

Report a Swarm and Help Save the Honey Bees

Nature

By Mark Gale, BeesMAX

It is well documented that the bee population is in a steep decline, but why is this? The removal of unmanaged wild woodlands and natural nesting sites, monoculture farming, poor quality pollens, pesticides, disease and the Varroa mite are all playing their part in weakening the wild bee colonies and their survival rates. But, The BeesMAX Association is a not-for-profit company with the sole aim of reversing the decline of the UK bee population.

BeesMAX are currently working with landowners countywide to set up honey bee boxes in designated areas. Several boxes are set up next to each other to create a safe new 'housing-scheme' for honey bees, thus helping to regenerate and maximise the opportunities for local honey bee renewal. Where there is a shortage of local wild bees, seeded colonies will enable the start of the renewal process within the immediate vicinity of the local scheme, before serving as a place for swarms to leave and revive the populations elsewhere within the UK countryside.

But BeesMAX need your help. Each spring and early summer bees swarm. This natural process is caused when the existing queen leaves an over-crowded nest with a number of worker bees to set up a new colony. Swarming bees are calm; they are not defending a honey store or hive and have no babies or pollen to protect. And, they will initially settle in a tree, or



on a branch, whilst the scout bees find a new location.

Should you see a swarm of bees please call BeesMAX, who will collect them and safely relocate them so that they have the best chance of survival. In addition beekeepers with colonies that have grown too large, may also call so as to split and rehome their extra numbers safely into the wild.

But most importantly, your help will be key to the survival of your local bee population. The new homes will never be moved and over time the local wild bee communities will recognise them as a safe haven. In addition, they will be left undisturbed and as unmanaged as possible, never being used for the gathering of surplus honey for us to eat.

Each multi-box site will be seeded with one swarm of bees, so that they may safely and naturally increase in numbers to kick start the local bee renewal process. In addition a remote data collection system is being installed into the seeded colonies, to enable national statistics to be collected on their sustainability.

So, if you would like to report a roaming swarm of bees, or find out more about The BeesMAX Association and their valuable work, please call 01372 702 337 or 07900 578 877, email markg@beesmax.org or check out the website www.beesmax.org

