

The Bee Line

2007—Issue 5

May 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

Swarm season continues with the warmer weather, so check that your bees have adequate space and also check for queen cells. Swarming can cause you to lose 60 to 90 percent of your bees. Also check that your queen is laying eggs, and requeen if necessary.



Coming Events

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.—Janet Brisson from Country Rubes' Combo Screened Bottom Boards in Grass Valley will be giving a Power Point presentation and talk about Chemical Free Integrated Pest Management (IPM). She will talk about the importance of using screened bottom boards, powered sugar dusting and drone brood management. She will also have a few SBB's (which fit standard hives) to sell at the special club price of \$37.50 (including tax). If you would like a special order (e.g., unfinished, large quantity, or to bring reducers for 8 frame hives), please contact Janet in advance at 530-913-2724 or rubes@countryrubes.com. At www.countryrubes.com you can also view the SBB's and read more about her methods of mite control.

Wed., May 23—Sun. May 28—Sacramento County Fair. We need YOU to help out at the bee booth educating children and adults about the wonders of bees and beekeeping. Can you share a few hours? Please call Howard Mann at (916) 812-9855 or (916) 332-8513 to sign up for specific dates and times. The schedule is as follows:

Wed. May 23 – Set up day.
Thurs. May 24 – 9 am - 10 pm (School day in the morning).
Fri. May 25th—9 am to 10 pm. (School day in the morning)
Sat. May 26—10 am to 10 pm
Sun. May 27—10 am to 10 pm
Mon. May 28—10 am to 7:00 pm

And we'll need just two observation hives if anyone would like to bring one.

Tues., June 19—7:30—Program and meeting—topic TBD—and plan summer picnic. (July). Program ideas? Please call VP David Ogden at (916) 687-6977.

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—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.

Bee Colony Collapse Survey

If you want to be part of a national study of the new Colony Collapse Disorder, fill out the questionnaire at <http://beealert.blackfoot.net/~beealert/surveys/BeeLossSurvey.pdf>

Apimondia 2007

Registrations are now open for the Apimondia Conference in Melbourne, Australia, Sep. 9—14, 2007. See website at www.apimondia2007.com. The program being devised is very exciting and will have something for everyone and the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre will provide a world class venue. There will also be a World Honey Show and any delegate can enter the competition. So sign up and meet beekeepers from all over!

April 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 April 17, 2007, at the Belle Cooledge Community Center. Bob thanked all those who helped with the recent beekeeping classes.

The **Program** was presented by "hobbyist" beekeeper Serge Labesque of Sonoma County, who keeps about fifty hives most of the time. He does not call his beekeeping "organic" but he does not use antibiotics or chemicals. He buys no bees and uses only locally captured swarms or divides his own hives. He captivated his audience for almost two hours of presentation and questions about his methods and philosophy.

Some of the problems Mr. Labesque noted that probably contribute to the "bee collapses" include the significant reductions in honey bee colonies in the US in the last 20 to 25 years (from about 5 million to 2.5 million), the loss of 90 percent of feral colonies, land and wild bee habitat lost to development, more bee diseases (e.g., chalkbrood, mites, hive beetles), high movement of bees for almonds (so colonies forced to boom faster and earlier in the season), monocultures, and the general problems associated with treating a species as a commodity.

Then Mr. Labesque shared several of the practices he's developed and tested which he's found keep his colonies healthy and growing. For example, he recommends breeding bees locally (rather than bringing in queens or stock from other regions) as local bees are more acclimatized to the area and it also maintains a more diverse gene pool. He encouraged us to produce new colonies, helpful for building local beekeeping and also for controlling swarms and reducing the miteload (during the queenless period).

For colony management, Mr. Labesque recommended using only one size super and frame so that all the parts are interchangeable as needed. He avoids using queen excluders but instead manages the brood area by moving honey frames up and opening space for more brood on lower levels. He uses screened bottom boards with removable trays, helpful for monitoring mites and the general activity of the colony (by viewing the trays every few weeks). He's found that the wax residues on the tray also helps draw wax moths down there and out of the combs, and in areas with high daily temperature variation he leaves the trays in year-round (to help the colony maintain a more even temperature)

Other well-tested ideas he shared included making an awning over the bee's landing strip (to shed water and provide shade), beveling the top edge of each box, and shaving the bottom edge in slightly, to reduce the capillary action which draws rainwater into the boxes, leaving the boxes unpainted (except for the corner joints) to provide better ventilation (especially in damper areas), and using "follower boards" (plain boards, same size as frames) on the ends of the hive so you only have 7—9 combs in a box. He's found these boards help insulate the hive from heat or cold. He showed a model hive with these features, and also the top feeder box he's developed which can be used to feed the bees off capping residues as well as sugar syrup when needed.

Indeed, those in attendance were so enthusiastic and full of questions that the **business meeting was continued** and the meeting ended at about 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, *Ron Melliush*, Secretary

Phone List Updates!

Please add the following newly joined or renewing members to the April 1 phone list. Remember the list is meant to help you communicate with other beekeepers in the area.

David & Gwen Maule—Rancho Cordova—916-635-2496—reuel@aol.com

Edward McCracken—Jackson—209-223-4201—wheresed33@hotmail.com

Barney & LaRue Merrill—North Highlands—916-344-8436—barney_merrill@hotmail.com

Mary Ose—Sacramento—916-484-7172—osework@yahoo.com

RuthAnne Rose—Sacramento—916-421-5028

Corrections to published list: Jerry Kimbro's phone number is 916-803-0303, and Jim Casey is not presently a member.



President's Message

As members of a nonprofit *service* organization it is important that each member is afforded opportunities to render some kind of service—hopefully, at least once each year. For example, we recently offered beginning and an intermediate beekeeping classes that were well attended. And we greatly appreciate the efforts of those who assisted in making this instructional effort a success by setting up and cleaning up, checking-in class participants, bringing refreshments, lending demonstration hives, and scheduling the room and instructors.

The most extensive service opportunities always come during our staffing of the State Fair beekeeping booth and display in August/early September. But there are many other opportunities to be of service such as the Sacramento County Fair [see page 1] and educating the public, especially in schools. The mentoring program by our cadre of experienced beekeepers has helped many individuals become more successful beekeepers, even for some of us who have been working bees for years. These are all examples of valuable contributions to our efforts to teach correct information and knowledge about the immense value of the honeybee to all people. Last month's guest speaker, Serge Labesque, professional beekeeper from Sonoma County, was especially insightful and interesting to all who attended—another example of a service we provide.

To better assist in our overall mission, we encourage all members to regularly attend our *meetings* and/or volunteer for *servicing* on one of the several SABA committees and outreach programs (e.g., publicity, library, refreshments, website development, classes, county fair, state fair, school outreach, swarm pick-up, mentoring, picnic planning, writing for the newsletter). There are many ways to serve, even from your home.

We wish to thank each of you who contributed, or will yet contribute, your time and talents in implementing our important mission, goals and objectives. Thank you.

R. L. Rollins, SABA President

Bees in the News

Excerpts from the article *Are GM Crops Killing Bees?* by Gunther Latsch; translated from the German by Christopher Sultan; apparently first published in *Die Spiegel* magazine earlier this year.



"A mysterious decimation of bee populations has German beekeepers worried, while a similar phenomenon in the United States is gradually assuming catastrophic proportions. The consequences for agriculture and the economy could be enormous. ... The problem, says [Walter] Haefeker, [on the board of directors of the German Beekeepers Association] has a number of causes, one being the varroa mite, introduced from Asia, and another is the widespread practice in agriculture of spraying wildflowers with herbicides and practicing monoculture. Another possible cause, according to Haefeker, is the controversial and growing use of genetic engineering in agriculture.

"Scientists call the mysterious phenomenon "Colony Collapse Disorder" (CCD), and it is fast turning into a national [in US] catastrophe of sorts. ... In many cases, scientists have found evidence of almost all known bee viruses in the few surviving bees found in the hives after most have disappeared. Some had five or six infections at the same time and were infested with fungi -- a sign, experts say, that the insects' immune system may have collapsed. ... Walter Haefeker... speculates that "besides a number of other factors," the fact that genetically modified, insect-resistant plants are now used in 40 percent of cornfields in the United States could be playing a role. The figure is much lower in Germany -- only 0.06 percent. ... Haefeker recently sent a researcher at the CCD Working Group some data from a bee study that he has long felt shows a possible connection between genetic engineering and diseases in bees.

"The study in question is a small research project conducted at the University of Jena from 2001 to 2004. The researchers examined the effects of pollen from a genetically modified maize variant called "Bt corn" on bees. A gene from a soil bacterium had been inserted into the corn that enabled the plant to produce an agent that is toxic to insect pests. The study concluded that there was no evidence of a "toxic effect of Bt corn on healthy honeybee populations." But when, by sheer chance, the bees used in the experiments were infested with a parasite, something eerie happened. According to the Jena study, a "significantly stronger decline in the number of bees" occurred among the insects that had been fed a highly concentrated Bt poison feed.

"According to Hans-Hinrich Kaatz, a professor at the University of Halle in eastern Germany and the director of the study, the bacterial toxin in the genetically modified corn may have "altered the surface of the bee's intestines, sufficiently weakening the bees to allow the parasites to gain entry -- or perhaps it was the other way around. We don't know." Kaatz would have preferred to continue studying the phenomenon but lacked the necessary funding. "Those who have the money are not interested in this sort of research," says the professor, "and those who are interested don't have the money."

-thanks to Laura Shlien for sending along this article

Honey Recipe of the Month

Honey-Marinated Grilled Veggies



Vinaigrette:

¼ c. balsamic vinegar 2 T honey 1 T olive oil
1 tsp coarsely ground pepper ½ tsp salt 4 cloves mashed or minced garlic

Vegetables:

1 Japanese eggplant, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch thick slices
4 plum tomatoes, halved 2 zucchini, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch thick slices
1 red bell pepper, de-seeded and cut into 8 wedges 1 sweet onion, cut into six wedges

Combine the vinaigrette ingredients in a bowl. Divide the vegetables and vinaigrette evenly between two large ziplock bags. Seal and marinate in the refrigerator for one hour, turning the bags occasionally. Place marinated vegetables on a grill rack coated with cooking spray. Grill 7 minutes on each side, or until the onions are tender, basting with the reserved vinaigrette. Makes 8 one-cup servings.

Reprinted from the April 2007 edition of *The Diablo Bee* (newsletter of the Mt. Diablo Beekeepers' Assn)

Bee Classifieds

FOR SALE: New, never used, high quality Carl Fritz 12-20 radial **extractor**. Holds 15 medium frames radially or 3 deep tangentially. Powerful manual freewheeling drive. Stainless steel body and easy-to-remove basket. Pick-up in Woodland or at SABA meeting. \$850. Call Laura at (530) 666-0713 or email Shlien@msn.com

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.

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!

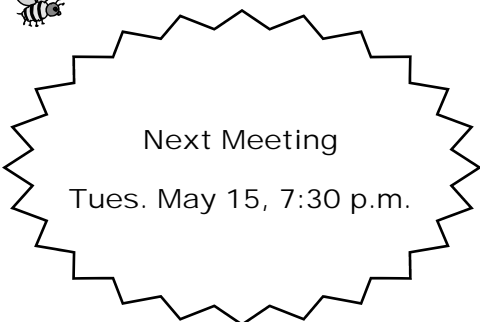
SACRAMENTO AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

c/o Sacramento Beekeeping Supplies
2110 X Street

E-mail (newsletter editor): dugongs@sbcglobal.net

Address Correction Requested

—The Bee Line—
May 2007



Next Meeting

Tues. May 15, 7:30 p.m.