Beetalk March 2016

General info and news about bees

Hello and welcome.

Beetalk is a compilation of news from across the bee keeping word.

Its not affiliated to any beekeeping group so you wont get things like the next meeting and what we are doing and such like.

We hope that the articles provided will be useful to anyone interested in the a rewarding hobby and in some way we also hope that you may gain some pleasure in reading some of the article that are included.

Also we intend to include articles that may be helpful to anyone new to the hobby.

Being based in Lancashire it would be great for any contributions from Beekeepers from the county. But as stated above, please nothing about your association or group.

Hope you enjoy.

Editor

If you have any articles that you think may be useful to have included in Beetalk.

Please e-mail them to the editor

at

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A Watering Station for Bees

Bees require a source of water for many things, including temperature and humidity control within the hive, and for increasing the fluidity of their honey to feed larvae. A strong hive on a hot day can use a litre of water a day, and this requires eight-hundred workers each making up to fifty trips to the water source during the day. Bees of course need more water in the Spring during brood rearing, and less water as the honey flow peaks, but they also require water in the Winter. Bees are experts at locating water, and they can be seen taking water from pond fountains and even swimming pools.

Unfortunately they can quickly become a nuisance to neighbours. Although a source of clean water is always recommended bees often appear to prefer dirty or brackish water, which contains minerals. The basic requirements for a bee water source is that the bees have a good footing so that they do not fall in and drown. The following describes how to make a simple and very low cost watering station that meets all these requirements.

First cut an old tyre along its circumference. This will require a good hacksaw and some effort to cut through the steel reinforcement. Find a empty plastic container, such as those used for bird food fat balls, which fits snuggly inside the centre of the tyres. Then carefully cut a curved segment out of the lid of the container. Hopefully as a result the surface of the lid will also sag downwards. Insert the plastic container into the centre of the two tyres, which are stacked with their cut edges at the top and the bottom. Fill the tyre at the top with compost, and water until the compost is saturated, so that the bees can land and suck water from the wet compost. Fill the plastic container with water until it flows partly across the sagging lid. This provides a landing platform from which the bees can also safely drink the water in the container.

A colony is more efficient if the workers do not have to travel far for water. But do not put a water feeder within 3 m of the hive because the bees will ignore it if it becomes contaminated due to defecation. Some experts suggest initially filling with sugar sweetened water to attract the bees to find the water source, but this should not be necessary. Remember to regularly top up the water in outer ‘compost ring’, and ensure that clean water is also always available in the centre.

How to Make Creamed Honey

Making creamed honey or finely grained honey may be just the challenge.

The following notes explain how to do it. In the UK, because of the floral source on which the bees foraged, most honeys will eventually granulate. This often produces a 'gritty' honey which is not liked by some consumers. The alternative is to make creamed or 'soft set' honey which is achieved by a seeding process. The process of seeding was developed by Dr E J Dyce professor of Apiculture at Ontario Agricultural College, Canada in 1928. He found that the optimum temperature for honey to granulate is 14°C (57°F), and that the addition of around 5% of finely ground honey crystals will encourage the honey to granulate. In practice commercial companies use around 10% because this speeds up the granulation. Step (1) - clear your honey. Gradually and gently warm your honey to about 42°C (110°F) and maintain at this temperature long enough for it to clear, which may take a couple of days. Note - honey should preferably not be heated above 50°C (120°F), because this will kill the enzymes and cook the pollen. Then filter the clear honey to remove particles of wax and other foreign material, and allow to cool to room temperature, around 18°C (65°F). Step (2) - prepare your seed honey. Warm a small quantity of suitable finely granulated honey such as Oil Seed Rape or other honey that has granulated to 32°C (90°F). Leave until it has softened to the consistency of porridge then knead it with a stirrer until it runs freely. Step (3) - add the seed honey. When the clear honey has cooled add a generous 10% of the seed honey. This percentage of seed honey speeds up the final setting process. Firmly and evenly distribute the seed honey throughout the mixture. Then complete the mixing, possibly using an electrical hand mixer. Maintain an even but not too quick stirring motion, and ensure no air bubbles are introduced. Step (4) - allow to set. When the seed honey is well distributed, set aside in a cool constant temperature place for a few days. The optimum temperature for the fine granulation to proceed at a rapid rate is 14°C (57°F). Any lower or higher and the process will slow down. After a period of time depending upon the kind of honey, and the temperature, it will achieve a good set. Step (5) - bottle your honey. Return the honey to a warming cabinet at 32°C (90°F). In a day, but sometimes a little less, the honey will have softened through with a small amount of liquidity on the outside edges. Remove from the cabinet and with your stirrer slowly work the honey until it is quite mobile, somewhat like pourable porridge. First remove a small quantity to provide seed honey for making more creamed honey in the future. Keep this at a cool, even temperature until next required. Then bottle the remainder in the normal way and put the creamed honey in a cool place 10°C-14°C (50°-57°F) to stand for a few days. At the end of that period it will be re-set and just about the consistence of firm butter. Step (6) - admire your honey. Inspect your creamed honey which should have a smooth texture, with no large crystals that the tongue can feel. The 'set' should be such that when a jar is held on it's side, without its lid, the surface should not move but should remain vertical.

Hive Roof Insulation

If you have been unable to find some waste expanded polystyrene packaging suitable for hive roof insulation, why not upgrade. The insulation board used for property construction is very suitable. Products such as Recticel, which is a purpose made insulation. The foam used is rigid polyisocyanurate and the product is faced on both sides with aluminium foil for excellent insulation and heat reflection. Available in a range of thicknesses including 25, 50, 75 mm, so you can select a thickness to suit your type of hive and optimise insulation. In addition to large sheets it is also available in smaller sizes that can be easily cut to make insulation boards for two plus hives. For a board 50 mm thick it costs around £7 from your local builders merchant such as Jewsons. Cut holes to suit your crown board, and place over the crown board - remembering to ensure you have adequate ventilation - and your bees will loose less heat during the Winter.

Recipe (12) Sri Lankan Love Cake

2 tablespoons ***Honey***
1 lb (500g) caster sugar
8 oz (250g) semolina
12 oz (375g) cashew nuts
7 eggs separated
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ teaspoon lemon rind
½ teaspoon ground cardamom
½ teaspoon almond essence
2 tablespoon rose water

Finely chop the cashew nuts, and finely grate the lemon rind.

Grease and line an 8 inch (20 cm) square cake tin with two thicknesses of greaseproof paper. Brush the inner paper with melted butter. Beat the egg yolks and caster sugar together until light and creamy. Stir in the semolina, cashew nuts, rose water, honey, lemon rind, spices and almond essence. Beat the egg whites until firm and fold into the mixture. Put in tin and bake in a 150°C or Gas Mark 2 oven until the cake is evenly brown and is firm to touch. If the cake starts to brown too quickly, cover with paper or foil. Do not use the usual skewer test as the cake should be somewhat moist.

Leave until quite cold and then cut into small pieces.

Why does a large colony seem to make so disproportionately more honey than a smaller colony?

The simple answer is that there is a certain fairly fixed number of bees that are required to feed and look after the brood, and all the 'additional' bees are then available to forage, draw comb, and process nectar into honey. In fact the ability to gather nectar increases non-linearly with population – doubling the population more than doubles the ability to gather nectar. Arranging for the maximum population point to coincide with the honey flows could therefore be one of the main aims of some beekeepers.

To do this requires understanding the relationship between queen laying rate, colony population, and population growth.

Queen Laying Rate

The period from egg laying to emerging worker bee is 21 days. Because of this 21 day brood period, the average daily queen laying rate can be obtained by counting the (worker) brood –all stages, eggs, open and sealed brood, and dividing the total brood population by 21.

(We can ignore the drones because the number is small compared to the workers). If the brood count is 31,500 the queen's average daily laying rate over the past 21 days will have been 1,500 eggs per day.

Maximum Brood Population

Laying rate and brood population are inextricably tied together by the 21 day factor. The stabilised maximum brood population is always Queen Average Daily Laying Rate x 21.

Total Colony Population

Extrapolating from laying rate to total colony population is rather less fixed since it depends on the life of the worker. A worker life of 50 days is often assumed for bees foraging in the summer.

Worker bee life is however, like aircraft life, a bit dependant on air miles. In periods of lax, non-foraging activity, their life is likely to be extended somewhat. However, assuming a typical 50 day average life, the maximum colony population is simply the queen average daily laying rate multiplied by 50. For a queen capable of sustaining a daily laying rate of 1,000, the maximum colony population will be 50 x 1,000 =50,000 workers – every day a thousand bees are born and a thousand die.

Increasing either the average life time of a worker or the average daily laying rate of the queen will increase the maximum population, e.g. 55 day average life and 1,200 average daily egg laying would give a maximum population of 55 x 1,200 = 66,000 workers.

Colony Population Build-Up

Take a typical Spring time scenario and assume the colony comes through the winter with a population of say 10,000 and virtually no brood. The queen starts laying at say 500 eggs per day and sustains that for say 2 weeks. The brood population is now 7,000, the adult population may have dwindled by 2,000 due to winter bees lost foraging in difficult conditions.

Provided sufficient pollen and stores of honey are still available and that some fresh pollen sources have been found, the laying rate may then increase, to say 1,000 per day. The population progress from the start of serious laying is illustrated in the table below.

End of Week	Winter Bees	Queen Daily Laying Rate	Brood Population	New Adult Population	Total Adult Bees
1	9000	500	3500	0	9000
2	8000	500	7000	0	8000
3	7000	1000	14000	0	7000
4	6000	1000	17500	3500	9500
5	4000	1000	21000	7000	11000
6	1000	1000	21000	14000	15000
7	0	1000	21000	21000	21000
8	0	1000	21000	28000	28000

Now that your head is swimming with numbers let's not worry about the numbers, they are only typical. But they do illustrate the important point, that a high population can be achieved quite quickly. Population growth is very dependant on food availability.

Bees well fed the previous Autumn will still have a good reservoir of food available for these quick building Spring activities. A good reason for always leaving your bees with their stores of Autumn collected pollen. As long as the colony foraging economics can sustain a high laying rate (1,000 per day or higher), the build-up will continue rapidly.

Beekeeping Tips :::::::::::: Clearer Boards.

Clearer boards take many forms. Basically they remove the bees from the su□pers overnight by providing a one-way system. In other words bees can exit the super(s) but cannot return. They are placed under the super(s) containing the honey you are about to extract. They are best put under the supers early in the day to prevent any new nectar diluting the previous day's honey from which water has been reduced overnight before removing the supers the next day. Occasionally they may be left for two nights should weather conditions restrict flying. However, the longer the supers are left the more they will cool. Also there is the increased likelihood that the supers can be robbed out by bees from other colonies and even wasps towards the end of the season; this may occur if there are small gaps between super boxes. Small pieces of plastic foam are useful to plug any gaps. Clearer boards are simply crown boards adapted for the purpose of clearing bees from the supers. The Porter bee escape is possibly the most widely used device and consists of two sets of springs, each allowing the bees to pass one way only.

They are obtainable in either plastic or metal from equipment suppliers. It is usual to use two of these with one in the centre of the crown board and the other parallel to it and about 8 mm from the edge of the board. Crown boards are best made from waterproof plywood with four pieces of 8 mm thick lath fixed to each of the four sides on one side only of the plywood. The 8 mm is a critical dimension since it allows a correct bee space in hives using bottom bee space frames. The Porter escape fits into a 80 x 30 mm rectangular hole cut into the plywood; each end of the hole being enlarged with a semi-circular hole of 15 mm radius. The Porter escape is then pushed into this hole with its exits on the framed side of the board when bottom bee space is being used. (The reverse applies when using top bee space). When not in use as a clearer board the Por□ter escapes can be removed and the holes covered with a small piece of expanded metal (0.6 mm mesh) held in position with two drawing pins; they then double as a crown board. Over a period of time Porter escapes tend to have their springs propolised by the bees and this fixes the springs and so prevents the bees passing. Separating the sliding top and bottom parts apart allows easy cleaning of both metal and plastic types. A small amount of Vaseline (petroleum jelly) placed on the sliding parts makes separation and closure easy. When cleaning also check that the spring separation at the tips is about 2 mm. Another type of clearer board is the Canadian type and this takes different forms.

One form that was recommended by the late Ted Hooper requires the use of a crownboard with both sides of the plywood framed with 8 mm lath. In two diagonally opposite corners of this board cut out 20 mm holes with their circumference about 10 mm from the laths. Two small pieces of lath about 60 mm long are then nailed to the plywood to form a square of lath around the 20 mm hole. Ensure the nails holding these small pieces are clear of the corner where they meet. At this corner cut a slot 6mm wide in these pieces (3mm in each) to allow bees to exit from this corner.

Cover the whole of the area including the laths on the four sides with a 80mm square of expanded metal (about 0.6 mm mesh). Use some red paint to mark the laths of the crownboard on the opposite side to the expanded metal mesh. This is to tell you that the hive tool must not be inserted under this corner; use the hive tool under the other two corners. The clearer board is used with the meshed corners underneath. The way this works is that bees in the super can contact and smell those below (especially the queen substance) through the mesh and can then reach them through the small 6 mm bee channel created between the two small pieces of lath. They are not motivated to return to the su□per via the small hole at the exit end of the channel. It is a good idea to place an empty super, wet or dry, under the clearer board to give room for the displaced bees.

Finally, try not to use clearer boards if you suspect there is rape honey in them. The best method for removing bees from rape honey is to brush them off the combs using a handful of long grass. Should the grass get sticky then use a clean handful. Do not use a bee brush, as this gets sticky. Replace extracted wet supers at dusk to minimise the chance of robbing.

A lovely wax exhibit.

Beekeeping Tips ……. Spring and Summer Feeding

The rather wet months this year have left some colonies short of stores, especially when they were not fed down well in the previous August/September and exacerbated when all early honey has been removed by the beekeeper.

One has to remember that full-sized colonies can consume up to 1 kg honey per day and lots of pollen to ensure the queen keeps laying well. A National brood frame with honey on both sides holds around 2.5 kg of honey. A central brood frame full of brood will have an arch of about 0.75 kg above it. Frames on both sides of the centre will have more honey and usually less brood. In any event a super of stores should be left above a National brood box at all times when there is no honey flow.

Larger brood boxes will contain more stores and may not need to have a super with stores left above them when there is no honey flow. In an emergency a colony can be fed down with a thin sugar syrup (2 kg to 2.5 l of water) remembering that this may well get mixed with any later honey and therefore no honey crop for the beekeeper.

Feeding of candy/fondant requires the use of water to break it down and this causes further stress to the colony. In addition, the colony may be short of pollen and this may be addressed by feeding pollen or pollen substitute patties (See Beekeeping Tips no. 2). Brood frames from other colonies containing pollen may also be used to boost colonies short of pollen.

Some colonies have used oilseed rape honey this year when supers have been left on the hives to prevent starvation. The downside of this, for the beekeeper, is that any OSR honey remaining is difficult to harvest.

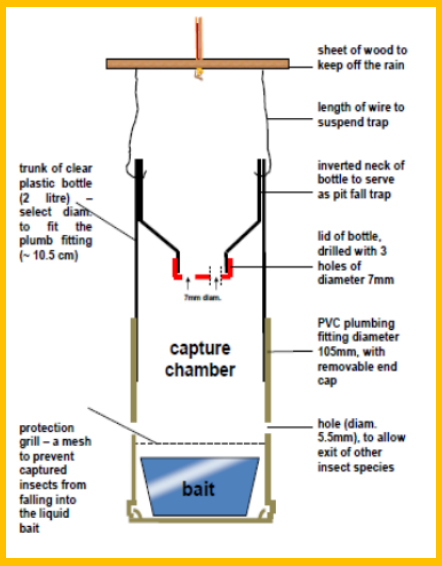
Queen marking gone mad!

It was like a 'spot the deliberate mistake' at Saffron Walden's August meeting, held at a member's apiary. The usual type of group, with a significant number of beginners, was inspecting a hive with me – looking for the queen as usual – you just can't help yourself. 'There she is, a 2011– marked white!!' But she wasn't moving in a queenly fashion. She looked like a worker, but what was she marked for? We trapped her in a match box and I took her home to look at under the microscope. It was certainly a worker. When she was dead the whiteness/ shinyness on the thorax had disappeared. Under the dissecting microscope

I could see shreds of what appeared to be membrane which had presumably stretched across the thorax in life creating the 'marked queen' effect. I took a photo – but it isn't very good! Closer examination of the bee showed the thorax to have a concave and symmetrical depression, not quite centrally – just the right size and shape to fit a varroa mite. To the right hand side the depression covered the base of the right wings, which were shrivelled and very poorly developed. I hadn't noticed this when we transferred her into the matchbox, probably because the left wings were normal – and she wasn't hanging about. Anyway, my diagnosis, although not confident, is that she'd had a varroa mite on her thorax as a larva/pupa which did the damage, but it had subsequently dropped off.

What do you think?

How to make an Asian hornet trap.



The Asian Hornet, *Vespa velutina*, is an aggressive predator of honey bees and other beneficial insects. It has recently extended its geographical range from Asia to mainland Europe following an accidental introduction to France, is now also present in Spain and Belgium. Adult hornets are highly mobile; the rate of spread across France is approximately 100 km/year. There is now great concern that this exotic insect will reach the UK, either by hitching a ride on imported goods or simply by flying across the channel. This sheet explains how to make an Asian hornet trap. Hanging this simple device in your apiary will allow you to monitor for pest arrival and, if necessary, help to protect your colonies from attack. These are especially effective if used in the Spring.

The efficiency of hanging traps

A variety of traps are available for catching adult hornets "on the wing", including Asian hornets. Comparisons of various designs for use against V. velutina have shown that funnel traps work best. Although field trials show that these capture considerable numbers of adult hornets (~400 hornets/week/trap), they cannot be expected to reliably eliminate V. velutina from an affected apiary. However, they are very useful as a first line of detection, for controlling hornet numbers and limiting damage, so thus have crucial roles in monitoring for arrival and, should Asian hornets arrive in the UK, in reducing impact and spread. Reports from France suggest that in areas where spring trapping has been used, subsequent numbers of Asian hornet nests are reduced by as much as 97% (2 or 3 nests in trapping areas versus >70 nests where no traps have been hung).

Trap design

Hornet traps can be purchased over-the-counter, but French beekeepers are frequently resorting to home-made equivalents, like the own shown in the photograph. Most of these share the same basic design: a plastic flask or bottle, containing a food attractant/bait, over which is inverted a funnel; the insects enter the funnel and crawl/ drop into a capture chamber from which they are unable to escape. The following design is closely based on that produced and field tested by ADAAQ*

What tools and materials do I need?

Clear plastic drink bottle with screw cap lid (2 litre) NB. check diameter is as close to 10.5 cm as possible. Most will be 10 cm or less; o PVC "soil and vent access plug" plumbing fitting (standard diameter 10.5 cm), with removable end cap;
Disc of wire mesh (diam. 10.5 cm; mesh size ~3 mm)
A small sheet of wood or plastic (approx 20 cm x 20 cm);
A piece of wire (e.g. an old coat hanger), (approx 60 cm);
A small plastic cup or bowl to hold bait mixture; o PVC adhesive;
A pair of scissors;
A drill with 2 drill-bits, diams. 5.5 mm and 7 mm;
A sheet of fine sand paper;
A saw;
A pair of clippers or pliers.

How to make the trap To make the trap entrance, use the saw to cut the top off the bottle, about 2.5 cm below its shoulder. Using the drill, loaded with the 7 mm drill bit, make three holes into the screw cap of the bottle. Screw the drilled cap back onto the bottle top and fix in place with glue. The size of these entry holes is important as they are just wide enough to permit passage of Asian hornets, but narrow enough to exclude larger native European hornets that may be attracted to the trap's bait. The capture chamber comprises the body of the plastic bottle and the PVC plumbing fitting. Cut the bottom 3.5 cm off the bottle and discard. Cut the wire mesh into a circular disc (diam.~10.5 cm) and, using a template, place this snugly into the plumbing fitting as shown in the diagram below (protection grill). Glue into place. At 5mm above the grill, drill a ring of smaller holes (diam. 5.5 mm). These will serve as exits for smaller non-target insects accidentally caught in the chamber. Use sandpaper to smooth the inner and outer edges of the holes. Insert the body of the bottle to a depth of 5cm into the plumbing fitting and glue into place. Invert the neck of the bottle, insert into the bottle's body, but do not glue into place. The bait cage consists of the space inside the plumbing fitting formed under the protection grill. The bait cage can be opened and closed by re□moving/replacing the plumbing fitting's removable cap. The overhead guard consists of a wooden board or plastic sheet (20 cm x 20 cm), placed 15 cm over the top of the open trap. Suspend the trap itself from the roof using two lengths of the wire, each about 15cm long. Don't forget to make a hole in the centre of the wood through which to put a suspension wire needed to hang up the finished trap

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING – AGAIN!

I understand that there was some confusion at the honey show about the legal requirements for country of origin labelling. It seems that neither our show judges, nor (surprisingly) Local Trading Standards departments are clear on this. The confusion centres on what constitutes a 'Country'. One might have thought that this would be fairly obvious, but when the labelling requirement was first introduced some unidentified bureaucrat apparently decided that the 'Country' had to be a Member State of the EU – so we would have to put 'U.K.' rather than, for example, 'England'. Of course, this was a nonsense – England as we all know is a Country in its own right (at least for the time being!). However, it seems that some Trading Standards Departments are still peddling the advice that we must put 'U.K.'.
In order to try to lay this to rest for once and for all, I offer this from the Food Standards Agency:

'Country of Origin Labelling Guidance

Honey

19. The Honey Regulations 2003 require labelling of the country or countries of origin. This will be the country or countries in which the honey was harvested. Where the honey is a blend of honeys from more than one country, then as an alternative to listing the various countries of origin (e.g. "A blend of German and French honeys"), one of the following statements may be used, as appropriate:

- "A blend of EC honeys";
- "A blend of non-EC honeys";

"A blend of EC and non-EC honeys".

20. **The Regulations (and the Directive) do not define "country". The Agency takes "country" to mean the UK (i.e. the Member State) or the individual country (e.g. "England", "Scotland", or "Wales" etc.) where the honey was harvested.** Similarly, the Regulations do not lay down a precise form of words that must be used for declaring the individual country (or countries) of origin of honey. So, statements such as "Produce of England", "UK honey" or "Made from honey harvested in the UK", or similar forms of words provided they are not misleading, would all be acceptable.
21. It is not enough to simply provide a manufacturer's address on the label as this is not sufficient as a declaration of country of origin.

SO WHO OWNS THOSE HIVES?

I expect that, like us, you sometimes see hives when you are out and about. But who owns them? Do you know? Are they members of our Association?
You may also know other beekeepers in your area. But are they all members of our Association?

Does it matter? Well, if you keep bees then your actions impact on other beekeepers in your area – and their actions impact on you.

Diseases are easily spread over a considerable area as are genetic influences which can have a great impact on things like temper.
So if you know of beekeepers who are not members of any Association please contact them and try to get them to join us – or pass on their names and addresses to the committee and we will be happy to make contact.

We all need to work together to ensure that we have healthy, good-tempered colonies.

Nice example of Varroa

VARROA BOARDS (submitted by David Berkely).

The perceived wisdom is to apply white paint to the board under your varroa screen. OK, but how long does it stay white?!. Solve the staining problem by cutting a piece of stiff clear acrylic to fit on top of the board. It washes clean "as a bell". In the picture the acrylic has been moved to one side so that you can see it!

PLEASE SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING.

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UK Honey Labelling Regulations

Below is our simple advice on honey labelling. For more detailed information - go to the website of the Food Standards Agency. www.food.gov.uk

1. The Word "HONEY" is required.

2. The weight must be on the label - we will ensure it is the legal size and format.

3. You can specify the area where the honey is produced. For example, Lincolnshire, Forest of Dean, Scottish Borders.

4. You can specify the type of honey. For example, Heather, Borage. The honey must be at least 75% of that particular type.

5. If you are selling the honey, you must have your name and address on the label. It does not need to be complete but you should be able to be found from the information.

6. If you are selling the honey through a third party, you must have a lot number.

7. New for 2003 You must have a best before date on the jar. We suggest 2-5 years from now.

8. New for 2003 You must have a country of origin on the jar. For example - Produce of England, Product of Scotland, Harvested in Wales. Adding the country to the end of your address is not acceptable.

E H Thorne (Beehives) Ltd disclaims all responsibility for all consequences of any person acting on, or refraining from acting in reliance on, information contained above.

From EH Thorne's online catalogue 2010 - other sources are available

Holidays

Tired with the noise and pollution and the same old Costa Holiday?????Then why not try a different Costa Holiday.
Come to Costa Geminiano
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The last of Apis cerana?

The Asian hive bee is suffering a precipitous decline and is threatened with extinction in its entire native habitat.

This has already happened in Japan where this native bee species has been completely replaced by the European honeybee.

Today in Japan only a few beekeepers and research institutes maintain Apis cerana colonies. In China, out of more than 8.5 million colonies of bees kept in modern hives, 70% are exotic Apis mellifera.

Similarly, in South Korea, only 16% of beekeeping is with native Apis cerana. In the Hindu Kush, Himalayan range, beekeeping with Apis cerana is being replaced by Apis mellifera at such a rate that the population of the native Apis cerana is declining to a level that is no longer viable. From Bee World Dec 11.