



NW European IUSSI Newsletter: March
2020

Tales from the lab: Mark Brown (Royal Holloway, London)



Note from Mark: the piece below was written before the UK government put the UK into lockdown. As of 24th March we are closing down all lab and field activities, and will be working hard from home to understand our social insects. Sending best wishes to all our NW European IUSI colleagues in these difficult times.

It's the spring, and normally our thoughts in the lab turn to the fun job of collecting bumble bee queens outside, to refresh our stocks of both bees and parasites for this year's experimental work. However, in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, we have other things to think about! While the lab continues working, both from home and in the university, we've been careful, as I am sure everyone else has, to assess our activities and make sure that they're in line with social distancing measures, and all other government advice. Given that we work on epidemiology and emerging infectious diseases, we're fortunate to be in the position where we can understand what is going on with Covid-19 as it unfolds.

Luckily, collecting bumble bee queens in the field is an excellent social distancing measure, so Viki Blanchard (who is currently in the first year of her 4-years MSc/PhD with us) is leading the charge. Queens of some species have been out for a while, as have the flowers they feed on, so it looks like it's going to be a good year for bees. Back in the lab, Alberto Linguadoca has been busy, ably supported by our visiting Masters student from Belgium, Antoine Gekiere, mating lots of bumblebee queens to look at the impact of novel pesticides on their hibernation success. Owen Vaughan (Masters student) is similarly busy with bees, conducting learning and memory experiments to understand how agrochemicals and pathogens interact, or don't, to impact bee health. Meanwhile,

Ed Straw has wrapped up experiments for the moment, and is writing up some exciting results from his PhD work.

The last few months have been hugely busy for Mark and Gail Turney (our PoshBee project manager), running the PoshBee (www.poshbee.eu) AGM in Marseilles ('interesting' city...) and then dealing with our first 18-month report. Wow, was that a mountain to climb! However, the meeting was great, and the work has been punctuated by lots of good stuff, with an exciting paper led by Emily Bailes (ex-post-doc in the group) on transmission of viruses and trypanosomes in bumblebees coming out in Proceedings Royal Society B in January, and grabbing their front cover with a great picture of tagged bees! Checkout our lab website for other recent papers (www.markjfbrown.com). On the more social side, Ed organised an evening in an escape room at Windsor (our next-door town). It was called the 'Crown Jewels Heist', and I'm happy to say we finished the heist in record time - it turns out that Viki, and a visiting PhD student from Estonia, Margret Jürison, are total whizzes at lateral thinking. It was great fun, and I can't wait to go back (and possibly contribute slightly more to the success the next time!).

We hope that everyone in the NW European IUSI section, and their family and friends, are keeping well and staying safe, and we look forward to seeing you all after this is all over, perhaps in Toulouse for the European meeting!



EU-IUSSI 2020 and Coronavirus



The 2020 conference of the European section of the IUSSI is now open for registration. Please have a look at the following link: <https://eu-iussi2020.sciencesconf.org/>. The organization is currently monitoring the situation with the Corona virus. Expect more news on this around the 15th of April.

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Current job opportunities



Current vacancies on the section web site: <http://www.iussi.org/NWEurope/vacancies.htm>:

Do you have Ph.D. or Postdoc positions coming up? Email nbos [at] bio.ku.dk and we will add them to the newsletter. We also run the INSECTSmil mailing list, which distributes information about job and studentship opportunities, meetings, courses, and calls for information about social insects. See more on the section website: <http://www.iussi.org/NWEurope/INSECTSmil.htm> and send any information to be included (or subscription requests) to INSECTS [at] bio.ku.dk.

Looking for pictures!



All of the pictures in this newsletter were contributed by Quentin Willot from Stellenbosch University, who kindly allowed us to choose freely from his portfolio. Have a look at his great work here: <https://www.picuki.com/profile/qwilltn>

If you have pretty pictures to share, please send a link to nbos [at] bio.ku.dk and they might just be used for the next newsletter. Credits will be given of course!

Questions? Contact Us!

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please mail to nbos [at] bio.ku.dk.