

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

EDITORIAL

What are the bees telling us?

Seems to me that whatever you do, the process has an increasing tendency to be described as 'a journey'. I think this is another escapee from management-speak.

Life? Well, it's a journey. The customer experience through the supermarket? That's a journey too. Even buying a railway ticket. But enough of the examples.

The point I'm aiming for is that beekeeping is a journey too, and I'm still at the bus stop, having been a beekeeper for under five years. So it may be naïve of me to say this but I've been captivated by the science behind beekeeping.

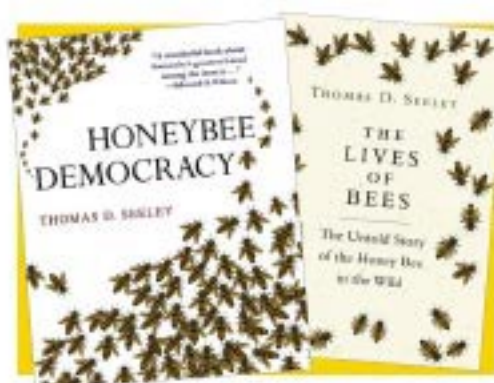
In particular, reading a couple of books by Tom Seeley, a prof from Cornell University, whose lucid prose describing the multitude of experiments that he's conducted on bees to discover how they tick (and buzz!) will—I hope, once winter is done—make me a better beekeeper.

Honeybee Democracy describes how bees make decisions: specifically, how they select a new nest once they've swarmed. As a beekeeper, this isn't of much value on the face of it, given that we try to dissuade them from swarming in the first place. He does, though, map his findings onto human behaviour, particularly decision-making, which makes for interesting reading.

So while the process of the bees' decision-making is undeniably fascinating, the outcome of those decisions has more value from the beekeeper's point of view. And this where his researches and experiments dovetail with his book on feral bees: *The Lives of Bees: The Untold Story of the Honey Bee in the Wild*.

In it, he describes what bees are looking for when they select a home.

Spoiler alert: the ideal home needs a small entrance hole, preferably about five metres up, and a capacity of around 40 litres. If it's leaky or damp they're not so



Thomas Seeley describes his experiments to discover the bees' criteria for selecting a home, and deep detail on how they make those decisions. Great Christmas presents....?

fussed, as they can fix that with propolis and by dumping any damp material out the front door.

There's a host of other data in those books too—information which can surely inform any beekeeper's practices.

Let me hear from you

As the newly appointed Newsletter Editor (I shall formally stand for election at the AGM), I hope to make the newsletter easy to read, more picture-full and drawn from a wide range of sources. I plan also to highlight more info from around the web.

That list of sources includes you: if you've seen anything—for instance, a website, a video, a research paper, a news story—you think is worth sharing, if you have something to say or a photo to share, please let me hear about it.

In the meantime, enjoy this issue—and please check out the Photography Competition on page 10.

Manek Dubash

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020

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NEXT MONTH

- Winter hints and tips
- What have the Romans ever done for us?
- Your contributions
- Photo Competition results
- Apiary reports
- From the committee
- Asian Hornet Team

MEETINGS

- Winter meetings are back!
- AGM is coming up soon
- See back page for details

ONLINE

brightonandlewesbeekeepers.co.uk



QR link to our website



Protective hive mesh. Photo: David Evans
<https://www.theapiarist.org/>

Hive protection

Now is the time to look at protecting those colonies from mice, woodpeckers, wind and hunger.

Green woodpeckers love a ready larder of food and a hive can be just that. Check there are no pecked indents on the thinnest part of the brood box. Any evidence, act fast!

A frame of chicken wire with 19mm holes will allow bees to fly but keep them safe. It's important that the mesh is loose and kept away from the sides of the hive so the woodpecker can't reach it—it's also vital to keep the mesh off the ground or it acts as a climbing frame for mice and others wanting to get into the hive.

Mouse guards and stands

Mouse guards on, or entrance reduced. Mice can't get through a narrow gap of less than 8-9mm. But if they get in they can do great damage to comb, and bees will be disturbed. Check entrances clear of any dead bees.

Are your stands good, not wobbly or beginning to rot? Winter gales can shift the weight and the hive can topple.



Mouse guard on a National hive

Strapping the hive ensures it stays together.

I wish I had done this early in my beekeeping time, when some 'oiks' kicked my hives over. Fortunately a caring person phoned me at 5am, and a quick rescue saved them.

Feeding

Heft the hive again. It should be nearly too heavy to lift with one hand. Is it too light for safety? Now you can put a pack of fondant on over the cover board hole, ensuring those bees are directly below.

If you're using a portion of a block of fondant, clingfilm over the exposed sides to ensure it doesn't dry and harden. If it does harden, judicious can of water to re-moisten it.

I admit I put fondant on every hive, even when heavy, just to be sure—it's cheaper than losing a colony! Check in a few weeks, they may need second helpings.

Varroa

Insert an inspection board under open mesh floor. Please note this is an inspection board—not a permanent fixture.

So it's time to check the varroa drop again. I draw squares on the boards to help evaluate varroa drop quickly. At this time of year, it's far too late for anything except fumigation now. There should be little or no brood, so there's nowhere for the varroa to hide, and they're vulnerable.

Oxalic acid (a natural product of the rhubarb leaf) can kill varroa, yet leave the bees unharmed. I began to use a GasVap last year with excellent results.

I understand that some beekeepers prefer not to treat their bees with any product, and while I don't agree, I respect their view.



Phoretic varroa on *Apis mellifera*



Green woodpecker—a winter menace.
Photo: Elizabeth Dack

Note however that British bees have not yet evolved to resist this imported mite.

Insulation

Bees can cope with cold but not damp. However I do put a layer of insulation on top of the cover board (ensuring all holes are covered), to trap the heat that the bees generate. This means you need to install an eke or an empty super to allow the roof to sit tightly on the hive.

We have not seen snow for ages, but should it happen, leave the snow on the hive entrance. If you remove it and the sun shines, bees think: 'bright, sunny day—lets go'. They hit the cold air and die! You can also pin a shade of cardboard or wood over the top of the entrance to eliminate sun glare, which helps to reduce this problem.

Need help?

Don't forget, advice is always readily given from the B&L Committee (see back page for contact details).

No question too silly, peace of mind is always better. If in doubt, ask!

The Veiled Beekeeper



Snowy hives from Northumbrian Bees blog



Norman Dickinson
Acting chairman

From the Chair

Things are moving apace now on the Brighton & Lewes Committee following the upheaval we experienced at the end of August.

The loss of the Chairman, Treasurer and Membership Secretary in any organisation can often be fatal to that organisation but, fortunately, we were able to quickly re-group and make some initial changes in order to stabilise the ship, and stable we now are.

Committee re-shuffle

I would like to welcome onto the Committee Graham Bubloz, B&L Facebook Group Administrator, and Ian White, Manager of our Piddinghoe apiary.

I have agreed to take on the roles of Membership Secretary (acting) and B&L Chair (acting) but I would like to relinquish the role of B&L Chair at the AGM in 2022.

Of course all these roles will need to be ratified at the AGM, to be held in February 2021, so the next task for your Committee will be to decide how the AGM will be conducted and how voting will be carried out, considering that under current Covid-19 restrictions, mass gatherings are not permitted.

Two positions not mentioned which still need to be filled are Treasurer, and President. The latter is a non-elected position so your Committee decides who that person is to be, but if you know or are someone willing and able to be Treasurer, please let us know.

The only thing that remains for me to do is to wish all of our members a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, different though it may be from previous years (and don't forget to renew your membership for 2021).



Hilary Osman
Secretary

Your Committee at work

At our latest meeting on 10 November 2020, we welcomed two new members onto the committee:

- Ian White, Piddinghoe Apiary Manager
- Graham Bubloz, Facebook Administrator

The other good news is that we have some online lectures arranged, as well as a Christmas Quiz—see back pages for details. The annual photographic competition is also live (see page 10).

All the apiary managers have recently completed an inventory of equipment. It looks like some needs to be moved around, so that everyone has what they require. Perhaps if you have any spare equipment

which is no longer of any use, and is sound, you might like to donate it to the Division. Just let me know please.

We have, as usual, had lots of enquiries about starting beekeeping. So last month I asked if anyone would be prepared to mentor a new beekeeper. We don't yet know if we can hold courses next year and it might have to be via Zoom for the theory. But the practical side will be difficult, hence I ask again, could you help out and be a mentor for a new beekeeper in 2021? Please let me know.

Many thanks. Contact details are on the back page.

New Committee Members



Graham Bubloz,
Facebook Administrator



Ian White,
Piddinghoe Apiary Manager



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet Team
Co-ordinator

Asian hornet latest

Welcome to winter: when it comes to the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*), no news is good news. So there's not much to report this month.

Not on the UK mainland, anyway. On Jersey, however, the invaders remained active until late October.

So props to the Jersey Asian Hornet Action Co-ordinator, John de Carteret, who shared the stunning photo (right) on the Jersey Asian Hornet group's Facebook page (photographer as yet unknown). Identification is clear: orange face, yellow legs, orange band on the lower abdomen.

There's also detail on the Facebook page on the many

nests that have been destroyed, and plenty of splendid images. It's well worth a look.

Germany suffers from the invasion too. The hornet was recently found in Hamburg, much further north than was believed to be possible due to the

insect's origins in warmer climes. However, DNA testing, published in a research paper [here](#) shows that it was transported there by humans and, in the words of the paper "shows further its high invasion potential". Here in the UK, we may have our work cut out next year.



From our apiaries: Barcombe, Grassroots, Hove & Piddinghoe



Barcombe

Ownership of Barcombe Apiary, consisting of seven National, one WBC and one Top Bar hive, transferred from Heather to Tony and Toni Birkbeck in August this year.

With the honey crop all but done the main focus has been autumn feeding and varroa treatment, the latter by completing a cycle of three vapes, each one week apart with the brilliant GasVap tool. Varroa count has been low across all the hives.

With Heather now managing Grassroots, we decided to transfer the WBC and Top Bar hives from Barcombe to allow future new beekeepers at

Grassroots to see the different hive types at that site. This means Barcombe now goes into winter with seven colonies altogether.

All colonies are already taking fondant and I'm planning a further GasVap of oxalic acid when we get a period of cold weather and the bees are taking a brood break.

The priority for next spring will be a bit of re-queening as they're not the most gentle of bees. I'll be using queens from a couple of my own lovely colonies!

The shed and hive stands at Barcombe have become very rickety and will be replaced throughout the winter. New hive stands will be made from concrete blocks and three-inch fence posts.

Hopefully we'll be able to install a new metal shed which will be more effective at keeping the wasps out.

Tony Birkbeck
Apiary manager



Grassroots

On taking back Grassroots, which I initiated many years ago, I found four colonies. These are all on National supers, one being too high for sensible management. But I will winter them through as such, and in the Spring reduce them to a good educational scenario: brood box and queen excluder *in situ*.

They are not nice bees, aggressive and following, behaviour I will not accept. If they are the same in the spring I will re-queen all, but not from

(Continued on page 5)

From our apiaries (cont.)

queens raised in the area as I don't want those drones impregnating future queens.

I strimmed the area and, with Norman's help, tidied the blackthorn hedge surrounding the apiary. I will require new stands as some hives are on old wooden supports.

I also (with Tony's help and a few giggles!) transferred the top bar and the WBC colonies from Barcombe (much to his relief).

So, there are six colonies *in situ*. This gives the Educational Apiary a range of methods of beekeeping, which I feel is important for the newer beekeeper.

All the colonies now have mouse guards on and fondant installed under insulation over the cover board. All roofs are now strapped down.

I removed all the surplus Commercial hive equipment from the shed, and hopefully it can be sold.

Heather McNiven
Apiary manager

Hove

Since the last report in July I have been visiting the apiary weekly, mostly with Graham Bubloz. He has been a great help, challenging my decisions on occasion and offering assistance with general inspection and apiary management.

There are now five hives. They have been fed syrup and been treated mid-August with Apiguard. There were small amounts of honey on many frames due to brood breaks and splits. We started the summer with four hives, one was removed because of its defensive behaviour, the three remaining colonies swarmed or were split, there was one hive which stayed

in honey production until extraction during July and August.

Each of the hives has a 2020 queen. Four of the colonies have been superseded with the honey that was left in mid-August, when the Apiguard treatments were begun.

Today I pulled apart hive 4 which had a super under and over the brood box, to make it possible to put fondant on. I scored the sealed honey in the under super, put the remaining honey in the super above, filled it with empty comb and returned it above a crown board hoping that the bees will draw the stores down. No fondant was put on this hive today. It looks very strong: it still has ten seams of bees in the brood box and bees in both supers.

Hive 3 looks weak with four frames of bees, and fondant above the brood box, hive 5 is slightly better, when weighed today (hefted) both were on the light side. I will monitor these during the winter and feed when necessary. Hopefully they will keep going until the spring.

There were about 25lbs of honey extracted from the hives in July and the start of August, so frames were removed and extracted when they were sealed.

I have divided fondant blocks into self-sealing sandwich bags so that I can feed below an Apiguard eke as necessary during the winter. I plan monitor how bees are taking fondant, check on the two weaker colony splits, and visit as required. I will put varroa floors into the hives on my next visit for 7 days, to determine when to use the ApiBioxal vaporiser.

Judith New
Apiary manager

Piddinghoe

It's good to be back involved with the division again and I look forward to establishing this new apiary as a teaching apiary to add to the other two we already have.

We are lucky to have a room, with facilities, available on site where



slightly more formal and theoretical training can be take place.

I made my first visit to Piddinghoe today, 29 October, in the pouring rain (*such dedication! Ed.*), which didn't diminish my delight in finding such a lovely site.

However, you can see from the photo the three existing hives, two BS National and a WBC, look a bit forlorn. The three hives were started from scratch in July from swarms. They have recently been fed with fondant so the main job is to ensure this doesn't run out and to get them through the winter until next spring.

But there is plenty of scope for enhancing the look and layout of the site in the coming spring and Summer. First on the list is to construct new hive stands and buy some new hives and assorted equipment to be able to increase the number of hives on site and have clean spares to use as and when needed.

Covid-19 rules allowing, we will be putting on a full programme of visits to the apiary throughout the summer but, if not, I can arrange individual or small group visits to help new beekeepers become more familiar with their charges.

During the swarm season it is hoped that the apiary will be used to temporarily home for swarms that have been collected but are waiting for their new keepers to pick them up. This will also take some of the pressure off of the swarm co-ordinators when they are trying to find a new beekeeper to accept a swarm. Because of the size of the apiary there is space to be able to quarantine the swarm way from the permanent hives.

Ian White
Apiary Manager



Photography Competition 2020



Classes

1. A bee or beekeeping related photograph (jpeg file format of under 3MB).
2. A close-up of a pollinator (jpeg file format of under 3MB).
3. An essay illustrated with your photographs on a subject of interest to beekeepers (max. 300 words with one to four photographs).

Prizes

- The winner of each class will have their photograph professionally printed and mounted.
- Certificates for 1st, 2nd and 3rd in each class and a B&L coffee/tea mug.
- The best submission in all three classes will receive a special prize.
- Paynes Bee Farms have donated a smoker and hive tool.
- Other prizes may also be awarded.

Rules

- All entrants must be Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers members.
- All entries remain the copyright of the author.
- Entries may be used in the B&L or sponsor's Newsletter and website and will be credited to the author.
- Photographs should be submitted in jpeg (jpg) format with a file size of under 3MB.
- Essays should be submitted in .doc or .docx format with a maximum of 300 words, accompanying photographs should be in jpeg (jpg) format.

Submission of entries

Entries should be submitted by Friday 11 December 2020 by email to Bob Curtis at meeting.blbka@gmail.com

Judge: Gerald Legg

FROM AROUND THE WEB

- **The Apiarist blog: Diutinus bees** About the importance of winter bees, the ones that form the foundation for the colony in the spring. Link [here](#).
- **Towards integrated control of varroa** A research paper comparing application methods and doses of oxalic acid on the mortality of phoretic *Varroa destructor* mites and their honey bee hosts. Link [here](#).
- **Chronic bee paralysis as a serious emerging threat to honey bees** A research paper that offers insight into CBPV, its spread and effects. Link [here](#). For a less detailed but more accessible insight, [here](#) is The Apiarist's analysis.
- **Sweet video of Australian sugarbag bees** (*Tetragonula carbonaria*). They are social like honey bees, but build their combs upwards in a spiral. Link [here](#).

Winter meetings return

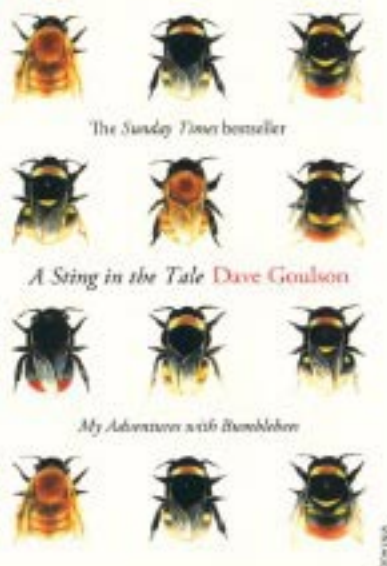
Can't do face-to-face meetings? Covid won't stop us! So instead, we have arranged a number of virtual meetings using the Zoom video-conferencing system.

The first of these, on 16 December, is a Fun Quiz for beekeepers, with 20 questions devised by B&L's own question-master Bob Curtis.

Speakers at our 2021 meetings include Prof. Dave Goulson and Celia Davis, so please check the back page or the [website](#) for details.

In particular, we hope to see you at the virtual AGM on 17 February 2021.

Links to all meetings will be sent out to all members 24 hours beforehand.



Curl up with a bee book

With the long, cold winter nights approaching, what better than to curl up with a book about bees? Our library of books will help keep the beekeeping passion alive during the quieter months.

We have how-to books, such as 'Practical Beekeeping' by Clive de Bruyn, scientific books, such as 'Form and Function in the Honey Bee' by Lesley Goodman, and others such as 'A Sting in the Tale' by Dave Goulson, which offers 'fascinating insights into the world of the bumblebee.'

Books are free to borrow, with just a £5 deposit requested. Librarian Dominic Zambito's contact details are on the back page.

Check out our new Facebook group

Love it or hate it—and I know Facebook ignites passions in the hearts of many—we can't ignore it. So we've set up a Facebook private group just for those of us in the Division. We won't be admitting anyone whose name has not first been checked against the membership list. To join, search for B&L Beekeeping Division.



B&L Beekeeping Division
Private group · 40 members



Why Facebook? It can be a great forum to share ideas and content, such as photos and videos, and it's a near real-time source of advice and help as and when you need it. If you're an experienced beekeeper, please feel free to chip in to help others. If not, don't be afraid to ask: we all started as novices and providing support is what we're here for.

Recent Facebook posts have included:

- information about ivy and a great image a bee on ivy flowers
- a post about the BBKA exams
- a link to a riveting presentation about research into varroa (see the 'walking dead' story on p4)
- a link to research about the effects of pesticides on bees
- and a call for help from a member who found a dead queen in his hive

So if you'd like to join the group—and about a third of our membership have already done so—please do!

Management needed for Ripe bees

B&L has been asked if we know of any beekeepers who would look after bees at Solar Farm, Ripe.

The owners said will they buy all hives and equipment, and would join the Division.

If you are interested and fancy looking after more bees, please contact B&L Secretary Hilary Osman.

Designer required for honey jar labels

B&L's honey jar labels need a fresh look. If you are or you know a designer who can and is willing to create a great new design, please contact B&L Secretary Hilary Osman.

Need fondant? Buy here

We have one last 6.25Kg fondant block for sale: £6. Norman D. has details.

Membership is due soon

Just a quick reminder that membership of the Division runs from 1 January to 31 December, so annual membership fees will fall due soon.

Bees with mites are 'walking dead', finds research



Varroa destructor mouthparts. Nightmare.

So-called hygienic bees—bees that tend to brush mites off their thoraxes—may not be accomplishing as much as we hope, because mites causing the most damage are firmly embedded in the bees' abdomens and cannot be easily removed. And mite damage so weakens bees that they are 'walking dead'.

Those are just a couple of points from Dr Samuel Ramsey's detailed and ground-breaking research into exactly how varroa mites feed on bees and what damage they do.

We know that *Varroa destructor* is a disease vector, but the mites also weaken larvae and adult bees in ways that perhaps were not previously understood. Among other things, they feed on the fat body not blood, which weakens bees in a multitude of ways.

The fat body's importance can be under-estimated: it's the bee's liver and kidneys, and is key to a bee's health. Its

removal—bit by bit—by a mite as it feeds means the bee functions more poorly and dies sooner, according to Ramsey. Consequently, foragers will not bring back as much nectar and pollen, and winter bees may die before their time, for example.

Ramsey produced some fascinating electron microscope images in the course of his research, and published his research along with supporting images and data, for free, in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*.

This work underlines that varroa control is probably the most important challenge we as beekeepers face.

And as the paper's abstract states, it is to be hoped that this research moves forward the process of finding a truly effective counter to this parasite.

If you haven't seen this research before, you'll find it fascinating viewing and reading.

The presentation is available on YouTube [here](#), and both the paper and images are [here](#). There's also a recent discussion about it on the beekeeping forum [here](#).

Below: the red imprint of a mite that was feeding between a bee's abdominal plates (the brown bits), sucking fat body through the hole (arrowed) it drilled. A pair of the mite's feet (arrowed) remain embedded.



DEFRA launches Healthy Bees Plan 2030

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has launched its Healthy Bees Plan 2030 to address continued threats to honey bee health.

This follows the conclusion of DEFRA's Healthy Bees Plan 2020, a review of which the department [has just issued](#); it contains statistics about beekeepers' methods and treatments, such as the amount of varroa treatment that beekeepers have administered.

Following advice from stakeholders on the Bee Health Advisory Forum, DEFRA said it had developed the 2030 plan to provide a framework of its aims for the next 10 years.

The plan describes the four main outcomes DEFRA wants to achieve:

- Effective biosecurity and good standards of husbandry to minimise pest and disease risks;
- Enhanced skills and production capability/capacity of beekeepers and bee farmers;
- Sound science and evidence underpinning the actions taken to support bee health; and
- Increased opportunities for knowledge exchange and partnership working on honey bee health and wider pollinator needs.

DEFRA said that partnership with organisations such as the BBKA was essential if threats to honey bee health are to be identified and addressed.

In response, the BBKA pledged to support the plan and said it would continue to work towards the plan's implementation.



The 2020 Honey Show 'was a great success'

The National Honey Show at the end of October, held as a virtual show for the first time ever, was a great success.

I received positive feedback for weeks after the show closed, with the common theme being the ability to re-visit the lectures and demos after the show closed, something that was never possible following the live show.

Yes, at previous shows you could view the lectures on the Honey Show YouTube channel, but only months later, after they had been edited down.

So we all hope that the 2021 show, to be held on 21 to 23 October 2021, will be live and will be bigger and better than any previously put on.

Norman Dickinson
Honey Show Membership Secretary



BBKA to raise funds for schools

You can help the British Beekeepers Association raise funds for its new schools learning Apiary which will be a live resource for learning about the environment and pollinators—all to help raise the next generation of beekeepers.

The BBKA's offices in Stoneleigh provide a central location for its new visitor centre, where children will come with their school classes and learn about bees and mini-beasts and food security and have a live bee display with one of the BBKA's beekeepers.

Lots of children get bitten by the bug this way and with their interest in beekeeping awakened, will return to it in later years. It's imperative we train a new generation too as the average age of a beekeeper in the UK is 65.

There's a link to the BBKA's video about the fundraiser [here](#).

England's natural assets are in decline



England's natural assets including bees, butterflies, as well as other wildlife, soils, land are in serious decline, according to a committee of environmental experts.

This is despite the government's targets to improve the environment.

The final report by the Natural Capital Committee, set up to advise the government on how to deliver on its pledge to improve the environment in a generation, found no area that was making progress.

In five of the seven areas the report examined—freshwater, marine, soils, plants and wildlife and land—England's natural environment is deteriorating, the committee said.

The report flagged a range of failings, especially with respect to river pollution, while bees and butterfly populations have seen declines of 30 percent in bees and hoverfly species between 1980 and 2016.

Only half of the country's national nature reserves are in a favourable condition and the government is off track to meet targets of 90 percent of priority habitats to be in a condition of either favourable, or unfavourable but recovering.

In terms of the causes, intensive farming and development is resulting in losses of at least £900 million a year for England and Wales, it said.



Rare bee discovered

A "nationally scarce" species of bee has been found in Newport for the first time, conservationists say.

Buglife Cymru said it discovered a "strong population" of small scabious mining bees at a local nature reserve last week, marking the first time the species had been found in area. The discovery in Newport was made by Buglife's Searching for Scabious project, set up to help halt the decline.



Smart hive cuts honey harvest effort

Daesung is launching Smarthive, an automated honey frame-gathering device claimed to make beekeeping easier.

The beekeeper inserts the Hive Controller into the hive, pushes a button, and the device picks up each frame and, it says here, safely brushes away the bees.

The company claims its system can reduce the work involved in frame removal by 70 percent.

More about it [here](#).

Sustainable beekeeping: a talk by Mike Palmer

Date: Wednesday 9 December 2020, 19:30.

With the tagline: "Are you satisfied with your bees in the spring? Are they alive or are they dead?", Cambridgeshire Beekeepers Association are welcoming Mike Palmer from his home in Vermont, USA to talk about Sustainable Beekeeping.

What is sustainable beekeeping? Beekeeping is sustainable when the interactions between humans and honey bees contribute positively to healthy populations of locally-adapted indigenous bees living in the wild and in the apiaries of beekeepers. For many years Mike Palmer has been working to convince beekeepers that they can raise their own bees without having to buy in bees from elsewhere. This is how he recommends we do it. It's free: the link to join is [here](#).



Mike Palmer in his apiary

The coming season: are you prepared? A talk by Roger Patterson

Date: 15 December 2020, 19:30

Many beekeepers switch off as soon as they bed their bees down for the winter, then put their feet up, only to panic in the spring. There is a lot to think about.

What went wrong last year? How can we overcome the problems and improve next year? What can you study so you understand your bees better, so make fewer mistakes? What other colony management techniques can you use?

Can you make your bees more productive and healthy? Can you enjoy your beekeeping more?

The presentation, by this well-known local, West Sussex beekeeper, is packed with suggestions for improving your bees and your beekeeping. It's a free event, and the link to join is [here](#).



Roger Patterson



A Small Pincertail dragonfly is captured by a European Hornet (*Vespa crabro*). Prof. Debbie Pain explains: "The hornet landed on the dragonfly and proceeded to dismember it. The abdomen was removed first, followed by a couple of the wings and then the head. It then flew off carrying the head in its mouth and the thorax in its legs. A fascinating, if rather gruesome, thing to watch! What amazing predators." Photo: Debbie Pain. Location: La Brenne, France. Thanks to Heather McNiven for this.

Cliff wall protects hives

Bees do not usually buzz around wooden hives 4,000 feet above sea level, but keepers have placed about 700 bee colonies at that height on the side of a mountain in Shennongjia National Nature Reserve in China's Hubei Province.

Asian honeybee populations have been shrinking. On the high cliff wall, however, they are safe from predators and other hazards, such as pesticides. The hive boxes also attract wild bees to come and settle. The keepers scale the cliff using rope ladders to check on the hives and collect the honey.

Source: [Scientific American](#)



B&L Divisional Diary 2020/21

Virtual Meetings

All virtual meetings will start at 19:15 for 19:30, and will be conducted using the Zoom video-conferencing service. You will be sent a link 24 hours before each meeting. Please join us!

16 December 2020

Topic: Fun Quiz for beekeepers. Twenty questions related to beekeeping, plus a short Q&A at the end
Question-master: Bob Curtis

20 January 2021

Topic: Insect Apocalypse
Speaker: Prof. Dave Goulson

17 February 2021

Topic: Annual General Meeting
Chair: Norman Dickinson

17 March 2021

Topic: TBC
Speaker: Celia Davis

Indoor winter meetings

There are no in-person events planned for the time being due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Your contributions

Please send all contributions for the newsletter, including photos, to the Editor (see above for contact details). Max. copy length: 900 words. **Copy deadline:** 12th of the month preceding the month of publication. Photos etc. for the website should be emailed to Webmaster Gerald Legg (details on right).

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Disclaimer

The Brighton and Lewes Division of the SBKA cannot accept any responsibility for loss, injury or damage sustained by persons in consequence of their participation in activities arranged by the Division.

Officers of the Division

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- **Knowlands Farm:** Tony Birbeck
- **Hove:** Judith New
- **Piddinghoe:** Ian White

Sussex BKA County Representative: Bob Curtis

National Honey Show Rep: Norman Dickinson

grassroots
grants

Managed by the Community Development Foundation
Funded by the Office of the Third Sector

The co-operative membership
Community Fund