



Wealden Apiarist

Newsletter of the High Weald Division of the Sussex Beekeeping Association

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September - October 2015

Features



French Visit



Annual BBQ



Hornet eating Plant

High Weald Beekeepers Events Diary

Date	Event	Address
Sunday 20 th September	Horam Apple Day and Food Fair	Horam Manor Farm Horam TN21 0JB
Thursday 10th Sept	Bee Banter	Crow and Gate Crowborough
Tuesday 29th Sept	Bee Banter	Rose & Crown Mayfield
Thursday 8 th October	Bee Banter	Crow and Gate Crowborough
Tuesday 29th October	Bee Banter	Rose & Crown Mayfield
	Any additional events during this period will be posted on website or emailed to the membership	

EDITORS BUZZ....

This summer hasn't been very kind and although my bees seem happy and productive I am aware that forage is getting less, until things like ivy come into flower for that last burst of nectar and pollen. Because rain and poor weather may be making it difficult for the bees to get out, the BBKA strongly recommend that we all check the weight of our colonies for winter stores, either by hefting, or as I do using luggage scales hooked onto screws driven into the sides of the floors.

If they seem a bit light, then you should consider feeding, although robbing is a danger, so care must be taken. Only feed in the evening when most flying bees are inside and always avoid any spillages.

John Lyte

Barbeque

Words and pictures John Lyte



It was under the usual, slightly threatening sky that identifies with the BBQ season that the association went al fresco. Held in the beautiful setting of John Schumachers trout fishery at Rotherfield, a marvellous spread was provided by the very hard-working committee team.



With a fair amount of smoke, hive like team-work, burnt fingers and precision catering, everyone tucked in to a feast. A great evening and a huge thank you to all who made the event possible.

The French Visit

Words by Malcolm Wilkie

This year there were five couples who came over from France for the weekend just before the bank holiday in August. It was a busy weekend, but much enjoyed by all the participants.

On the Friday Maggie Whittaker had organised a visit of the gardens at Great Dixter. We were given a superb tour of the gardens by one of the gardeners and this was enjoyed by many of the French participants. We also briefly went down into the meadow area to look at the one beehive that is kept at Great Dixter.



After that, several of us went to Hastings and fish and chips were bought for the French party. I am not sure that this was the best culinary experience they have had but, because of it, I don't think they will ever forget their brief visit to Hastings.

On Saturday there was a visit to LASI at Sussex University. The research done at Sussex University proved to be extremely interesting to Christophe and it led to much discussion about the late summer treatment of honeybee colonies. We discovered how they tried to breed hygienic queen bees at Sussex.

We stopped in Buxted for lunch in the garden of Chris Blandford; glorious weather and a beautiful landscaped garden with a lake. Later on that afternoon we were given a wonderful welcome at Iwood Place by Jonathan Coote. Jonathan speaks good French and we found out about his '123' method of swarm control. We also had the opportunity to look at one of his hives and talk about his use of lactic acid to keep his bees clear of varroa. Shirley gave us a wonderful tea and the whole experience was enjoyed by everybody.

On Sunday I had left time for hosts to look at their bees with their French guests. Heavy rain meant that the lunch we were going to have at the trout farm in Rotherfield had to be transferred to my house in Crowborough. A big thank you to all the hosts who cooked and provided salads, desserts, sauces and all sorts of goodies. I think all the French had a cracking time.

As everyone knows, European Foul Brood is still causing serious problems at the Association apiary site at Withyham. Association member Debbie Clark attended a key inspection and wrote to say that although it was extremely instructive but so disappointing to find EFB in that otherwise thriving hive. She attached a photo of an affected grub and more pleasantly the photo of the beautiful pollen array.



Hornet Eating Plants

A recent report on the BBC website caught my eye regarding the Asian Hornet.

Pitcher plant in France eats bee-killing Asian hornets

Bee-killing Asian hornets spreading across Europe now face a natural enemy that lures them to destruction - a carnivorous North American plant, French experts say.

The head of a botanical garden in Nantes, western France, says the pitcher plant *Sarracenia* devours Asian hornets - but not European hornets. Nor does it eat bees or wasps.

Romarc Perrocheau recently found a *Sarracenia* stem full of dead hornets.



Mr Perrocheau, quoted by AFP news agency, said *Sarracenia* had "invented a very selective trap" for the aggressive Asian hornets.

The hornets are apparently attracted by *Sarracenia*'s nectar and pheromones on the plant's tubular leaves. Once the hornet crawls inside the rim at the top it easily slips and plunges into the pitcher, to be digested by the plant's juices.

The trap appears to be a European adaptation, as Asian hornets do not exist in *Sarracenia*'s native Massachusetts, in the eastern US. The plant can be grown easily in Europe and is not considered a threat to native flora.

Mr Perrocheau and an entomologist aim to study the contents of 200 pitchers, hoping to identify the chemical secret of their attraction for Asian hornets.

For those who may be interested in the plant, which theoretically could be grown in the UK, the following provides some information.

Sarracenia, or North American pitcher plants, are native throughout the east coast, from northern Florida through the New England states and the eastern provinces of Canada. These plants get their name from their pitcher-shaped leaves. They capture insects by producing nectar along the rim of their pitchers. When an insect starts to lick up the nectar, it tries to get more by reaching in the pitcher. When it loses its footing, it falls straight in!

The inside walls of the pitcher are very smooth, so insects are not able to crawl out. They also can't fly out because there isn't any airlift! Eventually the insect dies from heat exhaustion or dehydration. As the insect decomposes, the plant absorbs its nutrients right through its leaves.

Sarracenia occurs naturally mostly where temperatures in winter can sometimes reach as low as 10°F (-12°C) for brief periods of time. In cultivation it is always recommended to follow proper winter care when growing, regardless of a plant's cold tolerance. See below for more information.

Where to Grow

Sarracenia grows best outdoors as a container or potted plant. It makes an excellent addition to any sunny deck or patio. You may also grow it in a pond or fountain, but keep the crown of the plant above water. Because of its specific soil requirements, avoid planting it directly into the ground, unless you have created a specific type of bog garden.

Sunlight

During the growing season, grow your pitcher plant outside in full sun. Provide 6 or more hours of direct sunlight for vigorous growth.

If full sun is not possible, provide a minimum of 4 hours of direct sunlight with bright indirect light during the rest of the day. Your plant won't be as vibrant or sturdy as one grown in full sun, but you will be able to maintain its overall health.

Heat Tolerance

Sarracenia is quite tolerant of the summer heat. It originates from areas where temperatures above 90°F (32°C) are a common occurrence in summer. However, in its native habitat, the soil temperature is moderated by a slow seepage of cool spring water.

Hornet Trap

Words and pictures John Lyte

For those who might have read my article on the hornet trap, I thought I should report on its use. I actually installed it mid July when hornets started showing an interest in the hives. On my first inspection after two weeks I found that the weight on the hive and supers pressing down made it difficult to remove the trap drawer. I had to use a 'J' hive tool to lever it out. I managed this without inflicting any damage and found that the only prey were, unfortunately, about six honey bees. This worried me at the time, but when I looked again a week later there were no bees, but lots of wasps.



Since then I've emptied the trap every 2 weeks or so and on each occasion it had caught scores of wasps. Regarding hornets, apart from an early sighting, I seen far fewer this year, while wasps have been far more plentiful. Anyway, I think it's been worth installing, if only to attract the wasps away from trying to enter the main entrances of the other hives.

The Bees - Book Review

Words by Kirsty Cable

A friend of Malcolm Wilkie, Kirsty Cable, read the above book recommended by him and wrote this short review that is well worth sharing.

I read this book purely as a novel, as I'm not a bee keeper, so was not hindered by any real science or bee keeping knowledge.

From this perspective it was a fabulous and gripping story. It blows the myth away of benign Matriarchal societies that's for sure.

Our heroines stoicism I think, reflects our ideas about bees being little grafters that don't give up. The religion of the bee's was fascinating and thought provoking, as we don't generally give animals or insects for that matter, any credit with having their own faith and rituals.

However the bees rituals are quite hypnotic, and the priestesses power was akin to cult brainwashing, with some uncomfortable resonances within human society, especially the blind and willing acceptance to follow the sages instructions even to death, always with the alleged good of the hive, until of course, this was exposed by Flora 717 nearer the end of the book.

This is a multi-layered story that will only improve with further reading, which I'm sure will reveal further insights as well as being a wonderful story. This book is definitely not one to be 'disneyfied ' but well worth passing on to a friend, which I have done and will read again on its return. Highly recommended

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS!
Please send them to the Editor jlyte@btinternet.com
Next newsletter out at the end of October
