

On 20th September, Brigit Strawbridge gave the first of this winters' evening meeting talks on 'The importance of bees'. It was an excellent, well illustrated lecture. An enthusiast for all bees Brigit spoke of the vital role that bees play in pollination and how, should we lose them, food production would collapse. Of the many interesting and valuable points she mentioned was; flower consistency, where bees tend to stick with foraging on one type of plant; bees take and use pollen, other pollinators don't use the pollen; bees sting, other insects don't so some insects have evolved to look like bees to deter aggressors (Batesian mimicry); there are fossil bees from 90 million years ago, bees probably having evolved from solitary wasps; bumble bees and honey bees first appeared about 20 million years ago and *A. mellifera* about 12 million years ago; in the UK there is one honey bee, 24 bumble bees and over 240 spp. of solitary bees; some bees 'buzz' pollinate where they hang on to the flower and buzz at 400 hertz to shake the pollen from the stigmas; on plants with very deep petals, e.g. columbine, bees will by-pass entering the flower and cut a hole in the flower tube to access the nectaries direct. Honey bees have a tongue length of 6.3mm, bumbles range from 5mm to 15mm; and that habitat loss and insecticides, particularly neonicotinoids are the main drivers for all UK bee losses. There was much, much more on habitat creation, bee hotels, flowers to plant etc. etc. Overall an enjoyable and very interesting evening.

Anne Moran was presented with her Module 1 pass certificate and Kelly Smith was presented with certificates for passing Modules 1 and 6 and intermediate theory.