



Bee World

ISSN: 0005-772X (Print) 2376-7618 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tbee20>

Guest Editorial

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To cite this article: Norman Carreck (2011) Guest Editorial, Bee World, 88:4, 73-73, DOI: [10.1080/0005772X.2011.11417428](https://doi.org/10.1080/0005772X.2011.11417428)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0005772X.2011.11417428>



Published online: 01 Apr 2015.



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Guest Editorial



Inside the bee house at the Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade. Professor Nikola Kezić of Zagreb University, Croatia examines a frame watched by Dr Jamie Ellis, University of Florida, USA and (back to camera) Professor Jerzy Wilde of Olsztyn University, Poland. Photo: N Carreck

COLOSS in Serbia, 2011

The seventh major meeting of the international COLOSS (Prevention of Honey Bee COLony LOSSes) network was held at the Palace Hotel, Belgrade, Serbia from 26th - 28th August 2011.

This truly global network was set up in 2008, and currently consists of 270 bee scientists (56 of whom attended the conference) representing 55 countries, investigating all possible causes of honey bee colony losses worldwide. The network is funded through the COST Programme of the European Science Foundation as Action FA0803 and is also sponsored by the Ricola Foundation.

In October 2011 COLOSS was selected as an outstanding COST Action for an exhibition at the European Parliament which produced a publicity poster with the slogan:

“Who is saving the bees of Europe?”

The COLOSS meeting was very well organised and showed that huge progress is now being made in understanding the causes of colony losses. Various strands are coming to the point where the publication of outputs is possible. Several papers have already been published in the *Journal of Apicultural Research* and others are planned.

The meeting was opened by IBRA Council Member and COLOSS Action Chairman, Dr Peter Neumann (Swiss Bee

Research Centre, Agroscope Liebefeld-Posieux). The keynote invited speakers were IBRA Council Member Dr Jamie Ellis (University of Florida, USA) who spoke on “The COLOSS Beebook, a manual of honey bee research methods” and Dr Baldwyn Torto (ICIPE, Kenya) who spoke on “Colony Collapse Disorder: myth or reality in Africa”. IBRA Council members, Dr Fani Hatjina (Hellenic Institute of Apiculture, Greece) and Prof. Dirk de Graaf (Ghent University, Belgium) were also present and presented posters.

Scientists within the network are carrying out an ambitious experiment testing sixteen strains of honey bee at sixteen locations around Europe. At each site, the local strain of bee is being tested against two others under standardised conditions to see how each survives. Many beekeepers believe that imported bees are superior to local bees, whilst others argue that local bees are adapted to local conditions and are thus better able to fight pests, diseases and other factors. The results of this experiment will enable decisions to be based on the results of controlled trials rather than on mere opinion.

Thanks are due to Dr Mića Mladenović and Dr Ljubiša Stanisavljević of the University of Belgrade Faculty of Agriculture for their extremely efficient organisation. The Saturday afternoon of the conference featured a visit to the University’s Experimental Farm at Radmilovac, where, in addition to the beekeeping department, we were shown work on fish farming, fruit production and wine making, which was followed by a tasting session in the modern winery, which proved very popular.

Norman Carreck
IBRA Scientific Director



University of Belgrade bee van for migratory bee keeping. Photo: N Carreck