

# The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter  
Hot off the 'press'

Issue No: 1/10

March 2010

**THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER IS ANONYMOUSLY SPONSORED BY AN M.B.A. MEMBER – THANK YOU!**

## NEW SEASON – NEW CHALLENGE!

On a fine sunny morning in March, the site of bees bringing in pollen will gladden the heart of many a beekeeper, especially after the cold and snowy winter we are in the midst of. Honeybees are remarkable creatures and as 'they don't freeze to death, just starve to death', it is important that you follow John Salt's advice on page 2 and check that your bees have enough stores to keep them alive until pollen and nectar is available.



MBA volunteers – the lifeblood of any organisation!

It is an exciting time for Moray Beekeepers Association (MBA) as interest in beekeeping is at an all time high compared to recent years, not only in Moray but throughout Scotland and the U.K. At a time when feral colonies of honeybees are almost non existent which means there won't be many swarms about we will struggle to provide new members with bees. This is where the Association Apiary comes into the picture. ***The vision is to have a well stocked apiary of local healthy bees, and a Queen rearing programme which will enable us to provide members with Queens and nuclei of bees at a much reduced cost. It will also be a 'Training Apiary' where MBA members, of all levels of experience, will be able to improve their beekeeping skills and knowledge. It will also be a 'Community Apiary' where local groups will come and learn about the honeybee and how they can help conserve the species, and attract them into their gardens. And finally, it will be a 'Honey Producing Apiary', bottling and selling local honey at local outlets, profits going back into the apiary running costs.***

### BUT FOR THIS TO HAPPEN WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

A small team of dedicated volunteers is required to achieve the vision. So, if you are passionate about the future of the honeybee in Scotland, and would like to improve your beekeeping skills and knowledge, or share your experience with others, why don't you get involved in this exciting project. The only requirement on your part is enthusiasm and the time to give a few Sunday afternoons a year!

The plan is to hold Open Apiary meetings every fortnight throughout the season when a Duty Beekeeper and Assistant will carry out the normal seasonal work at the apiary and any interested parties can go along to watch and learn. This will be in addition to our usual summer programme of monthly meetings so it is going to be a busy time for some of us.

There will be a Working Party at the Association Apiary on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March commencing at 11am when we hope to complete the pathways, fit a gate, erect a large shed and get the apiary ready for the bees which will hopefully be available in April/May

MBA will also be holding a number of beekeeping courses this summer aimed mainly at beginners but with the option to hold intermediate courses for more experienced beekeepers later in the year. (details on page 3). Please spread the word to your friends and acquaintances who have shown an interest in beekeeping in the past!

## THIS MONTH IN THE APIARY *by John Salt*



March is the month when hope starts to stir in the beekeeper but it can also be the month that can bring disappointment. Your queens should have started laying in February with the first of the young bees emerging by the middle of March. Spring flowers such as snowdrops, crocus and aconites should be well out of the ground. 'Pussy or 'goat 'willow' (*Salix caprea*) flowers mid to end of March and produces an abundant quantity of much needed pollen.



Queen laying an egg



Worker bee emerging from cell



Snowdrop



Bee on aconite



Honeybee on pussy willow



Bee collecting pollen



Guard bees



Pollen patty on top bars

The nurse bees need this high protein source when making up the food for the new larvae and mix with it enzymes from glands in their heads. If there is a shortage of good pollen, the young bees/larvae are undernourished and consequently the glands in their heads become under developed. When these young bees/larvae emerge and then in turn become nurse bees, the amount of enzymes they are able to produce to mix into the bee food, is reduced, causing the next generation of bees to emerge with even more under-developed glands. This can cause the whole colony to go into decline and finally perish. If in doubt you can feed a pollen substitute ... make up a pate of soy(a) flour and honey, place on a piece a grease proof paper on top of the frames. Soy flour can be obtained from a good 'health food' shop. Don't use imported honey, it may contain AFB spores, use your own if you can.

**Do your bees have enough stores?** End of February/March is the time when brood rearing starts to take off and food consumption increases dramatically. This is the time when beekeepers can find their colonies dead through starvation. If the bees are confined to barracks with snow/cold damp weather feed fondant, obtainable from your local baker. If the weather is warm and the bees are flying regularly you can feed sugar syrup, a 2:1 mix is good. If in doubt over feed !

**Are your bees still alive?** I am a bit of a lazy beekeeper and don't bother to inspect the bees too much during March. I have a look at the outside of the hive ... the doorway. You can learn a lot! Your bees should be flying by March and especially on warm days, around lunchtime-ish. Are there guard bees at the entrance, checking other bees coming and going ? Bees bringing pollen in? Good! No guard bees, no pollen, just bees coming and going ? Could be robbers cleaning out a dead hive. No bees at all ... give a couple of sharp knocks on the brood box, stand back and see if anyone comes to the door to see who's knocking.

If you are one of the unlucky beekeepers to find your hive has died out. Seal it off soonest to stop robbers who will spread any pathogen that was responsible. If you're not sure what has killed them ... ask for a second opinion.

There was a lot of AFB and EFB reported last backend. Please don't be responsible for letting it spread by leaving your dead hive open to robbers. Finally, don't forget to monitor varroa!

Why are some husbands like beekeepers' smokers ?

They are difficult to get started, emit foul smells, and don't work half the time.

**JUST ONE POLLEN SUBSTITUTE RECIPE** – 75% (of total weight) FAT FREE SOYA FLOUR, 25% BREWERS YEAST, mixed together with sugar syrup or honey. The patties are flattened out so they are half an inch thick on plastic sheets and stored in plastic bags to stop them drying out. They are put directly onto the brood chamber frames (pressed down in between the seams of the frames) with the plastic film uppermost. It pays to have the plastic much bigger in diameter than the patty to prevent it drying out and becoming crumbly.

In Feb/Mar a healthy colony may consume a one pound patty per week. Once started it is important to continue until natural pollen is available in sufficient quantity.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING UPDATE

22 members attended the A.G.M. on a cold winter's night in January and here is some of what was decided.

- Membership fees were increased to £10. Adult, £5 for over 65 yrs and those aged between 12 – 16 years
- A new updated Constitution was adopted.
- A new Committee was elected, details as follows: Chairman: Andrew Tassell, Keith, tel. 01466 771243, Vice Chairman: Graham Hill, Elgin, tel. 01343 542919 , Secretary: Tony Harris, Fochabers, tel. 01343 821282 , Treasurer: Kevin West, Longmorn, tel. 01343 860274 , Committee members – John Salt (Webmaster), Forres, tel. 01309 673703 , Eric Clayton (Librarian), Clochan, tel. 01542 850270 , Rob MacKenzie, Pluscarden, tel. 01343 890395 , Viv Hill, Elgin, tel. 01343 542919 , Lorna Lloyd Baker, Forres, tel. 07989 263028. In addition, Andrew Watson. Huntly, tel.01466 760277 has been co-opted onto the Committee. These people are your representatives so please feel free to make contact with the Committee member in your area.

# DYSENTERY

In the midst of one of the coldest winters for decades your bees will have been confined in the hive for long periods of time, and being unable to exit the hive for a cleansing flight, or to collect water to dilute granulated stores, you may find dysentery present in your hive.



The first signs will be brown stains (excrement) around the hive entrance and this will undoubtedly be the case inside the hive as well. It is not a disease, however, it is a condition, telling you that something is wrong inside the hive, and it can happen to the best of beekeeper's bees.

Dysentery is caused by excess water in the intestine of the bee, which manifests itself mainly in the winter and can be due to any of the following:

- Unripe honey or late feeding
- Granulated stores
- Alcohol due to fermenting stores
- Brown sugar, raw sugar and acid inverted sugars, and
- Possibly, wintering for long periods, solely on heather honey.

Although the winter bee has the ability to extend its rectum, when the rectum weight approaches a third of the weight of the bee, comb soiling starts, and if a half weight of the bee, dysentery is certain.

In severe cases, in bad weather, it can kill a colony, but it is more likely that the bees and the colony are so weakened that it succumbs to viral infections.

There is no prescribed treatment for dysentery although warm thick syrup is said to be helpful.

The other method is to carry out a shook swarm in spring. The shook swarm technique replaces all brood frames in a single operation, thus removing all potentially diseased equipment at a single stroke and minimising disease transfer. Also, it should only be carried out on a strong colony (say 6 or 7 frames of bees) capable of enduring the stress it undoubtedly creates and should have a satisfactory laying Queen. Full details of how to carry out a Shook Swarm with your bees will be in the next Newsletter.

## M.B.A. BEEKEEPING COURSES 2010

**TASTER DAYS** Association Apiary, Birnie Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April, Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May, Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June. Time: 1.00pm – 3.00pm

These afternoon 'taster sessions' are for those who are interested in bees and beekeeping but don't necessarily wish to keep bees. It is a 2 hour outdoor session looking at the many threats to our native bees, what can be done to help them and attract them into the garden, and participants will also be shown the inside of a hive.

The cost of the afternoon is £10 and numbers are limited.

### INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING

Location: Elgin Library, Cooper Park, Elgin (Fri evening) and Association Apiary, Nether Birnie, Elgin (Sat/Sun afternoon)

Dates: Fri 7<sup>th</sup> and Sat 8<sup>th</sup> May, Fri 11<sup>th</sup> and Sun 13<sup>th</sup> June, Fri 16<sup>th</sup> and Sat 17<sup>th</sup> July

Time: Friday evening 7pm – 9pm, Saturday or Sunday afternoon 1.00pm – 3.00pm

This course is for those interested in keeping bees and would like to know more. It is held in the classroom on the Friday evening followed by a 2 hour practical session on the Saturday afternoon, looking inside a hive.

The classroom session will include: The Honeybee colony; Inside the hive; Getting started; Swarming; Disease; The Honey Harvest

The practical session will cover: Protective Gear/Safety; Opening the hive; What's inside; Recognising workers queens and drones

The cost for the weekend is £25.00 per person, £40.00 per couple, under 12 years free.

Numbers are limited and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. For further details please contact: Tony Harris, Tel. 01343 821282 or any member of your Committee

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### MORAY BEEKEEPERS SUMMER PROGRAMME

Sunday March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Working Party, Association Apiary, Nether Birnie * <b>START TIME 11 AM</b>
Sunday April 18 <sup>th</sup>	Queen Marking/Clipping, Association Apiary, Nether Birnie
<b>Saturday</b> May 15 <sup>th</sup>	General Inspection, Pluscarden Abbey
Sunday June 20 <sup>th</sup>	Summer Inspection, G & V Hill's Apiary, Blossombank, Birnie
Sunday July 18 <sup>th</sup>	Warre Hives, Rob & Angie MacKenzie's Apiary, Pluscarden
Sunday August 15 <sup>th</sup>	Barbeque at John & Julie Salt's, Rafford
Sunday September 19 <sup>th</sup>	Talk & Demonstration, 'Extracting Honey' Location t.b.a. Meetings commence at 2pm and are usually concluded by 4pm

### INVERNESS BEEKEEPERS INVITE M.B.A. MEMBERS TO THEIR MEETINGS

Tuesday March 9 <sup>th</sup>	John Durkasc, 'The Dark Bee in Scotland, past. Present and future'
Tuesday April 13 <sup>th</sup>	Ian Craig, 'Preparation of Honey for Show and sale'
Tuesday May 11 <sup>th</sup>	Neil & Evelyn Spence, 'Queen selection and Rearing'
Tuesday June 8 <sup>th</sup>	'Beekeeping Question Time' with Brenda Maclean, Peter Browne & Alan teale

Meetings take place at the Scottish School of Forestry, Balloch, and commence at 7.30pm. For further details contact Stella Forth. Tel. 01463 831511

## NEW SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS' FORUM

A beekeeping forum, under the auspices of the Scottish Beekeeping Association, has opened at [www.SBAi.org.uk](http://www.SBAi.org.uk) and you are cordially invited to join in. Once registered, you can:

- talk to beekeepers across Scotland and beyond
- help beginners
- discuss issues with your local association colleagues
- talk to your national beekeeping association
- record your experiences in your own blog

If this sort of thing is your 'cup of tea' then please join in to make it a success!

### SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

MBA is affiliated to the SBA which is the national body that represents Scotland's beekeepers. Membership of £25pa brings among other things a monthly magazine, an extensive website, an insurance policy, teaching and exams in practical beekeeping and a range of other services to members to assist and support their beekeeping.

Full details are on their website [www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk).

### SBA BASIC BEEMASTER CERTIFICATE

Please note that the closing date is 17<sup>th</sup> April

### SBA AUTUMN CONVENTION

Will be held on Saturday 11 September at Blackburn, between Aberdeen and Inverurie. Further details to follow.

### BEE BOOK WEBSITE

Northern Bee Books have a wide and varied selection of books on beekeeping many of which cannot be purchased elsewhere. They now have a new site where you can view and purchase the books and the address is shown below [www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks](http://www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks)

## A WARM WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

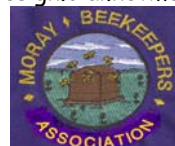
Edna Cameron

### BEE SUITS/GLOVES /SMOCKS

Quality bee suits and clothing from BB Wear, for MBA members who receive a 15% discount (please order via the MBA Secretary)

BB1 Full suit £78.63,  
[www.bbwear.co.uk/](http://www.bbwear.co.uk/)

Baseball caps, T-shirts, sweat shirts and fleeces are available with the Moray Beekeepers logo embroidered on from:  
**EMBROIDERY DESIGNS**, Easter Lochend, Balcroy, Nairn IV12 5NY  
Tel:01667 404635  
E-mail: [user@embroiderydesign.dial.netmedia.co.uk](mailto:user@embroiderydesign.dial.netmedia.co.uk)



The Association website is packed with lots of useful information on beekeeping and bees and has links to national associations, suppliers and other bee sites around the world. It is well worth a visit - the address is shown below.

[www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk)

Items for inclusion in the Newsletter to be sent to the Editor: Tony Harris, Cowiemuir, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7PS or you can e mail: [tonyharris316@btinternet.com](mailto:tonyharris316@btinternet.com)

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR SUBS, NOW £10 ADULT, £5 OVER 65YRS AND 12-16YRS!**