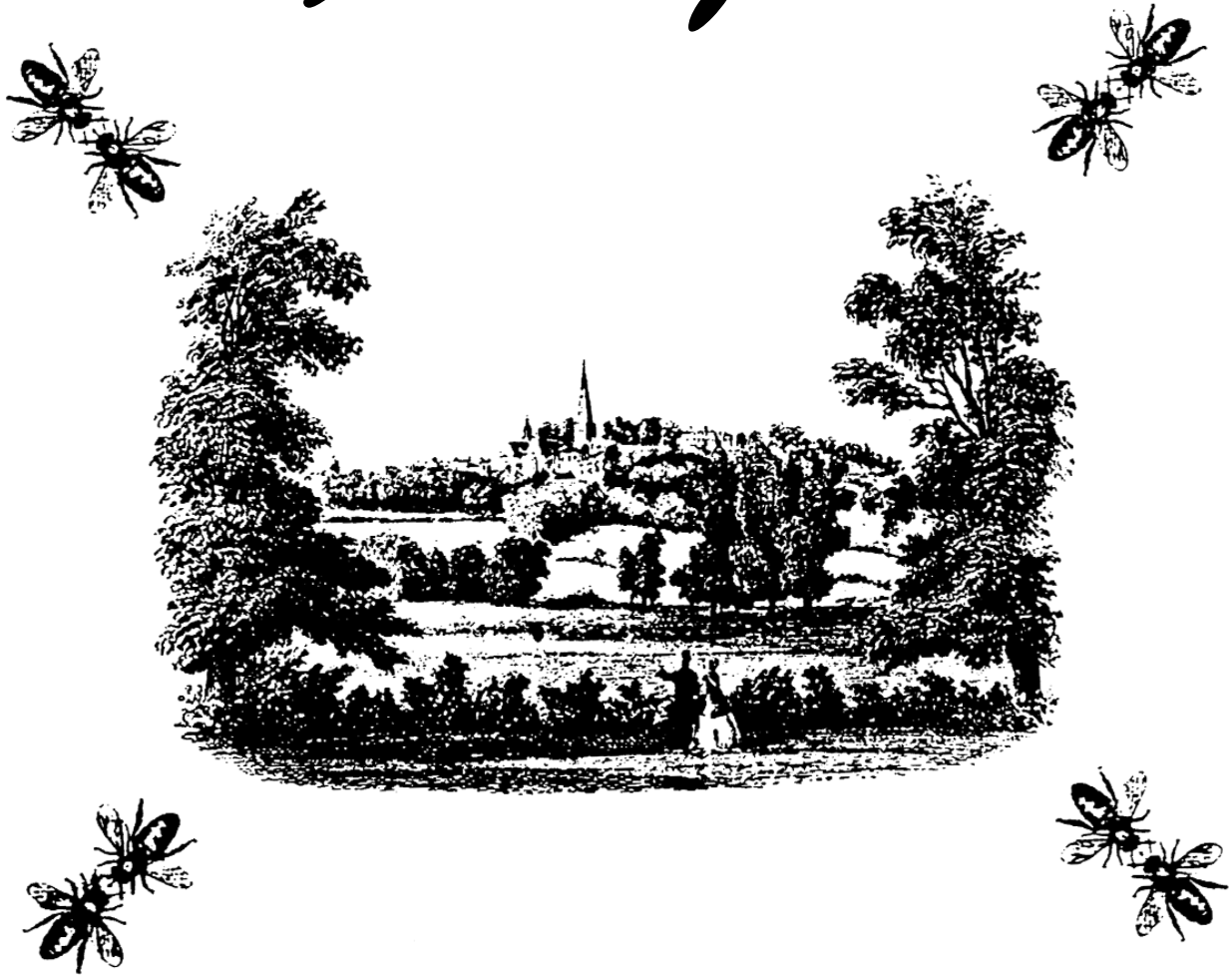


Vol 64 Dec 2009

# Forager



The Magazine for the Bee-Keeping Association of Harrow

[www.harrowbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.harrowbeekeepers.co.uk)

# Forager

Published by the Harrow Bee-Keeper's Association  
by whom this magazine was founded in the year 1946

## Editors

J Moore & M P Davey (Consultant)

*All correspondence and literary contributions intended for Forager, which goes to press on the 2nd Saturday of each month, should be sent to:*

The Forager Editor, 4 Endymion Road, Hatfield, Herts AL10 8AS e-mail: jem2102@mac.com - Tel: 07801691265
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## Association Secretaries

### HARROW

Mrs Aline Bowers, 12 Larkfield Ave, Kenton Harrow, Middlesex HA3 8NF  
Tel: 020 8907 9832

### PINNER & RUISLIP

Mrs Sue Ryan, 31 Hazeldene Gardens, Hillingdon UB10 9DJ.  
Tel: 01895 464108

### EALING

Andy Pedley, 36 Ferrymead Gardens, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 9NF.  
Tel: 020 8578 7997

### NORTH LONDON

Elizabeth Jack, 2 Rookfield Close, London N10 3TR.  
Tel: 020 8883 2835

### LONDON BKA

Julian Lush, 97 Larkhall Rise, London SW4 6HR.  
Tel: 020 7622 9407

### ENFIELD BKA

Mrs Mary Hunter, 18 Slades Gardens, Enfield EN2 7DR.  
Tel: 020 8367 8452

## Middlesex Federation Secretary

Mrs J Telfer, Midwood House, Elm Park Road, Pinner HA5 3LH.  
Tel: 020 8868 3494

Whilst care is taken to verify the material published, the Editors do not accept responsibility for the accuracy of all statements made by the contributors, nor do they necessarily share the views expressed.

6th Dec	Working party at the apiary, weather permitting
13th Dec	Glass of mead and discussion at the apiary
13th Feb	Top-up taster course
27th Feb	Federation Day, Broomfield School
6th 7th Mar	Beginners' course
13th 14th Mar	“ “
25th Mar	BBKA exams.
20th April	Stoneleigh



# Editorial

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AGM and meal went down very well, thanks to everyone that helped with the organisation and food, it was good to catch up with the Harrow Beekeepers, drink some wine, eat some food, win on the raffle and get none of the questions right in the quiz (I would of thought bees travelled at least 40mph).

I came away with 2 Harrow Beekeeper calenders (with members photos from our years with bees - see page 11) that will be wrapped up for various Christmas prezzies.

The leaves have nearly dropped, just the Oak to go, cold weather round the corner as is the Xmas break, so have a very Merry Christmas and a Varroa free new year.

**Jeremy Moore**  
Editor

Please note that all contributions intended for inclusion in the **Jan** issue of Forager must be with the editorial office by the **15th of Dec**, at the latest.

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# Articles and Notes

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## FORAGER NOTES

December 2009

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER

This splendid event took place on Saturday 7th November at St Lawrence Church Hall, Eastcote.

After the President's welcome, approval of the previous year's minutes and reports from the Chair, Officers and Treasurer, the officers for 2010 were elected.

Here is a list:

Chair	Judy Earl
Secretary	Aline Bowers
Treasurer	Aubrey Kutner
Trading Sec	Brian Desborough
Social Sec	Moira Spiers
Education and Membership Officer	Jo Telfer
Harrow in Leaf Delegate	Judy Earl
Equipment Officer	Odette Thomas
Librarian	Van Hinman
Apiary Manager	Brian Desborough
Deputy Apiary Manager	John House
Forager Deputy Editor & Harrow Notes	Susan Kelly
Forager Distribution	Danuta Loveday
Federation Representative	

Pat Dutson

Auditor David Passey

Our urbane and affable President is Van Hinman.

The meeting took exactly fifty minutes. After this, there was an opportunity to buy raffle tickets for prizes including designer dining accessories, interesting bottles and china honeypots shaped like hives. Or you could invest in HBKA calendars complete with envelopes at £5.50, and stock up on bee-themed Christmas and Birthday cards designed by my daughter (10% goes to HBKA).

After the retail therapy came the meal. The menu was publicised before the event, so I won't list everything we ate. It was all very tasty. Many thanks are due to the cooks and organisers: Judy did many things, cooking stilton pie and beef pie and collecting hired crockery etc, Bidy Gillman provided flower arrangements, Bruce, Bill, Jo and Aline provided food and did many other things, and Moira, in addition to cooking the soup and attending to practical tasks, co-ordinated the whole effort.

Fifty-five of us sat down to eat and chat, and it was good to see some new beekeepers there. The youngest were the two small children of Rogelio Aguilar and his wife who seemed perfectly happy and went peacefully to sleep.

## 90 YEARS OF HARROW BEEKEEPERS

...Was celebrated during the year first, by a tree-planting ceremony at Hatch End Apiary, when Gareth Thomas, a local MP, came along and planted a Pinner Seedling.

Second, Najma Kazi had an article published in the Harrow Observer in which she outlined the history of our association and mentioned a longstanding member (Rosemary West, who has been keeping bees for over fifty years), and one of our newest members, Paul Goggin, who is fifteen.

Third, we celebrated by holding an open day at Hatch End Arts Centre on the 4th October when the association did itself proud with high quality demonstrations of what members could do and make, as well as opening the apiary to interested people.

Currently there are eighty-eight full registered members, a healthy number.

There will surely be celebrations for the 100th birthday.

### TWO THOUSAND AND TEN

...Is going to be a good beekeeping year for everyone. December 09 and January and February 2010 are the months when beekeepers can stay indoors, browse through catalogues of equipment, clothing and sundries, choosing the perfect broodbox/smoker/veil. And planning strategy.

Very important, strategy. Decide how you are going to manage and

manipulate your bees; what you are intending to enter for the Harrow In Leaf show. Write it down if necessary.

It never worked for me. My bees always discovered my plans, had a good laugh, and then did something completely different.

And in the Meantime

...Have a very happy Christmas/Hanukah/celebration.

**Susan Kelly**



## MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Some gardeners believe that sowing and planting should be carried out in accordance with the seasons of the moon. Plants are divided into roots, leaf, flower and fruit, and there are favourable days for tending and harvesting each one. The care of bees is regarded in the same way.

But how do you know what is to be done on each day?

Each year a special calendar is printed, which gives advice as well as dates.

It seems that when a beekeeper opens a hive, he or she allows cosmic forces to enter the hive. They will influence the life of the hive until the beekeeper opens it again. The beekeeper should therefore choose only auspicious days

for working.

Earth-root days should be selected if the colony needs to do more building. Light-flower days encourage brood activity and colony development, while warmth-fruit days stimulate the collection of nectar.

Beekeeping notes for each month supplement the detailed calendar.

For those with an interest in biodynamics, this might be worth trying. (Ever-Patient takes most of his cuttings at the full moon, and says they thrive mightily.)

However, a word of caution on some of the advice given - it is not what we have been taught.

The treatment of varroa, for instance, seems unorthodox, to say the least. The publishers suggest 'burning and making an ash of the varroa mite 'in the usual way'. After 'dynamising' it for one hour, you put it in a salt-cellar and sprinkle it lightly between the combs. We are told that the ash should be made and sprinkled when the Sun and Moon are in the Bull. Hmm.

Anyone who fancies bee-keeping or gardening in this way should be able to buy a biodynamic sowing and planting calendar from any good bookshop.

**Susan Kelly**

## ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

The sudden death of champion hurdler Ross Baillie has highlighted the dangers faced by those suffering from extreme allergies. BBC News Online examines "Anaphylactic Shock", the name for any life-threatening reaction to a seemingly innocent substance.

Anaphylactic shock is an extreme form of allergic reaction to a particular substance, and is often life threatening.

In effect, the body's immune system, which is there to tackle substances or organisms which are a threat, such as bacteria or viruses, decides that something harmless poses a great danger, and launches a massive overreaction

In extreme cases, large quantities of an antibody called immunoglobulin E are produced, which cause a variety of effects on the body's cells and tissues.

In particular, it causes the body to release an excess amount of histamine, a dangerous chemical.

The resultant, and usually very swift, effects are muscle contractions and swelling, often closing the throat, making it difficult to breathe.

Sufferers may also experience abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea. Immunoglobulin E expands blood vessels, causing a drop in blood pressure, which leads to fainting or unconsciousness.

The most visible signs are often swelling and rashes on the skin, or on the lips and tongue if it is a food allergy.

## Bites, stings, and jabs

A variety of substances can trigger this massive immune response.

Among them are insect bites or stings, food - commonly nuts, drugs like morphine or the dye injected prior to X-raying. The horse serum used in the makeup of some vaccines can also cause anaphylactic shock.

Many people suffer severe allergic reactions to certain items, such as pet fur or pollen, but these symptoms are rarely life-threatening, and can normally be treated with anti-histamines - a treatment which reduces the amount of dangerous histamine in the body.

However, these treatments take up to an hour to reach the bloodstream, and true anaphylactic shock requires immediate treatment with adrenaline injection.

### Hormone makes body 'fight'

Adrenaline is the "fight or flight" hormone, which is released naturally when the body is in a stressful or dangerous situation.

It makes the heart beat faster, widens the air passages in the lungs, and reverses the widening of the blood vessels caused by immunoglobulin E.

Most people who realise they have severe allergy reactions carry a ready-filled adrenaline injector with them at all times.

However, such is the speed with which anaphylactic shock takes hold, even immediate treatment with adrenaline is not guaranteed to save the victim's life.

**BBC**

## Burnt Dog is treated with honey

A dog which was pulled from a house fire in Cornwall is being treated with honey pads to help heal her wounds.

Lady the alsatian was found stuck under burning ceiling tiles after the fire at her owner's home near Stithians.

The treatment of eight-year-old dog, who suffered severe burns down one side and on her back, includes pads impregnated with manuka honey.

Owner Cyril Bond, 77, said her condition had improved because of the treatment.

'Very impressed'

Lady was trapped for two hours before fireman rescued her from the burning building.

Mr Bond said he was given the good news that she survived after he was taken to hospital.

He said: "One of the nurses came over and said the police had been on the phone to say the fire brigade got her out and she was on oxygen."

She is thought to have survived because she found an air pocket.

As part of her treatment, which has been ongoing for several months, her bandages which contain honey-coated dressings, are replaced several times a week.

Vet Amanda Manley, who works at the Cornwall Animal Hospital, said she believed the honey had greatly improved Lady's condition.

"I'd like to say it's all down to the honey, but to make a proper judgement you need to have a scientific control.

"But I'm very impressed and I'd use it again in this situation."

The honey is produced by bees feeding on the Manuka bush, which mainly found in New Zealand.

Manuka dressings for wounds were licensed for use in NHS hospitals in 2004.

**BBC**



## Bee study examines aging process

The behaviour of bumble bees is being studied by two universities exploring the ageing process of animals.

In a joint project, the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the University of Southampton will uncover what happens to colonies as queen bees age.

Scientists hope how the colonies react to the ageing queen when her daughters take over will help explain how other animals age and social make-up changes.

The three-year study, which begins in autumn, will study around 100 hives.

'Accelerating ageing'

Prof Andrew Bourke of UEA's School

of Biological Sciences said: "As queen bees age, they produce fewer offspring, which provokes conflict over the inheritance of resources.

"As the social make-up of the hive changes, a tipping point occurs when queens should die and pass on the hive to her worker daughters.

"However, from the daughters' perspective, that point occurs earlier, creating a conflict over the inheritance of the resource.

"We think this will accelerate the queen's ageing and is also why workers sometimes kill their mother queen."

Dr Joel Parker Parker of the University of Southampton will carry out laboratory investigations into how genes in the bees are switched on or off as family relations within the hive deteriorate.

He said: "Theoretical models already exist of this process but our research will be the first to test how social conflicts affect ageing.

"Simultaneously exploring the behaviour, biochemistry, and genetics of these social insects can provide useful information on the ageing process in any animal that passes on resources to offspring, including humans."

The project was funded by a £500,000 grant from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The bumble bees to be used for the study will be bought from commercial suppliers.

**BBC**

## Industrial Pollination in the USA

THE business of pollination is not nearly as quaint as many would like to believe. There is a picture of happy bees, flitting from flower to flower, greedily imbibing floral nectar and brushing pollen hither and yon, accomplishing the fine act of fertilization in the process. You can almost hear the soft flute music in the background, can't you?

Beekeepers know better though, or at least those that are in the business of pollination, and when it comes to large scale pollination that soft flute music is mostly drowned out by the roar of heavy duty diesel engines and bobcat motors. This is serious business...serious for the beekeeper who strives to make sure his or her colonies live up to the specifications on the contract; serious for the grower, who absolutely requires enough bees in the right place at the right time so there's enough pollination going on to set the crop; and it's serious for the bees, who have to endure all of this and still keep on keepin' on.

For the beekeeper and the grower to get done what they need to get done, it's usually the bees that have to bend the most. Or it has been in the recent past. Perhaps that is changing now, since scientists, beekeepers and growers are looking a bit harder at what it is we have been expecting from our bees. The most extreme pollination job on the planet is probably the almond crop in California. Unless you have been too busy planning the protest at 10

Downing Street for the lack of research funds, you certainly know something about this crop.

That something is undoubtedly the value of almonds, the cost of renting a colony of bees for pollination, the fact that half the bees in the US are used to doing this job, and that for some reason, the media focus on this crop when discussing Colony Collapse Disorder.

So why should we be different?

So let's look at this Extreme Pollination job, should we, though for the sake of brevity I'm going to generalize a bit.

Basically, bees arrive at the almond crop from several sources. California beekeepers run about 350,000 or so colonies but since less than half are pollinators they don't have nearly enough bees to pollinate the entire almond crop that needs around 1.5 million or so colonies. As a result bees from other parts of the US, and even Australia, must travel there.

There is variety in how they get from harvest and travel to California to spend the winter. These are mostly from the northern parts of the US, since winter's hard up there, and it's not supposed to be in California. Some bees stay in their frigid locations until just before the early February bloom and get dug out of snow banks and trucked to California – sort of a just-in-time operation.

These tend to be not quite as far north as the of snow banks, they have been busy being

split, making honey, raising queens

and the like because the weather and the forage allow it. They are usually at pollination strength when they leave states like Texas, Florida and Arizona. Still others arrive in the US in the late fall as packages from Australia which are installed in equipment and built up in a hurry to get strong enough to do the job.

Some Australian packages come even later and go right into the orchards, or almost so rather than spending time building up

No matter where they come from, several criteria must be met before they can even get into California. Those that come from down south have less trouble getting up to the necessary strength (a good pollinating colony should have a minimum of eight frames of bees and brood) in time since they have been making honey, and even growing to the point of swarming or being split late in the year. But they have to contend with the notorious fire ants that live in our fair south. Treating for the ants during the summer, washing colonies of ant nest residue, and installing new or clean bottom boards and pallets are added chores for these beekeepers before the colonies even get on the truck to head west. This has added considerably to the cost of managing hives.

Getting to the required strength is probably the most difficult part of all offirst group.

Others, those that spend the winter in the southern parts of the US, also tend to leave this for many of the beekeepers who send bees west.

Traditionally, colonies stuck in a snow bank in January are at the season's lowest population, with the queen just getting back to speed. To get these colonies on a truck can be a challenge, then trucking them thousands of winter-weather miles to a warmer but still barren landscape is an even greater challenge. Usually, but not always, these colonies come to California early enough to sit in a holding yard somewhere to be built up to pollinating strength. For most of these there is no forage available and the only food comes out of a tanker truck and a bag. High fructose corn syrup or, more commonly now, sucrose syrup and a protein supplement are poured into these colonies in an attempt to get them growing fast, and up to strength even faster. If the colonies were healthy when they arrived, this mostly works, but they are pushed hard.

If they weren't healthy no amount of food is going to get a sick colony strong.

The colonies that came from the south, colonies that were built up from packages from Australia, and colonies that live in California year round generally do OK, but they, too, have to make sure they are healthy when they leave home (even for short drives from home yards in California), and that they stay healthy after they arrive. The incidence of Colony Collapse Disorder that visited some last year and the year previous seems to show up dramatically after they arrive in California and are in the process of

*continued on page 12*



## Beelines

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October was another dry month with 1.7” of rain in Chorleywood. Many were pleased with the mini heat-wave at the end of the month. Temperatures of 70F compared with 52F last year. Last year snow fell at the end of October with nights of 20F. The mouse guards were pinned on after the warm spell. Shame that it had wasps escaping as the drawing pins were driven in. This wasp activity was not seen in the good old days when winter started in August.

It is hoped that the N. B. U. random survey of 5000 apiaries across Wales and England for Disease will bring results. Beelines nearly provided the statutory 60 bees for the survey. Unfortunately the Herts bee inspector chose the week when I was in Derbyshire. Discussing bee matters with him, revealed that feral bees are still alive and well. Confirmed by my five swarms collected from bee boxes stacked behind the back door. In October Beelines visited Down House, Kent, to search out the bee display discussed at our Day Meeting at Hatch End. Darwin in 1881 purchased some land west of the house and built a brick laboratory against the back wall of the greenhouses. Darwin died the next year and there is no evidence that it was used. Today it houses a free standing observation hive run by the Kent B.K.A.A. A notice explains that

Darwin worked on the evolution of bee comb using his own beehives and others. The queen was marked with a red spot for 2008.

Bees are still being discussed by the media. Radio 4 stated that a bumblebee worker does the work of 20 honey bees. The gentle hum of the bumble flying across your garden will alter to a high pitch buzzing on entering a flower head. The Bumble collect pollen quickly by shaking its furry body ‘all about’ amongst the anthers. The cloud of pollen is trapped by the body hairs, then scooped into the pollen baskets. Our bees are more gentle with the flowers relying on their mandibles and legs to do the gathering. That buzz is mentioned in a new book ‘The buzz about bees’ by Prof. Jurgen Tautz at the Institute of Behavioural Physiology and Social Biology of the University of Wurzburg. The original was in German now translated into 10 languages. The English version is unusual in that all the text is illustrated by brilliant photographs, often on each page. It is not a hand book on how to keep bees, but how bees manage themselves without the help of beekeepers. All bee activities are discussed, age, defence, heating, cooling, scents and dancing etc. All translated books have a problem with vernacular English, this is soon overcome to enjoy page after page of

pictures and facts which may be new to the reader. Priced £15 available at your local bookshop. In the nineteenth century the craft of lipwork was widespread in England, prepare straw was passed through a short length of cowhorn about 1" diameter to form an untwisted continuous rope for straw. This was coiled and bound with bramble or seating cane to produce skeps for catching swarms or cropping produce off the allotment. An Awl, hollow with a pointed end was needed to open up the straw to push through the binder. At the Hatch End H.B.A. bee day several visitors expressed interest in skep construction.

Like old Terry Thomas with his Car, make a start and collect that Awl, save the turkey legs from the Christmas lunch, strip off all meat and tendons and leave out in the garden to

weather, well away from the neighbour's cat. Later produce a sharpened end by removing the smaller knuckle, the large knuckle is left to help you in the palm of your hand as you push the awl through the straw. If sufficient beekeepers can appear with their awl a group could be formed to source long straw and a binder. Please contact beelines if you would like to make 2010 the year of the skep.

Tusser writing in 1573

*Go look to thy bees, if the hives too light*

*Set honey and water with rosemary dight*

*Which set in a dish full of sticks in the hive*

*From danger of famine will save them alive.*

M.P.D.

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## HBKA calendar

If you missed the AGM and, haven't recently been at Hatch End on a Sunday morning, you may not have seen the HBKA calendar.

The calendar is A4 size and features 12 full colour pictures (13 with the cover ) all taken by members and depicting bees and beekeeping throughout the year. Ideal not only for beekeepers but anyone who has an interest in bees and the environment.

I'm now selling the second batch of calendars (the first lot sold out at the AGM ) so if you'd like one (or more) then please let me know as soon as possible. Once this lot's gone that's it !

It makes a great Christmas present - at a cost of £5.50 each or 2 for £10 with all profits going to HBKA !

Thanks Jude

being built up on that artificial diet, or right after they are moved into the almonds. Once bloom starts, colonies are moved from holding yards as fast as possible. Many of these orchards are huge, with nothing for bees to eat except almond nectar and pollen. But almond nectar and pollen aren't bad, and after a diet of artificial food for months this is pretty good stuff. Bees do fairly well on it for the month or so they are there.

Some orchards are adjacent to other crops however, mostly tree crops in the Prunus family and these provide a bit of variety...and occasionally a bit of danger from pesticides being sprayed. Coordination between growers is important during this time.

Almond growers are very, very careful about not allowing anything except almonds grow in these orchards. Some may allow a narrow strip of closely-mowed grass between trees in the center of the row, but nothing beneath the trees. The goal is to make sure every available resource...fertilizer and water...is used by the trees and not a freeloading weed. Thus, for those bees in almond-only country, it's almonds only for the month they are there.

After four weeks or so of this the petals fall and the bees leave for other pollination jobs on the west coast, for honey crops or splitting and requeening back in the south, or for additional buildup in preparation for honey production back in the Midwest when the weather turns.

Some head back to the east coast and prepare to move to Maine to pollinate blueberries, but stop along the way to do apples and tree crops along the east coast on the way north.

The bees...well, they don't seem to complain much. But for a busy pollinator on this kind of schedule, losing half of his livestock over a season is a predictable event.

Maybe the bees don't complain so we can hear them, but dying seems to me a pretty straightforward way of getting your point across.

**Kim Flottum**

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