

Newsletter June 2026

Hi everybody, welcome to my newsletter for June. Well last month was hectic for bee swarms I know that our website has had a lot of requests for help from people who have, they think, a bee swarm on their property. Some most were but some were confused with Bumble Bees. The Guardian did a recent article on the Swarm Season in the USA with many bee keepers finding the whole season was a month early and more aggressive. Clearly further signs of climate change

Membership

Welcome to new member Marc, who attended the swarm workshop in May

Events

On Wednesday 20th May, we hosted a public meeting on behalf of the Scottish Governments Bee Health Team and we welcomed Claire and Laura who outlined the problems of the Yellow Legged Hornet threat to the UK's pollinators in general and Honey bees in particular. Their talk went on for over an hour with questions during and after from the floor. Great assurances were given over the governments action plans as to how they will deal with confirmed sightings of the Yellow Legged Hornet, with full effort given to search and destruction of YLH nests.

Tony's Bee Log

At the time of writing, it has not yet been published, my thanks to Tony for his Blogs and I welcome the different take from the excellent blogs from Chris and Kevin

Apiary Visits

Due to shortage of space and high demand, the visit to Kevin's bees in Carsluith was spread over two days. Ten members turned up on each day and thanks to some real luck with the weather, conditions were perfect for hive inspections. Two of the hives had been split to prevent swarming three weeks previously. So, the aim was to check that both the 'parent' colonies were progressing well, and to find out whether the other halves of the split had produced a new queen. This was certainly the case with one split, and we were able to find the new queen and mark her. Members were able to see brood at all stages, stored honey and stored pollen, and one 'parent' hive had several unsealed queen cells. It was explained how this colony will need to be split again before it swarms.

There was a good mix of newbies and experienced members and courtesy of the farmer we had an enjoyable round table chat over drinks and nibbles in his big shed.

I really do thank Kevin for arranging this visit, as it is not his land to invite people on to. I'm also very sorry I was unable to attend as it was an enjoyable and very educational day.

AGM and Honey Show

The AGM will be held as usual in October and I am raising this as my post is only constitutionally of a two-year tenure and I am not seeking re-election. I am now sitting in the post unconstitutionally and I really would like to hand the role to someone else at the AGM. Please give this a lot of thought.

The Honey Show will be held at the end of November and I intend to be sending out the schedules and applications to enter this month.

Royal Highland Show

Good luck to members entering the Honey Show competitions at the Highland Show later this month. If you are heading to the show, don't forget to visit the Honey Tent (at the West Gate) to see Honey Show entries, observation hives, taste honey and lots more.

Things to do in June

June should be a beautiful, sunny month with plentiful forage to help our colonies build up well and fill supers – time to book the extractor and order extra jars and labels! Well yes, but the hot, dry, and windy weather in May brought everything forward and the bees have been busy and have built up fast, meaning honey aplenty and swarming to match. June can bring abundance and anxiety in equal measure... we have all heard of the 'June gap.' In some areas there may still be a gap in flowering between the spring flowers such as sycamore, blackthorn, hawthorn and oilseed rape, and the start of the summer flowers such as lime, clover, blackberry, and sweet chestnut. There is a strong chance that we will see a proper June gap this year and beekeepers need to be vigilant, as always, that there is sufficient food in the hive to carry the colony through, especially if we have a spell of bad weather. This is a particularly important consideration when deciding to take off honey: last year colonies were left starving when poor weather prevented them from replenishing stores after the oilseed rape honey harvest was taken off. Please be mindful of forage and weather conditions and leave some honey for the bees. Expanding colonies mean more brood to host varroa so be sure to monitor any fall. Despite our best efforts to prevent or control swarming our colonies may still swarm if we have not at least kept up with the need for more space for the bees to store nectar during a strong flow. If there has been any appreciable acreage of oilseed rape in the vicinity of your hives you will need to extract the honey before it sets in the comb. Those of us on the swarm collectors list will have our skeps and swarm collecting kit permanently in our vehicles. June's a busy month! June Summary Continue weekly inspections and undertake swarm control if required. If inspections reveal that food stores are low, feed 1:1 syrup in a contact feeder, if there are no supers on, or fondant. Remember to only feed in the evening and to reduce the hive entrance to avoid robbing. Add another super when the current one is almost full of bees, not honey. Extract oilseed rape honey as soon as the bees start capping it and if no droplets fly out of uncapped cells when you quickly shake the frame. Mark any new queens with the years designated Colour Monitor for varroa: an average daily might fall of 10 or more means the colony is in trouble and needs treating. MAQS can be used with honey supers on. Continue monitoring for Asian hornets in your apiary: baits should now be protein-based and offered in an open dish to avoid bycatch; weight the dish with a pebble.

And finally... Enjoy your beekeeping and be ready to learn from the bees... Remember the Green Cross Code?

Stop, look, and listen! It's a good one to apply each time you visit your apiary... Stop and ask yourself what your intention is today: have you got the right equipment with you, enough time, and the right conditions to carry it out?

Look at your hives, your bees, and the surroundings – does everything look normal, are the bees flying, taking in pollen, forming a blanket on the front of the hive?

Listen to the sounds – contented humming or angry buzzing? Time spent observing your bees is even more valuable than reading about them – as any experienced beekeeper will tell you, the bees don't read the books...

Dougie

Chair