

THE BUZZ

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INVERNESS-SHIRE BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Happy New Year 2022!!!



IBAs hardworking beekeepers are rewarded at the annual dinner for another year of successful beekeeping. See a full list of awards inside this Buzz!

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Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for beekeepers:

**Scottish Government
Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate
19th July 2021**

As beekeepers, you should act responsibly and ensure that you continue good beekeeping practices, effective stock management and health checks whilst observing [guidance on COVID-19](#).

You must follow the rules on physical distancing, gatherings and any other required measures in place in your area to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Read more about: [Scotland's protection levels](#).

General advice for beekeepers is as follows:

You should continue to work and care for your animals in the normal manner, as far as possible. You should not take measures that compromise the welfare of the animals in your care.

You should:

- maintain good [biosecurity](#) at your apiary
- do not share beekeeping equipment with other beekeepers, particularly hive tools and other handheld devices and protective clothing
- wash your hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and hot water before and after you come into contact with any animal. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to

There are currently no restrictions on the movements of bee colonies – for example, moving bees to fulfil pollination contracts. You should observe the guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when carrying out these activities, including the guidance on physical distancing and travel.

If you are required to visit premises other than your own, you should familiarise yourself with the guidance on [infection prevention and control](#) and take measures to minimise the risks from contaminated surfaces

You are required to self-isolate when:

- you have symptoms of coronavirus and [get tested](#)
- you have tested positive for coronavirus – this means you have coronavirus
- you live with someone who has symptoms or tested positive

- someone in your support bubble has symptoms or tested positive
- you're told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Protect
- you have been abroad and told to quarantine on your return

If you are responsible for looking after bees, you should make alternative arrangements for their essential care if you, your family or your staff become ill or are unable to look after their welfare. If this is not possible, we would advise that you only attend to the basic needs and welfare of your bees where you can ensure you do not have contact with other people and you are able to follow all government advice on actions to minimise the risk of spread of COVID-19.

Local associations should consider how they can support those shielding, in isolation or otherwise unable to attend their bees at this difficult time for all of us.

Read more:

- [self and household isolation](#)
- [travel and transport guidance](#)

Bee inspections:

If your bees are due an inspection by a government inspector, and you are in a high-risk group, or are in any of the categories requiring self-isolation, you must let your inspector know ahead of the inspection.

Arrangements will be made that will limit the chance of COVID-19 being spread. This may include the inspection proceeding without the beekeeper being present or delaying the inspection.

For all inspections, 2 metre distancing will be considered the minimum and so the beekeeper will not be able to stand at the hive side with the inspector while the inspection takes place.

Imports of bees are still permitted. There is no evidence to support restrictions to international movement or trade in bees, and the UK has no additional rules for bee imports with respect to COVID-19.

Report any suspicion of notifiable diseases or pests to the authorities in the usual way – please see the [bee health page](#) for further information.

Use husbandry techniques to minimise swarming. If you have to respond to collect a swarm, ensure that you adhere to the guidelines on distancing when collecting the swarm. If that is not possible, then the swarm should not be collected. Trying to prevent swarms is the best approach. Similar arrangements are also in place in England and Wales – information can be found at: [National Bee Unit - News](#).

At the time of releasing this Buzz, this information is up-to-date. However, this advice is being constantly reviewed and may change at any time. For the most recent advice for beekeepers relating to Covid-19, visit:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-beekeepers/>

Inverness Beekeepers' Association Calendar

Inverness-shire Beekeeping Association Meetings Calendar		
Date	Talk Title	Host
11/01/22	Scottish Dark Native Honeybees: The Scottish Wildcats in our Hives?	John Durkacz
08/02/21	The Honeybee Whooping Signal	Dr Michael-Thomas Ramsay

Until the current Covid situation settles down, we will be online through Zoom, but if that changes, we will let you know so please watch out for updates.

The meetings will start at 7.30pm. Charlie will send joining details via email to all members.

IBA Christmas Dinner and Prize Giving:

Christmas is upon us now, which can only mean one thing – the IBA Christmas dinner.

Our members turned up in force to enjoy a delicious meal, a few drinks, and to have a catch up on the years events. The Honey Show Prize Giving Presentation and the bee-themed quiz were also highlights of the evening.

As always at the Craigmonie, the food was fabulous, and the menu offered a fantastic spread.

Some pictures from the evening are on the front page of this Buzz and the prize recipients can be seen below.

IBA Members Trophies Only

Mackenzie Challenge Cup (Best exhibit in sections category, not heather):
Bryce and Elizabeth Reynard

Peter Brown Shield (best exhibit in heather classes):
Bryce and Elizabeth Reynard

Open Competition Trophies

Peterkin Cup (best honey exhibit in show):
Fred & Jean Millwood

McIntosh Grigor Challenge Cup (most points in heather Classes):
Bryce & Elizabeth Reynard

Margaret Logan Trophy (best display of hive products):
Bryce & Elizabeth Reynard

Hugh Chisholm Cup (best exhibit in gift section):
Barbara Sandbach

Newcomers Shield (best exhibit by a novice beekeeper in novice Classes):
Alan McDonald

Donald Matheson Quaich (best two jars of blossom honey):
Fred & Jean Millwood

Novelty Spoon (Best in products made with honey class):
Caroline MacKenzie

Simpson's Garden Centre Wowed by IBA Honey Show!!

Barbara Sandbach

15th September 2021

Inverness-shire Beekeepers Association successfully held their Honey Show earlier this year (11th and 12th September) at Simpsons Garden Centre who kindly provided space and more for us.

Exhibits were accepted on both the Friday afternoon and Saturday morning from our members and other beekeepers, and we recorded 97 in all which exceeds the number recorded in recent past years (not including 2020 when the Show couldn't be held).

The Honey Judge, Enid Brown, inspected all the exhibits carefully on Saturday morning and awarded them with 1st, 2nd or 3rd places, but only if they were up to standard. There were classes where a first prize was not awarded! She very helpfully offered advice on her reasons for disqualifying an exhibit, so the exhibitor can learn and improve the standard next year. The purpose of the Show is not just to reward those who supply top quality produce, but to offer a benchmark level for all beekeepers to strive for.

Once the judging was complete, prize cards were placed, and scores worked out for the allocation of the trophies and rosettes. These will be engraved and formally presented at our annual Christmas Dinner in December.

The Show was opened to the public after the judging on Saturday, and all day on Sunday, with our beekeepers' own honey and hive products on sale. The variety of honey offered included blossom, heather, creamed and comb honey. Apart from the exhibits, which this year included a photography section, on show were some historical beekeeping artefacts and a live bee demonstration hive.

We are very much looking forward to building on this success at next year's Honey Show.

On this and the following page are some photos from the event. The lady shown in one picture is one of our two Show Stewards, Noelle O'Neill. Also featured in the photos; the demonstration hive showing live bees; the black and white photography section; our trophies and rosettes; historical equipment; honey frames; skeps and beeswax; and a variety of other exhibits.



IBA Honey Show Picture Collage:



A boost for bees as Defra works with beekeepers to implement the Healthy Bees Plan 2030

**Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Rebecca Pow MP,
October 5th 2021**

A raft of new actions were published by the Government on 5th October 2021 aimed at sustaining populations of honey bees in England and Wales.

Defra today published its [Implementation Plan for the Healthy Bees Plan 2030](#) which sets out more than 50 actions which beekeepers, bee farmers, bee associations and government will undertake to protect and enhance populations of honey bees.

Honey bees continue to face pressure from a variety of pests, diseases and environmental threats and the new Implementation Plan sets out actions to sustain the health of honey bees and beekeeping in England and Wales over the next decade.

The plan was developed in consultation with stakeholders and includes promoting training and support as a key action to improve beekeeping skills and provide a supportive and inclusive community.

Honey bees contribute directly to food production and make an important contribution, through pollination, to crop production and the wider environment.

They are just one of many species of pollinator in the UK, alongside 26 species of bumble bee, over 250 species of solitary bee and hundreds of types of hoverflies, butterflies and moths. Actions to support and improve the status of wild pollinators are set out in the [National Pollinator Strategy for England](#).

The economic benefit of pollination – provided by all of these species groups - to crop production in the UK is over half a billion pounds each year, based on yield.

The plan is an important step towards achieving the four key outcomes set out in the Healthy Bees Plan 2030:

1. Effective biosecurity and good standards of husbandry, to minimise pest and disease risks and so improve the sustainability of honey bee populations.
2. Enhanced skills and production capability/capacity of beekeepers and bee farmers.
3. Sound science and evidence underpinning the actions taken to support honey bee health.

4. Increased opportunities for knowledge exchange and partnership working on honey bee health and wider pollinator needs.

Launching the Implementation Plan, Environment Minister Rebecca Pow, said:

In this hugely important year for nature, our Implementation Plan is packed with meaningful, tangible actions that will deliver the goals of the Healthy Bees Plan 2030 to look after the health of some of our most iconic and industrious insects – honey bees.

I'd like to thank our honey bee health stakeholders who have played an important role in developing our plan, and we look forward to continuing to work together to help ensure future generations can enjoy this wonderful hobby and profession while connecting with nature.

The Implementation Plan will now be taken forward together in collaboration with beekeepers, bee farmers, bee keeping associations and government, alongside ongoing action to support wild pollinators under the National Pollinator Strategy for England and the Welsh Government's Action Plan for Pollinators.

The National Bee Unit (NBU) maintains a voluntary database of active beekeepers called BeeBase. Beekeepers that are not registered with BeeBase are strongly encouraged to get in touch with [the NBU online to register with BeeBase for free](#). Registration provides the beekeeper with a free visit from their local bee inspector and access to a wide range of information on their craft.

Defra's landmark [Environment Bill](#) and [Agriculture Act](#) will enhance and protect our precious natural environment and diverse ecosystems including improving habitats for pollinators. Defra and Natural England are also bringing together partners, legislation and funding, to create a [Nature Recovery Network](#) across England. At the G7 Summit in Cornwall, we announced the [Nature Compact](#) – a commitment by G7 leaders to halt and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030, including tackling deforestation. We will build on this ambition with more countries later this year when the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow.

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-boost-for-bees-as-defra-works-with-beekeepers-to-implement-the-healthy-bees-plan-2030>

Honeybees use social distancing when mites threaten hives

Nicola Davis

Friday 29th October 2021

Foraging bees keep away from centre of colony when infested with mites, find researchers



Honeybees in Turkey. Photograph: Anadolu

In the past 18 months humans have become all too familiar with the term “social distancing”. But it turns out we are not the only ones to give our peers a wide berth when our health may be at risk: research suggests honeybees do it too.

Scientists have found that when a hive of honeybees is under threat from the mite *Varroa destructor* – a parasite linked to the [collapse of honeybee colonies](#) – the bees respond by changing the way they interact with one another.

“If you think we have a brain, we’re conscious, but it took us time to change our everyday behaviour [in response to Covid], I think it’s exciting to see that other animals are doing something similar,” said Dr Alessandro Cini, co-author of the research at University College London.

Writing in the journal *Science Advances*, Cini and colleagues describe how they first looked at beehives in Sardinia, Italy, and compared the behaviour of bees in hives that were naturally infected with the mites, to those in hives which had been treated to get rid of the parasites.

By examining videos recorded inside the hives, the team found that when the hive is infested with mites, foraging bees – which tend to be older members of the colony – performed important dances to indicate the direction of food sources, such as the waggle dance, away from the centre of the colony where the young bees, the queen and brood cells are found.

That, said Cini, may help to keep the infection at a level that can be controlled, limiting the amount of damage. “Foragers are one of the main entrance routes for the mites,” said Cini. “So the more they stay away from the brood and the young individuals, the better it is in terms of preventing the spread of the mites within the colony.”

The team also found changes in where bees groomed one another: in uninfected colonies this tends to be concentrated among the young in the central part of the hive, but the researchers found this was even more the case when mites were present. “They’re probably concentrating their thoughts [efforts] toward the more important part of the colony, leaving the grooming of foragers,” said Cini.

The team then carried out experiments in the laboratory, artificially infecting small groups of about 12 young bees with the mites and comparing them to uninfected groups. This time, the team found no increase in social distancing among infected groups – which, says Cini, may reflect that it is more important for foragers and young bees to keep their distance when mites are present, and that bees rely on one another.

“Probably social distancing is too costly at small scale,” he said.

But again, there were differences in grooming behaviour: infected bees were groomed more, inspected more, and had food shared with them more than individuals in uninfected groups.

Cini said the study showed the power of natural selection in the evolution of social behaviour. “And also dynamic change in the social behaviour to adapt to an ever-changing environment,” he said.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/29/honeybees-use-social-distancing-when-mites-threaten-hives-study>

‘No one knew they existed’: wild heirs of lost British honeybee found at Blenheim

Donna Ferguson, The Guardian

Sunday 7th November 2021

The ‘ecotype’, thought to have been wiped out by disease and invasive species, is thriving in the estate’s ancient woodlands

Thousands of rare forest honeybees that appear to be the last wild descendants of Britain’s native honeybee population have been discovered in the ancient woodlands of Blenheim Palace.

The newly discovered subspecies, or ecotype, of honeybee is smaller, furrier and darker than the honeybees found in managed beehives, and is believed to be related to the indigenous wild honeybees that foraged the English countryside for centuries. Until now, it was presumed all these bees had been completely wiped out by disease and competition from imported species.

While feral honeybee colonies – usually created by swarms of non-native bees that have left a nearby managed hive – are occasionally found in the UK, there was no evidence that self-sustaining colonies of native, tree-nesting honeybees still existed in England, and no record of the wild subspecies living in Blenheim.

Filipe Salbany, a [bee conservationist who found 50 colonies](#) of the rare honeybees in Blenheim’s 400-acre estate, said: “These bees are quite unique in that they live in nests in very small cavities, as bees have for millions of years, and they have the ability to live with disease. They have had no treatment for the varroa mite – yet they’re not dying off.”

The varroa mite, [a parasite that feeds on and attacks honeybees](#), arrived in Britain in 1992 and decimated the UK’s population. Salbany believes the bees he has found have evolved to survive. “We are not seeing the deaths we would expect to see with varroa.”



Filipe Salbany with a swarm of wild bees. He has found 50 colonies to date and thinks they have evolved to ensure their survival. Photograph: Paul Sharkey Photography

Unusually, the bees swarm with multiple queens – up to nine in some cases – to ensure the colony’s survival, and have been recorded foraging for honeydew on the treetops in temperatures as low as 4C. Most bees will stop flying at 12C. “A wild bee that has adapted to the environment is called an ecotype, and this bee could be a very precious ecotype – the first wild bee that is completely adapted to living in the oak forest.”

The results of DNA samples taken from the bees are expected within the next three to four weeks, but Salbany is confident it will show the bees are descendants of an ancient native species. “I think the majority of the genetics are going to be of an old English bee, of something that was here many, many years ago.”

His preliminary analysis of the wings of the honeybees strongly suggests they are related to indigenous honeybees that once lived in Britain. “They are not from the imported stocks of bees that people bring in. The wings are smaller and their veins are very distinct.”

The bees’ cubital index, a method for differentiating breeds of honeybees, also confirmed they are “more of an indigenous bee” than anything else, he said, but their adaptations have made them unique and peculiar, and they have very little banding. “Supposedly, wild tree-nesting honeybees which can sustain themselves do not exist, so nobody knows what type of wild, self-sustaining honeybee is actually left in the UK.”

One of the nests he found was at least 200 years old and he estimates that the bees have been living on the Blenheim estate, which dates back to the middle ages, for “quite a few” centuries. Unusually, they have built their nests in tree cavities a quarter of the size of a normal beehive, 15 to 20 metres off the ground, and despite several ecological surveys over the years, “nobody knew they existed”. The entrances to the nests typically have a diameter of less than 5cm.

There are no managed beehives on the estate, which Salbany thinks has played a critical role in the wild bees’ survival, while imported bees from hives nearby are likely to have been deterred from flying to Blenheim to forage by the landscape. “It’s a closed environment, in terms of bee access, because there are damp and humid valleys which form physical barriers.”

The woodlands, which Salbany describes as a paradise of biodiversity, are not open to visitors and no planting or gardening takes place there. “There’s very little human interaction.”

The wild bees seem able to live in balance with the environment and in harmony, not only with each other but with wasps and bumblebees that live in the forest. “For the 50 honeybee colonies that we have found, we probably have 500 empty sites for them to swarm into. They do not populate every single site: they’ve reached an equilibrium with their environment.”

Remarkably, he found two colonies of wild bees living within five metres of each other, in a single tree – right next to a wasps’ nest. “That is quite unique.” He thinks wasps don’t try to rob the bees because the bees build their nests very high up the trees and make their entrances so small: “There’s enough forage for the wasps in the forest not to go and bother the honeybees.”

As a result, the bees are extremely relaxed and he does not need to wear any protective equipment around them. “I can put my hand in the nest. They are very calm.” Their honey, he said, tastes “incredibly pure”. It is very floral as the bees like to feed on dandelions, blackthorn and sunflowers. “The smell of it is just extraordinary.”

He now suspects there may be other colonies of wild, tree-nesting bees in the UK that have not yet been discovered: another reason, he says, that “we need to protect our ancient woodlands. Because that’s where we are likely to find these bees.”

In total, about 800,000 wild bees have been discovered. Salbany hopes the news will have wide-ranging implications for Britain’s large, imported population of managed honeybees, which can “decimate the countryside” for native pollinators when they forage. “This species could be used as stock for beekeepers.”

Dr Rob Stoneman, a director at the [Wildlife](#) Trust, said the discovery of the wild bees was “extraordinary” and demonstrated the value of the UK’s ancient woodlands. “These kinds of stories give us hope and motivation to create a wilder future.”

What's the buzz?

- Wild honeybees are resistant to the varroa mite, a deadly parasite for other bees
- They can forage in temperatures as low as 4C
- They're happy to live near wasps and other honeybee colonies
- They nest in trees 15 to 20 metres off the ground
- They live in colonies eight to 10 times smaller than managed beehives
- They have multiple queens to ensure the colony survives, and the fittest queen rules
- They're smaller, darker and furrier than imported honeybees, with smaller wings and more distinct veins.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/07/no-one-knew-they-existed-wild-heirs-of-lost-british-honeybee-found-at-blenheim>

Notice Board.

AT THE MOMENT OUR PRICES FOR JARS, AMBROSIA AND FONDANT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Item	Price
Ambrosia (12kg, non-refundable container)	£15.00
Fondant (2.5kg pack)	£4.00
Fondant (full box – 5x 2.5kg packs)	£20.00
Jars (72 x 1lb jars with lids)	£30.00
Jars (96 x ½lb jars with lids)	£35.00
Spare lids (for both sizes of jars)	£2.00 per dozen

Please contact Alan Macdonald (alanmcdonald8@gmail.com) if you would like to purchase any of these items or would like to borrow equipment from the association.

Please visit our website <https://inverness-shirebeekeepers.org/>

for more exciting information and resources such as:

- The beekeepers blog
 - Beekeepers library catalogue
 - Help with swarms
- Details of upcoming events and meetings
 - Helpful beekeeping hints and tips
 - Backdated issues of the Buzz

Don't forget to visit the exclusive **MEMBERS SECTION** for extra goodies!!!

EASY FUNDRAISING SUPPORT

The Inverness-Shire Beekeepers Association needs your help!!!

If you would like to help the association financially,

PLEASE VISIT: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause/step-1/?char=208763>

YOUR SUPPORT WILL GO TOWARDS:

- **NEW TRAINING EQUIPMENT – USED TO TRAIN THE NEXT GENERATION OF BEEKEEPERS**
- **APIARY IMPROVMENTS AND REPAIRS – ENSURES ALL OUR FACILITIES ARE SAFE AND PLEASURABLE PLACES**
- **CLUB ADVERTISMENT – SPREADING THE BEEKEEPING WORD**

YOU CAN PUT AN ADVERT IN THE BUZZ!!!

Anyone wishing to advertise the sale of bees or beekeeping equipment can advertise in the Buzz.

The Buzz is distributed to every member of the Inverness Beekeeping Association.

If you are interested in filling this space with your advert contact Jed Russell via:

jed.k.russell@googlemail.com

The Back Page.

Contact Details:			
Committee Members:			
President	Charlie Moir		
Secretary	Barbara Sandbach		
Treasurer and Membership	Bea Wallace		
Education	Moira Carstairs		
Apiary Manager	Alan McDonald		
Membership and Website	Mark Paton		
Librarian	Rebecca Higgins		
Social Media	Jess Thorne		
Newsletter	Jed Russell		
Honey Show	Noelle O'Neill		
Swarm Control Team:			
Inverness area	Bryce and Elizabeth Reynard		
Inverness area	Fred Milwood		
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Kiltarlity area	Charlie Moir		
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