2026 Conference Program

Friday 6th March

17.30 **Welcome & Introduction**

17.45 **Gerard Coyne,**
Do the bees know best?

18.15 **Colm ONeill,**
Giving our Honey Bees their best chance

18.45 **"To Treat or not to Treat"**
Panel Discussion with conference speakers.
Chaired by Paula Somers-Kennedy

Suppliers Marketplace

DonegalBees

Ben Harden Beekeeping Equipment

APIS BEE SUPPLIES

FORMICPRO

Saturday 7th March

9.00 **Welcome & Introduction**
Loretta Neary Chairperson NIHBS

9.15 **Mick Verspuij**
Mapping Our Bees: Insights from the Managed and Free-Living Honey bee Census

9:45 **Dr. Alan Moore**
Hedgerows for life

10.15 **Tea & Coffee Break**

10.45 **Professor Stephen Martin**
Science of Varroa resistance

11.30 **Steve Riley**
Adding Varroa resistance to Irish Honey Bee stocks

12.15 **The Rev. Sam Millar Award**

12:30 **Lunch** 90 Minutes

14.00 **John Kelly**
Invasive species: threats to Irish Bees

14.30 **John De Carteret**
Asian Hornet - The Jersey experience

15.15 **Tea & Coffee break**

15.45 **Professor Grace McCormack**
SWARM: Sustainable Ways to Advance Reproductive Management in honey bees

16.30 **NIHBS Annual Raffle**

www.NIHBS.org **Protecting the Native Irish Honey Bee**

AMM IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Friday 6th March
Early Bird **€25**/Late **€30**
Saturday 7th March
Early Bird **€45**/Late **€55**

Early bird rates until February 20th ONLY

Native Irish Honey Bee Society
Apis mellifera mellifera

Annual Conference

6th & 7th March 2026

Athlone Springs Hotel

EST. 2022 THE FARMHOUSE Raw Irish Honey

BALLYGOWAN

EXTERNAL IT

hive alive

Mick Verspuij

Mapping Our Bees: Insights from the Managed and Free-Living Honeybee Census

Mick Verspuij is a PhD candidate at the University of Galway with a professional background in forestry and landscape management. He is also the founder of Boomtreebees Ltd, a company dedicated to honeybee conservation through the creation of naturalistic log hives that replicate the ecological qualities of tree-cavity nests.
His research focuses on the ecology of free-living honeybee colonies in the Irish landscape, investigating the density and spread of these colonies, the microclimatic and ecological conditions within natural tree cavities, and the role of wood decay fungi in shaping nest environments and parasite dynamics.

John Kelly

Invasive species: threats to Irish Bees

John Kelly is Invasive Species Programme Manager with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and has over 20 years' experience in invasive species policy, biosecurity, management, and eradication. Through the Shared Island Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative, he led the development of a contingency response plan for Asian hornet incursions, which informed Ireland's national response in 2025. Following confirmed nests in Cork and Cobh, John supported a multi-agency taskforce that successfully located and destroyed all known nests before new queens emerged. He will outline lessons learned from this response and discuss efforts to strengthen future preparedness and resilience.

Dr. Alan Moore

Hedgerows for life

Alan Moore is co-founder of Hedgerows Ireland, a voluntary group dedicated to all aspects of hedgerow welfare including promotion, education, better farm payments and stronger protections. Hedgerows Ireland believe that the optimum management and restoration of our existing hedgerow network, along with new multispecies hedge planting, as being fundamental to addressing our climate and biodiversity challenges. They have a collaborative approach to there work: this is especially relevant to understanding the forces which drive hedgerow management and developing close working relationships with individual farmers and their organisations as well as with environmental and other stakeholder groups.

Steve Riley

Adding Varroa-Resistance to Irish Honey Bee Stocks

Steve is the author of the book "The Honey Bee Solution to Varroa" and a member of the "Path to Varroa-resistance" team that launched the science and education website: www.varroaresistant.uk. He is the former Chair & Education Officer at Westerham Beekeepers, a club in the south-east of England, who are in their 9th year of not using miticide treatments. Steve presents on Varroa-resistance to beekeeping associations throughout the UK at local and national level, and also internationally.

Gerard Coyne

Do the Bees Know Best?

Gerard Coyne from Connemara has been keeping bees for 40+ years and who knows how long the + represents! He has wide experience of beekeeping from beginner basics to queen rearing. As a founder member of NIHBS he continues to work tirelessly to protect and conserve Amm.

Emeritus Prof. Stephen Martin (University of Salford, Manchester, UK)

Science of Varroa resistance

Stephen has studied social insects (bees, wasps, termites and ants) for most of his career. His areas of specialisation are the 'hornet ecology', 'pest and diseases of honeybees' and 'chemical ecology of ants'. He holds a Chair in Social Entomology in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences at Salford University, Manchester. Prior to that he spent 12 years working at Sheffield University, 7 years with the National Bee Unit and 7 years in Japan conducting research into hornets.
Stephen is best known for his work on the Varroa mite a global parasite of honeybees and its association with viruses, especially the Deformed Wing Virus, but more recently his expertise in hornet biology is in demand, both nationally and internationally. His research funded in part by beekeepers aims to understand why some honey bee colonies have become naturally tolerant to Varroa and see if this information can provide beekeepers with a long-term solution to their mite-problem.

John De Carteret

Asian Hornet: The Jersey Experience

John De Carteret is a retired forensic examiner, photographer and poor (now) ex-beekeeper. He first became involved with Asian Hornets upon their arrival on the island of Jersey in 2017, when he was Vice President of the local "Jersey Beekeepers Association" (JBKA). Using data from tracking, timing and mapping hornets in 2018, he uncovered the relationship between time/distance, often referred to as "John's calculation". This rule of thumb is now used extensively as an initial guide in tracking nests, coupled with an observation of flight direction it gives a good starting point when commencing tracking. He also developed his highly portable "Hornet Hoover" vacuum design, using a large, clear "In-line" filter, at one ground level nest it collected a record 1,500 live hornets, and provides a pesticide free method of nest removal.
John calculates that he's attended well over 500 nests.

Colm ONeill

Giving our bees their best chance

Colm has been beekeeping for over 50 years, he and his three brothers worked 30 colonies with their father until Colm took over the beekeeping operation in his early 20s. With his wife, Imelda, he manages 60 honey production colonies, and another 30 colonies and nuclei, for the production of *Apis Mellifera mellifera (Amm)* queens and nuclei for sale. Colm and Imelda only use *Amm* bees for local adaption, ease of management, and rapid Spring build-up. Colm is a committee member for the Native Irish Honey Bee Society (NIHBS), and holds beekeeping, bee improvement and queen-rearing classes at his home and association apiaries during the summer.

Professor Grace McCormack - NUIG

SWARM: Sustainable Ways to Advance Reproductive Management in honey bees

Grace McCormack is a Professor in Zoology at NUI Galway. She has run funded research projects and published scientific papers in the area of apiculture and honey bee science, established and directed the Diploma in Apiculture at University of Galway. Grace has been beekeeping for about 10 years and currently manages 20 colonies. She became interested in free-living colonies in 2015 and has been investigating their survival, diversity and distribution since. She is interested both in conservation of *Apis mellifera mellifera* and resilience of untreated bees to varroa and other challenges introduced by humans.

Don't forget to buy tickets for the NIHBS Raffle!