

# Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

Volume 29

Number 7

July 2008

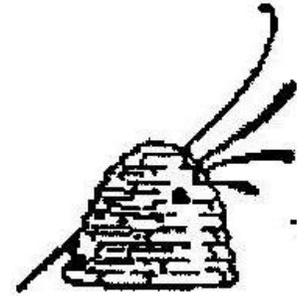
## Beekeeping Events in the Area

The annual **NPBA** picnic was well attended despite the record breaking heat and humidity. It was one of those 'ugly' hot days when sweat poured down the back just sitting around. Despite all that we had twenty something people attend, including a record number of children. In true beekeeper eating style, the spread on the food table was copious and varied. The gamut of foods made with and without honey included meats on the grill, salads, sides, drinks, and desserts. The crowning glory of the food table had to be the bee hive cake sporting cascading sugar icing and a colorful bee on a wire hovering alongside. This masterpiece was baked by our own VP, **Bob Duxbury**. Not one crumb was uneaten!



One of the newer **NPBA** members, **John Kulick**, did a brisk business selling the new **NPBA t-shirts** for \$10.00/each in a wonderful variety of colors. We will try to have some for sale at the next club meeting in September and at the booth at the Orange County Fair July 24-27. The Chinese Auction was a great success, with 40+ things to bid on. Bee suppliers

and club members alike donated items, little and large. **Kelley Bee** donated a very nice pair of leather & canvas gloves; **Rossman**, a gift certificate for a hive body; **Mother Lode** several division board feeders; **Dadant** a plastic helmet, bee books and hive tool; **Glory Bee** several hive tools; and **Mann Lake** a jacket with attached veil. **Ann Harman** raided her personal larder, as did other club members. (We want to know Ann, just how many closets of bee "stuff" do you really have in your home?) We raised \$207.00 for the club kitty, thanks to the generosity of all. The ultimate prize was a handmade bee theme quilt handcrafted by **Susan Ishmael**. There were so many tickets in that bag that it was difficult to insert my hand to select one. Susan's husband, unbeknownst to her, placed his own tickets in the bag and won the quilt!. New beekeeper gained from this year's bee class, **Richard Asher** made 50+ pictures of the event, some of which you see in this edition of the newsletter. To see others, go to the club website at [www.npbee.org](http://www.npbee.org).



**President &  
Newsletter**

**Kathy Miller**  
540.923.4772

[kfmiller@nexet.net](mailto:kfmiller@nexet.net)

**Vice President**

**Bob Duxbury**  
540.937.6026

**Secretary/Treasurer**

**Lele Hankins**  
540.547.4711

**Regional Inspector**

**Bob Wellemeyer**  
540.937.2175

**NPBA Website**  
[www.npbee.org](http://www.npbee.org)

**Webmaster**  
**Mike Wilson**

**Bob Duxbury**  
**Chef Extraordinaire!**

## This and That

For those members of the **NPBA** who are also members of the **Virginia State Beekeepers Association (VSBA)**, just a reminder that membership for VSBA runs from July 1st-June 30th. Those who are currently members of **VSBA**, now is the time to renew your membership! If you are an **NPBA** member but not currently a member of **VSBA**, now is a great time to join! A **VSBA** membership for is attached to this newsletter for both renewing members and “first time” members. Also, watch future **NPBA** newsletters for information on the upcoming **VSBA** Fall meeting, held on a Saturday in early November, at Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave, VA. This is a meeting close-by for **NPBA** members. As the date gets closer, beekeepers can check the **VSBA** website for the list of scheduled speakers — [www.virginiabeekeepers.org](http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org)

**Lele Hankins** is updating the **NPBA** members email addresses. She would appreciate if everyone with an email account would send your current email address to [hankins77@comcast.net](mailto:hankins77@comcast.net). To help with costs of mailing the newsletter via U.S. Mail,

please let her know if you would like to receive the **NPBA** newsletter by email.

Just a reminder, **NPBA** will have a booth at the **Orange County Fair July 24-27**. We will be selling honey, **NPBA tee shirts**, other bee products, recruiting new members, and providing honey bee education to the public. **Bob Duxbury** is coordinating this effort and can be reached at his home phone of 540.937.6026. Volunteers are needed for shifts listed below:

### July 24 & 25th

3:00-7:00 pm and 7:00-10:00 pm (2 needed for each shift)

### July 26th

8:30-11:30 am, 11:30 am-2:30 pm, and 2:30-5:30 pm (2 needed for each shift)

### July 27th

9:00 am-12:00 pm and 12:00-3:00 pm (2 needed for each shift)

If anyone attended the June 27th Open House Program at the **Beltsville Bee Research Lab**, **Kathy Miller** would be interested in your first hand impression of the event.



**Emily Lawrence's** youngest child showing her new Bee outfit at the picnic!

Six of the seven **Lawrence** Children filling their plates.



## In This Issue

**Beekeeping Events in the Area**

**This and That**

**Hive Works**

**Manipulating your Hives**

**Found on Ann's Desk...**

**What's Booming this Month?**

**Bees' First July or Second July?**

## NPBA 2008 Meeting Schedule

**Culpeper County Extension**

101 South West St.

Culpeper, VA

July	No meeting
August	No meeting
September	7:30-9:00 p.m.
October 16	7:30-9:00 p.m.
November 20	7:30-9:00 p.m.
December	No meeting

## Hive Works

Back by popular demand **Ann Harman's *Hive Works***. This insightful and informative commentary has been a favorite for many years, and is filled with common sense plus things to do and to watch for. With Ann's permission, we will bring back some of her wisdom each month concerning the caring of the hives and other topics associated with beekeeping. Some great examples for this month are "Keep the grass and weeds cut in the beeyard; put your veil on when mowing; and remember to not let the discharge from mower or weed whacker blow at the hive.



This is the month to take off your honey!

If you started a package this year, forget a honey harvest until next year.

You can give treatment for varroa after removing your honey. Ann recommends the powdered sugar treatment. Try to obtain plain powdered sugar from a local bakery instead of from the supermarket shelf. That has some cornstarch added that cannot be digested by the bees.



Package bees from this year should be drawing out the second box if they are in 2 deeps or in the third box if in 3 mediums.

Keep those grease patties on for tracheal mite control, as strong colonies can use them up quickly in the warm

weather.

Check your water supply for the bees and make sure they are using it and not the neighbor's birdbath. Plan now for fall requeening during the first two weeks of September. If you captured a swarm, you can requeen at any time.

Ventilation is important at every time of the year, but especially so in the hot weather.

Besides removing your honey, cutting the weeds, and checking for starvation there is not much else you need to do now.

## Honey Recipe for the Month

### Kaleidoscope Honey Pops

2 1/4 cups water

3/4 cup honey

3 cups assorted fruit, cut into small pieces

12 paper cups (3 oz) or popsicle molds

12 popsicle sticks

#### Directions

Whisk together water and honey in pitcher until well blended. Place 1/4 cup fruit into each mold. Divide honey-water mixture between cups. Freeze about one hour or until partially frozen. Insert popsicle sticks; freeze until firm and ready to serve.

From National Honey Board

Website: <http://www.honey.com/consumers/recipes/textversion.asp?RecipeID=505>

**Source: National Honey Board**



## Summer Plan for Manipulating your Colonies—Michael Palmer Style

**Michael Palmer** is the president of the **Vermont Beekeeper's Association**, and spoke at a recent **VSBA** meeting. He strongly advocates getting away from using package bees with their host of problems. He believes nucleus colonies form the foundation of successful beekeeping. **Mr. Palmer** splits his weak, non-productive hives rather than using his strong hives, and tries to maintain his strongest hives at peak strength all the time, believing that is the key to making honey. Instead of requeening non-productive hives (which gives a 1:1 return) hoping this will dramatically improve them, he advocates taking those hives and making nucs from them. In a normal season, one nonproductive hive can make 4-6 nucs. In a long enough season, if those nucs are growing rapidly and threatening to expand beyond four frames, he splits them again and ends up with nucs. This represents a 1:8 return. **Mr. Palmer** advocates using colonies which are weak, but not diseased to make nucs. In addition, he buys his queens from a local survivor source breeder or raises queens from his good hives.

His nucs only contain 4 frames because he does not want make them so crowded that they begin to think about swarming. He gives them one frame of honey per nuc, which will sustain the colony until there are field bees to gather more nectar. The bees will change the honey frame into a brood frame. To assemble a nuc, he does the following:

1. From a nonproductive hive take a frame of honey and put it against one wall of a nuc box.
2. Then put one frame of brood next to the frame of honey. Do not use smoke or the bees will run off the combs. With the heat of sum-



mer, you don't need extra bees to maintain warmth, only those that are on the frame.

3. Next put a frame with eggs and pollen, some empty cells, some honey, and adhering bees.
4. The fourth frame is foundation or empty drawn comb
5. Move these nucs to a new yard. The next day give them a caged queen, or ripe queen cell from a local queen producer, or raised from your strong production hives.



The old hive leftovers consist of the old queen, field bees, and extra frames, but no brood. The old queen does not go into a nuc because you do not want to propagate her genes. The old queen will start to lay again, the field bees will go out and restock the hive with pollen and nectar. When the old queen has brood in all stages, including emerging brood, requeen it. This last round of queens in the season are used to replace your old, non-productive queens.

**Mr. Palmer's** nuc management focuses on making sure nucs do not get so overcrowded they begin to make swarm preparations. If necessary, remove a frame of brood from the nuc and give them drawn comb foundation in its place. Cut queen cups or queen cells out when you see them. Nuc colonies do not make drones. They make workers and are unbelievable at drawing out combs. Fall feeding of a nuc is different than the fall feeding of full strength colonies. A full strength colony generally should be fed until they won't take anymore, as long as they have time to 'cure' the sugar syrup down before they cluster. But because a nuc has so many fewer bees than a full strength colony, their cluster needs to be tighter; therefore, they need some room to cluster **inside** the cells. Nucs need some room to cluster inside the cells, not just on the surface of the comb, so feeding should be stopped before they fill up every cell. He winters two nucs side by side on top of his production colonies, making sure they have upper entrances which face opposite directions.

The U.S. Presidential election seemed to feature the word “change.” Let’s forget the election noise for a while (I am tired of it) but still keep the word “change.” It fits our beekeeping situation very well. We are faced with all sorts of new problems: *Nosema ceranae*, CCD, and who knows what is lurking behind the door.

We are also facing a change in the help we get in marketing from the National Honey Board. I feel as if I am losing a good friend. When I was an apicultural student of Dr. Dewey Caron (donkey’s years ago) I remember him saying: “Beekeepers have to create their own market. There is no marketing board like the ones for wool, cotton, pork, eggs.”

I remembered those words when I spoke before the marketing people of USDA when the beekeepers were asking for a marketing board for honey. And so the National Honey Board was established. Now the current one has been voted out of existence and a new marketing board will be initiated, organized by the packers and importers. Although that group represents only a few percent of the beekeepers of the U.S. the amount of honey represented is about 90%. A marketing door has closed. We have no idea what is behind that door in the future.

What does this mean for hobbyist beekeepers? It means that you need to present a good, clean product to your customers. Honey sold in attractive containers, including the new “upside down” one, with legal, well-designed labels. Offer recipes. Talk to the customers if you are able. Do what you can to be your own marketing board.

It seems that “change” can mean going backward as well as forward.

Someone sneezes and everyone decides they have flu. A bee colony dies and the beekeeper decides it is CCD. The scientists surveying colonies have concluded that colony losses over the US were up during 2007-2008 but—guess what—at least 71% of those dead colonies were not from CCD.

You should remember that CCD has definite

signs. One important one is that a seemingly healthy colony suddenly loses all its bees. Sometimes a small handful (think golf ball size) of young bees and the queen are left in the hive. No dead bees are found in the hive on combs or bottom, or on the ground by the hive. No robbing of the honey stores takes place. A new colony placed on an empty hive also succumbs to CCD.

So before you start shouting that you have CCD in your hives, think twice about the signs and ask for a visit from your local bee inspector.

Solid honey—what a novel thought. Yes, it exists! A new product is finding its way into the honey market. It is called Honey Drops®—A Honey You Can Hold. It is pure honey but in solid form and is being promoted for tea drinkers. That is why it comes in two flavors: pure honey and lemon. One of the “drops” equals a teaspoon of honey. It is made in Prince Edward Island, Canada, and at present is available either by mail or in shops in PA, NC and TN. You can find more information on the website: [www.nostickyfingers.com](http://www.nostickyfingers.com). I think the solid honey is a great way to introduce people to the pleasures of using pure honey in all its forms.



### What's Blooming this Month?

Rain will be the center of attention this month after last summer’s drought. Many things are blooming with July bringing changes in blooms and plants as the month progresses. Here is **Ann Harman’s** list of plants blooming in July:

#### What is blooming in July?

Garden plants	Mints
White Dutch clover	Corn
Milkweed	Some thistles
Chicory	Knapweed
Sumac	Daisy-Like Flowers
Herbs and wildflowers	Queen Anne’s Lace

# Is This Your Bees' First July or Second July?

By Ann W. Harman

New beekeepers are always so anxious for their first honey crop. You can see that the bees are busy so you think there should be something to harvest. So let's take a look at reality.

## The First July

If you started your bee colonies with packages in April in a nice new hive with just foundation, the bees have had to build their comb, essentially make all their own "furniture" from scratch.

Making wax for comb takes energy. The sugar syrup you have been feeding them supplied that energy plus the energy to fly out and discover nectar-rich flowers.

The nectar-rich flowers bloom mainly during May and perhaps into June. Then the types of flowers change, providing sustenance but not much extra for comb-building. Depending on the enthusiasm of your colonies you were able to add a second hive body sometime during the end of May or into June.

If you have your bees living in the deep hive bodies, you want them to have fully-drawn comb in two deeps, all 20 frames finished by the end of July.

If the bees are living in medium-depth hive bodies you want them to have fully-drawn comb in three mediums, all 30 frames finished by the end of July.

To achieve this feed them 1:1 sugar syrup continually. This stored sugar syrup is NOT honey and must not be removed or sold or even given away as honey. It is not. It is still only sugar syrup.

## The Second July

Your bees are now in their second year, a well-established colony and you are no longer feeding sugar syrup except in early spring, if needed. This now will be your first honey year. The first year to harvest real, pure honey. That harvest will come from the rich nectar plants of May and into June.

So set aside a day during the first two weeks of July for honey super removal and extracting. Invite a few friends to help. They don't have to be beekeepers. In fact non-beekeepers find extracting wonderful sticky fun.

Why extract during the first two weeks of July? Because if you wish to control varroa mite this is the time. The varroa population will have been increasing as the bee population increases. By removing honey now you can test for varroa and if necessary do any treatments. With the honey off the hive you can now use any treatment necessary without damaging your honey crop. If you have a varroa problem and do not take action you will probably lose your colony in August.

Do not remove your honey supers until you are ready to extract. The danger in letting honey-filled supers sit around until you get around to extracting—even a few days—gives any small hive beetles the chance to invade the supers and turn your precious honey into a slimy fermenting mess. Think of all that hard work done by your bees ruined.

Even if you do not have a small hive beetle problem, ants and mice can discover those supers you set aside. Bottling up pieces of ants in your honey doesn't make a good food product.

By the way, to clean up the sticky empty supers, place them over the inner cover on their original hives as soon as you finish extracting. The bees will clean them up and you will not attract ants or small hive beetles or start robbing in the apiary.

If you follow the above, you are on your way to be a good beekeeper.

