

New eLearning Programme for Beekeepers



Interest in bees and beekeeping has increased substantially over the last few years, with ever growing concern for the welfare of the UK honey bee population. The Healthy Bees Plan (HBP), published in 2009, set out a programme for the Government, beekeepers and other stakeholders to work together to ensure a sustainable and productive future for beekeeping. Since then there have been over 17,000 additional beekeepers who

have registered their details on BeeBase, the National Bee Unit's (NBU) online database. To read more about the Healthy Bees Plan, please see the BeeBase website, www.nationalbeeunit.com.

With this influx of new registrations comes a significant change in demographic. Whereas five years ago less than 7% of beekeepers on BeeBase had an e-mail address registered, this has now risen to

over 60% and we are frequently reminded of the growing number of people who use modern technology to develop their craft while on the move. Many of the beekeepers we visit have other full-time responsibilities and choose to keep bees as a hobby. This means that, although they may want to, they are unable to commit their time to the more traditional training methods such as practical courses and demonstrations. While nothing replaces this first-hand experience, in order to meet the HBP objectives to 'keep pests, diseases and other hazards to the lowest levels achievable' and 'promote good standards of husbandry to minimise pest and disease risk' it is vitally important that we reach out to all beekeepers and offer alternative, supplementary ways of learning.

We hope that with the introduction of a new eLearning programme, beekeepers will be able to access well-informed, structured training completely free of charge in the comfort of their own home. eLearning gives beekeepers who are unable to attend practical training events the chance to take responsibility for their own learning and offers them a way to improve their beekeeping skills and knowledge in their own time and at their own pace. The programme not only aims to provide information for new beekeepers, but also to act as a continual reference and learning tool for beekeepers of all experience.

Initially concentrating our efforts on honey bee pests and diseases, the NBU is developing an eLearning module which covers six main topics:

- Varroa
- Foul Broods
- Exotic Pests
- Other Brood Disorders
- Other Pests
- Adult Bee Diseases and Viruses.

The aim of the module is to provide beekeepers with a good understanding of the issues that might affect a honey bee colony including the background and biology of specific diseases, the impact and spread of some of the pests that are not currently present in the UK but may arrive here, and advice and guidance on how to prevent, monitor, identify and treat these

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problems including the legal obligations for notifying and preventing further spread. Beekeepers will access the eLearning programme via the NBU's website,

BeeBase. Users will explore each topic individually, working through a series of screens containing information, images and interactive activities before completing the learning piece by passing a final quiz. The information can then be used at any time for the beekeeper to refer back to. The module has been written and constructed by a team of highly skilled personnel including a specialist eLearning company who have experience working with large public sector organisations and the NBU Bee Inspectors who routinely work 'one-to-one' training beekeepers in the field.

Watch out for further details on the launch of the eLearning programme in later editions of *BBKA News* where we will provide details on how to access the eLearning and when it will be available.

Kate Parker, NBU Office Manager and BeeBase Co-ordinator

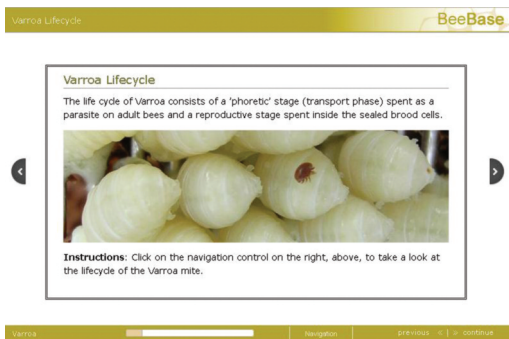


A Final Word From The BBKA

The NBU has developed the programme in consultation with the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA), which as an extension of the 'Course in a Case' resource initiative, is also looking to extend distance learning to beekeepers. We aim, together, to make the information and resources available to beekeepers easily accessible, consistent and understandable for all.

“ The uptake in beekeeping in the last four years has highlighted the need for the BBKA to provide training to our members through additional channels and using new media, to complement our existing mechanisms. With access to internet-based resources now widely available an eLearning initiative that leverages the expertise within the NBU and the BBKA is a logical route forward for both organisations in pursuit of healthier bees. ”

David Blower,
BBKA Education Coordinator



Above: Two 'screen shots' of the new eLearning programme soon to be launched on the NBU BeeBase website. Photos courtesy of Kate Parker.

THE SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION AUTUMN CONVENTION

Saturday 21 September 2013
8.45am – 5.10pm

at
INVERNESS COLLEGE – UHI
3 LONGMAN ROAD, INVERNESS, IV1 1SA



Mike Brown, Head of NBU — Supporting Britain's Bees and Beekeepers; Activities of the National Bee Unit; The NBU's Queen Rearing System
Dr Mario Pahl, University of Wuerzburg — Honey Bee Biology; Honey Bee Cognition, Learning, memory and navigation in a miniature brain.

Tickets £30 including coffee, lunch and tea (Students half price)

TRADE STANDS:

BeeCraft, Bee Books New and Old, BIBBA, SBA, Brunel Information, Solway Bee Supplies, Scottish Government Bee Inspectorate, Abelo.

Bookings for the Convention to:

Alan Riach, Woodgate, 7 Newland Avenue, Bathgate, EH48 1EE
Tel: 01506 653839; E-mail alan.riach@which.net
Please make cheques (£30) payable to SBA and enclose SAE for programme and receipt.

A list of B & B's is available from Alan Riach on request

Closing date 14 September 2013

Inverness-shire BKA is hosting a lecture in the College on Friday at 7pm. The lecture, to which all are welcome, is entitled 'In the Company of Dolphins' by Charlie Phillips, Field Officer for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Trust.

Reader information

Bee Watercolour Painting Courses for Beginners and Improvers

These are to be held at WWT, Slimbridge Wetlands Centre, Gloucestershire with Wildlife and Natural History Artist, Cath Hodsman, one of the country's most technically accomplished and accurate entomological artists and illustrators.

Beetles, Butterflies and Bees
on Monday 15 July 9.30–4.00



Painting Pollinators
on Friday 30 August 9.30–4.00



Paint in the stunning surroundings of the McNiece Suite, overlooking the Centre's wetlands. Both courses are totally unique. Cath will make use of a myriad of fascinating resources, such as microscopes, macro photography, specimens and much more to capture these fascinating creatures in all their intricate beauty. Places are limited so early booking is essential.

Cost of the day is £60 including VAT
Slimbridge booking Tel: 01453 891223, or e-mail Cath at cathodsman@talktalk.net
More info on these courses can be found on Cath's website www.cathodsmanwildlifeartist.com or on WWT Slimbridge's website www.wwt.org.uk/visit/slimbridge/