

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association

Local Buzz



February 2011

President's Message

February is here and this warm weather we have been having is great for the bees. Today (1-26) I watched lots of orientation flight. It's never too early to feed pollen substitute to get them rearing brood.

Please join us at the February meeting for Amigo Cantisano for a garden talk. No-host dinner 5:30 PM at Lin-Q buffet in Raleys Center in Grass Valley.

Your President, Rob Slay

February Meeting

At the February meeting our speaker will be Amigo Cantisano speaking about local garden matters. See last paragraphs of the next article for more details!

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

What a beautiful early spring! As I write this at the end of January, there is a two-inch ring of fresh pollen around the brood. This is exactly the best possible thing for the bees. Be aware though, that this will encourage early buildup, and likely lots of swarming, plus additional mite pressure. I suggest that you all stay on top of swarming, and perhaps make early splits, once there are drones.

Nevada City hosted the South Yuba River Citizen's League (SYRCL) environmental film festival in early January. One of the films shown was Queen of the Sun, a lovely film, but strongly oriented towards biodynamic philosophy. There was great public interest in the film, and in a beekeeper panel that was given on Sunday, consisting of Janet Brisson, Serge Labesque, Gary McClaughry (who is healing very nicely), Kathy Kellison (who works at improving bee pasture nationwide), and myself.

I caused quite a stir when I presented the opinion, in my usual abrasive manner, to the largely "organic" audience, that it did not appear that neonicotinoid insecticides were the cause of all bee problems! Some, no matter what the actual facts from the ground, will hear nothing else.

This leads us to a brewing issue, which is placing me at odds with some of the environmental groups that I normally support, over the petition going around that demands that regulators revoke the registration of one of the neonicotinoids immediately. I, on the other hand, feel that this petition is based upon misinformation, and could detract from the credibility of beekeepers in the eyes of the regulatory agencies, who actually have hard field and lab data at hand.

I'm deeply concerned about beekeeper credibility, and feel that the beekeepers are being used by other organizations, who wish to take advantage of the current public sympathy for the honey bee.

The problem is, that as we lose credibility with government agencies, they will simply blow off our legitimate concerns. Pesticides are, and always have been a major issue for beekeepers. We are

currently in the position to be respected stakeholders in the regulatory process. It is very disheartening for me to see us lose that respect.

I had a very informative long lunch at Galveston with a representative each from EPA, Bayer, private research, and university research, and me as a beekeeper. At the end of the lunch, we were all in agreement as to the future direction for pesticide research, and for getting to the bottom of problems with neonicotinoid registration and application. We could have all walked out with a united message to legislators and the regulatory agencies. Believe me, all parties are on the same page!

Unfortunately, this sort of positive progress is currently being hampered by extremism, such as the petition that tells them how to do their job. All are aware of specific problems with certain pesticides, and all are working to resolve those problems, which is generally a rather straightforward matter of changing the label for permitted uses. The process works, and is successfully phasing out the most environmentally harmful pesticides.

We beekeepers in Nevada County are lucky in that pesticides are not normally an issue for us. But be aware that one neonic (imidacloprid) is freely sold to homeowners for landscape and garden insect control, and is allowed to be used at sky-high levels! So those of you in town may not be immune.

This amount of pesticide use pales in comparison with the use in some states. Fully two-thirds of the land area of Iowa and Illinois are in crops, mostly large-scale intense monocultures of corn, soy, and canola. In such monocultures, insect and fungal pests will flourish, and farmers will cry for pesticides to control them. Ideally, there would be a shift toward more mixed farming, pasture, and organic methods, but that is not going to happen with our current price supports and the demand for cheap food.

Beekeepers in many areas must work hand in hand with farmers, especially since our industry depends upon the good graces of farmers to allow us to set bees on their property. The farm lobby is

currently on the defensive, and has a “new-found attitude of unity and assertiveness...in part, ‘to counteract those who are hell-bent on misleading consumers.’” Those words are from an address to the annual meeting of the American Farm Bureau [a], which represents some 6 million farm families, a politically powerful group with which beekeepers would do well to nurture and maintain a good working relationship.

The pesticide manufacturers are under great pressure to develop “reduced risk” pesticides, of which the neonicotinoids are the current major class. When used as seed dressings, they do indeed greatly reduce the need for application of more environmentally dangerous chemicals. There are clearly some problems with certain aspects of neonic use, but these are being addressed.

I suggest that all beekeepers make an effort to become fully informed about the actual facts in these matters prior to becoming politically active.

Our Speaker

We are lucky to have a leader in the organic farming movement to be a speaker--Amigo Bob Cantisano.

If you don't already know him, you can read more about him at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/cultiv/cantisano>, from which I lifted the following introduction:

“One of the most widely experienced and influential figures in California organic agriculture, Amigo Bob Cantisano is perhaps best known as the founding organizer of the annual Ecological Farming Conference, which celebrates its 30th anniversary in January 2010 and is the largest sustainable- agriculture gathering in the Western United States. Recognized among conference-goers for his adept leadership of Eco-Farm’s popular bus tour of Central Coast organic farms—and for sporting trademark shorts and sandals no matter what the weather—Amigo (a high-school girlfriend gave him the nickname) has been involved with diverse aspects of organic foods and farming since the late 1960s. In 1990 he and his wife Kalita Todd received the Stewards of Sustainable Agriculture (Sustie) award from the Ecological Farming Association.”

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Those who are searching for ideas for value added hive products beyond the usual cosmetics and flavored honeys definitely need to give this book a look.

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And, to be very complete, a short section on embalming, which may or may not be of use.

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From the Librarian...

By Tynowyn Slattery

This book has been in the library for a while but deserves some renewed interest.

Super Formulas: How to make more than 360 useful products that contain honey and beeswax, by Elaine C. White, published in 1993.

114 pages, indexed with handy temperature, weight and measure conversion tables, chart for measuring liquid and dry weight bees wax and a dry pigment/medium ratio chart for coloring wax for use in encaustic art,

The "super" in the title reflects the amazing number (17 on the first 7 pages), practicality and simplicity of the recipes rather than anything unnecessarily complex or requiring elaborate equipment and almost every one of them uses some product from the hive.

It's easy to get caught up in thinking how easy, inexpensive, useful and (mostly) "green" all these recipes are; the hard part is figuring which are the most useful to you and worth the time to make. Considering that most of you already have the major ingredients and the current state of the economy, not making any of them is hard to imagine as an option.

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Help our club reduce paper and mailing costs, get your newsletter electronically and we will reduce your family membership fees to from \$20.00 to \$15.00. If you are paying in cash, please try to bring the exact change. If you are a new member, we will ask you to fill out a short form at the meeting. If you would like to pay your dues through the mail, please send your check made out to NCBA or Nevada County Beekeepers Association, for either \$20.00 (to receive newsletter through mail) or \$15 for NET OFFER to:

NCBA

C/o Janet Brisson

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New members please provide all family member names, full mailing address, indicate whether you want to be a library member (add \$5.00 to amount please)

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Any questions, please feel free to call me at 530-913-2724 or email me at rubes@countryrubes.com

Thanks, Janet Brisson, Treasurer

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Antibiotic Honey

Here is a personal anecdote from your editor. A couple of weeks ago a girlfriend visited me and my husband, and among many other topics, she was lamenting the fact that she had had a scalp infection for almost a year and a half. An antibiotic-resistant (MRSI) staph infection was causing her a lot of concern and pain—she was spending all kinds of money on doctors and prescriptions, but couldn't get rid of it. She was losing her hair, having to continually wash linens, be careful in public, etc. Remembering my own experience of several years ago where honey got rid of a twelve-day-old infection on my knee overnight (!), I recommended she might as well see whether honey could help, and sent her home with a half-used jar. We laughed as we talked about how to apply it to her head! I forgot about the conversation until last week when she emailed me: "Leslie, the honey cured my staph infection, two cultures verify it's gone, gone, gone. I slept with honey in my hair with a plastic shower cap. Wish I had tried it a year ago!"

I encourage you to remember this next time you have a wound that doesn't heal right, or any other time you get a cut!



Bobbie donated that fabulous bee jewelry to our September raffle. For wonderful gift ideas, please contact her.

January Minutes

Pres Rob Slay opened with Q&A. Drone trap frames, with open space which bees build into drone cells, should be checked for mites each drone cycle, by uncapping some cells. If no mites are seen, the drone frame can be replaced in the hive, since bees will make drone cells somewhere and returning healthy pupae saves lots of effort and pollen. If mites are found, the frame can be frozen overnight and replaced. The bees will remove the dead pupae and mites, and reuse it.

MOTION Slay: When guests are invited to dinner before meetings, a board member may also be invited as guest. Passed, voice vote.

Randy feeds pollen supplement concentrate from Mann Lake, which is economical since he adds the sugar and makes the patties. The concentrate is 65% protein.

PROGRAM DVD "Colony" Video of a commercial beekeeping family business. Migratory beekeepers ship thousands of colonies by truck-trailer, pollinating blueberries and cranberries in the East, and almonds and tree fruit in the West. In CA, one million colonies pollinate 660,000 acres of almonds. Colony Collapse Disorder wiped out a third of US bee colonies one winter. Neo-nicotinoid pesticides are suspected. Possibly the missing bees become disoriented and can't find home.

Jack Meeks, sec

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. 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. The newsletter is published monthly as a service to the membership. Articles, recipes, commentary, and news items are welcomed and encouraged. Submission by email is encouraged. Please submit to Leslie Gault at lesliegault@yahoo.com. The deadline for the March 2011 edition is February 24th. A limited amount of advertising space (business card size 3" by 2") is accepted and need not be bee-related. Rates are \$1 per issue or \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members. All revenue from advertising goes to the Association treasury and helps offset the cost of producing and distributing this newsletter. To receive the *Local Buzz* via email: please email your request to lesliegault@yahoo.com

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Nevada County Beekeepers Association



c/o Steve Reynolds
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February 2011

February Program

The February will feature Amigo Cantisano speaking on local gardening matters. See last paragraphs in 'Bee Bits' for more details.