

Friends of the Honey Bee Newsletter

Vol. 7 Summer Term 2025

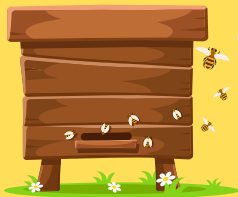


Spring has sprung!

Since the equinox in March, the days have been growing longer, and the warming weather is giving us a taste of summer. Most insects are now active, and our outdoor spaces will be alive with various species racing to complete their life cycles. This term is also busy for students and teachers as many prepare for exams. Spending time outside enhances our health and well-being, so it's beneficial for everyone to take breaks from study and work to enjoy our surroundings. This edition features themed activities that can be used to celebrate designated days, fill study gaps, or serve as summer holiday projects.



What's Happening in the Hive?



In the wild, honey bees create hives in trees or other suitable spaces. Beehives are designed to replicate wild hives while enabling beekeepers to inspect the colony. [Click here to learn more about beekeeping.](#)

May: By this time, a strong and thriving colony should have grown in size and be preparing for reproduction, leading to a swarm of bees. Beekeepers will be busy managing this process, as swarming not only diminishes the colony's size but can also be a nuisance to neighbours!

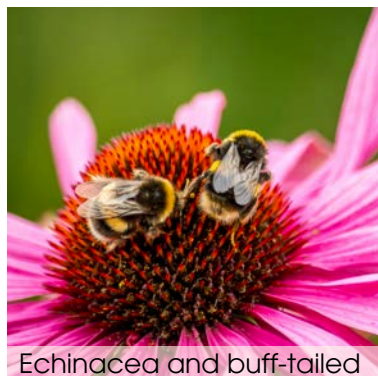
June: Ongoing inspections of the colony are crucial to prevent swarming, but June can also bring a gap in food resources. Beekeepers will monitor their colonies and provide substitute food if needed; some lucky beekeepers in areas with abundant forage may begin collecting their first harvest of honey.

July: The growth of the colony begins to slow as the bees prepare for winter by focusing on storing honey and pollen. Beekeepers will manipulate the hive enabling the bees to store enough honey while providing a harvest to the beekeeper.

August: If the season has been successful then now is the time to harvest honey, ensuring the bee's have plenty left to survive the winter. Now beekeepers begin preparations for pest and disease control.

Who's That Bee?

In Britain we have only one species of honey bee, but around 270 species of other bee! They are wild and many live solitary lives. This year we are following the: Buff-tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*. [More info here.](#)



Echinacea and buff-tailed

The buff-tailed bumblebee is the largest bumblebee you'll encounter in your garden.

Throughout summer, the queen stays in the underground nest while approx. 350 worker bees gather nectar and pollen from nearby plants. Occasionally, you might spot them chewing holes at the base of flowers to access nectar that their short tongues can't reach!

'Friends of the Honey Bee' members are encouraged to share environmental projects. schools.officer@bbka.org.uk

This is a great time of year to showcase your school's garden, wildlife area, allotment or other environmental initiatives and outdoor projects.



Millbrook Primary Market Garden



Strawberry and honeybees

Gardening for Insects

- Now is the time to add more flowering plants to your garden. [Information on plants for pollinators can be found here.](#)
- Leave areas of lawn to grow long, take part in [No Mow May](#).
- Keep ponds full and [create watering station's](#) for insects.
- Avoid using pesticides; weed killer and insect deterrents can be harmful to many insects, even in small doses. [See organic gardening techniques.](#)

Does your school have a wildlife garden or any features for insects? Please share with us!



Protecting Pollinators

Honey bees are pollinating insects, alongside at least 1,500 other insects in the UK!

Pollination is an essential ecosystem service.

3/4 of crops grown in the UK require insect pollination.

Pollinating insects are in rapid decline, many factors contribute to this such as:

Climate Change

Rising temperatures and shifting weather patterns are reshaping habitats. Additionally, changes in seasonal timing can disrupt the synchronisation between pollinators and flowering plants, resulting in decreased pollination efficiency.

Pesticides

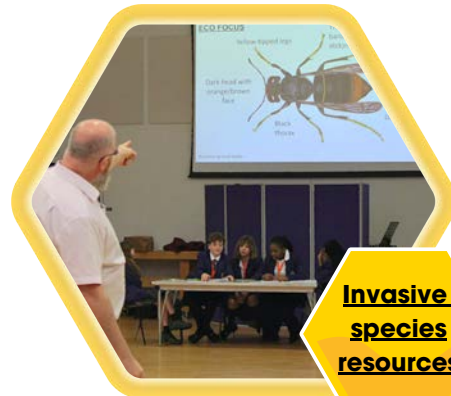
Insects may be exposed to pesticides through direct contact or residues in nectar, pollen, soil, or water. Such exposure can impair navigation, memory, and foraging, as well as hindered reproduction. These interactions could be explored in both biology and chemistry lessons.

These issues affect all native wildlife, see the [State of Nature Report](#) for more information.

Invasive Species Week

12th-18th May

Invasive species, including the yellow-legged asian hornet, can outcompete native species, prey on them, or transmit diseases, which can disrupt ecosystems and the essential services we depend on. This is a crucial subject when educating about species, their interactions, and interdependencies.



Invasive species resources

Bees in the curriculum



Biological Diversity Day

22nd May

A day to to increase understanding of biodiversity, from species to genetics.

World Environment Day

5th June

Encourages action for the protection of the environment. An opportunity to run a poster competition to promote [environmental campaigns!](#)

World Bee Day - 20th May

This day marks the baptism of Anton Janša in 1734, a pioneer in beekeeping. A day to celebrate the role of bees and other pollinators. You might find a [local beekeeper](#) to present a talk or use these [online resources](#). A bank holiday project could include home baking using local honey following this [recipe](#).



Ashbrow School Bee Blog

Summer Holiday Insect Research Project

Encourage students to study their surroundings by monitoring insects and documenting their observations; including the locations, durations, and findings. In September, these results can be compared as an introductory activity to the new term, or used to contribute to [other surveys](#).



Insect Monitoring Sheet

Please share updates and photos as well as feedback to: schools.officer@bbka.org.uk



BEEs in the CURRICULUM

INSECT MONITORING

Check your monitoring station daily and record what you see.

Use this sheet to record your observations.

Date	Location	Weather	Insects	Bait	Maintenance
Date of inspection	Location of monitoring station Ideally use what3words or GridRef	Describe the weather conditions	List or describe the insects seen, if any	Refilled/What type	Clean traps regularly and check for damage

Do not touch or disturb insects. Do visually observe insects as they feed.

Monitoring can inform local records about the population distribution of native species. Monitoring will also help to identify invasive species, such as Yellow-Legged Asian Hornets, and locate nests before they become established.

Monitoring stations are open feeding sources that do not trap or kill insects

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They can be easily made using a tray or pot

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Do not fill the container with liquid.

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Soak sponges with bait or use a cloth wick in a pot.

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Place in an easy to see location and check as often as possible



Bait can be purchased or homemade.

A simple 2:1 sugar to water solution will attract bees, butterflies, and other insects.

To attract hornets and other wasps a suggested recipe is:

1kg	sugar
2ltrs	water
50g	blackberry jam
1 teaspoon	bakers yeast

Insects you might see:



Honey Bee

Native. Pollinates plants. Produce honey.



Wasp

Native. Pollinates plants. Eats pest insects.
Cleans up deceased insects.



Bumblebee

Native. Excellent pollinators of plants.



European Hornet

Native. Pollinates plants. Controls insect populations. Largest native wasp.



Hornet-mimic Hoverfly

Native. Looks like Hornet but does not sting.
Pollinates plants. Eats pest insects, especially aphids.



Horsefly

Native. Pollinators of plants.
Also feeds on horses and cattle - can bite humans!



Butterfly

Native. Attractive and pollinates plants.
Larvae are caterpillar which can be considered pests.



Yellow-legged Asian Hornet
Invasive non-native.

Rapidly spreads, competes with and predaes native insects.

If seen, please report!

