



Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

Volume 30

Number 4

April 2009

IN THIS ISSUE

For New Beekeepers
Beetles, Queens and Nucs
Drought - now

APRIL

Date: Thursday, April 16
Place: Cooperative Extension Service , corner
of Davis Street and South West Street
in Culpeper, entrance on West St.
Time: 7:30 PM
Program: Use Your Honey and Wax

President: Mike King
PO Box 213
Amissville, VA 20106
540-937-4792
kahu9@juno.com
Vice President: Deb Parker
540-854-4883
brokenpost@gemlink.com
Secretary/Treasurer Lele Hankins
540-547-4711
hankins77@comcast.net

Website: www.npbee.org
Webmaster: Mike Wilson
webmaster@npbee.org

Newsletter Editor: Ann Harman
540-364-4660
ahworkerb@aol.com

**Virginia State Beekeepers Association
Meeting!**

**April 17, 18, 2009
See page 4 for information**

APRIL PROGRAM

Wow - you need to see the quilt! Then buy raffle tickets -- and if you have the Lucky Number, the quilt is yours! Step right up.

Find out what you can make with honey and beeswax. Get ready to use your harvest.

It's fun! It's worthwhile! Find out about the Farmer's Market.

HIVE WORKS FOR APRIL

A busy month! This is the month that bees love - lots of flowers, eggs and the fun of swarms. Check those bottom hive bodies and when empty, reverse! Do this as many times as you need to, about every 7 to 10 days, until nectar flow starts.

Are your honey supers ready? If not then you are behind. You might want a few to help with swarming. And you definitely want them for nectar flow.

Remove grease patties and leave off until autumn. If you put pollen patties on, watch carefully for small hive beetles.

You can get queens now that it is April. If you have a lousy queen, go ahead and get one now.

Remember to remove attendants in queen cages when introducing the new queen.

Swarms are ready to draw comb! If you do catch a swarm, install on foundation to get a supply of good drawn comb.

Remember to cycle out 1/3 of your old comb. You will get comb drawn in a good nectar flow this spring.

FROM THE (new) PRESIDENT'S DESK

We had an exceptionally well-attended March meeting, with a discussion and demonstration by Lele Hankins on how to install queens more successfully using a "nuc" method. A big "thank you" to Lele for an informative meeting.

For those of you not able to attend the last meeting, we've had a little officer shuffle. Bob Duxbury, who had agreed (with a bit of arm twisting!) to serve as club President this year, decided to step down from the helm. As the sitting Vice-president, I have moved up as President, and Deb Parker has agreed to now serve as Vice-president. A big "thank you" to Bob for all his efforts on behalf of the club, and a big "thank you" to Deb for being willing to take over as Vice-president.

The Beginning Beekeeping class is getting ready to wrap up, and farmer's markets in the area are getting ready to gear up. Thanks to all those who have agreed to serve as mentors to new beekeepers. Bob Duxbury will again be coordinating the Culpeper Farmer's Market for NPBA this season. The Culpeper Market runs from the end of April until the end of October. Anyone interested in participating with honey or bee-related products to sell please contact Bob at 540-937-6026. This year there will be a sales fee of 5% charged to help cover the cost of associated expenses.

The upcoming April meeting will be discussing other bee-related products. Susan Ishmael and Joe Miller will discuss their hand-made products that incorporate honey, beeswax and other ingredients. Members will also be displaying examples of different types of feeders and frames.

Last month, Lele Hankins, our Treasurer / Secretary sent out an email asking members to consider getting the monthly newsletter via email. To all those who have contacted her to say "yes," thank you for your efforts to help NPBA be just a little bit greener. If you haven't yet emailed Lele but are willing to help save resources by receiving the newsletter electronically, please email Lele at hankins77@comcast.net

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BEEKEEPER...

This month's topic is Mythbusting!

So often beekeepers find older books on beekeeping in secondhand shops and actually read these books. Now, some information is still good after 30 or more years. But some is hopelessly outdated and some still contain old beliefs. We'll have a look at some of these.

You will also hear beekeepers repeating some of these old myths. Just because that beekeeper has been keeping bees for 30 years does not make the myth real. If something sounds strange, it may well be strange. Don't be afraid to find out whether true or not.

"Just clip one of the queen's wings to stop swarming." The colony, that is the workers, prepare for swarming weeks, even months, in advance of the actual swarming day. They have harassed the queen to keep her from laying eggs and reduced her diet, both to slim her down so she can fly with the swarm. She doesn't know she can't fly. The workers don't know she can't fly.

What happened? Swarming procedures continue until the day for the swarm to emerge. The bees pour out of the hive, the queen comes out, attempts to take off and crashes to the ground. Since the queen is not with the swarm, the bees return, find her by her pheromones. You appear on the scene and find a large clump of bees on the ground in front of the hive. That's handy. You can collect this swarm and install it in a hive. However, if the scout bees have committed the swarm bees to a new home you may have problems keeping the bees in their new home.

All clipping a wing did was to enable you to capture the swarm. But if you had not happened on the scene you may well lose those bees and never understand what happened.

"Don't feed the bees sugar syrup. It makes them lazy." Now that myth is definitely anthropomorphic. Bees actually prefer collecting nectar from plants and eating their honey. But if no nectar is available—too early in the season, drought, or poor forage areas—the bees will certainly take sugar syrup. That's better than starving to death!

FROM OUR MEMBERS!

SMALL HIVE BEETLES

Mike Wilson

The little top bar beetle traps (AJ's Beetle Eater) will indeed catch beetles. I have no idea if it catches enough to be effective, but the cost, effort and risks are low. I tried mineral oil, that doesn't dry out, and caught plenty of them. Vegetable oil is allegedly better, but I was worried that it would rot and congeal by the time I came back to tend the traps. (OK, you an call me lazy now.)

I found SHB larvae merrily eating a pollen patty and the adults love to hang out under grease patties. My management plan has been changed accordingly: pollen patties, if needed at all, come out as soon as spring pollen starts coming in; grease patties only in late fall/winter, according to a suggestion from Ann Harman.

QUEENS AND NUCS

Mike Wilson

Of 20 queens that I have wintered over this year, one wouldn't start to lay at all, four more have just barely started as of March 8, and one was laying only drones. I used a thymol-based product last fall and am starting to believe the allegations that it adversely affects fertility. I had similar issues last winter.

Over my five winters of beekeeping, I have yet to have to admit to having a dead-out, but have had to deal with several defunct or drone-laying queens in early spring that would have failed without help.

It has been useful to keep a few nucs over winter for early queen and population replenishment. I use old deep hive bodies with a divider board and partitioned top and bottom boards. (Ed. note: These keep the queens separated.) In the fall I pick the best and stack up two bodies for each pair of colonies, giving them eight frames with a common "warm" wall.

- - - - -

See how easy it is to have an article in the newsletter. Please send your contributions by snailmail or by e-mail to the Editor:

ahworkerb@aol.com

A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING

If you have heard weather reports recently you realize tht we are in the middle of record drought, I keep reminding beekeepers that no matter what the calendar says if your bees need food, they need food!

Trees do have deep roots so their nectar supplies may be good. Pollen is only affected by the number of flowers being scarce or smaller flowers.

What to do? Check the food stores of your bees frequently. Recent rains have been scant. A quick look, even if the day is chilly—but no wind—is important.

The problem in giving the bees lots of 1:1 syrup is that the colony will build up and swarm. April is our best month for swarms. Once the nectar flow starts in May the bees go into a storage mode and forget about swarming.

Keep an eye on those locust trees - the blooms can be destroyed by wind and rain.

FOR YOUR LIBRARY

I know that many of you have children, grandchildren and also visit schools to tell the story of honey bees. So here is a new children's book that is truly a beauty.

In the Trees, Honey Bees by Lori Mortensen, Illustrated by Cris Arbo. 2009. 32 pp. Dawn Publications. Hardcover \$16.95, Softcover \$8.95. This beautiful large-format book shows the bees living in their natural home, a hollow tree. The dramatically large drawings realistically show the bees and their comb, brood, pollen and honey. Most pages have a little rhyme accompanying the drawing. Although this is primarily a picture book, the text for each picture presents some accurate information about the life of bees. The book ends with two pages giving more details about honey bees along with several references. These pages will give parents and teachers enough information to augment the picture captions. This book is sheer enjoyment for all ages.

(Dawn Publications, 12402 Bitney Springs Rd, Nevada City, CA 95959 Tel: 800-545-7475)

COOKING WITH HONEY

Here is a collection of salad dressings. You can add a sprinkle of redbud blossoms or violets to your salads. Later in the summer use nasturtium flowers.

CELERY SEED DRESSING

1/2 cup honey
1 teaspoon dry mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon celery seed
1 cup oil - your choice
1/3 cup vinegar (your choice)

Combine dry ingredients in blender. Add vinegar and gently-warmed honey. Gradually add oil while blending. If not for a fruit salad you can add some chopped onion.

A Honey Cook Book A.I. Root co.

HONEY HERB SALAD DRESSING

1/4 cup white wine vinegar
1/4 cup honey
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil or mint
1 tablespoon minced green onion
salt and pepper to taste.

Combine all ingredients in small bowl; mix well.

Sweetened Naturally with Honey

HONEY POPPY SEED DRESSING

3/4 cup mayonnaise
1/3 cup honey
2 tablespoons poppy seeds
1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
salt and pepper to taste

whisk together all ingredients in small bowl.
Both above recipes from National Honey Board

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

- Our winter drought has affected some of the spring plants—slowed bloom, poor growth.
- dandelions (a favorite of bees)
- redbud (look for many different types of bees)
- some garden flowers
- trees: oak, elm, wild cherry, fruits
- henbit
- ajuga
- watch the black locust for bloom (end of Apr)

JUST STUFF

PROGRAM for VSBA Meeting, April 17, 18

Ross Conrad: CCD, Current State of Beekeeping and organic solutions
Wyatt Mangum: Experiments in Sustainable Beekeeping
Billy Davis on: Nucs
Nancy Adamson: Honey Bees and Land Management
Nancy Ostiguy: Bee Health
Wyatt Mangum: Requeening
Nancy Ostiguy: Organic Beekeeping
Juliana Rangel: Ecological and Genetic Basis of Swarming

You won't want to miss this meeting!

- - - - -

Meeting dates for NPBA:

	September 17
April 16	October 15
May 21	November 19

June 14 Sunday Potluck Picnic
No meetings in July, August, Decemeber

- - - - -

VSBA autumn meeting Saturday, November 7 at Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, just off I-81.

Eastern Apicultural Society Short Course August 3, 4, 5; conference August 5, 6, 7 at Ellicottville NY (near Buffalo).

- - - - -

For information about Virginia State Beekeepers Association go to the website:

www.viriniabeekeepers.org

C & H BEE BOOKS

If you are interested in bee books contact C & H Bee Books for a list of books available. Call Ann to request a book list.

We cannot accept credit cards but checks and cash are just fine!