower buds on them this year, hot dry sunny weather also favours these with temperatures around 27°C ideal for optimum nectar production.

Heather permit application forms are now available from the HBA Treasurer who can be contacted on pearity@lemonia.org or (01264) 323 185. I recommend you get your forms returned as soon as possible as its first come first served. The best honey flows from the Heather is only possible if it rains while its growing before it starts to flower in August. So if the weather turns for the worse and we don't get a BBQ early summer then the heather should be good.

My masonry bee nest boxes are filling up the tubes nicely – the bees making excellent pollinators for my strawberries and earlier flowering fruit trees.



Apples and plums can be protected from the codling and plum moth maggots by using traps with pheromone lures. These are available from www.defenders.co.uk

www.defenders.co.uk or by phoning 01233 813121. I've found they work very well and are bee safe as no chemical insecticide sprays are



used, particularly important if hives are sited near to the fruit trees. I'm hoping that they will develop one for wax moth one day which we could then just hang in the apiary, wouldn't that be good!

The aphid population is expanding fast right now. I have watched bumble bees collecting the honeydew from the hazel trees in my front garden. It does make a sticky mess on the car, but dark or black honeydew honey tastes good and has won me prizes at shows. If the weather continues dry and the ladybirds don't have a population explosion then we may get a crop of this rare honey. I've managed to get a crop of black honeydew honey twice in the last ten years.

Queen problems are cropping up again the most typical being queens suddenly dying and emergency queen cells being produced. I have seen this happen in two recently housed swarms. One was an older 'red' marked queen and the other was in a cast swarm headed by a new virgin queen. In both cases most or all frames had been drawn, the queens had started to lay but only managed 1 to 3 frames of eggs before keeling over and vanishing. This will have a big effect on these colonies and they will struggle to get up to strength and into honey production.

Things to do

- Mark new queens as soon as they start to lay, this year's marking colour is blue.
- Make up nucs with spare sealed queen cells to increase the chances of having enough new mated queens.
- Continue to do shook swarms for varroa control and comb change/swarm control
- Continue to do weekly checks for swarming preparations and ensure the bees have enough room. Try not to lose a swarm now as you will probably get no more honey this year.
- Hives shook swarmed or artificially swarmed or actually swarmed in April/early May often want to do a second round of swarming now or early next month. Don't get complacent, assume nothing in beekeeping! Do weekly inspections in all brood boxes.
- Open up entrances to allow easy access in and out for all the bees in a honey flow
- Add more supers when the bees are covering two thirds of the super below
- Continue to remove/cull capped drone brood built under the shallow frame in the brood box for varroa control (usually needs to be done once every 14 days)
- Feed new swarms or divisions until all the new frames in the brood box are drawn. Use dilute syrup (1lb sugar in 1 pint water)
- Make up frames and fit foundation into supers so that you don't run short in the main honey flow



- Extract spring honey when capped or oilseed rape honey before it sets
- Be prepared to feed strong colonies if the weather turns bad if you do take off the spring honey
- Use a brood free period in a colony to trap varroa in a single frame of open brood taken from a disease free hive. Remove and destroy once capped.
- Use the monitoring tray to give a varroa count when housing a new swarm
- Do monthly checks on varroa numbers in all colonies – varroa numbers build up fast now drones are being produced (numbers can triple in 24 days)

Things to look out for

- Pollen coming in to a hive – brood being produced
- Pollen not coming in to a hive – hive may have swarmed / virgin not mated yet / has gone queen less
- Grey pollen in brood area – blackberry pollen
- Black pollen in brood area – field poppy pollen
- Bees coming in coated head to toe in yellow pollen towards the end of the month – sweet chestnut pollen
- Drones flying out all excitedly around midday (new queens are on mating flights)
- Scout bees ‘sniffing’ around empty stored boxes. There may be a swarm locally looking for a home – put out a bait hive fitted with foundation it may come to you
- Bad tempered bees! – The June gap makes most bees bad tempered for a few days. The worst offenders are best re-queened from an unrelated stock of better temperament.
- Disease – foul brood has been found again in the new forest area – if you suspect disease ask an experienced beekeeper to have a look or call the regional/seasonal bee inspectors. Our area inspectors are – Nigel Semmence tel: (01264) 338694 or Fraser Young (01590) 682977

Plants our bees could visit this month

Plant	Pollen Colour	Pollen	Nectar	Comments
Astrantia		v	vvv	Excellent herbaceous plant
Birds foot trefoil		v	vvv	Best after rain but requires sun
Blackberry	Grey	vvv	vvv	Best in dry, sunny weather
Buddleja globosa			vv	Evergreen shrub
Catmint		v	vvv	Favourite June plant in my Lincolnshire garden
Cistus (rock rose)		vvv		Worked by bees for pollen until midday when petals tend to fall
Cordylin (Torbay palm)		v	vvv	Avidly worked by our bees
Cornus (Dogwood)		vvv	vv	Wild and cultivated varieties
Cotoneaster		vv	vvv	Popular garden shrub, many different types extends flowering
Field Beans / Broadbeans	Grey	vvv	vvv	Lovely flavoured pale-medium amber coloured honey
Hebe		vv	vvv	Evergreen shrubby veronica much loved by our bees
Horse Chestnut - Indian	Brick Red	vvv	vvv	Good June gap tree
Lavender		v	vvv	Requires hot sunny, dry conditions
Lime			vvv	Requires moist soil, warm sultry nights / thundery weather.
Mallow		vvv	vv	Wild and cultivated forms much worked
Oil Seed Rape - Spring sown		vv	vvv	Possible Honey Crop - sets quickly. Pale amber, white when set.
Poppy - Field	Black	vvv		No nectar
Poppy - Opium		vvv		No nectar, pollen very attractive to bees
Privet		vv	vvv	Bitter tasting honey, can taint nicer honies
Pyracantha		vv	vvv	Good June Gap plant flowering after Hawthorne
Raspberries		vvv	vvv	High quality honey tasting of raspberries, good in all weather
Robinia pseudoacacia		v	vvv	Street tree in Southampton, short flowering period at start of month - gives 'Acacia honey'
Roses - Single□		vvv		Good source of pollen
Sage		vv	vvv	High nectar blue flowers of the garden herb loved by bees
Snowberries		v	vvv	Very attractive to our honey bees - long flowering period
Sweet Chestnut	Yellow	vvv	vvv	Best in high temperatures and sunny weather. End of month. Bees dusted yellow all over.
Thistles		vv	vv	Wild flower / weeds worked by many types of bees
Thyme		v	vvv	Herb much worked by our bees
Tulip Tree		vv	vv	Good June gap tree
White Clover		v	vvv	Possible honeycrop - Best after rain/heavy dew

Key
V: Okay
VV: Good
VVV: Very Good

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