LUNE VALLEY COMMUNITY BEEKEEPERS

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2019

New members

We welcome new members, Lyn Hiller and Lisa Tamlin.

National Meadows Day

National Meadows Day on Saturday, 6th July, was celebrated by Bowland AONB at Belle Sykes Meadows, near Slaidburn. In addition to guided walks through the acres of meadows, there were displays of a number of traditional rural crafts such as hay making, scything, spinning, clip mat making and beekeeping, together with the opportunity to taste and buy a range of gins flavoured by flowers grown in the Belle Sykes meadows. The observation hive, kindly provided by David Wareing, attracted a lot of attention as did the Lune Valley Long Hive and our alternative beekeeping approach. The day turned out to be warm and sunny and the event attracted a steady flow of visitors.

Open Day

Despite clashing with possibly the most exciting ever World Cricket Cup final, the Wimbledon tennis final and qualifying for the British Formula 1 Grand Prix, our Open Day attracted a steady stream of visitors! A surprising number told us that they had been interested in keeping bees for some time but had found the conventional approach too daunting to try.

Many of those attending were also interested in wildflower meadows and it was a delight to see our meadow looking so well.






Events like this take a considerable effort to stage and the Club would like to record its sincere thanks to all the members who turned out for the working parties on the Wednesday and Friday before the event, the Sunday after the event and, of course, on the day of the event itself.

Despite the heat, which threatened to melt many of the homemade cakes, refreshments sold well and we sold 70 jars of honey. Many thanks to all who made or donated cakes.

Bit of a Buzz, which sells hive products such as cosmetics, polishes and candles also had a good day and the *Bee Together* project stand manned by Christine Mercer, the Project Officer, attracted a steady flow of interested visitors.

We would also like to record our sincere thanks to the members of the Community Payback Team who strimmed all the grass, moved numerous chairs and tables and played a major role in erecting the marquee.

Club activities programme 2019-2020

8th Sept **Autumn Apiary Inspection** **Club Apiary** **10-00am to 2-00pm**
An opportunity for all members, especially new members, to experience an Autumn inspection and assess how well the bees are prepared for winter.

15th Sept **Meadow Mowing Day** **Club Apiary** **10-00am to 4-00pm**
Preparing the meadow for winter. We need to scythe or strim the meadow, take away the cuttings, dig out some larger weeds and sow a mixture of perennial and annual native wildflower seeds, designed to improve and enrich the current flora! Please come and help. We need to complete this in one day.

16th Oct **Speaker Meeting** **Scarthwaite Hotel, 7-30pm**
Topic: Bee Together Project **Speaker: Catherine Mercer**
Catherine is the Coordinator of the Bee Together project which aims to connect communities and landscapes to reverse the decline of wild pollinators, and in particular, wild bees. The project involves coordinating and delivering capital works and activity-based projects along the B-Line from Lancaster to Leeds, connecting communities to create pollinator super-highways.

Wed 13th Nov **Speaker Meeting** **Scarthwaite Hotel, 7-30pm**
Topic: Bees for Development **Speaker: Bob Spencer**
Bob is a Trustee of Bees for Development, an organisation that promotes sustainable beekeeping to combat poverty and to build sustainable, resilient livelihoods. It supports beekeepers to maintain environments that are good for bees, for biodiversity, and for people. Bees for Development works with local partners on community-based projects, and provides a wide-range of information services.

Sun 17th Nov **Managing woodland for pollinators** **Club Apiary** **10-00am to 4-00pm**
A one day practical course, run by Catherine Mercer of Bee Together, which will include coppicing and other practical skills.

Wed 11th Dec **Speaker Meeting** **Scarthwaite Hotel, 7-30pm**
Topic: The two frame nucleus **Speaker: Fred Ayres**
An introduction to this approach for those interested in increasing their colonies or wish to participate in a club project next season.

2020

Wed 8th Jan **Social Event – Wine and Cheese Evening** **Scarthwaite Hotel, 7-30pm**
Details to follow

Wed 12th Feb **Speaker Meeting** **Scarthwaite Hotel, 7-30pm**
Topic: The Woodland Trust **Speaker: Paul Littlewood**
Paul will explain the work of the Woodland Trust and provide advice on how we should manage the woodland at our Club apiary.

Wed 11th Mar **Speaker Meeting** **Scarthwaite Hotel, 7-30pm**
Topic: Thermoregulation in the hive **Speaker: Keith Bartlem**
Keith is an airline pilot, and experienced beekeeper. His talk will help to improve our understanding of how, why, and when bees monitor and alter the hive temperature and is particularly relevant in our usage of insulated hives.

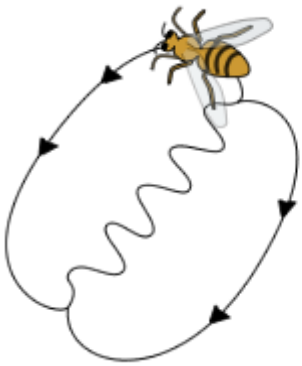
Other events of interest

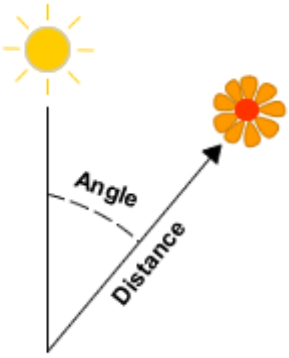
Learning from the bees

The second *Learning from the Bees* workshop and conference will take place in Berlin from 29th August to 1st September 2019. For details visit www.learningfromthebeesberlin.com

Decode the Honey bee Waggle Dance Workshop

Sunday 6th October 2019





Honey bees have sophisticated communication systems which they use to coordinate colony activities. The best known is the "waggle dance". Foragers who have located profitable flower patches make waggle dances back in the hive. These communicate the direction and distance of the flower patch to nestmate bees who follow the dance. In 1973 Karl von Frisch received a Nobel Prize for discovering the waggle dance. The waggle dance is one of the few scientific discoveries awarded a Nobel Prize that can be seen with the naked eye. The honey bee is the only animal that "tells you where it has been". This can be used in many ways by scientists. It can be used, for example, to investigate how flying insects measure distance. It can also be used to learn where honey bees are collecting food, and to study their foraging patterns and how they vary with time. The workshop is targeted at anyone interested in science, as well as people with particular interests in honey bees, plants, and conservation. It will be taught by Professor Francis Ratnieks, Dr. Karin Alton and other bee researchers from the Laboratory of Apiculture & Social Insects (LASI) at the University of Sussex. LASI is using dance decoding to understand honey bee foraging as part of the Sussex Plan for Honey Bee Health & Well Being.

For more information visit http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/newsandevents/events/decodedances

Slovenia’s hungry brown bears face being shot before they reach the villages

Growing up in the densely forested Slovenian countryside, bear sightings were a rare treat for Simon Marolt but this farmer, says he is now encountering them every day as they regularly raid his beehives or the electric fences protecting them.

“The bear is a beautiful animal, we love him, but this is out of control,” he says, “Now we are seeing them every day, we are wondering, when will they start to attack people?”

Slovenia’s brown bears, which risked extinction in the aftermath of World War Two, have made an extraordinary comeback thanks to recent efforts across Europe to reintroduce once common wild animals. The country's bear population has now risen to more than 1,000, while nearby Romania has 6,000. But the wildlife boon has brought with it a growing backlash, as night-time raids on beehives and livestock are becoming an almost nightly occurrence.

Last month, the Slovenian government announced it would cull 175 bears and 11 wolves, with hunting quotas dispersed among severely affected areas. The move has divided Slovenia, with conservationists warning the approach is heavy-handed and a potential breach of EU wildlife regulations. The government’s plan has shocked animal lovers in Slovenia, with a petition against the cull receiving nearly 13,000 signatures - a high turnout for a country of only two million people.

A beehive near Bloke in Slovenia which is protected with an electric fence to prevent bear raids
Credit: Uros Abram

Opponents of culling say the government needs to provide farmers with more non-lethal defences against bears and wolves, such as electric fences, with hunting reserved only for dangerous beasts. “You are supposed to shoot the problematic bear, not the average bear,” says Tomaž Ogrin, a spokesman for environment NGO Alpe Adria Green.

The bee is declared the most important living being on the planet

Its sting hurts a lot, but if they were to disappear, it would hurt much more!

The Earthwatch Institute concluded in the last debate of the Royal Geographical Society of London, that bees are the most important living being on the planet.
However, scientists have also made an announcement: Bees have already entered into extinction risk.

Bees around the world have disappeared up to 90% according to recent studies, the reasons are different depending on the region, but among the main reasons are massive deforestation, lack of safe places for nests, lack of flowers, use of uncontrolled pesticides, changes in soil, among others.

The Apiculture Entrepreneurship Centre of the Universidad Mayor (CeapiMayor) and the Apiculture Corporation of Chile (Cach) with the support of the Foundation for Agrarian Innovation (FIA), conducted a study where it was determined that **bees are the only living being that is not a carrier of any type of pathogen,** regardless of whether it is a fungus, a virus or a bacterium.

The agriculture of the world depends on 70% of these insects, to put it more clearly and directly, we could say that 70 of 100 foods are intervened in favour by bees. Also the pollination that the bees make allows the plants to reproduce, of which millions of animals feed, without them, the fauna would soon begin to disappear.

The honey produced by bees, not only serves as food, but also provides many benefits to our health and our skin.

The Federal Institute of Technology of Switzerland, proposes a theory that blames the waves produced thanks to mobile telephony. They explain that these waves emitted during calls are capable of disorienting bees, causing them to lose their sense of direction and therefore their life is put in danger.

The researcher and biologist Daniel Favre, along with other researchers, made 83 experiments that show that bees in the presence of these waves, produce a noise ten times higher than usual, behaviour that has been observed to make it known to other bees they are in danger and it is important to leave the hive.

Undoubtedly, the greatest reason for its disappearance is attributed to the constant fumigation of crops. During the last three years 34% of bees with agrotoxins have died of poisoning.

There are solutions, the problem is that it is very difficult to carry them out, because there are very entrenched practices in production and agriculture.

However, three solutions are proposed with the hope that they can be done in a short time:

1. Prohibit, not reduce, the use of toxic pesticides.
2. Promote completely natural agricultural alternatives.
3. Perform constant research and monitoring of the health, welfare and conservation of bees.

This is an example of the problem that is being experienced with bees and the urgency of creating changes in our management of resources, says Luciano Grisales, representative to the Chamber of Commerce of Colombia.

"It is of vital importance to establish the strategic nature of the protection and repopulation of bees and other pollinators, since not to do so in 10 years would not be counted on bees in Colombia. This would lead to a food catastrophe and a health crisis in the country" – said Luciano in a recent interview.

Small Hive Beetle

On 20th June 2019 an apiary in the municipality of Lentini, in the province of Syracuse, Italy, was found to be infested with the Small Hive Beetle (*Aethins tumida*). In 2014 the Small Hive Beetle was detected in an apiary in South Italy but no further reports have occurred in between.

The small hive beetle, which originates from sub-Saharan Africa, can cause significant damage to a beehive from destruction of combs to fermentation of honey and colony loss. It belongs systematically to the family of the Glanzkäfer. It appeared in the USA in 1996 and in Australia in 2002. Since then, this dangerous bee pest has been spread to many other countries and there have been occurrences in North, Central and South America, the Philippines and South Korea.

Bee myths and customs

In Bavaria and Bohemia it was customary to have a hive adorned with a red cloth at a wedding ceremony. The following verse would be recited just after the couple were married.

Bees in, bees out,
Here is the young bride,
Bees around, bees about,
Here is the young man.
Little bees, desert them not
When in time they have children.

Apiary Site Available

We have been offered another apiary site in the Lune Valley. I have not had time to inspect it yet, but if anyone might be interested, please get in touch.

Mite bombs or robber lures?

A new paper has recently been published by Dr David Peck and Professor Tom Seeley entitled "The roles of drifting and robbing in *Varroa destructor* transmission from collapsing honey bee colonies to their neighbours. This is the paper's abstract.

When honey bee colonies collapse from high infestations of Varroa mites, neighbouring colonies often experience surges in their mite populations. Collapsing colonies, often called "mite bombs", seem to pass their mites to neighbouring colonies. This can happen by mite-infested workers from the collapsing colonies drifting into the neighbouring colonies, or by mite-free workers from the neighbouring colonies robbing out the collapsing colonies, or both. To study inter-colony mite transmission, we positioned six nearly mite-free colonies of black-coloured bees around a cluster of three mite-laden colonies of yellow-coloured bees. We then monitored the movement of bees between the black-bee and yellow-bee colonies before, during, and after mite-induced collapse of the yellow-bee colonies. Throughout the experiment, we monitored each colony's mite level. We found that large numbers of mites spread to the black-bee colonies (in both nearby and distant hives) when the yellow-bee colonies collapsed from high mite infestations and became targets of robbing by the black-bee colonies. We conclude that "robber lures" is a better term than "mite bombs" for describing colonies that are succumbing to high mite loads and are exuding mites to neighbouring colonies.

Fred Ayres, Editor & Chairman
Tel: 01524 811978
Email: fred@lunevalleybeekeepers.co.uk