

Local Buzz



August 2006

President's Message

Here it is July 21, 2006 and it's supposed to be around 102 degrees in Grass Valley tomorrow. That's hot for here. Make sure your bees have a clean water supply close by as they use the water to cool their hives.

Our Honey Hut is under construction and should be completed by next week. George Barta Construction is heading up the operation and is doing a great job. We've been busy designing labels and assembling new equipment, preparing for expansion and replacing old equipment. Things have been very busy around here, but we are enjoying ourselves.

The bees seem to be doing very well. We currently have between 500 and 700 pounds of honey on the colonies waiting to be extracted. Varroa counts seem to be lower than usual this year. Just a reminder, Randy says that August 15th is the deadline to knockdown Varroa prior to fall. Star thistle seems to be doing very well around here and the bees are on it.

The Nevada County Fair is just around the corner and the bee booth still has slots available. If you haven't manned the booth, it is a good time. People are very interested in bees and the products they have to offer.

Janet Brisson purchased a copy of Walt Wright's pamphlet on Checker Boarding. I was able to read to the pamphlet and found it not to be too labor intensive and feasible for swarm prevention and hive management. A copy of the pamphlet will be available in the library by the next meeting.

Your President, Shane Mathias

Workers Needed for the Fair Bee Booth August 9-13

We are once again hosting the buzzingly popular bee booth at the Nevada County Fair, Wednesday August 9 through Sunday August 13. If you read last month's Buzz you will remember that we solicited our members to staff the booth. Karla Hanson (phone 265-3756 or email karlahanson@lanset.com) is coordinating the sign-up this year, and tells us we still need Nevada County Beekeepers Association members (you) to sign up. Four hour shifts are available Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10 AM to 2 PM, all afternoons 2 PM to 6 PM, or most evenings 6 PM to 10 PM. Remember, the NCBA provides one free entry ticket (save \$7) to each worker (you will have to pay for your own parking.) Times are on a first-come first serve basis, so please contact Karla as soon as possible.

Fair Booth Clean Up Aug 6

The NCBA will be meeting at the Bee Booth at the Nevada County Fairgrounds on Sunday August 6th at 11 AM to clean up and prepare the booth for the Fair. The bee booth is just inside gate 5 at the fairgrounds, enter the parking area via gate 4 from McCourtney Road and drive towards the rear to find gate 5. All are welcome to join and help. Bring cleaning supplies and a picnic lunch to enjoy together afterwards.

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

Enjoying the heat? Yesterday afternoon we were lucky to find a little shade in which to make up 80 late nucs. Got them home by 8:30 in the evening in the sweltering heat, unloaded, then installed ripe queen cells as darkness fell. Staggered out of bed early this sultry morning to check up on them, and was rewarded with a beautiful rainbow across the western sky!

The temperature is expected to pass 100° today, and we have 60 more nucs to make. Not the best of conditions--the ripening blackberries are withering on the vine, and yellow star thistle can barely squeak out a pathetic little dry flower. The bees have decent brood nests, though, and I'm even shaking watery nectar from some colonies! Unfortunately, inspection of the brood frames shows little spare pollen.

The protein from late summer pollen is critical for building healthy colonies to survive the winter, and to brood up for almond pollination. I'm handling the local lack of pollen in three ways--two natural, and one artificial. Half of our colonies we've moved up to Nevada to irrigated alfalfa for the summer, with the associated late-summer rabbitbrush bloom. (Let's not even talk about the cost and time replacing the truck engine, \$1700 on brakes, and sky-high gasoline). Our remaining colonies stayed here, and I planned to feed them sugar syrup and pollen substitute. To that end, I purchased \$1000 worth of the new pollen replacement from Canada: "Feed Bee." It's a bit pricey (about \$2.30/ lb. delivered in bulk), so I'll have to experiment to see if it's worth the cost. If any Member wants to try some, call me. I haven't had a chance to try it yet, but it's gotten great reviews.

A few days ago, serendipity struck, and my beekeeping friend Keith called to tell me that he had fields of safflower and alfalfa in bloom in Sacramento, and not enough bees to take advantage of them. Most of his bees were tied up in contracts pollinating seed plots of carrots, onions, melons, and squashes. If I may digress, he pollinates Grimmway Farms (the prepacked carrots in the grocery) carrot seed production. They grow it in little 5-acre plots isolated from other carrots. Then they harvest the

seed and ship it to Chile to grow out in the Southern Hemisphere summer (during our winter) in larger plots. The resulting seed is then shipped back to the U.S. for planting next spring!

Keith hated to see all the safflower bloom going to "waste," so he called me. I took a load of singles down to Sacramento to a buffer zone that Sacramento purchased from a farmer surrounding their sewage treatment facility. No development is permitted on this land, but the farmer is free to farm it or not, depending upon his whim. His whim this year is to leave a portion fallow, to plant some in alfalfa and till it back in, and to grow safflower on the rest.

If you've never seen safflower, it is an incredibly spiky thistle-like plant about two feet tall with brilliant yellow to orange flowers. It's grown as an oilseed for the polyunsaturated oil it produces (the flowers also produce a strong dye). It's grown around West Sacramento in river bottoms and dry areas, and blooms in late July into August. The bloom in "Keith's" field was just starting. Each plant has about 6-10 flower heads, but only one had opened, and some parts of the field were still entirely green. Over a levee, there was about 40 acres of alfalfa in full purple bloom--a sight rarely seen in California, since alfalfa here is usually cut before bloom for the higher protein content. I didn't see a single bee working the bloom until I placed mine. Talk about a bee dream come true! The honey from safflower is not table quality, but the bees build up well, and pack out with bright orange pollen. Stephanie and I are heading down to the WAS conference Sunday morning, and I can't wait to stop by the field at that time and see how the colonies are doing!

Our bees are looking better this year than they have in some time. The queen genetics are finally up to the task. I'm really happy with several of our current breeders. Queen cells are more difficult to produce now, but surprisingly, those that reach completion are large and well fed. We're gambling by producing such late nucs, but my goal is to get up to 600 healthy queenright colonies going into winter, with the hope of taking 500 busting colonies to almonds. The almond market is looking up due to a drought in Spain (which drives

the price up), and the number of new orchards coming into production. It looks to be a sellers (renters) market for the beekeeper for next February.

We're preparing for pollination right now, and as soon as we return from WAS, I'll jump on mite testing and control, and late summer stimulative feeding. That will coincide with the County Fair, so I'll be plenty busy. Please call Karla to sign up for the Fair Booth. One shift per person is not enough--we only have a limited number of members to fill all the slots. This is the one time each year that the NCBA asks its members for their valuable time. Please volunteer!

Randy Oliver



Dr. Mussen Interviewed by Sacramento TV Station

For those of you with internet access, check out the links below. State Extension Apiculturist Dr. Eric Mussen was interviewed recently by UPN Channel 31. The interview is available on two video clips:

<http://www.cbs13.com/video/?id=7222@kovr.dayport.com>

<http://www.cbs13.com/video/?id=7223@kovr.dayport.com>

Dr. Mussen's earnest responses to UPN's silly interview style are worth the download time!

Sacramento Beekeeping Supplies

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email:sacbeek@cwnet.com
Open Tuesday through Saturday 9:30 – 5:30
MAIL ORDERS RECEIVE QUICK SERVICE

July Minutes

Our July meeting was a picnic at Memorial Park on July 3 so no meeting minutes were prepared. A good time was had by all.

Cottage Cosmetics

A how-to guide for making fine olive oil soap and all natural personal care products using beeswax is available from local author and herbalist, Linnie McNaughton. Detailed instructions are included.

To order send check for \$15 (Cost of book is \$12, plus shipping and tax) to:
GREEN BLESSINGS
21055 Dog Bar Rd., Grass Valley 95949
or call (530) 906-0831 or e-mail at greenblessings@infostations.com.

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 Sept 2006 edition is August 20th. 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



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August 2006

August Meeting

Our August 7th meeting will be a presentation by Randy Oliver on wildflowers, plus a bonus report on the Western Apicultural Society meeting.