THE LEEDS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
BRANCH OF THE YBKA
AFFILIATED WITH THE BBKA

"The Leeds Beekeeper"

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Berries for Breakfast

Well when the temperature goes up the amount of nectar is supposed to decrease..... so by the amount of supers my ladies have got through in the last fortnight I can only presume they have been doing double shifts and not watching any of the football..... which is just as well as I have plenty of repeat orders for honey that need fulfilling.

The end of the month will see the bees relocate to their summer residence up on the moors and hopefully I can look forward to a good heather honey yield – assuming no moors fires! I would quite like a good downpour though as my lawn is looking decidedly baked.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

This is the month when all of the work carried out since last September should show its benefits. The main summer flow of nectar should have started in late June and if colonies are in good health and suitably strong with sufficient space they should bring in a bumper crop of honey and give a surplus to harvest

The hottest June on record and it looks like it's going to be the hottest July on record so are we getting bumper honey crops that is the question? I've never seen so many colonies with beards of bees outside like I have done this month the ground is hard it's bone-dry the grass is a lovely shade of brown and not green so are the plants producing nectar? I've noticed that the Himalayan balsam is now in flower I believe that's a lot earlier than normal but I also believe that there is not so much nectar due to the dryness of the ground, time will tell. The Colony should be at full strength with adult bees and many of these will be foragers from eggs laid in May, the brood area will be shrinking as the need for new bees has diminished and the

queens rate of lay reduced. The main focus of the colony is collecting the biggest honey crop possible.

Wasp colonies usually reach their peak towards the end of July. Nuclei should have their entrances reduced to a single bee-way. Keep your colonies strong and the entrance blocks in so that the entrances are easy to defend. It is important to be ahead of the game and restrict entrances before wasps discover hives as a source of food. Once they attack a nucleus or weak colony in numbers it is difficult to stop them. I find filling a wine bottle two or three inches full of a one-to-one sugar syrup left on top of the hive or near the entrance is a very good wasp catcher.

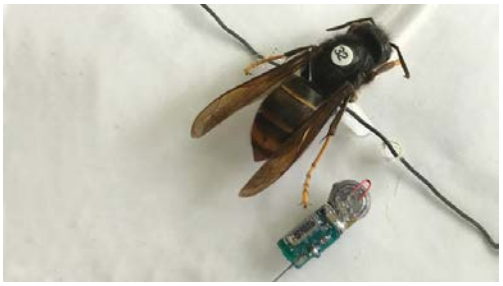
Good luck to those members who are going to the heather and hope you come back with your supers full of heather honey.

Till next time happy beekeeping

Duncan

HORNET DEAD AHEAD

Many column inches have been devoted to the Asian Hornet in recent months following its sighting on a cauliflower but up to now (touch wood) no further sightings on the mainland have taken place. This comes on the back of the initial nest discovered in Gloucestershire in 2016, followed by further sightings in Woolacombe, Devon, last year. However, this has given scientists time to investigate a new method for tracking hornets back to their nests to make destruction easier using hornets found on Jersey and France where they are more established.



"Hornet, 2 o'clock"

> *"The hornets could carry the tracking device which could be up to 80% of the insect's weight", Dr Kennedy, University of Exeter*

Hornets are known to fly straight from their nest to their intended prey; that could be a hive full of tasty honeybees, then return directly back to their own hive with their quarry. Currently in order to find the hornet nest location, triangulation through a series of compass bearings is used. Not easy or necessarily quick and thus scientists have come up with a faster high tech solution.

Much work has taken place in recent years as electronics have become miniaturised involving the attachment of radio tags to bumblebees. The relatively large size of hornet workers (2.5cm ,1") means they are also ideally suited to carrying similar radio tags. In order to attach the radio tags, the hornets were captured, partially froze and had the tags sewn to them with thread. The researchers could then use the tags to track the hornets up to 0.8miles (1.3 km) enabling nest locations to be determined much faster.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-44701632

ALMOST AS PLEASING AS A SWARM

This was a mid-June call out to a swarm. It turned out to be a delightful bumble bee nest safely occupying a bird box. The householders were desperate to be rid of them and were pleased at my suggestion that I sealed them in at dusk and relocated the bird box. It was a simple job unscrewing the box and re screwing it to the wooden arch in my garden. I'm delighted to report that they've continued to thrive - as you can see. It's lovely to watch their comings and goings, quite brings the garden to life.

I'd stopped collecting bumble bees as hitherto all my relocations had failed. Householders always had genuine reasons for wanting them removed. Allergies. Inquisitive dogs (or cats or children or grandchildren) etc. I'd agree to remove, having already made small wooden boxes to house removed nests. I relocated them under my garden hedge. But the bumbles always dwindled rapidly and died. So I gave up removals, trying really hard to persuade householders to "let nature take its course".

So perhaps this recent success will rekindle my enthusiasm, particularly for those living in bird boxes.

Dave Barrett

Bumblebees in their new location

MINI NUC CREATION

Groove Creation

Having listened to Gerry Collins informative talk on mini nucs last year (and being a tight Yorkshire man) I decided that rather than forking out for some polystyrene mini nucs I would construct my own out of a modified brood box, with the idea that if it didn't work I should be able to salvage the brood box to use again. The advantage of mini nucs is they require relatively few bees in order to raise a mated queen, the disadvantage is they are relatively high maintenance.

One of my older brood boxes was selected and two grooves were routed into the sides ready to take plywood dividers to create the four compartments. Some plywood offcuts were fashioned into dividers with plastic rails for the frames to sit on added to each side. There were a few small gaps which needed a small wooden plug to be added to ensure each compartment was isolated from the others and thus functions as

Four little houses ready for new residents

A mini frame for a mini nuc

an individual mini nuc.

Next was the tricky, time consuming task of making twenty mini frames to go in each of the mini nucs. DN4 self-spacing brood frames were used, the top bar of each was cut in half before an end recess was cut into the bar to take a side bar. The bottom bars were then cut to length to create the custom frame. A small starter strip of wax was added to the top of each frame. Using some joining clips allow two of the mini frames to be coupled together and placed into a strong colony to draw out the wax. (I have one colony in particular which seem to like nothing more than drawing wax and thus do all my cut comb frames).

A custom base was then created from some scrap wood with a sheet of steel mesh stapled to the bottom and a pair of cross members added to form the four compartments. An entrance was then added on each side so that each mini nuc was self-contained. Once more the router made an appearance to create the angled entrances such that once the screwed entrance block was added each mini nuc can be closed individually as required. Then it was a case of taking a good scoop of bees and one of my freshly created queens (see June's issue for that) and job done!

Er yes Mrs Bee your in flat four, first entrance on the left.

So I guess the proof of the pudding is in the eating – does it work? Well yes, my queens are getting mated successfully (about 75% success – such that the “no more than 2 hives in the garden rule is now a thing of the past, to be replaced with the “No dear, it is only a nuc they only count as half a colony” rule) but careful siting is required as with an entrance on each side there is a tendency for bees to dart across the garden before flying up above hedge height..... The main disadvantage I can see is the small frames and having seen some other LBKA members setups using Queen castles where standard sized frames can be used – perhaps a different direction will be undertaken next year. If that is the case then I will reclaim my brood box and modify the floor back to a single entrance, but as they say nothing ventured, nothing gained.....

A BEGINNERS COURSE IN MEADS AND MELOMEL MAKING

Back by popular demand, a one day taster course on the making of honey meads / wine both dry and sweet, plus how to make Honey fruit melomels / meads / wines. The course will be held at the YBKA headquarters Pavilion on the Harrogate show ground on Saturday 22nd of September. Start time is 10-00 am. The course will cost £30, to include a starter kit. Your tutors for the day will be senior honey judges Dave Shannon and Tony Jefferson. Course organised by Elaine Robinson; the YBKA's new education officer.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided throughout the day, however persons attending should bring along a packed lunch if req. We will break for lunch around 12-30 and resume at 1-00 pm. Course to terminate around 3-/3-30. All attendees will receive a free starter mead/ melomel pack in with the course price to enable them to start and make their first gallon of brew on their return home. Everything req. will be in the starter kit.

A selection of two or three meads and melomels will be on hand for attendees to sample in the afternoon after the talks. We look forward to hosting another successful course for our member. Unfortunately, we can only accommodate 24 persons on the course. It will be on a first come first served basis so don't delay in booking if you're interested as it will, I'm sure soon get filled.

Please make checks payable to Y.B.K.A and send to - The Treasurer, Wharfe Bank House, Ings Rd. Ullerskelf, N. Yorks, LS 24 9SS. Or Click on the link on the Y.B.K.A web site advertising the event and make payment there if available.

See you all later on the day.

Dave Shannon

PUTTING YOUR BEES TO BED FOR THE WINTER?

Alternative bee storage © Brandon Hopkins

Are you beginning to make Winter preparations already? Well one commercial beekeeper in America has a unique winter routine for his bees, involving cold storage and a side order of carbon dioxide..... Research many years ago by Canadian scientists uncovered the fact that during Winter as the bees are in a tight cluster the CO_2 levels around the cluster naturally increase due to respiration with apparently no significant effect on the health of the bees.

One year after significant losses the beekeeper couldn't afford to take his bees to his usual holding yard in California and thus he asked a friend if he could keep them in his old apple storage sheds. These sheds had a controlled atmosphere to ensure the apples wouldn't spoil and the beekeeper decided to take advantage of this. The bee hives were placed into the dark storerooms, sensors were used to monitor the CO_2 levels to ensure they didn't rise above 5% - if levels did rise the doors were opened at night and fans used to circulate the air. Through this method the bees were kept in near perpetual darkeness in their cluster safe and rested. However, an unexpected secondary bonus occurred; in this rested state the queen stopped laying eggs depriving the varroa population of the brood they need. Additionally, the rise in CO_2 levels within the colony has a much greater effect on varroa mites within the colony as they have a much greater surface area to volume ratio leading to them experiencing a greater effect. It is believed that the higher carbon dioxide levels cause the mites to leave their breathing tubes open leading to loss of water through the tubules and thus it is also desirable to control humidity. The larger bees are less affected by this and also have access to honey within the hive to help replenish moisture.

MASTERCLASSES

A reminder that we still have two masterclasses remaining this summer:

- 1st August – Beeswax Processing Made Easy – Link to booking page
- 15th August - Preparing your Bees for the Winter - Link to booking page

If you wish to attend either of these, please book using WebCollect, if you have any ideas for Masterclass topics, please contact the education secretary (education@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk)

HONEY REQUEST

We have had a request for honey from LS16/LS18, if anyone can assist please contact the newsletter (newsletter@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk)

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

There are many ways to skin a cat so the old saying goes and similarly there are many ways to control varroa in bee hives. Be that by chemical treatments (oxalic acid, etc), a bee gym, icing sugar, drone sacrifice, breeding for cleanliness, queen isolation and so on. Each approach has positives and negatives and it is up to the beekeeper to weigh up these when deciding on a varroa control method – what is clear is some form of control is better than none. But what happens when you use multiple approaches in tandem? Is it curtains for the mites? Or have they got nine lives?

Italian researchers investigated the effect of using a commercially available varroa treatment (Apiguard®) or the biotechnical approach of caging the queen, compared to doing nothing or using both methods in tandem. Apiguard is a thymol based veterinary product supplied in trays, placed gel side up on top of the brood frames. The thymol is then slowly released from the gel over time. For queen caging, the queens were placed in VAR-CONTROL® cages, which are plastic cages allowing the queen to be confined thus ceasing egg laying but whilst still allowing worker bees to attend to her.

46 hives were monitored during the study, 10 colonies were treated with apiguard, 12 colonies had VAR- CONTROL® cages fitted, 15 hives had both apiguard and VAR- CONTROL® cages and 9 were left untreated for comparison.

Acaricide effieicny was calculated as 76.1% for the apiguard group, 40.6% for the queen caging group, 96.8% for the Apiguard and caging group and 5.2% for the control group. Thus the researchers were able to show that using two treatments in tandem led to a much greater reduction in mite survival. However, these figures are tempered slightly if the cumulative number of adult bees is also considered. The average colony strength was 86.4% of the pre-treatment value in the Apiguard group, 61.1% in the queen caging group, 51.3% in the Apiguard and queen caging group and 79.9% in the control group. This shows that there is a balance between mite destruction and bee survival and the choices beekeepers make effects this balance.

Varroa – how do you treat yours?

It should be noted that when using both Apiguard (or similar) and a queen cage, care should be taken to ensure the queen cage is towards the bottom of the frame to avoid over exposing the queen to the vapours.

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13592-015-0408-4

HOW SMALL CAN THEY GO?!

Teeny tiny hive

I keep my bees on simple stands, just two pairs of breeze blocks stacked up with wooden stretchers in between. I'd never have seen this tiny colony if I hadn't dropped my hive tool. It had taken occupancy of one of the squares in one of the breeze blocks. The hardest part of it's recovery was getting another pair of blocks in place so I could remove the one containing the bees.

It was "small but perfectly formed" and had a teacup sized amount of bees in attendance. There had been brood but there was now no sign of a laying queen. The bees were simply shaken off the comb and would find their way into the colony above. Much of beekeeping is like a detective story don't you think? Just how has this strange behaviour come about? Well I'm "half stumped". I routinely clip my queens. I reckon that I've missed swarming preparations in a colony and the resident queen has left the hive and fallen to the floor. From there she has walked over rough ground with a small retinue of loyal attendants. They've found shelter and taken residence in the breeze block. I was so sure that this would be the case, and that I'd find a yellow marked (last years) queen that I took a queen introduction cage to catch her in. I was going to use her to replace a queen in a colony that was a tad "frisky"! So far so good. But then my detective skills failed me as I can't explain why there was no longer a laying queen heading this micro nuc.

One mini hive

You can never say that beekeeping isn't interesting can you?

Dave Barrett

"A worker bee's work is never done"

BEE IN THE CITY

Last month's edition highlighted the Bee in the City event taking place in Manchester over the Summer. Well should you be unfortunate enough to find yourself on the wrong side of the Pennines then a map with the locations of all the Bees are now available and there are plenty to see!

Click here for map.

Ask The Beekeeper

Have you got a burning beekeeping question that you want an answer to? Then please send it to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk and we will do our best to find you an answer!

12OZ HEXAGONAL JARS

Hopefully your bees have been busy and you now have lots of honey and not enough jars to put it in.... fear not LBKA have the answer! 12oz (340 g) hexagonal jars with lids are available in the shop at a bargain price of 23p each, they come loose so you can buy as many as you require. Please bring a cardboard box to carry them home in. If you require a large quantity, please email Duncan thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk or ring him on 07855 308143

Got an article for the next edition? Please email to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk by 31st July

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July

Saturday 7th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Tuesday 10th – Thursday 12th – Great Yorkshire Show

Wednesday 18th – Masterclass – Going to the Heather

August

Wednesday 1st – Masterclass – Beeswax Processing Made Easy

Saturday 4th – Going to the Heather trip

Saturday 11th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 11th – Taster Sessions

Wednesday 15th – Masterclass – Preparing Your Bees for the Winter