

The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter

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Scottish Charity Number SCO42185

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SWEDISH VISIT

Due to the funding received from Leader, a European funding programme aimed at rural communities, Moray Beekeepers Association have formed links with a beekeeper society in northern Uppsala County and recently hosted a visit from the Swedish beekeepers.



Tony Harris, shows off local Morayshire honey to the Swedish guests who were particularly pleased to taste Scottish heather honey for the first time!

Donna Clark and Tony Harris, as part of a larger group from Moray Leader made a trip to Sweden a few weeks later where they witnessed Swedish beekeeping at its best. After a 2 hour drive to the apiary, with thanks to Mia, our driver, we were served a delightful lunch by Yngwe Persson and his group followed by Swedish honey tasting.



It can get much colder in Sweden in the winter but the summer temperatures and beekeeping management systems are similar to Scotland.



However, pests of the honeybee are rather different, as Yngwe has to keep watch for bears, wolves and wild boar as they can damage beehives. This is one of the reasons he keeps his Buckfast bees in a bee house as they are more secure and also better protected from the very cold winters.

Another half hour trip saw us at the group's extracting facility that was impressive and something we would like to copy here in Moray.

We were finally shown around a honey factory, which is also the headquarters of their honey co-operative. They jar over 10 tones of honey a year that is sold all over Uppsala County in supermarkets and farmers' markets.



VARROA



VARROA MITE

Varroa is endemic across Moray so if you keep bees here you can be sure that they will be infested with the varroa mite. But that shouldn't give you cause to panic! Beekeepers should be aiming to keep the varroa mite below the level where they cause significant harm (that's officially less than a 1,000 mites per colony in the U.K.) by using a combination of controls, at different times of the year. The bees, with a little help from the beekeeper, can learn to live with varroa, but, if you do nothing to tackle varroa it is more than likely that the colony will die out within a year or two.

Even if the bees were treated for varroa last autumn, the mite can build up quite rapidly as the Queen increases her laying rate and if left untreated can lead to sudden colony collapse later in the summer. Remember this - with an 80% kill rate the danger level (of 1,000 mites) is reached again in only 65 days and with 90% in 100 days!

Also, there are now pyrethroid resistant mites in Scotland so it is unwise to simply rely on a varroacide like apistan.



So what simple steps can the beekeeper take now to attack varroa?

The ardent Beekeeper should check the varroa infestation level in spring time and during summer and into autumn, by counting the dead mites on the floor of the hive over a given

number of days (open mesh floor and insert required), or, by uncapping drone brood and looking for the mite there. Very roughly, if more than 5-10% of drone pupae are infected, then the infestation is serious, and urgent treatment is required – seek advice if necessary.

Regardless of whether you have the time or inclination to measure the varroa levels in your colony, DRONE BROOD REMOVAL is a very simple way of fighting back against varroa, it doesn't require a high level of skill and is something you should be doing now up to the end of July!

How does it work? Well, varroa prefer to lay eggs in drone brood due to the extra days it takes for drones to emerge from the cell (they can make more babies) and beekeepers can take advantage of this. Simply insert a shallow frame of drawn comb or foundation in the middle of the brood chamber, and invariably, the bees will build drone comb on the underside of the frame. Once the queen lays in this comb the varroa will move in and once it is sealed, the sealed drone brood, along with the varroa mite inside the sealed cell, can be cut away and disposed of. The shallow frame can be immediately replaced in the brood box and the entire procedure repeated again and again. It is very important not to let the drones emerge because if this happens the beekeeper is actually making the situation worse rather than better!

DUSTING WITH ICING SUGAR

To compliment this we need to also attack the mites that live on the adult bee and we can do this by dusting the bees with icing sugar. Drone brood trapping and sugar dusting is an excellent method of controlling varroa in your hive, attacking the mites in the brood whilst also knocking them off the bees. It's safe, doesn't hurt the colony, can be used even when they are storing honey, works any time of the year that bees are not tight in a cluster, is cheap and only takes seconds. The drawbacks are that its application is dependent on fair weather and it may also draw ants into the hive.

Here's how to do it. The equipment needed is a bee brush, a 1 cup measuring cup filled with icing sugar, a wood rimmed travelling screen, and the colony should be on a screened bottom over an open mesh varroa floor.



brush over the top bars

Technique: Smoke the colony, remove the crown board and smoke the bees down off the top bars. Put the travelling screen over the frames and then use the cup to spread the icing sugar on the screen over the bees (some beekeepers don't use the screen and apply the sugar direct onto the top bars). Then use the brush to sift the sugar through the screen and onto the bees. Lift the screen and continue to use the brush across the top bars so that the sugar falls between the frames. Replace the cover.

Mites will begin to fall within seconds and if you have rubbed Vaseline on the floor insert you can get a good indication of your mite level in an hour.



dusted bees

It is claimed that if you dust once every 4 weeks and continue Drone Trapping the varroa mite population will be held in check

JUNE MEETING

OUR NEXT MEETING IS AT BIRNIE TRAINING APIARY ON SUNDAY 30TH JUNE, 1.00PM START.

WEATHER PERMITTING WE WILL BE CARRYING OUT SUMMER INSPECTIONS INCLUDING SWARM CONTROL TECHNIQUES.

FOUNDATION AND JARS WILL BE ON SALE AT DISCOUNTED PRICES AND YOU CAN PAY YOUR 2013 SUBSCRIPTION, SO BRING CASH OR CHEQUE BOOK WITH YOU.

A RAFFLE WILL TAKE PLACE AND REFRESHMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTERWARDS!

Full details of all Monthly Meetings, Open Apiary Sessions and Courses are at

www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk

THE SWARMING SEASON IS UPON US! PART 2

So, despite your best efforts, one of your hives has swarmed and the swarm is hanging on a branch about 5 feet from the ground just waiting for you to come and collect it (well, we can but dream!). There are several ways to collect a swarm but this article explains how the swarm behaves once it has issued from the hive and how and why a new home is chosen. If you can get an understanding of this you will be able to increase your chances of picking up a passing swarm.



A clustered swarm



Bee exposing its Nasonov gland



Bees fanning Nasonov pheromone at hive entrance



Natural comb



More natural comb



Varroa mite on adult bee



Bait hive, a few metres off the ground



Swarm lure

Assuming that the weather is favourable, the swarm will emerge at about noon, and with the queen will settle, usually within 10-20 metres of the hive, the bees attracted initially by the queen pheromone and then by the Nasonov pheromone from the worker bees that find her first. (also know as 'the come and join us' pheromone, it comes from the Nasonov gland on the base of the bees abdomen, and the bees raise their abdomens (bums) and fan their wings when releasing it). As the bees will have gorged on honey before leaving the hive, swarms are usually good tempered although they can cause alarm to members of the public when settling as there are thousands of bees flying to and fro!

They cluster to conserve heat and the scout bees continue their search for a new home. Ideally they are looking for a cavity of between 20 and 80 litres, with a relatively small entrance of less than 70cm square at the bottom of the cavity. They prefer the cavity and the entrance to be about 5 or 6 metres above the ground and if the cavity has comb in it, built by a previous colony, it is particularly attractive to the bees as they can use it to store nectar and pollen and the queen can commence laying earlier.

Returning scout bees perform different dance routines on the surface of the cluster indicating the site of a new nesting place, and eventually the most vigorous dances are accepted and a decision reached. Sometimes the bees are unable to reach a decision or find a new home and they commence comb building where they are clustering, and although they may thrive in the summer, they are unlikely to survive the winter.

Prior to leaving for the new nest site, the scout bees perform the 'whirr dance' on the surface of the cluster and the swarm takes off for the new home. Upon arrival the scout bees begin fanning the Nasonov pheromone telling the other bees to 'come and join us' and before long the swarm has taken up residence.

It is quite surprising how quickly a swarm can draw out a few frames of foundation into comb but they do so using the stores of honey they previously gorged on. The colonies survival depends on them building comb quickly, collecting and storing nectar and pollen, and the queen commencing laying as soon as possible!

So, with this knowledge what steps can you take to try and catch yourself a swarm? A bait hive is a good idea, fitted with a few frames of old comb and/or frames of foundation. Some beekeepers smear the inside of the bait hive with beeswax and remember that it needn't be a proper beehive; any similar container can be used! You can place your bait hive in your own apiary or better still 50 to 100 metres away, or, you can place it a similar distance from where you know a feral colony of bees is located. If you place the hive a few metres off the ground all the better!

Beekeeping suppliers sell a product called 'swarm lure' that you place in the bait hive and it is said to be even more of an attractant to passing swarms! And if you are fortunate enough to 'catch' a stray swarm, it is a good time to treat for varroa, as any mites will be on the adult bees until comb is built and brood is sealed. This could give you a few days or a week or so to insert one or two strips of apistan or a thymol treatment for example, enough time to kill off lots of varroa mites!

MAKING A NUCLEUS OF YOUNG HOUSE BEES

Nurse bees are the best for forming nuclei, first, because they haven't flown so won't abscond and second, because they accept a new Queen more readily.

To make up a nucleus without finding the Queen take 3 combs, at least one containing plenty of unsealed brood and the others plenty of honey and pollen, out of the hive and shake all the bees from these combs back into the hive. Place these brood frames, now devoid of bees, into a fresh brood chamber, with the unsealed brood in the centre. A Queen excluder is placed over the original brood chamber and the 3 comb box is placed on top and this is covered with a crown board.

In a very short time, about 30 minutes, young bees will have come through the excluder and will be covering the 3 combs, and these can be safely removed, knowing that the Queen will be below the excluder in the original box, and placed in a nuc or spare hive. Feed this nuc thick sugar syrup, as there will be no flying bees in it.

You can introduce a queen immediately in a cage or leave 7 days till there are no eggs or larvae left for them to make a new queen.

Next month we will look at different methods of introducing a queen.

SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN CONVENTION Saturday 21st September 2013 8.45am to 5.10pm in Inverness College – UHI

3 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SA

Mike Brown – Head of the National Bee Unit

Supporting Britain's Bees & Beekeepers
Activities of the National Bee Unit

The NBU's Queen Rearing System

Dr Mario Pahl – University of Wuerzburg

Honeybee Biology
Honeybee Cognition
(learning, memory and navigation in a miniature brain)

Tickets £30 including coffee, lunch and tea (students half price)

TRADE STANDS

BeeCraft, Bibba, SBA, Brunel information,
Solway Bee Supplies, Scottish Govt Bee Inspectorate, Abelo Beekeeping Equipment

Bookings for Convention to Alan Riach
Woodgate, 7 Newland Ave, Bathgate, EH48 1EE
Tel. 01506 653839
Email: alan.riach@which.net

HARVESTING SINGLE FRAMES OF HONEY

You may be fortunate enough to have a few super frames filled with honey by the middle of the month and if you do it is quite easy to enjoy it without the use of expensive extractors. It is quite simple to reap a harvest from just a couple or even individual frames and here's how you do it.

The comb is completely cut from the frame into a bowl and thoroughly mashed until the comb cells are broken up and it has a nice even consistency.



Spoon or pour this honey wax mixture into a large jar as shown in the photo. Place a piece of shaped metal mesh over the mouth of another similar jar. Now take the jar with the mesh and turn it upside down, setting it on top of the filled honey jar and duct tape the two together forming a honey hourglass

When a good seal is made, flip the honey hourglass over and put it in a warm place and wait for an hour or two. Your honey will flow right from the honeycomb into the jar, leaving behind the beeswax and you can fine filter it later. Yummy!

One of the benefits of harvesting single combs at different times throughout the season is that you get to sample honey from multiple flora sources because the bees are collecting from different nectar flows at different times during the season and you will be amazed at the differing flavours. And if you intend to enter your honey into the many summer honey shows in the area, harvesting single frames, allows you to get jars of light, medium and maybe even dark honey without just mixing the lot together to get one uniform blend.

DECANTING HONEY FROM THE SETTLING TANK

Once you have extracted and filtered your honey and left it overnight in a settling tank or more simply a bucket with a honey tap you need to decant it into jars. This is quite an easy job to do but when you get to the last few pounds of honey there is always the problem of the surface scum in the bucket mixing with the clear honey going into the jars. Well, here's a really useful tip to stop this happening!

Cut a length of cling film about the same diameter as your bucket plus an extra 6-8 inches. Starting at the gate side of the bucket lay the cling film on the surface of the honey scum but don't allow any film to stick to the inside of the bucket yet. If your bucket diameter is greater than the width of the cling film you may have to use 2 lengths of film side by side. Try to lay it so as to trap as little air as possible and then when done stick the extra 6-8 inches of film to the inside of the bucket.



Lay the cling film on top of the surface scum



The scum ends up stuck to the cling film

Continue decanting as normal. As the level goes down the film should stay anchored to the side where it has been stuck and the film on the surface should now be pulled across the top, dragging the scum with it. Even if you don't get it exactly right (like my effort in the right hand photo) you will still get clear honey right to the last jar. And as the saying goes, 'practice makes perfect', so give it a go and let us know how you get on.

JUNE IN THE APIARY

by the Apiarist

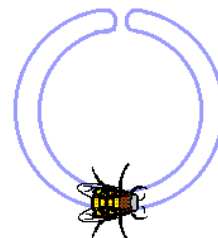
Now that the weather has warmed up your bees should be building up on the 'spring' flow and it is likely that the late start to the season will be a benefit as colonies could be at maximum strength to take advantage of the main nectar flow in July. I moved hives to the oilseed rape about 3 weeks ago and they have really benefited from the move compared to those left at home. Most of my hives have at least one full super of honey, some have two or three with one hive now on its fourth super so I am really pleased with that!

The fine weather will bring on swarming so make sure you are prepared with spare equipment, hives or nucs to make 'splits' or carry out an artificial swarm. The first swarm I heard of was in the last week of May and I have just helped a member collect a prime swarm from the garden. Remember that the skill in beekeeping is keeping your colonies from swarming so that they are at maximum strength for the main summer flow. One very strong colony will collect more honey than 6 weak colonies so it is crucial that you are 'on the ball' with your chosen swarm prevention/control techniques.

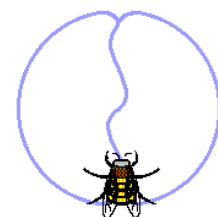
- Regular inspections should continue, every 7 days if you have an unclipped queen, every 10 days if she is clipped. Check for any queen cells with larva inside and when found carry out your chosen swarm control technique.
- Make sure there is enough space in the hive for the queen to lay, the bees to spread out and for them to hang ripening nectar.
- Cut out the sealed drone brood from the bottom of the shallow frame inserted in the brood chamber as part of varroa control and replace the frame in its original position.
- You may be able to take off some frames of capped honey or even complete supers if you are fortunate and this should be extracted as soon as possible. Oil seed rape honey should not be left until it is capped as it is likely to granulate in the comb but how do you know when you can take it? The answer is to shake full super frames over the hive and if any nectar flies out, place it back in the hive as it is not yet ready. If no nectar comes out, even if cells are uncapped, remove and extract immediately. The wet supers can be placed back on the hive in the evening for the bees to clean up.
- Fine filter the OSR honey as it is run into buckets, fill the bucket to the brim, seal the lid and then store the honey at 14C to allow rapid granulation and then below 10C for the best storage conditions after it has granulated. Don't jar OSR in its liquid state unless you don't mind it going 'rock hard' in the jar. Next month's Auricle will include an article on what to do with your granulated OSR honey so you get a lovely creamed or soft set honey from it!
- Spring was late this year so bear in mind that the 'June gap' may also be late. This is the period between the end of the spring nectar flow and the beginning of the main summer flow when the bees can actually starve. You need to check stores and feed the bees if required. Don't feed syrup if you have supers on the hive as it may find its way into the honey super and this is a big 'no, no!' Use fondant over the feed hole in the crown board surrounded by an eke or empty shallow super. Remove the fondant once the flow resumes.
- Make sure you have supers ready for the main nectar flow that should start in July from the lime tree, bramble and Rosebay Willow herb.
- Continue to monitor for varroa using an insert in your open mash floor and by uncapping drone brood.
- If you are fortunate enough to collect a swarm, treat it for varroa as soon as you have it while the mites have no brood to hide in. You can use an apistan strip or strips depending on the size of the swarm or trickle oxalic acid between the top bars – 5ml per seam of bees. Swarms are in a prime state to draw out foundation, so place the swarm onto frames of wired foundation and feed sugar syrup for a week in a rapid feeder.
- Remember it takes between 6 and 8lb of honey to make 1lb of beeswax so be very careful when extracting honey from frames of drawn comb – you can use them again later in the season and indeed, if stored correctly, they can be used year after year.

HONEY BEE DANCES

Bees have a very effective method of communicating information about sources of food using a ROUND dance and a WAGGLE dance.



The ROUND dance is used when the source of food (nectar or pollen) is less than 100 metres from the hive. The dancing bee goes in a circle on the comb, first one way, she turns around and then the other way around the circle. Food is passed from the dancing bee to those watching and following giving information about its taste and smell. The round dance does not tell the bee in which direction to go to the food source just that the food is 'close to the hive and smells and tastes like this'. The bees will then be seen flying to and fro around the hive looking for the food, a sight you may well have seen if you feed sugar syrup to the bees during the day time or you leave a frame or box of honey out by mistake!



For food sources more than 100 metres away the WAGGLE dance is used. The bee will run in a direction on the comb that indicates direction relative to the sun's position. The bee uses the force of gravity (vertically downwards) as the position of the sun and if for example the food source is 30 degrees to the left of the sun the bee will dance 30 degrees to the left of the vertical on the frame. While the bee is indicating direction she will waggle her body from side to side to indicate the distance to the food source. The more waggles the closer the food source is to the hive. The waggle dance gives both direction and distance to the food source and by tasting the food the bee knows what to look for.

SUMMER & AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2013

Saturday 8 th June	Nucleus Creation Workshop, Birnie, 10am-4.30pm (still places available, cost £20)
Sunday 30 th June.	Monthly Meeting, Swarm Control Techniques, Birnie Apiary, 1.00pm
Sunday 28 th July,	Monthly Meeting, Summer Inspections, Birnie Apiary, 1.00pm
Saturday 17 th August	MBA Honeybee Health & Disease course, Birnie, 10am-4pm
Sunday 25 th August.	Trip to the Heather, venue to be confirmed
Sunday 1 st September	MBA Honeybee Health & Disease course, Birnie, 10am-4pm
Saturday 21 st September	SBA Autumn Convention, Inverness
Sunday 30 th September,	Talk & Demonstration, 'Extracting Honey' Birnie Apiary, 1.00pm
Friday 11 th , Sat 12 th October	MBA Honey Show (venue to be confirmed)
Saturday 19 th October	MBA Honey Extraction & Marketing Course, Birnie, 10am – 4pm
Saturday 26 th October	MBA Honey Extraction & Marketing Course, Birnie, 10am – 4pm

M.B.A. SHOP SALES AND RULES

MBA members can benefit from discounted prices on beekeeping equipment and also save on postage by buying from the MBA shop. The prices are shown below along with the shop rules.

Deep wired foundation, pack of 10	£ 8.00
Shallow wired foundation, pack of 10	£ 5.00
DN4 Unassembled Hoffman frames, pack of 10	£10.00
SN4 Unassembled Hoffman frames, pack of 10,	£10.00
1lb Honey jars and lids, pack of 54	£20.00

You must have paid your subs for the current year and **produce your membership card** at the time of purchase! (if you haven't received a membership card or have lost it please contact Joy Malcolm).

Equipment will only be on sale at advertised Apiary Sessions or Monthly meetings (see website or membership card).

Pre-ordering to Andy Watson by phone, Tel 07786247327 is recommended, as your journey will be wasted if your item is not in stock.

A maximum purchase of 20 frames and 40 sheets of foundation only will be allowed

Tony Harris, Tel. 07884 496246 has sourced a stock of 8oz hexagonal jars inc lids at £15 per pack of 36 so give him a call if you want any.

ASSOCIATION HONEY EXTRACTORS



If you don't have your own honey extractor you can borrow one of the Associations. The one on the left is a heather honey press and the one on the right is a manual radial extractor for liquid honey and we have 2 of both



You can borrow them for free by contacting either

Yvonne Stuart (Lhanbryde) Tel: 01343 842317

Or

Tony Harris (Fochabers) Tel 01343 821282

SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (SBA)

Moray Beekeepers Association is affiliated to the SBA and you are encouraged to join. Membership of £30 a year will give you a monthly magazine, £2 million Public and Product liability insurance, a compensation scheme if you lose your bees and access to beekeepers throughout Scotland,

Contact membership convener: Mr. Phil McAnespie, 12 Monument Road, Ayr, KA7 2RL

SBA web site: www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk

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 £84.00

www.bbwear.co.uk/

CONGRATULATIONS

To MBA member **Barbara Westie** for her recent success in the Scottish Beekeepers Association Exams.

Barbara passed Module 8, 'Honeybee Management, Health and History' and has now been awarded the Advanced Beemaster certificate.

The Association website is packed with lots of useful information on beekeeping and bees and has an interesting blog that you are encouraged to contribute to. It is well worth a visit - the address is

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 or phone 07884 496246

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR SUBS FOR 2013, NOW £12 ADULT, £7 OVER 65YRS AND 12-16YRS!