

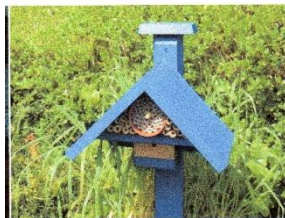


January 2017
Issue 3

Mercia Marinas Bee group Newsletter

Red Mason Bees

So, Nigel & Neil have been very busy as promised in the last newsletter. They have now completed four of the new bee nests and Neil has adapted two of the older ones to now include release chambers for the cocoons, which should be with us in March.



Ready for the new season

Bumblebees

You may notice that in the cottage garden two large terracotta plant pots have been sited. These are for emerging Queen Bumblebees. The pots are filled with hay, encased in a basket of chicken wire.

You will notice a piece of hose pipe sticking out from the ground close by the pot. This is the entry for the bee, it has got small holes in the bottom of it to allow for any drainage required. Red, White or buff tailed Queens will make use of this nester, hopefully. However, we know from last year that all



three of these bees have been seen feeding on the plants in the garden. The key is to provide the right kinds of plants in early spring as she will be attracted to areas where she can find plenty of food for her first batch of eggs. These emerge as workers who help to look after the nest, collect food and raise new offspring. You can watch queens searching for nesting places with a distinctive low-flying zig zag flight. The pots have been placed behind the fruit bushes as these will provide some shade and shelter which is important for the bees.

For 2017 we thought it would be a good idea to continue to promote education for the public and Mercian's alike. We can do this on our event days but highlight this in our promotional advertisements. Neil would like to continue to carry out some bee walks but we need to make sure this is publicized beforehand. We may also be able to get Ron Rock of the BBCT to do some walks and talks with the public. Kiddies Lucky Dip, raffles and stalls would also be part of the events. As these proved very successful last time.

The planting of more native wildflowers is also on the cards. We have a list of those particularly liked by the Red Masons, as well as many other types of pollinators so hopefully this is a route we can take. All the plants used are supplied by local wildflower grower Naturescape. This company has a good reputation across the region.

There are many aspects of conservation for bumblebees and other pollinators as well as a vast number of different solitary bees which are also in dire need of help. They have many different requirements and habits which can prove fascinating. We had good success with the workshop which we ran for the mammal group and would happily do similar interactive training with the bee enthusiasts. One of these would be how to empty and clean our cocoons for storage over winter ready for next year. Also, get out with little bee traps and learn how to actively identify them. You cannot beat getting hands on.

Pam came on a bee walk last year at Leicester University and had a really good time. So, between us we have a number of little catching boxes which can be used.

We also need to understand how to carry out the bee transects (walks) for the BBCT. These transects will be set up well before we are ready to start so maybe a walk round them to help us get familiar would be a good idea in a couple of months' time.

Please let us know of any ideas you may have for training, workshops or events. We will arrange for a get together soon in the new year.

Looking forward to a good 2017 for us all and the wildlife.