



# Wealden Apiarist

Newsletter of the High Weald Division of the Sussex Beekeeping Association

Secretary: John Preston T: 01892 862581 E: [john\\_alan\\_preston@hotmail.com](mailto:john_alan_preston@hotmail.com)  
 Editor: John Lyte T: 01435 872559 E: [jlyte@btinternet.com](mailto:jlyte@btinternet.com)

**March - April 2015**

## Features



Apidea Workshop

## High Weald Beekeepers Events Diary

Date	Event	Address
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> March	SBKA AGM Trade stands 13.00 Meeting starts 14.30	Robertsbridge Village Hall
Thursday 12th March	Swarm Control talk	Cross in Hand Pub
Tuesday 31st March	Bee Banter	Rose & Crown Mayfield
Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> April	Bee Banter	Crow and Gate Crowborough
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> April	Beekeeping Taster Day 10-4pm	Rotherfield Apiary
Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup> April	Bee Banter	Rose & Crown Mayfield

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### **EDITORS BUZZ....**

Although March 1<sup>st</sup> is the meteorological start of Spring, the last few days of rain and cold winds makes that hard to believe, but as I write this the sun is shining and honey bees are busy in a clump of Erica. Life is stirring and in the hive the queen may well be starting to lay. I've already noticed that some bees are bringing in pollen, from crocuses and snowdrops I assume. But, although this is a vital source of protein, it'll be some time before nectar becomes available, so keep an eye on the stores situation. If the hives feel light give them some fondant to help tide them through, as the workers will be using up a lot of energy at this time.

**John Lyte**

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### **SKEP MAKING WORKSHOP**

Fun was had by all those who attended on the Skep making workshop on the 7th February given by expert Nick Mengham at Uplands Community College in Wadhurst. Nick guided us through the complicated, but fascinating process of skep making. Here are the happy skep makers after a hard days work.



A big thanks should go to both Nick for his expertise and Helen for working so hard serving tea and washing up in addition to all her other tasks.

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### **Bee Behaviour and Colony Collapse**

**Brian Hopper** spotted a recent article in *Nature* on some interesting work carried-out on bee behaviour and links to colony collapse. Below is summarised version of the report.

#### **Bee Behaviour and Colony Collapse**

A possible cause of honey bee colony collapse could be due to younger, inexperienced bees which are flying out to forage, raising their risk of death according to a report in the journal *Nature*.

As we know, many bee colonies are failing due to a combination of factors such as varroa, viral pathogens, pesticides and adverse weather. Bees react to such stressors by foraging at a younger age, so to learn how this might cause rapid population declines, Andrew Barron and his colleagues at Macquarie University in Sydney radio-tagged bees in experimental colonies to monitor their flight behaviour.

The insects that began foraging earlier in life completed fewer successful trips and had a lower survival rate than those that foraged at the normal age.

Mathematical models showed that the resulting decrease in food for the colony and the increased forager mortality over time led to rapid colony collapse. The researchers suggest that supplemental feeding of colonies at critical times in the season would allow stronger bee populations with a more balanced spread of ages to be maintained which could help to stave off such rapid colony decline.

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### **Threat to Wild Bees and other Insects**

I recently saw an article on the BBC Website, which I include below.

The trade in bees used for honey, or to pollinate crops could have a devastating impact on wild bees and other insects, say scientists.

New measures are needed to stop diseases carried by commercial bees spilling over into the wild, says a University of Exeter team.

Evidence suggests that bees bred in captivity can carry diseases that could be a risk to native species. Bees are used commercially to pollinate crops such as peppers and oilseed rape.

*"It's vitally important that we look after the health of both wild and managed bees - we have to be very careful we don't spread diseases from one continent to another"* says Professor David Goulson University of Sussex

Species of bees used for this purpose, or in commercial hives, are known to suffer from parasite infections and more than 20 viruses. Many of these can also infect wild bumble bees, wasps, ants and hoverflies.

The study, published in the **Journal of Applied Ecology**, reviewed data from existing studies to look at the potential for diseases to jump from commercial bees to insects in the wild.

*"Our study highlights the importance of preventing the release of diseased commercial pollinators into the wild," said lead researcher Dr Lena Wilfert.*

*"The diseases carried by commercial species affect a wide range of wild pollinators but their spread can be avoided by improved monitoring and management practices. Commercial honey beekeepers have a responsibility to protect ecologically and economically important wild pollinator communities from disease."*

#### **'Drastic impacts'**

Several diseases of honeybee colonies are known, such as the Varroa mite and a virus that leads to deformed wings, which is now being found in wild bumble bees.

Vanessa Amaral-Rogers of the charity, [Buglife](#), said the results of the study showed an urgent need for changes in how the government regulates the importation of bees.

*"Wild honey bees can no longer be found in England or Wales, thought to have been wiped out by disease," she told BBC News. "Now these studies show how diseases can be transmitted between managed honey bees and commercial bumble bees, and could have potentially drastic impacts on the rest of our wild pollinators."*

A study last year on a sample of commercial bumble bee hives imported into the UK found 77% were contaminated with up to five different parasites, with a further three being found in the pollen that was brought in with them, she added.

Commenting on the study, Prof David Goulson of the [University of Sussex](#), said: *"It's vitally important that we look after the health of both wild and managed bees. We have to be very careful we don't spread diseases from one continent to another."*

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## APIDEA WORKSHOP

## Words and stills John Lyte

On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February, Helen Hadley and Malcolm Wilkie ran a fascinating workshop on queen rearing using Apideas and Demaree boards. I won't try to explain the process in this article as it would take up too many pages, but there will be explanatory details on the website shortly.

I'll just say that Apideas are a 'kit of parts' and that the following stills may help to clarify the mechanics.



Reminiscent of an airfix kit, there are a few fittings that have to be separated for use. When the plastic frames are clipped together a thin strip of foundation is fitted and secured by dribbling molten bees wax along seam to weld it in. The bees will quickly draw this out as in the right hand frame.



I won't try to explain the process, but a queen is contained in a Demaree board that contains artificial cells for her to lay in. When the egg has hatched the cell is removed from the frame to the next stage.



There are three components that make up the artificial queen cell, starting with the smallest from the Demaree containing the larvae. The three parts are quickly fitted together and placed in a queen rearing frame that is placed in brood box with bees.

After a few days workers will add wax to the artificial cell which will then be removed from the frame and placed into the Apidea. Note that the frames must be arranged correctly creating a circular space to accommodate the cell.

**Full details and time scales will be available on the association website.**

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**ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS!**  
**Please send them to the Editor [jlyte@btinternet.com](mailto:jlyte@btinternet.com)**  
**Next newsletter out at the end of June**

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