

The British Beekeepers Association

BBKA – *supporting bees and beekeepers*



Press release

19 May 2014

“Honey – I’m just doing what comes naturally!” Honey bee swarms are not “angry” and are unlikely to “attack” - BBKA advice on what the public can do to help

The recent spell of warm weather has been ideal for honey bee colonies to start swarming - the natural way honey bee colonies increase their numbers. There have been reports of swarms in the high street and on cars from across the country. As the number of bees in a hive grows the colony runs out of space and it's time to split the colony and look for a new home. So they swarm.

Swarms are valuable; they need to be collected by a beekeeper and put in a new hive so that they can thrive, producing honey and even more importantly, pollinating food crops. With the pressure on bee numbers we can't afford to lose swarms.

The British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) urges members of the public to learn how to spot a honey bee swarm and to know what to do when they see one. The BBKA has a list of beekeepers willing to collect swarms. [BBKA website](#)

The public is increasingly aware of the importance of honey bees through their contribution food production through pollination, not to mention the honey they produce. But a swarm of bees still can be scary. The public should not be alarmed if they see or come across a swarm of honey bees. They are doing what honey bees do naturally and are not remotely interested in humans. Contrary to some recent press headlines they are neither angry nor likely to attack. In fact before leaving their hive the bees fill up their stomachs with honey and are rather mellow; their sole intention is to find a new home to build-up a new colony. As long as the swarm is not provoked it will not do any harm but it is important that the bees are collected by an experienced beekeeper. If left to their own devices they may choose to set up home in the nearest (in)convenient spot which could be a chimney or other inappropriate place, where they will not thrive and may well be a nuisance.

Tim Lovett, BBKA Director of Public Affairs, gives some advice: “Honey bees swarm as nature’s way of increasing the number of colonies. With honey bee numbers under threat we can ill afford to lose swarms. As long as it is safe and practicable, beekeepers are keen to collect them and give them a new home. Swarms left uncollected are unlikely to survive, which means lost honey production but even more importantly, fewer of these hard working insects to pollinate crops, including our favourite fruits and vegetables.”

He continues; “however, people often mistake groups of other types of bees or wasps for honey bees. At this time of year the BBKA receives hundreds of calls; three out of four calls are about wasps’ nests, bumblebee sightings, or other flying insects and not honey bees which puts a huge strain on the resources of the our small office team. The public can help by contacting a beekeeper as soon as possible on sighting a swarm of honey bees ”

The BBKA website has pictures and information to help people to determine if what they have seen is a swarm of honey bees or some other type of insect. Check here first: http://www.bbka.org.uk/help/do_you_have_a_swarm.php For more information. - details of the nearest swarm collector can be found on the [BBKA website](#)

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