

Local Buzz



January 2007

President's Message

Dear Fellow Beekeepers,

Here it is December 22nd already. (I just had to explain to my 7 year old daughter how Santa was going to fit through the pellet stove.) Where does the time go?

Soon it will be time to gather all our colonies and take them to pollination if that is your desire. I am looking forward to this year since it will be our first year as semi-pro/hobbyist beekeepers. I have a feeling we will learn a ton this year through trial and tribulation.

The NCBA board met recently and came up with a great schedule of events for 2007, thank you Randy for hosting the meeting. We have some great speakers on line including Dr. Eric Mussen, John Miller, and our very own Randy Oliver, just to mention a few. A full schedule of events will follow.

If you haven't done so yet, it's time to start gathering new equipment and repairing old equipment. You don't want to get caught with your boxes unassembled!

I hope that 2007 turns out to be the best beekeeping year yet and that your goals and expectations are exceeded!

We'll see you at the next meeting on January 8th.

Your President, Shane Mathias

January 8th Meeting— Different Date

Note that our January meeting will be held on Monday, January 8th, the second Monday of the month. We were preempted by a New Years Holiday party at the Veterans Hall.

Our usual meeting date on the first Monday of the month will resume in February.

January Program

The January meeting program will be John Miller, Commercial Migratory Beekeeper, regarding his view on the latest in the beekeeping world. John is always a lively and entertaining speaker with a broad perspective, so don't miss this!

At the time of press we were planning on taking John out to dinner, 5 PM at Maria's in Grass Valley. We'd love for the entire membership to attend (no host), but please confirm arrangements first with Shane Mathias at 308-1376.

2007 Membership Dues Due!

But, I'm (Janet) not going to be at the January meeting. I will be in Austin, Texas at the American Beekeeping Federation as a vendor. Please bring your membership dues of \$12.50 for snail mail or \$10.50 for email to the February meeting, or mail them to me at: NCBA c/o Janet Brisson 20693 Dog Bar Road Grass Valley, CA 95949

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

A request: I lent my new Bosch sabre saw to (I believe) a new beekeeper, and I need it back! If you have it, please give me a call.

Almond pollination prices are looking good. Most contracts for strong colonies are being signed in the \$150 range. Prices may be affected by the mysterious bee die off going on all along the East Coast, and possibly further inland. Three teams of researchers are out there trying to find anything in common between the affected colonies. So far, no luck. There are places where yards of bees collapsed just across the field from apparently healthy colonies. There doesn't seem to be a common denominator in feeding, medication, mite levels, pollen or honey flows, or places they've been moved from or to. Kinda scary. Our bees will soon begin brooding up. Now's the time to start planning for your mite control strategy for the year. I'm finishing up a long article on the population dynamics of the varroa mite, and how to monitor for it. What I've come to realize is, that until unless one has a firm understanding of mite dynamics, you're shooting in the dark at attempting nonchemical beekeeping. Unfortunately, unless you are reading the journals *Ecological Modeling*, *Experimental and Applied Acarology*, *Trends in Parasitology*, *Journal of Animal Ecology*, and, of course *Apidologie* and *Journal of Apicultural Research*, you will miss the most important research! A basic premise of science is that if we understand the dynamics of a system, we should be able to model it to the extent that we can predict what will happen in "real life." When researchers have attempted to model varroa populations and colony collapse, they find that there are many complex parameters. Each generation of model tells us what new research we need to do understand one more aspect of varroa dynamics. The models are getting pretty good, but still have a long way to go.

Despite that limitation, reading the literature has sure given me much more confidence in predicting what varroa control strategies will likely be effective. The

strategy that we used for a number of years--letting the mite build up until we blast it with a chemical "silver bullet" in fall--is likely not the best. It would be better to be more proactive in the spring, and retard the mite buildup in the first place. This would also suppress the transmission of viruses in the colonies. If you don't receive the *American Bee Journal*, I will soon have a website up, and you will be able to read all my articles in full. I'll announce in this newsletter when it's up and running.

On a poignant note, a novice beekeeper from the Bay Area, Roger Hess, had visited me a few times over the past two years to apprentice with me. He recently spent three days with my son Ian and me in pulling honey in Nevada and working bees in Grass Valley. Roger had recently had chemo, but was in great spirits, and made calls from the road to arrange his upcoming bone marrow transplant. He never dwelled on his cancer, and packed his life full of adventure. Bees had become a passion of his, and despite an occasional headache, he had a great time, and went home with two fresh nucs. I called him two days later, and found that his headaches were due to the cancer moving into his spinal fluid. Two weeks later, I called him from the road on my next trip to Nevada. His son answered his phone at the hospital; Roger had only hours to live. I was so shaken, that I had to pull the truck over. He'd been sitting squeezed next to me on the same road days before, laughing and making plans. Upon returning home, I found the sack of lemons that Roger had left me from his garden. I immediately remembered the quote "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." That's what Roger did--he squeezed everything he could out of life. Each of us should remember to do the same.

Happy New Year!

Cornell University Donation

By Janet Brisson

At November's meeting, we voted to donate \$75.00 to Cornell University so they could digitize the first 20 volumes of the *American Bee Journal*.

I received two email notes and one letter from various directors of the Albert R. Mann Library at Cornell U, thanking us for our donation. I enquired about the eventual online availability and here's the response:

“Once digitized (and after some post-scanning quality control and programming work when we receive the files back from our scanning vendor) all of the ABJ volumes from 1861 through 1884 will be available for browsing, viewing, and downloading via the Hive website. We are still in the process of collecting the seed funding to start the scanning process---figuring the gift from the Nevada County Beekeepers Association we've raised \$1250 of the \$3000 needed. It may be possible to start the scanning once we reach "half way there" point (\$1500) toward our final goal, in which case it's quite possible we'll be sending the first volumes out for digitization early on in the new year. We'd then have those first scanned volumes available for viewing on the Hive site (<http://bees.library.cornell.edu/>) by spring 2007 (because the ABJ volumes are rare and fragile, some extra time and care is needed in the scanning process to avoid damage to the artifacts themselves). “

characteristics of honey such as pH, electrical conductivity, flower and geographical origin, can be determined more quickly and cost efficiently with a spectrophotometer than current technologies being used. (editor's note: no doubt not considering the cost of the machine and the cost of modeling and calibrating the machine to recognize the honey being analyzed). The authors offer that this technology will allow honey to be labeled more accurately, especially for authentication of blended or multifloral honey.

Perhaps if there were any labeling standards for honey this would be of use...



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What's In That Honey?

In the November 2006 issue of the magazine 'Photonics Spectra', a trade journal about optics and lasers, the section 'Using photonics to solve problems of the real world' contains an article about identifying the botanical and geographic origins of honey by using spectroscopy. The authors, who appear more interested in the spectrophotometer machinery than the honey, say that important

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December Party

We had a wonderful Christmas potluck and pirate gift exchange at the Veteran's Hall on December 4th. Thank you to Karla Hanson and Debbie and Hugh Cavallaro for making us main dishes, and to all the members for bring such good food. There could not have been a better mixture of foods if we had assigned dishes!

Members were encouraged to dress up their settings, and indeed they did! Here's Sherry and Charlie:



Janet was thrilled with her gift...thingie:



All very picturesque indeed, but Tynowyn and her family must win the award for absolute cutest guests:



We have lots more pictures of members having fun, so if you have a desire for your picture to appear in print, let the editor know! ☺ Finally, thanks to Deborah Morawski for running the gift exchange—everyone seemed to end up with suitable gifts, once all the stealing was completed.



Raffle to Resume

Karla Hanson is taking over the monthly raffle duties—if you have raffle gifts to donate, please bring to the meeting, and preferably give her a call in advance.

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, except for the January '07 meeting which will be on the second Monday. 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 February 2007 edition is January 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

Nevada County Beekeepers Association

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