

Slovenia – a Small Country with a Rich Beekeeping Tradition



Standard-bearers of beekeeping societies in Slovenia

The Republic of Slovenia is situated in the heart of Europe at the midpoint of Mediterranean area, Alpine region and Pannonian flat. It is one of the smallest countries in Europe (its surface is just 20.273 km²). Most of Slovenia has a continental climate with cold winters and warm summers. Because of these good beekeeping conditions and other influences Slovenia has good beekeeping conditions and therefore a great beekeeping tradition.

The population is slightly less than two million and it is a country of many beekeepers. Slovenia has around 11.000 beekeepers and therefore more than five beekeepers per 1000 inhabitants, which means that the Slovenes are truly a nation of beekeepers. Slovenia has a long tradition of organized beekeeping. In 1873 the Carniolan Association for Prudent Beekeeping was established in Ljubljana, which represents the beginning of the organisation of the Slovenian beekeepers.



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Organized Beekeeping in Slovenia



The seat of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association

Today the beekeeping organisation is known as the Slovenian Beekeeper's Association.

It includes 206 beekeeping societies and 15 regional beekeeping associations, with a total of about 8.000 beekeepers. Its main tasks include the education and training of beekeepers in the framework of lifelong learning, publishing the Slovenian Beekeeper monthly and various technical books, the preparation of exhibitions, discussions and symposiums, the organisation of school clubs, beekeeping camps and workshops, raising the public awareness about the importance of bees in the preservation of the environment, the promotion of

bee products in healthy nutrition and other projects related to and beekeeping.

The Slovenian Beekeepers' Association has been in operation since 2002 on its premises in the building at the Brdo pri Lukovici, the building is the property of Slovenian beekeepers – members of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association. The so-called Slovenian Beekeeping Centre has three conference rooms, five offices, laboratory for analysis of honey, beekeeping library, shop facilities with beekeeping equipment and inn with accommodation, which the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association has leased out.



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Cultural Heritage of Beekeeping in Slovenia



The traditional Slovenian back-loaded hive bee-house and Slovenian beekeepers' traditional attire

Slovenia has a 150-year-old national beekeepers' association, the prominent 125-year-old technical magazine Slovenian Beekeeper (Slovenski čebelar), more than almost 180 beekeeping banners, beekeeping formalwear, a hymn and much more. Thanks to its cultural heritage, beekeeping is still a very valuable part of the agricultural life of Slovenia. The present situation in the Slovene beekeeping sector is characteristic for its massive use of back-loaded hive bee-houses enriching the land-

scape, its mode of bee transportation, cultural heritage, and for the good organisation of beekeepers in the beekeeping associations.

Slovenian beekeepers, who are mostly united in the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, are proud to continue and to preserve the tradition of their ancestors. They take special care in the conservation of the autochthonous Carniolan bee, the protection of its life habitat and the production of the finest bee products.



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Anton Janša - The Father of Modern Beekeeping

Beekeeping in Slovenia is a traditional agricultural activity. In general, it is correct to say that Slovenes had a very important role, or perhaps even a decisive role, in the beginnings of the teaching of beekeeping in Europe.

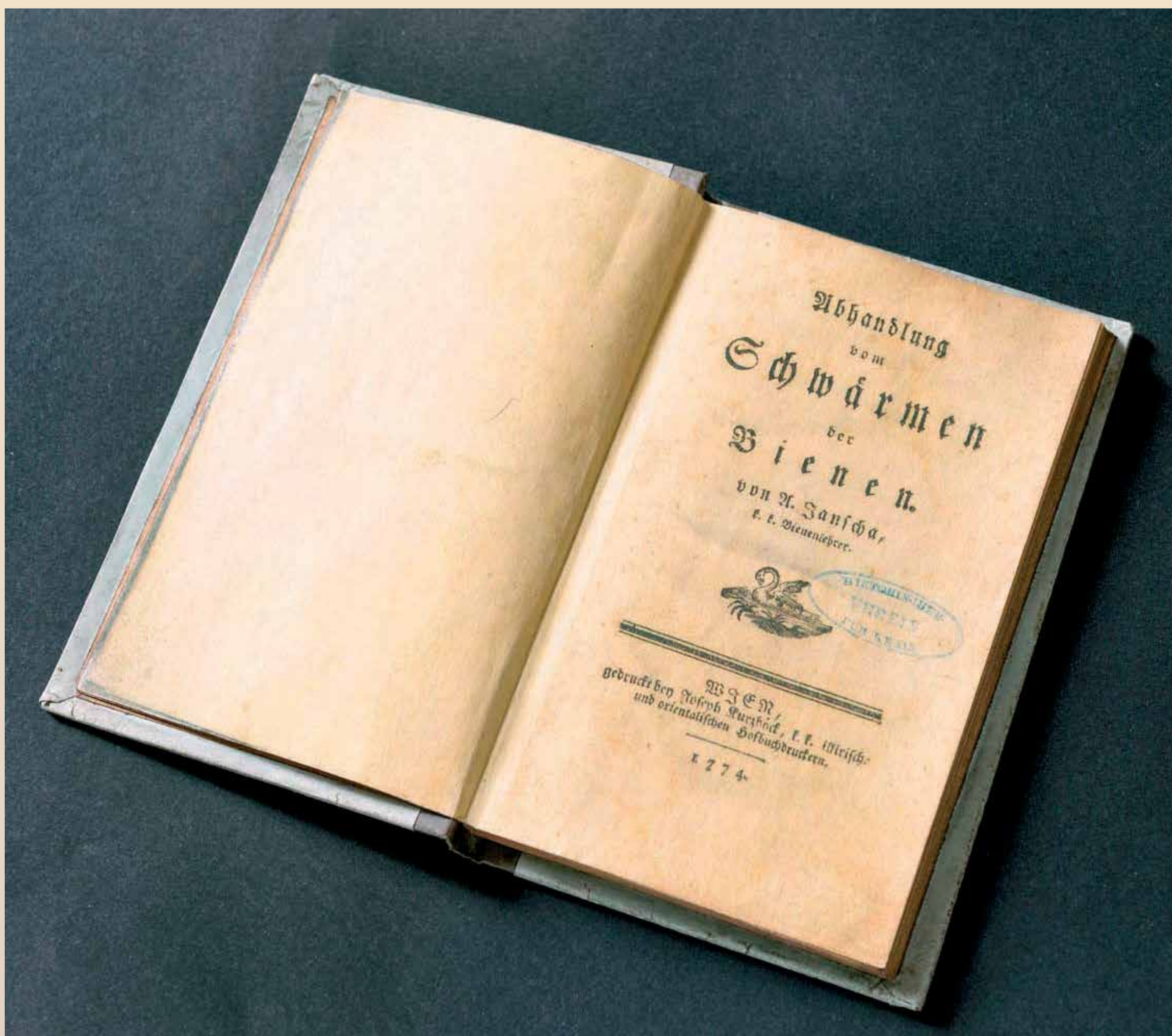
Slovene apiculture had many capable beekeepers in the 18th Century, among which Anton Janša (1734-1773) is known world-wide, as World Bee Day is celebrated on his birthday, the 20th of May.

Anton Janša was a student of painting in the capital of the Habsburg monarchy, Vienna, where he was employed as a beekeeper with the Lower Austria Society in 1769. On 6th of April 1770, Empress Maria Theresa chose him to be the first imperial teacher of beekeeping. He taught at the first public imperial beekeeping school, opened in May 1770 in Augarten, Vienna. His beekeeping methods, based



An image and a bust of Anton Janša

on the knowledge and experience of Carniolan beekeepers, garnered much attention and imitation due to the great amount of honey and wax produced, partly because of the bees being led to buckwheat pasture. Kratzer (1774) named his method "the new Austrian method of beekeeping". In her instructions to beekeeping teachers from 1775, Maria Theresa ordered that only the tried and tested methods used by the first teacher Janša are to be taught in public beekeeping schools. A great commendation to Carniolan apiculture and the first imperial beekeeping teacher Anton Janša. In addition to this, Janša also wrote two works on beekeeping, or better, two manuals: *Abhandlung vom Schwärmen der Bienen* (Discussion of the swarming of the bees) – Janša (1771) and *Vollständige Lehre von der Bienenzucht* (The Complete Guide to beekeeping) – Janša (1775, published two years after his death). These were reprinted several times and translated into Slovene and other languages. With his work as a teacher in the capital of a European multi-ethnic empire and with his publications he left an important footprint in the history of modern beekeeping, both nationally and internationally.



Anton Janša's publication, Discussion of the swarming of the bees



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The Carniolan Bee



Carniolan honeybee on the flower of a plant in the Astarceae family

The Carniolan honeybee (*Apis mellifera carnica*) is a subspecies of the western honeybee (*Apis mellifera*). It is autochthonous over a wide area of Central Europe: in the entire territory of Slovenia, in a small part of northern Italy, in the eastern part of the Carnian Alps, in a considerable part of Austria (Carinthia, Styria, Lower Austria, the Province of Burgenland), in most of Hungary, one part of Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. Slovene beekeepers also fondly call it the “grizzly” because of the bright grey hair along the edges of its abdomen. Its basic characteristics include an excellent sense of orientation, diligence, and gentleness. In terms of these features, it is superior to all other races of bees.

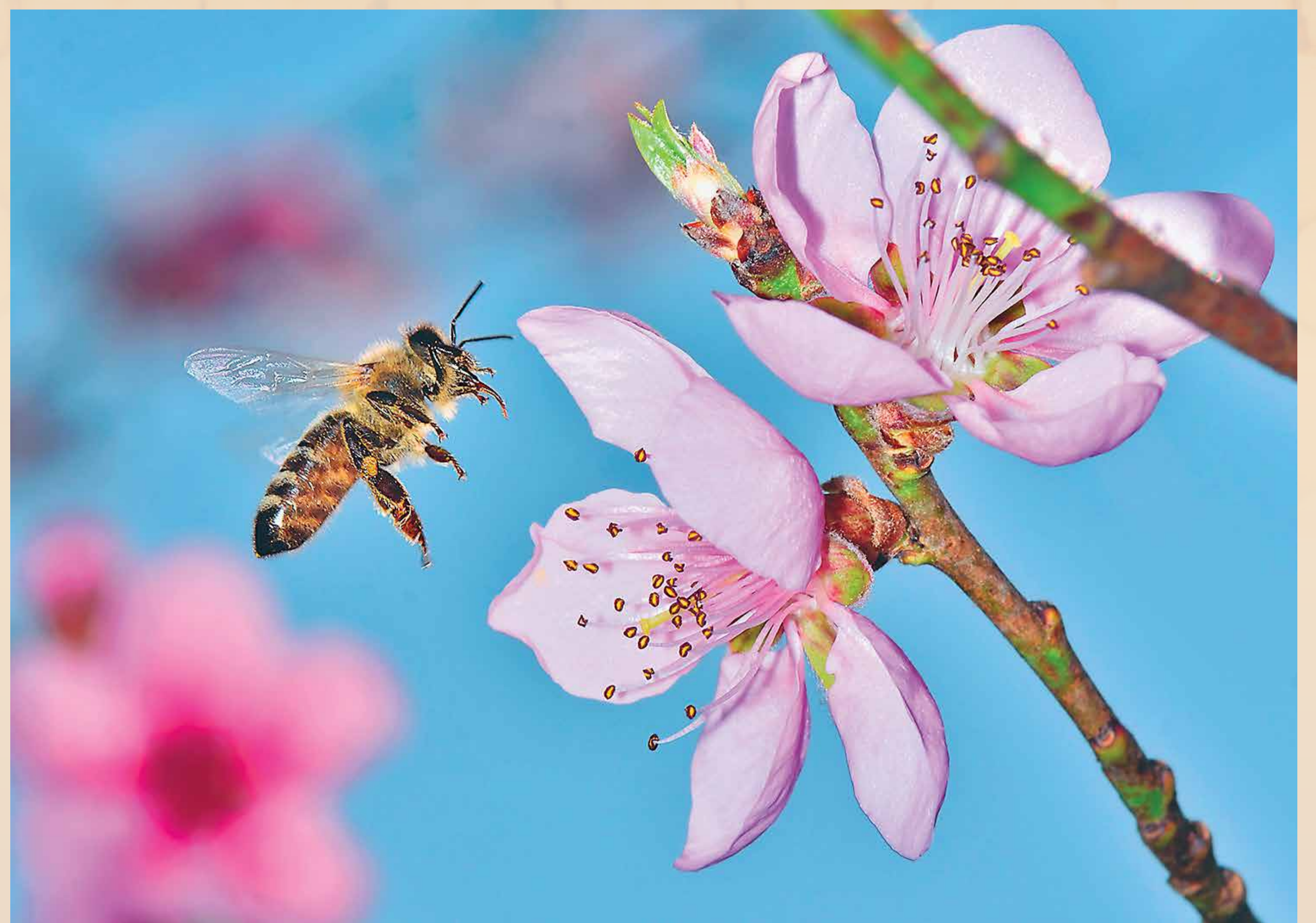
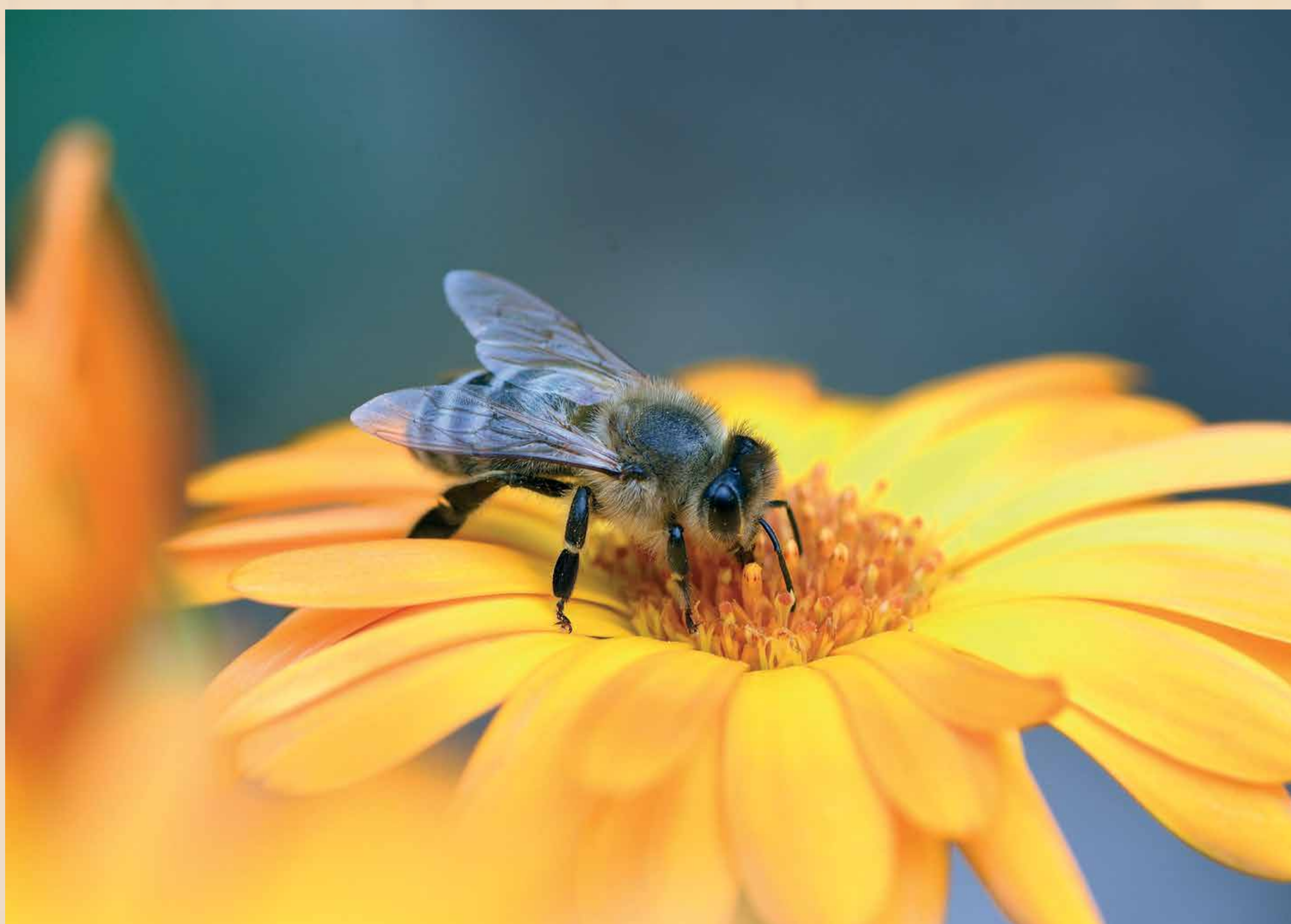
The Carniolian bee spends its winters in a small cluster with a relatively modest food supply, but its development in spring is abrupt, and colonies sometimes reach their peak as early as May. Such a rapid build-up often takes beekeepers by surprise, and if they do not provide their bees with enough space for storing honey, the swarming may soon begin. The inclination towards swarming is not a desired quality in the bees of large, commercially oriented beekeepers. By appropriate selection and breeding, experts at the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia in Ljubljana are determined to select bee colonies which are less inclined to swarm and are thus acceptable for more demanding bee buyers around the world.



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International Expansion of Carniolan Honeybee



In 1857 Emil Ravenegg Rotschutz (1836-1909) sent bee colonies from Višnja gora, Carniolan province, to Eichstadt, Germany. The experiences of German beekeepers with bees from Carniolan province were so good that they demanded more and more of these bee colonies. News of the gentle character of the grey bee soon spread to other nations.

Between the period from 1857 and the end of World War I, it is documented that specialised Slovene mer-

chants exported at least 170.000 swarms; according to some estimates the number is even as high as 500.000. In many places they completely superseded the native dark bee. Today, their work is being continued by honeybee queen breeders, who sell approximately 40.000 queens, mostly to the countries of Central and Western Europe, with exports increasing annually.

Today the Carniolan honeybee is the second most common honeybee subspecies in the world.



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Beekeeping Clubs in Slovenia



Slovenia has centuries-old beekeeping tradition. Many beekeepers help with passing their beekeeping knowledge to the younger generation. Beekeeping clubs are one of the methods of intergenerational knowledge transfer. In Slovenia, they have existed at elementary and high schools and at certain beekeeping societies for more than five decades. In 2023, there are almost 170 active beekeeping clubs in Slovenia and there are more than 2.500 children participating in them.

Beekeeping clubs are volunteer based; in the last decade, they are coordinated by the Public Extension Service on Beekeeping of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, and they receive teaching aids and mate-

rials. The basis for uniform functioning is the 40-hour curriculum with the textbook and workbook. Work takes place in classrooms in the form of teaching or practical work and observing at an apiary etc. The main purpose of beekeeping clubs is raising children's awareness of the importance of beekeeping and the ecosystem role of bees. They help children gain a positive attitude towards the environment and bee preservation while getting familiar with hive products and their benefits. Through familiarizing themselves with beekeeping practice, some children start keeping bees in their school years while for others the memories of the magic of bees bring them to beekeeping in adulthood.



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Beekeeping in Slovenia, a Way of Life



The whole community is characterized by its love and respect for bees; in addition, the centuries-old beekeeping tradition also inspires modern expressions and practices. Knowledge and skills are passed down from generation to generation; at the same time, the bees are the beekeeper's teachers and friends, as well as a symbol of everything good, smart, and frugal. Bees help beekeepers to expand their spiritual horizons and constantly explore new worlds; in addition, they also inspire their artistic expression. The direct consequence of beekeeping is a rich terminological, professional, literary and folklore heritage (printed works from the 18th century onwards that have taken the rich beekeeping knowledge into the world and among the people, as well as storytelling, poetry, proverbs and sayings), fine arts (typical painted beehive panels of "kranjčiči", formerly used hives, bearing various religious or secular motifs), and architecture (typical apiaries).

In Slovenia, beekeeping is a way of life for numerous individuals, families and communities who use their knowledge, practices, and skills to care for honeybees. In doing so, they directly acquire bee products (honey, wax, pollen, royal jelly, propolis, bee venom, aerosol) which are then used for food and to alleviate health issues. Indirectly, they enable bees to pollinate plants which are a source of food for humans and animals alike. By breeding bees, a beekeeper contributes to the maintenance of ecological balance and biodiversity. Beekeeping is only carried out using an indigenous subspecies of the honeybee - the Carniolan bee. Beekeepers have around 200,000 bee families; through controlled breeding of queen bees, they take responsibility for maintaining its valued characteristics - non-aggressiveness, profitability, excellent orientation, food austerity and resistance to weather conditions. Beekeepers mostly keep their bees in beehives in the vicinity of their homes. To make the best use of bee pasture, they also transport them to other locations. Beekeeping is predominantly carried out in wooden AZ hives manufactured in Slovenia, stacked to form apiaries.

'Beekeeping in Slovenia, a Way of Life' has been listed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

As a result, in Rabat, the capital of Morocco, where the 17th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was taking place, the 'Beekeeping in Slovenia, a way of life' has been listed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

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Bee Forage Planting Day



Slovenian beekeepers are aware of the importance of clean and healthy natural environment, as even the smallest changes in the ecosystem can quickly affect it, which is felt first by honeybees and other pollinators. Because of this, the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association has decided to take initiative for lowering negative environmental impacts due to greenhouse gas emissions, and helping pollinators, by planting new bee forage plants and trees. The Beekeepers' Association of Slovenia has been encouraging the planting of honey trees and plants, among other projects also with a joint project with Slovenian municipalities. Many of them have supported the suggestion to gift the new parents honey trees on the birth of their child. Additionally, the Beekeepers' Association of Slovenia has suggested that municipalities do not mow public meadows and grass until the flowers have finished blooming, with good results. We want our future generations to be able to enjoy

the beauty of nature, which is the reason behind our initiative, Bee Forage Planting Day.

We realize that such a project needs, besides strong will and a wish for change, the support of society, as well as the expertise of researchers and experts from the forestry field. Slovenian Forest Service was quick to generously provide its experts who are ensuring that the right trees are being planted in the right environment, as well as providing the expert instructions for planting and care the selected honey trees. In addition to honey trees, we are including other forage plants for pollinators, which is why we are happy that many Slovenians participate in mentioned endeavour. We are also inviting many other organisations to actively participate in our project, among them all Slovenian non-governmental organisations, local communities and municipalities and first and foremost all Slovenian citizens, as each and every one of us can participate by planting a bee forage plant or tree.



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Slovenian Initiative for the World to Join with Planting Bee Forage Plants



Bee Forage Planting Day is the first defined tree planting project in EU that is officially contributing to the EU project »3 billion trees by 2030« and will also contribute to the planned greenhouse gas emission sinks in EU, which will help achieve European climate neutrality. One of the main goals of our project is also to increase bee forage resources in Slovenia, which will help many pollinators as well as honeybees in the future, when their survival will be increasingly more difficult due to climate change. By planting bee forage plants we will also help to ensure food stability, since around 70 % of all grown food in the world depends on insect pollination. On the Bee Forage Planting Day, Slovenian beekeepers and other interested individuals are planting bee forage plants in bigger and smaller areas: in Slovenian forests, in gardens, in containers on balconies, as well as on public surfaces such as parks and elsewhere. With this noble activity, we will take care of our honeybees and other pollinators together and ensure new food sources for their development by planting honey trees and other honey plants.



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The Goal in Slovenia is to Plant 2 Million Bee Forage Plants by 2030

We have already carried out two successful Bee Forage Planting Days, one on the 25th of March 2022 when we planted over 200.000 forage plants and the second one on the 25th of March 2023. We have received many letters of support and pleas to participate in Bee Forage Planting Days from many individuals and institutions from all over the world, including Germany, Croatia, Chile, China, Ghana, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, to name just a few. We hope that even more people and institutions will join us with planting forage plants for pollinators in their own countries to negate environmental impacts of deforestation and provide food for pollinators.



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Golden Bee Award



The Golden Bee Award sculpture symbolises the life of bees

Golden Bee Award is the highest award of the Republic of Slovenia for outstanding achievements in the protection of bees and the recognition of the role of bees and other pollinators in ensuring food security, sustainable agriculture, nature conservation, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. Individuals or institutions from all over the world can apply. Golden Bee Award is presented once a year, generally on 20 May, on the World Bee Day. A seven-member committee selects the award winner.

Nominees for the award are selected through an open call for the Golden Bee Award, which is published each year by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. The open call defines the areas, con-

ditions, and criteria to be met by the nominees. Each year, the award is given to the best project in one of the three fields, which succeed each other every three years:

- the promotion of bees and other pollinators,
- the conservation of bees and other pollinators,
- research on bees and other pollinators.

So far two Golden Bee Awards have already been awarded. In the year 2021 the first Golden Bee Award was awarded to Professor Lucas Alejandro Garibaldi from Argentina. The second award was awarded in 2022 to Boštjan Noč, the president of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association.



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World Bee Day



Flag of the World Bee Day

On the 20th of May, people all over the world celebrate the World Bee Day, which was declared by the United Nations in 2017, on the initiative of the Republic of Slovenia. This marked the end of a long process that began in 2014 with the starting initiative of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association and its president Boštjan Noč, and is still one of the greatest Slovenian diplomatic achievements. The first celebration of World Bee Day



*Slovenia World Bee Day
2 euro coin*

was organised in 2018 in Žirovnica in Upper Carniola, Republic of Slovenia, where Anton Janša, one of the fathers of modern beekeeping, was born on 20th of May 1734. For his important contributions to theoretical understanding of the biology of bees and improving regional and international beekeeping practices, his birthday was chosen as the most suitable date for the celebration of the World Bee Day,



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The Purpose of the World Bee Day



Pollinators pollinate around 70 % of plants which we use as our food sources

Since its proclamation, the World Bee Day has been celebrated by many organisations and associations around the world. Some of the activities related to the celebration of World Bee Day are coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food in cooperation with the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, which has set up a website www.worldbee-day.org to provide useful information related to the celebration.

Internationally, the celebration of the World Bee Day is promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organisa-

tion based in Rome, in cooperation with the international beekeeping organisation APIMONDIA. The main purpose of the World Bee Day is not to celebrate, but rather to raise awareness among the public that:

1. Bees and other pollinators are extremely important!
2. Bees are under threat in many areas!
3. What we as a community and as individuals need to do in the future to negate negative effects on bees!



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Activities to Improve Well-being of Bees



- Planting native nectar source plants (a list of plants is available on the website Slovenian Beekeepers' Association)
 - Sow, plant nectar source plants for ornamental purposes (on balconies and other outdoor areas).
 - Maintaining meadows with greater diversity of plants.
 - Sowing meadows with honeydew-bearing plants.
 - Mowing flowering plants after flowering.
 - Purchase honey and other bee products from the nearest beekeepers.
 - Ceding a suitable agricultural site for the temporary or permanent housing of bees.
 - Reduced use of pesticides harmful to bees.
 - Mulching flowering plants in orchards and vineyards before spraying pesticides.
- We should also keep in mind that by helping bees we are also helping other organisms and, ultimately, humans. Bees need almost the same living conditions as humans to thrive and live. Clean air, water and a healthy, pollution-free environment. And such an environment is also healthier for human life.



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Traditional Slovenian Breakfast



The breakfast consists of bread, butter, honey, milk and apples, or other fresh or dry fruit of Slovenian origin.

Slovenia was the initiator of the European Honey Breakfast in 2014, an idea that was born out of a practice started by the Slovenian Beekeeping Association in the Republic of Slovenia in 2006, which brought together beekeeping associations and schools in the implementation of the Honey for Breakfast project in kindergartens and primary schools, known as the “Honey Breakfast” for short. The project, which took place on the third Friday of November each year, was soon extended to secondary schools and day-care centres. In 2011, on the initiative of the Slovenian Beekeepers’ Association, the Honey Breakfast became the “Traditional Slovenian Breakfast” and was adopted at national level.

While the project originally included honey as the main food, in 2011 the range was expanded to include bread, milk, butter and apples, all produced in Slovenia. The aim of the project is to educate children, young people and the general public about the importance of breakfast, the importance of beekeeping and agriculture, and thus the importance and benefits of locally produced food. The traditional breakfast on the day of the event has been extended beyond the school system to businesses, public and private institutions, etc. On the day of the event, various side activities are held in schools with the aim of increasing awareness on the importance of healthy eating, beekeeping, agriculture and food safety.



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European Honey Breakfast



For Slovenia it is extremely important to educate its youths on the importance of bees and other pollinators in food production

Given that Slovenian Honey Breakfast project is one of the most adored projects in Slovenia, we wanted to take this practice beyond Slovenia's borders. Although the European Honey Breakfast was not adopted at declaratory level in European Parliament, as the proposal did not receive enough signatures from MEPs in 2016, it has become a movement. In 2015, we received the first responses from foreign beekeeping organisations participating in the European Honey Breakfast, and each year more supporters have come forward. The activities of the European Honey Breakfast have spread to different countries around the world, including outside the EU, thanks to Slovenian embassies around the world organising the breakfast and accompanying events at their embassies.

Stakeholders in Slovenia are keen to build on the knowledge of traditional dishes and promote the consumption of locally produced food in the future. On the occasion of last year's Traditional Slovenian Breakfast and Slovenian Food Day, 11 representatives of organisations in the field of agriculture and nutrition, on the proposal of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, proposed to the

Government of the Republic of Slovenia that the Slovenian Food Day be transformed into a Slovenian Food Week, to be held every third week in November, culminating in the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast on Friday. The aim of the Slovenian Food Week is to ensure that during this week, not only in educational institutions, but in all public institutions across Slovenia, locally produced food or dishes are consumed. The activities of the Slovenian Food Week are intended to encourage the consumption of locally produced food and the knowledge of traditional Slovenian dishes, to promote a healthy eating style and, last but not least, to improve the promotion of Slovenian producers' produce and foodstuffs.

Every year, we encourage and want people around the world to join us in enjoying a honey breakfast or a breakfast that includes honey, reminding them of the importance of bees and other pollinators in food production. By having a honey breakfast together, we are highlighting the importance of preserving nature and the environment and the importance of bees, which are essential for a better world, a world without hunger!



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Bees Know no Borders



Bees Know No Borders is an exhibition about the importance of international cooperation of beekeepers and non-beekeepers in the European Union and around the world to achieve common goals that concern beekeepers and humanity. Some of the key issues that beekeepers and non-beekeepers from across the globe face on a daily basis, which can be addressed only with an international cooperation are:

1. The environmental crisis,
2. Food shortages for pollinators,
3. Food security and
4. Protecting customers and beekeepers from impacts of counterfeit honey.

The exhibition starts with a short presentation of the institutions, the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, and the Croatian Beekeepers' Association, that have been involved in the creation of the exhibition. The main part of the exhibition consists of international beekeeping projects that are working to tackle the presented problems: the World Bee Day, Day of planting Bee Forage Plants, as well as efforts to promote the European Honey Breakfast, which, for instance, aims to raise awareness on problems of food production. All these projects bring together beekeepers and supporters of bees and beekeeping of different nationalities, as demonstrated by the numerous letters of support and active participation in the presented projects from people all over the world.



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Protecting the consumer through quality control



Slovenian beekeepers produce quality bee products, which are a reflection of their careful work with bees, tradition and extensive knowledge of beekeeping. The quality of honey produced in Slovenia is confirmed by three groups of honeys certified under European quality schemes: Slovenian honey with protected geographical indication, Kočevje forest honey with protected designation of origin and Kraški honey with protected designation of origin. Honey from quality schemes allows consumers to buy honey that has a known origin, meets controlled quality standards, ensures traceability and protects them from buying honey of inferior quality or false origin.

Most Slovenian beekeepers dispense honey into special jars for honey of Slovenian origin, the origin and

quality parameters of which are monitored by the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association in accordance with the rules. The jar guarantees the Slovenian origin and, with its special shape symbolising a drop of honey, allows the consumer to distinguish at a glance between honey of Slovenian origin and other, mostly imported, honey on the market. In addition to honey, beekeepers in Slovenia produce pollen, propolis, royal jelly, wax and a wide range of products made from bee products, such as creamed honey, mixtures of honey with pollen, fruit, nuts, honey vinegar, honey liqueur, honey brandy, mead and honey beer. We are proud of our Slovenian speciality - sparkling mead, which is made by honey drink makers using the champagne method from different types of honey.



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Tools for spreading awareness on pollinators and bee products

The Slovenian Beekeepers' Association recognises that raising people's awareness of the importance of bees and beekeepers in protecting the environment and pollinating plants that are crucial for animal and human nutrition is important for achieving the goals of achieving food security for people.

To raise public awareness, the Slovenian Beekeeping Federation has developed some tools for promotion of its ideas:

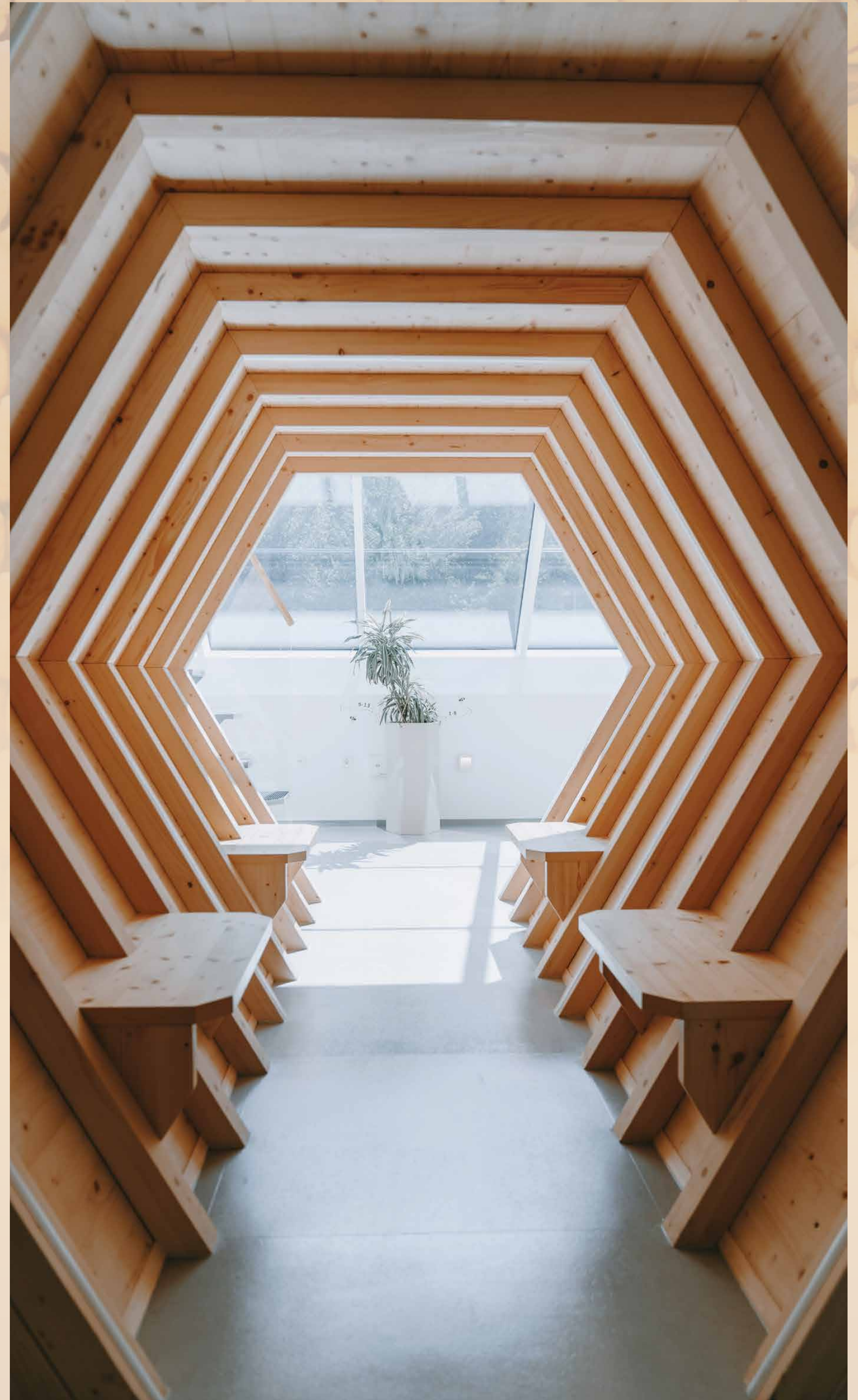
- The 3D-Carniolan in 1:100 ratio, a unique educational and promotional tool, which contains moving parts and nine educational animations. The 3D-Carniolan has already flown to Istanbul and Dubai, for promoting beekeeping and care for pollinators in the region.
- Honey story pavilion, a transportable apiary for education, presentation and promotion of Slovenian beekeeping and honey products. At a time of a high quantities of counterfeit honey on the world and European markets, it is important to promote and protect local beekeepers who sell their genuine honey on national and European markets, and to spread awareness to European consumers about the presence of counterfeit honey on European markets.
- An anatomical model of a 30 cm worker bee, designed to educate beekeepers and the public about the biology of the honeybee. Ensuring the survival of bees is only possible with a good knowledge of bee biology!



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The Carniolan Bee House



A most special house, called the Carniolan Bee House, has opened its doors in Višnja Gora. With it, Slovenia wants to revive the unique beekeeping story of one of Slovenia's most important beekeeping families, the Rothschütz, which is responsible for the present-day spread and visibility of the Carniolan bee in the world. The Carniolan bee is an *apis mellifera* subspecies which is the second most common honeybee subspecies in beekeeping. Members of the Rothschütz family introduced the Carniolan bee to the world more than 150 years ago. Today, they tell the story of beekeeping, the interesting biology of the Carniolan bee, and, above all, they teach visitors from Slovenia and abroad about the important impact bees have on the environment and on people. The Carniolan Bee House is home to the Tourist Infor-

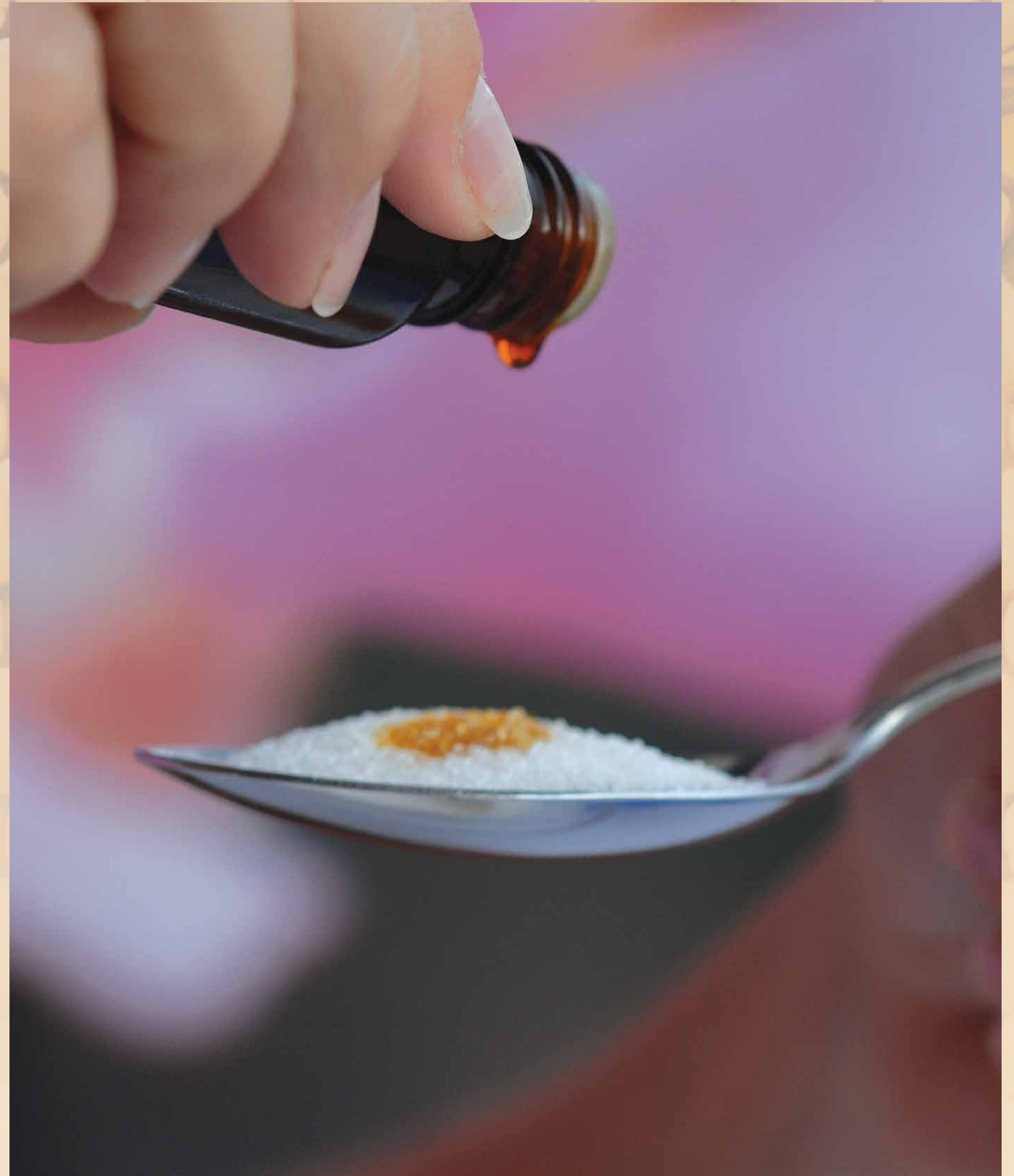
mation Centre, where guests can learn all about what the house and the surrounding area have to offer. The café with a summer garden is a space with a selected range of honey products and products from local suppliers.

The ApiLab Centre of Innovative Technologies is dedicated to improving the competencies of small and medium-sized companies and provides various training courses.

The centrepiece of the Carniolan Bee House is the Carniolan Bee Exhibition, which is arranged circularly in four rooms and teaches visitors about the bee; it also features a live beehive.

The Carniolan Bee House brings together bees, people, and beekeepers under one roof.

Apitherapy



Apitherapy is an alternative therapy that uses bee products for medicinal purposes. It is one of the older methods of supportive healing.

The father of modern apitherapy is Filip Terč. He was of Czech origin, and his medical professorship was in Maribor, Slovenia, where he practiced medicine and beekeeping. On the anniversary of his birth, the 30th of March World Apitherapy Day is celebrated on 30 March. In the context of apitherapy, he tried to cure rheumatic diseases using bee venom.

Slovenia runs a training programme for the national vocational qualification of apitherapist. To obtain the certificate, a catalogue of skills and competences is drawn up. The certificate enables the profession to be practised.

Bee products are used for nutritional and cosmetic purposes according to the principles of apither-

apy. Other types of therapy are also known, such as inhalation of hive air, honey massage using bee venom, etc.

Honey massage is part of the apitherapy treatment. It is carried out exclusively in the back area from the seventh vertebra to the highest point of the buttocks. The massage is beneficial for detoxifying the body.

Inhalation of hive air is another method of apitherapy in which a person blows air from the hive into a chamber or through a spout. The therapy is particularly beneficial for the respiratory tract and for strengthening the immune system in general.

An apitherapy centre is being built in the Maribor area, which is planned to be the largest facility of its kind in this part of Europe. The facility will host various apitherapy-related activities and a honey plant nursery will be set up next to the facility.



Slovenian Beekeepers' Association

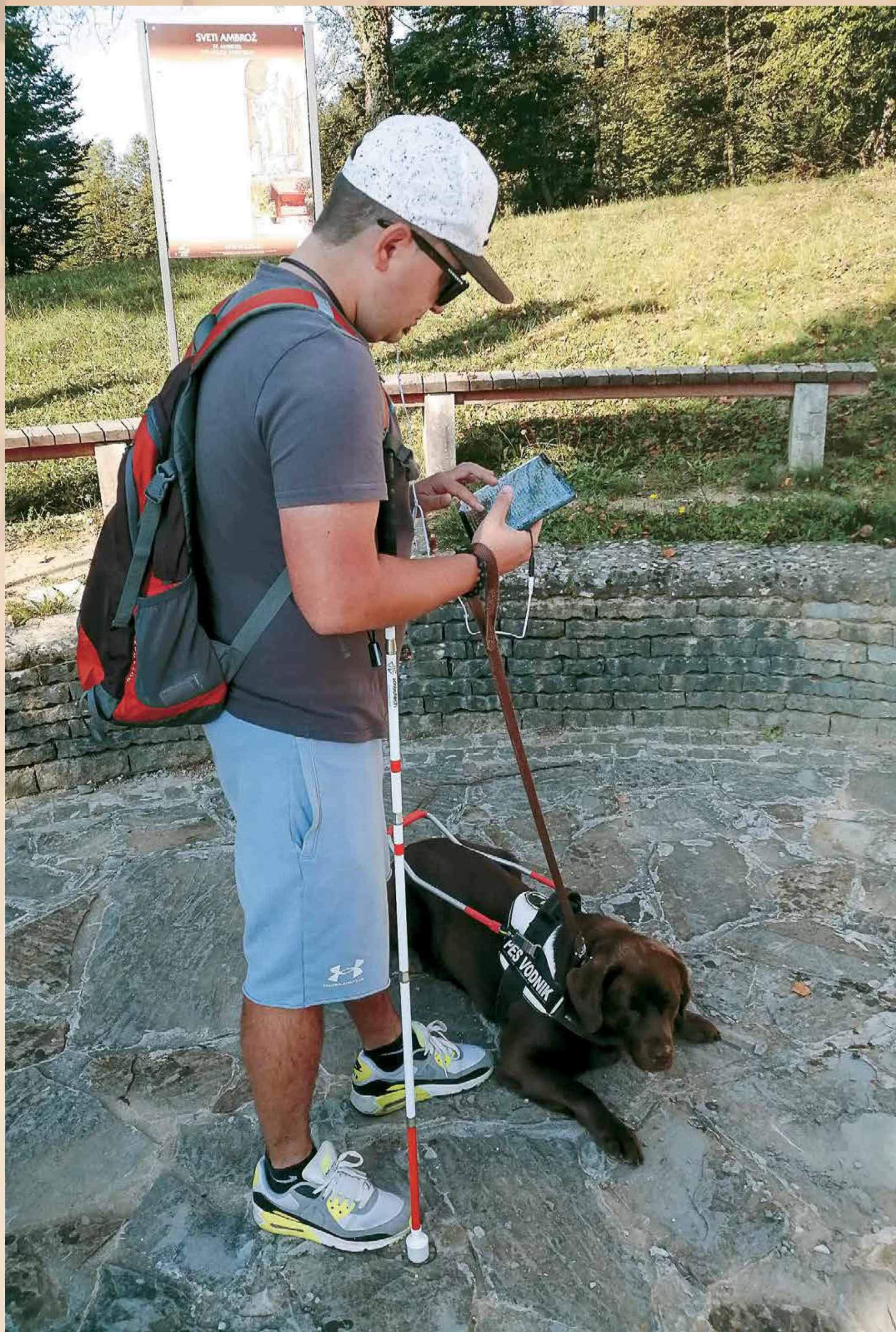
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Wheelchair accessible learning apiary and learning trail for the visually impaired



Slovenia was the first country in the world to build two apiaries that allow people with reduced mobility to work independently. We have built apiaries in Črnomelj and Murska Sobota that are fully adapted for the physically handicapped. To protect the beekeepers from the sun, wind or sudden rain, we placed the hives in a special apiary. The apiary houses eight slovenian AŽ-hives. Beekeepers with physical disabilities do not have to lift heavy hives, only honeycombs, which weight a maximum of 3 kg. To make it possible to work with them in a wheelchair, the hives were placed in a horizontal row. They are raised 80 centimetres off the ground, which makes it possible to work in a sitting position.

Beekeeping and all the accompanying activities have a positive impact on the development of the users' psychophysical abilities, on the strengthening of self-esteem, well-being, the development of creativity, the discovery of new contents, active leisure time, and most importantly, in this way, people with developmental disabilities also become active members of our society in this area.

In addition to the beehives for beekeeping for the visually impaired, we have also created an innovative beekeeping learning trail on beekeeping in Slovenia for the blind and visually impaired, using electronic tablets to guide the blind and visually impaired along the educational trail.



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Breeding Programme for *Apis Mellifera Carnica*



In 1879, German biologist August Pollmann described and named the bees he obtained from Carniola as the subspecies *Apis mellifera carnica*. Technical improvements, the modernisation of beekeeping and breeding in the second half of the 19th century and into the 20th century further consolidated the reputation of the Carniola bee in the European area. In addition to the knowledge and description of the biological characteristics of the honeybee, important economic progress was also made during this period. In 1866, Emil Ravenegg Rotschütz, an immigrant German, set up a shop to sell bees in Ivančna Gorica (Slovenia). This created the right conditions for a very important part of beekeeping, namely 'keeping bees for sale'. Fast forward to 2004, the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association was granted the status of the Recognised Breeding Organisation in beekeeping. In Slovenia, beekeeping is only allowed with

the bee *Apis mellifera carnica*, a subspecies of the honeybee *Apis mellifera*.

Breeding objectives for the Carniolan honeybee:

- To maintain the purity of the Carniolan bee,
- to maintain variability in the population,
- to improve the calmness of the bees,
- reduce swarming,
- increase the fecundity of bee colonies,
- to enhance the bees' productive qualities (honey yield),
- increase the bees' resistance to diseases.

Actions envisaged to achieve the breeding objectives:

- basic culling (this is carried out in all apiaries),
- breeding work (organised in the framework of approved queen rearing centres); and
- breeding of brood queens.



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Apitourism



Slovenia is the first and currently the only country in the world to have organised certification of bee tourism providers and to award certificates of excellence. The certificate offers a competitive advantage in the market and to some extent tells visitors what kind of offer they can expect. Bee tourism or apiculture is a relatively new form of tourism product offering and an innovative approach to sustainable tourism. In Slovenia, apiculture tourism is developing rapidly, with the offer of each bee tourism provider becoming increasingly rich and diverse.

There are currently around 45 bee tourism providers operating in the country, offering a variety of activities:

- bee products and products and bee tasting,
- beekeeping tours,

- a visit to a beekeeping heritage museum,
- lectures on bees, beekeeping and bee products,
- beeswax workshops,
- demonstrations on making and decorating lecto,
- apitherapy,
- a walk along the beekeeping trail,
- honey drinks and honey cakes,
- a tour of the honey plantations and the nurseries,
- a demonstration on the production of honeycomb,
- accommodation on offer (also specially adapted for the beekeeping experience),
- training opportunities,
- cosmetics and gift programme.



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Donations of Slovenian apiaries around the world



Foto: MKGP

Slovenia has donated over 30 Slovenian beehouses, otherwise also called apiaries, to different institutions at home and abroad. To count just a few Slovenia has donated an apiary to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, to the Slovenian Ambassador in Prague, Tanja Strniša, for her contribution to the

promotion and development of Slovenian beekeeping, and a Slovenian beehive also adorns the United Nations Headquarters in New York. A Slovenian beehouse with painted beehive panels was also presented to King Harald V of Norway, and to His Holiness Pope Francis in Rome.



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