

Newsletter April 2024

Hi everybody, welcome to my newsletter for April '24.

Membership

First, let us welcome our new member: - Jacqui who joined in March, Welcome to the association Jacqui.

March Events

Beginners group - 10 beginners enjoyed the 2-day intensive introduction to beekeeping this year - some would love a mentor to work with before they take the plunge. If you would like to mentor a beginner (and if you had a mentor, you will remember how much that helped you get started!) please let Linda know - introductions can be made at the swarming workshop and apiary visits.

Fionas' Advanced Apiarian Certificate Talk. This was held on Sunday the 24th, and a fantastic, supportive turnout it was too. Fiona was giving a talk/lecture on propolis as part of her ongoing studies and was observed and marked my two members of the Scottish Beekeepers Association. Mark Barnett and David Wright, we wish Fiona well in her further studies.

Equipment from Susan and Grant (and honey jars from Fiona) - you have been very generous in your donations - the sum so far is £187. Linda will catch up with Susan and Grant to discuss how best to pass this on to a charity of their choice - hopefully the amount can be increased with the help of Gift Aid. Thanks

One of your new members, Jan, has connections with farmers in our area who have oil seed rape fields. If you would like an OSR contact please let us know and we will pass your details to Jan. Thanks for doing this Jan.

Chris's Bee Log

Chris's latest blog is now on line and please read it soon if you have not yet done so.

Dates for your diary

Sunday 14th April - swarming workshop. This was probably the very first workshop and second meeting I attended after moving to Scotland and joining the association last year. I found it educational, great fun, but above all as a newcomer to the association a great way of meeting and getting to know other members. Watch this space for further details.

Apiary visits will start in April - again watch this space. If you would like to host an apiary visit, please let us know.

Things to do in April

April generally marks the beginning of the active season with warmer days and the appearance of early blossom. After a winter of unceasing rain and endlessly unsettled weather we finally have some forage for our bees: the early snowdrops,

hazel and alder have given way to wild plum and blackthorn, spring flowers and shrubs and my bees are taking full advantage.

Oil Seed rape may be available locally providing early forage depending if the local farmer has planted it this year.

Spring can be a dangerous time for our bees: the queens increase their laying rate as the days lengthen and, as stores in the hive dwindle, our bees need to go out foraging at every opportunity. No forage, no food and if poor weather prevents foraging there is the risk that our winter bees will perish before the colony has new foragers to take on the task. Bees can starve in an astonishingly short time – we beekeepers need to maintain our vigilance where stores are concerned and feed where necessary with syrup in a contact feeder once bees are flying freely.

The arrival of spring means it is time for regular inspections and the completion of any winter tasks we did not quite get round to because soon we will have to turn our full attention to swarm prevention and control. Do not panic, there is plenty of help and information out there – just ask.

April Summary

Continue to check stores by hefting, checking floor inserts or a quick look in.

Carry out your first detailed inspection if you have not already done so. Be clear what you are looking for:

Queen present & laying?

Brood at all stages?

Good brood pattern with biscuit-coloured capping's?

Bees looking normal & healthy?

Acting normally?

Any sign of disease or varroa mites (be sure to check floor inserts)? Are there enough stores to last the bees to your next inspection? Has the colony got enough room?

Check the queen's mark and renew if indistinct.

Add a queen excluder and super when the brood box is full of bees, not stores.

Replace any dirty, mouldy, or damaged comb with frames of sterilised comb or new foundation or move these frames to the outside of the brood nest to replace later.

Read up on your chosen method of swarm control and assemble equipment.

Assemble the equipment you will need for swarm collection and read up on how to do it.

Set up Asian hornet traps and monitor closely: put a piece of foam or kitchen roll into the liquid reservoir to prevent non-target insects from drowning.

Dougie

Chair