

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association

Local Buzz



October 2011

President's Message

Well it's soon October or will be when you read this. I harvested about 2/3 of what I expected, but that's fine as all but 40 honey bears have been sold. And all my colonies have been given pollen substitute, and my inventory is almost done! The bees are gearing up for almonds and I'm gearing up to double my operation. Hope everyone had a great bee year as we may not have this good of a year again.

Your President, Rob Slay

October 3rd Meeting

The October meeting is going to be a talk by Janet Brisson about powdered sugar treatments, along with nominating next years officers and a honey tasting. Please everyone bring a bottle of this years honey to sample and share and study with the refractometer.

Thank You!
Valarie Farrell

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

It seems that I keep writing about unusual weather. Perhaps that is due to poor memory or lack of record keeping, but most California beekeepers agree that this season is again unusual. I can't remember this much bloom occurring during our "normally" dry summer. Everything

ran about a month late due to the cool spring and early summer weather. In Nevada County, drones usually disappear during July once blackberry bloom ends. This season found drones in abundance clear into the end of September! I wouldn't normally dream of making late-summer nucs unless I was ready to feed them heavily, yet I've got a bunch of them mating out right now, and some are even building comb from the lids! The blackberry crop this year was good, but the honey was of unusually high moisture content. It was followed by a heavy dark honey (the source is still a mystery to me) that in some yards was "stringy." In a few yards, we even got some yellow star thistle honeyflow—something that I haven't seen for over a decade!

As a result of these good conditions, mite levels are up in my hives, and we are actively hitting them with a variety of the natural miticides to keep them in check. Again, it is critical to make sure that your mite levels are way down in order for colonies to winter successfully.

Our good fortune was not enjoyed by beekeepers in other areas of the US. Texas and Oklahoma are in devastating drought, and the harvest in areas of the normally productive Midwest (where most commercial hives are summered) are way down. I'm not hearing any numbers yet, but this may lead to a shortage in the almonds.

I attended the Western Apicultural Society convention in Hawaii last week. They've had the unfortunate bad luck of being invaded by both varroa and Small Hive Beetle in short order. The latter is causing devastation of hobby and mid-scale beekeepers there. Hawaii had formerly been a true bee paradise—no chilling, year-round nectar and pollen, no pesticides, and no parasites. The only management that Hawaiian beekeepers had

needed to do was to decide if they wanted to pull any honey that week!

All this changed with the arrival of the two pests, especially SHB. Honey or drawn combs can no longer be left on the hives, or SHB will move in and slime the hive. If you haven't seen sliming, it's worse than a nightmare! Consider yourself lucky that Nevada County does not appear to be good SHB habitat!

I'm currently at the world beekeeping convention, Apimondia, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Argentina is one of the world's major honey producers, due to their vast, flat farmland, similar to the American Midwest. Traditionally, it was managed as cattle pasture, which was very good for bees. Unfortunately for beekeepers, much of it is now being converted to corn and soybeans.

What is fascinating here is to see the exhibitors from all over the world wishing to sell their products to beekeepers. We all know how inventive beekeepers are—just imagine how many clever inventions and products are being hawked! One device that caught my eye was a queen catcher. It was a clear plastic tube, gently curved, looking somewhat like a pipe, with the tube large enough to easily accommodate a queen. Instead of the bowl opening being on the top, it was on the bottom, rectangular, and just large enough to place over a queen. The queen then walks up into the tube. You then lift up the tube, put the narrow end at the entry hole of a queen cage, and blow into the rectangular hole at the other end, which blows the queen into the cage!

A Bee Surprise

By Irl Denniston

About nine years ago on a warm October tenth afternoon I was checking a colony housed in two deep supers. They were very friendly bees. I pulled the lid off and started my inspection frame by frame.

As I raised the second frame midway on the comb and near the right hand edge was one of the largest

queen cells I had ever seen. Overjoyed with delight, I lowered the frame very carefully back into its place. The rest of the frames were checked one by one. The colony was in good shape.

The inevitable desire arose to take one more look at that beautiful queen cell specimen. With a thumping heart, up came that second frame. My eyes told the horror story, there in the bottom of the queen cell was a big hole. Tears started coming to my eyes. Why did I risk a second look? All of a sudden there before my eyes a new born queen was walking about. Her wings were still damp.

Quickly I rushed her on the frame to our kitchen and held her captive while I prepared a nuc box for her and placed her therein.

That queen lived more than two and a half years. Several nucs were started from that colony. Surprise number one.

In September 2010 with seventeen colonies we extracted 38 gallons of honey. September 2011 with nine colonies we extracted 38 gallons of honey.

The loss of colonies between 2010 and 2011 was due to unintentional mismanagement on my part. That is another surprise story for another day.

Goodies Sign-up

Please let Karla Hanson at queenbeez@att.net know if you can bring a treat for any of the coming months. We need three people per meeting for treats. At the next meeting I will send out a sign up list for goodies for all of those have not already signed up by sending me an email. Please make sure that whatever you bring does NOT have hydrogenated oils in the contents. Our bees bodies don't like poisons and neither do ours...

Thank you,

Karla

Raffle HELP!!!

We always need more contributions to the raffle! We beekeepers are a creative bunch, and appreciate a wide variety of things; plants are always a great item to bring. Almost everyone loves having more plants. Do remember, for every item you bring, you will get a free ticket for the raffle. So look around the house and see what you can find for the next raffle.

Thanks, Karla

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Dan Wheat Sr. of A to Z Supply wanted us to let everyone know that they have finished their honey extraction house and it's now available for rent. Cost is \$15.00 plus .15 cents per pound extracted. There is a 6 frame electric extractor, hot knife, and uncapping sink. The room is heated with lots of hot water for clean up. Client is responsible for clean up. Also available is a 4 frame extractor for \$15.00 per day.

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From the Librarian...

I have just come from Randy's excellent September presentation on the use of his new mathematical model for tracking Varroa infestation in the hive over a period of time; if you had the misfortune to miss this last meeting, check out the September issue of "American Bee Journal" and read "Sick Bees Part 12", or go to Randy's web site, "[Scientific Beekeeping.com](http://ScientificBeekeeping.com)" and look for articles by date; September 1, 2011, Sick Bees #12, Getting Down to the Brass Tacks; An Early Summer Test of Mite-Away Quick Strips TM. There should be a link to the article by the time you are reading this review.

While I doubt that I'm going to be filling in variables in a spreadsheet any time soon, it doesn't matter; he has already crunched enough numbers that generally apply to our area and put the practical applications out there in bold letters. Putting one piece of all this great information into practice... come Feb/April, I'll be in the yard, in the nasty weather, making splits out of every hive that I'm lucky enough to keep over winter, which brings me to the book review(s) of the month: "Increase Essentials" and "Queen Rearing Essentials" both by Lawrence John Connor. Wicwas Press

A few years ago, when Dr. Conner came to a couple of the associations meetings, I thought making splits had a pretty steep learning curve and raising my own queens was as far away as the moon; now making splits is just another springtime thing to do (albeit, always interesting) and raising a queen seems closer than ever before but both take preparation...in equipment and understanding.

I agree that you can't "learn" bee keeping from a book, but it sure helped to have a good one to keep turning to when I was learning about hive increase; there is a lot to know and "Increase Essentials" is a comprehensive work with a lot of clear information on establishing new colonies by installing packages, swarms, nucs or by splitting existing colonies using different manipulations and techniques.

The second book, "Queen Rearing Essentials," takes the beekeeper further down the road to self sufficiency; while most of us are perfectly happy to buy our queens in the spring, information about how a good queen is bred is something that all beekeepers need to have and, as in "Increase Essentials," Dr. Connor's "Queen Rearing Essentials" is clearly written and well organized, the technique descriptions are straight forward and easy to understand, with a care to not slip into scient-ese.

Winter is the time to get our ducks in a row for the spring increase and reading both these books, in a comfy chair with the snow outside, will make it a whole lot easier.

...a fun(ny)/not so funny, link to follow...
<http://beequick.com/wall/shame2.html>

...and a note about late books:

The library books are checked out for a month, so... if you check out a book, you have agreed to come to the next meeting and, if you think about it, a book or DVD that is not returned in the next two meetings means that it is not available to the rest of the members of the association for 3 months, a long time, if you're waiting for a specific book.

Meeting only once a month contributes to some of the problem so, in cases where it just doesn't work out, I'm happy to have books mailed to my home address:

Tynowyn Slattery
20493 Rome Road
Nevada City, CA 95959

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September Minutes

Pres. Rob Slay opened with Q&A. Some nucs just don't thrive. Differences in health of hives may depend on genetics of resident viruses and microbes, as well as the queen's. In a successful hive, the queen lays a daily full pattern, and there is plenty of royal jelly under the eggs. A new antibiotic is used to treat American Foulbrood. Pollen patties @ \$1/lb, used three to a hive, can produce profit. Light syrup is 1:1 sugar:water; heavy syrup is 2:1. Dry fresh yeast is good pollen extender. Multicolor cells of pollen surrounding egg pattern helps nurse bees feed larvae. Shortage of pollen stops hive growth. Hive splitting is best when broodless. Splitting reduces mite numbers. Swarms take 15% of hive's mites; 85% stay and should be treated. In summer, a sticky board left in hive 24 hours should catch three or less mites to be safe.

Treasury by Janet Brisson:

April Start \$3865.03; Inc \$628; Exp \$92.84: End \$4400.24

May \$4400.24; Inc \$45 End \$4445.24

June \$4445.24; Inc \$448.20 End \$4893.44

July No activity

August \$4893.44 Exp \$511.21 End \$4382.23

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 November 2011 edition is October 27th. 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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Treasurer: Janet Brisson... 530-913-2724
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Nevada County Beekeepers Association



c/o Steve Reynolds
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 First Class Mail
 October 2011

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