



CBKA Newsletter

February 2014

Year 28/ 6. Download our Newsletters from www.teesbees.co.uk

Chairman's Note

At last it seems that Spring is on the way with the snowdrops and other bulbs beginning to show. The pussy willows that I planted several years ago are now beginning to flower and will provide plenty of early pollen which is essential to provide the bees with a good start for the year.

Feeding fondant should continue where necessary as it would be a pity to lose your bees after getting

THE BEEKEEPING YEAR

February



Check hive for weight
Ensure enough food stored
Protect from mouse and woodpecker damage

them safely through the winter so far and only to lose them now for lack of food.

The coach for our summer trip to Chain Bridge Honey Farm in Berwick on Sunday 29th June is almost full and there are

only four seats remaining. The total cost for the trip will be £15 per person, partners are welcome, and would members who have already got their names down for the trip please pay our treasurer Derek at their earliest convenience.

You can pay by cheque, cash at one of our meetings or by BACS

Sort Code. 40 43 11

Account No. 91063758

Remember to put your name in the reference field and note Chain Bridge Trip.

There will be only one pick up point – outside Boots the Chemist on Teesside Park at 8.30 am. and we should return by 5.00 pm. Lunch can be purchased at Chain Bridge and details will be given a bit nearer the date so that if required it can be ordered in advance.

The swarming season may be a long way off but I will shortly be compiling the 2014 swarm call-out list of members willing to collect swarms in the CBKA area and who agree to comply with the British Beekeepers Association Swarm Collectors Protocol. You must be an experienced beekeeper

willing to travel and collect swarms in your area - do not ask to go on the list just to get one or two swarms or if you are going to cherry pick the easy ones! A copy of the BBKA Swarm protocol will be sent to those who wish to go on the list and you must be happy to follow the guidelines to be on the CBKA list. As the list is redrawn every year it follows that if you don't apply you will not be on the list for 2014. Please contact me via email at robandrews574@gmail.com or phone 01642 781639 as soon as possible.

Best regards

Rob Andrews, Chairman

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In the Apiary

We are lucky that we haven't had the flooding that has occurred in other parts of the country, but I've seen lots of fields with standing water around the area. Have you been checking your hives during the recent bad weather? Have you been hefting the hives and feeding fondant if there was a need? The recipe for home made fondant was in last month's newsletter if you are so inclined, though there are plenty of outlets selling ready made fondant. Not all commercial fondant is the same, make sure that what you buy doesn't have added flavours or additives. What you use to decorate a birthday cakes might have things in it that would not be welcomed by your bees.

When was the last time you used your bee suit? If you had a few stings on it during last year then the dried venom will still be on the suit and will be ready to agitate the bees when you wear it again. Now is the time to give your suit a good wash. I have a one piece suit (I never thought I'd own up to owning a "onesie"...) and I remove the hood before I put the suit through the washer as I don't think the mesh would survive too many washing machine cycles. I soak the hood separately in a weak solution of washing machine liquid and warm water for a few hours and then rinse it thoroughly in warm water. If your suit is speckled with black dots then it has got a little mouldy over the winter. I found that even bleach won't shift the black spots, but a light spray with bathroom mould remover

straight onto the suit and leaving outside for half an hour clears the stains completely. Make sure you do this outside and don't get any spray into your eyes or onto your skin - it's very nasty stuff. I've not had any problems but the spray probably says do not use on fabrics, so if the spray eats a hole into your brand new suit then you have been warned! Test a few drops of the spray on an ankle cuff first. If you take the risk and spray your suit then be sure to give the suit a wash after half an hour or so to remove any remnants of the spray.

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Bombus hypnorum, the tree bumblebee

Reading Rob Andrews' notes, above, about volunteering to collect swarms reminds me that most of the calls last year were from people



wondering why their bird boxes and soffits had been colonised by "swarms of bees" which nearly always turned out to be bumble bees, most, if

not all, of a variety fairly new to our part of the UK. 2013 was the year when the population of *Bombus hypnorum* seemed to explode. If you want to go onto the swam collectors list you must be willing to go out and reassure panicking householders and occasionally remove bumble bee nests to a location where they don't cause problems.

You will have read in last month's BBKA News the interesting article about *Bombus hypnorum*, and CBKA member Barrie Bloom was called out to many of these "swarms" which turned to be bumble bees, and wrote the following:

I have moved bumble bees into nest boxes for removal or just relocated nests in bird boxes for

years but last year I was called to a bird box in a tree in Marton in Middlesbrough and these bumble bees seemed different to the usual. They were quite noisy and flying around a lot but when I went back at



night they were all in. I quickly stopped the entrance up with paper, cut the wire holding the bird box up and they were mine. They spent the rest of their lives safely hanging in their bird box mounted behind

my greenhouse. At first I could not identify them, but eventually I found them to be *Bombus hypnorum* (the tree bumble bee) first found in this country in 2001.

2013 was THE year for *Bombus hypnorum* in our area. Most of the early pollinators in my garden were *hypnorum*. The public then started noticing them as they have a habit of flying round their nest unlike our native bumble bees, and very like a small swarm of honey bees. With all the flying and the noise that they make they have been called defensive but I had no trouble taking photos at 18 inches (45cm) but of course I did not flap about. By mid August I noticed no more bees flying so I opened the box and it was empty. The cells were in layers with new cells on top of old so it looks like they are only used once. To get an idea of numbers in the colony I counted the cells and found 299.

Next year I will put my beekeeping gear on and get up close to see if they really are as defensive as had been reported or just noisy. By Barrie Bloom

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Happy beekeeping!

Secretary: Steve Jacklin, 34 Juntion Rd, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 1PL Tel: 01642 866240

Winter meetings (September to April) are held on the 3rd Monday of the month at 7:15pm in the:

Middlesbrough Bowling Club, Cornfield Rd, Middlesbrough TS5 5QL (Near the Little Theatre). Visitors and new members welcome.

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES

Allan, Tony & Richard Jefferson

Stonelea Apiaries, 1 Dalehouse Bank, Staithes, Cleveland, TS13 5AN

Tel 07749 73 1945 or Tel/Fax 01947 893811

stoneleabees@yahoo.co.uk

Suppliers of all beekeeping equipment.

Honey bought and sold.

Cleveland Beekeepers

Visit our website at www.teesbees.co.uk. You will find our programme for the coming year and all our past Newsletters.