

CBKA Newsletter February 2008

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www.teesbees.co.uk



After a cold start February is turning quite mild, there's still a little over week to go to the next meeting and we have been promised many more days of mild weather yet to come. Temperatures are almost twice what they should be at this time of the year with the result that the bees are flying, albeit only in the middle of the day, but many of them are being caught outside as the sun goes down behind the trees and the shade temperature suddenly falls too low for safe flying. Several bees were seen stranded on the hive front some with the almost white pollen they were taking back home. Pollen is not too plenty-full at this time of the year, though I have seen my bees working snowdrops, crocus, mahonia and viburnum tinus and it will not be long before we see the won-

derful seas of daffodils all around us, and of course that ubiquitous rape. The loss of bees, not to mention that of pollen, is something we can do little to prevent. In addition this is the time of the year when we start to see collections of dead bees on the ground just in front of our hives as the older bees from last year begin to die out leaving the younger ones, those born in early autumn, to take over the task of building up the colony for the coming spring and summer. Such collections of dead bees is nothing to get excited about, so long as it does not build up to enormous numbers. It is also a source of food for our blue tits and while they are eating those dead ones they are not taking live bees from the hive entrance.

One of my colonies shows signs of faeces on the hive front. It may be that the stores put aside for winter are fermenting and giving the bees 'belly ache'. I quickly opened it so as not to let in too much cold air, and inserted a container of candy, there were lots of bees there and I shall be disappointed if they do not come through the winter. I shall check the candy container in a few days time and continue to feed until I am quite certain they can manage on their own.

The 700gm container of candy given to the five frame nucleus hive in November has (about) half gone and the colony is very busy during this warm weather.

So all there is to do now is to make sure I am well prepared for the coming season. I must order any equipment I need (have you placed your order with John?) repair any damaged items, throw out old wax more than two years old, clean any frames of the remains of wax and signs of dysentery and re-wax them, for before we know what's hit us our bees will be ready for the new year.

We've received the following request for help this month from the BBKA:

"Can You Help?

The BBKA website is being redesigned and one of the features will be a section "Hints and Tips". This is intended to be a list of the sort of things you won't find in books, not a regular feature, and it will be added to on a regular basis when new material becomes available. If you or any of your beekeeping colleagues

have any suitable hints and tips on a wide variety of beekeeping subjects then please send them to Roger Patterson who is co-ordinating the section. r.patterson@pattersonpressings.co.uk or 3 Hayes Lane, Slinfold, Sussex, RH13 0SQ".

On the same theme, any member is welcome to submit any article for publication in this Newsletter. Anything you feel would be of interest to our members will help me to fill pages rather than sitting here looking frequently at an empty, very unfriendly computer screen.

Last month I mentioned the story of DDT and it's dramatic effects on the environment. Well here's another little gem I came across some years ago, but I've recently been told it's just as relevant today.

"BUY AS MANY BRAZIL NUTS AS YOU CAN! WHY?"

The tree grows in the Amazon rain forest, and is so special that people are not allowed to cut it down. But people cut down the rest of the trees to clear the land for ranching and logging.

The Brazil nut tree is left standing alone. The sad thing is that it needs the other trees around, because it is pollinated by a bee which feeds on these trees. When the trees go, the bee goes, and no nuts will grow on the Brazil nut tree.

Buying Brazil nuts guarantees the farmers an income from the trees, and so they will protect the surrounding forest."

Also last month I also mentioned the need to take the Basic BBKA qualification to obtain



a better understanding of our pastime, and that Tom Rettig had, once more, passed two papers. Here we see him smiling as he is presented with his new certificates. Well done Tom, I feel quite confident that

you have inspired others to 'have a go'.

Déjà vu ! There a sense of wondering if the world has been here before. An article in a



Bite me: A Cretaceous-era tick found in amber from Burma.

recent issue of 'Cosmos OnLine' reviews a new book entitled 'What Bugged the Dinosaurs' and suggests that they may have died out as a result of a tiny biting insect and its kin spreading disease.

Palaeontologists and amber fossil experts at Oregon State University in Corvallis, U.S, detail a new theory that insects were a major

force in the slow decline and eventual extinction of dinosaurs over millions of years.

"Competition with insects and emerging new diseases over very long periods of time, is perfectly compatible with everything we know about dinosaur extinction," Co-author Poinar suggests that the rise and success of insects may have also been a factor in that decline. His evidence comes from the study of ancient disease and parasites in the fossil record. Most of the evidence points to a major asteroid or comet impact linked to a planet-wide mass extinction.

But by working with insects preserved in amber, Poinar has found ancestors of the insect-borne pathogens that today cause, malaria, leishmaniasis and trypanosomiasis, in addition to evidence of viruses. His painstaking work has also turned up the remains of intestinal worms and the cysts of protozoan parasites in dinosaur coprolites (fossilised faeces).

"After many millions of years of evolution, mammals, birds and reptiles have evolved some resistance to these diseases. But back in the Cretaceous period, these diseases were new and invasive, and vertebrates had little or no natural or acquired immunity to them," he said. *"Massive outbreaks causing death and localised extinctions would have occurred."*

Is it going too far to suggest that with Colony Collapse Disorder, varroa, small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) etc. and their associated viruses in addition to GM crops, a cocktail of insecticides, global warming and much more, something similar may just be happening again, this time to our bees? But this time it's not a natural phenomena, It's

mostly man made and invariably founded in greed.

I remind you once again of the Cleveland BKA Beginners Course which is arranged to run over the weekend of the 7th / 8th of June. It will be held at the Newham Grange Leisure Farm, Wykham Way, Coulby Newham. Further details re. timing and costs can be obtained from Rob Andrews, telephone 01642 781639. Please note that protective clothing is required. Some will be available but may be limited by numbers attending.

Our friends at Durham also run Beginners Classes and these are due to start on the first Thursday in May. They will be held at Houghall College, Durham and they run for 10 weeks and are free. Classes start at 18-30 and CBKA Members are welcome. Contact George Eames, Phone:- 0191 334 5573 up to 12-00am on weekdays, or on his mobile 07970 926250

It's now time to submit the names of people willing to collect swarms this year to our local authorities. Please let Ian Brown know if you are prepared to collect swarms in your particular area. Do note that you can only claim reasonable expenses. Never start dismantling buildings to gain access to bees and for your own safety do not go climbing trees.

And finally a message from our friends in Durham ABKA. We are invited to join them on a coach trip to Chainbridge Honey Farm in Berwick.

It will be on Saturday 21 June 2008 and is open to members of Durham and Cleveland Beekeepers Associations and members of their families. Cost: £10 per person. The schedule for this trip will be approximately as follows:

- 10.00am Leave Houghall College in Durham.
 - 11.00-11.30am Stop at Heighly Gate Garden Centre, near Morpeth
 - 1.00-1.30pm Arrive Chain Bridge. Refreshments available.
 - 1.30-3.30pm Tour of Chain Bridge with introduction from Willie Robson.
 - 3.30pm Leave Chain Bridge for Berwick.
 - 5.00-7.00pm Leave Berwick and return to Houghall.
- Places on the bus will be given on a first-come-first-served basis. Secure your place by contacting the DBKA Treasurer, Sue Drea 5, The Grove, North End, Durham DH1 4LU, 'Phone 0191 386 4735 and sending payment of £10.

Kindest regards to you all,

bryan@hateley.me.uk

Say not always what you know, but always know what you say.

Secretary; Ian Brown, 48, Thames Avenue, Guisborough, TS14 8AF. Tel: 01287 632851

Meetings held, from September to April, in Lingfield Farm, Countryside Centre, Middlesbrough, on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7.15pm
Newcomer's are welcome.

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES
Allan, Tony & Richard Jefferson;
Tel. 01947 840723 or Tel/Fax 01947 893811
Email:- tony@stoneleabees.wanadoo.co.uk
Stonelea Apiaries, 1, Dalehouse Bank, Staithes,
Cleveland. TS13 5AN.
Suppliers of all beekeeping equipment.
Honey bought and sold.

John R. Allen
LONGNEWTON GRANGE BEEKEEPERS SUPPLIES
THE GRANGE, Phone: 01642 585896
BACK LANE, Fax: 01642 585896
LONGNEWTON, Home: 01642 898073
STOCKTON-ON-TEES. TS21 1BN Mobile: 07814 576785
EMAIL: beekeepingsupplies@longnewton.fsworld.co.uk

Alphabetical Beekeeping

Copied from the Honey Association's WebSite

K is for.. Kvas - a Russian variant of mead, made from barley and rye. **P** is for.. Pollen - bees collect pollen in the spring when the flowers are in bloom