



March 2017

Issue 5

Mercia Marinas Bee group Newsletter

Well, the new style bee nesters, with release chambers, are now in position. Two in the cottage garden, two by the fruit trees which are located behind the annual wildflower patch and the last two on the bund in the new car park area.

If this Red Mason Bee project is successful this year, then hopefully we can expand next year with more nesters. What we find when we empty the nesters at the end of the season will give us a good idea of how we need to proceed.



This is what we hope to find when we open the canes. You can clearly see where, after, the bee has laid an egg she has plugged each chamber with mud. The little bits which look like dirt are in fact droppings. As the female bee puts

pollen and nectar in each egg chamber the resulting larvae has food to eat before it turns into a cocoon, hence, the droppings. The removed cocoons, on the right of the picture, will be cleaned off and stored over winter.

As we keep only clean viable cocoons the mason bee population here at the marina, will remain clean and healthy and thrive.

CONCERNS OVER BUMBLEBEES WITH CHILDREN.

Bumblebees are not aggressive and are generally only interested in finding flowers. Having bumblebees around is a great opportunity to teach children about these vitally important pollinators and how we can live together in harmony. Encourage them to watch how the bees collect pollen on their legs (pollen baskets), how they fly and which flowers they particularly like. Respect is

the key, so the best approach is to teach children to leave any nest alone. A bumblebee's life span is about 2-3 months and they will only act defensively if their nest is disturbed. If you have a nest in the ground, compost heap etc. and you can put a barrier a few metres away from the nest this will help to prevent very young children or pets disturbing it. If you want to make sure that a new queen does not use the same nest site next year, then you can seal up the entrance hole. PLEASE wait until you no longer see bees coming and going before doing this.

There is to be a bee I.D. walk at Markeaton Park on April 7th, with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. This is a great way to find out about differences between our bees and how to identify them. You learn how to catch them for a closer look. Something which will be very helpful on our bee walks. These events are usually good fun. As places are limited please let us or the office know, as soon as possible, if you would like to go along.

How did you do on the quiz?

1. Up to how many bumblebees would there be in a nest? - 400
2. How many different species of bumblebee are there in the UK? - 24 (25 includes a recent - re-introduction)
3. Is the Red Mason a bumblebee or a solitary bee? - Solitary
4. How does a Leafcutter bee carry the leaf pieces to her nest? - In her jaws, and held between the legs
5. What is the main reason for bumblebee decline in the UK? - Habitat loss, especially wildflower meadows
6. Bombus Lucorum is commonly known as what? - White-tailed bumblebee
7. How many bumblebees from the nest survive the winter? - Only new Queens

Well done if you got these right.