

IS IT A BEE? IS IT A CAB? NO, IT'S BEECAB!

Beecab may not be a working taxi, but it is certainly causing a buzz! The Festival, a festival that celebrates the art of being an insect, will take place Friday 4 to Sunday 6 September at the Southbank Centre. A London taxi has been specially customised by artists and scientists for the unique festival, as the theme of this year's Festival is the collapse of bee colonies around the world. To raise awareness of the plight of bees, the iconic black cab has been transformed into a bumblebee in full flight, and even has a working beehive in the front seat.



British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) beekeeper and Beecab driver, Steve Benbow, said: "Bees and cabbies have more in common than you might think - the way bees navigate is very similar to the way cab drivers use the Knowledge to get round London. They both service the city, and with the Varroa mite wiping out wild colonies of bees, urban beekeeping is more important than ever. Bees are vital for the pollination of flowers and fruit in the capital, and beekeepers are the only way the population of honey bees can be maintained in London."

Beecab will be appearing around London until the end of the summer when it arrives at Festival 2009, where highlights will include: the Termite Pavilion, a six-metre cube on the South Bank showing the intricate design of a termite mound; artist in residence, renowned Japanese artist Noboru Tsubaki; a mobile brownfield site created by Bob and Roberta Smith to provide a safe haven for the capital's insects; and evening entertainment

from the likes of musician Robyn Hitchcock and comedian Robin Ince.

The Wellcome Trust, which recently launched a funding scheme for scientific research into the disappearance of bees and other pollinating insects, is supporting Festival. Dr Pat Goodwin, Head of Pathogens, Immunology and Population Health at the Wellcome Trust, said: "The decline in bees and other pollinators may devastate our environment and would almost certainly have a serious impact on our health and wellbeing. As well as funding research into the reasons

behind the decline in pollinators, the Wellcome Trust is delighted to be supporting Festival, which will engage everyone with the vital role insects play in maintaining our way of life."

Festival Founder and Director, Bridget Nicholls, said: "Insects are critical to human life on Earth. With over a million insect species, they are the most diverse group of animals on Earth. And yet insects are frequently misunderstood, reviled or ignored by the majority of the human population. Festival will challenge stereotypes about insects and give them their rightful place, for good and bad, in our collective cultural consciousness."

Valerie Singleton OBE, a member of the Festival Advisory Panel, said: "Since I moved to the country, I've really learnt to appreciate how many insects live along side us. I think Festival is a wonderful idea, especially now with our bees, those vital pollinators, in such peril. The timing couldn't be better!"

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