

Busy Swarming Season



Vic Webb has also had a busy time swarm-collecting in recent weeks. He had to climb a ladder to retrieve a swarm, pictured left, five metres up a tree in a garden in Rusthall.

Another call took him to a garden near Skinners School, in Tunbridge Wells, where a swarm had also come to rest in a tree. The swarm was successfully taken and the householder, Theresa Penfold, pictured bottom left with Vic, gave a donation to the branch.

A report of this swarm collection made it into the Tunbridge Wells Courier.

The third picture is of a bumble bee rescue, as Vic explains: I was called out to take away bumble bees from a pile of litter in a garage in Ferndale, Tunbridge Wells. The house owners took photos as I removed the bees and made a donation to the Branch as well as giving me a bottle of quality white wine (which has now vanished!). I used a shovel to put the bees into a cardboard box, then wrapped it in a sheet and took it away. They are now at the Hilbert Road apiary, under the beehouse in the cardboard box.



Have a look on our website under the 'SWARMS' page, to see more pictures of John Farrow and Vic Webb at work:

<https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Vic-Webb-Collecting-a-Swarm-15-ft-up.pdf>
<https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-Frustrating-Day-of-a-Swarm-Collector.pdf>

Outbreak of European Foul Brood

There has been a single reported incident of EFB near Five Oak Green (between Tudeley and Paddock Wood). Thankfully, this does not appear to have spread. However, it is a salutary lesson for us all that it can happen to anyone. EFB is one of the notifiable diseases and so must be reported. If EFB or one of the other notifiable diseases is confirmed by the bee inspector at your apiary, and your colonies must be destroyed, you can claim against the disease insurance included in the subscription for registered members. If I could just reiterate the importance of registering with Beebase: www.nationalbeeunit.com If you have an out apiary, you need to list the closest postcode for your apiary as well as your home address, to ensure you are correctly identified in the event of a reported infection. This website also lists the contact details for the bee inspectors and a well written range of fact sheets about a wide array of bee issues you may encounter.

Liz Birchenough

Helping the Public to Tell Wasps from Bees



When we get telephone calls about bees nests at this time of year they can, quite often, turn out to be wasps nest. Now I have this picture of a wasps nest handy to send and prevent a wasted trip. It was taken on the 25th June 2020 in a Kemsing shed, so it had probably been under construction for a couple of months. The nest is initially started by the queen who lays worker brood, which then complete the task by rasping away at the shed timber over the next few weeks, to make this very light, papier-maché construction.

John Farrow



Clin Hayward, Brighton Chapter

Queen Success at Barrwood

an old comb to act as a swarm lure. Instead it attracted a European hornet queen to build a nest inside.

Five Nucleus boxes were set up from the queen-raising exercise. From the middle of June, pollen was being taken in and a quick inspection showed that the queens were just coming into lay in all but one box.

The following week the first box opened revealed, to my delight, what I was hoping for: a productive queen filling brood in a textbook fashion on almost all the frames, with the bees remaining still on the comb. We moved this colony into the WBC that Sarah Rapley had spent the Winter restoring for us. I was concerned they might find their way into the entrance difficult, being a good foot lower and hidden by that peculiar rain guard/sun shield arrangement specific to WBC's. It probably helped that the nucleus box was painted white, but I certainly needn't have been worried. They were soon launching and landing from the very generously proportioned landing board.

If some you win, some you lose! The next colony revealed itself to have a drone-laying queen. She had clearly failed to mate. This is a problem that has been reported across the whole country in recent years. The other two colonies were building up slowly with a good brood pattern, although they are not vigorous enough to move out of their nucleus box yet.

The field beside Barrwood, that has grown rape for so many years is now 'p' has finished early and all the hives have required an extra super. As the bees can find foundation to frames as all the drawn comb is now on the hives.

The Sound of the Queen

The article on the BBC website describing recent discoveries about the range of sounds emitted by developing queens just before swarming occurs has triggered a lot of discussion amongst members.

The original research was undertaken by Dr Martin Bencsik, from Nottingham Trent University, and a team of colleagues. The research and findings have been published in Nature, which is one of the leading scientific journals. A full copy of the report has been saved to our branch website. It's on the last page under INFORMATION/QUEEN RELATED TOPICS.

The link is: <https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Swarming-Prediction.pdf>

The report contains a lot of technical detail, but if you don't want to read everything, the conclusion and discussion at the end are very thought-provoking.

Full title: The prediction of swarming in honeybee colonies using vibrational spectra, published in Nature Scientific Reports, 2020.
Liz Birchenough

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marystaffurth@yahoo.com for
inclusion in the next newsletter.*