Winter 2017

Furness Flyer

A Newsletter for Furness Beekeeper Members.

Letter from the Secretary

Welcome to this edition of the Flyer,and a Happy New Year to all.
I hope you have managed to dig yourselves out from the snow drifts and floods without too many problems…what a winter!

Winter went well for the bees all in all. The properly cold weather kept them in their hives and didn't tempt them into suicidal flights for forage. Spring hasn't quite sprung yet but long range forecasts are good (depending on who you listen to), so lets hope for a good season to follow. Losses have not been reported generally yet.

It's difficult to believe that we will be soon donning our bee suits and gloves again.
Before we do that we are holding the bee keeping lessons that we have run for several years

We will start on Wednesday 21st February With a guide on what to look for and do during your first inspection of the season.

On the Wednesday evenings of the 14th,21st,and 28 of March we have a series of lessons mainly for new beekeepers and timed to coincide with the bees becoming active in Spring and, depending on the weather, will run in tandem with the informal 'hands on' lessons at our apiaries in Ulverston, Haverthwaite and Skelmsmergh near Kendal..

On Wednesday April 25th and May 2nd
We will hold two lessons on what to do if you find queen cells in your hive and how to make an increase. Of your colonies
The courses will cover these topics in depth and are aimed at the more experienced although novices are most welcome to attend if they feel that the courses will be worthwhile .

All courses will start at 7.30 and will be a small charge to cover the cost of the hall and the booklets which accompany the courses
We have a break midway for some tea and a biscuit.

Hazel tells me that some members have not renewed their membership from January 1st 2018. Under the insurance rules members that have not paid their subscription by April 1st, have sadly, allowed have their membership to lapse and will receive no further communication from us.
Please contact Hazel ASAP if you do wish to renew.
We value all our members and are always sorry to lose them for whatever the reason. To the 99.9% of you that did renew, thank you very much for your continuing support and hope that you enjoy your beekeeping with us.

Annual Convention is already planned this year for Saturday April 14th in the usual venue of the Nalt Kiln Bardsea.
Speakers this year are well know and are excellent knowledgeable speakers.
We have Julia Piggott who lives locally and Peter Sutcliffe who lives in Cheshire.
All will be notified with details of their topics in due course
I can really recommend the event to anyone, beginner or expert.

So before I run out of space and fall under the Editor's guillotine, I wish you a successful 2018. May you be awash with honey and free from stings.
Best Wishes

David Walmsley January 2018.

Update on the Asian Hornet Outbreak in Woolacombe

Following suspect sightings, on Sunday 24th September the NBU received two photographs from a beekeeper in Woolacombe, North Devon, of an Asian hornet. The following day, the 25th September, preliminary surveillance began in the apiary and the NBU's Contingency Plan was activated. The local Bee Inspector monitored the apiary and initially found surveillance difficult due to the position of the colonies in the apiary. However, that morning, the Inspector managed to capture a hornet and sent the sample to the NBU in Sand Hutton for formal identification. Later that afternoon, the Inspector returned to the apiary site and a further 7 hornets were seen hawking in front of hives, but no line of sight could be ascertained, to establish a flight path back to the nest.

On the 26th September, South West Region inspectors were deployed to intensify searches for Asian hornets hawking in the area. Wet, misty and murky morning weather conditions were not ideal, but the Inspectors continued to survey the original outbreak apiary and two lines of sight were established. Inspectors were able to identify a second apiary site about 1km from the original outbreak, where one hornet was seen hawking for returning foraging bees. A hornet sample was taken, in order to establish if the hornets visiting the second apiary site were from the same nest and thus determine if there were multiple nests in the area.

Hornets were also observed in an apiary at a further site and were seen flying in a similar line of sight. The lines of sight from both the outbreak apiary and the second apiary combined were enough for an initial triangulation to be taken and investigated. The Inspectors began investigating public footpaths and the area around where the lines of sight met at the triangulation. A great deal of Asian hornet activity was observed at a nearby building site and on 27th September an Asian hornet nest was discovered.

The nest was destroyed the following evening, removed and taken to the Fera lab (Sand Hutton, York) on Friday 29th Sept. Further surveillance was carried out within a 10 km zone of the nest site and no further Asian hornet activity was detected. Following analysis of the nest has shown that none of the adult hornets were male and this indicates that the nest was detected and removed before the production of queens which will have gone into winter and then produced nests in 2018.

FBKA Convention 2018

This year's convention will be held on Saturday 14th April at

Bardsea Malt Kiln.

The speakers will be Julia Piggot and Peter Sutcliffe. The topics are still to be confirmed, but will appeal to both new and experienced bee-keepers.

There will be the option of a pre-booked pub lunch, homemade soup in our kitchen or bring your own packed lunch. The day will conclude with tea and homemade cakes.

Tickets will be available soon

Would you like to see your story in our newsletter?

Have you seen a story that would interest our members?

Perhaps you're an artist or photographer and would like to share your bee/honey related work?

Have you read a beekeeping book that you would like to review for us?

If YES, than contact us at Mail: info@furnessbeekeepers.co.uk

Honey bees in Cumbria and Lancashire see invasive plant as 'fast food', study reveals

THE invasive plant Himalayan balsam has become a scourge of the Cumbrian and Lancashire countryside - but honey bees in both counties are just loving it, according to a new study.

Researchers into bee bread - the kinds of pollen the busy honey makers collect for their young - has revealed they view Himalayan balsam as a "fast food", although like humans they thrive better on a more varied diet.

Bee bread is made up of pollen stored in cells in the hive, and is the basic component of food for bee larvae and young bees, while older bees eat nectar in the form of honey.

A study of honey bee bread in Lancashire and Cumbria bee hives showed that in some samples nearly 90 per cent of the pollen came from Himalayan balsam, a foreign plant humans are desperate to eliminate from the countryside.

The research, carried out by scientists at Lancaster University, uses next generation sequencing to analyse 52 samples of bee bread from 26 bee hives to identify which plant species the pollen came from and the nutrient make up of each sample. Each bee bread sample contained between six and 35 distinct pollen species.

Lead author of the study, Dr Phil Donkersley, from the Lancaster Environment Centre, said: “Himalayan balsam is like fast food for bees, they are obsessed with it and want to chomp it down as fast as possible.

“But it may not be the best food for bees, it is better for their health if they have a broad diverse diet.”

The Westmorland Gazette

Himalayan balsam (Impatiens glandulifera) is a relative of the busy Lizzie, but reaches well over head height, and is a major weed problem, especially on riverbanks and waste land, but can also invade gardens. It grows rapidly and spreads quickly, smothering other vegetation as it goes.

What is Himalayan balsam?

Introduced to the UK in 1839, Himalayan balsam is now a naturalised plant, found especially on riverbanks and in waste places where it has become a problem weed.
Himalayan balsam tolerates low light levels and also shades out other vegetation, so gradually impoverishing habitats by killing off other plants. It is sometimes seen in gardens, either uninvited or grown deliberately, but care must be taken to ensure that it does not escape into the wild.

Appearance

Himalayan balsam is a tall growing annual, 2-3m (6-10ft) in height. Between June and October it produces clusters of purplish pink (or rarely white) helmet-shaped flowers.
The flowers are followed by seed pods that open explosively when ripe.

The problem

Each plant can produce up to 800 seeds. These are dispersed widely as the ripe seedpods shoot their seeds up to 7m (22ft) away.
The plant is spread by two principal means;

The most widespread distribution tends to be by human means where individuals pass on seed to friends

Once established in the catchment of a river the seeds, which can remain viable for two years, are transported further afield by water

Control

Plants that out-compete other more desirable plants or simply invade half the garden are classed as weeds and require control. First, consider whether this can be done using non-chemical means such as pulling or digging out, or suppressing with mulch. If this can't be achieved, consider using chemical methods.

Larger Colonies of Honeybees Have Quieter Combs, Scientists Find

"The surprising result was that — and at first I thought something must be wrong — when there are more bees on the comb, the vibrations are actually reduced," said Michael Smith, a doctoral student at Cornell University.

Smith and his colleague, Po-Cheng Chen, found the bees actively damp vibrations in the comb, possibly by the way they grasp the combs, though more study is needed to verify the mechanism.

The finding is important because bees communicate with substrate vibrations in the comb.

Bees perform a waggle dance to communicate to other bees the exact location of a patch of flowers; the dance vibrates the comb to spread the message to other bees. Even queen bees transmit vibrational signals to communicate with other queens. But in order to convey these messages, or any message, one must eliminate noise.

"The study underlines the universal need to separate signals from noise in all biological systems — from unicellular organisms sensing their environment to human bodies trying to sense hormone concentrations," Smith said.

The authors used computer chips that contain an accelerometer for measuring vibrations.

They attached these chips to the outside of honeycombs in the lab. They varied the number of bees on the combs by taking measurements with half a colony and then with an entire colony.

In another experiment, they took measurements of an active colony at different times of the day, since their numbers fluctuate as bees move in and out. They counted the bees on the combs with each measurement.

"The secret to how the bees damp the vibrations could be in their posture, where individual bees straddle many comb cells at once and act as 'little staples' by connecting different cells together," Smith said/

"Another hypothesis is that, like sailors on a teetering boat, bees lean into and compensate for the vibrations, in a manner that has a stabilizing effect."

The scientists also tested whether the mass or sheer weight of bees was damping the comb vibrations, the way a piece of paper with paper clips might wiggle less than a plain sheet.

"The additional bees had absolutely no effect whatsoever on the comb vibrations, which showed us that the bees are actually doing something to damp these vibrations," Smith said.

"The results demonstrate how living systems, including superorganisms such as honeybee colonies, can overcome physical obstacles with curiously simple and elegant solutions."

The findings were published in the November 2017 issue of the journal Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology.

www.sci-news.com

Honeybees Seem to Prefer Sugar Sources Laced With Pesticides

Our understanding of the complex interplay between honeybees and agricultural crops is ever-evolving.

All species evolve over time to have distinct preferences for survival. But with rapidly changing synthetic chemicals, sometimes animals don't have a chance to develop a beneficial aversion to something harmful.

New research from the University of Illinois indicates that honeybees—which are dying en masse—may actually prefer the taste of flowers laced with pesticides that are likely harmful. The study tested honeybee consumption of different sugar syrups, some plain and some with different concentrations of common pesticides. They found that while the bees didn't care for syrup with extremely high concentrations of pesticides, at low levels, the bees flocked to those pesticides.

Among the pesticides tested were the ever-controversial glyphosate, the most common pesticide in the United States, which previous studies have also shown to be attractive to honeybees. Chlorothalonil, which is ranked as the 10th most commonly used fungicide in the U.S., usually on peanuts and potatoes, also proved to attract more honeybees. (The connection between fungicides and honeybee health is not that clear; studies suggest they are not in themselves highly toxic, but in combination with other factors can be dangerous.)

The bees did not universally prefer adulterated syrups; the researchers note that they avoided prochloraz, a fungicide sold under the name Sportak. And of course, laced sugar syrup is not the same as a flower in the wild. Still, it's another alarming bit of news about our bees..

Dan Nosowitz
From www.modernfarmer.com

'90,000' bees worth £600 stolen from 'gutted' Bradford beekeeper

A BRADFORD beekeeper has been left reeling after discovering thousands of his treasured honey bees have been stolen.

The industrious insects were stolen from an apiary made up of four hives, with three of the hives being raided and six of the frames used to accommodate the bees being taken from each one.

Paul Seage, who owns the apiary, has been keeping bees since 2010.

The 53-year-old, from Wrose, helped to set up the Bradford Beekeepers Association.

He said: "I went to check on my honeybee colonies at my apiary, where I put new fondant into my hives.

"I then went back to check fondant levels about two weeks later, and upon opening one of the hives I found no bees inside, only to find that there were six missing frames. This was the same for all my other hives.

"I had about 90,000 bees overall, and they are worth about £600.

"I still have one colony and some friends have said they will help me out to make a new colony in spring.

"It's something I enjoy, I use the honey myself and also sell it at my local church St Cuthbert's.

"I just don't want this to happen to anyone else."

Mr Seage added that he has made the police aware of the incident.

Ian Dwyer, chair of the Bradford Beekeepers Association, said the theft is "totally disgusting".

He said: "I really do feel for Paul at this time, as I'm sure it's a real devastating experience for him.

"Honeybee theft is on the rise across the UK and as a beekeeping association in Bradford we are totally aware of how this is affecting beekeepers across the country.

"It saddens me that this has now occurred in Bradford to one of our own members.

"People should be aware of buying bees from people who are not members of a beekeeping association, where the seller has little experience of keeping bees themselves, or has few bees themselves."

Thefts of honeybee colonies have been on the rise across the UK, with more than 135 thefts reported to the police since 2011.

The data, revealed last year in a Freedom of Information request, also showed in West Yorkshire, about £2,000 of bees were stolen, including two thefts in February 2016 worth an estimated £900 each.

Queen bees from certain strains can fetch price tags of up to £180.

A spokesperson for the Bradford Beekeepers Association said there is a worry the thefts are being carried out by other beekeepers.

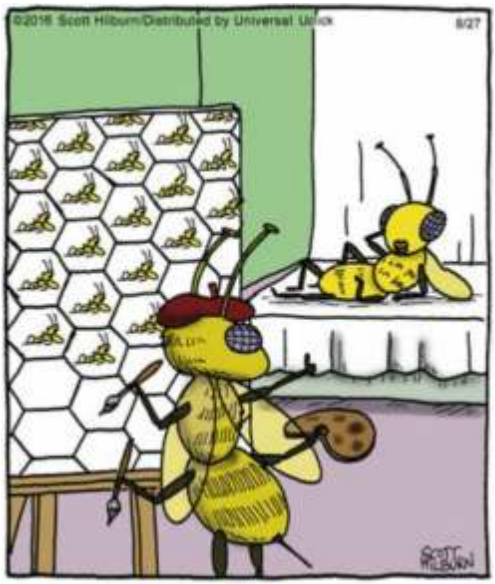
He said: "To be able to steal honeybees requires a fair degree of knowledge and equipment.

"Thousands of colonies have been stolen throughout the UK, and now this trend has hit a Bradford beekeeper.

"The way that Paul has described what has happened to him, shows that the hives were not taken and left in situ.

"The thieves had the knowledge and equipment to be able to move a number of frames out of each hive, leaving the hives behind."

David Jagger
http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/



The Beekeeper Who Makes Synth Music With His Bee Colonies

Bioni Samp translates bee behaviors and sounds into electronic music to help raise awareness of the ecological issues threatening them.

Tinkering with retro synthesizers is nothing new—but beekeeper Bioni Samp isn't your typical oscillator geek. He records and analyzes the frequencies of his bees, such as the soothing "songs" queen bees chirp to their hives, and uses them in his compositions. He wields a hive frame "scanner" to pick up electromagnetic smog and sticks electrodes in his homegrown honey to reap its rich, viscous sound.

Bioni (pronounced BEE-own-ee) Samp's music is abstract, glitchy, and noisy, not unlike Throbbing Gristle or Nurse With Wound, but often rhythmic, and dancey as well, kinda like if Aphex Twin was really into bugs. Samp—whose real name is a secret—lives in North London, acting as a kind of urban bee shaman. Now in his early 50s, he's been an apiarian enthusiast since he was seven and now performs wearing a stereotypical beekeeping suit.

With his music, Samp hopes to raise awareness of colony collapse disorder, the plague that has killed millions of honeybee hives worldwide. Billions of bees die each year, due to a combination of Varroa mite infestations, climate change, and pesticides such as neonicotinoids. But while bringing awareness to this delicate issue is Samp's goal, he isn't preachy about it.

"If I went around with a Greenpeace badge on and started shouting about deforestation, people quickly tire of that, it doesn't really connect with people," Samp says over video chat. "So I worked around the idea of presenting something that's got an underlying ecological message, but it's put over in a way which interest geeks and people interested in electronic music and computing."

His art and sound installations have travelled across the globe, performing at environmentally-conscious festivals and art galleries as far flung as Slovakia, Poland, Canada, Austria, and others.

"In the U.K., beekeeping is kind of like a gentleman's hobby—it's not quite seen seriously like it is there in Central Europe," Samp says. "So when I go to

like Czechia, I get interviewed in the national papers, I'm seen as an important artist. I met somebody there and they said their father even knew of me and he was about 80."

Samp's gear is part function, part symbolic. For example, one of his setups has three oscillators, representing the hierarchy of a hive: one for the workers, one for the drones, one for the queen. Some of his other bizarre, original instrument creations include the Electronic Beesmoker, BeeVerb, BFX, and the Binaural Beeframe.

Apart from his custom-made hardware, Samp also employs numerology in his compositions, using the detailed logs from his beehive diaries as inputs on digital synthesizer programs like Max/MSP.

"You can put a tray in a beehive with a kind of graph pattern on and then look at how many Varroa mites have fallen through the mesh floor onto this sheet of paper," Samp explains. "You can use the kind of numerology to make sounds…I put in numbers like how long it's been since the queen laid some eggs and some drones appeared in the hive. I started typing all these numbers in and I have music being created."

But a real breakthrough came to Samp when he discovered honey could be used as a resistor, which limits electrical flow through a circuit, adjusting the otherworldly sound of his homemade Hive Synthesizer. He first tried this

The Hive Synth

with propolis, a type of tree resin that bees use as glue in their hives, but it didn't work nearly as well. "I liked the idea that having an organic element," Samp says. "Not being all electronics."

Like many beekeepers, Samp talks to his insects, and even meditates on their soothing buzz. Likewise, he speaks with a relaxing, droning British accent that could induce ASMR in some people—it certainly seemed to in me. Samp says every colony has its own personality, like a dog—his bees can be moody when it rains and don't really tolerate other people besides himself.

"It's bizarre, you know, bees got as good a smell as a bloodhound and they know my smell," Samp says. "When somebody else comes along with aftershave on or perfume, they hate that—they really try and sting them. They also hate mobile phones…when my phone rings they try and sting my pocket. They really don't like the hot frequencies from mobile phones."

Samp was the subject of a 360º BBC mini-documentary, The Resistance of

Honey, which was nominated for the Raindance Film Festival's Best VR Sound Design Experience. It acts as a kind of day-in-the-life of the beekeeper, showing his studio and the bee house he co-designed and built, housing three different colonies.

Once, a film festival rejected showing the doc, which Samp attributes to pesticide companies sponsoring the event. He won't name which festival or which company, but a few months later, his film was rejected again from another festival. He later found out the festival was sponsored by the same pesticide companies.

"They didn't want people learning about me and my anti-pesticide stance, my anti-GM crop stance…it's a form of censorship," Samp says. "When I started beekeeping many, many years ago, I didn't realize it'd be so political by now."

But Samp tries not to focus on things like that, saying that complaining would allow "them" to win. So that's what he's doing. In addition to prepping for touring, dates TBA, Samp says he's about 90 percent finished with a new album, he has a publishing

deal for an "alternative beekeeper's diary," and is designing a rotating hexagonal sculpture that gives off a magnetic field that creates sound.

"That's where they've got you in the end—if it actually prevents you from doing more work because you're overthinking about it," Samp says. "The best thing I can do to counteract that is just to come up with something new."

You can check out Samp's music on Soundcloud or Bandcamp.

Troy Farah https://motherboard.vice.com