



# LEARNING FROM THE BEES

SERVING THE HONEYBEE

SHEEPDROVE, UNITED KINGDOM

MONDAY 3 APRIL - TUESDAY 4 APRIL 2023



## WELCOME

Dear Bee lover,

A very warm welcome to Learning from the Bees at Sheepdrove in England. Thank you for being with us here. Many of you have undertaken great journeys to share this time with us; we appreciate enormously the efforts involved.

We look forward to sharing what the bees have inspired and we are very confident that this inspiration will bear fruit in time to come.

We hope that you will have memorable days here and will gather strong resolves to find ever new ways to keep and to honour this most extraordinary and engaging animal - the honeybee - to whom we are all so greatly indebted.

May we use this precious time we have with each other to rise to our highest ideals and intentions in the manner of a 'world hive'; may we work with courage and conviction to meet the challenges of the future. We all know that there is a pressing need to combine our skills and knowledge to protect the world we share with the honeybee.

We express our sincerest hope that Learning from the Bees will continue to be a living impulse - a force for change towards a true culture of the Bee.

Jonathan Powell

Heidi Herrmann

Simon Kellam

Joanna Powell

*Natural Beekeeping Trust*

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## SPONSORS



The Natural Beekeeping Trust is the main sponsor and organiser of this conference.

“Where the bees live, such places are holy places, whole and sound. Look out for them and tell the bees that we love them. Ask them what came first, the banishing of the spirits from the living world or the crushing of our own, they surely will have an answer. And if you offer them a hive, in summer time, be sure that it is a beautiful hive, in a beautiful place. Let the hive proclaim the beneficence of the being that inhabits it. Let them face the rising sun.

Go there often. Go in peace. If that’s not possible because your soul is in turmoil, tell it to them, but don’t breathe on them as you will make them afraid. Bees will make all things better. Each day we can be born again among the bees; without the bees we are nothing.”

Heidi Herrmann - Founding Trustee



Our thanks go to Living Libations who when they heard we were putting on a conference generously donated oils and diffusers to fragrance our time together.

### **We are the World**

Celebrating the beauty of diversity in people, plants, animals, ideas, and ecosystems is one of our core creeds. As we revere the numinous nuances of nature, we also esteem each individual and community with openness and dignity.

We love this beautiful planet, the altar of our existence, and we appreciate creating respectful relations and enjoyable experiences for our beloved clients, dedicated distillers, superstar suppliers, and dream team of employees that bring their best and bring it all together each day. Our hope is for all people who grace Living Libations to thrive.

## PROGRAMME – MONDAY 3rd APRIL

08:30 - 09:30	<b>REGISTRATION / COFFEE</b>
09:30 – 11:30	<p><b>CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME</b></p> <p>Jonathan Powell, Natural Beekeeping Trust, UK</p> <p><b>MUSICAL OPENING</b></p> <p>Led by Melody Brink, UK</p> <p><b>KEYNOTE: WHAT GIFTS DO WE BRING?</b></p> <p><b>Jeremy Naydler, UK</b></p> <p>In our relationship to the bees, as in our relationship to nature as a whole, two different responses mark the extremes of how to meet the many challenges both they and we currently face. On the one side – more technological intervention and more effective control. On the other side – to step back completely, allowing nature and the bees to “re-wild”, and find their own way to healing and health. But is there perhaps a third way of responding? What is really being asked of us? And what gifts, if any, do human beings have to bring to the world and to our fellow creatures?</p> <p><b>KEYNOTE: THE HONEYBEES OF BELGRADE</b></p> <p><b>Dr Jovana Bila Dubaić, University of Belgrade, RS</b></p> <p>Jovana will share her discovery and mapping of free-living honey bee colonies in her hometown of Belgrade. Mesmerised with the idea that honeybees can live freely in such numbers, and in such a highly urbanised area, Jovana organised a large number of citizens to study and monitor the bees. On several occasions she witnessed a change of perception in people, from fear to appreciation. This experience helped her understand both people and honeybees more than she could ever imagine. Connection to nature is deep in every one of us, it is not lost, and this gives her hope.</p>
11:30 – 12:00	<b>BREAK</b>
12:00 – 13:00	<p><b>KEYNOTE: A CALL FROM THE WILD?</b></p> <p><b>Matt Somerville UK, Michiel Verspuij IE, Michael Joshin Thiele US</b></p> <p>Three voices from three countries and two continents will share some of their pioneering work with wild honeybees and present new forms of apian stewardship, conservation and arboreal apiculture. All three speakers will show diverse perspectives that will exemplify the richness and potential of this new field. The understanding of wild honeybees is fundamentally different from that within apiaries. In the context of the wild we can observe and get to know honeybees from new angles. This new understanding will be a baseline for future guidelines of preservation, ethics and human-apian relationship and interaction.</p>

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13:00 – 14:30	<b>LUNCH</b>
14:30 – 15:45	<p><b>KEYNOTE: TREES, BEES AND BEING WITH THE FOREST</b></p> <p><b>Helen Leaf, UK</b></p> <p>Bees. Trees. The Forest. An account of ongoing observation and appreciation of trees and wild bees, and a whole-forest approach to ‘finding’ them.</p> <p><b>KEYNOTE: BEES FOR PEACE</b></p> <p><b>Yossi Aud, Bees for Peace, IL</b></p> <p>To save the bees and society:</p> <p>A women's initiative to raise bees in a natural way as a bridge between Israeli and Palestinian Jews and Muslims and Arab countries. A model for creating a bridge between communities in conflict zones in the Middle East and around the world.</p>
15:45 – 16:15	<b>BREAK</b>
16:15 – 16:45	<p><b>KEYNOTE: LEARNING FROM WILD IRISH HONEYBEES</b></p> <p><b>Grace McCormack, Galway University, IE</b></p> <p>Ireland would seem to be in a strong position to take a lead on the conservation and improvement of <i>Apis mellifera mellifera</i> (Amm), a honeybee subspecies under threat across most of its range. Recent research shows the presence of the dark bee right across the island being a preferred bee of Irish beekeepers. Not only that, hundreds of wild colonies of dark bees have been reported across the island. Wild colonies of the dark bee survive well here it would seem perhaps because of the low level of commercial beekeeping, because they have successfully adapted to manmade habitats and because they are well adapted to the climate. Despite the presence of Amm here increased imports of non-native subspecies threaten the integrity of the population and its associated biodiversity potential.</p>

16:45 – 17:30	<p><b>PARALLEL SESSIONS</b></p>
OAK ROOM	<p><b>HOW WE SEE THE WORLD</b></p> <p><b>Gareth John, UK</b> - This session is for 120 people.</p> <p>Gareth spoke at the first LfB conference in Holland about how bees see the world. At this conference he will speak about how we see the world. With practical examples he will discuss the need to move beyond habitual viewpoints to embrace new insights. These allow us to perceive more deeply the world of the bee and also give us new ways of seeing the wider world in which we all partake.</p>
CROWS NEST	<p><b>AN INVITATION INTO BEEINGNESS</b></p> <p><b>Michael Joshin Thiele, Apis Arborea, US</b> - This session is for 10 people (sign-up required)</p> <p>Deep love and utmost altruism are alive in the coherence of the apian tissue-like gathering of individuals. In their presence, we feel the gravitas of heart and an invitation onto the dancing ground of beeingness. So often apian wisdom points beyond language and form and opens a gateway to a terra incognita. Bewilderment and a sense of belonging can be some of our guides for this journey. What does it take to enter? Who is we in this context? And how can we serve the world and reciprocate the gifts of the Earth? This is an invitation to deep listening and a call into beeingness.</p>
BEECH ROOM	<p><b>SACRED GEOMETRY OF BEES</b></p> <p><b>Daniel Docherty, UK</b> - This session is for 20 people (sign-up required, finishes 17:45 )</p> <p>Many insights into sacred geometry and the principles of order in space may be arrived at through a study of the Geometry of Bees. During this workshop we will develop a deep appreciation of some of the bees' most fundamental rhythms and forms. The focus will be on the befriending of the forms - through the drawing of them - using the ancient tools of compasses and straightedge. This activity will be gently guided in a contemplative, step-by-step, way. Daniel has been practicing sacred geometry and befriending bees for the last two decades. He runs Sacred Art of Geometry studios at Emerson College, UK.</p> <p>This session will run again on Tuesday.</p>
17:30 – 22:30	<p><b>BAR OPEN</b></p>
18:30 – 20:00	<p><b>DINNER</b></p>
20:00 – 21:15	<p><b>SPEED TALKS</b></p> <p>We will invite a handful of conference attendees onstage to share their bee stories about innovation, community-building, creativity, activism, and more. In this series of informal talks, each speaker will be handed the mic for a brief, 5-minute presentation.</p>

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## PROGRAMME – TUESDAY 4th APRIL

08:00 - 09:00	<b>ARRIVAL</b>
09:00 – 11:00	<b>MUSICAL OPENING</b> Led by Melody Brink, UK <b>KEYNOTE: MODERN BEEKEEPING IS DAMAGING OUR BEES</b> <b>Torben Schiffer, DE</b> For thousands of years humans have harvested bee products like honey, wax and propolis. Historically, this harvesting together with breeding and selection did not cause a threat to the species of honeybees, because only a small fraction of the genetic pool was lying in human hands and most if it was still subject to natural selection and adaption. Nowadays the tables have turned and a key species, which is literally carrying our ecosystem on its wings, is subordinate to the mercy of beekeepers that are either seeking to use honeybees for their own benefit or are caught in the trap of modern beekeeping with all its negative side effects. Natural selection is the only force that is able to generate bees showing all the facets that define independent and locally adapted survivability, which has been practically abolished by human controlled breeding and selection.  <b>KEYNOTE:</b> <b>This session is still under wraps</b>
11:00 – 11:30	<b>BREAK</b>



11:30 – 12:30	<p><b>PARALLEL SESSIONS</b></p>
	<p><b>BEING CONNECTED</b></p>
OAK ROOM	<p><b>Johannes Wirz, Goetheanum, CH</b> - This session is for 120 people</p> <p>An ancient wisdom saw all beings – rocks and mountains, plants, trees and forests, animals and human beings – intimately connected. Beekeepers and beefriends have kept this knowledge. Sitting at the entrance hole observing the bees homing in and leaving the hive, we start to acknowledge the bee hive’s connection to the cosmos. All the foragers connect flowers and plants and thus secure their prestigious renewal.</p> <p>This harmony may inspire us to participate in the dance of all beings. With the words of Thích Nhất Hạnh: “It is possible the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community, a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living... This may be the most important contribution to the survival of Mother Earth”.</p>
ROOKS NEST	<p><b>THE APIAN ECOLOGY OF SELVES: WHO IS WE?</b></p> <p><b>Michael Joshin Thiele, Apis Arborea, US</b> - This session is for 10 people (sign-up required)</p> <p>At a time when global ecological systems are undergoing fundamental changes (Anthropocene), new models for animal stewardship, conservation, and understanding of complex biological systems are emerging. Wilding is one of them. It is a novel pathway of conservation, that has become part of wild apiology. It promotes self-willed ecological processes, empowers the wisdom of living-landscapes, and brings the sentience and agency of nonhumans into our awareness. When we realise that even the simple act of perceiving is mutually entangled with our environment, then what does that mean for our relationship with Apis m. and the world? Who is We? What are the implications?</p>
BEECH ROOM	<p><b>SACRED GEOMETRY OF BEES</b></p> <p><b>Daniel Docherty, UK</b> - This session is for 20 people (sign-up required)</p> <p>This is a second opportunity to experience Daniel’s fascinating exploration into the Sacred Geometry of Bees. This session may extend by 15 minutes into Lunch.</p>
12:30 – 14:00	<p><b>LUNCH</b></p>

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14:00 – 16:15	<p><b>KEYNOTE: PROTECTION BEGINS WITH AWARENESS</b></p> <p><b>Filipe Salbany, Blenheim Palace, UK</b></p> <p><i>“We do not know what we have and so cannot protect what we do not know is there”.</i></p> <p>Filipe will give us an impression of what he learnt in 50 years of working with bees. He is passionate about free-living honeybees. The quote serves as a reminder of the importance of understanding and appreciating the resources that we have. By increasing our knowledge and awareness of the world around us, we can better protect what is there and preserve it for future generations. This highlights the idea that ignorance, lack of knowledge or pure disregard can lead to neglect and the loss of valuable resources, whether they be natural, cultural, or otherwise, which may have significant ecological, economic, or social consequences.</p> <p><b>KEYNOTE: BEES BEFORE BEEKEEPERS</b></p> <p><b>Matt Somerville, Bee Kind Hives, UK, Michiel Verspuij, Boomtree Bees, IE</b></p> <p>In a world where insect populations are already in decline, it is vital that the importance of the free-living bee is shared with a larger audience. The wild bee should be seen as an indicator of a healthy ecosystem.</p> <p>In this talk, Mick and Matt talk about what they are doing to address this decline and invite the audience to discuss how we might make real change.</p> <p><b>CLOSING ADDRESS</b></p> <p><b>Heidi Herrmann, Natural Beekeeping Trust, UK</b></p>
16:15 – 17:00	<b>TEA AND CAKE</b>

## HIVE DISPLAYS

For too long the design of bee hives has been dominated by the needs of beekeepers. By contrast, in this display we only ask “what are the qualities of the hive or nest that support the biology, and thus the health, of the honeybee?”

### Hives on display:

Freedom Hive / Matt Somerville / <https://beekindhives.uk/>

Log hive / Matt Somerville / <https://beekindhives.uk/>

Eco-hive / Simon Kellam / <https://www.justbeeecohives.com/>

Skep / Tabitha Nichols /

Latvian Tree Hive / Māris Ķirsis & Mārcis Bauze-Krastiņš / [cirgale.society@gmail.com](mailto:cirgale.society@gmail.com)

Wild nest tree section

Pallet Hive / Jonathan Powell / <https://Naturalbeekeepingtrust.org/>

Hempcrete Hive / Daniel Boschung / <https://www.bee.house/>

Modified Layens / Simon Kellam / <https://www.justbeeecohives.com/>

Modified National / Chris Davies-Barnard / <https://bachwoodworks.co.uk/bee-keeping/>

We thank Paul Honigmann, Ingo Scholler, Eleanor Coke and Guy Thompson for organising the hive displays.

## SUPPLIERS

With appreciation to all our suppliers

Flowers / Headley Flower Garden

Lighting / Core Event Hire

AV / Kingsbridge

Food / Vaughan's Kitchen

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