

MAY 2012

Surrey Beekeepers Association

CROYDON DIVISION

Chairman Mark Stott 0208 684 1098
Treasurer Tamar Cavett 0208 406 9258
Secretary Joyce Atkinson 0208 657 2817

www.croydonbeekeepers.co.uk



Country Playtime

BEEKEEPING DAYS TO NOTE IN MAY

SUNDAY 6 th, MAY

Apiary meeting at Hartley Down for beginners 2 to 4 p.m.

SUNDAY 13 th, MAY

We now resume the usual 2 nd. and 4 th. Sundays of each month for apiary meetings - 2 p.m. for those who wish to attend David Shepherd's introductory talks and slide show before the main meeting at 2-30 p.m. - hopefully by then summer weather will return so the colonies may be fully examined.

SUNDAY 20 th, MAY

The next apiary meeting just for beginners like that on the 6th. - 2 to 4 p.m.

SURREY COUNTY SHOW - GUILDFORD - MONDAY 4 th JUNE

Have you thought of going? - if so and you could spare the morning or afternoon there to help in the bee tent let Anne Buckingham, the Hon. Sec. know - 01252 714069 and you will be given free admission to the show and refreshments!

Also in the bee tent the County Honey Show takes place - so if you were inspired by Peter Bashford's talk on showing last March 'have a go and enter' our secretary, Joyce Atkinson - 0208 657 2817 has entry forms.

I am fairly sure there have been no entries from Croydon for some years and the show committee would be pleased to have both Croydon enter and be represented - only two committee meetings per year.

CROYDON GREEN FAIR - SATURDAY 16 th, JUNE

This has become an annual event held at North End for the whole day - we have taken a place there and need some help to man our stand so if you could give a few hours please let one of our committee know.

SWARMS

There have been a few reports of swarms before the recent spell of bad weather and when summer does come there are sure to be many more so if you are willing to help take any please let one of the committee know.

MODULE 3 STUDY GROUP

Honey Bee Diseases, Pests and poisoning.

If you are interested in taking this test and would like to join the group details are available from Serena Fraser on 01372 842742 or - serena @ frasers 8.plus.com.

SURREY B.K.A. TREASURER

So far no one has enquired about this vacancy due to David Humphrey wishing to retire after many years Service. This is a responsible position in the running of the counties affairs and requires some accountancy experience, if you feel you might be able to take it on but wish to know more about the duties please contact Sandra Rickwood - 01932 244326

SKEP BEEKEEPING

WHY SKEPS TODAY? - Bees have long been kept in skeps, or straw hives, for hundreds of years in Britain and Ireland. The invention of the movable comb hive a century ago opened up new horizons in the handling of bees, and made possible a much wider range of management techniques than were possible with skeps. Because of these advantages, movable comb hives have almost entirely replaced fixed comb receptacles for honey production in western countries today.

Yet skeps possess several merits, and beekeeping needs to direct more attention to those fields where they could still have a place. The pendulum of fashion has swung too far and beekeeping is the loser. It is for this reason that we are now advocating some renewed interest in skep beekeeping.

THE NEED TO CULL - The particular advantage of the skep is its cheapness, coupled with lightness, strength and relatively long life. It is the latter virtues which fit it for the capture and housing of swarms, but it is the first mentioned which has special value for the bee breeder. In skeppist days, because of the practise of driving or sulphuring bees to obtain honey, there was a big annual increase by swarming, followed by a heavy annual culling of stocks; these two applied a strong and continuous selective pressure to the surviving populations. Today, in the interests of minimising waste, genetic culling is at a minimum, for both man-selected and naturally selective reasons. The result is that the genetically less fit, the bad tempered, the over-prolific and those showing many other undesirable failings, are perpetuated to carry on producing drones, queens and swarms to carry these faults into future generations. Management culling, on the other hand, is often practised on the grounds of advancing age of the queen; this, however, is not genetically selective, and does nothing to aid breeding progress.

The above is from 'Make your own Skep' by the Rev. E. Nobbs published by the Village Bee breeders Association in 1969

This photograph is from the 'Bee-keeper's Guide Book' by Thos. Wm. Cowan twentieth edition June 1911



Driving Bees. How to Strike Skep (front to back).

News from the Apiary (Hartley Down)

D.Shepherd April 2012

All but one of our apiary hives came through the winter - only a small late swarm that was hived late in the season, succumbed. That pesky 'pecker' was around again, ALL the hives had been wired but he (or she) had had a go at a couple of member's hives, a pile of my empty supers and surprisingly a double walled WBC hive, but damage was small. Drilling could be frequently heard in the large ash tree above the hut, but the only sighting was a glimpse of green disappearing over the railway, where the drilling then soon recommenced.

As usual pollen started to arrive from January onwards, but despite large quantities of blossom the cold weather is inhibiting nectar flow and we are continuing to have to feed a number of colonies.

The demonstration hive in the hut is up and running: interestingly whilst we were transferring the frames it started to rain, then hail; we ended up in the dark hut, unable to use smoke - what a lovely gentle lot of ladies they turned out to be, thankfully!

I found an interesting snippet in the March edition of BBC Focus magazine (Science & Technology) that might throw some light on the problems that bee farmers and bee keepers are having in the USA and to a lesser extent in the UK:

'A Parasitic fly turns bees into a zombie-like state, leaving their hives at night and being attracted to light. The fly, Apocephalus borealis, deposits eggs in the bee's abdomen. Affected hives often contain bees and flies with deformed wing virus and the fungus Nosema ceranae, both implicated in colony collapse disease (CCD). How the parasite fits into the picture is unclear.'

Bees navigate by visual memory and do not normally fly at night: this may be an answer to the vanishing bee syndrome. Both *Nosema ceranae* and Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) are both common diseases in our area at the moment and we need to keep on top of them – the May edition of Bee Craft discusses both in one of its articles. Healthy and well fed bees have efficient immune systems that are in a better position to be able to overcome these problems; hygienic beekeeping continues to be very important.

On another matter, it is quite well known that when bees are purchased from an **outside** supplier (usually very docile), things can frequently go wrong after the first supercedure. The new queen mates with the 'local drones' and the first offspring colony turns out to be productive but somewhat vicious and defensive – no good for an inexperienced beekeeper and certain no good for the neighbours. The exact reason is unknown but one theory is that it could be 'hybrid vigour'. The advice of the BBKA for new Beekeepers is to purchase **locally**, but until we are up and running with local supplies, things could be difficult – I have already heard of two beekeepers who are 'buying in' and of course it is so understandable if there is nothing else. Can you help?

Our first 'Taster' Introductory Beekeeping Course took off at the beginning of March with nine prospective beekeepers – the course is going well and is based on the BBKA course. It continues throughout May and on selected occasions in the year.

SHORT OF EQUIPMENT ?

Richard Palmer can help! so let him know what you need or would like a copy of Thorne's catalogue for 2012
telephone 0208 679 0401



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Farm Open Days

Dates for 2012

Open Farm Sunday - Sunday 17th June
 Shabden Farm Picnic - Saturday 25th August

For a few days of the year, we open the farm to the public. Our open days focus on events in the farming year and aim to provide an opportunity for visitors to experience first hand and learn more about farming activities and how they fit into our farming system and the industry at large. We hope that these events will help visitors to understand how our farming system allows us to manage the countryside for wildlife and how our farming and conservation activities are interlinked.

All open days open from 10am until 4pm.

Visitors are advised to bring wellies or boots to open days. Sorry no dogs allowed.

For photos of previous farm open days, visit the Gallery.



Open Farm Sunday Sunday 17th June 2012

Introduction

Come and join Mark and Kirstie, Sam and Tui, and various family helpers, our Countryside Ranger Bob Crompton and Sophie from Surrey Wildlife Trust for a fun packed day at the Farm to celebrate Open Farm Sunday.

Meet the animals, go on a tractor ride, watch Farmer Mark shearing the sheep and working the sheep dogs, visit the Back to Nature Farm Shop, enjoy some local produce from the mini Shabden farmers' market and join Ranger Bob for a guided walk. Learn about bees with the Croydon Beekeepers, who will be showing their glass-sided observational beehive. There will also be sales goods, hot and cold refreshments and much more.



We are still lambing and you will be able to get close to the baby lambs and their mothers. Our sows farrow regularly and you will be able to look in on the piglets and older pigs, as well as other farm animals. Our chestnut Sussex cows are in the fields with their calves at foot, but you may see them if you go on a farm walk, along with the young rearing cattle.



Farm Walks

Bob, our Countryside Ranger, will lead a guided walk around the farm at 2pm to give visitors a chance to ask questions about how we created and farm the chalk grassland and Surrey Wildlife Trust's role in the farm and woodlands. There is also a self guided trail on the farm - you can get details and a leaflet from Surrey Wildlife Trust, or Bob will have some on the day.