

Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association

Newsletter for March 2009



Well, so far so good! Most of the beekeepers I have spoken to recently tell me that the majority of their hives have come through the cold weather successfully and the bees are now flying out and collecting pollen.

A few hives were lost in the early winter and some colonies appear to have gone queenless, nevertheless so far the losses do not seem to be as bad as last year.

It is too early to crack open the champagne however. March is a difficult month for bees because the brood is increasing, the winter bees are getting old and there is still not much nectar around. The weather can easily close in again. Keep a sharp eye on their food stores and be prepared to feed sugar syrup if you think they are getting short.

Last year we started an annual survey of winter losses and 30 of our beekeepers responded. Next month I shall start collecting 2008/2009 figures.

Our Next Meeting

The next meeting in our winter programme will be

"A Beekeeper's Introduction to Bumblebees"

by
Clive Hill
on

Wednesday 18th March
7:30 pm in the Bowls Club

Bumble bees are very important pollination partners of honey bees and, like honey bees, are under considerable pressure.



Clive is the vice-chairman of the High Wycombe Beekeepers Association but has also many years experience in studying bumble bees. He is uniquely qualified to give us a talk on bumble bees from the beekeeper's perspective.



Clive will also introduce the work of the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust. He will bring along plenty of exhibits describing the work of the Trust and there will be an opportunity for you to join in their work if you wish.

I am sure this meeting will be of great interest to beekeepers and non-beekeepers alike. If you have any friends or family who are interested in bumble bees, bring them along.

April Meeting

On **Wednesday 15th April** we will be holding a **"Beekeepers' Question Time"** when a panel of experts will answer questions on all aspects of beekeeping, honey production and other hive products.

Modelled on the popular BBC radio "Gardeners' question time" format, questions will be submitted in advance and I shall act as chairman, calling on people through the course of the evening to put their questions.

To make this work well, we need to have a broad range of topics available with questions at all levels from beginner to experienced beekeeper.

At the end of this newsletter there is a form for submitting questions, also there will be forms and a box for questions at our meeting on March 18th.

Alternatively you can email questions to me at chairman@mbbka.org.uk.

Other dates for your diary

Friday-Sunday 17th-19th April

BBKA Spring Convention,
Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

Sunday 26th April

Apiary Working Day (details overpage)

Wednesday 20th May

Apiary evening session starting at 7:00 pm

More overpage

Training Courses

Beginners Course

This year's Beginners Course got off to a flying start on 2nd. March. There has been so much media interest in the problems of honey bees recently that the course was oversubscribed.

Basic Assessment

Currently three people have expressed an interest in taking the Basic Assessment this year so we shall almost certainly be running a course.

The Basic Assessment provides an excellent opportunity to brush up on your beekeeping skills and we greatly encourage all members who have been keeping bees for more than one year to come along and take part.

The assessment consists of a short oral examination and a practical test where you need to show that you are confident opening up a hive and are able to identify the normal things you would expect to find there. You will also need to demonstrate that you have a basic knowledge of the major disease problems

The course will consist of four evening meetings where we go through the theory syllabus and a couple of practical sessions will be organised in our apiary.

There will be no charge for the course; if you are interested please email or phone me.

Beekeeping Husbandry

During the summer, Beulah Cullen will be running a practical course in our Association Apiary to the level of the BBKA General Husbandry Certificate.

Because of the advanced level of the course, people attending should already have passed the Basic Assessment.

It is being run on behalf of the Bucks County BKA as a whole so people will be attending from North Bucks, Mid Bucks, High Wycombe and Chalfonts. Numbers are limited to 3 people from each association. Last week I sent round an email to all our beekeepers inviting them to apply.

I am very pleased to say that the places available to Mid Bucks have been taken up. It will provide an excellent opportunity for some of our members to gain advanced husbandry skills which will greatly benefit our teaching of new beekeepers and Basic Assessment level.

Frank Rickett

Tel: 01494 866516

Email: chairman@mbbka.org.uk

Association Apiary

Last year month I asked for volunteers to help look after the Association Apiary for one month during the summer. I am delighted to say that we have had a very good response and we now have been able to cover all the months from May to August.

May - Ruth Malleson
June - Gill Peacock
July - John and Kath Grant
August - Martin Holman.

Simon Arnold-Round remains in overall charge so any questions concerning the apiary should be addressed to him.

More volunteers are needed for mowing the grass during the summer and there will be list out at the next meeting on March 18th. If you would like to help but cannot come to the next meeting, please email Simon at apiary@mbbka.org.uk

Apiary Working Day - Sunday 26th April

Every year we get together at the start of the season to prepare the apiary for the summer. There is always lots to do and we have a barbecue lunch to refresh the workers!

Keep a note of the date in your diary. I will list the jobs that need to be done in the next newsletter.

Apiary Open Day

Because we had so many enquiries about our Beginners Course this year, we have decided to organise an Open Day at the apiary during the summer.

We will invite anyone who is interested to come along. They will be given a brief presentation about bees and beekeeping and have the opportunity to look inside the hives (weather permitting).

As soon as we have fixed a date I will let you know so that you can help to publicise it as widely as possible.

Wish us luck!

A group of 7 of us will be taking BBKA module examinations on 21st March. These exams are pretty tough and we have been studying furiously since the New Year. I think we must be mad!



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Beekeeper's Question Time

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Starting at 7:30 pm



Name: _____

I would like to ask the following question:

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