

# Local Buzz



June 2007

## President's Message

Shane Mathias, our President, reports that the weather has been great for beekeeping! The blackberries have just opened at his yards, and all of his colonies are doing very well. He's put honey supers on about 60% of them (some of the splits are not strong enough yet). He hopes everyone's bees are doing well, and says he looks forward to seeing you on June 4th for a great program and meeting.

Your President, Shane Mathias

## June 4<sup>th</sup> Program

Are you getting ready for the Nevada County Fair Honey Judging in August? Can't tell your light honey from your dark? Wondering what the judges are looking for? Our special guest, past award winner for honey and honey products Lois McClaughy, will give a talk about preparing your honey for judging and a demonstration on baskets and tips on how to win the blue ribbons. Join our lively regular question and answer session starting promptly at 7 PM followed by a brief meeting and refreshments and program.

If you have any questions, please call our president, Shane Mathias at 530-308-1376.

## Register, Register, and Register!

All beekeepers must register their apiary locations in Nevada County. This is to your advantage, since you will be notified of pesticide spraying. It is also to the advantage of beekeepers in general, since registration gives us a political voice. A registration form is attached, please fill out and return directly to the farm advisor at 255 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley

(same building where meetings are held, office is upstairs.) or bring to the meeting. There is no cost if you have fewer than 10 colonies.

## Raffle Items Wanted

Karla Hanson, raffle chair, is looking for items for the raffle. Support the club raffle by bringing in your old bee equipment (new, old, or not wanted), plants, knick-knacks (bee related stuff is nice, but not necessary)-- anything that might earn a buck for our club. Our club brings in between \$150 and \$350 a year with our raffles and this money goes directly to club enhancements like books and videos for our library. If you have a question about raffle items, please call Karla at 265-3756.

## Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

(These are excerpts from Randy's upcoming article in the American Bee Journal. Please read the full article when it comes out, as there is significant detail omitted here due to space issues)

I remember when beekeepers would argue if we should ever put any chemical into our hives. Most of us would reluctantly use Terramycin, or possibly Fumidil. But the thought of intentionally putting synthetic pyrethroids, organophosphates, or other toxic-smelling agricultural chemicals into our hives would have been unthinkable. Funny how one little mite changed all that! Nowadays, commercial beekeepers play miticide roulette: use a chemical until it doesn't work, then treat with a second or third chemical which may interact with the first and hurt your bees; perhaps find out that you've contaminated your combs to the point that they are worthless; or get your honey rejected by the packer; or, worst of all, make the headlines with your contaminated honey, and ruin the honey market for all of us.

How did we get to this point in just 12 years? When we first used Apistan® strips to save our colonies, we stepped onto a slippery slope. The “active ingredient” (tau-fluvalinate) appeared to be a dream come true, the answer to our prayers. It was simultaneously the best thing to happen to beekeepers, and the worst thing. It was safe to handle, didn’t contaminate honey, didn’t appear to hurt the bees, and really killed mites. Take two strips and the mites are gone! It allowed us to largely ignore the mite, and continue keeping bees the way we always had, with just the addition of a yearly “treatment.”

The flip side was that it gave us the fleeting illusion that we had varroa under control, and didn’t need to invest any effort in developing alternative methods of mite management, removed the economic incentive for the development of resistant bee stocks, and insidiously contaminated our combs. But worst of all, it got us into the Silver Bullet model of giving the mite free rein to build up all season, knowing that we had a weapon in our holster that we could use to blast the mite to Kingdom Come at the end of the season, giving us what appeared to be a fresh start each winter.

Beekeepers worldwide embraced fluvalinate. Apistan strips seemed pricey to many, so application by dipping a stick into the ag formulation Mavrik® was quickly (and illegally) adopted. Mite control was cheap and easy, and beekeeping was good.

The first signs that the party was about to end appeared in 1992, in the Lombardy region of Italy. After four year’s use, fluvalinate no longer killed the mite, and the term “resistance” entered the beekeeping lexicon. We Americans were slow to listen to the Italians, and suffered our own crashes when resistant mites appeared. Some beekeepers started increasing the doses of fluvalinate applied, others (myself included) used the scary-smelling Checkmite+® strips, promising that we’d try to rotate chemicals to avoid resistance. It only took the mites a few years to laugh at Checkmite, also.

At that point, the Industry cried for new treatments, and we were belatedly granted ApiLife Var®--a shift toward the European model of “soft” or “natural” treatments.

Many beekeepers, however, turned into kitchen chemists, and tried every concoction of agricultural, acidic, or aromatic chemicals imaginable. Many colonies did not survive the experimentation. The mites generally did.

As readers of this series know, bee scientists are telling us that it’s time to move on to mite management that is not based 100 percent upon chemical treatments. That’s not to say that chemicals are necessarily excluded from varroa integrated pest management, but only used sparingly, if at all. For the hobbyist or sideliners, I’ve detailed alternative methods that involve no chemicals.

Likely, though, you will need chemical help from time to time, especially if you are exposed to major mite immigration from outside your operation. Commercial operators will understandably look for the most cost effective methods, and chemical treatments are relatively inexpensive, as long as they are efficacious. Scientific research and consumer demand are pointing us toward “natural” chemicals such as formic and oxalic acids, and the essential oils such as thymol. I will cover these in the next article. In this article, I’ll inspect the synthetic acaricides.

There are now three registered synthetic miticides for varroa control in the U.S. All three have different modes of action, and thereby should theoretically be able to be rotated in order to delay mite resistance. There is currently widespread mite resistance to fluvalinate and coumaphos. Fenproximate (Hivastan) has just entered the market. There is also considerable off-label use of a fourth miticide—amitraz, again with a different mode of action.

Their safety to humans is in the order (from safest to most toxic) fluvalinate, amitraz, fenproximate, coumaphos. In this author’s opinion, coumaphos should be phased out, and amitraz should gain registration.

Varroa’s main strength is its ability to rapidly evolve resistance to chemical miticides. The mite has beaten us at the chemical game time and again, yet we keep playing into its hand by trying to fight it at its strong point! Miticides can be very useful tools in varroa management, but only if we don’t overuse them.

Clearly, coumaphos is very rough on queens, and rough on workers, and resistant mites are common. Fluvalinate is rough on drones, and may have some sublethal effects and immune response issues. Fluvalinate-resistant mites are also common. Amitraz, though not registered for use in the U.S., shuts down the queen’s egg-laying temporarily, but does not appear to cause other major problems. Amitraz appears to be less effective than it was a few years ago. Beekeepers who use the latter two chemicals judiciously, and don’t ramp up the dosages, appear to be keeping thriving colonies.

The effects of miticides in the colony appear to lie somewhere between the Chicken Little shouting that they are the cause of all our problems, and the chemical industry’s soothing assurance that colony health is dependent upon them. My current opinion (subject to revision) is that beekeepers who choose to use synthetic miticides should dump coumaphos, avoid repeated use of fluvalinate, especially in high doses, perhaps try Hivastan, or better yet, give the bees a break by using one or more of the “natural” treatments that we know don’t leave residues in the combs (remember, I’m not dispensing pesticide advice—consult with the proper authority).

# May Minutes

President Shane Mathias opened with Q&A: If you added a queen cell to your colony, leave the plastic base in place--it may be used for a new queen cell later. Removing queen cells will prevent swarming--but you must find each one. Swarm season's coming. Australia and Hawaii seem to have escaped Varroa infestation until recently.

FINANCE Janet Brisson:

Apr Start \$1357.02; Inc 189.50; Exp 0; April End Bal \$1546.52.

PROGRAM Randy Oliver: "Rules for moving colonies on your pickup:" 1) Prepare with full gear-smoker, gloves, ropes, tools. 2) Move at dusk, never in the dark. Unload at dawn. 3) Give helpers full gear that fits them 4) Don't allow either end of a hive to be dropped, even one inch. Set down gently! 5) Protect ankles completely, including boots, and tie cuffs or use elastic rings from motorcycle inner tube. 6) Don't pound staples to hold supers together. Use ratchet-tightened straps. 7) Strap tight enough to prevent sliding on farm roads and potholes. 8) Gas up before loading bees; carry spare gas in metal cans. Never stop en route. 9) Don't block hive entrances in warm weather. Bees may panic and try to escape, killing them all. Cover load with loose netting or use screened bottom boards. 10) If unable to unload at once, spray them--they'll think it's a storm.

LATE RUMOR (internet) Imadacloprid, a 'neonicotinoid', the most common insecticide worldwide, applied as seed coating, may release the toxin into the plant nectars. May impair bees' memory and learning, homing and navigation.

Jack Meeks, sec

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# Pollinator Habitat Protection Act of 2007 Introduced to Senate

Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) and Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) along with 28 other co-sponsors including both California U.S. Senators, introduced the Pollinator Protection Act of 2007 into the Senate recently. This bill allows existing conservation programs to provide enhanced habitat for pollinators.

The European honey bee is -- and will continue to be -- the most important single crop pollinator in the United States. However, with the decline in the number of managed honey bee colonies from diseases, parasitic mites, and Africanized bees - as well as from Colony Collapse Disorder - it is important to increase the use of native bees in our agricultural system as well. Providing habitat for these pollinators is vital to this effort.

The Pollinator Protection Act of 2007 is aimed at improving habitat and food sources for pollinators. This bill utilizes existing Farm Bill conservation programs to strengthen both native and managed pollinator habitat. It does not cost additional money, or create a new program. It simply requires existing conservation programs to acknowledge pollinator habitat as a conservation resource and rewards producers whose conservation practices are beneficial for pollinators.

Hundreds of species of native bees are potentially available for crop pollination. Research from across the country demonstrates that a wide range of native bees help with crop pollination, in some cases providing all of the pollination required. These free, unmanaged bees provide a valuable service, estimated recently to be worth \$3 billion annually in the U.S.

The Pollinator Protection Act of 2007 recognizes that conserving America's pollinators will require economic incentives for private landowners. The bill would create incentives for farmers to protect, restore and enhance pollinator habitat on and around farms.

Fully integrating native pollinators into Farm Bill programs can have a wide impact. For example, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) allocated over \$1 billion in financial and technical assistance to farmers in 2006, and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) retired over 36 million acres of farmland, 4.5 million of which was specifically for wildlife habitat that could be tailored to provide the greatest benefit for pollinators.

# Partners for Sustainable Pollination

Submitted by Kathy Kellison, Sonoma County Beekeepers Assn.

Partners for Sustainable Pollination (PFSP) was proud to be among the co-sponsors of the Pollinator Conservation Act of 2007. If you have not heard of PFSP, it's a newly chartered non-profit organization with the mission of pursuing a partner-based, collaborative approach founded on sound science working with willing farmers, beekeepers, and scientists to develop, demonstrate, and validate ways to improve EHB health while incorporating more native pollinators into meeting field crop pollination needs in the U.S. PFSP advocates for the needs of bees and beekeepers to improve the conditions and serve everyone's best interest. PFSP is working to promote the benefits of screened bottoms and is also advocating the investigation of the use of packaged Australian bees and their negative impact on the overall beekeeping industry due to lack of mite tolerance. (See current article in this month's Bee Culture for more information on this.) We also want to develop a channel for beekeepers to have more say in the research conducted by USFA regarding EHBs. Anyone concerned about pollinators and honeybee health can join PFSP, not only beekeepers, and there is no charge for joining. Contact Kathy Kellison at [kellison@earthlink.net](mailto:kellison@earthlink.net)



## Sacramento Beekeeping Supplies

- Complete line of all beekeeping supplies
- Candle making supplies (molds, wicks, dyes, scents)
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- Beeswax and paraffin, special container candle wax
- Gifts, books, ready made candles

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## A Quick Funny/Not so Funny Story...

(Submitted by Randy Oliver as reported from Pennsylvania)

One of our local beekeepers who has been losing a battle to township ordinances finally moved his bees from his home yard. A while later, he received a letter threatening a \$8,000 fine for hiding a beehive next to the house. One of the township officials took a photo of "the hive" as evidence. After reviewing the "evidence" they all agreed to drop the fine after looking at a photo of his air conditioner.



AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER  
COUNTY OF NEVADA

**APIARY REGISTRATION**  
**DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION IS MONDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2007**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE CHECK HERE IF ADDRESS HAS CHANGED

PLEASE CHECK HERE AND RETURN IF YOU NO LONGER HAVE BEES IN NEVADA COUNTY

**LOCATION OF APIARIES IN NEVADA COUNTY AS OF JANUARY 1, 2007**

**DESCRIBE LOCATION SO IT CAN BE PLOTTED ON COUNTY MAPS USING ROADS, CANALS, INTERSECTIONS, LANDMARKS AND RANCH NAMES GIVING DIRECTION, DISTANCE AND SIDE OF ROAD; OR SHOW QUARTER SECTION, SECTION, TOWNSHIP, AND RANGE.**

**# OF COLONIES                      LOCATION OF COLONIES**

# OF COLONIES	LOCATION OF COLONIES

**USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NEEDED.**

**THIS INFORMATION IS ALSO USED FOR TOTALS IN NEVADA COUNTY'S YEARLY CROP REPORTS**

**REQUEST FOR PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION**

I hereby request to be notified before pesticide applications as provided for in Section 29101 of the California Food and Agriculture Code and Title 3 California Code of Regulations, Section 6654.

I am available for notification during the two-hour time period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Monday through Friday by collect call to the following phone numbers(s): ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ or ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that if I fail to submit my request for pesticide notification to the Agricultural Commissioner IN WRITING within the 72-hour period before relocation, I may not be entitled to recover damages for an injury from pest control operations. I also will not recover damages if I fail to properly post an identification sign at my apiaries or am not available for notifications at the hours I have designated above. I understand that this "REQUEST FOR NOTIFICATION" will expire next December 1<sup>st</sup>.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE RECEIVED BY AGRICULTURE: \_\_\_\_\_ BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
AGRICULTURAL STAFF

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](mailto:lesliegault@yahoo.com). The deadline for the July 2007 edition is June 21<sup>st</sup>. 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](mailto:lesliegault@yahoo.com)

#### Nevada County Beekeepers Association

##### 2007 Officers

President: Shane Mathias..... 308-1376  
[lawdawg911@earthlink.net](mailto:lawdawg911@earthlink.net)  
Vice President: Rob Slay ..... 268-8656  
Secretary: Jack Meeks..... 432-4429  
[jackm@nccn.net](mailto:jackm@nccn.net)  
Treasurer: Janet Brisson....530-913-2724  
[rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com)

##### Board Members

Past President Gary Wood..... 477-9202  
Randy Oliver..... 277-4450  
Karla Hanson..... 265-3756

##### Committee Chairs

Swarm Hotline: Karla Hanson..... 265-3756  
Lynn Williams ..... 675-2924  
Librarian: Tynowyn Slattery... 265-6318  
Newsletter Mailing: Gary Wood..... 477-9202  
Newsletter: Leslie Gault..... 346-7092  
[lesliegault@yahoo.com](mailto:lesliegault@yahoo.com)  
Honey Extractors: Karla Hanson.... 265-3756

## Nevada County Beekeepers Association



c/o Gary Wood  
10396 Mountain Lion Lane  
Grass Valley, CA 95949  
First Class Mail  
June 2007

### June 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting Program

Our special guest, past award winner for honey and honey products Lois McClaughy will give a preparing your honey for fair judging, plus a demonstration on baskets and tips on how to win the blue ribbons!