

Save the Honey Bee

I was reminded to write this article by the Mayor of London. Not personally but, when I switched on the radio to hear whether Boris or Ken had won the election, I caught the end of Farming Today and heard a Defra spokesman talking about honey bees. It reminded me that I had promised Adam an article on that very subject.

Honey bees are under threat as never before from viruses and diseases. In the UK much beekeeping is by individuals on a hobby rather than commercial basis – so if such diseases are to be effectively combated it will need to be led and funded by government. Bees do more than produce honey; they play a vital role in pollinating food crops, making an estimated contribution of £165M annually to the agricultural economy. Bees also have an important environmental role: by pollinating wild plants, they help provide seeds and fruits on which our wild birds and animals depend. So a decline in honey bees arguably threatens what we eat, the colour in the meadows around us and the range wildlife we encounter.

Strictly speaking Defra's spokesman was not talking about bees as much as arguing that it was duly concerned about the disease threats to UK bees. As the Gander aims to keep political debate out of its pages I will say no more than that. The British Beekeepers Association was also on the radio as part of their campaign to instigate a programme of increased research costing £8M over five years (during which time our honey bees will contribute over £800 million to agriculture). It seems a large sum but I understand it is less than 15% of Defra's contingency fund.

Thanks to everyone who has signed the petition on this subject, and to Colin & Christine Creasy for hosting it in their shop. I have written to tell Shona Mclsaac MP of my concerns and if you wish to do likewise then there is a sample letter on the Gander and Goxhill Trader websites.

On a related topic, if you are concerned about a swarm of bees that has settled near you then ring John for assistance: either John Guggiari on 530363 or John Hankinson on 531029. As members of the British Beekeepers' Association we only charge to cover our expenses (primarily mileage) but otherwise we offer our services free. We are covered by the BBKA Public Liability Insurance policy.

It helps us to know the following information when you contact us:

- That the creatures are indeed honey bees. We cannot collect wasps or hornets and most other bees are relatively solitary and harmless – but we would still need to charge mileage if we attended.
- The position of the swarm or cluster of bees - e.g. whether on the ground, the height if in a tree or bush, how accessible it is.
- When the swarm arrived.
- The size of the cluster – e.g. tennis ball, football, (spacehopper!).
- Address/location of the swarm and telephone number of the owner/occupier.

John Guggiari

GOXHILL TRADER - Celebrating 6 months Online!

It doesn't seem more than a few days ago that I sat here at my computer writing my first article for the 'Gander' introducing the Goxhill Trader website, www.goxhilltrader.co.uk, but actually it was at the end of October 2007, well before Christmas!

So suddenly, here we are, six months down the line! If you haven't visited it recently, please take another look. You will be amazed how it has grown, there are now over 30 pages in total, and it is receiving an *average* of 150 visitors a day, not only from Goxhill and North Lincolnshire, but all over the world!

As it continues to claw its way relentlessly up the internet search engine rankings it also continues to grow strongly and I have high hopes for the next six months of achieving my original vision of establishing it as a true one-stop-shop for all local information and events, advertising, and buying and selling online;- a true trading platform supporting the local economy.

In pursuit of this goal, the latest addition to the site is a page entitled 'News Feature'. Similar to a

newspaper editorial page, it is designed to give free publicity to start up businesses, items of interest, local news and events, charities, community services, and recognition for individual's achievements. Please do take a look and your contributions are invited (email: enquiries@goxhilltrader.co.uk).

My thanks to all who have helped getting things 'up and running' over the last six months and particularly to the established local services who have greatly assisted in integrating Goxhill Trader into the community.

As ever, Goxhill Trader relies entirely on your support so please continue to send in your free classified ads, support the trade advertisers, and visit the site as often as you can. Explore the corners too, it is fast becoming an 'Aladdin's Cave' of interesting information and links, so you never know what you might find!

Stephen R Foster, Webmaster