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Issue 6

Mercia Marinas Bee group Newsletter

LOTS OF QUEENS

After what seems like a long winter we are at last seeing some wonderful bumblebees out and about again. Mostly Buff-tailed Queens (*Bombus terrestris*) at the moment, these are usually the first to emerge from hibernation,



often as early as late February. The queens being our largest are unmissable at 20mm long. Their primary food at the moment seems to be the Pussy/Goat Willow which is full of pollen rich catkins. However happily,

we have seen them also on the Pulmonaria (Lungwort) in the cottage garden. Other flowers they are attracted to are Daffodils, Crocus and a little later Bluebells.

She will be looking for a place to nest, usually in the ground and often in an old mouse nest. She secretes a pheromone, which, if present within the first 5 days of larval life determines that the larva will develop into a worker. If the pheromone is absent, and if the larva receives sufficient food (more than a larva destined to be a worker) she will develop into a queen.

Pam, who came on a bee ID walk last year also caught one on board their boat. Not having one of the small bee catching boxes handy she used a very small jar and we were able to get a good look at her. Lovely, well done Pam good to know you have not lost your touch in bee catching. In case you are worried no creatures were harmed by the inspection, the bee flew away quite happily.

The next ones we should be expecting are White-tailed (*Bombus lucorum*) these queens are a bit smaller at 16mm. After that over the next couple of months we hopefully, should be seeing many other species.

BEE WALKS

March is the month when the bee walks should be starting. We have six different transects set out and they vary in length from 450mtrs to 1000mtrs.

The first ones have been done and we will now be inputting the data on the Bumblebee Conservation Trusts website where the walks are registered. The good thing with these is we have a month in which to carry them out. Hopefully after April 7th when the bee I.D. workshop has been completed at Markeaton we shall have a few more able to identify the bees.

However, we would ask anyone to please let us know where & when you have seen bees, what they were feeding on and what kind of bee, even if only a description.

You can download an ID chart from www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk. Please give it a go and really help us to get a good count of our bees. This information is essential in assessing how they are doing or not, as the case may be. You can put your information on the community Facebook page or contact Jane & Neil direct or through the office. Going forward the times for bee walks will be announced and anyone can join in and learn hands on.

RED MASON BEE PROJECT

The bee cocoons are now out in the release chambers.



There are six boxes around the site, two in the cottage garden, two by the fruit trees behind the wildflower drift and two on the bank by the new car park area.

Keep eyes peeled for any activity around the boxes. Males out first then after two weeks the females. The cocoons in each box are a mixture of both sexes. The cocoons can

be identified by the size, female ones being noticeably larger than the male.



GOOD BEE SPOTTING
EVERYONE.