



The Bee Line

2007—Issue 4

April 2007

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Mission: To promote interest in, and awareness of, the vital importance of the honeybee and beekeeping to agriculture, commerce, and the public at large.

Tips for the Month

Queens are now available so you may want to replace your queen if she's not laying good brood. If your queen is laying, then wait until May. As the honey flow starts, add supers to provide adequate space and prevent swarming.



Spring Activities!

Sat., April 14—Intermediate Beekeeping class taught by Dr. Eric Musen, UCD's Coop Extension Apiculturist, 8—5, with a lunch break at the Sacramento County Coop Ag Extension auditorium, 4145 Branch Center Road (1 block west of Bradshaw Road at Keifer Blvd.)

The **cost** is \$35 per adult or \$60 per couple, and \$15 per child under 18 accompanied by a paying parent or legal guardian. **To register**, call Sacramento Beekeeping Supply at (916) 451-2337.

Sat. Apr. 14- Noon to 2 p.m. (weather permitting) **"Splitting Hives" class** at Wine Country Honey in Santa Rosa. \$15. Call (707) 578-0797 to reserve a spot. They also offer apprenticeships.

Sun. Apr. 15 – Sustainable Beekeeping & Natural Honey Production Workshop by Serge Labesque in Hopland. \$95. See www.solarliving.org to register.

Tues., April 17—7:30 p.m.— Program and meeting. Topic TBD. Bring your questions and observations to share, too.

Sat., May 5—The Sacramento Zoo's First Saturdays offer a chance to share beekeeping with the public. Can you help staff a table or bring an observation hive? Call Nancy at (916) 451-2337.

Sat., May 12– 9—5. Beekeeping & Pest Mgmt class by David Basile at Steiner College in Fair Oaks. \$90. Call (916) 961-8727 for more info.

Tues., May 15- 7:30 p.m.—Program and meeting. Program ideas? Please call VP David Ogden at (916) 687-6977

Tues., June 19—7:30—Program and meeting and plan July picnic.

SABA's **regular meetings** are held the third Tuesday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 p.m. at the Belle Cooledge Community Center, 5699 South Land Park Drive (on the southeast corner of Fruitridge Road and South Land Park) in Sacramento. All are welcome!

SABA Resources

SABA Library—Enclosed in members' newsletters is an inventory of the books, pamphlets and videos currently in our club library. Do you want to check out an item? Do you have an item to add to the library? Please email or call Georgianna at dugongs@sbcglobal.net or (916) 457-3113 to reserve it for check-out or pick-up at the next club meeting. Have an item checked out? Please return it (to a club meeting) in a timely manner. Let's keep building this great resource and circulating the materials!

SABA Phone List—Also enclosed in members' newsletters is the current SABA phone list to help you locate and mentor with other members in your locale.

SABA Newsletter—Thanks to the members who've been sending in items. I want to remind all members that this is your local forum for sharing info on beekeeping, and I rely on you to submit news and tips and questions and recipes, etc. that you have found (or written) and think other members might want to see, too. So please keep the info coming and help make the newsletter even more useful and informative this year. You can email items to me at dugongs@sbcglobal.net or mail them to 3517 57th St., Sacramento, 95820. Thanks! G. Pfost

March Minutes & Program Notes



The Meeting of the Sacramento Area Beekeepers Association was called to order by President Robert Rollins at 7:30 p.m. on March 20, 2007, at the Belle Coledge Community Center. He welcomed visitor John Laughon, who said he is looking into beekeeping and has signed up for a class.

The **Program** was then presented by Bob Sugar: the second half of the film "Honey In The Comb" by Gene Killion, which presented more information on how to harvest and package comb honey.

The **Business Meeting** began at 8:30 p.m. The executive committee would like to have an **agenda** for our meetings. If anyone has any items they'd like to see on the agenda, please call or e mail our President or Secretary. We may even reach the goal of having a written agenda to pass out at the start of meetings. The **minutes** for February were corrected (moved Ernie Buda, 2d Fred Stewart) and approved (moved Bob sugar, 2d Ernie Buda.) The correction was under New Business: "American Bee Federation & American Honey Convention" was changed to "American Beekeeping Federation & American Honey Producers Assoc. Convention." The treasurer's report by Treasurer Richard Cuny stated a current balance of \$4,476. (Have you paid your annual dues of \$15 for 2007 yet?)

Old Business : The proposed **Mission Statement** and Goals and Objectives were discussed and adopted with changes made at the meeting (moved Howard Mann, 2d Georgiana Pfof). An ad hoc committee of Nancy Stewart, Dennis Larson and Howard Mann was appointed to review **solicitations for donations** and report back on how the SABA might help, consistent with our Mission Statement. The current requests include: an endowment at UC Davis to fund apiary research; the Sacramento Zoological Society auction; and a political action arm of the American Beekeeping Federation that will lobby regarding colony collapse. Georgianna suggested putting information in our newsletter such that individuals may contribute if they like, and that a gift certificate for a beekeeping class would be a good contribution to the Zoological Society.

New Business : Howard Mann will report in April on the details of the **Sacramento County Fair**. At the Elk Grove Harvest Festival in October, a roving inspector from the County Health Department required our booth to get a food sellers permit. We signed up for the permit on the spot, though we respectfully argued that our honey sales did not require such a permit (and we have never been billed for the permit). The question arose as to whether we will have such an issue at the County Fair and Ron Melluish recommended that we not inquire with County Health at this time, but be prepared to do so if the Department purports to require us to obtain a permit in the future. Final assignments were filed for helping at the upcoming **Beekeeping Classes**. (Thanks to all those who volunteered to help run the classes.) At this time the beginning class on March 24th is full with 38 students, and there are 9 signed up for March 31st and 12 for the intermediate class on April 14th. The County wanted to put the class in a smaller room on April 14th but Bob Sugar recommended that we stick with the larger room we reserved as last year 30 people attended the intermediate class, and our instructor Eric Mussen has lots of equipment and materials.

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m., following by Mentoring Time for those who questions or who just wanted to talk more about keeping bees.

Respectfully submitted, *Ron Melluish*, Secretary



Bee Reading

If you're looking for a good bee read this spring, but don't have time for "The Hive and the Honeybee," check out the slim but informative collection of essays by apiculturist Mark Winston in "From Where I Sit: Essays on Bees, Beekeeping and Science" (now available in our club's library). Originally published in the 1990s in *Bee Culture* magazine, the essays (by this professor in British Columbia) thoughtfully explore everything from the natural history of bees to the politics of bee research, and provide a great introduction to higher-level beekeeping issues for those of us whose bee experience is largely confined to our backyards.

Another slim but good read on bees is "The Sacred Bee in Ancient Times and Folklore" by Hilda Ransome (Dover Publications, 2004). This is an intensively researched text on the history of bees and beekeeping from ancient times and all over the globe. If you wondered where I was getting those interesting tidbits for our periodic "bee trivia" column, this is it. While it's sometimes quite dense given the academic style (lots of footnotes), it provides great insights into humanity's long-time fascination with bees and honey.

-Contributed by *Georgianna Pfof*

Beekeepers in the News



"Like father like son, Orin Johnson carries on a beekeeping tradition" by Christine Souza, reprinted from the March 14, 2007 *Ag Alert* (publication of the CA Farm Bureau Federation)

In the early 1980s when Ronald Reagan was serving as the nation's 40th president and Clara Peller was asking, "Where's the beef?" for the Wendy's fast-food chain, Orin Johnson held a satisfying position as a switchman for Pacific Bell Telephone Co. in Modesto. Then his father made a small request.

"My dad called out of the blue one day and asked me for this favor. I said 'Sure Pop, what is it?' He said, 'Your mother and I have a chance to go on this program,'" Johnson recalls. "... "I need someone to take care of the bees while I'm gone." I said, 'No problem. Where are you going?' He said, 'The Philippine Islands.' I asked, 'How long are you going to be gone?' And he answered, 'A year.'"

Johnson's parents, Charles and Frona Johnson, who are now deceased, were [asked by] their church ... to go ... teach the Filipino people the apiary business. Charles Johnson, a well-known beekeeper from the rural Stanislaus County community of Empire, had worked the bees for many years, both for pollination and honey production.

"Orin's father had been in the bee business forever and he lived into his 90s," said Los Banos beekeeper Gene Brandi, past president of the California State Beekeepers Association. "But Orin, having been raised in the business, really didn't want anything to do with it. It is a lot of hard work, you sweat and you get sticky."

Charles Johnson trusted his son to care for the bees while he was away, which he did for a short time with his brother Nate. "My father said, 'I have all of these commitments. You have to move the bees into the almond orchards and then out, and once you get them out you can put them up in the foothills and just leave them. Whatever money you make is yours,'" Johnson said. "They were leaving just prior to almond pollination."

The chore of taking care of his father's bee business blossomed into a new career for Johnson.

"Because there was a lot of rain at the time, it was a big honey-production year for sage, which is a crop you only get every four or five years. So just by taking care of the bees part-time on the weekends, I made \$5,000," Johnson said.

"When Dad came home I said, 'I'm not giving the bees back to you, Dad. I'm going to buy them from you.' And actually, he was happy. The only reason he hung onto the bees for so long was because he wanted someone to continue with them. Once you quit the business, you lose your locations and that was what he held onto in case me or my brother ever wanted to take over."

Today, with more than 20 years in the bee business, Orin Johnson now operates Johnson Apiaries in Hughson. He remains committed to working with the landowners that he and his father built relationships with for over 60 years--only now he works with the younger generations as well.

"I am still using spots on ranches that we have used for over 60 years between the two of us. I deal with grandsons of the people my dad dealt with and got the original permission to use the property," Johnson said.

This past fall, Johnson was elected president of the California State Beekeepers Association, an organization of beekeepers from hobbyist to commercial that has been in existence since 1889. This honor comes exactly 50 years after his father served in that capacity.

"I wish my dad was still alive to see me as the president and the things that are going on now in the industry. I think he would just be overly pleased," Johnson said. ... The California State Beekeepers Association is an advocacy organization meant to educate the public about the beneficial aspects of honeybees, advance research beneficial to beekeeping practices, provide a forum for cooperation among beekeepers and support the economic and political viability of the state's beekeeping sector.

An essential component of the nation's agriculture, honeybees pollinate about \$15 billion worth of crops annually. California's almond crop alone is worth \$2 billion. One of the big issues for today's apiarists in California is a shrinking amount of good bee pasture available to them to store their hives in the winter and throughout the remainder of the year. Beehive health is also a concern. A worry for beekeepers this year is colony collapse disorder, which leads to the abandonment of the hive. Also, pests like the Varroa mite and small hive beetle have destroyed bees and weakened hives. ...

"Beekeeping is not as enjoyable as it was because of all of the problems we are having with mites and keeping hives alive, but bees are such fascinating creatures and can just do amazing things in such a short period of time," Johnson said. "As soon as you think you know something about bees, you find out that you are just beginning to learn."

In addition, with almond pollination being such a high priority in California--especially as more acres of almonds come into production over the next several years--there is concern about having enough bees for pollination.

"There are not a lot of beekeepers left in California," Johnson said. "I think the average age of a beekeeper today is around 60 years old and a majority of new beekeepers are second- or third-generation beekeepers."

Johnson and his wife, Patti, who serves as secretary/treasurer of the beekeepers association, have two grown children, Neil and Robyn. Neil, who is working on his master's degree in psychology at San Diego State University, says beekeeping could be something to fall back on. "Before college I was running my own bees. However, I want to see how far I can take my education before I decide what to do," he said.

Honey Recipe of the Month

Ham At Its Best

2 Cups Honey
1 Cup Cognac or Brandy



Mix together honey and cognac or brandy, baste ham, and place on rack in 325° F oven to bake. Baste frequently while it heats.

A family recipe by Bill Bastida, reprinted from The Monthly Extractor, April 2007, newsletter of the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association.

Bee Classifieds

SABA DUES—If you're reading this but are not yet a member, you can join any time by sending a check for \$15 (made out to SABA) for the calendar year, to SABA, c/o 2110 X Street, Sacramento, CA 95818, Attn: Treasurer.

DONATIONS: To contribute to the "Henry H. Laidlaw, Jr. and Ruth Laidlaw Honey Bee Research Endowment Fund" from which the interest earned will support bee research at UC Davis, mail a check (made out to the fund) to Dr. Walter Leal, Chair, UCD Dept of Entomology, One Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616.

TREELESS NEWS: If you would like to **save trees** and postage and printing costs, you can receive the newsletter text via email. Just email the editor, subject Treeless SABA News, at dugongs@sbcglobal.net Thanks!

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Address Correction Requested

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