



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2011

BOB's BIT

There was once a film called The Vikings, described by one critic as “about rape and rowing”. Though I go to Henley each year, my interest in rowing is now secondary to a jolly day out. But the humble *brassica napus*, or rape, attracts my eye at this time of year. It is an unassuming plant just now, but in a very short time it will be a sea of brilliant yellow, crying out to be pollinated. It relies on insects for this, including our dear honeybees. If farmers neglect to plant rape on your doorstep, perhaps this is the year to try migratory beekeeping. For this you need a few simple pieces of equipment. A strip of foam plastic for the entrance and straps to lash everything together. If the journey is more than an hour or so, a screen crownboard is needed to give ventilation. One last item is a stout assistant to help carry the hive (stout only in the muscular sense, rotundity is a drawback).

The prolonged cold weather is not doing much for brood-raising, but something is going on in my garden stocks. Cast-off cappings on the floor insert are not coming only from the middle of the colony, but towards the sides, as the bees are opening up more stores. Then there is pollen from the catkins and crocuses, so on the face of it they have come through ok. I must resist the impulse to go looking for brood; what would I do if there were none?

I have just assembled a National super from a flat-pack, and wondered why it takes six pieces of wood to make a box. True, you get nice handles.... incidentally, it would be very easy to assemble it properly, with top bee-space.

As well as thinking about equipment, the most important task is to heft your hives weekly. Have some thin syrup made up ready in case of need, and try to feed a bit. If the bees don't want it they will ignore it.

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday March 8th
7.30 pm at Itchen Abbas Village Hall

Andy Willis on, 'Trials and Tribulations'
Stories and events that have kept up his interest in beekeeping.

Andy is a highly experienced beekeeper, an excellent speaker and the outstanding winner of most of the prizes at the Hampshire Beekeepers Association Annual Honey Show.

MEETING Tuesday 8th February

Another 'full house' of 30+ members heard Nigel Semmence (RBI) speak about, among other things, 'Solitary Bees'.

There are more than 25,000 species of bees world-wide compared with 8,600 species of birds and 5,500 of reptiles.

There are 251 species of bee in the UK of which 35 are under threat, mainly due to habitat loss. 230 of these species are classified as Solitary bees and the remainder as Social bees. The solitary bees include Leafcutter bees and Red Mason bees. The Social bees comprise the several species of Bumble bee and honey bees (*Apis Melifera*).

Solitary bees live alone in small holes, such as in 'Bee Hotels' made of cardboard or bamboo tubes, in sunny locations. In the US and Canada the Leafcutter bees are used for pollinating the Alfalfa crops. The Blue Orchard Bee, which is a cousin of the Red Mason Bee, is comparable with the Honey Bee for pollination, but it is not as convenient to manage (e.g.

wintering, travelling and disease/parasite management).

Nigel described the scope of bee farming for pollinating the Almond crops in California, where in then Central valley alone there are 1.3 million hives. The orchards are typically a mile square.



Nigel explains how Mason bees use the tubes in which they nest.

Nigel ended his talk with a brief update on our region (Southern). From April he will be joined by seven Seasonal Bee Inspectors (SBIs), including Frazer Young. There are over 3000 Southern region beekeepers with a total of approximately 16,000 colonies as registered on BeeBase. Our region is particularly susceptible to European Foul Brood (EFB) compared with other regions, so we must be very alert to any possible signs of the disease.

This was an absorbing and highly informative talk. Very many thanks Nigel.

BEEKEEPING FOR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS. Saturday 19th March

F.Y.I. The Association is again running this one day course for non-members/would-be beekeepers.

BBKA BASIC ASSESSMENT REMINDER

Amanda is collecting names of members thinking of doing the **Basic Assessment** this year. The BBKA is keen that all beekeepers take the Basic Assessment – you need to have kept bees for at least a year but there is no upper limit on the number of years you've been at it! John Hanks, the Assessor, is already getting booked up, so please contact Amanda soon to book your place:- atrigg@waitrose.com or at the next meeting.

FOR YOUR DIARY

The first Apiary meeting of 2011 will be at the Associations Three Maids Hill apiary at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday 16th April. It will be followed by a demonstration of some of the Association's equipment at Bob Geary's house in Dean Lane

'SCIENCE IN THE GARDEN' at INTECH

During the two weeks of school holiday before Easter, Intech is featuring 'Science in the Garden'. The Association will be supporting this event during the weekend of 16th/17th April.

We need a few more volunteers to help. You don't need to be a hugely experienced beekeeper. The audience comprises mostly families, from babies to grandparents and all ages in between. If you can spare two or three hours to help over that weekend, please contact Russell at: russell.fairchild@virgin.net

SMOKER FUEL

Wood chippings (from chain saws), long pieces of thin wood. Ideal smoker fuel, it goes on for ever and is easy to light. If you would like some for a small donation, contact Ray Gorman at: ray.gorman1@btopenworld.com or by telephone: after 17.00hrs 880525, or any time on 07802394580.

MERIDIAN OPEN LECTURE Monday 11th April 2011 at 7.30pm in the Roman Catholic Church Hall, off Victoria Road, Bishops Waltham, SO32 1DN

Professor Keith Dellaplane will be talking on:
'The honeybee as a super organism'

The lecture will be followed by a finger buffet with a glass of wine. Tickets for non Meridian members are £5.00p. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. Please let the Secretary know if you are coming: Mrs Nina Jetten on 02380 767956 or email: nina.jetten@btinternet.com.

From the second roundabout in Bishops Waltham bear left, if coming from the South, into Victoria Road. At the top of the hill turn left into Martins Street and the Hall is on the right after about 70 yards. If from Winchester, go around the first roundabout and take the 4th exit - Victoria Road, then as above.