

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association

Local Buzz



April 2011

President's Message

Well an ark passed me while we were stuck in an almond orchard. Boy, we need some good weather! I hope everyone's bees are doing well, I'm looking forward to making up 200 nucs when the weather gets better.

The April meeting will be run by our Vice President Jeremiah, who will also present the program on doing splits. I'll be doing bee research in Cabo San Lucas.

Have a good time!

Your President, Rob Slay

April 4th Meeting

The topic for the month will be swarms and splits, presented by our very own Jeremiah Farrell, 7 PM at the Grass Valley Veteran's Hall. Also, this will be Randy Oliver's 'Beginning Beekeeping' first class.

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

We are enjoying a winter like the Good Old Days, back when men were men, and Winter held on through the end of April! Which meant that we rarely got a crop of Manzanita honey. It's killing me to see all that good bloom go to waste. Not to mention seeing my fruit trees go through bloom while it is snowing, meaning that there will be no fruit this year.

It's not as bad, though, as what the poor almond growers are experiencing as I type this. High winds in the waterlogged Valley are blowing over almond trees (notable for their weak roots) like dominoes. We had

to call off hauling hives out of the almonds today due to the extreme weather.

But that hasn't stopped us from raising queen cells in the snow, and making up nucs in the cold rain. No fun at all! But everyone is screaming for bees, so we have to make hay even when the sun is not shining.

It could be worse though—I spoke today with a major California queen breeder/producer. He has 35,000 (yes, 35 thousand) nucs sitting on the ground, with the virgin queens just biding their time until they can take mating flights! I visited him a few days ago, and he showed me that stack of letters that he was sending out to tell his clients that orders for queens would be running at least two weeks late this year. Looks like there will be no early April California queens this year.

My own nuc production is also going to be delayed, which is too bad, since it promises to be a good honey flow this year due to the soil moisture.

Speaking to commercial beekeepers, most everyone's bees are looking good this year. In my own hives, the brood is beautiful, and I'm seeing much less disease than I did a few years ago (knock on wood).

You all should be out there hefting your hives during this weather to make sure that they are not starving—they can really go through the honey stores under these conditions. You want them to survive until the weather clears, so that they can make you some honey this spring!

From the Librarian...

By Tynowyn Slattery

A new book:
Managing Alternative Pollinators: A Handbook for Beekeepers, Growers and Conservationists. Eric Mader, Marla Spivak, Elaine Evans.

8X11", glossy paper format, 162 pages with 8 appendices (the eighth has 4 pages of up to date resources) and photos, diagrams and informative sidebars, too many to count. Published by Natural Resource, Agriculture and Engineering Service, 2010 (NRAES mission is assisting land-grant university faculty in increasing the public availability of science- and experienced-based knowledge. NRAES is sponsored by eight land-grant universities in the Eastern US and receives administrative support from Cornell University, the host university. I'm including this information because there are 140 other excellent publications on their website that deserve a look.) Authors, Spivak, Mader and Evens, all associated with the University of Minnesota's Department of Entomology have put together an outstanding book; an eminently practical guide on raising all the "other bees"; the Bumbles, Masons, Alfalfa Leafcutters, Alkalis and Coccos, on up to the endearingly named, Shaggy Fuzzyfoot (Fuzzyfeet?) and beyond into the fly family.

Even though this is a very "how to", scientific handbook, albeit written in a layman's language, the presentation of the immense amount of information, instead of being overwhelming, inspires a "can-do" confidence that comes in handy considering that alternative pollinators also have the same problems as our melliferians; pesticides, diminishing habitat, viruses and parasites.

If I weren't determined to follow through with my honey bees, I'd consider giving alternative pollinators a go, if even for this one good reason in a quote from Eric Mader , "...our dependence on a single managed pollinator is a risky proposition."

I hope this book gives some inspiration to someone to try "the others" and I wish them every success.

Just a few last impressions...thanks to Randy for getting this for the library... Marla Spivak with a bee beard on her website... another website called "What's That Bug?" and the picture of the hairy-fingered mite of Bumble Bees that's even uglier than Varroa.

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Dues!

By Janet Brisson

Missed me? Sorry I've missed the last 3 meetings and thank you Deborah, Steven and Leslie for helping out with collecting the membership dues. In April, I will be collecting dues and in May late notices will be going out. You will know if you have not paid your dues by the notice on your May mailing label, and those who get their newsletters through email will have a note. Please pay your dues to keep your newsletters coming; they are such a valuable source of information. Thanks, Janet Brisson, Treasurer

News from the Road!

January we were on a family trip. February we were touring the Bay area. There were 4 bee clubs right in a row. And March we were in Washington speaking at 2 clubs. We were lucky to have excellent weather, raining only at night after we were back at the motels.

I listened to a lot of beekeepers who came into spring with no bees, mostly because they got hygienic, survivor bees or regressed bees and kept them without doing any treatments at all.

There are a lot of popular veteran beekeepers who advocate 'No Treatments' and picking the best of your bees and breeding those. They feel that the bees that do not survive are not worth having.

I feel differently. I feel that bees are a valuable commodity, you pay a lot of money for your bees and

just to let them perish without a helping hand just seems wrong. I have been talking a lot about dusting your bees with powdered sugar to help your bees along.

We have been keeping our bees going for 6 years now, just using powdered sugar. About 3 years ago, we took out most of our plastic foundation so our bees could build natural comb and let themselves regress. You can see the natural comb has smaller cells in the brood area with larger cells surrounding them for honey, pollen and drones. Last year we dusted our bees for 3 weeks in July as we usually do and saw very few mites. We also had hardly any mites in our drone cells. We dusted 3 times again in mid-September after we pulled our honey and again, saw hardly any mites. Our program has been to dust once a month throughout the winter to capture any phoretic mites, but in October, we had so few mites, we didn't dust again until February. And again, just a few mites. So, maybe the natural comb has kicked in, or maybe we trained our bees to groom the mites off themselves, or maybe we have bred our own survivor line by picking our strongest hives to take queens from.

When you get your new bees, give them a fighting chance by dusting them with powdered sugar and see what your mite load is. This procedure will not hurt the qualities of the bees you choose, it doesn't hurt the brood and it is the most non-toxic way of removing mites from your colonies on the market. Of course it doesn't remove all the mites in one dusting, you must dust at least 3 times in 3 weeks (high mite loads, dust twice a week for 3 weeks) to capture most of the mites, and you still don't get them all. When our mites were a problem, we dusted 3 weeks every few months to get our mite load under control. And it worked. For a video of me dusting our bees, you can go to YouTube and type in Country Rubes, or go to our webpage Countryrubes.com and scroll half way down to find the movie.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at rubes@countryrubes.com, I will be happy to help.

Have a great day, Janet

Need a Mentor?

If you're an NCBA member and are looking for a mentor, please call the person closest to you to arrange a meeting:

- Stephanie Hughes
Grass Valley

(530) 320-5297

- Karla Hanson
Nevada City

(530) 265-3756

- Leslie Gault

Chicago Park

(530) 346-7092

- Hugh Cavallaro

Rattlesnake Rd.

(530) 272-7550

- Jeremiah Farrell

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March Minutes

Pres Rob Slay opened Q&A. No finance report. Formic acid anti-Varroa strips will be available this spring. All hives should be checked by alcohol count, or weekly check of sticky boards. Nosema ceranae disease is a minor problem, but fumagillin is available. Beekeeper classes begin April 4 plus the next four Monday nights, plus field trips to Randy Oliver's <randy@randyoliver.com> He will provide mask and suit. \$50 per family.

PROGRAM Randy showed slides indicating overall effects of modern insecticides having low level toxicity to bees, and illustrations of an inexpensive method of producing queens for hobby beekeepers.

Jack Meeks sec

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. 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. The newsletter is published monthly as a service to the membership. Articles, recipes, commentary, and news items are welcomed and encouraged. Submission by email is encouraged. Please submit to Leslie Gault at lesliegault@yahoo.com. The deadline for the May 2011 edition is April 22nd. A limited amount of advertising space (business card size 3" by 2") is accepted and need not be bee-related. Rates are \$1 per issue or \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members. All revenue from advertising goes to the Association treasury and helps offset the cost of producing and distributing this newsletter. To receive the *Local Buzz* via email: please email your request to lesliegault@yahoo.com

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Nevada County Beekeepers Association



c/o Steve Reynolds
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First Class Mail
April 2011

April 4th Program

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