



The Honey Pot



February 2006

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

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Upcoming Meetings and Events

March 8, 2006 7:30 PM

Brookside Nature Center

1400 Glenallan Ave, Wheaton, MD

Upcoming MCBA Meetings

Second Wednesday of the Month

7:30 PM Brookside Nature Center

1400 Glenallan Ave, Wheaton, MD

April 12, 2006

May 10, 2006

June 14, 2006

Short Course Location and Dates

Brookside Nature Center

Tuesday Lectures 7:00 PM

March 7, 14, 21, 28

Thursdays Lectures 7:00 PM

March 9, 16, 23

And Wednesday March 29

Live Bee Field Days

Saturday, April 1, 2006, 1:00 PM

Saturday, April 8, 2006, 1:00 PM

Submissions for Honey Pot due by the 25th of each month. Send to:

Amazing.bee@verizon.net or to

MCBA, 26626 Howard Chapel Drive
Damascus, MD 20872

President's Notes

by David Bernard

Brrr. As I write this column the cold north wind is howling outside my windows and the new bee season feels to be a long way away. The actuality is that the bees have begun replenishing their numbers as the days grow longer and the swarming season is just around the corner. I remember one year when we were in the apiary with the beginning beekeeping class in late March and the hives were full of swarm cells! Well, maybe the bees are behind that schedule this year, but swarming season IS fast approaching. With that in mind, the March meeting will focus on Spring Management, Swarming, and Making Splits.

Last month, when it was warmer (go figure?), Sarah Richards gave an excellent presentation on making homemade soap with various fat sources, including beeswax. I've never made homemade soap, so it was new territory for me and I'm guessing most of you. With Sarah's knowledge and reassurance, soapmaking seems like something that I could do successfully and I'm anxious to give it a try. Thanks for sharing your experiences Sarah!

The short course kicked off this first week in March after I split the class into two because of the number of interested participants. We have identical sessions running on Tuesdays and Thursdays with 40-45 people attending each night. The duplicate nights doubles the work but so far the club volunteers and my teachers have met the challenge. If it weren't for a number of you (Jim Fraser, Woody Medina, MaryEllen Kirkpatrick, Barry Thompson, Bill Troup, Toni Burnham, Ann Dorsey, Jill and Jeff Martinez – and others I'm sure) I would be in over my head with new students. If you would like to get involved helping the new students and feel the energy and enthusiasm they bring to beekeeping, contact MaryEllen Kirkpatrick

maryellenkirkpatrick@cox.net and be a "bee buddy" resource for the new beekeepers. Even a single year of experience would qualify you to help these brand new beekeepers- someone to help them light their smoker, use a hive tool, open the hive, identify brood or honey, and tell them when to add more space to avoid swarming. Certainly we have members of our club willing to help in this way!

Again, thanks to all who have sent in their dues payments! If you haven't sent in your dues, please do so this month. We'll be purging our mailing list in April.

Calendar and News

MCBA Monthly Meeting: March 8, 2006 7:30 PM Brookside Nature Center

7:30 - 7:50	Welcome and Introduction	David Bernard
7:50 - 8:00	Refreshment Break	
8:00 - 9:00	Spring Management, Swarming, and Making Splits	

Spring is the most intensive bee season, with the ultimate goal of growing strong colonies populous enough to swarm while keeping them from swarming. Beginners, and experienced beekeepers alike, have great difficulty in keeping their colonies from swarming while maximizing the honey production. Come and hear as experienced club members present their strategies for spring management and swarm control.

If you've wanted to increase your number of hives, but don't quite know how to do it, come and hear club members describe the process of making nucs and splits to increase your colony numbers without seriously affecting the parent hive's honey production.

By Laws and Articles of Incorporation

I've asked a few people to help steer the club forward with the establishment of formal bylaws. My main goals are to establish officers who will help the organization run smoothly, expand our activities, and grow in membership and service. If you are interested in serving on a steering committee to guide us through this process, please contact me directly by email, amazing.bee@verizon.net. More to follow in the next few months.

Membership Directory

No one contacted me last month regarding publishing a membership directory. If you are interested in working on this project, please call 301-414-2317 or email me at amazing.bee@verizon.net. Otherwise, I'll drop the idea and move forward with other club issues.

Field Day Anyone?

Last year we held our first club field day, with about 25 beekeepers present. I'd be very much interested in holding another field day, or two, this year. Perhaps we could hold one in the spring and one later in the summer or fall, focusing on medications, and winter preparations? If you'd be interested in holding or coordinating a field day, please contact me at amazing.bee@verizon.net.

Honey Jar Purchase?

Last year Jim Fraser organized and purchased a large order of honey jars and bears for club members. If enough members are interested, we could organize another purchase. Contact Jim Fraser at Jfraser71@aol.com if you'd be interested in participating.



Website:

Remember to visit our website, at: www.montgomerycountybeekeepers.com. If you have any ideas about the Website, please contact Woody Medina at wmedina@pragmatiq.com.

MCBA EMAIL LIST

Are you on the MCBA email list? You are only if you get occasional messages with [Bee] in the subject line. If not, email Beemoderator@gmail.com to be put on it. The email list includes announcements of events and opportunities, discussions of the local beekeeping situation, and questions and answers about beekeeping from our local beekeepers.

Hiveworks

by Bill Miller and Evelyn Hogg

The Perfect March Hive

In March, the colonies are well into buildup for the early Spring nectar flows. While in early March, the colonies will still be using their winter stores; by the end of the month the colonies will have shifted over to fresh nectar from the early Spring sources.

Brood should be abundant in a March colony. A look at your calendar will tell you that the brood you find in your colony in March should be the field force for the honey flow. March brood can also become the big ball of bees your neighbor finds in his tree after a swarm.

If you didn't reverse in February, you will find the bottom hive body empty or nearly so.

Feeding

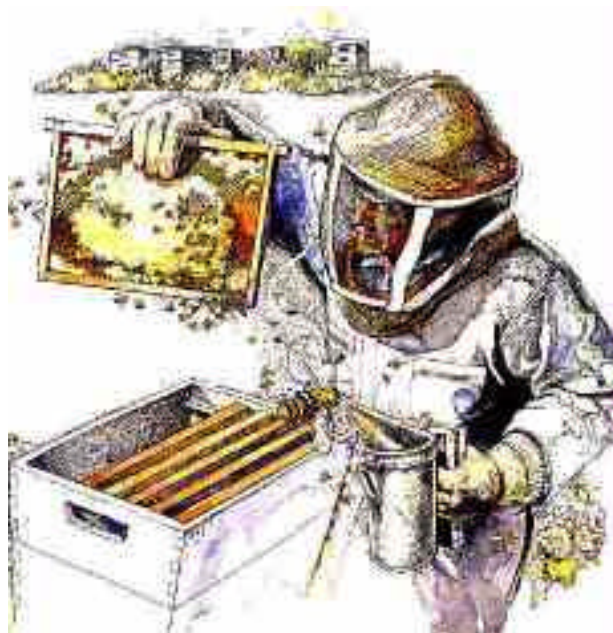
The next few weeks before the early Spring nectar flow are the critical time for bee stores. The bees are eating a lot of food with nothing coming in to replenish. Make sure your colonies always have at least three deep frames equivalent of capped food stores. Anything less- feed a gallon of 1/1 sugar syrup. In fact, feeding a gallon of 1/1 sugar syrup is a good idea in any case, as it will encourage brood rearing.

Pollen

My Maryland experience has been that the bees bring in more than enough pollen for their needs. You don't need to feed pollen in Maryland. In fact, the most common reason I discard a frame is that the bees have filled the frame with pollen.

Frame Inspection

When you reverse a colony, don't just throw the empty bottom box on top and close up the colony; go through the empty box first



and cull out broken frames, bad comb, comb filled with pollen, and similar rejects. Replace these frames with drawn comb frames before you put the empty box back on top.

If you have a known bad frame in the brood area, try to move that frame to the outside and down in the colony. That way, the bees will abandon the frame and you can replace it.

Failed Queen

If you don't find brood by the time of a March inspection, you should be thinking about your queen: she's either dead or is worthless. Bees rarely accept a new queen without open brood present. Requeen after adding open larva from another hive.

Drawing Comb

Not yet- wait until a strong nectar flow (typically mid-April).

New Equipment

Get your new equipment assembled and painted. Painted equipment should sit for at least a week before you put bees in it.

Dr. Nancy Ostiguy of the MAAREC group at Penn State presented a lecture at the February 18th MSBA meeting describing their research into the development and propagation of bee viruses, with particular attention to how they might be associated with varroa infestations. The talk presented a great deal of information, and ended with a series of recommendations and conclusions that left the audience with deep concern and foreboding about the future challenges in beekeeping.

Dr. Ostiguy presented several observations that are essential to understanding her conclusions and recommendations. First, the principal focus has been on Deformed Wing Virus (DWV), which is described biochemically as an RNA virus. In their studies of colonies purposely allowed to become very sick, the PSU team has found DWV in all the elements of the hive except wax. Specifically of concern was finding the DWV in capped honey and stored pollen. This observation led to their recommendation that beekeepers NOT feed “good colonies” with the honey and/or pollen remnants from deadouts with DWV symptoms.

Furthermore, as an RNA virus DWV is very hard, if not impossible, to kill. The action by which honey kills bacterial impurities – lysing – does not apply to DWV. Lysing is the action of removing all the water from a living cell and breaking it down into its biochemical constituents. While this kills a conventional cell-based organism, DWV is a virus particle and not a cell, and is therefore unaffected.

Second was the observation that drones appear more resistant or tolerant to DWV – that the levels of DWV in a colony necessary to observe DWV symptoms in drones were much higher than levels where the onset of symptoms appeared in workers. If you see drones with DWV, you have a very, very, sick colony.

Third was the observation that there appeared to be some critical varroa infestation intensity that enabled the DWV to manifest. Once the pressure of the infestation exceeded some threshold, DWV symptoms begin to manifest and there is almost no going back. This is coupled with the observation that the DWV is always present to some degree, even in healthy colonies. Perhaps, like cytomegalovirus (CMV) in humans, symptoms don’t manifest unless there is some other compromise of general health, as in HIV.

Finally was the observation that DWV, like the mites themselves, propagated within an apiary. Whether by drifting, by robbing of the weakened sick hives by the stronger colonies, or by some other mechanism, sick hives caused neighboring hives to get sick too. This led to the recommendation of keeping smaller apiaries and rapidly quarantining colonies that demonstrated DWV symptoms. While some of these sick, quarantined colonies might recover and survive (and in my opinion be very, very valuable in that regard), the probability that they would infect neighboring healthy colonies far outweighed the probability they would recover.

The presentation understandably generated much consternation and potential for misunderstanding. It is important to remember that these studies are ongoing and the results are preliminary. In some cases key control evaluations have not yet been performed. What, for example, is the concentration of DWV RNA in the various parts of a healthy colony? No data: MAAREC studies sick colonies. Does uptake of additional DWV RNA, for instance from inoculated honey, result in manifestation of DWV symptoms? No data yet. What is the mechanism for transmission of DWV symptoms within an apiary? Unknown and several paths are possible and come immediately to mind. Absent an external driver, such as HIV to CMV in humans, and in the honeybee’s case the pressure exerted by a strong varroa infestation, does the concentration of DWV RNA matter at all? No data. Why is the DWV RNA not showing up in the wax? Or is it, but just at much lower levels? Perhaps levels below our current detection capabilities? Or masked by an unidentified agent in the wax?

These questions are very difficult to answer and the technical work required is neither simple nor cheap. For myself, I take away only one rock-solid conclusion: if a colony in one of our apiaries manifests DWV we will cull it out of the apiary and move it to a “sick house” apiary. We will consider the same action if a colony exhibits a mite level that is significantly higher and out of line with its neighbors. Any colonies that recover from the sick house need particular attention – they might be treasures indeed. Other than that I will maintain a keen eye on MAAREC’s results, a keen eye on our apiaries, and a biotechnologist’s healthy skepticism of our understanding of such a complex system.

SALMON IN HONEY-MARSALA HERBED MARINADE

by MaryEllen Kirkpatrick

This recipe makes enough to marinate 4 servings of salmon, in fillet or in steaks.

- 2 Tablespoons honey
- 2 Tablespoons Marsala
- 2 Tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon lime juice
- 1/2 small onion finely minced (about 1/4 cup)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- black pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon tarragon, minced*
- 1 teaspoon parsley minced*



Combine all the ingredients in a bowl or a ziplock bag and marinate the salmon for a couple of hours in the refrigerator. * A note on the herbs: Use fresh herbs if you possibly can. If you only have dried, use the tarragon but omit the parsley. Fresh herbs can be purchased at the grocery store, minced and frozen in a ziplock bag.

Preheat the oven to 350°. Oil a baking pan with olive oil and set it in the oven to heat up briefly. Place the salmon on the heated pan, spoon over a bit of the marinade and bake until the fish is done- it will be firm when pressed, but it should not be hard or flaking apart. Discard or freeze the remaining marinade for another dinner.

Serve with boiled new potatoes and butter, salt, pepper and a sprinkling of the fresh herbs you used in the marinade.

Dewey Caron's Bee Race Comparison Chart:

Characteristic	Characteristics of economically important <i>Apis mellifera</i> races			
	Italian	Carniolan	German	Caucasian
Honey production	Good/High	Good-High	Good-High	Fair-High
Honey cappings	Waxy	Waxy	Waxy	Watery
Swarming	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Weak
Propolis	Low	Low	Moderate	Excessive
Temperament	Gentle	Gentle	Defensive	Gentle
Robbing	Strong	Weak	Moderate	Weak
Spring buildup	Fast	Fast	Slow	Slow
Overwintering	Poor	Good	Good	Poor
Drifting	High	Low	Moderate	Low
Burr comb	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
Queen visibility	High	Low	Low	Low

