

Local Buzz



March 2008



President's Message

Hello all, welcome to March, my bees loved the good weather in Feb. and have been brooding up nicely. One colony has two plus frames of brood. I hope yours are doing great. I put one colony into almonds last year and ten now, so I must be doing something right!

A few of the NCBA members asked me about the Paramount Citrus snafu—Paramount Citrus planted seedless mandarins in CA, but they chose not to allow for a buffer as they were instructed. Now the company is threatening to sue beekeepers for allowing their bees to pollinate the Clementine mandarins, which makes seedless fruit have seeds and reduces their value. Most beekeepers moved away for fear of losing a lawsuit to a corporate giant. The brand of mandarins is Paramount Citrus Clementine, all others are ok.

As a beekeeper I choose not to purchase these or other products from this company i.e. pom wonderful pomegranate juice or Fiji water. if you have any questions about this, please see me at the next meeting.

Your President, Rob Slay

March 3rd Program

Randy Oliver will kick off his annual beginners class with a bit of his PowerPoint presentation "Bee Husbandry for the 21st Century." Members are also welcome to bring samples of 25 bees collected at the entrance of the colony for nosema testing. The bees should be either frozen (they can thaw on the way), or preserved in rubbing alcohol. We will have time to process several samples to determine nosema infection rate.

Mailing Label

Please take a look at your mailing label. If you see the words "dues r due!", by your name, your 2008 membership dues have not been paid yet.

A membership in NCBA keeps you informed of programs coming up, what to do in your hives and the goings on in the bee world. Please pay your dues (\$20.00 mailed/\$15.00 emailed) at our March meeting or make your check out to NCBA and mail:

NCBA
c/o Janet Brisson
20693 Dog Bar Road
Grass Valley, CA 95949

Why'd You Get This?

Check your label, if it has the word 'fair' by your name, you signed up at the Nevada County Bee booth for class information. This is the newsletter you have been waiting for! Beekeeping Classes start at our March 3rd meeting. Bring your family for an evening of bee introduction and slides put on by Randy Oliver. Hope to see you there.

Alert! Hive Theft! Alert!

Mike Hall, a beekeeper in Sacramento County, has had two separate thefts of beehives within the past week. The hives are described as **having bright yellow lids**, in **excellent condition**, and on **new pallets**. Evidence at the yard where the bees were stolen points to a “pro”. A total of **180 hives** have been stolen. Just for almond pollination at \$125/ hive that amounts to a catastrophic loss (\$22,500) for our beekeeper. So please keep an eye out and contact me if you see these hives.

Also it was suggested since these hives have bright yellow lids, perhaps our aerial applicators could be help out, as this time of year they are especially aware of bees. Any information which leads to recovering the hives will be greatly appreciated. By: David L. Wilson, Chief Deputy Agricultural Commissioner, Sacramento County. 916-875-6150

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

What a crazy winter! I've never seen a winter this rough for bees. We've had rough springs due to El Nino, but the nonstop cold and snow were tough. On the discussion group Bee-L, someone asked today (Feb 22): Is there any truth to the Rumors I am hearing? [about almond pollination shortages]

I replied: I haven't wanted to dispute previous posts that there are plenty of bees in Calif. As with last year, there are plenty of boxes in Calif.

Again, as in last year, some of those boxes had bees in them in the recent past, but no longer do. The bloom is just beginning--way late, and the weather has turned foul again. Many out of stagers dropped off bees early, expecting better weather, and a timely bloom. Neither happened. So colonies sat in the cold and starved. Not cold enough to form a tight cluster and conserve stores, so they burned through their food. Then a few days of warm to get robbing and burn up even more energy futilely looking for food. Then the current rain again, which should last through Sunday. My guess is that colony protein levels are low, unless the colonies have patties on them.

Monday should begin a sunny turn in the weather, and then we will really know what the bee situation is. But I

can tell you that cell phones are ringing as beekeepers try to fill in sudden holes in their contracts.

I personally went down and put pollen supplement on all my protein-hungry colonies a few days ago. Other local beekeepers kept their bees out of the orchards and on mustard flows until the last minute--they are moving in today in the rain. Almond pollination separates the beekeepers from the box haulers.

Now before anyone accuses me of blaming losses on PPB, there are some very good beekeepers experiencing losses. There are also mediocre beekeepers (such as myself) suffering the same (I believe that mine reached their nadir about two weeks ago). There are some incredibly strong colonies in almonds--I'm talking to those guys to see how they pulled it off. 'Cause next year...

Randy Oliver

In rainy California

I recently returned from Pennsylvania, where I was a speaker. I was able to spend time with two of the top CCD researchers—Dennis van Engelsdorp and Dr. Diana Cox-Foster. I'll tell you, bee research has never been more exciting! The politics, intrigue, competition for money and prestige are amazing, yet incredible research keeps getting done. My hat is off to the hard-working researchers trying to figure things out in an environment where getting sufficient funding is their major concern.

The hot topics in my mind are *Nosema ceranae* and bee viruses. Here is the intro to the article that I am submitting today: The more I learn about CCD and other colony maladies, the more I am impressed by the fact that honey bees are currently dealing with a complex of novel parasites, pathogens, vectors, stresses, and immunosuppressants. The nutrition/parasite/virus complex appears to me to be where the main action is, and viruses are all too often winning the game! (More on this in a later article).

Unfortunately, at present, there isn't much we can directly do about viruses ; but what we can do is feed our bees well, and take action against the parasites.

Healthy bees generally handle viruses fairly well until something starts punching holes through their integument. And that's just what mites and *nosema* do—one pierces the skin, the other perforates the gut. As I

speak to beekeepers who are successful at bringing strong colonies into the almonds, a common thread is that they've been diligent at keeping mite and nosema levels down—in the case of mites, way down. Many also swear by heavy feeding to supplement natural forage.

Today's successful beekeeper tends to be smart, diligent, hardworking, and willing to invest time and money into good bee husbandry.

Back to Nosema ceranae

The big question is: just how virulent is *N. ceranae* in this country? In Spain, Dr. Mariano Higes' team found *ceranae* to be devastating to both colonies, and to individual bees in the lab. However, Dr. Steve Pernal of Alberta, in a small lab test, did not find it to be notably more virulent than *N. apis*. I've spoken to beekeepers who found high spore counts this fall, yet have thriving bees in almonds. Yet others, including myself, have seen colonies lag, or go downhill with moderate spore counts in summer. Others in the US report major collapses.

Researchers in North America are trying to figure out the equation that makes *ceranae* the kiss of death in some colonies, and a mere nuisance in others. Why do some yards go down, while other yards in the same operation thrive? As I mentioned in the forward, there are likely other aspects or players involved. In any case, it would certainly be prudent for any beekeeper to monitor nosema levels, and to treat if necessary.

Raffle Items Appreciated

Please help to support the club through the raffle! The raffle makes it possible for us to have those special speakers come to our meetings. Bring your unwanted extras of bee equipment, home made jellies and jams are also great. Whatever you think someone else might like and you no longer need or desire. Thanks for your support!!!

Karla Hanson, Raffle Chair

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February Minutes

Pres Rob Slay opened with Q&A

Finance Brisson: OctEnd\$1189.18; Inc\$111.50;

Exp\$121.72; NovEnd\$1178.96.

DecExp\$404.63; DecEnd\$774.33. JanInc\$746;

Exp\$284.74; JanEnd\$1285.59.

PROGRAM John Miller, keeps 1600 hives. "Spring Buildup" Jan is time to

provide pollen patties with pollen or brewer's yeast for protein, sucrose sugar, medications. Fumagillin treats *Nosema apis* and *N. ceranae*. Fall broods are the most important of the year. New World black Carniolans keep smaller clusters, eat less. In spring Italian yellow bees build fast if fed sucrose (not fructose.) Spring splits are time to requeen if the brood is poor. Pollination contracts now \$160 for 8 full frames (out of 20) @60F. Miller over winters his bees in S. Dakota potato cellars with 40F dark, quiet, dormant conditions. Janet Brisson demonstrated screened bottom board convertible hive bases and plastic traps for Small Hive Beetles, which cluster at top of frames. For March meeting, Randy will show exam for *Nosema*. Bring a jar of 20-40 bees, collected from entrance at noon, in alcohol.

Jack Meeks, sec

BEE SYMPOSIUM MARCH 8, 2008

THE HONEYBEE, Pollinators AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In this time of global ecological challenges, the honeybee is an indicator species reflecting the enormous changes taking place in our world. Bee populations are dying and pollination ecology is deeply affected. As beekeepers, we must become stewards of the earth and change paradigms. This one-day symposium offers information and speakers with new perspectives on

honeybees and native pollinators, beekeeping practices, innovative approaches and ecological strategies for beekeepers.

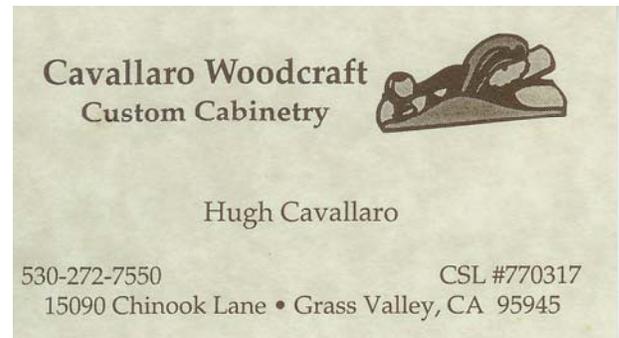
The SYMPOSIUM features Randy Oliver, Grass Valley, Biologist and forward-thinking commercial beekeeper, Dr. Eric Mussen, Entomologist, UC Davis, CA Beekeeper Association 2006 Beekeeper of the Year Katharina Ullmann, Presenting for Claire Kremnen, Xerces Society, UC Berkeley, Serge Labesque, 2006 Western Apiculturist Society's (WAS) Innovator of the year, Kathy Kellison, Executive Director of Partners For Sustainable Pollination (PFSP), Michael Thiele, Holistic beekeeper; Demeter Beekeeping Standards, Ron Fessenden, M.D. Co-Chairman of The Committee on Honey and Human Health. A panel discussion will take place, and two innovative movies on beekeeping will be presented by the filmmakers 1) Pollen Nation, by Singeli Agnew and Joshua Fischer , 2) The Vanishing of the Bees, by Maryam Henein , Doreen Schmid, presenting bee art, The Melissa Garden, A honey bee sanctuary in Healdsburg, Rudolf Steiner College, Sonoma County Master Gardeners, 4-H Kids, Sonoma County Beekeeping Association and more.

LOCATION: Summerfield Waldorf School & Farm. There is limited parking, so please carpool. 655 Willowside Road, Santa Rosa, CA The date is Saturday, March 8, 2008 from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Tickets are \$25.00 (advance) \$30.00 (at the door) Tickets may be purchased by phone at (707) 824-2905 or by MAIL before March 1 at Beekind Honey Shop, 921 Gravenstein Hwy. 116 South in Sebastopol. Go to beekind.com for directions and a flyer. Additional information may be requested at: symposium@beekind.com. Lunch by "Angelo" will be available for purchase on site.

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. The guide includes detailed instructions. To order send a check for \$15 to:
Green Blessings
21055 Dog Bar Road

Grass Valley 95949
Or call (530) 906-0831
Email: greenblessings@infostations.com
Green Blessings - Class Schedule 2008
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November 1 - Cheesemaking
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Organic Beekeeping Forum Conference Notes

We just got back from the first Organic Beekeeping Forum Conference, at a YMCA camp, 4000'+ in the mountains outside Tucson, AZ. For \$80, we shared dorm rooms for two nights with 6 meals. This was an amazing event. This eclectic group of about 75 people from all backgrounds and all corners of the US, and a few with roots outside the nation, all met with intent to save the planet. Many were backyard to small scale farmers, intent on keeping things as natural as possible. The group conversation went quickly from the health of the bee to getting top dollar for natural honey (small jars worked out to \$20.00 a pound) they couldn't keep in stock. This echoed Larry Connor's Serious Sideline Symposium last month, 'Localvores' – people committed to eating and learning about foods grown close to home.

The main theme was small cell or natural beekeeping without the use of any treatments, including powdered sugar, which I've been passionate about. The matriarch and organizer of the convention was Arizona's Dee Lusby, who pioneered, with her late husband, Ed, the art of regressing bees to a smaller size to bring back health and vitality to what could be our new indicator species, the honey bee. Through research dating back to the 1860's, the Lusby's discovered that the original European Honey Bee were smaller in size. They found early writings of not only smaller bee sizes, but small cell sizes. When beekeepers starting breeding bees to produce a larger gentler line that produces more honey, they found they were able to do this quickly by putting bees on foundation that was imprinted with a slightly larger cell size. It seems, shortly after that, bees were hit with a combination of pest and disease issues that seem to devastate colonies year after to year.

The Lusbys figured they could reverse the process and regress. They made metal rollers that imprinted smaller cell size on wax and made their own foundation. Once the hives had regress, Ed and Dee discovered they had no varroa, no tracheal, hardly any foulbrood and they were using nothing else but small cell. They did cull their hives severely. They wanted only survivor bees in their operation.

The Lusbys published their theories in an article in APIACTA XXVII; 109-117 (1992) titled "SUGGESTED BIOLOGICAL MANIPULATIVE TREATMENT FOR CONTROL OF HONEYBEE MITES". I made copies and will have them available at the club meeting March 3rd. The theory for Varroa mites had already made sense to me--- small bees, less time to develop so they emerge in fewer days, and that doesn't allow the varroa's offspring to mature and continue to breed. But tracheal mites? Lusby's theory was these mites, *Acarapis woodi*, co-existed on the exterior of bees. When the size of bees increased, the mite was able to travel into the bee through the enlarged thoracic spiracle.

Great speakers. Dr. Kerstin Ebbersten from Sweden talked about Bee Genetics and Breeding for Sustainable Beekeeping; Michael Bush on raising queens on small cell and one on different types of splits. Corwin Bell brought top bar hives and had a great hands on demo (I bought his cd for the club). Michael Bush has his own website www.bushfarms.com where you can find all sorts of information on small cell. The two best forums on this topic are Beesource.com and <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/Organicbeekeepers/>

I came away inspired to seriously try Natural Beekeeping on small cell this year. Check out Randy Oliver's preliminary work on small cell at www.scientificbeekeeping.com under Varroa management and Honey Super Cell (drawn out plastic small cell to regress quickly). Below is a picture of Corwin Bell with his top bar hive and observation window that has a closeable door-cool!

Next local conference is the Bee Symposium March 8th, 2008 in Santa Rosa, CA. See you there.

Janet Brisson



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 April 2008 edition is March 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



c/o Gary Wood
10396 Mountain Lion Lane
Grass Valley, CA 95949
First Class Mail
March 2008

March 3rd Program

Our March program will be an introduction to the beginning beekeeping class 7 PM meeting at the Grass Valley Vets Hall. Also, bring a sample of 25 bees for nosema ceranae testing.