

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

# Bolton leads the fight to help protect bees

THE fight to save the honeybee has been taken up by local beekeeper, David Bolton.

A campaign, titled 'The Wild Bee Project' has been spearheaded by Bolton who is a member of the Fermanagh Beekeepers' Association as well as being its former chairman.

The aim of the Wild Bee Project is to gain a better understanding of the wild honeybee population and their place in the family of pollinators and to help explain how they are reacting to environmental pressures.

Bolton says the introduction of a parasite to Ireland has posed a serious threat to the native bee population but there are bees who have survived this and the Project aims to bolster their chances of doing so even more.

He said: "About 25 years ago a parasite called Varroa came to Ireland and it's a very pernicious parasite that drains the strength of the bees.

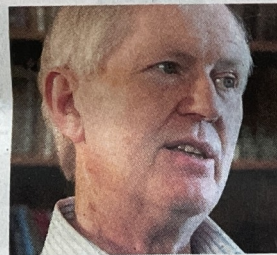
"One of the exciting things about our project is that we began to discover there are colonies which are surviving despite the threat from Varroa.

"The bees that occupy our boxes we hope will become the bearers of sustainable genes into the future.

"Another big concern is how bad climate change is going to get. Currently we're on a very worrying trajectory. The honeybee is a bit like the canary in



Bees have been under threat from a parasite introduced to Ireland 25 years ago called Varroa



**LIFE SAVER...** Fermanagh conservationist, David Bolton, is leading the charge to help save the honeybee.

the mine.

"For example, because the winters are becoming milder the queens are continuing to lay through the winter and that creates problems for the bees."

The Wild Bee Project has seen the Fermanagh Beekeepers Association erect 16 Wild Bee boxes and has been supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Bolton added: "The National Lottery funding created good links for us with other organisations, like our local men's shed and they made four of the boxes for us, which we're delighted

with.

"We also got funding to buy some of the sensors and equipment that allows us to tackle the data. And that's great because it makes the project so efficient for us.

"The interesting thing is that there's not a lot of this data around.

"We've had universities asking us for our data because it's quite unique."

Now retired, Bolton is thrilled by the surprising findings and is equally enthused to play such an important role in nature conservation.

"Since being a child, I've lived in the fields and the woodlands and was very interested in wildlife and the natural world," he continued.

"I had some great teachers at school who imbued a sense of respect, knowledge, and interest in nature.

"The other thing is I just love research, finding out how things work, why things work because by doing that we can learn, and progress can be made.

"I love just getting out into the woodlands where we have the bees, to be able to witness nature at its very best. It's wonderful."

National Lottery players raise more than £30million a week for good causes.

Find out how your numbers make amazing happen at: [www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk](http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk)