



Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

Volume 30

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March 2009

IN THIS ISSUE

For New Beekeepers
Go green!
VSBA meeting information

MARCH

Date: Thursday, March 19
Place: Cooperative Extension Service , corner
of Davis Street and South West Street
in Culpeper
Time: 7:30 PM
Program: Successful Requeening

President: Bob Duxbury
148 Weaver Rd
Amissville, VA 20106
540-937-6026
duxamiss@gtcinternet.com

Vice President: Mike King
540-937-4792
kahu9@juno.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

A SPECIAL WELCOME

The Bee Course is a big success this year. NPBA welcomes all the "newbees" to the wonderful world of beekeeping. We hope you can find the time to attend meetings of NPBA (schedule on page 4). Keep learning and asking questions!

MARCH PROGRAM

Although there are many ways to requeen a colony not all are really successful. Establishing a nuc from the colony to be requeened just about guarantees 98% success. What could be better than that? Learn how now so you are ready to requeen a colony that came out of winter weak and needs a boost.

HIVE WORKS FOR MARCH

After this winter's endless strong winds you may need to clean up your beeyard of sticks, leaves and other blown debris.

The ground has been frozen for a while. As it thaws with warming weather your hives may have tilted. Pick a nice warm day and straighten up the hives. The best comb is built if the hive is not slowly sinking and not badly tilted.

We had a dry winter. Grass fires seem to be more common. Please do not set the dry, dead grass or the dry leaves on fire. Be careful with your smoker!

Keep a good eye on the food supply. March weather could be called totally wacky - 80° today, 30° the next day.

The queen should be laying plenty of eggs at this time. You want maximum work force May first, so those eggs must be laid March 15.

If you are feeding 1:1 sugar syrup watch out for swarm preparations toward the end of the month.

Reverse as soon as the bottom hive body is empty. Keep reversing until nectar flow starts.

Keep your eye on the plants. Spring is a great time for pollen and nectar plants.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

We had a good turnout with lots of honey that was tested by Ann at the February meeting.

This month Mike and I will be asking for help on plans for the club to grow and projects to help the club, so come with your ideas.

I have a good list of mentors for the class but it's not too late to get on the list; just give me a call.

Please tell us your thoughts and concerns as well as any input you may have to further help the NPBA.

Your questions are always welcome so give me (937-6026) or Mike (937-4792) a call.

Hug your bees!

Bob Duxbury

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FROM THE EDITOR'S PAPER PILE

Let's go "green!" It's the buzzword of today and a highly worthwhile project.

All I need to do is get this newsletter ready to send to your friendly computer via e-mail.

All you need to do is send Lele your e-mail address unless she already has it. In that case you are ready to save paper and postage (which is going up in May).

Two more things: (1) You have to let me know if you have a problem receiving the e-mailed newsletter and (2) Keep your e-mail address up-to-date! It is very frustrating and time consuming to have newsletters bounce back so think of us if you change your e-mail address.

I would really like some feedback on what you want or don't want in this newsletter.

So let us know about the e-mail and about the content.

I have deliberately left out all sorts of fancy stuff -- fancy borders, little flowers, and such, to make sure it doesn't snarl up sending this by e-mail. Computers have opinions about what they like.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BEEKEEPER...

Although we have had a very cold and extremely dry February, March is here and Spring will come. With Spring come blossoms that will provide pollen and nectar for the bees. Those early sources are for the bees themselves. Your turn for the honey comes in May. But not your first year with a package.

I know you recognize a dandelion—a good plant for bees, by the way. But do you recognize the trees that offer bees so much or the wildflowers (stop calling them weeds!) that are growing everywhere.

Unfortunately books on bee plants are almost non-existent. One book is available: *Honey Plants of North America* by Lovell. Please note that this is a reprint of the 1926 book. It is available from A. I. Root Company for \$20.

You will not see color pictures or drawings of many plants. The color photography was not used in 1926. So my recommendation is to augment this book with field guides, Peterson or Audubon. You will need one for trees and for wildflowers (no, I just said they are not weeds).

You need to discover the trees that are so important for bees. We tend to overlook the fact that trees do bloom. The blossoms are frequently inconspicuous. And to many, trees in winter seem to be lots of branches and twigs.

The best time for you to learn to identify trees is when they have leaves. At that time take a good look at the bark and the shape of the tree. The characteristic appearance of the bark will help with identification in the winter.

I always recommend that beekeepers have a "target" tree. That is a tree that you have identified as providing nectar and pollen for bees. You recognize it and know where it is. Then as spring approaches you can watch that tree, see when it is blooming. Some trees bloom before their leaves appear. Now you know what your bees are doing. Now you know when to put honey supers on.

Look for blooming plants—some good ones for bees are low-growing and easily overlooked.

QUEENS, QUEENS, QUEENS

We are always thrilled when we catch a glimpse of the queen during colony inspections. Perhaps there is something magical about a honey bee queen. Beekeepers get quite upset when a colony goes queenless. Rightly so—a colony with no queen is a doomed colony.

Sometimes an early spring inspection of a colony shows us that the queen has died. There is no brood and the colony may seem weak. What happened when during the winter? We don't know. For reasons known only to that, now dead, queen—she just died. Unfortunately queens produced in the south are not available for replacing until about end of March or beginning of April.

So what to do with a queenless colony that you discovered on a warm day in early March. You can save the adult bees, even if they are the last of the winter bees by combining with newspaper to another colony. The boost in population of the recipient colony may give you a bumper honey crop.

The color of a queen has absolutely nothing to do with her egg-laying capability. You may hear some beekeepers say the beautiful golden queens are superior. Well, they are not. They can be good or not good. We judge a queen by her egg-laying performance and her worker bee progeny. That is what counts.

Recent research has shown that the more matings the queen has the better her performance. Unfortunately we really cannot know how many matings she has had if she is not instrumentally inseminated.

Queens that have not had enough matings may turn into drone layers. She is healthy, strong but has simply run out of sperm. If you catch this type of performance early enough, before the colony population has declined significantly, you can requeen, if suitable, or combine colonies.

Two queens in a colony occur about 20% of the time. This situation is usually a mother-daughter combination with the mother queen failing or has already failed in egg laying.

A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING

The International color code for queens this year is green. Not all queen producers use the International colors (but they should).

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For those of you at the last meeting where you saw my remarkable cobbled-together polariscope and wish to make your own, you get the polaroid filter material from Edmund Scientifics. Phone 800-818-4955.

You will ask for Item Number 3038493. It is a plastic sheet 17 X 19.5 inches, which is enough to make two polariscopes. The cost is \$35 plus shipping cost of \$9.95.

Now you can make one before you harvest and process your honey.

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BE A MENTOR!

Out "newbees" need mentors. And even if you have kept bees for only a couple of years, you have all the requirements for being a mentor.

You have opened up hives, looked at brood, found a queen, made several goofs, been stung. Our newbees have done none of this and they sure would appreciate your participation.

Remember, mentors do not do the newbee's work. A mentor is there to lend support, guide in inspecting a colony and answer questions.

Oh panic—you will say, "what do I do if I don't know the answer?" Don't worry—you and your newbee can together find the answer from books and more experienced beekeepers.

And guess what—you will learn, also! I have always said the best way to learn a subject is to teach it. So welcome questions from your newbee. That is the best way to advance your beekeeping.

Remember, you were once a new beekeeper. Did you have a mentor? Now you know how important helping a newbee is.

COOKING WITH HONEY

March—in like a lion, out like a lamb. Couldn't find any honey recipes for lion so we'll have to make do with lamb.

LAMB CHOPS TERIYAKI

- 4 to 8 lamb chops
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 3/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 clove garlic, minced or pressed

Arrange chops in glass baking dish. Combine rest of ingredients. Pour over lamb. Marinate for at least 3 hours or overnight in refrigerator, turning occasionally or marinate in plastic bag instead of glass dish. Preheat broiler. Place chops on rack in broiling pan 3 to 5 inches from source of heat. Broil for 6 to 8 minutes on one side. Turn and broil 6 to 8 minutes on other side or until desired degree of doneness is reached. Yield 4 servings.

NATURE'S GOLDEN TREASURE Joe Parkhill

PIZZAZ PEAS

The French frequently combine peas and lettuce in cooked dishes.

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 10-oz package frozen peas
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1 cup chopped lettuce
- 1/4 cup minced green onions
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
- 1 chicken bouillon cube dissolved in 3 tablespoons hot water

In small saucepan melt butter. Add green onions and saute until tender but not brown. Add peas, parsley and honey. Cover and simmer over low heat 2 to 3 minutes. Add lettuce and chicken stock. Cover and simmer 2 to 3 minutes longer. Makes 4 servings.

COOKING WITH HONEY Kansas Beekeepers

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

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|----------------------|------------|
| willows of all kinds | henbit |
| skunk cabbage | chickweed |
| red maple | dandelions |
| alders | oak |
| crocus | jonquils |

JUST STUFF

Virginia State Beekeepers Association Spring Meeting will be in Hampton, April 17, 18 Information later. It's a bit of a drive but the information you get is valuable.

Speakers will include Ross Conrad on his Natural Beekeeping, Dr. Nancy Ostiguy on Producing Organic Honey. Land Management for bees, and some fascinating information on swarming.

Starts at 1:00 PM Friday and ends 4:30 PM Saturday. Contact Ann or go to the VSBA website for complete information. and preregistration form.

For information about Virginia State Beekeepers Association go to the website:
www.virginiabeekeepers.org

See you there!

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Meeting dates for NPBA:

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| March 19 | 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, a few miutes off I-81.

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

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!