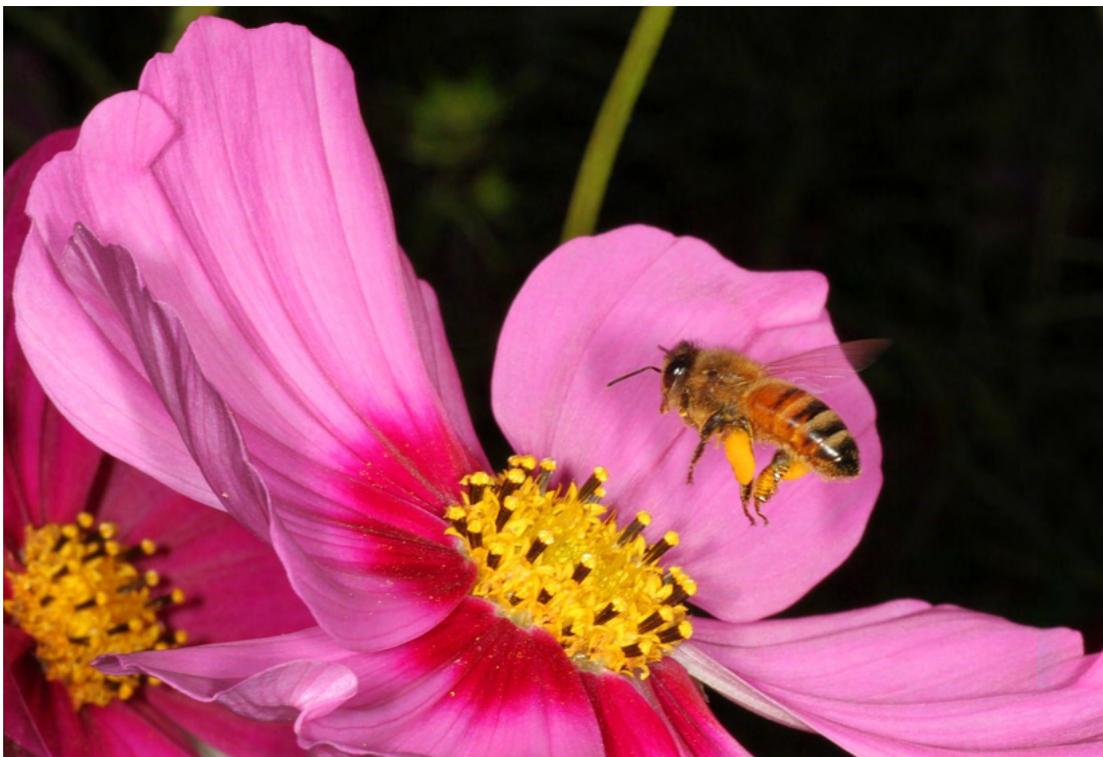


HONEYCRAFT

July 2021



Dorset County Beekeepers Association



Editor's note

Welcome to the midsummer edition of HoneyCraft—neither Covid-related restrictions nor the weather has made the 2021 season easy for bees and beekeepers, as you will read in the association reports. Kevin Pope and Lesley Gasson are both worried about bee diseases, Terry Payne outlines the new BBKA exam procedures and there is a description of the role of the NBU, courtesy of BeeCraft.

A thought-provoking article on bees and microplastics, reproduced courtesy of National Geographic, as well as one on dropped larva syndrome, draw attention to the well-being of bees. On a more practical note, Caroline Dilke describes her experience as a member of the NBU swarm hotline team and Ron Briggs tells how he made a solar wax extractor. Thus I hope that there is something for everyone to enjoy and think about.

Sadly, Covid has caused the cancellation of two of the county's major shows, at Dorchester and Melplash, while the Gillingham and Shaftesbury show goes ahead on 18/19 August, but on a severely modified basis. Thus there are no public opportunities to show and sell honey or any other hive-related products in Dorset this year. But beekeepers are optimists and so we know that 2022 will be better!

In the meantime, happy reading—and don't forget to send in your answers to the question that our Seasonal Bee Inspector, Kevin Pope, poses on pp 5& 6.

Tim Villiers

P.S. Don't forget

Asian Hornet Week: 6-12 September

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Presidential thought

Queens returning from mating flights very occasionally miss the entrance and go under the hive. With a solid floor they soon relocate to the correct entrance. With a mesh floor they can smell the colony and potentially remain under the mesh, possibly getting lost. Is it worth putting the varroa tray in for a few weeks on colonies with virgin queens?

Richard Norman

Chairwoman's chatter

As a Basic Beekeeping Exam examiner I come across beekeepers from many associations and try to make the exam both interesting and challenging. There are four sections to the exam which takes about an hour to complete. It is a practical and oral exam, so there are no written questions. Each of the four sections carries 25 marks and each section has to be passed for the candidate to achieve an overall pass. The four sections cover a practical manipulation where the candidate has to open the hive, describe what they see and carry out a few tasks, a section on the natural history of bees, a swarms and swarm control section and finally a section on diseases. In the past the whole exam was very easy to pass, because everything was lumped together and if you did well in one area that compensated for doing less well in another area. Now things are more difficult because you have to know more about each area and a failure in one area means a failure of the whole exam.

The area that is the most difficult for most candidates is the section on diseases. There are several reasons for this; lack of experience; lack of interest and lack of information. Let me explain this. If you have experienced chronic bee paralysis virus (CPV) you have seen it with your own eyes. You have seen dead bees, shiny hairless bees, shaking bees, and it is very distressing. You remember it well. Few people have seen or experienced American foul brood (AFB) or European foul brood (EFB) so they are not aware of the symptoms and they have not gone through the experience of seeing their frames and bees destroyed. On the whole people believe their bees are healthy and do not search out diseases so overlook them or cannot remember the symptoms. Finally, courses do not emphasise disease recognition and control sufficiently. Most candidates who fail the Basic Beekeeping exam do so as a result of not knowing enough about bee diseases.

If you are thinking of taking the Basic Beekeeping exam or are a teacher on one of the courses your association runs, please emphasise the importance of knowing about bee diseases. You will be helping everyone to reduce the amount of disease in all our colonies if they know what to look for.

Lesley Gasson

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The Inspector Reports

Hi everyone,

As beekeepers we are very used to saying that it has been an odd year due to the fact that the weather, the bees and the flowers are different every year, BUT this year has been spectacularly different.

We had warm days in February and March, frosts pretty much every night of April and sunny but cold and windy days. Then came May; well, the less said about May the better. In 12 seasons of being an inspector I have never seen so many hives that have starved or were on the brink of starvation. I also heard one of the weather presenters say that the winter solstice was warmer in several places in the UK than the summer solstice. I guess anything goes as far as the weather is concerned.

On the disease front this year, it is very quiet with only one hive found so far with English foul brood (EFB). This does not mean that it has all but gone away, it just means that we (I emphasise the “we” as I can’t do my job without your help) have not found it yet. I have looked in all the usual places but it does move about, mainly helped by us beekeepers. Yet again, I am asking for vigilance when going through your bees; anything out of the ordinary, please talk to a more experienced beekeeper or give me a ring or send me a photo. *(Editor’s note. Kevin’s contact details can be found on the last page of the magazine)*

This year I have had quite a few videos sent to me. They have, in the main, been of bees dead and dying on the ground at the front of the hive. The “just alive” bees are shaking and busy going nowhere. Another symptom seen is a lot of very black shiny bees, although this incarnation of the disease has not really shown up this year yet. This strange manifestation is caused by a virus called chronic bee paralysis virus (CBPV) and unfortunately there is not a lot we, as beekeepers, can do about it, except to perhaps try the following:

Find the queen and temporarily cage her

Shake bees into the air 50+m away

You may have to do this twice as the virus has a five-to-seven day incubation period

Give the bees more space as transmission is bee to bee, mainly through the hair follicles.

In the very early stages, you can take the floor away so that all the dead and dying bees fall to the ground. The downside of this is the high risk of robbing, especially as we progress into the later part of the season.

The best remedy of all is a lot of sunshine and a good honey flow; most of the problems are caused by the bad weather in May as all the bees were confined to the hive and busy passing the virus around.

There is a lot of research going on into CBPV but it is very difficult, because you identify that you have an apiary with it and the following year it does not show and then it pops up somewhere else.

Newcastle University is one place where we as bee inspectors have sent samples over the last few years and one thing to come out of the research is that the Buckfast strains of bee seem to be slightly more susceptible to it.

I have included some photos (see the next page) that I was sent so as to identify the problem, so I wondered if I could do the same to all of you, the readers of HoneyCraft—what do you think that these photos show? I will discuss the answer in the next issue of the magazine. In the meantime, you can send your ideas to me or the editor and I will let him know the correct answer in due course.

Here’s hoping for a reasonable main flow .

Kevin Pope

Editor’s Note. In case any readers missed it, there was an extensive article on CBPV, written by the team at Newcastle University, on pp 151-154 of the May 2021 issue of BBKA News

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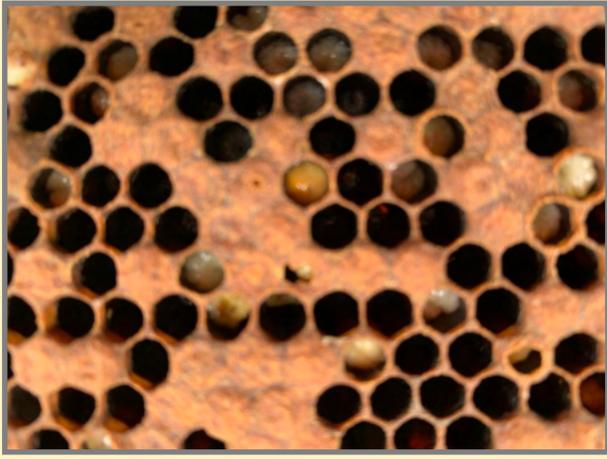
Kevin's photos—what is this?



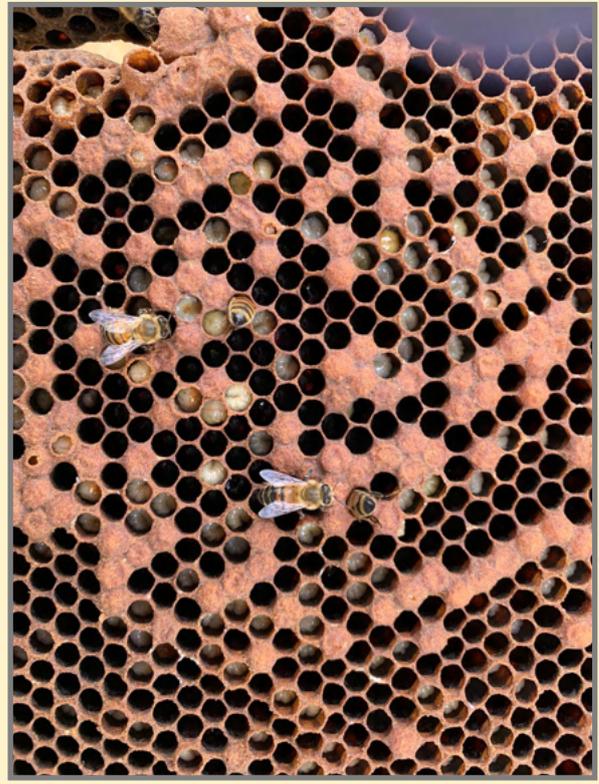
A



B



C



D



E

BBKA exam procedure changes

The BBKA has introduced new procedures for the way in which candidates apply and pay for examinations and assessments which will now be done online.

Candidates now only need to email me with name and membership number and I will send them a link to an application form with guidance for payment online.

Receipts will be sent by email.

This will streamline the process and avoid the need for cheques and manually completed forms so the process will be completed much more quickly.

I will continue to arrange assessments as before but online module exams will now be organised by the BBKA centrally.

It is understood that there will still be a requirement for handwritten exams and these will be arranged by the BBKA at a reduced number of venues according to the number of applications.

Results will be sent direct to the candidate but certificates will still be sent to me for onward transmission to branch secretaries for final presentation to the candidate.

Applications for Junior, Basic and Bee Health assessments should be made as early as possible please, and before the end of May if you can.

Please remember that assessors have busy diaries and it can become difficult to find convenient dates if applications are made late in the year.

Terry Payne,

County Examinations Secretary

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Swarms

With the weather turning warmer, we had a rush of swarms for a few weeks in June but still fewer than we would normally have had two years ago. Last year was also a very quiet year for swarms. It could be that more beekeepers are carrying out better swarm control but the weather certainly plays a part, as does the nectar flow.

The picture shows part of a swarm at Bradford Peverel, left by a beekeeper who had tried to collect it, got into difficulties as things were not going as expected so just went off with the bees he had managed to collect. One of our registered swarm collectors, having been rung up by a member of the public, had to go and rescue the remainder. After a week sitting on the wall annoying pedestrians they were getting a little grumpy and much tact was needed. The apidea (feeder removed to provide more accommodation) seemed to appeal to them. The added appeal of pheromones from a dead queen persuaded them to re-home themselves and leave the local residents in peace.

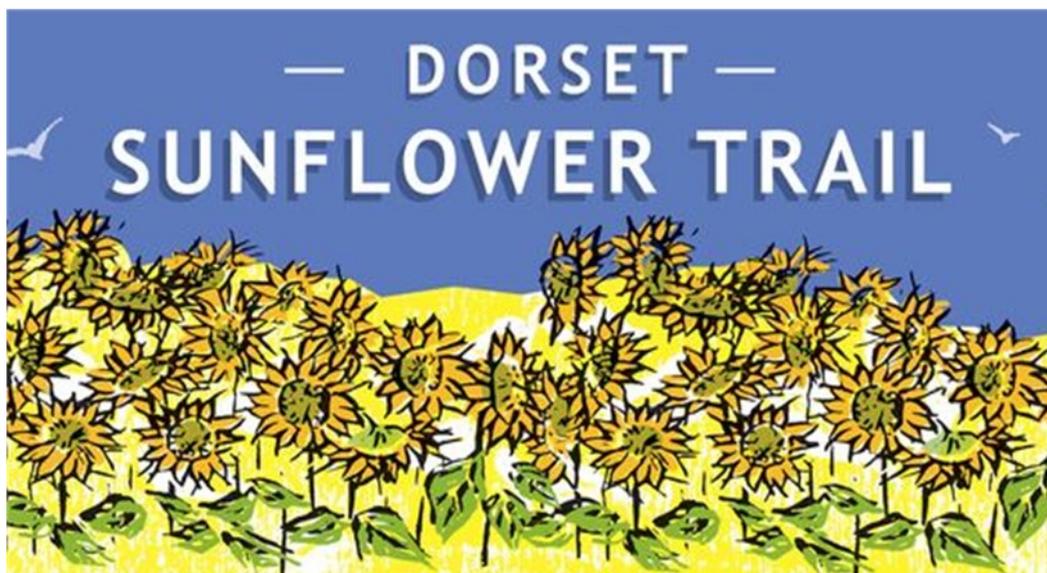


This is one of the reasons why at D&W we are quite careful that we only put members who are experienced in collecting swarms on the official BBKA swarm collectors list. Even collecting a swarm that looks as if it will be easy can turn into a disaster if things don't go to plan.



Be careful about leaving empty boxes around in the swarming season unless they are prepared bait hives otherwise you can end up with a difficult situation as per this photo

Our beginners course dates have been rearranged a few times but we now hope to start the theory sessions on 20th July. We have been holding practical sessions in small groups since April at various apiary sites and by now most of the beginners have had some experience in handling bees. In fact, quite a few of them now have bees. We are careful about handing on bees to beginners and will only do so if we know they have done enough practical sessions to be competent at handling bees or have a mentor. It is great to see their enthusiasm and willingness to learn, and become responsible beekeepers.



We have been invited to get involved in a local event "The Dorset Sunflower Trail". It is due to take place over three weeks in August, dependent on when the flowers emerge. We have already put a hive of bees on site so we are hoping for some sunflower honey in due course.

https://www.facebook.com/MaidenCastleFarm/?_xts=%5Bfusion_builder_column%5D

Sally Leslie

P.S. From Richard Norman's photo album



*The queen is welcomed home (from a mating flight?)
Apidea May 2016*



Happy days!!

East Dorset BKA

EDBKA was delighted to receive a further grant of £2000 from Strategic Solutions Community Foundation in Poole. The money was awarded for future association apiary advancement. Thank you to Russell Tonks for supervising the funding.

Our apiary has undergone some changes in recent months with Robin Oliver at the helm. All our hive boxes have been replaced or repaired and there is a new configuration with three groups of four hives containing the “docile” bees with Danish queens which are most suitable for our training groups. Robin has left a few hives with the more ‘feisty’ bees and moved them to one side of the apiary for people to compare. There will be a programme of re-queening later in the year. Other plans are to include a variety of hives such as a Langstroth, WBC and two flow hives for members to get to know.



We were delighted to get to the apiary for our outdoor training sessions in June, and what wonderful weather it was. Having completed their “classroom” tutorials in the New Year, our trainees descended on the apiary primarily to gain confidence in handling bees but there were also group sessions on recognising disease, marking drones, frame building and checking for swarm cells. Robin Oliver also gave a full group demonstration on handling the more aggressive bees and emphasised how such a colony can spoil the enjoyment of the hobby. Our usual Saturday afternoon apiary meetings for all members are under way and all who have attended are delighted with the improvements Robin has made to the apiary —particularly the wonderfully good nature of the colonies.

2021 has been a strange year for our team of 10 swarm collectors. Usually, we receive in excess of 70 phone asking if we can collect but this year we are well down on that number. Even so we have been able to supply most of our 2021 trainees with bees and this year on the good advice of Robin Oliver we have been offering nuclei of swarmed bees which have been re-queened and quarantined for those who are willing to pay a reasonable fee for the privilege. We did need to use the EDBKA bee vac on one occasion to rescue some bees from a high fence where the queen was hiding between the slats.



All in all, times are good for EDBKA with about 200 members to date, some excellent leaders and bee buddies for our trainees and two thriving What’s App group forums which are both full of new reports and experiences every day.

Ivor Kemp

North Dorset BKA

(www.northdorsetbeekeepers.org.uk)

It is hard to believe that we are coming towards the end of the active beekeeping year. We take off the honey at the end of July then start treating for varroa and feeding our bees for winter. What an extraordinary year it has been. Not only has Covid made meetings impossible, but the weather has not helped. The cold, dry April followed by a wet May, a short heat wave in June and then cold wet weather have made bees and their survival hard. During the short heat wave swarms came out as soon as they could, as predicted. Some of them were very large because they had waited so long to emerge. What sort of honey harvest there will be depends on the weather during the four weeks of July. Do not rob your bees to ensure you get a good honey crop. They need their winter stores whatever the weather.



We have run a basic beginners course in our apiary with groups of six (five beginners and a tutor). We have not been able to run the theory course and because every tutor does their own thing it is hard to say where the gaps in learning are. Fortunately Terry Payne has published a series of information sheets every week so if everyone reads them they should have some good theoretical knowledge. In the end we are having a Study Day on 31st July which will give students a chance to ask questions and chat to each other.



We have had an outbreak of chronic bee paralysis virus among four hives in the apiary. This is not related to varroa but passed between bees rubbing against one another. They look shiny and bald, and tremble. The bees throw out the dead ones and there have been piles of dead bees outside the hives. Bad weather does not help as this keeps the bees in the hives and passing the virus among themselves, rather than reducing the crowding and giving them a chance to eliminate the virus.

We have put in our planning application for the building of the new apiary on Holloway Farm in Shillingstone but Dorset Planning Dept has a long backlog of requests and it takes 10 weeks for anything to be verified

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Sherborne BKA

It has been an active few months since our learners finished the technical content of the course.

We came through the winter with three colonies and predictably we have had to artificially swarm one. It appears the bees are behaving in very strange ways this year after the erratic, cold and late spring. Most beekeepers report brood frame foundation being chewed up. There has been a lot of swarming despite preventative measures, and sadly the swarms disappear so cannot be used for beekeepers with winter losses or for the learners to start their beekeeping in earnest.

The apiary visits have been well attended this year, which is so nice for the teachers.

We had a colony safari earlier in the year, when Kevin Pope visited a number of beekeepers' apiaries and thankfully found no serious disease.....only chalk brood and bald brood.

So far we haven't taken any honey off, but hopefully the colonies will settle down and give us an August harvest.

Judy Easdale



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West Dorset BKA



At last we have been able to hold the student sessions at our teaching apiary this past month, having their last one on the 26th June with Kevin Pope SBI. It was a great success; 11 students were able to come along to see Kevin open up all the nine colonies of bees with his expertise and explanations of what he was seeing on the combs. Lots of questions were asked, and answered in his easy manner. The students came away having learned a lot.



We are going to hold our first weekly members session starting 4th July, which we are looking forward to.

The weather, as everyone has experienced, has sadly played a big part on how the bees have fared this year. I am sure several of us have come across starving bees, supers one minute with honey in them being raided by hungry bees and queen matings going wrong. I personally have never known a year like it. Unless the weather picks up, honey will be in short supply this year.

I have not been notified of many swarms so far this year, although the bees have been making plenty of queen cells in our apiary. Hopefully beekeepers have been splitting their hives to prevent swarming! It is always good to have a few nuclei around to over-winter, to cover any losses during the winter.

Fingers crossed now for a good spell of weather so that the bees can fill up the supers and any new virgin queens can mate well.

Carole Brown



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Dropped larva syndromel

A speaker at one of the Somerset Zoom lectures talking about queen problems mentioned that in some queen cells the larva can become dislodged and instead of swimming in the pool of royal jelly at the top of the cell it starts to fall out. The bees continue to extend the wall to accommodate it and the cell becomes very elongated and thin.

There is a risk that these cells may be selected by the beekeeper, who thinks they are going to produce an extremely large queen, but as the larva will have been starved of royal jelly this will not be the case and these cells should be removed.

We spotted one of these at the West Dorset association apiary when checking a hive for emergency queen cells after a swarm manipulation in June.



There is always something interesting to see and something new to learn for those of us who support the sessions at Netherbury.

Carole Astbury

Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show

Wednesday 18th & Thursday 19th August

Turnpike Showground, SP7 9PL

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<https://gillinghamandshaftesburyshow.ticketsrv.co.uk/tickets/>

N.B. No honey or wax competitions

National Swarm Hotline

I have been regularly volunteering on the BBKA's national swarm hotline, run by Leigh Sidaway. The aim of this is to relieve pressure on local beekeeping associations. So many calls — as we all know — refer to wasps, bumblebees or long-established honeybees which have only become a nuisance because the home-owner has grandchildren staying, or is trying to sell her house. If these can be dealt with remotely, it leaves the way clear for genuine local swarm calls.

Interesting experience. What a relief to know that as a volunteer in a different part of the country, there is no need for me to rush out after a swarm. However... people are extraordinarily slow to get to the point. They start by telling me where they live (get on with it!), their name (irrelevant), how long they have been living there (?) and how to reach their home (er...). The skill is to focus them on the bees. What do they look like? How long have they been there? Are they really being a nuisance? Surprisingly often, the caller will be concerned about bees (if they *are* bees...) she or he has not even seen. "My mother-in-law is elderly and ill. She is bothered by bees every time she goes in or out... No, I live far away so I can't get over there myself to have a look. !'m afraid the lady is blind, as well, so..."

You sign on for a two-hour stint and how busy it turns out to be depends entirely on the weather. It can be just one call, or 25 calls, with a long list in the message box.

Most people don't want to kill bees. Overwhelmingly the callers are grateful for advice -- particularly when it helps them to steer clear of cowboys on the Internet trying to charge them for pest control -- and a friendly voice suggesting they calm down. Only about one in 10 calls needs prompting to contact a local beekeeper, to collect a swarm or relocate tree bumblebees.

What a helpful and worthwhile initiative by the BBKA. And I have found it surprisingly enjoyable, too.

Caroline Dilke



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Honeybees are accumulating airborne micro plastics on their bodies

Scientists discover a new way to monitor airborne plastic particles. But do they harm bees?

BY MATT KELLY - NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

PUBLISHED MAY 24, 2021

As honeybees make their way through the world, they are ideally suited to pick up bits and pieces of it along the way. Bees are covered with hairs that have evolved to hold tiny particles that the bee collects intentionally or simply encounters in its daily travels. These hairs become electrostatically charged in flight, which helps attract the particles. Pollen is the most obvious substance that gets caught up in these hairs, but so do plant debris, wax, and even bits of other bees.

Now, another material has been added to that list: plastics. Specifically, 13 different synthetic polymers, according to a study of honeybees and micro plastics in Denmark. The study was published earlier this year in *Science of the Total Environment*.

Graphical abstract from honey bees as active samplers for microplastics (Edo et al)

Science of the Total Environment Vol 767 1 May 2021

It's well established that micro plastics are spread extensively around the planet. Yet scientists are still learning how they move through the atmosphere. Sampling them is difficult and most research of airborne micro plastics to date has been conducted at ground level, scientists say.

It turns out that honeybees—and all those hairy legs and bodies—provide a viable means for better assessing the distribution of windborne plastic fibers and fragments. Thanks to their large numbers and wide-ranging foraging, honeybees can be drafted as living probes of how micro plastics are scattered around the world.

“This work demonstrates for the first time the possibility of using honeybees as a bio indicator for the presence of MPs (micro plastics) in the environment,” the scientists say.

Miniature environmentalists

For decades, scientists have used bees as pollution sentinels, tracking heavy metals, pesticides, air pollution, and even radioactive fallout. But research into bees' interactions with plastics, which also dates to the 1970s, has focused more on macro plastics than micro.

Leafcutter bees, for example, which are similar in size to European honey bees but solitary and found all around the world, have been shown to use their huge mandibles to cut half-moon shaped pieces out of plastic, just as they do from leaves and petals.

Scientists in Chile, Argentina, and Canada, and the United States have observed leafcutter bees collecting such bits from bags, packaging, and other plastic materials and lining their nests with them. In the United States U.S. a study suggested that the bees also cut nesting material from plastic flagging used for surveying or marking construction sites.

In the Denmark study, scientists gathered thousands of worker bees, which are all female, from 19 apiaries—nine in the center of Copenhagen and 10 in suburban and rural areas beyond the city. The researchers collected bees directly from the interior of their hives in the spring, when colonies were building up. Because bees interact with plants, water, soil, and air—all areas where micro plastics accumulate—they had abundant opportunity to encounter plastics. The collection team wore clothing made of natural fibers and took other precautions to avoid contaminating the sample bees.

The bees were frozen to euthanize them, then washed and scrubbed to remove the particles attached to their legs and bodies. Using a microscope and infrared light, the particles were then sorted by size, shape, and material type.

Fifteen percent of the particles recovered were micro plastics. Of those, 52 percent were fragments and 38 percent were fibers. Polyester was the dominant fiber, followed by polyethylene and polyvinyl chloride. The bees also picked up natural cotton fibers.

The city bees presented the highest counts of micro plastics, as expected, since it's known that urban areas contain the highest densities of micro plastics. The surprise was that the counts of micro plastics on suburban and rural bees were not much lower. That suggests that wind dispersion evens out the concentration of microplastics over large areas, the scientists say.

"I would have expected more 'clean' bees in the countryside than in central Copenhagen," Roberto Rosal, a professor of chemical engineering at the University of Alcalá in Madrid and a co-author of the study, said in an email. "But the high mobility of small micro plastics offers an explanation for it."

Is plastic pollution harming bees?

The question of how exposure to plastics is affecting bees is still open. Scientists are divided over whether nest-building with plastic bits by leafcutter bees is simply evidence of the bees adapting to the presence of a new material or whether it ultimately may prove harmful.

In a study published earlier this year in the *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, scientists in China sought to assess the potential risks that micro plastics pose to honeybees. They fed honeybees polystyrene micro plastics for two weeks and found it did not change their mortality rate. It did however alter the bees' microbiome—the assemblage of gut bacteria essential to basic biological functions—in a way that the Chinese team concluded might present "substantial health risks."

In particular, the team found that the bees' death rate shot up from less than 20 percent to around 55 percent when the bees consumed a combination of polystyrene and tetracycline, a common antibiotic used in beekeeping to prevent a larval disease. "In isolation, micro plastics might not be the most toxic contaminant, but the existence of other chemicals might increase their toxicity," the Chinese researchers concluded.

Illaria Negri, a researcher at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Italy, who was not involved with either the Denmark or China studies, expressed similar concerns. The toxic effects of micro plastics "could be magnified when they occur in combination with other pollutants, such as pesticides, veterinary drugs, plastic additives," she said in an email.

Certain pesticides can be absorbed by plastic debris, Negri said, and could have "devastating effects" on the health of bees and other wildlife and insects if ingested.

A DIY solar wax extractor

Ron Briggs, a student on the North Dorset BKA current beginners' course but with his own bees already, describes making an extractor.

"I recently made some furniture polish using wax recovered from my girls. I really enjoyed the process and cannot wait to have a go at some candle making. She who must be obeyed was however not so impressed with melted wax all over the kitchen and our best pots, pans and sieves, So I decided to make a solar wax melter.



I particularly liked the idea that the sun would do all the work for me and with little to clean up it would be ready to use over and over again when the weather permits. I wanted to make it big enough to lay frames in so my first task was to source a suitable size tray. I found a stainless steel automotive drip tray measuring 600mm x 400mm on eBay costing £11.49. I then needed a suitable sized container to catch the melted wax. I would like to say this was free as I got an old loaf tin that I found in a kitchen cupboard; the reality however was I had to buy a new one to replace the old one, £6.99!!!



I then simply made a box wide enough to fit the tray and insulation, long enough to fit the tray, insulation and also to see into the loaf tin. It was also deep enough to fit the loaf tin, insulation, tray and the dirty wax to be melted. The overall dimensions are 800mm x 500mm x 38mm. The depth was decided by the amount of ply I had. I made the sides and base from left-over 18mm ply and the two ends from left over 13mm ply. I then lined the box with 25mm insulation sheet; again this was left-over from a second-hand sheet I purchased last year to put in the roof of my hives.



My next task was to put in a piece of 50mm x 25mm on one end to hold the loaf tin at the right angle, two side rails to hold the tray and two carrying handles at each end which also held all the insulation in place. I then needed to think about the legs, which I wanted to fold in and out to make the whole thing easier to store. After some Google research, I decided a 15 degree pitch would work, so I propped up one end of the box to 15 degrees so that I could work out the length of the legs.

Next up was the lid. I had some 75mm x 50mm timber and constructed a frame to which I inserted two pieces of Perspex, I had some of this from a screen I had acquired— one of those used in shops etc as anti-COVID measures. Unfortunately it was not big enough to make two single pieces so I had to settle for one full piece and one piece constructed from two smaller pieces, hence the line down the middle of the frame that you can see in the pictures. I also put in a couple of those little anti-condensation sachets between the two sheets. The lid was then joined to the main box with hinges on one side (£2.99) and a couple of clips on the other side. I use these clips to join my brood boxes to the floors so I had a couple of these already.



The wax needs to be filtered so as to remove the propolis, dead bees and bee parts etc. To do this I drilled a number of holes in the bottom of the tray and placed a mesh over the holes, I then placed a finer mesh over the loaf tin. I then fitted a thermometer (£6.95). About 65 degrees Celsius is the melting point of wax and 80 degrees is too hot and darkens the colour of the wax. So I wanted to be able to manage the heat inside the melter.



I then painted the outside black in order to help retain heat, I then took the whole lot outside and set it up to see what the temperature inside would do. It was a warm but cloudy day but the temperature did get up to 70 degrees for a short period so I was confident that it would work on a sunny day.



I did however notice a potential problem. The angle of the melter would make it difficult to spread the dirty wax in the tray without it all sliding down and missing the filters completely. My solution was a stepped frame that would sit on top of the tray and hold up to 3 stainless steel steamers / colanders. (sourced in a charity shop 50p each).



Test day: Sunday 30th May, a beautiful sunny day, I put a small amount of water in the bottom of the loaf tin to make the wax easier to remove as when cooled the wax will sit on top of the water. I then placed it in the sunshine at 9am and loaded it with dirty wax by 9:45 am the wax was starting to flow. Throughout the day and all the following day I kept adding dirty wax. The end result was just over a kilo of beautiful rendered wax.

Clean-up consisted of scraping out the colanders. What's left is called slumgum . You can use this to make fire lighters or you can put it in the compost bin. So overall I was very happy with the results. It cost me less than £30 and made a messy job easy. Now I have the wax, it's candle-making next weekend!!

Ron Briggs



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