



April 2006

President's Message

There will be no President's message this month.

Please Look at your Mailing Label

Is it telling you this is your last issue and you have paid? Please contact me so you don't get bumped from receiving your monthly 'Local Buzz'. Our newsletter keeps you up to date with what your hives should look like, what you should be doing at that month and important information concerning your bees. Your dues not only support local beekeepers by buying books and videos for our library, you support agriculture, which is vital to our food supply. Without bees, we would be in a sorry state.

If you have not paid, please bring your dues to the April 4th meeting or mail them by April 15th.

\$10.50 will get your newsletter on-line or \$12.50 if you like your newsletter via the post office. Please make out your check to Nevada County Beekeepers Association and mail to:

NCBA c/o

Janet Brisson, Treasurer

20693 Dog Bar Road

Grass Valley, CA 95949

530-346-6439

rubes@infostations.com

(call or email me if you paid your dues this year, thanks)

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

Brazilian beekeeping has changed, first due to the Africanized bee, then because of "green propolis." Green propolis comes from the resins in the flower heads of a local weed (*Baccharus dracunculifolia*) that grows in poor soils. Japanese pharmaceutical companies have isolated some 20 promising new chemicals from the propolis, with potential to be used as antibiotics, and to cure cancer and other diseases.

Beekeepers who collect green propolis no longer bother harvesting honey. They make a special slot in

the side of the hives that the bees fill with a curtain of propolis. The propolis is cut out with a hive tool in long strips, and delivered to a processing plant to be graded and shipped to Japan.

The Brazilians are selecting queens from 12,000 colonies, and using instrumental insemination to breed Africanized bees that produce the most propolis. The best colonies are producing 1.4 kg (~3 lb) of propolis monthly, during the peak season, and 0.45 kg (1 lb) off-season. A few colonies reach 2.5+ kg of propolis monthly in the peak, suggesting that further selections can still significantly improve the stock. (Source Bee-L).

There is a fascinating video of the process, which I've ordered for us to view at a future meeting.

On the subject of pharmacology, bee venom has been shown to have a strong inhibitory effect on the causative bacterium of Lyme Disease <http://www.gaianstudies.org/articles9.htm>.

Dr. Karl von Frisch won the Nobel Prize for deciphering the honeybee dance language. There has since been a controversy as to whether odor is more important than the dance. Feelings run strong in this scientific controversy, and the debate has been relatively quiet for the past twenty years or so. However, the controversy has been on the pages of Bee-L of late and is an interesting read. The analyses demonstrate how scientific debate is done, and how the results of various experiments are interpreted.

As far as local buzz, the weather has been lousy for bees. Don't count on ordering early queens or nucs from California! Our bees have been stuck in the muddy almond orchards, in which, due to the cold weather, some varieties are still in the late stages of bloom. Make sure you check your colonies for weight-they could easily starve under these conditions.

This is a very experimental spring at Golden West Apiaries (that's Stephanie and me). We're developing a new varroa mite trap for patent and sale. We're converting our operation to screened bottom boards at great expense. We're changing our brood chambers, management, honey and nuc production, colony migration, feeding, and especially mite control! We've looked at our beekeeping operation from the bottom up, and are making changes to make it more foolproof, less stressful, less hard work and driving, more organic, and more profitable. How's that for a plateful?

We saw the results of our first experiment yesterday. We had installed about 250 specially constructed frames for trapping mites in drone brood. Yesterday, we removed, cut out the drone brood, and replaced about 100 of them. It only took about 15 seconds per colony~this was far easier than we expected! (It's not often that we get that sort of pleasant surprise). The mite level in our colonies appeared to be far less than last year's (we'll do further checking when they return from almonds). My guess is that it was from our midwinter oxalic acid dribble.

In case you hadn't noticed, Varroa has finally pissed me off! I'm making life miserable for them in my colonies. We're ordering three new instrumentally inseminated breeder queens, and setting up special mating yards in which we can partially control the mating of our virgin queens. In addition, we're going to screened bottoms, using oxalic acid and powdered sugar, drone brood trapping, and have a case of thymol as a last resort! Note that we're not using any synthetic miticides any more.

We hope all your colonies survive the late winter storms, so that you can take advantage of the bloom to follow with all the soil moisture. Remember, we're looking for a few mite-infested colonies for testing our new mite trap~please call me if you have any.

March Minutes

President Shane Mathias welcomed a dozen guests and beekeeping class signups.
Finance Janet Brisson: February Balance \$2189.20; Income 233.50; Expenses 304.80; New Balance \$2117.90

Program: Randy and Stephanie's class starts Mar 13. \$40 per family, repeats \$20, 4H students free; meets 6:30 at the Imaginarium.

Varroa Mites: Pollination beekeepers, contractors and almond growers were at odds this year, out of state suppliers lost out and felt cheated; next year there may be a shortage. Apigard (thymol) is approved. Apply before or after honey flow.

Foundation frames for raising drones in a hive will attract mites to drone cells, which are removed and deep frozen to kill drones and mites.

Replaced in hive will be cleaned out ready for more drones.

Randy explained his MITRAP varroa trap, a wire cage two frames wide, in which queen is trapped with two drone cell frames, where she can't lay worker eggs. After two weeks, mites are in drone cells; worker brood has hatched and is too old for mites to enter. Queen returned to regular frames to start more brood and can make up two weeks egg laying rapidly.

~Jack Meeks, Secretary

Study Shows Consumers Confused about Sweetener Safety

A recent study by Shape Up America! found that Americans are still confused about the safety of the most commonly available sugar substitutes. The study showed that many consumers harbored unfounded concerns about safety and false perceptions about which high intensity sweeteners carry warning labels. In addition, the survey recorded a strongly held belief that there is a natural sugar substitute, when in fact all are derived through chemical processes.

<http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com>

Doubts Cast over Value of Low-Calorie Sweeteners

A study conducted at the University of Wales questions the role of artificial sweeteners in weight loss. Professor David Benton of the University of Wales, Swansea, conducted a review of the scientific evidence looking at the effect of artificial sweeteners in weight control and energy intake. Publishing his findings in Nutrition Research Reviews, Benton concluded there appears to be

little long-term benefit for people of normal body weight.

Low-calorie sweeteners have been championed as a possible tool to fight obesity but as Benton points out, little is known about the long-term impact of artificial sweetener consumption on energy intake and body weight. Although it would make sense that replacing sugar with artificial low calorie sweeteners would help achieve weight loss, Benton says that the science is not as straight forward as it may seem. He argues that the body is capable of sensing and adapting to a reduced energy intake, and as a result people may compensate for this by eating more later.

<http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/news/ng.asp?n=65958&m=1FNU222&c=gixecytqxbziyd>

Rough Weather Hits Almond Crop, Damage Unknown

Temperatures dipped as low as 22 degrees in parts of California's Central Valley in mid-February, followed by a brief warming trend and then intense rain and wind, all of which is causing almond growers cause for concern. With many of the state's almond orchards in bloom, the wind in particular is an issue for blossoms as winds can knock blossoms from the trees, which can discourage bees from pollinating crops.

"It will be two or three weeks before we can see the damage," said Richard Price, Butte County Agricultural Commissioner. "However, we're not hearing a lot of concern about adequate pollination. There have been some good warm days between the cold and the warm. The problem is the bloom has been scattered over a longer period of time, which makes it hard to judge the effectiveness of pollination across the growing region."

Evaluating damage and pollination is important in Butte County, which has about 40,000 acres of almonds with a value of \$108 million, representing about a third of the county's total agricultural production

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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 Bonnie Bagwell at arwg@infostations.com. The deadline for the May 2006 edition is April 15th. 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 arwg@infostations.com.

Nevada County Beekeepers Association



C/o Gary Wood
10396 Mountain Lion Lane
Grass Valley, CA 95949

First Class Mail

April 2006

The next meeting of the Nevada County Beekeepers Association is Monday night, April 3, 2006, at 7 PM. The program will be the comb honey video (see Bee Bits inside for more information).

Nevada County Beekeepers' Association

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