

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association ~ July 2013



President's Message

Jeremiah Farrell, President

Summer is in full swing and next month is the Nevada County Fair. Our Association has a unique booth. The fair offers us beekeepers a great opportunity to show off our bee products, and maybe even earn a few ribbons if you enter an exhibit in the honey division. There are several categories to enter including honey, beeswax, and a gift box of packed honey. For information or to sign up, go online to nevadacountyfair.com by July 19. We want to support this division in the fair to ensure its longevity and it's a lot of fun when you compete. I hope your supers are heavy and your mite count is light.

July 1st Meeting - 7:00 PM

Grass Valley Veteran's Memorial Building
255 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley

Our July 1st program will be a PowerPoint presentation and talk by Dr. Christine Casey of the UCD Entomology Department. Dr. Casey's specialty is bee gardens and IPM (integrated pest management). This promises to be a pertinent and interesting presentation especially if you're wondering what you can do to increase forage for your bees.

Join us for a no-host dinner at Diego's Restaurant on the patio with our speaker. Diego's is located at 217 Colfax Ave (on hiway 174 right near hiway 49) promptly at 5:30 PM. Diego's prides itself on local homemade and fresh food, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, with a South American emphasis. Sandwiches start at \$9, dinners \$13-\$17 (plus drinks, tax, tip, etc.) Seating will be limited to 14 people (due to time constraints), so please **RSVP to Leslie Gault** at lesliegault@yahoo.com or 346-7092.

Bee Bits

Randy Oliver, Contributor

I'm writing this piece on the morning of the summer solstice—the longest day of the year. This is a special concern for me, since all my days are already too long!

The honey flow is mostly over, and in most yards, the blackberry honey flow was a bust. Interestingly, in those that did get a flow, it came on towards the end of bloom. A number of plants have dried-up buds, but some still have clumps of green buds and flowers, into which the bees are piling.

Toyon came on with a vigorous bloom, but we haven't gotten any honey from it yet. Yellow star thistle is making buds, but I doubt that there is enough moisture in the soil for any nectar flow. All we can pray for is that there will be some strong-flavored honeydew as there was last year.

We've been busy running experiments. We followed up on seeing whether oxalic treatment of nucs suppressed initial honey production. The results suggest that it did to some degree, but were statistically inconclusive. There just wasn't enough weight gain to see a large spread.

We're running a second trial to determine whether the accidental crushing of bees on the top bars leads to colony health problems.

And we're setting up a large (150-hive) trial to do a "Consumer Reports" kind of test of the various pollen substitutes on the market. We'll be setting up the hives starting early July, and then feeding all weekly. Any volunteers are welcome to come out and get some experience.

I'm recently returned from a very informative Honey Bee Health Summit put together by Project Apis m., and hosted by Monsanto at their headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri. I'm sure that the more rabid anti-Monsanto members will be surprised that I returned alive!

PAM invited the presidents of the major beekeeping organizations, the cream of U.S. bee researchers, and stakeholders from USDA, EPA, agricultural commodity groups, pesticide companies, etc. The meeting was about sharing our problems in the bee industry with the other stakeholders. There were very few speakers directly associated with Monsanto. The information came so fast in presentation after presentation, that one could barely scribble notes!

What was fantastic was that all the stakeholders could interact and learn about each other's concerns. Meals were venues for free exchange of questions and ideas. We also got a tour of the huge (1000 scientists) research facility, with three acres of greenhouses on top of the fifth floor (allows them to grow three generations of crops a season, tripling the rate of plant breeding). Contrary to common belief, most of Monsanto's efforts are directed at traditional plant breeding, and they supply many seeds used by organic farmers.

It was strange coming from California, where Monsanto is frequently demonized, and meeting actual Monsanto employees, who are very concerned about the environment, and with honey bees. The company filmed and webcast the Summit proceedings to all their 20,000 employees worldwide, and allowed those who wished to attend with full pay, even picking up transportation expenses.

I'm finishing writing up my summary of the conference to send to ABJ for publication. For now, let me suggest that you don't believe everything that you read on the internet ☺.

Speaking of which, you also can't believe everything that you read in scientific publications. A team of Dutch researchers recently released a paper entitled "Macro-Invertebrate Decline in Surface Water Polluted with Imidacloprid" (a free download). I'm as concerned about aquatic life as anyone (I have a background in aquatic biology). But in this case, the study was clearly a case of "painting the bullseye around the arrow"—in which you first determine the result you wish to "prove," and then design a "study" that will predictably support your bias. In this case, the financial support was by the "Triodos Foundation's Support Fund for Independent Research on Bee Decline and Systemic Pesticides." The name of the organization suggests the desired result of the study.

Anyone with a background in aquatic biology already knows that the species diversity of aquatic insects and other invertebrates decreases in agricultural runoff waters, due to a number of factors. It's always been that way. So the researchers knew full well that if they analyzed the Dutch government's water quality data set, that there would be a strong correlation between any artifact of farming (sediment, fertilizer, or any ag pesticide) in the water and a decline of species diversity. You could have bet the bank on this before even starting the "study."

And that's all that the researchers did; nothing more than improperly using statistics to mine a data set. They picked out only one of the 600 compounds monitored in the database—imidacloprid—and found, to no one's surprise, that "Our regression analysis showed a significant negative relationship ($P=0.001$) between macro-invertebrate abundance and imidacloprid concentration for all species pooled." But the researchers covered their butts three times in the paper (but not in the abstract that everyone actually reads) with disclaimers such as, "Note that our approach of statistical analysis of observational data implies that even if we find a correlation, this does not necessarily imply causality, because there could be other factors that could be the main driver of the observed patterns of abundance."

So in the very same paper they go to lengths to give strong reason to discount their “conclusions.” I find this to be disingenuous at best.

I then did what no one else does, and dug deeper. I checked the Netherlands water quality monitoring website, and found that water quality has actually improved greatly in recent years, and that most of the pesticide residues were found in waters downstream from the small area in which tulips are commercially grown on large scale for ornamental sale. These waters have high levels of all pesticides, including imidacloprid, and are toxic to invertebrates. Such data completely skews any analysis of correlation, although the authors neglected to mention either of the above details.

So these scientists had the chance to really learn something, and blew the opportunity. They could have mined the entire data set, and found out which compounds were actually most strongly associated with invertebrate decline—it wouldn't have been much more work. We could then have actually learned something useful, and possibly changed agricultural practices to protect stream life! But that's apparently not what their funding group wanted them to do. They already knew the result they wanted to get.

So again, don't believe everything that you read! I don't trust any salesperson, politician, or corporate PR flak. Neither do I trust the media, news writers, or most environmental bloggers. You've got to go much deeper to find the truth! Unfortunately, most public sentiment is based upon media information from the least reliable sources

The Nevada County Fair

Karla Hanson, Coordinator

The Nevada County Fair is coming up once again!!! The dates are August 7th thru the 11th. Please contact Karla Hanson if you are interested in working the fair. The shifts are 4 hours long. We will have two people on every shift.

Hopefully we will be handing out free entry and parking tickets this year to all who help out. Though this still needs to be confirmed. The early bird gets the best shifts! Contact Karla Hanson with your desired time and day at queenbeez@att.net or give her a call at 530 265-3756.

Honey Tips for the Kitchen

Honey - the versatile sweetener

- To help that honey slide smoothly from your measuring utensils, simply lightly coat the utensil with a vegetable spray or oil before measuring the honey.
- Since it has the ability to absorb and retain moisture, honey is can be used to keep baked goods moist and fresh especially if you plan to mail baked items.
- Honey is also an excellent choice to use in salad dressings, since its emulsifying qualities make it a perfect stabilizer.
- If you are measuring honey by weight, 1 cup will weigh 12 ounces.
- When baking sweets, you should try lowering your oven temperature by 25 degrees F. (15 degrees C.)
- Honey is up to twice as sweet as table sugar, so you will need to reduce the amount called for in the recipe by one-third to one-half honey for granulated or table sugar. In addition, since honey is composed of up to 18% water, you will need to reduce the liquid called for in baked goods by about one-fifth.

Goodies Sign-up

Karla Hanson, Coordinator

Please let me know if you can bring a treat for any of the coming meetings. We still need treats for our September, October, and November meetings. Contact Karla Hanson, queenbeez@att.net

Country Rubes Combo Screened Bottom Boards

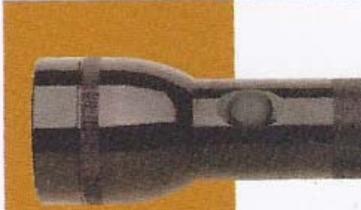
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Minutes from Last Meeting

Jack Meeks, Secretary

Pres Jeremiah Farrell opened with Q&A. Nectar sources are three weeks early this year, and blackberries scanty from drought. Drone frames are useful to trap varroa until July. Uncap them before they hatch to see if they have varroa or not.

Finance: Janet B: AprilStart \$4320.55; Inc\$376.66; Exp\$205.86; AprEnd\$4491.15

Program: Jerry Creason demonstrated his TopBar hive made from scrap wood strips the size of Langstroth frame tops hung side by side in a box. The bees make comb along the strip, but the ends converge to a 60 degree V, as the comb builds downward. Honey cannot be extracted, it's all double sided comb, which can sell for more if the bees don't build across combs. The hive must be exactly level for the combs to be built separate and vertical. Internet has lots of designs.

Program: Janet Brisson experiments with special foundation with reduced spacing between cells which causes smaller bees to be born. Large bees mature in 21 days while smaller bees mature two days earlier. This may save them from varroa mites and tracheal mites which may not be mature enough to damage the young bees. Rob Slay's bee flatbed will have honey motif kids and banners in the Grass Valley July 4 Parade.

Raffle Prizes

Karla Hanson, Coordinator

Thank you all for bringing some great items for our raffles, keep it coming. Plants, eggs, jewelry, soaps, bee items, jams, beautiful metal garden art, the list goes on and on... Thanks to everyone!

From the Librarian

Tynowyn Slattery, Librarian

A new book...

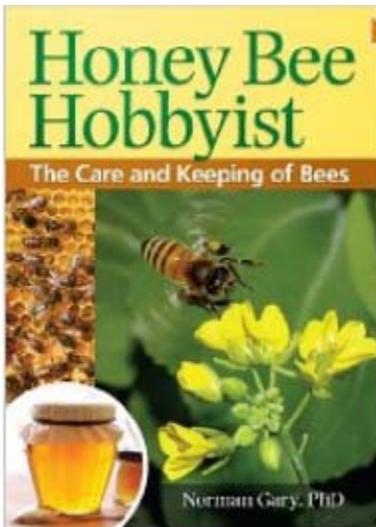
Honey Bee Hobbyist: The Care and Keeping of Bees

Norman Gary, PhD

BowTie Press 2010

175 pages

This is the second book from Randy's reading list for his beekeeping classes to be reviewed.



Dr Gary has some impressive credentials from his 60-year career in the beekeeping world, from research scientist at the University of California to "bee wrangler" in Hollywood. An articulate and respected advocate for the bee, his writing style is informative yet free of too much "academia/scientist" speak and the many, wonderful pictures are what we are fortunate to expect in today's books on beekeeping.

After reading just the first chapters, which include very clear descriptions of the physiology of the bee and their functions and communication in the dark world of the hive, I was very impressed with the level of technical and research information that he was able to include all the while keeping the books focus on the myriad, practical things that the beginner needs to know and the information just kept coming. This is a great achievement and one that is too often missing in beginner's books.

There were, also, amusing asides, which helped make the author feel like the "bee friend," that has such an important place in the beekeeping learning process. However, I was surprised that he suggested killing a laying worker hive, when there are, at least, a couple fairly easy ways to get rid of the false queen. I think this is a book that everyone, beginner and old-timer, would do well to read. However, you must remember that a scientist wrote this book, and if you have any warm, fuzzy thoughts about our bee friends...forget it!

A couple of quotes... "Anthropomorphic tendencies are counter productive to rational beekeeping strategies." and "...they are there for your entertainment."

He also, thinks that we should wait until more research be done to use some hive products medicinally and more research is always welcome, but as we have seen, the research follows the money and the money comes to the corporations with the research patents and so ancient wisdom is subsumed into corporate control.

And so it goes...a last quote, "...you can be a skilled hobby beekeeper without concerning yourself with these philosophical matters." Yes, but these philosophical matters make it so much more than a hobby. Read the book, it will give you a lot to think about.

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association is dedicated to apiculture education and promotion of the art and science of beekeeping among beekeepers, agriculturists, and the general public. This is a "not for profit" organization. Donations are welcomed.

Meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 7 PM at the Grass Valley Veteran's Memorial Building at 255 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley. All visitors are welcome. Use the back entrance.

The newsletter is published monthly as a service to the membership. Articles, recipes, commentary, and news items are welcomed and encouraged. Contributions should be received by the 20th of the Month to be included into the next issue. Submit to garyg@newpress.com

Advertising space (3" by 2") in this newsletter is usually available and need not be bee-related. Advertising rates are \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members.

Nevada County Beekeepers Association



c/o Steve Reynolds
10838 Ridge Road
Nevada City, CA 95959
First Class Mail

July 1st Meeting - 7PM

Program:

Bee Gardens and IPM
with Dr. Christine Casey

Nevada County Beekeepers Association

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