

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association ~ October 2014



Local Buzz

President's Message

Leslie Gault, President



Welcome to fall! Hopefully you have made sure your bees are well fed and completed your fall treatment by now. Did the recent rain remind you to pull things in out of the weather? Those of you at the last meeting know that when I went to treat for mites in August, I was dismayed to see several bees crawling on the ground in front of the entrances. They were unable to fly because their wings were deformed, which is the curly wing virus, meaning that the colony probably has/had a pretty good mite infestation. The hives have since been treated and I am hopeful, but will do a mite count soon and see if they need additional treatment.

I recently asked a young friend what she knows about bees. Her reply was ‘not much, except I know they can smell fear’, which caused me to wander about the internet to see if there is evidence one way or the other. The consensus is that they can’t ‘smell fear’ per se, but that certainly odors play a significant role in how the colony communicates. There is much evidence that odor is tied to food sources and defensive needs, and that a colony can ‘learn’ behaviors tied to odor. Bees are sensitive to different styles of movement, such as defensiveness and agitation as a fearful person might exhibit. There is no disputing that alarm pheromones signal other bees to attack, so it may appear to a human observer that they are smelling the emotion fear.

Last month we opened up the bee booth during the Strawberry Music Festival. The festival has been held at Camp Mather near Yosemite for years, but was moved to the Nevada County Fairgrounds in Grass Valley—right where our bee booth is. At the request of the organizers, we opened up the booth for two afternoons so festival-goers could see the observation hives and taste honey. The crowds differed from the County Fair crowd in that they were mostly from all over California (and beyond), were generally not very familiar with bees, and were in no hurry to leave the booth so they were chatty. I don’t know whether the festival will be coming back to our fairgrounds, but I hope so because it’s good to get additional use out of the booth.

Our September meeting was held on Labor Day Monday, a day when attendance is usually low. Because of this the meeting was enjoyably low key so we had time to talk and review the various creative gadgets members brought to show off. See you at the October meeting.

Oct 6th Meeting – 7:00 PM

Grass Valley Veteran’s Memorial Building – 255 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley

Our Program for October 6th will be a combination of Winter Preparations for your Bees, and Recent Research Updates, by Randy Oliver. Talks by Randy are always entertaining and enlightening.

No pre-meeting dinner is planned.

Bee Bits

Randy Oliver, Contributor

Rain—glorious rain! Earlier this week I flew to the East Coast, leaving behind a parched and smoky tinderbox that we call the Sierra Foothills. A few days later I returned to a rain-refreshed environment, with all the plants perked up, my lawn suddenly green, and the figs on the trees starting to split from the sudden influx of moisture. I can only pray that the heavens will continue to be kind to us, as there are a lot of trees that were showing serious stress from the drought.

If you haven't already done so, be aware that you are reaching the end of the time window in which you can get varroa levels down to the point that your colonies have a chance at surviving the winter. Either Apiguard or MAQS work well at this time of year. We've been experimenting with the new Hopguard II strips, but unfortunately, are not finding that a single treatment at full dose is doing the job. I'll have more data in a while, as we are running a controlled trial.

Another option is to use Apivar strips, containing the miticide amitraz, making sure that the strips are placed in contact with the bees in the center of the cluster. Note that I have a new article on amitraz going up to my website by the time you read this.

If you haven't yet pulled your honey, do so now while we have some warm days left. You want to make sure that the hive isn't so plugged with honey that the queen can't lay a large broodnest. The brood rearing in the next several weeks is that from which the bees that will form the winter cluster will emerge. You want lots of broodrearing going on right now, with good nutrition, and minimal mites to wreak their damage.

What with the rain, fall forage will likely be better than it might have been—time will tell. The best test as to whether your colonies are getting enough good nutrition is to look at how well they are feeding the young larvae. I'll show slides on this at the meeting.

Colonies this time of year respond very well to the feeding of pollen sub patties, or even to dry feeding of pollen sub powder. I am continuing research on this mode of feeding.

At the Western Apicultural Society conference in Montana this month, I had the pleasure of hearing a fantastic presentation by Philip Hughes of the consulting firm The White House Writers Group (founded by past presidential speechwriters). I've known Philip for some time, as he has been closely following the media circus about the neonicotinoids and honey bees. He spoke about his perspective on how we should take what we see or hear in the media with a large grain of salt, and how we should be cautious about asking politicians to solve problems. I'll try to get permission to post a copy to my website.

In any case, the good news is that the major pesticide manufacturers and the EPA are getting the message (although it is at times misguided) that the public wants pesticides to be used in a manner that will not unnecessarily harm pollinators. Unfortunately, the agricultural industry gets a very different message from the consumer, who demands cheap, plentiful, and cosmetically perfect produce. The upshot is that the pesticide manufacturers are currently going out of their way to work with beekeepers. This is good news for the environment.

Beginning Beekeeping class

Offered by the Sacramento Area Beekeepers Association

Date: October 18th, 8:30 - 4:00 -

Place: Sacramento County Extension Center

Contact: Ron Nies, rtnies@yahoo.com

Natural Beekeeping Group

There is a new Beekeeping group in Nevada County for those that want to keep bees without antibiotics, pesticides, or any chemical inputs. We meet once or twice a month at a member's apiary. Meetings include hive inspections, snacks and discussions on anything about bees. This is open to anyone with any type of hive. So far we have both Langstroth and Top Bar Hive people.

We have members that are new and those that have been keeping bees for many years. Some are members of both the NC Beekeeping Assoc and this group. We will have one more inspection meeting in October and then a meeting about winterizing your hives.

If you are interested, sign up at: ncnaturalbees@googlegroups.com

Trouble signing up? Contact Jenna Brager jennajbrager@gmail.com or Steve Hill stephenhillnc@gmail.com

The Honey Wheel plus Introducing Dr. Niño

Leslie Gault

Luci Wilson, an NCBA member (who also happens to be an Ag Biologist with the Nevada County Ag Department) sends along the following web links for us:

<http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=14862>

This article describes a newly released 'honey wheel' to help people describe the various tastes of honey. The Honey Flavor Wheel, measuring 8.25 inches, sells for \$10 each, with all proceeds supporting bee health research at UC Davis. The product is available at the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science and soon will be available online, at the UC Davis Campus bookstore and at the downtown Davis Campus Bookstore.

Another article introduces honey bee scientist Dr. [Elina Lastro Niño](#) (pictured right) as the newly hired Extension apiculturist at the University of California, Davis. Dr. Niño comes from Pennsylvania State University and is known for her expertise on honey bee queen biology, chemical ecology, and genomics. She joined the UC Davis Department of Entomology and Nematology faculty in September, replacing [Eric Mussen](#), who retired on June 30 after 38 years in the position. <http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=14446>



Uncapping Tank For Sale

Like new (never used or assembled) Rubbermaid three piece clear uncapping tub, drainer and lid.

A wooden strut supports supports the frame of honey while you uncap the cells. The see-thru clear food-grade commercial restaurant quality equipment, virtually unbreakable with normal use, allows you to easily see what's below.

Large capacity, dimensions 25"L x 18"W x 9" D. Currently retails for \$115 (plus tax and shipping) in Dadant catalog, for sale for only \$75.



Call or email Leslie 346-7092 or lesliegault@yahoo.com

Country Rubes Combo Screened Bottom Boards

Special NCBA Club Price! Call Janet for details. 530-913-2724 or rubes@countryrubes.com

Honey Extraction House

A to Z Supply has a honey extraction house available for rent. Equipment is provided and the room is heated and there's lots of hot water for clean up. For more information: 530.273.6608



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For sale: 2 bottom boards, 2 top covers, 2 deep boxes, 2 medium boxes, one internal feeder.
Call Kathleen at 477-0954

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

Raffle Prizes

Karla Hanson, Coordinator

Thank you all for bringing some great items for our raffles, keep it coming. Raffle prizes are necessary for the financial survival of the club and it's just plain fun! Plants, cuttings, eggs, jewelry, soaps, bee items, jams, beautiful metal garden art, the list goes on and on... Thanks to everyone!

Goodies Sign-up

Karla Hanson, Coordinator

Please let me know if you can bring a treat for any of the coming meetings. We only need a couple of folks each month, so pick a month and let me know. Contact Karla Hanson, queenbeez@att.net

From the Librarian

Tynowyn Slattery

Remember...If you can't make meetings to return books, you can always mail them to:
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What I learned about beekeeping this month

Brion Dunbar

A bear got into one of my beeyards Tuesday night. There was an electric fence set up, but with the ground being so dry the shock was apparently not enough to dissuade his interest. He ate every frame of brood and honey from 4 colonies, and knocked a couple more over. Next summer I will put some chicken wire or something similar on the ground underneath the wires to insure a good jolt to any marauders, even if the ground is bone dry.



Praying Mantis in the apiary. Picture (right) is of a female eating a bee on top of one of my colonies. Mantis have enormous appetites and can eat up to 16 crickets a day.



Picture (left) is of a mantis eating another mantis. Most people have heard of the mantis behavior where the female eats the male after mating (this does not happen all the time, some males fly away quickly enough). I believe the victim here was a female based on the size of the abdomen.

Minutes from Last Meeting

Jack Meeks, Secretary

President Leslie Gault opened with Q&A. Beekeepers in areas with gardens, like Nevada City report more honey than rural areas like Penn Valley.

Logo selection for website still under consideration.

The Bee Booth at the fair will be open Sept 12 and 13 for the Strawberry Festival.

PROGRAM: Members' construction exhibited. David Edwards showed his 3-frame gravity extractor which hangs in a bucket and collects honey after caps have been scratched.

Jerry Cresson built a press for making smoker fuel discs by compacting sawdust and fallen leaves.

Vice-Pres Brion Dunbar showed his truck-mounted winch boom for loading colonies compactly.

The Secret Life of Bees

An excerpt from the novel, The Secret Life of Bees, by Sue Monk Kidd

Nobody around here had ever seen a lady beekeeper 'til her. She liked to tell everybody that women made the best beekeepers, 'cause they have a special ability built into them to love creatures that sting. It comes from years of loving children and husbands.

I hadn't been out to the hives before, so to start off she gave me a lesson in what she called 'bee yard etiquette' She reminded me that the world was really one bee yard and the same rules work fine in both places. Don't be afraid, as no life-loving bee wants to sting you. Still, don't be an idiot, wear long sleeves and pants. Don't swat. Don't even think about swatting. If you feel angry, whistle. Anger agitates while whistling melts a bee's temper. Act like you know what you are doing, even if you don't.

Above all send the bees love. Every little thing wants to be loved.

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

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Nevada County Beekeepers Association



c/o Steve Reynolds
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Oct 6th Meeting – 7PM

Program:

Winter Preparations and Research Updates
with Randy Oliver