

MASON BEES UK

GUARDIAN NEWSLETTER

*** SPRING 2018 ***



PHOTO: JOHN GIBSON

A LONG-AWAITED SPRING

After a long, cold winter, we started to release our first bees on the 9th April. We completed three more field releases over the next week before the Cherry crops came into full bloom: perfect timing. This has been a feature of this year - our timed releases have been as near ideal as ever.

Last year, Pear, Plum, Cherry and Apple trees were all in blossom at the same time, which is very unusual. This was due to a warm spell in late March/early April. We placed cocoons into orchards to coincide with the blossom, but then the weather went very cold until the middle of May and generally the bees suffered badly as a result, filling very few tubes with poor quality, small cocoons.

For the second time in living memory, all four crops were again in blossom at the same time this year. However, the weather stayed warm to hot throughout April. The bees emerged very well and started filling tubes rapidly.

We did our first tube collection on the 14th May in Apple orchards, which is much earlier than usual. The tube fill was good, and the bees were still active. We collected tubes from the other orchards a day later with varying results. We have no real idea how the bees have done yet, but first impressions are that they have filled lots of tubes and the tubes are very heavy, suggesting healthy cocoons inside.

But we cannot count our cocoons just yet, as losses to parasites are inevitable. Fly damage is often a factor and due to the hot weather, the risk of a Mite attack is increased. Still, the outlook is positive.



PHOTO: JOHN GIBSON

PROTECT YOUR COCOONS

Now your emerged bees are reaching the end of their lives, Guardians can take steps to ensure that any cocoons left in the nesting tubes are kept safe from harm....



PHOTO: NICK CLIFTON-WELKER

Above is a picture showing the evidence of a bird attack on some capped tubes, courtesy of one of our Guardians, Nick Clifton-Welker.

The best defence from bird predation like this is to remove the capped tubes from the holder as soon, and as often, as possible. You may remove the tube from the Holder or Lodge and bring it indoors as soon as you see a capped tube.

Capped tubes should be stored in a cool place such as a garage - do not keep them in a conservatory or a shed that can heat up, as this can affect development of the bee.

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Store them upright in a container until September before sending them to us!

RELEASE BOX NESTING

We've had a few Guardians reporting apparently unusual behaviour this season...



PHOTO: DAWN LANE

Thanks to Dawn and Bernadette for sending in their fantastic photos. Don't worry, this is completely natural! This is how your bees usually go about building nests for their cocoons - if we weren't providing tubes instead!



PHOTO: BERNADETTE TAYLOR-LYNCH

We'd rather they didn't do this, though - this process is much more labour-intensive and energy consuming! If your bees are nesting like this, the easiest way to stop it is to remove the Release box from the garden. At the earliest opportunity after the bees have emerged from their cocoons, bring it indoors. As soon as the emerged bees have found our nesting tubes nearby, they'll start to use them!

Any cocoons that have been deposited in the Release Box already can be left as they are. Provided the box is stored at ambient temperature and safe from predators, (a garage is ideal), they can be removed using

sharp knife and sent in to us along with your filled Nesting Tubes in September.

WEBSITE ADDITIONS & FACEBOOK

New for the spring, we've added a couple of extra pages to masonbees.co.uk...



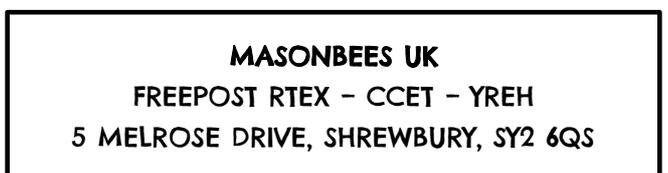
Our **NEWS** section will keep you up-to-date and our **GALLERY** is a place to view the pictures and videos of Mason bees we've collected over the years. We'd love to show off yours too! If you have any pictures or videos you'd like to share with us, send them in to: contact@masonbees.co.uk. Alternatively send them to us via our Facebook page - facebook.com/masonbeesuk - or tag us - and please don't forget to give us a like!



PHOTO: JOHN GIBSON

TUBE RETURN

We will be accepting filled nesting tubes from **1st September** onwards. Please only send filled or partially-filled inner tubes and only send the complete tube if you cannot separate the layers. **Please mark the packages with your name and post code** - this is very important and will ensure your place on next year's scheme.



Please feel free to include any comments you wish to make on your experience this year - we love reading your feedback!!