



**February 2017**  
Issue 4

# Mercia Marinas Bee group Newsletter

It will soon be time to start thinking ahead. Next month the Red Mason Project should be getting underway. With the new nests and release chambers being put up and the cocoons arriving from Ron Rock of the Bumble bee conservation trust.



In the meantime, it is possible this month that some Queens may already be emerging. If you find one that is very sluggish and a bit tatty looking do not take it indoors. She will need to be outside to

search for a nest. Indeed, she may already have one that she is gathering food for.

Bumblebees can cope quite well with the cold if they have enough energy. While they get most of this from nectar in the flowers, this isn't always available in winter. And these bumblebees sometimes use a lot of energy in flying, but don't have any food to replace that lost energy. These bees can be helped though, and the easiest way to do so is to make a sugar solution (50/50 sugar and warm water). Put this in a small saucer or plastic drinks lid, and place it near the bee's head (see the photo below). She should then lap this up, and she'll use the energy to heat her body up and fly off.



It really works, we did it last year and it makes you feel so good when she takes off. It was surprising how quickly she took to the wing.

As mentioned a couple of newsletters ago we will probably be taking on some work with butterflies this year. They are after all pollinators as well as the bees and also in need of our help as they too are in desperate decline.

Our help will initially take the form of butterfly transects. These will be based on those we carry out for the bees and take the exact same route. To help us with how to carry out and record the transects and with identification Ken Orpe the butterfly recorder for Derbyshire will be giving a talk on March 17th in the tea rooms. At least most butterflies are easier to tell apart than many bees.

We thought a little quiz to get the brains going again ready for spring might be fun.

1. Up to how many bumblebees would there be in a nest?
2. How many different species of bumblebee are there in the UK?
3. Is the Red Mason a bumblebee or a solitary bee?
4. How does a Leafcutter bee carry the leaf pieces to her nest?
5. What is the main reason for bumblebee decline in the UK?
6. *Bombus Lucorum* is commonly known as what?
7. How many bumblebees from the nest survive the winter?

Good luck, answers next month.