

CARROLL COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

THE CARROLL BEE

<http://www.carrollcountybeekeepers.org/>

MAY 2013

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring is almost here. The calendar says it arrived last month, but the thermometer shows otherwise. I am surprised how thirsty my bees are; I continually see dozens of them at my bee spring. They're also hauling in lots of yellow, green, and bright orange pollen, so I keep a one-quart feeder on the hive to give the bees some extra energy. Everything seems okay locally; however, with substantial winter losses across the country and long term weather so unpredictable, the industry forecasts for 2013 are not promising. Locally, Carroll County beekeepers are enduring a cooler than usual spring, but the rain should produce a good nectar flow. We labor at the whim of Mother Nature and she has a long head start on us when it comes to honeybees.

The more I know about Varroa mites, the more confused I become. Every magazine article expands my knowledge but leaves me less sure about what to do. I believe this is a good thing. There is a lot of scientific research going on, and governments worldwide are recognizing that modern agricultural practices rely largely on the common honeybee for pollination. The confusion and the conflicting reports reassure me that real research and investigations are under way and that a sound approach to controlling the Varroa mite will eventually be developed. Will it be soon enough? We don't know. And ultimately it may be the bees themselves that figure out how to control Varroa mites. After all, who knows what other difficulties honeybees have overcome and survived in the last 40 million years? The problem is our human time horizon. We want the Varroa mite situation controlled right now. We don't want to wait decades for an answer. My approach is to keep a close watch on the bees to make sure they are well fed and as stress-free as possible. If they keep the mite count low by their own efforts, I will celebrate with them.

The package delivery for this year's Short Course was delayed a second time apparently due to cool weather and high demands from commercial beekeepers. We now have a delivery date of May 18. However, the packages could come earlier, so please stay informed by regularly checking our CCBA website.

The Board of Directors will meet at 7pm on Thursday, May 9th. The meeting place will be announced. We plan to discuss the budget, event-planning, revising

handouts and club information and whatever else comes up that's pertinent to the club. The meeting is open to all members.

The regular meeting on May 15th will be an open discussion. After the minutes from the board meeting, we'll circle the chairs and talk about bees, blossoms, honey, the club, membership participation and what we can expect in the coming months. If you have a question, a suggestion, a thought, or an opinion, write it down before you forget it and bring it to the meeting. I look forward to seeing you. We'll have cookies, too!

FRED SYPHER

UPCOMING EVENTS

5/12 and 6/9: 11 AM – 1 PM Open Hive Demonstration @ Hashawa Apiary – No open hive demonstration if rain is predicted or the temperature is predicted to be below 55 degrees.

5/15: 7:30 PM CCBA General Meeting at Bear Branch Nature Center



MAY 15TH MEETING AGENDA

- Old/new business
- Roundtable discussion

Please sign up for e-mail notification when the newsletter is posted at <http://www.carrollcountybeekeepers.org>. Also, please share your beekeeping experiences with the club by submitting articles/pictures/upcoming events by the last day of each month (for the upcoming month's newsletter) to Stella Fouts at Newsletter@CarrollCountyBeekeepers.org.

I am involved with a spring fund raising campaign for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society. I plan to sell honey and donate all proceeds to the campaign. The money is used for research for the cure for blood cancers: leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma. My goal is to sell 100 pounds of local honey. If you'd like to contribute any amount of honey, or want details, please contact me at g7pohlner@gmail.com or 443-271-2047. The campaign runs from April 11 to June 20. Feel free to bring any donations to the club meeting each month. Let's all help take the sting out of blood cancers. Thanks for your consideration and willingness to make a donation for a good cause.

Gary Pohlner



CCBA Meeting – April 17th 2013

Attendance was higher than usual at this month's meeting as a handful of Short Course students were in attendance. With all of these new beekeepers, it is important to have a lot of mentors! We thank those who have volunteered to mentor already, but we could always use more. If you would like to mentor please see Fred or Chris.

After calling the meeting to order, and acknowledging our new members, Fred discussed the new business. On May 9th we will be having a CCBA Board meeting. The exact details will be available soon, but all members are welcome to attend to discuss upcoming events, committees and next year's Short Course. Upon voting, the club decided to have two-sided business cards printed to hand out to the public with information on the club.

In addition to needing volunteers to mentor, we also need volunteers to help with the club's hives. On the second Sunday of each month, from May to October, we will be inspecting the hives. Anyone is welcome to attend and any volunteers are greatly appreciated. Volunteers are also needed to help out with the observation hive. Please see Fred if you are interested.



Next month's meeting will be a roundtable discussion and general information session. Start thinking of questions and topics you would like to discuss at this meeting. It should be very informational.

Once we had reviewed the club's new business, Paul Dill gave a presentation on raising queens. He was kind enough to drive here all the way from Delaware and is a firm believer in using **local** queens. Paul had a lot of good information to share and encouraged anyone with questions to look him up. His information can be found on the MSBA's website <http://www.mdbeekeepers.org/newsletter.html> or the Eastern Shore Beekeepers' website.

We look forward to seeing you on May 15th for a roundtable discussion (and May 9th if you are interested in attending the board meeting).

Stephanie Krome

Beekeeping Anecdotes of Note

On Sunday, Anna, Karen, Larry and I went on a fun "field trip" to Bjorn Apiaries in Dillsburg, Pennsylvania. We spent the day learning about sustainable beekeeping from Mike Thomas, owner of Bjorn Apiaries. Mike Thomas raises queens and nucs and he's a former Pennsylvania State Bee Inspector who is well known in the bee industry. The Thomas family generously opened their home, fed us extremely well and showed kind hospitality laden with rich bee education. For Anna and me, the trip was particularly interesting because our bees originate from there; for Anna, her bees were passed down from a friend that got them from Mike about six years ago, and for me, one of my hives started as a nuc that Anna made from her bees.

Mike does not believe in "treatment free" beekeeping, but rather "chemical free" beekeeping, an important differentiation. He believes in having an IPM plan in place, but not just treating with chemicals hoping to have an impact.

One of his suggestions that I may use this summer is to monitor Varroa mites on a regular basis to stay on top of your numbers. He likes to do frequent sugar rolls since there is a potential reduction in mites from the process, particularly the grooming that ensues once the bees are put back into the hive, but utilizing the IPM board of a screened bottom board on a regular basis or capturing drone brood are certainly other options, as long as you consistently employ these actions in the same manner. The importance is to know what's going on in your hives and why you are going to





take some action, something Anna also tells me on a regular basis. He explained how one hive might have consistently low mite numbers while another next to it has high numbers and that this can be a good indication of which hive handles mite loads better, has more hygienic bees, and which hive you may want to split based on how those numbers evolve and how the bees handle their situation. It certainly doesn't give all of the answers, and may not represent a big improvement, but Mike believes that combined efforts of small improvements can have an impact on the health of your hives.

Mike spent a lot of time sharing what happens in nature with bees: how often bees swarm, their natural cavity preferences, how often they requeen, etc. If the quiz he gave us at the beginning of class had been graded, I would have failed despite all of the

reading I've done over the past year. But with that came the learning and the ability to transfer what happens in nature to sustainable or natural beekeeping practices.

Mike is a believer of requeening yearly. Not everyone will agree with him; that's part of the fun of learning what other beekeepers do. He believes strongly in genetic selection and the ability of a first year queen to outperform and survive older queens, which is why the older queen leaves the hive in a swarm. He shared that swarming instinct represents a healthy hive, not always a hive that just needs more room.

Mike spoke about the importance of lots of brood in the fall and being more concerned about how much brood is available to the fall bees to carry them through the winter and how to simulate a fall flow where there's a dearth to get the queen to lay more eggs. He shared his thoughts on winter management and loss expectations in our new environment. There was a discussion on the need to rotate old comb since it can harbor chemicals, not just the ones you think of from Varroa treatments and such, but also the chemicals being brought into the hives from the bees foraging in fields where systemic pesticides are in use.

At the end of the day, Mike removed some drone cells, offering them up as an afternoon snack. I was amazed at how many people stepped forward to eat them! The discussion from earlier in the day on using drone cells, perhaps with a green drone board as a way of reducing Varroa mite loads since the mites prefer drone cells, came full circle during this culinary adventure as several of the drone larva that he removed had Varroa mites on them—and not just one, sometimes multiple mites!

There was a lot of information and hands-on experience, many hives were opened, different types of hives were explored, including a homemade top bar hive and a Warre' hive, so I could continue on but that's not the point here. I wanted to share our "field trip" experience with the club because as beekeepers with different experience levels, we all got something out of this and it showed me the importance of doing things with other beekeepers, not just reading my books. Allen Hayes is always encouraging us to attend national as well as local meetings and, while they may not always fit into our busy schedules, after attending this course I recognize the need for me to make things like this part of my hobby experience in addition to our club meetings that provide an opportunity to hear good topics and ask questions of other beekeepers.

The car rides to and from the apiary were rich with bee conversation. On the way home, we talked about our learnings and what changes we might implement. For Karen and me, there were a lot of learnings, certainly a lot to think about and consider in our developing beekeeping practices. While Anna and Larry are more experienced, they enjoyed the day but weren't sure they would make too many changes to what they currently subscribe to, and that's okay. They have experiences that have brought them where they are that allow them to better evaluate suggestions. From my perspective, the best part of a day like this was hearing other opinions and practices and then picking out what I like—what fits into my style to consider adding to my little backyard beekeeping practice. Even if no changes are made, it was a great day full of "bee talk," which is a rarity at any other time.



Check out Mike's website at www.bjornapiaries.com. And when things get complicated, which they sometimes do particularly for us new beekeepers, consider what Mike said to us. "Beekeeping should be a journey. It should be fun and it should be a learning experience." Larry likes to say that the bees have been doing this for a long time and they know what they're doing. He's right. We are just there to help. The helping part, the beekeeping if

you will, should be full of experiences that teach us for the next time and help us to evaluate what's right for us. I think most of us see that, even in the early years of this hobby. It's the "bee-ing informed" part that can really make a difference in confidence and outcomes.



Our own Carroll County beekeepers: Anna, me, Larry and Karen

Connie Young

Please note that **CCBA's May Open Hive Demonstration at Hashawa Apiary will be on Sunday, May 12th, from 11 – 1.** This is a great hands-on learning opportunity for those of you who are still contemplating getting your own bees. However, if the weather prediction calls for rain/temperatures below 55 degrees, there will be no demonstration.

CCBA 2011 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Fred Sypher frsy4@starpower.net

Vice President Larry Fritz lfritz44@gmail.com

Treasurer Jody King kingbees@starpower.net

Secretary Stephanie Krome skrome@gmail.com

The Carroll Bee Editor Stella Fouts mfouts@carr.org



Stella Fouts, editor

NEW BEEKEEPER CHECKLIST

1. Hook up with a Carroll County Beekeepers Association mentor
2. Order bees
3. Buy equipment
4. Assemble and paint equipment
5. Place equipment outdoors
6. Install bees and feeding system
7. About **one week later**:
Open hive and inspect frames/remove burr comb/look for queen and eggs
About **two weeks later**:
Open hive and inspect frames for queen/larvae/eggs
Continue removing burr comb
About **three weeks later**:
Open hive and inspect frames for queen/capped brood/pollen/nectar/capped honey
Continue removing burr comb
About **four – eight weeks later**:
Open hive and inspect frames
If 7 of 10 frames have been drawn into comb, add a second hive body
Remove entrance reducer
Continue to feed and remove burr comb
About **Week eight**:
Open hive and inspect frames
If 7 of 10 frames in second deep have been drawn out
 remove feeder
 add queen excluder
 add honey super with frames and foundation
About **every two weeks** or so, continue to inspect what is now a multi-level hive:
 Remove super
 Remove middle hive
 Pull and inspect frames in lower hive/removing burr comb
 Replace middle hive on lower, remove queen excluder and pull and inspect
frames in middle hive/removing burr comb
 Replace queen excluder on middle hive
 Replace super and cover
8. If all goes well – many warm, sunny days with ample rain and plenty of blooming flowers with nectar flows – your bees will fill the super with extra honey that you get to harvest just for you. When the super is filled (at least 80 percent or more of sealed, *capped* honey), it's time to **harvest the honey – perhaps in late summer** (the precise time can vary depending on conditions).
9. **August/September**: test and medicate (if needed) for Varroa mites.
10. Place feeder and begin feeding sugar syrup.
11. As the days get cooler, place mouse guard at entrance and consider putting up a windbreak to protect the hive during winter. Place a couple bricks/rocks on the cover to keep it secure.
12. Be sure the hive is properly ventilated.
13. Continue to feed until temperature drops below 50 degrees.