

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta The Heritage Council



Our Young Beekeeper Program 2017

Kindly sponsored by the Heritage council

South Tipperary Beekeepers are very lucky to have some very talented young beekeepers in our midst, successfully exhibiting prize winning honey in not only our own Clonmel Honey Show, but also Fota, Dublin and even London. Their enthusiasm, drive and ambition is enviable to say the least. Sadly, though the 12 to 18 year old age group is on a whole underrepresented in our association. Recognizing the need to involve more young people in the craft, STBA decided to approach local secondary schools to invite some of their students to join a short beekeeping program, similar to our beginner's course, designed to introduce young people to beekeeping and also our native pollinators.

This program was kindly supported by the Heritage Council, who provided funding for a dedicated section of our apiary with hives and equipment provided for our students. The Students were tutored by members of STBA during the active season through to harvesting in early August. This was followed up with classes on honey preparation and hive construction during the autumn. The program was devised to foster an interest in the craft, so each time the students arrived either at the apiary or indeed at a workshop, it was a very relaxed occasion. We moved along at their pace and chose not to overload them with facts and figures.

We took the opportunity during Heritage Week to invite a Lecturer to give the students and the public a 'Pollinator Forage Walk' along the banks of the River Suir. Strolling along the riverbank, Dr. Emma Reeves imparted a huge amount knowledge and lore regarding the various plants available to our bees. But she cautioned, that there simply wasn't enough native forage available, invasive

species and habitat loss were very apparent on the short walk. This gave the students another perspective. If they choose never to pick up a hive tool again, they will no doubt always be aware of the plight of Irish pollinators, hopefully impacting on their future choices.

By far though the apiary visits were of most enjoyment for the students. Apprehensive at first, they soon found their feet. Oftentimes surprising themselves. This was an activity that none had ever in their wildest dreams considered before. We were pleasantly surprised by the level of interest and engagement, from both the students and their parents. We never expected to hear words like, 'relaxing' or 'interesting' from a bunch of teenagers. It was lovely to see young people in quiet awe as they stared into a box of bees. Hopefully it will have a lasting effect on them, now that they have dipped their toes in. Certainly, it will have a lasting effect on South Tipperary Beekeepers, and we anticipate a continuation of this program in the coming years.

We would like to thank the Heritage Council for their great support, our dedicated members for making the program so successful and our wonderful students for their interest and courage.



NATIONAL
HERITAGE
WEEK 2017
19-27 AUG



“Pollinator Forage Walk”, during Heritage Week 2017

