



The BUZZ



Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Bee Keepers' Association



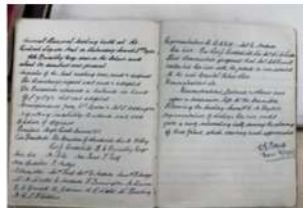
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **Back to Basics: The Lifecycle of the Honeybee**
- **Spring Has Sprung: Some Q&As**
- **Dance of Discovery - how bees find a new home**
- **Dates For Your Diary**



Preparing For Battle : The Yellow Legged Asian Hornet

Part 2: Baiting & Trapping explains measures we can all take to be prepared for this invasive pest



HBKA Archives

We take a look at our history with a visit to the Huntingdon library archives where HBKA records from 1920 onwards are stored.

A Message From Our Chair - Helen Swain



chair@huntsbka.org.uk

In the recent warm spring like weather, colonies are showing plenty of activity, pollen baskets full and emerging bees doing swirling orientation flights in front of their hives. I am sure, like me, you are eager to start inspecting your colonies and see how they have done over winter but its best to try and be patient. Whenever you open the hive and inspect you risk damaging your queen. So early in the year with no drones about and no mated queens for sale, damaging the queen will result in a doomed colony.

So if you must inspect, chose a warm sunny afternoon and do as little as necessary. Keep an eye on stores as new brood will get through it quickly and have a plan in place ready for swarming season.

I would like to welcome new members and those joining this year's beginners course and wish you all a good bee keeping season ahead.

Helen

Back To Basics

The Lifecycle of the Honeybee

In the busy world of beekeeping—amid varroa checks, swarm prevention, and honey flows—it's easy to lose sight of the fundamentals. Yet the colony's success rests on the remarkable lifecycle of *Apis mellifera*, a process of complete metamorphosis that produces the three castes: queens, workers, and drones. This refresh revisits the four stages—egg, larva, pupa, and adult—and how diet and cell size determine a bee's destiny. All bees begin as eggs laid by the queen.

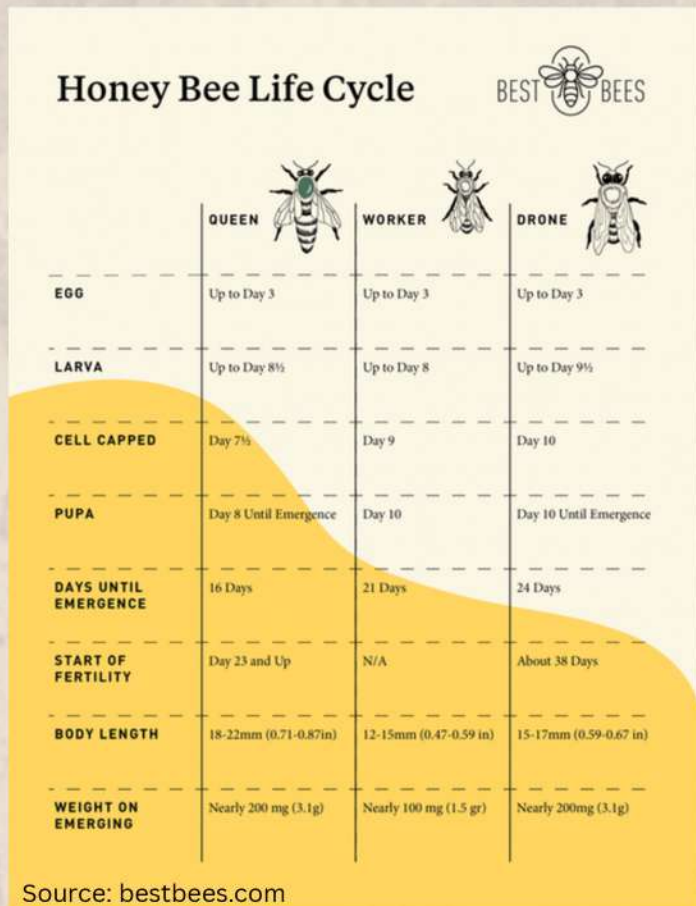


Photo courtesy of Honeybeesuite.com

She deposits a single tiny, pearly-white egg (resembling a small grain of rice) upright in the base of a cell. Eggs hatch after about 3 days, regardless of caste. Fertilized eggs develop into females (workers or queens), while unfertilized eggs become males (drones). The queen controls this by releasing sperm selectively. Upon hatching, the tiny, legless, C-shaped larva emerges. Nurse bees feed it lavishly. For the first three days, all larvae receive royal jelly, the nutrient-rich secretion from nurse bee glands.



Photo courtesy of Phys.org



After day three worker and drone larvae switch to a mix of honey and pollen ("bee bread"). Queen-destined larvae continue on exclusive royal jelly. This dietary switch is crucial: continued royal jelly suppresses worker traits and enables full reproductive development in females. Worker larvae grow in standard hexagonal cells, drones in larger ones, and queens in vertical, peanut-shaped queen cells. Larval feeding continues until the cell is capped with wax by nurse bees. Capping occurs around day 8–9 for queens, day 9–10 for workers, and day 10 for drones. Once sealed, the larva spins a cocoon and enters the pupa stage, undergoing dramatic metamorphosis. Organs reorganize, legs, wings, eyes, and antennae form, and the bee transforms inside the capped cell.

Development times vary by caste:

Queen: ~16 days total (3 days egg + ~5.5 days larva + ~7.5 days pupa)

Worker: ~21 days total (3 days egg + ~6 days larva + ~12 days pupa)

Drone: ~24 days total (3 days egg + ~6.5 days larva + ~14.5 days pupa)

Back To Basics cont...

The adult bee chews through the cap and emerges. A new queen quickly prepares for mating flights (typically within a week), mating with 10–20 drones mid-air to store sperm for years. She may live 1–3 years in managed colonies, laying up to 2,000 eggs daily in peak season.

Emerging workers begin as house bees—cleaning, nursing, building—before graduating to foraging. Their short summer lifespan (6–8 weeks) focuses on colony labour. Drones, stingless and fed by workers, exist mainly to mate; they die after mating or are expelled in autumn. This elegant cycle reminds us why timing matters in inspections: spotting eggs confirms a laying queen, open brood shows recent activity, and capped brood indicates upcoming emergence. Understanding these stages helps diagnose issues—spotty brood patterns, queen cells for supersedure, or drone-heavy frames signaling problems.



Returning to basics grounds us. The colony thrives because each bee follows its scripted path from egg to adult, shaped by pheromones, nutrition, and season. In our hands, we steward that process—keeping it healthy and balanced.

How Can You Tell a Honey Bee's Age?

We can estimate a worker bee's age by observing two main physical changes that reflect her 6–8 week summer lifespan: body hair condition and wing wear.

Newly emerged bees (0–10 days) appear distinctly fuzzy. They are covered in thick, silvery-gray to pale golden hairs, especially on the thorax and head, giving a plush, velvety look. Their wings are clean and intact with smooth edges, and the exoskeleton looks softer and lighter.

As bees age and perform hive duties (roughly 1–3 weeks), hairs begin to wear off from comb contact and activity. By mid-life (2–4 weeks), the thorax often looks noticeably smoother and shinier, with much of the fuzz thinned or gone, revealing a darker, polished surface. The clearest sign of advanced age (4–6+ weeks) is wing condition. Foraging flights cause progressive



damage: wing tips fray, tear, and become ragged or notched from wind, vegetation, and heavy loads. Severely tattered wings typically mark veteran foragers nearing the end of life. Hair loss (from fuzzy to bald) and wing wear (pristine to torn) provides a quick, reliable field estimate of relative age and role during inspections. Slight variations occur due to season, workload, or bee strain, but the progression is consistent.

The Asian Yellow-Legged Hornet

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

PART 2: BAITING & TRAPPING



Baiting & Trapping

As beekeepers in Huntingdonshire, we're on the front lines of protecting our honeybee colonies from emerging threats. The yellow-legged Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*), an invasive predator from Asia, poses a significant risk to UK apiaries by preying on bees and other pollinators. First detected in the UK in 2016, sightings and nests have increased, with over 160 nests found & destroyed nationwide in 2025 alone. While Huntingdonshire hasn't seen widespread incursions yet, vigilance is key, especially given our region's mix of rural farmland and urban edges that could serve as entry points via trade routes. Following guidance from the National Bee Unit (NBU), part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), we can use targeted baiting and trapping to monitor and help control this pest without harming native wildlife.

Understanding the Threat

The Asian hornet is smaller than our native European hornet (*Vespa crabro*), with a dark brown or black velvety body, yellow-tipped legs, and a distinctive yellow band on its fourth abdominal segment. Queens emerge in spring, building nests that can produce thousands of workers by autumn. These workers hawk outside beehives, capturing returning foragers and disrupting colony health. Early detection through monitoring is crucial, as the NBU handles nest destruction—public capture and release of hornets is illegal under the Invasive Alien Species Order 2019.



NBU-Recommended Monitoring Methods

The NBU advises using selective, non-lethal traps or open monitoring stations to detect hornet activity while minimizing impact on declining insect populations. Avoid unmodified lethal or sticky traps, as they can kill beneficial species like butterflies, bees, and native hornets. Instead, opt for designs that allow smaller non-target insects to escape via meshes, grooves, or varying hole sizes. Guard like a black plastic roof. Hang traps in sheltered, sunny positions in your apiary or near risk areas like ports or previous sighting spots.



Baiting & Trapping cont...

- **Monitoring Stations:** These are simple and humane—use an open tray or jar with a bait, or a closed container with a wick (like a folded cloth) for insects to feed on without drowning. Place them in sunny, visible spots at head height, such as near apiaries, trees, or hive stands. Check them regularly during the day to observe any visiting hornets and note their flight direction, which can help track nests. They're ideal from mid-summer (August) when worker foraging peaks.
- **Traps:** For active capture, the NBU highlights selective options like the Gard'Apis trap (with interchangeable nozzles: red for spring queens, orange for workers), the Andermatt blue/yellow trap (8mm entry holes, 5mm escape grooves, and a yellow platform to prevent drowning), or the Ornetin lid for jars (with escape holes and a wick).

Home-made versions can be crafted from 2-litre plastic bottles: Cut and invert the top to form a funnel, add a mesh base (3mm grid) for bait protection, drill 7mm entry holes to exclude larger European hornets, and 5.5mm exits for smaller insects. Include a platform or wick to avoid liquid pooling, and add a rain guard like a black plastic roof. Hang traps in sheltered, sunny positions in your apiary or near risk areas like ports or previous sighting spots.

Start monitoring in spring (March-May) to catch queens, and continue through autumn. In low-risk areas like much of Huntingdonshire, focus on apiaries; in higher-risk zones, place traps near hibernation sites like woodpiles.



Baits should match the hornet's seasonal needs. In spring, use sweet attractants for energy-hungry queens: Mix sugar with dark beer, fruit juice, or alcohol, or try commercial options like Trappit (which includes a bee deterrent). From summer onward, switch to protein baits for workers: Dilute mashed fish, prawns, or raw meat to 25% in water—change every 3 days to prevent rot. Ripe or windfall fruit works well in late season. Apply baits sparingly to avoid overflow, and spray some on trap lids for added allure.

Precautions and Best Practices

Check traps daily: Release non-target insects (chill the trap if needed for safe handling of stingers), and humanely dispatch suspected Asian hornets using soapy water or freezing for identification. Always prioritise non-lethal designs to protect biodiversity—French studies show spring trapping can reduce nests by over 90%, but only if done selectively. Additional hive protections include reducing entrances to 5.5mm height and growing vegetation around apiaries to disrupt hornet attacks.

If you spot a hornet, don't approach—report immediately via the Asian Hornet Watch app (available on iOS and Android) with a photo, description, and location. The NBU will investigate and destroy nests.

By adopting these NBU-approved techniques, HBKA beekeepers can play a vital role in safeguarding our bees and ecosystems. Stay informed through BeeBase and the HBKA—together, we can try to keep this invader at bay.

Spring Has Sprung

Common Q & A's

Q: When should I perform my first hive inspection of the year?

A: Wait for a calm, dry day with temperatures at least 12–14°C (ideally higher) and bees actively flying. For a quick peek (without removing brood frames), 10°C+ can suffice, but avoid full inspections below 14°C to prevent chilling the brood. Prioritise bee activity and pollen inflow over calendar dates—rushing on a cold day risks more harm than good.

Q: How can I tell if my colony has enough food stores in March?

A: March is often the highest-risk month for starvation as brood rearing ramps up and stores deplete quickly. Heft the hive regularly (lift from the back or side to judge weight)—a light hive compared to previous checks or others in the apiary likely needs feeding. During your first inspection, look for frames of sealed honey/pollen around the brood nest. Aim for at least 6–10 kg (roughly 12–20 lbs) of stores. If low, add fondant above the crown board rather than syrup (which can stimulate unnecessary activity in cold weather)

Q: Should I feed my bees this month, and what type of feed is best?

A: Yes, if stores are low—many more colonies starve in March than in mid-winter due to rising consumption. Use solid fondant rather than liquid syrup early in the month, as syrup can chill the colony or trigger excess activity when it's still cold. Pollen substitute can help if natural pollen is scarce and brood is expanding. Feed only as needed; the goal is to support steady build-up without over-stimulating before natural flows begin.

Q: What should I look for in my first spring inspection?

A: Focus on essentials: a healthy laying queen (eggs or young larvae in a good pattern), presence of brood, adequate stores, and no obvious signs of disease (e.g., dysentery streaks or unusual smells). Don't pull every frame—check a few in the brood area, then close up quickly to minimise disturbance. Note varroa levels if monitoring, and observe entrance activity beforehand (purposeful flying and pollen loads are positive signs).



Q: How do I monitor for varroa in early spring?

A: Insert a varroa monitoring board (sticky insert or mesh floor) and count natural mite drop over 7 days. If >2 mites/day average, plan spring treatment soon; >7/day may need immediate action. March is an ideal time to assess post-winter levels before brood becomes sealed and mites hidden. Refer to the National Bee Unit's "Managing Varroa" guide for thresholds and options.

Q: Is it too late to order equipment or nucs for this season?

A: Not necessarily, but act quickly! Demand for nucs peaks in spring, so orders placed earlier are best. If starting beekeeping this year, secure hives, frames, and bees now to avoid disappointment. Use March to prepare and repair equipment (clean floors, prepare supers, make up frames) so you're ready when conditions improve.

Q: My colony looks weak or hasn't built up yet—what should I do?

A: Weak colonies in March often stem from low stores, high varroa, a failing queen, or poor overwintering conditions. Ensure food is adequate first, then check for queen-right status and disease. Unite very weak colonies with stronger ones if appropriate (using the newspaper method), or boost with frames of brood/stores from stronger hives if you have them. Sometimes patience is key—March build-up varies hugely with weather.

Q: What other apiary jobs should I prioritise in March?

A: Tidy the apiary, remove mouse guards/ woodpecker protection, change/clean floors if not done, prepare supers and queen excluders for expansion, and plan your season (swarm control strategy, forage planting, etc.). Observe entrances on warm days for pollen and activity—it's a great non-invasive way to gauge colony health.

Enjoy watching your colonies come alive—spring is finally here!

Q: How often should I inspect for swarm signs, and what do I look for?

A: Start regular brood inspections every 7–10 days once consistent warm weather arrives (14°C+ and bees flying well)—often from mid/late March onward for vigorous colonies. Look for: queen cells (especially charged/uncapped ones on brood frame edges/bottoms), backfilling brood cells with nectar (a classic pre-swarm sign), reduced laying, or a crowded brood nest with little empty space. Entrance activity (bees "bearding" excessively or frantic traffic) can hint at issues. Routine checks let you act before cells are sealed.

"More colonies starve in March than in mid-Winter"

DANCE OF DISCOVERY

How Bees Waggle Their Way to a New Home

Last month we looked at swarming and how to collect swarms but have you ever wondered what the swarm is doing when it is hanging in beard like fashion from your neighbours tree? The story of how one perspicacious scientist discovered the means by which bees decide on a new home is remarkable.

In the rubble-strewn streets of post-World War II Munich, amid the chaos of reconstruction, a young biologist named Martin Lindauer stumbled upon one of nature's most democratic decision-making processes. It was May 1949, and Lindauer, a postdoctoral student at the University of Munich under the mentorship of Nobel laureate Karl von Frisch, spotted a swarm of honeybees clustered on a bush outside the Zoological Institute. What he observed that day would revolutionize our understanding of bee behavior during swarming—and offer timeless insights for beekeepers managing hive splits and relocations.

Lindauer, already familiar with von Frisch's groundbreaking work on the "waggle dance"—the intricate figure-eight movement bees use to communicate food sources—noted something peculiar. Scout bees on the swarm's surface were performing vigorous waggle dances, but none carried pollen loads. Instead, many were dusted black with soot or red with brick dust, telltale signs of exploring the bombed-out ruins of the city. These weren't foragers directing hive mates to nectar; they were house-hunters, using the dance to advertise potential new nesting sites like unused chimneys or collapsed walls.

This revelation marked Lindauer's key discovery: during swarming, when a colony divides and the old queen departs with half the workers to find a new home, scout bees repurpose the waggle dance for real estate scouting. Unlike foraging dances, which point to temporary food patches, these signals guide the swarm to permanent cavities—essential for survival in the wild.

Here's how it works: A swarm, typically comprising 10,000 to 20,000 bees, hangs in a temporary bivouac while a few hundred elite scouts venture out. Each scout inspects potential sites, assessing factors like cavity size (ideally 40 liters or more), entrance height, and protection from predators. Upon returning, a satisfied scout performs the waggle dance on the swarm's outer layer. The dance's straight "waggle run" encodes distance (longer waggles for farther sites) and direction (angled relative to gravity, mimicking the sun's position outdoors). Excited followers decode this, visit the site themselves, and if impressed, join in dancing for it—building a buzzing consensus.

Lindauer's meticulous observations, often spanning days of note-taking, revealed the process's elegance. Dances start tentatively for multiple sites but intensify for the best one as more scouts agree. Quorum sensing kicks in: once about 15 scouts dance enthusiastically for a single location, the swarm reaches a decision. Then, in a dramatic finale, scouts pipe high-frequency vibrations to warm the cluster's flight muscles, and the entire swarm lifts off en masse—usually within hours.

For beekeepers, Lindauer's findings are more than historical trivia; they're practical gold. Understanding this dance helps predict swarm behavior, improve bait hive designs (mimic ideal cavities with lemon grass oil lures), and even foster healthier colonies by allowing natural decision-making in managed swarms. In an era of declining bee populations, respecting these innate processes could bolster resilience against varroa mites and habitat loss.

Lindauer, who passed away in 2008, built on von Frisch's legacy to show bees as not just workers, but sophisticated societies. His 1950s studies, detailed in works like "Communication Among Social Bees," remind us: in the hive's hidden world, a simple dance can lead to a new beginning. As beekeepers, let's keep watching—and learning—from these tiny architects of democracy.

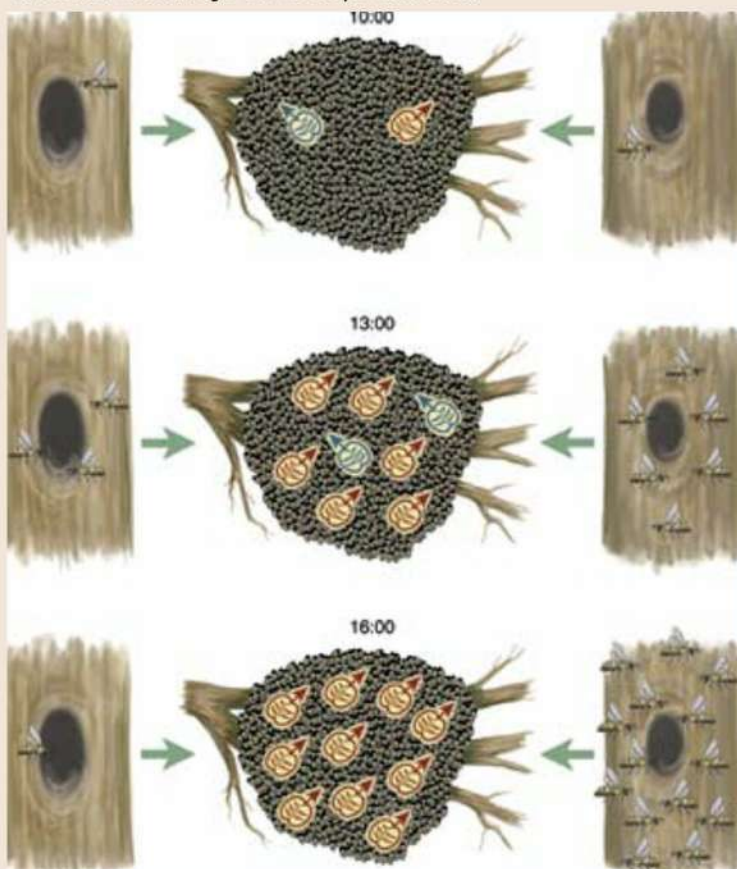
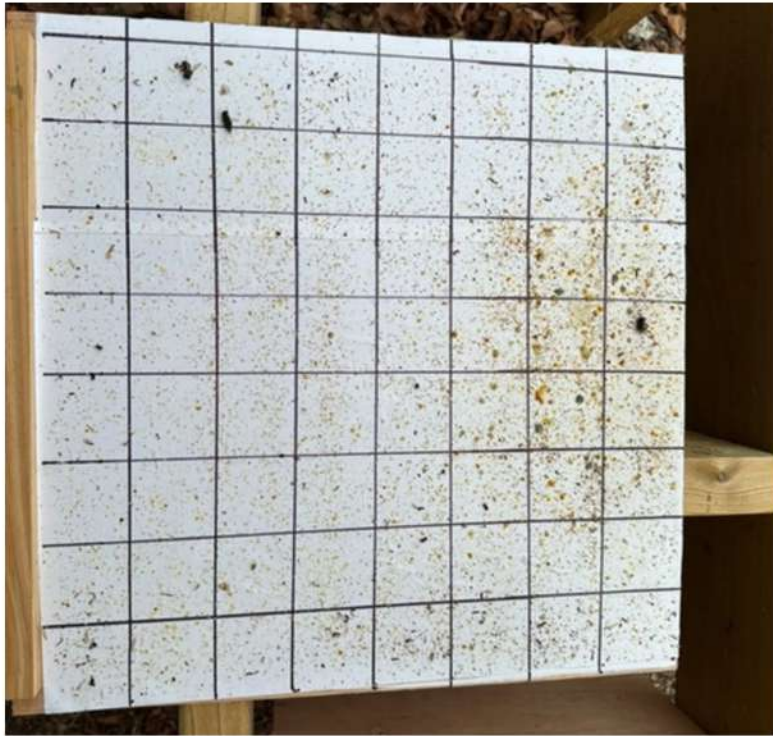


Diagram 1: Illustration of a bee swarm cluster with scout bees performing waggle dances on the surface
(Source: Thinklike a bee .com)

BOARD TALK

Understanding your hive debris



Every time you pull the white insert from beneath your screened bottom board, you are pulling out a diagnostic report on your colony's health. While it might look like a random scattering of trash, this "hive drop" is one of the most valuable, non-invasive tools a beekeeper has for monitoring Varroa destructor populations.

Unlike alcohol washes or sugar rolls, which require opening the hive and handling the bees directly, a sticky board gives you a passive look at what is naturally falling to the hive floor. Here is how to use this debris to calculate your colony's mite load and interpret what the numbers mean.

Step 1: Preparing the Board

To get an accurate count, you need a grid-lined white insert board. I bought sticky backed plastic and used a ruler and sharpie to grid. To prevent the wind from blowing the debris away and to stop live mites from crawling back up into the hive, the board must be coated with a sticky substance. Most beekeepers use a thin, even layer of Vaseline or a quick spray of cooking oil. Slide the prepared board under the screened bottom board of your hive.

Step 2: The Waiting Period

Leave the board in place for a set period, ideally three to five days. Leaving it in for just 24 hours can give you skewed results, as mite drops can fluctuate wildly from day to day based on weather, bee activity, and hatching brood. Leaving it in for longer than five days makes the board too cluttered with wax and pollen to accurately count the mites.

Step 3: Calculating the Daily Drop Rate

Once you remove the board, it is time to count. Find a well-lit area and look for the telltale reddish-brown, oval shapes of the Varroa mites. Ignore the irregular, crumbly wax cappings and yellow pollen grains. I found it helpful to use a magnifying glass and tweezers and push them to one side in a drop of water.

To find your average daily mite drop, use this simple calculation:

Total Number of Mites Counted ÷ Number of Days the Board Was Inserted = Daily Mite Drop

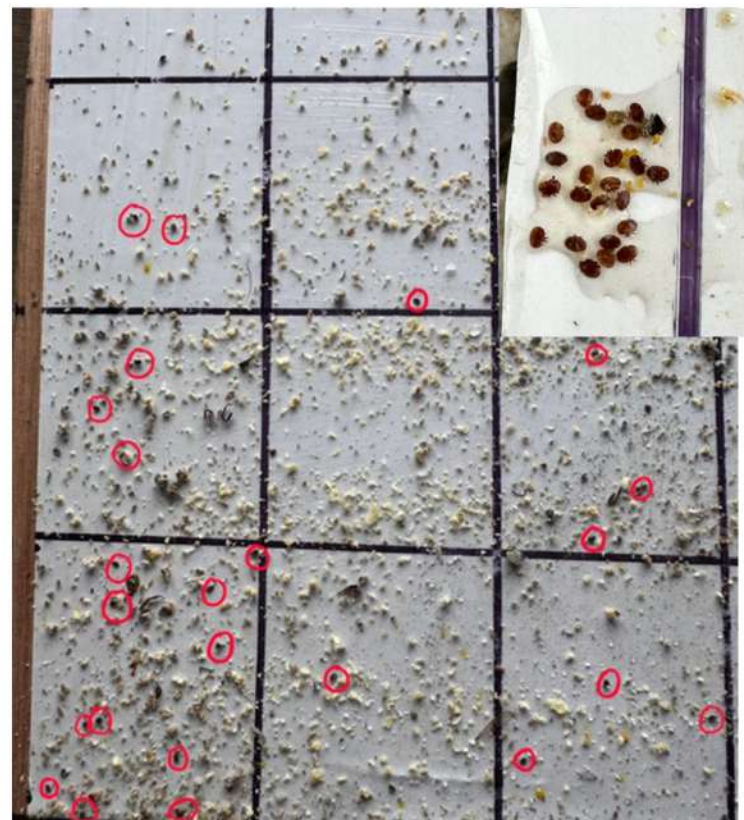
Example: If you left the board under the hive for 3 days and counted a total of 45 mites, your calculation would be $45 \div 3$. Your daily mite drop is 15 mites per day.

Step 4: Interpreting the Numbers

What constitutes a "dangerous" mite drop depends heavily on the season and the size of your colony.

Spring: The colony is building up. A drop of more than 2 to 3 mites per day is cause for concern and warrants closer monitoring or an early intervention.

Late Summer/Autumn: Mite populations peak just as the colony's winter bees are developing. During this critical period, a drop of 10 to 15 mites per day (or higher) is a flashing red warning light indicating that a treatment is likely necessary to ensure winter survival.



The Full Picture

For a beekeeper, the bottom board is more than just the floor of the hive; it is the colony's "black box" recorder. While a full inspection provides a direct look at the frames, "reading the debris" offers a non-invasive way to monitor hive health, population dynamics, and potential threats throughout the seasons. checks are important, but the debris offers much more to observe. Trails of chewed wax point to honey use or emerging brood. Photo 1 highlights where the bees gather in cold weather, and bits of pollen show they're still out collecting. Reading the board helps you track your colony quietly, with the hive undisturbed. You may also spot wax moth larvae, small hive beetles, or chalkbrood mummies, which look like small, dry pieces of chalk left by a fungal infection.



Photo 1: Winter board can show where your bees are clustering



Photo 2 : Seasonal boards reveal different activities

Seasonal Insights

Spring (Expansion): Look for parallel lines of wax cappings. These indicate where the cluster is located and how quickly the brood is emerging.

Summer (Pests): Reddish-brown specks reveal Varroa mite levels. Mummified, chalky larvae (Chalkbrood) or chewed pupae signal hygiene issues or disease.

Autumn (Security): Ragged, large wax chunks suggest robbing by wasps or neighboring bees tearing into honey stores.

Winter (Survival): The location of debris tracks the cluster's movement. If the trail reaches the top of the board and stops, the bees may have reached the top of the hive and run out of food.



- 1 Varroa mites
- 2 Wax cappings
- 3 Bee Limbs/Parts
- 4 Pollen/Propolis granules
- 5 Nectar/Honey droplets

Photo 3 : Learn to read your debris

Additional Resource



The Wider World OF BEES

In this edition of The Wider World of Bees, we highlight UK information, updates and research that could influence your beekeeping. Whether adjusting habitats or refining varroa treatments, these stories offer actionable insights.

Disney's "Secrets of the Bees" (a National Geographic production streaming on Disney+ from 1 April) is a two-part documentary series delving into the extraordinary hidden world of bees—using groundbreaking filming technology and special cameras to peer inside a single hive over three years, capturing never-before-seen moments.



The series highlights the astonishing architecture, intelligence, and complex behaviors of more than 20,000 bee species, which pollinate one-third of the world's food supply, while emphasizing their critical role in ecosystems and featuring insights from entomologist Dr. Samuel Ramsey to unlock these tiny yet indispensable creatures' secrets.

Research Highlights Importance of Hygienic Behaviour

A recent study from the University of Vermont, published in PLOS ONE, reveals for the first time how hygienic honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) colonies exhibit unique advantages in combating infectious pathogens in adult bees, specifically against the microsporidian parasite *Nosema ceranae*. While hygienic behavior—primarily the detection and removal of unhealthy brood—effectively limits brood diseases and certain colony-level threats, it does not directly target adult-infecting pathogens like *Nosema*. However, the research demonstrates that bees

from hygienic colonies mount stronger innate immune defenses, resulting in lower infection levels, higher survival rates after experimental *Nosema* exposure, reduced spore loads, and enhanced physiological responses (such as lower sugar syrup consumption of inoculants and potentially upregulated immune gene expression or other mechanisms) compared to non-hygienic counterparts, despite similar initial exposure risks. This suggests that selection for hygienic traits indirectly bolsters adult bee resistance to gut pathogens, offering new insights into breeding for resilient honey bee stocks amid ongoing colony health challenges.

Britain's Thriving Wild Honeybees

New research from the University of Sussex (October 2025) has overturned the belief that wild *Apis mellifera* were nearly extinct in the UK. An estimated 40,000 wild colonies exist across England, often nesting in veteran oak and sweet chestnut trees. These colonies appear to be self-sustaining (not just swarms from managed hives) and may hold valuable genetic diversity for natural resistance to pests.

Engineered Bee "Superfoods"

A breakthrough study led by the University of Oxford in collaboration with Kew Gardens has developed a yeast-based dietary supplement that mimics the specific sterols found in natural pollen. Colonies fed this supplement reared 15 times more larvae to adulthood than those on standard sugar/protein feeds. It could help address "nutritional stress" during wet summers or in areas with low floral diversity, potentially reducing winter colony losses which reached 45% in some UK regions recently.

recipecorner

Honeycomb Cream

Prep and Cook Time
Prep time: 15-20 mins
Cook time: 5-10 mins
Chill Time: 6 hours

This month we feature a recipe from the HBKA Newsletter Archives. Printed in 1983 it adapts a much older recipe for the honey lover. The name actually refers more to the texture of the pudding than the addition of honey which was a more modern twist and is also known as Honeycomb Pudding or Honeycomb Mould. If luck is with you the magic of this recipe is that the lemon juice acts on the milk, and as it sets, the white rise to the top creating a foam, while a clear jelly forms at the bottom.



Nutritional Info (approximate per serving)

- Calories: 120 kcal
- Fat: 4.8g (saturated 2.5g)
- Carbohydrates: 9.8 (sugars 9.7g)
- Protein: 6.8g
- Salt: 83mg (approx.)

Red Seed nettle

Honeycomb Cream

- 1-2 tblsp honey
- 1½ pints milk
- 1oz gelatine
- ½ gill water
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 eggs
- Peel of 1 lemon

Boil the milk with the bay leaves. Beat up the yolks with the honey, pour in the strained hot milk, stirring thoroughly, then return to the pan and stir over a low heat until it thickens. Pour into a basin to cool. Melt gelatine in the water, add to custard with the grated lemon rind and stir often until nearly cold. Whip the egg whites until stiff and fold into the mixture. Put into a wetted mould and leave in refrigerator until set. Turn out onto a glass dish.

Tips:

I would suggest paring some of the lemon and grating the rest. You may also want to add a little lemon juice if you want the layered effect. infuse the parings and zest with the milk and don't forget to remove the parings before you thicken the mixture
A gill is a quarter of a pint so half a gill is equivalent to 70 ml or 5 tbsp



MEMBERS

ROUNDUP

Our Whats App chat room has been busy with many spring related questions around feeding and when to do a first inspection. As usual the advice given is generous and really useful to many of our members. Watchword being be careful at this time of year. Go cautiously and keep feeding if in any doubt your hives don't have enough food. It is lovely to see all our ladies out and about collecting pollen and some of your photographs are included here for all to enjoy! Also in the chat room some great tips on underfloor entrances and wasp deterrence.



Chrissie Barnes did a 'Bee Talk' at Somersham Primary with a huge audience of all the KS1 classes - 85 children in total. She had them all waggle dancing and collecting pom pom pollen. She said 'the kids loved it, they were so engaged and full of questions!'



Photo: Simon Collins

There has also been quite a bit of activity around Asian Hornet traps and Helen has been distributing some traps to members. We will keep you posted on how these work out this season but for now the discussion is around getting them up and running and bait tips. Steve J wins the prize for most sensible use of dark ale!



Photo: Karen S

Photo: Steve Hamilton



Photo: Simon Collins



Photo: Steve Hamilton




Photo: Steve Hamilton

MONTHLY TO DO'S

MARCH



- Losses can be high this month but avoid doing too much too soon. Remove mouseguards when frosts have passed.
- Depending on location leave inspections until April unless urgent or the weather is warmer than average.
- Keep any inspection brief.
- Check Varroa levels.
- Continue checking stores and if feeding is necessary a thin syrup is normally recommended.
- Remove any fondant when adequate forage is available.
- Find your queen excluders and ensure all kit is ready to be used.
- If a colony has died close the entrance until you are ready to deal with it. Try to understand why a colony may have failed; look for signs. Common causes can include: Poor/failed  queens, Varroa-related issues, Starvation, Small/weak colonies



From BBKA

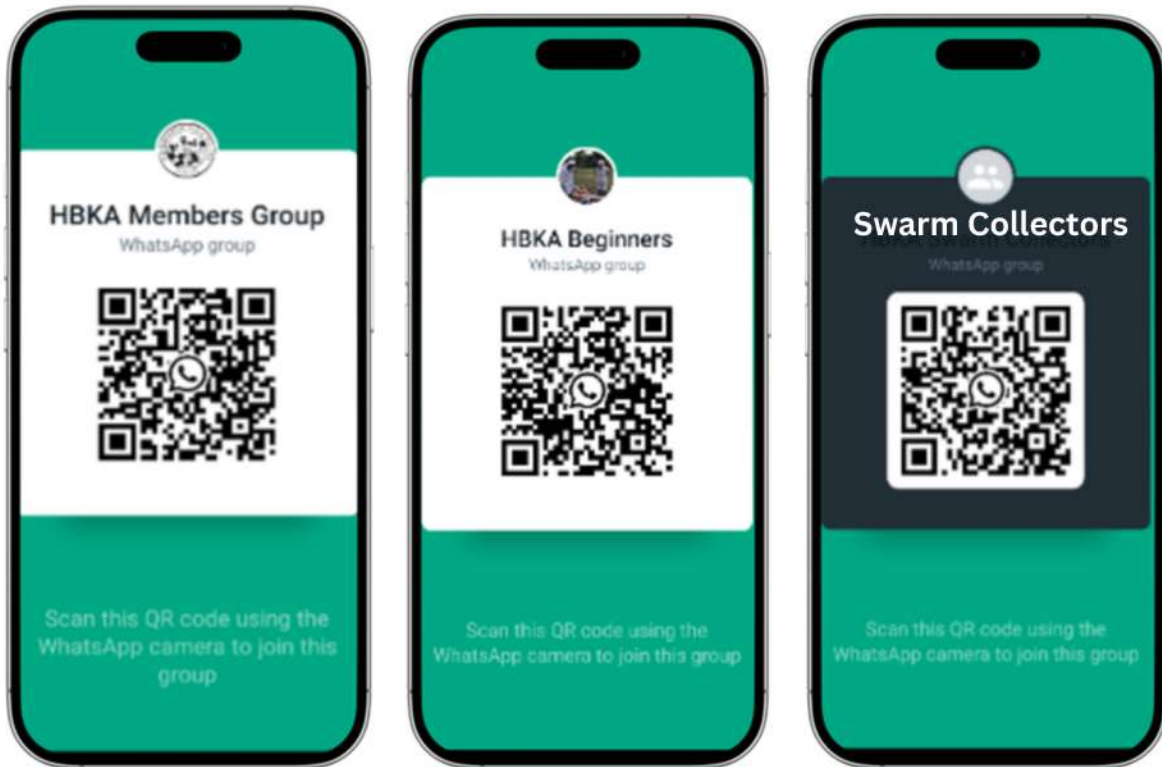
SAVE THE DATE



Date/Time	Event
1 st April	'Secrets of the Bees' airs on Disney + channel
17th-19 th April	BBKA 2026 Spring Convention, Harper Adams University, Shropshire
18 th & 25 th April	Beginners' Beekeeping Course
9th May	HBKA AGM and Spring Workshop 
13th-19 th July	Bees' Needs Week

Stay CONNECTED

There are numerous ways you can stay in touch with what's happening in the HBKA. We have this newsletter which we send out by email (and hope to make available digitally in the near future); we have our website where you can find a treasure trove of resources HBKA Website and we have our WhatsApp groups where you can find instant news and views from your fellow members. There are some great chats as members swap ideas and thoughts on everything from wasp control to winter storage bags! We have a general members group, one dedicated to swarms and another for our beginners. Scan the QR codes or use the links provided. Please note that your phone number will be visible to other members of the HBKA Members Group.



Do you have news, photographs or information that would be good to share with your fellow beekeepers? Share top tips, ask questions or seen something interesting in your hives? Email us at newsletter@huntsbka.org.uk