



Honeybee news

Honeybee news is produced by our own Jill Hill and contains interesting snippets and links to articles from around the world that mention the honeybee.

This page is updated approximately 4 times per year with previous years available in our [Library](#).

2023 (Part Two)

Hitching a ride: a swarm in a car

Transporting bees in the back of your car is always a potentially dodgy activity, with the thought of them escaping while you are driving being the stuff of nightmares! Not so in China.

A story on Chinese social media recently describes a cool-headed driver who continued to use his car despite a swarm of bees settling above his head.

Videos posted by a passenger in the back seat show that Yeo, the driver, far from being afraid, was happy to accommodate his unusual passengers. "I am going to be rich" he smiles.

Apparently, in some areas of China it is believed that you will come into money if a bee visits your house.

The news item doesn't say how long the swarm stayed clustered in his car but one feels for the poor scout bees trying to keep up with the car!

[Click here to view the full article](#)

A happy ending

A happy ending to the sad news item last year describing the theft of several hives and colonies in Cornwall.

The thieves were never discovered but presumably were local as many of the foragers returned to the area from which the hives were sited. Sports Direct is working with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and football manager Harry Redknapp to promote the growing of wildflowers to support the wild bee population.

The sports equipment retailer has funded the replacement of the hives which were stolen from Guy and Kathrin Barnes at the Tresillian House country estate.

Fellow beekeepers have also donated bees to populate the hives.

Sports Direct is giving away 1.5 million wildflower seed papers when customers purchase a Save the Bumblebee bag for life or giant mug. The papers have seeds embedded in them so are very easy to plant.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

More evidence that pesticides are bad news for honeybees

Researchers at the University of Arizona have been investigating the effect of two pesticides on the lifespan of honeybees.

They collected bees as they emerged from cells and fed them with either pyriproxyfen or spiroticlofen, in varying quantities, and monitored them.

Bees fed on the lowest dose of either pesticide survived for 25 days whereas those fed on the highest dose survived for only 17 days.

Diminishing size of abdominal fat bodies is associated with ageing and the change from being nurse bees to foragers.

Stress can accelerate this process.

Further investigation showed that bees fed on pyriproxyfen became foragers at an earlier age than those fed with spiroticlofen.

However, those fed on the latter had a faster loss of fat bodies and were noted to collecting pollen with a high fat content when they became foragers.

It is proposed that affected bees compensate by favouring pollen with a high fat content.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

Robotic honeycomb

Scientists in Switzerland and Austria have developed a robotic system for observing and modifying behaviour of honeybees when they cluster in winter.

Normally, it is difficult to observe the cluster as opening up the hive alters the temperature and therefore changes the bees' behaviour.

The device looks like a frame of drawn comb and is placed inside the hive.

Sensors within the device monitor activity but can also change the temperature within the hive to change behaviour.

It is suggested it could be a tool to encourage the cluster to move to other areas of the hive during very cold weather to access stores and prevent isolation starvation.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

Cheap honey imports in Afghanistan

The issue of cheap imported honey is not just an issue in the UK. Afghanistan beekeepers have the same problem with honey imported from Iran. Although Afghanistan is self-sufficient for honey, Iranian imports cannot be banned because of Afghanistan's membership of the World Trade Organisation.

In the last 20 years, beekeeping has been encouraged as a way of lifting people out of poverty and providing an alternative to growing opium poppy.

The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation has provided training programmes, start-up kits, colonies of bees and protective clothing.

The Taliban has continued to encourage beekeeping and recently announced the addition of another 400 beekeeping farms in Helmand region.

Unfortunately, the economic crisis caused by rising inflation and mass unemployment means people can now only afford basic essentials.

Added to this is the import of cheap but poorer quality honey from Iran.

A kg of Afghan honey used to sell for about 1,000 afghanis (\$11) but is now competing with Iranian honey selling at 150-400 afghanis (\$1.70-\$4.50) for the same weight.

Beekeepers in Afghanistan have been left with a glut of honey they cannot sell.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

2023 (Part One)

AFB vaccination for honey bees

The US Dept of Agriculture has granted a conditional licence for a vaccine against American Foulbrood.

Produced by Dalan Animal Health (<https://www.dalan.com/science>), partnered with the University of Georgia, it will initially just be available to commercial beekeepers.

The article states that in some areas of the US, the disease has been found in 25% of colonies.

However, identification and management of the disease appears to be the responsibility of the individual beekeeper in the US, without a service like we enjoy from our seasonal bee inspectors.

Before you have visions of sticking a needle into each individual bee in your colonies, apparently the vaccine works by incorporating inactive causative bacteria *Paenibacillus larvae* into the candy fed to the queen.

Some of the vaccine ends up in her ovaries which ultimately gives immunity to the bee larvae developed from her eggs.

If the vaccine is successful, the company hopes it could lead to vaccines for other diseases such as European Foulbrood.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

Was a single mated Asian Hornet queen responsible for the huge numbers now found across mainland Europe?

The Asian Hornet is believed to have been introduced into France from China in 2004.

Since then, it has spread and become well-established across mainland Europe and the Channel Islands.

Relatively few nests and insects have been found in the UK so far, but climate change may alter this in the future.

A single hornet, alive but dying, was discovered in Dublin in April 2021, origin unknown.

It was sent to the National Museum of Ireland where genetic analysis was performed, comparing it with hornets found in several European countries.

Data from 3 genetic markers showed that the hornets in Europe are all related and probably originated from a single mated queen.

The bad news, of course, is this research shows how easy it appears to be for a single insect to colonise a novel and extensive area, given favourable environment and circumstances.

However, the good news is that the close relatedness of Asian Hornets in Europe may make it easier to develop a way of eradicating them based on biological control methods.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

Bentley bees

The headquarters of the Bentley car manufacturers at Crewe are the proud owners of 10 colonies of honeybees.

The apiary is sited in the grounds as one of Bentley's initiatives to improve the local environment along with birdhouses, hedgehog boxes and planting 100 trees and 5,000 daffodil bulbs.

The bees had a good season last year producing a bumper crop of 1,000 jars of honey.

These are given as gifts to important visitors to Bentley HQ so next time you're in there buying a car, you may get a jar!

[Click here to view the full article](#)

Giant Asian Hornet nest found in a toilet!

A volunteer Asian Hornet tracker in Jersey discovered a large nest, about the size of a small dustbin, in a toilet block.

Fortunately, the facility was in a disused building.

The link below has some great pictures and a close-up video clip of the nest in-situ.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

Can honey help to reduce heart disease?

Researchers at the University of Toronto evaluated 18 clinical controlled feeding trials involving 1,105 participants whose average age was about 45 and who generally followed a healthy diet.

They were asked to consume about 40g/2 tablespoons of honey every day for 8 weeks.

At the end of the investigation, the blood test results were surprising.

There were reductions in fasting blood glucose levels (associated with type 2 diabetes and pre-diabetes), harmful low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, triglycerides (another harmful fat) and total cholesterol levels.

There was also an increase in the protective high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. These results suggest honey may be of benefit in reducing heart disease by reducing harmful indicators and improving protective elements.

Raw unprocessed honey was most effective, especially clover and robinia honey.

Benefits were lost if the honey was heated above 65 degrees C. Interestingly, some of the background literature searches on the benefits of honey mainly involve animals, one of which showed honey led to weight loss in rats.

However, honey made up about 20% of the rat's diet, so not replicable for humans!

Despite the benefits demonstrated, the researchers caution against adding honey to an existing diet but instead recommend using raw honey to replace any sugars usually consumed.

A summary is available [here](#)

[Click here to view the full article](#)

The search for a test to diagnose stress in honeybees

Researchers at Bucknell University in Philadelphia are trying to identify chemical indicators of stress in honeybee brains.

The goal is to then develop a cheap and simple test which can diagnose when a colony is under stress at an early stage before it shows signs and symptoms.

The underlying cause can be addressed before it harms the colony.

The driver for this work has been Colony Collapse Disorder which first hit the headlines in the USA in 2006 and continues to be a significant issue there.

Surveys by the Bee Informed Partnership show that beekeepers lose between 30 and 50 % of their colonies annually.

As a consequence of these losses, as well as rising fuel costs and the impact of Covid, farmers are now paying \$100 dollars per hive, compared to \$50 dollars a decade ago, when hiring hives to pollinate crops.

Honeybees are big business, contributing at least \$15 billion dollars annually to the US economy.

[Click here to view the full article](#)

Knives changed to a bee

An enormous bee has been created by artist Luke Kite at the British Ironworks Centre near Oswestry.

The sculpture was fashioned from illegal weapons gathered by Manchester police.

It has been touring round schools and colleges in Shropshire and Derbyshire as part of a project by police forces to raise awareness of the dangers of carrying knives, and to show the sort of weapons being regularly confiscated by police.

The Manchester Bee is back on display at the British Ironworks Centre.

[Click here to view the full article](#)