

The Hive

TTVBKA Newsletter

February 2025

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Update from the Chair

Dear Member,

The association continues to tick over quite nicely, and we are always considering ways of bringing in income so that we can further our association aims. This ties in particularly well with the conversion of the association into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which is moving apace. You'll hear more about this at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) which this year is due to be held on Friday 28th March . About the AGM, start thinking now about the propositions you would like to be voted on and submit them early. Remember, this is your Association, and you have a say on how it should be run and what direction it should take. On that note, the offices of Chair and President have run their three-year courses so new officers will need to be elected at the AGM. Maybe you want to take on a role?

We are also changing the structure of how the committee runs the association. This will involve creating a number of functional groups of active members and publishing to the wider membership what these groups do. If you have an interest in the activities of any of the groups and would like to join in, joining will be easy and straightforward and you will have direct influence on how the association is run.

Shop news

Our Equipment Centre is a not-for-profit 'shop' for members of the T&TVBKA. The shop is open every Friday from 6pm until 8.30pm throughout the season.

Through our supplier relationships, we are able to purchase a large range of products at a discount and pass this saving on to our members. Our prices are usually lower than other beekeeping suppliers and online sources.

Run by our friendly volunteers, the shop has a good selection of hives parts, frames and foundation for common hive designs including National, Langstroth & WBC. It stocks a selection of hive tools, feed & supplements, queen catchers & markers, feeders and many more useful items for around the apiary.

Our volunteers are knowledgeable and experienced beekeepers and happy to help out with advice or just a friendly chat, so even if you have nothing to buy, please pop in and say hello!

The shop will open on Friday 21st March

Our Equipment Centre is a popular resource for our members, and we'd like to expand on this service by exploring digital solutions. If you have any experience with ecommerce, and are willing to give us some advice, or you would like to lend a hand in the shop on Friday evenings, please email

ray.nicol@twickerbees.co.uk.

We are preparing for the new season and many of the significant dates and events have already been posted to the apiary schedule which you can see on the association's website (Members->Apiary->Apiary Year Plan). In the coming weeks we'll be getting the Twickenham apiary ready. This involves the new Gardening group and the cleaning of old kit and building of new hives with the upcoming Woodwork workshop on Saturday 1st March.

This season there is an increased emphasis on training existing beekeepers/members. Soon you'll be receiving emails to see who wants to train for the Basic Assessment and, new this year, the Honey Bee Health Assessment. We will also be supporting those who have signed up for the BBKA's General Husbandry 2026 (GH26) training. In addition to this, the Winter course is up and running with twenty participants. The Winter course has changed slightly this year with more emphasis on other pollinators such as solitary bees as well as honey bees.

I hope to see you in the new season.

Cheers, Ray

Around the Apiary

Apiary jobs for February & March

February can be challenging for bee and beekeepers. Weather can be unpredictable, and warmer weather can see bees out foraging for early pollen sources further depleting food reserves. Be vigilant, keep hefting and feed if required.

February Jobs:

- Keep hefting hives and feed if required – too cold for syrup use fondant directly on crown board, use eke or empty super. Can also use pollen supplement for extra boost
- Check hives for damage, roofs for leaks – replace wet roofs, and entrances are not blocked



- Repair and clean equipment, make up some frames ready for the Spring
- Check stored comb for signs off wax moth
- Seal entrances of dead hives disease can be spread through robbing

Keep alert for early signs of the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet



March is traditionally the month that the apiary comes alive but again, can be unpredictable when it come to the weather. Starvation can still be a real threat; more colonies starve in March than any other time of the year*. Keep hefting your hives and if you think your bees are starving feed immediately with fondant placing it directly on the frames above the bees. If the weather has been warmer and bees are actively flying, feed a 1:1 syrup.

Depending on the weather, you may want to have a quick first inspection! Only do this if the temperature is at least 14.C – check

that the colony is building up and that there are enough stores. If a colony has failed, clear it away immediately or block entrances to prevent robbing and possible spread of disease, until you have an opportunity to remove.

- Keep hefting hives and feed if required if the bees are starving, use fondant directly on frames or if the bees are flying and the weather is warm enough, use a 1:1 syrup
- · Remove mouse & woodpecker guards
- Prepare brood frames for full inspection; prepare queen excluders and supers
- Check your equipment is ready for the season to start; spare hive parts, foundation, frames, etc. contact our Members Trading Shop to order your equipment
- Get your record sheets ready!
- Keep alert for signs of the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet, join the association WhatsApp group TTVBKA-AHT for updates

Time to renew your membership!

An email was recently sent out to all members will full details on how to renew their subscriptions.

It is important to renew your membership to keep all your benefits in place. This includes your BBKA membership (including third party and product liability cover through BBKA) and use of the TTVBKA facilities.

Registered (full) membership includes disease loss insurance cover with BDI Ltd for up to three hives. BDI premiums that are paid **before 31 March** will take effect immediately. Any paid after 31 March will not enjoy cover until **40 days** following payment to the local BKA. You can add hives for a supplementary premium. It is therefore sensible to pay on time and allow for any expected increase in the numbers of colonies they may have during the season, due to swarm control, collecting swarms or queen rearing.

We're happy to inform you that there is no increase in membership subscriptions for 2025. Full details, benefits & prices of our Membership options can be found here.

If you have not received an email or have any questions with regarding your membership, please email membership@twickerbees.co.uk.

Thanks to all members for the continuing support over the past 12 months.

^{*} BBKA March In the Apiary 2022



Some of my Favourite Solitary Bees

By Sally L. Ewen

We beekeepers love bees. Some might say we're positively obsessed with them. Yet somehow, it's easy to forget that the honey bee is only one of about 276 bee species in the UK... there are actually another 275 other types of bee out there! 27 of these are bumblebees, which means that the remaining 248 species are that somewhat enigmatic group known as the solitary bees.

Personally, despite being a beekeeper since 2019 and an amateur entomologist since forever, I've somehow only recently begun noticing the solitary bees. I happened to attend a talk last January by the bee expert James Power, and from that moment on have been on a bit of a personal quest to spot and identify as many solitary bees as I can - a little like collecting Pokémon creatures, I suppose! And what I've discovered is that there's so many amazing ones out there, with great variation in their life cycles, habitat, appearance (some of them don't even look like bees!).

One of the very first solitary bees you're likely to see each spring is the fantastically-named hairy-footed flower bee (Anthophora plumipes). From afar, this one looks very similar to a fluffy bumblebee, though without the distinctive stripes (females are fluffy and plain black, and males are fluffy and buff-coloured). I suppose many people do just assume these are bumblebees since they appear at the same time of year as the overwintered bumblebee queens, but hairy-footed flower bees move in a very different way, kind of darting about erratically (almost never stopping for photographs!), and hovering in front of flowers with their super-long tongue poking out. In my garden they love the yellow flowers on the bolted kale and the purpley-blue bell-like flowers of Pulmonaria.



Another spring bee is the <u>red mason bee</u> (Osmia bicornis). This is one of a handful of bees that will happily nest within the tubes and cavities of a back garden bee hotel; they also excavate nests in crumbling mortar. Like all solitary bees, the red mason bee is univoltine (meaning only one generation of brood per year, and female dies leaving her brood to overwinter in the nest). This happens to be a particularly efficient pollinator of fruit trees, more than the honey bee.

Whereas honey bees are generalist foragers (polylectic), picking and choosing from a great range of flowers, many solitary bees are much more selective (monolectic). One of my favourite examples is the clover melitta (Melitta leporina). Every year in my Whitton garden we leave a patch of white clover unmowed, and every year - like clockwork - the clover melitta bees turn up in fantastic numbers (although it took me a while to realise that they weren't honey bees - superficially they look quite similar, but with more distinctive, paler stripes and a prettier face). The clover melitta literally only forages upon clover and the closely-related vetch plants... I really recommend leaving a tiny clover "meadow" in your lawn and watching to see if they turn up.



Next, I'd like to introduce one of the prettiest solitary bees ever - the magical, green-eyed flower bee (Anthophora bimaculata). This species digs deep tunnels in sandy areas, such as in the pathways of Bushy Park (where this pic was taken). These are some of my favourite bees because of the unbelievably emerald-coloured eyes, and the fact that they're hugely territorial, fighting off any nearby insects (even ones who are just minding their own business), and because they have this really characteristic hilarious high-pitched whining sound that they make when flying.





Interestingly, most solitary bees and bumblebees have a matching cuckoo bee - that is, one that's evolved to covertly deposit its own brood into the other bee's nest. Often, these cuckoos don't look anything like the classic image of bees... an example here is the cuckoo of the ashy mining bee, Lathbury's nomad bee (Nomada lathburyana), which I spotted hanging around some ashy mining bee nests in Hounslow Heath. It looks more like a wasp than anything (although wasps tend not to have furry bodies like bees do, and I don't think this one is interested in jam sandwiches).

My final one for today is a bit of a rare one, and very special. While all of the above bees can easily be spotted in the area around Twickenham, this final species is only found on certain types of chalk downland, and only where certain snails live.

What happened was, last May, my family and I were picnicking in a magical chalk valley in Buckinghamshire that we visit each year so I can photograph the nearly-extinct Duke of Burgundy butterflies and the children can run wild. It's literally butterfly paradise there.

At some point we noticed what looked like long blades of grass floating along above the ground by themselves, as if enchanted. Looking closely, we could see that they were actually being



carried in the mouth of a bee, and it suddenly occurred to me that this was the mysterious <u>red-tailed mason bee</u> (Osmia bicolor) that the author James Power had spoken about in his talk earlier in the year! At the time, I'd been mesmerised by his tales of this very curious solitary bee who lays her eggs in an empty snail shell then stuffs it up with chewed-up dried grass before turning it over, pushing a stone in front of the entrance, and camouflaging the whole nest with a thick blanket of dried grass which she painstakingly carries over, piece-by-piece. Such dedication to her offspring!!! And never did I think that I would spot one of these bees in real life! It was truly fascinating watching her build her nest... such strength to carry along all those long pieces of grass and endlessly lift up and rearrange her snail shell (a bit like watching a dung beetle in action).

Anyway, I hope this was a bit interesting. There are so many more fascinating solitary bees out there (another 242 species, in fact, if my calculations are correct!), but I've run out of space for now. Keep an eye out for them as the new season begins.

Oh, and if you're interested in reading more about solitary bees, James Power kindly donated two copies of his brilliant book "The Bees of Sussex" to the TTVBKA library... I highly recommend it.

All photographs copyright Sally L. Ewen

Association Library

Phase one of the library project is nearing completion thanks to the heroic efforts of Greg Elliot. The books have been rationalised and reindexed and will be available to the membership at the end of February.

The audit has uncovered a number of missing publications. If you have any books from the association library, can you please return them before the end of February to be reindexed.

The next phase is to put the library online to make the borrowing of publications easy to do and to track. Some people think that in this day and age of everything on the internet, there is little use for a library. However, others believe that there is even more need for a library precisely because everything is on the internet. By definition, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to assess the quality of what has been published online, whereas in our library the information has been carefully curated. If you have a missing book or have question about our library, please email library@twickerbees.co.uk or speak to Greg or Pat.

BBKA updates & talks

2025 BBKA Spring Convention

4th - 6th April, Harper Adams University, Shropshire

With a full programme of lectures, workshops, seminars and social events, the BBKA Spring Convention is a great opportunity to meet up with, and learn from, beekeepers and traders from all around the country and indeed from other parts of the world.

Bookings and ticket sales are now open, the full programme, FAQs and additional information is available at: www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention.

A few stewards are also still needed and any member interested in stewarding at the Convention is asked to contact: scstewards@bbka.org.uk



Next BBKA Zoom talk

'An Inspector Calls' with Keith Bartlem, 18th February 2025 at 7pm

Keith Bartlem has been keeping bees for quite a while. He was introduced to honey bees during a student summer job as a gardener in the late 1980s. Since then, honey bees have been something of an obsession for him. Keith recently resigned as a Seasonal Bee Inspector for the North East of England after four years in the role. He is a Master Beekeeper, BBKA examiner, BBKA exam board member, and an active member of the Richmond and District Beekeeping Association. Currently, he manages twenty colonies in the North East of England, mostly using 14 x 12 hives.

The talk, 'An Inspector Calls', is a pun on the title of the famous play of the same name. It covers some of Keith's experiences as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in the North East of England. The talk will explore practical aspects of beekeeping, tips and hints that Keith has picked up from his inspections, as well as a number of personal frustrations related to the role of Bee Inspector.

https://learning.bbka.org.uk/course/view.php?id=106

(You will need to log in using your membership number and postcode).

A recording of this talk will be available on YouTube for those unable to watch live.

Future BBKA Talks:

Preparing for Exams

18th March 2025 **Jenny Morgan**

Ways of Preparing For BBKA Exams ...Beyond Rote Learning

My talk will focus on strategies that can be used to help people prepare for assessments. We shall look at the importance of reviewing the syllabus. The development of the vocabulary associated with a topic. Mind maps, diagrams and other techniques for helping develop key links. Examination techniques will be discussed.

Previous talks are available to watch here **BBKA Learning**

BBKA Member Courses

The Education & Husbandry Committee has arranged a number of members only courses to be held in 2025 at the BBKA office and apiary, Stoneleigh. Topics include:

Microscopy for Beginners - One day course

The areas that will be covered are Dissection and Compound Microscopes, Disease Investigation, Dissection of Alimentary System and Preparing Pollen Slides from flower/samples/pollen loads. Equipment for this course will be provided.

Intermediate Microscopy - Two-day course

For intermediate candidates who are preparing for the BBKA Microscopy Assessment.

Honey Bee Health: Train the Trainer - One day course

The Honey Bee Health Certificate is a practical qualification which makes a major contribution to improving beekeeper practice. This one-day course is for BBKA members who are experienced beekeepers wishing to run a Honey Bee Health course locally.

Queen Rearing: Train the Trainer - One day course

This one-day course is for BBKA members who are experienced beekeepers wishing to run a queen rearing course for their local association. Participants must have previous experience of queen rearing. This course is not suitable for beginners.

For more information and to book places, please visit the shop on the BBKA website: https://www.bbka.org.uk/pages/shop/department/training-courses

Bee-stowing our knowledge

This year, in addition to putting candidates forward for the <u>Basic Assessment</u>, we intend to put people forward for the <u>BBKA Honey Bee Health Assessment</u>. This is for those of us who have been keeping bees for a minimum of three years and is seen as an intermediate assessment between the Basic and <u>General Husbandry</u>. It is a mixture of practice and theory. You will receive an email in the near future asking if you wish to join either of these groups.

The BBKA is running a series of online sessions with the aim of preparing those interested to take the General Husbandry assessment sometime in 2026. The association intends to help coach members who want to do this and combine this with the Honey Bee Health training. The BBKA sees the Honey Bee Health Assessment as part of an informal route to the General Husband qualification.

We are continuing with the module work study groups. The current module being studied is **module 2** (**Honey bee Products and Forage**). Not everyone who has signed up for this is taking the assessment but nevertheless still feel it's valuable knowledge to have under their belt.

We also have a microscopy group, the members of which intend taking the Microscopy Assessment at the end of the year. Building on this, we will be running a Nosema and Acarine clinic early this season on April 19th. This is open to the membership to bring along a sample of thirty of your bees and check them for these pests and diseases. Unlike previous clinics held in the past, this time we will be coaching you how to carry out these investigations yourselves.



Bees (and we) need you!

Volunteering with the Association

As a charity, our Association is run entirely by volunteers, and without the support of these fantastic helpers the important education, facilities and services we offer to beekeepers, young people and the public would not be possible.

We are keen to expand on our current team of volunteers and there are many ways that you can get involved. And you don't need to be a beekeeper, we are grateful for any time, skill or experience you can offer.

We are currently recruiting volunteers to help in the following areas:

Young People Education Group

The Education group run regular Schools & Groups sessions aimed at 3-11 years old. The team of volunteers provide a range of fun, hands-on learning activities that cover aspects of the National Curriculum science programme relating to insects, pollination, habitats and the environment.

The Education group will be organising School visits twice a week to the Twickenham apiary on (probably) Wednesday and Thursday mornings during the Summer term time and some visiting groups of young people in the early evenings.

We are looking for more volunteers to support the Group's work. Any member is welcome to come and observe what we do before committing to anything regular. Please contact Jane at schools@twickerbees.co.uk.



Gardening Group

Chris will be running Tuesday afternoon garden sessions at the Twickenham apiary. These sessions will start in March and run throughout the season. Tasks will include general tidying, pruning & reseeding. All gardening equipment supplied, except gloves and refreshments will of course be provided!

The first session will be on Tuesday 18th March 1-3pm. Please email Chris at <u>cbetley63@gmail.com</u> if you would like to help.



Taking our shop online...?

We are exploring ways our Equipment Centre can better serve our members. One area we are looking into is online & digital solutions, another is increasing the number of volunteers willing to run the shop. If you have any suggestions or would like to help contact Ray at ray.nicol@twickerbees.co.uk



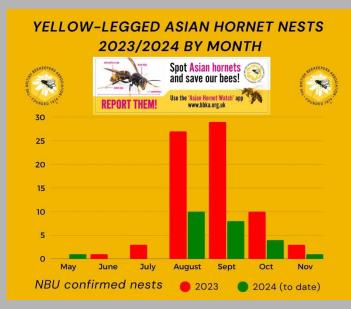
Other areas you can help include Apiary teaching, General DIY & handyman, Website & IT and Events but we are grateful for any support you can give.

Volunteering can be hugely satisfying and is not only a chance to pass on your skills & experience but also the opportunity to develop your own. If you would like to find out more email volunteer@twickerbees.co.uk.

Yellow-legged (Asian) hornet update

Final 2024 Update from Defra

This is a final update on the Animal and Plant Health Agency's National Bee Unit's (NBU) work against Yellow-legged-hornet (YLH) also known as Asian hornet for 2024.



BBKA Latest final sightings of 2024

Since the last update, no further nests have been located, bringing the total to 24 nests found in 2024.

Results from laboratory analyses have now concluded and indicate two of the nests found in 2024 (Coldred and Udimore in Kent) are likely to have been produced by queens released from nests found and destroyed in late 2023 (Alkham and Four Oaks/Rye respectively). This is not wholly unexpected following the capture of foundress queens also thought to be related to these nests in the Spring.

These findings are not considered to be strong evidence of an established population. Defra will continue to follow an eradication strategy against YLH in 2025.

Yellow legged hornets in the media

What does it take to clear an Asian hornets' nest?

Finding and removing Asian hornet nests in the Channel Islands is a challenge which is only going to grow, according to experts.

Asian hornet nests dissected to monitor species

The dissection of Asian hornet nests is being carried out to inform the strategy used to manage the invasive species in Guernsey.

Identifying & reporting nests

Ray was contacted by the BBKA regarding a nest close to Twickenham, but it was a wasp nest!

Yellow legged hornet nests are often confused with the nests of similar species. For more information on identifying nests, view the NNSS Yellow-legged Asian hornet Nest Identification sheet

The Association does not expect AH Co-ordinators or any other Member to verify nests. If anyone is contacted about a suspected nest, a photograph and location should be sent to:

Outreach.officer@bbka.org.uk who will input onto a map. The map can be viewed here: Asian Hornet Map UK

If taking a photograph take it from a suitable distance – at least 10 meters away - and avoid disturbing a live nest.

Dates for the diary

Woodwork Workshop Saturday 1st March

First night for Members & Equipment centre/shop open

Friday 21st March at 6.30pm

Annual General Meeting Friday 28th March at 7.30pm

First night for beginners Friday 11th April at 6.30pm

Nosema and Acarine Clinic Saturday 19th April

Open DaySaturday 7th June

Summer Social Evening Saturday 28th June

Honey MarketMonday 25th August

Annual Honey ShowFriday 3rd, Saturday 4th &
Sunday 5th October

Last night for members Friday 26th September

President's EveningFriday 14th November

Subscribe to TTVBKA Calendar

Becoming a CIO

SGM & project update

Last November, the committee called a Special General Meeting to inform and have the membership vote on transitioning to a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO), to update our charitable 'Objects' and to elect new Custodian Trustees.

All propositions were unanimously carried through and as a result, the association have now started the process of becoming a CIO and preparing a Constitution. The entire



project is estimated to take around 18 months and the wider membership will be consulted throughout the process where appropriate and in adherence with our association Rules.

In keeping with the plan to transition to a CIO, the association's new charitable 'Objects' will be:

"To educate and promote awareness of the importance of honeybees and other pollinators to the biodiversity of our environment, through the craft and science of beekeeping".

We believe expanding our 'Objects' gives us wider remit to use our facilities, skills & knowledge to support and educate a broader range of people on issues often associated with modern beekeeping, for example, the importance of other pollinators, environment/biodiversity issues, new threats & disease control, etc,

In compliance with Charity Commission regulations, the new 'Objects' will be submitted to the commission for approval.

A document providing general information on the project can be found <u>here</u>.

If you would like to find out more about the process or have any questions, please email CIOProject@twickerbees.co.uk.

Combing through the news

A round up of Bee related news & research

Pesticide emergency authorisation denied for 2025 to protect bees

An emergency authorisation for Cruiser SB, a neonicotinoid pesticide, will not be granted

Rapid action against invasive bee-killing hornet has halted spread, study finds

The National Bee Unit responds to public sightings of the yellow-legged or Asian hornet to destroy insects and nests.

<u>British Beekeepers' Association response to interpretations of study on effectiveness of yellow-legged 'Asian' hornet eradication measures</u>

The report brings welcome news – but the fight isn't over yet

Hunt for 'murder hornets' after first sighting in Europe

The invasive species poses a threat to local ecosystems – but where did the insects come from and how are they dangerous?

From paper to pixels, Mountain West researchers bring bee collections into the digital age

The University of College Boulder holds about 200,000 bees in its natural history museum. Collectors there are partnering with other institutions to digitize the images of, and information about, the bees so the information can be used by scientists

Fishing and beekeeping project in Essex aims to improve mental health of serving personnel

Serving armed forces personnel have participated in a new week-long project aimed at treating their physical and mental health through activities such as beekeeping, fishing and mindfulness

The microbiology of honey: A sweet symphony of life

Humans have been using honey for generations to soothe cold symptoms and promote wound healing, citing its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and antimicrobial properties. Is there scientific merit to these claims, and, if so, what gives honey its medicinal properties?

Put some wiggle in your mowing. Bees will love it

Cutting grass in ever-changing curves—rather than straight lines—could boost the abundance and diversity of pollinators

Award-winning Hungarian Development Helps Beekeepers

Develop a device that stitches and drills a hive frame in eight seconds.

'A little spooky': an artist-beekeeper's apian oeuvre celebrates the industrious insect

Garnett Puett's Los Angeles exhibition is a collaboration between humans and bees and an exploration of their relationship

Honey bee behaviours within the hive: Insights from long-term video analysis

An old study but scroll to the bottom for some fascinating bee short behaviour videos that were part of the 2021 German study

FEATURE: Beekeepers in a corner against varroa mites

Resistance concerns are growing with chemical control products, and the alternatives are finicky. What's a beekeeper to do?

Exploring Bee Diversity: Roles of Solitary, Social, and Other Bees

Discover the diverse roles and behaviours of various bee species, from solitary to social, and their impact on ecosystems

King Charles adds honey from his own bees to make rum

Made with the honey of Charles's own bees on his country estate, Highgrove Honey Infused Rum is now being sold by the King's Foundation

Bee mortality in Ukraine was 20-25% in 2024

Industry losses due to war reach 30% - Institute of Beekeeping

Scientists Strapped QR Codes Onto Thousands of Bees to Learn How Far They Actually Fly

Researchers put a sensor at the entrance of beehives to register each time the pollinators entered or exited, and how long they were gone

The Downside of Selection: A Forgotten Cause of Honeybee Decline

This article explains how resistance alleles have disappeared from honeybee populations in Europe and North America

Wildlife Photographer of the Year: The small world of bees wins big

Karine Aigner's dynamic photo of a bee mating ball stole the show at the fifty-eighth Wildlife Photographer of the Year Awards

Nano colonies: Rearing honey bee queens and their offspring in small laboratory arenas

This study suggests a new system to reliably produce queens and worker brood in the laboratory to provide a bridge between field research and laboratory trials.

Any other buzzness...

Thanks to Sally for a really interesting and informative feature on solitary bees, and what fabulous photography!

We would love to include more content from our members. If you would like to discuss an idea, drop us a line at newsletter@twickerbees.co.uk. We'd also like to hear your feedback on the newsletter including any topics you would like to see included.

BJ Sherriff is extending their student discount offer to February 28th on bee suits to all members who order during the off-season. Input tatvbk5 at the checkout.