

Introducing children to beekeeping as a pathway to sustainable development

Lidija Senič

Slovenian Beekeepers Association, Public extension service on beekeeping,
 Brdo pri Lukovici 8, SI - 1225 Lukovica, Slovenia



Introduction

In Slovenia, we are aware of the important role bees play in the environment, and for decades we have been trying to pass this awareness on to young beekeepers. It is a process through which we aim, in the long run, to change the way of thinking towards sustainable development. It is crucial in this regard to create awareness and habits in the early stages of life.

Methods of work

Beekeepers visit children in kindergartens, and children visit us at the Slovenian Beekeeping Centre. Beekeepers and advisors of the Beekeepers' Advisory Service conduct lectures on bees and the importance of their conservation, bee products, etc. with workshops and science days in primary and secondary schools. Teachers conduct an elective subject in beekeeping in the third triad of primary schools. Also, with the help of beekeeping mentors and / or teachers, beekeeping clubs are conducted in primary and secondary schools in classrooms and educational apiaries. We help each other with a 40-hour curriculum for lower and higher levels. We organize school, regional and national competitions on beekeeping knowledge. We prepare motivation letters for the preparation of diploma, master's and doctoral theses for faculties and universities.



Figure 1: Different methods of work.



Figure 2: A song about a bee.

Projects

- Cooperation between the Beekeepers' Association of Slovenia and the Centre for School and Extracurricular Activities by implementing science days
- Cooperation of the Beekeepers' Association of Slovenia and local Beekeeping Societies with primary and secondary schools by implementing beekeeping circles
- Cooperation in the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast project in educational institutions with visits by beekeepers
- Painting beehive panels, performing plays on the theme of beekeeping, singing beekeeping songs, planting melliferous plants
- Setting up educational apiaries with hives and bee colonies in primary schools through sponsors



Figure 3: Painted beehive and other children's products.



Figure 4: An educational apiary.

Results

- Early formation of environmental awareness in children, which also indirectly affects parents
- Greater interest in beekeeping among the younger population
- Active participation of children in sustainable activities, such as beekeeping, planting melliferous plants, creating beehive extensions that are installed on beehive
- Increased interest in research tasks related to beekeeping, especially in the agricultural and economic fields, and further education in this field at primary, secondary and tertiary levels



Figure 5: Planting melliferous plants.

Photos: SBA Archives

Conclusion

Involving children in beekeeping through various methods and at different levels has proven to be an effective tool for raising awareness among children and the wider public about the importance of bees for the environment. Through such long-term and continuous efforts, we can contribute to the goals of sustainable development.

Lidija Senič

Slovenian Beekeepers Association, Public extension service on beekeeping, Brdo pri Lukovici 8, SI-1225 Lukovica, Slovenia

In Slovenia, we are aware of the important role bees play in the environment, and for decades we have been trying to pass this awareness on to young beekeepers. It is a process that aims to change the way we think about sustainable development in the long term. It is crucial in this regard to create awareness and habits in the early stages of life. Learning about beekeeping starts in kindergarten, when we tell children interesting facts about the bee colony and explain the important role of bees for our environment. The introduction to beekeeping continues in primary school, where we organise lectures with workshops or full-day science days for children, tailored to the age group and duration of the visit. At the same time, the Beekeeping Centre of Slovenia, in cooperation with the Centre for School and Outdoor Education, organises science days. Students who want to gain more theoretical knowledge and practical experience in beekeeping can join beekeeping clubs in some primary and secondary schools. These clubs are led by beekeeping mentors and follow a specific curriculum that entails 40 hours of lectures. At the end of the year, the participating students test their knowledge by taking part in local, regional or national competitions on beekeeping. In some primary schools, beekeeping is also taught as an elective subject in the final three years. Students are encouraged to write research papers and, at university level, to write their bachelor's, master's and doctoral theses on this subject. Throughout the year, we organise a number of promotional and educational projects involving children, which also focus on planting honey plants and preserving biodiversity, e.g. participation in the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast, beehive panel painting competitions, singing songs about bees and theatre plays about bees with the aim of creating a positive attitude towards preserving the environment and bees. All these activities are carried out throughout the year, as they have a greater impact in the long term than if they were focused on a short period of time.