



Newsletter

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Springtime in Lockdown in Cammo



After torrential rain in February, came lockdown in March ... and April and ... May - with a bit of easing of restrictions at the end of May. The sunniest spring in Scotland and the hottest May in the UK since records began! During the spring lockdown, the schools were closed, the weather was beautiful and Cammo became a haven for families, and for people doing their one hour a day exercise, either walking, jogging or cycling.

Everyone acknowledged how lucky we all are to have Cammo park on our doorsteps.

Good for the soul!



The park was looking particularly beautiful during these months with the big oaks (and new, little oaks) and sycamores coming into leaf against a blue, blue sky.



People had picnics in front of the old house.

And it was fabulous to see the children making use of the fallen trees as play parks.



Who doesn't love to climb a tree or scramble up a big, fallen log?!



The Cammo Bees

Our Beekeeper, Rachel Doughty, wrote on 23 August 2020:

Since entering into the wonderful world of beekeeping I'm asked most often,

“How much honey do you get?”

I think if you ask any beekeeper that at start-up, you'll get the same answer - none!

I have heard myself (and been convinced), “Next year!”



Rachel and Rhona

A bee colony (known as a nuc) starts on frames.



A nuc normally consists of a queen bee, her workers, and a frame or two of baby bees, or brood. They should have some stores too as bees need pollen and honey which is vital for colony build up. A beekeeper gives sugar syrup in the spring, to support the build-up of a colony since, after winter, their larder is depleted. Spring supplies pollen enough for the bees to increase and then by June, when the hive is fullest, there comes the June dearth.

Beekeepers have to watch that bees do not starve as their numbers are at their highest and forage is at its lowest.

From late April. The bees look to increase their numbers by swarming. A series of queen cells are built. If left unchecked each queen takes away a cast of bees with her. Those workers fill up on honey and take it away for a packed lunch or three. They find a new home and use the honey they have taken, to quickly build wax. Each 5 kilos of honey builds 1 kilo of wax. So to bees their honey stores are a precious commodity for survival when multiplying their colonies.



Bees at work

The bees that are left behind have hopefully been left with enough to sustain the new queen cells and finally one becomes the head of the new colony. In that state the bees have a delay whilst the maiden queen mates and starts laying. At the start of September the bees that emerge will keep the colony alive through the winter and survive until the temperatures rise above 10 degrees and laying starts in the following year.



Beekeeper at work

Last winter I froze the precious frames that had comb, to store them without becoming damaged. It means that the bees have a head start and hopefully will fill them with stores rather than making wax.

With the fields disappearing last year as builders moved in at 'Cammo Meadows' a significant amount of forage was wiped out. I would normally expect the bees to have a late feeding of Canola (rapeseed blossom) to help fill their stores. Instead I fed them throughout September on bought sugar syrup. My beekeeping association buys

containers of 12.5 litres. The bees took the syrup and filled their 11 frames to see them through and the colony built up nicely. Black bees, which are at Cammo, are quite frugal with stores and had no need for the fondant I also put on to tide them over.

We did find queen cells so did an artificial swarm, by taking the frame cell of choice and adding some new frames as well as donors from the main hive. It is better that they don't swarm as numbers are lost, and it is good to have another colony just in case.

The bees have survived the summer but so much forage has gone now, there's no extra to be found. Even with recycling ready-to-go frames, there's been no great excess. However, Cammo Park has lots of wildflower meadows planted by the Friend of Cammo so fingers crossed that the Cammo bees find enough here.

My hope for the answer to the honey question is "next year!"

Grateful thanks to Rhona and Bryan for their help in looking after the colonies.



BUT THEN ... in early September Rachel decided that the bees had enough to spare ... and so ...

she was able to box up the very first **Cammo Honey!** 18 cartons of pale golden, beautiful comb honey.

Well done, Rachel! All your nurturing and hard work has paid off.



And more joy - owlets!

In another first for Cammo, a barn owl family was raised in the park this year. The photo shows one of the chicks being ringed by a qualified ringer.

The council put a box up in the winter and it rapidly became home to a pair of barn owls. The first we knew of it was hearing the weird snoring/hissing sounds the young make. Turned out there were four young and all four fledged. For a while you could go out at dusk and watch the adults bringing voles to the box. Later in the summer the young would come out and peer about with that strange head bobbing they do before flying into the park to feed.

As with the Cammo honey the barn owl chicks are a sign that the environment in the park is great for wildlife as well as a haven for people.



Other News

Jeff Chalmers

It is with great sorrow that we report the death of Jeff Chalmers on Tuesday 11th August after a battle with cancer. Jeff was a key organiser of our barbeques and he will be very much missed. Our thoughts are with Arlene and their family at this time.



Dates for your Diary:

None, I'm afraid. The Committee Meeting held on 10 September in the park, observing social distancing, will be the last for a while until the Scottish Government allows more than 2 households/6 people to meet outside - (new rule announced on 10th and effective on Monday 14th September.)

We had already decided to cancel the "Wilderness Disco" at Turnhouse Golf Club planned for 20th November. Hoping to be able to reschedule next year.

David Kyles, the Park Ranger, reports that **Forest Kindergarten** has resumed at Cammo. The containers that they plan to use to enhance their forest experience will not be installed in their designated location near the carpark at the top of North Field until October. Currently they are making some use of the Lodge, as they did last year.

The Lodge, however, remains closed to the public but is being used as storage for tools and materials for the various educational and conservation activities which are still going on. The Council is looking at marketing the building for lease in the near future, perhaps as a small café or information hub ... or something similar.

Please see our latest **Wildlife Sightings** here:

<https://www.friendsofcammo.org/see-more-wildlife>

We would like to thank the very talented photographers who have been contributing some fabulous photos which we have posted on the website and on Facebook.

You are encouraged to continue send in contributions to friendsofcammo@yahoo.co.uk that we can share.