

Books Reviews

It is often said that there are more books on beekeeping than about any other animal after man. No single book can cover the information a beginner needs in a way that the beginner needs to know it. Also you cannot learn beekeeping from a book, it is too practical a subject and bees present a special challenge because you cannot tame bees and you are attempting to manage a social colony not an individual animal. So the subject is rather like learning to play golf while herding cats. However knowing the rules and etiquette of golf and the equipment when and how to use it as well as an understanding of the domestic cat's needs and behaviours would provide a good start.

So I recommend the top three to the beginner and the more experienced beekeeper.

Title: Guide to bees and honey Author: Ted Hooper

If you only had one book on beekeeping this should be it. Not full of the pretty pictures, which usually add nothing, found in some other books and looks daunting with its unbroken blocks of text. But this can be read by the beginner and acts as a reference for the more experienced. Has been kept up to date with regular revisions. Buy the most recent copy you can 1997 onwards.

Title: Bees at the bottom of the garden Author: Alan Campion

This packs a lot of practical information in its 112 pages. Written originally in 1983 when the author was a newcomer to beekeeping it covers the essentials and more. Easy to follow with useful diagrams.

Title: Teach yourself beekeeping Author: Adrian and Claire Waring

This long running title was completely rewritten by its current authors for the edition published for the first time in 2006. It is more up to date than many other books on the subject.

Title: Practical beekeeping Author: Clive de Bruyn

Being only available in hardback makes this more expensive than the above which are all published in paperback editions. Also in a larger format and is well laid out with useful diagrams.

Title: The complete guide to beekeeping Author: Jeremy Evan

The author describes a 'rule of three' as applied to beekeeping in the introduction and then labours to apply this to the rest of the book. Beginners tell me that the 'three year cycle' is help but is, I think, too simplistic as bees are not that predictable. Overall this book is well presented and full of practical advice. It is, in my copy published in 2005, woefully out of date on varroa as it states that 'At the time of writing no cases of varroa had been found in the UK.' Varroa entered the UK in 1992 and has since spread to all parts.

Title: Keeping bees and making honey Author: Alison Benjamin and Brian McCallum

This book annoyed me immensely in that it provides the little knowledge that could be a dangerous thing. The title gives a clue to the problem – bees make money not beekeepers. It looks pretty enough, covers the basics but doesn't follow this through with practical advice. It will tell you 'what' but not 'how' often advising to 'seek advice from an experienced beekeeper'. You will quickly outgrow it. Would be of interest to the non-beekeeper who wants to gain a little knowledge about the subject.

Title: Beekeeping for dummies Author Howland Blackiston

This book is by an American author and describes American beekeeping climate, plants, animal pests and equipment. Buy a book written for British beekeepers. Not recommended.

Title: Keeping bees Author: John Vivian

Another American author but this one manages to include sufficient good ideas and information to outweigh the disadvantages. Add to your collection after getting a book at the top of the list.

All reviews by John Dudman.