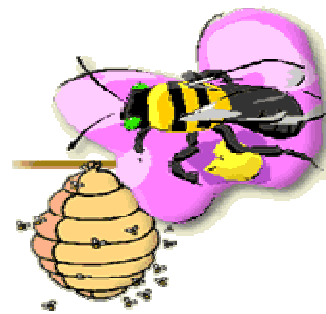


The Forager



January 2007 Vol. 4 No 1

President: Fred Hafer, Vice President: Joe Taylor, Treasurer: Karen Zablocki, Recording Secretary: Laura Davis

Editor: Michael A. Coyle and Ben Duff Newsletter deadline is the 25th of each month.

TBA meets 2nd Monday every month @ 7:00 in the Chesapeake Agriculture Annex.

January 8, 2007 – Tidewater Beekeepers Meeting

The monthly TBA meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM at the Chesapeake Agriculture Annex, by Fred Hafer, the President. Several new visitors attended; introductions were made.

Treasurer's Report was given by Terry Zablocki. The ending balance as of December 12, 2006 was \$1,566.68.

Mr. Hafer discussed problems with warm weather and bees having lots of activity but little available nectar. He stressed the need to feed at this time of year. Bees are also bringing in lots of pollen. There may be a shortage of nectar in spring because the flowers are blooming now. Fred Hafer's packaged bees and queens are due to arrive in late March or early April from Wilbanks Suppliers in Georgia. Email Fred if interested in queens, most packages have been reserved.

Members were encouraged to provide program topics for the April meeting. Ideas include swarm management.

New Business

Pam Fisher and Joe Taylor discussed web page issues. Pam reports no cooperation from Cort Tompkins to date. Pam recommended that we register the name TidewaterBeekeeper.net. The potential exists

for Cort to hand over Tidewater Beekeepers.org name. Fred already owns the name Tidewaterbeekeepers.com. Pam has begun building the web pages. Bob Schwartz recommended having more than one person to help diversify the web committee. Motion made for \$130 for site builder account fee for Pam to continue with the web building. Judy Ferguson made the motion. The motion was seconded by Joe Taylor. Discussion about additional cost including a \$20 domain name fee per year was added to the motion. Amended motion made for \$180. The motion was seconded and carried.

Pam can gear site to members and the general public. She can include a local honey section and also a hive products section. Pam will need an updated roster for website for those members who are interested in selling through the site.

The official Website committee to date:

Pam Fisher
Carol Watkins
Bob Montcalm
Fred Hafer
Larry Tate

The members voted on this Website Committee. Majority agreed.

Steve Black spoke about honey helping local allergies – an article is to be published in Hampton Roads Magazine.

Bob S. discussed packaged bees to be raffled at the short course. An entire hive with bees (1 deep, 10 frames, bottom board, inner cover, and top board) will be given to the winner.

Bob S. motioned for the club to purchase bee hive and packaged bees for new beekeeper who attends and completes short course – not to exceed \$200. Motion was seconded and carried. Fred H. will assemble hive.

Member brought in picture of beehive from Kenya. The beehive was a hollowed out log suspended in tree. The member stated that the beekeeper would harvest 1/3 of the honey and leave 2/3 for the bees.

The Norfolk city council is still drafting a proposal for its beekeeping ordinance.

Bee Q&A:

What's the best way to keep temperature up in the entire hive?

CE Harris -- No need since warm temperatures are near the cluster. Keep good ventilation.

Weak colony plus weak colony = weak colony
Need to pair weak plus strong = strong colony
Bob Schwartz. – Tar papered hive to increase hive temps. He doesn't recommend this but his bees made lots of honey.

Replace all queens?

Ken C. -- Requeen every 1-2 years. Good to have management system.

Bob S. – Confined queen will last 5 years, overburdened queen will only last 1 year.

CE – Had queens lay drones after running out of sperm.

Ken C. – Had to raise his own queens last year, need back up plan if the supplier can't follow through.

CE. – Colony will swarm after queen is 2 years old because they sense it is time to replace her.

What equipment should be used?

Ken C.-- Do not put frames with dead brood into hive – burn it to prevent disease to your hive.

CE.-- Problems exist with plastic frames with wax coating. Bees do not like plastic. If you

crowd the bees, they will use it, but do not mix with beeswax if you want them to draw out the plastic frames. Less than 50% will be drawn out nicely with plastic frames.

Raffle tickets – 8:22 PM

Break 15 minutes.

Meeting resumed 8:39 PM

Honey Tasting Program:

Honey # 5 first place -- (Joe Taylor)

Honey X second place – (Floyd Watkins)

Honey #6 third place – (CE Harris)

Raffle

Meeting Adjourned 9:10 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Davis

Up Coming Events:

- Virginia Flower and garden show - February 15-18, 2007
- Beekeeping short course in March – Virginia Wesleyan College. Fri. 16 March 2007 Registration will begin at 6:00 PM Sat. 17 March 07 Classes begin at 9:00 AM.
Bee Yard to be announced Weather Dependant
- Founder's Day -- bring a covered dish to share and serving spoon or fork with the dish. Location is Town Bank in the Town Hall section on the far left of the facility. Directions: Located at 137 Mount Pleasant Road in the Great Bridge section of Chesapeake. Take Battlefield Blvd. South past Cedar Road. Turn left at Mount Pleasant Road. There is a Papa Johns just before you turn at the light. If you turn right, it's Johnstown Road. Stay in the left hand lane. As soon as you turn, Town Bank is less than one block on your left. Contact Judy Ferguson (547-2338) by Feb. 1 with how many will be coming, so we can plan. Open to members, a guest/spouse and children of members. Cleanup committee is: Fred Hafer, Bob Montcalm, Ed Cart, and Marcus Griffin.
- March meeting – CE Harris to talk about making splits and possibly requeening.

Bee Yard Notes and Thoughts for January



This winter has been unusually warm. Many colonies of bees have been collecting pollen. Beekeepers have also noticed increased brood production. Some hives even contain drones. When the temperature outside is warm enough, check hives thoroughly. If honey stores are low, feed them sugar water that is 2 parts sugar to 1 part water.

January and February are good months for beekeepers to read up on splitting techniques, swarm management, and any other beekeeping information available. Now is the time to build equipment. Use this time to prepare for the upcoming spring and summer. Do not fall behind trying to play catch-up with the spring flows.

Member suggestions:

Ken Carmody - Feed bees now. Be careful with hive manipulations in winter. 2:1 sugar syrup. Be careful introducing water into the hive, ie. sprays.

Time to order queens and it does not hurt to order extra.

CE Harris- Need to be concerned with size of brood patch. Bees will starve if they need to cluster over large brood patch. Move stores near brood to prevent starvation. Move stores to equalize hive stores. Move brood to stronger colony so bees can cover brood adequately. Chick weed is blooming, as are dandelions. Pollen is coming in, which triggers brood rearing.

Bob Schwartz. – Bees are hungry and active. They are consuming more nectar than they are storing. Brood should be low. Feed bees sugar water. Expecting spring build up.

Bee Literature:

The Hive and the Honey Bee. Graham, Joe M. ed. Hamilton, Illinois: Dadant & Sons, Inc., 1992.

The Beekeeper's Handbook. Sammataro, Diana and Avitabile, Alphonse. Ithaca and London: Comstock Publishing Associates a division of Cornell University Press, 1998.

A Book of Bees...and How to Keep Them. Hubbell, Sue. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.

Bee Links:

<http://www.pollinator.com/>

<http://bees.library.cornell.edu/>

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bees/>

Other News:

TBA members have been looking for programs/opportunities to give back to the community. The Heifer Organization was mentioned by one of our members. Printed below is an article detailing a successful program that beekeepers may be interested in participating.

<http://www.heifer.org>

Bees at Work

Story by Ray White

Halfway between San Pedro and Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras, there is a little town called Siguatepeque, and if you were to drive or take a bus from one city to the other it's likely you'd stop there for the restaurants or the squeaky-clean public banos.

Siguatepeque (sig-uh-tuh-PEH-kee) also happens to be the regional headquarters of COAPIHL, or the Cooperativa Apicola Ponera de Honduras Limitada, a big name for a small cooperative of 50 beekeepers that is a new partner with Heifer International in helping the area's small farmers develop beehives and plant flowering trees.

Heifer promotes beekeeping because bees are useful in many ways. They increase pollination,

which boosts crop production. They produce family income through the sale of honey, pollen and beeswax. And adding beekeeping to a small farm helps diversify operations, so the farmers have something to fall back on if the market for one of their crops goes flat, as happened when the price of coffee, a principal crop here, fell to 30-year lows last year due to a glut on the market.

James C. Hoey, Heifer International's Latin America and Caribbean director, visited Siguatepeque to look at the bee project as part of a weeklong Honduran tour with Tim Wheeler, Heifer's country director for Honduras.

The co-op manager, Allan Velasquez, greeted Hoey with a big smile, which changed to a concerned frown as he looked around. "The bees are a little aggressive right now," he explained, inviting the visitors into a small office just inside the main gate to the compound.

Velasquez described for Hoey COAPIHL's 22-year history and the crises it has weathered starting in 1985 when Africanized "killer" bees that had been accidentally introduced to Brazil in 1956 made their way into Central America. People and livestock unintentionally disturbing their hives have been stung to death and publicity about their spread caused panic among beekeepers.

"It wasn't until 1988 or '89 that the co-op started to recover from the flight of beekeepers abandoning their hives," Velasquez says. The experience persuaded COAPIHL, which had relied mainly on selling beekeeping equipment that it, too, needed to diversify. So in 1997 COAPIHL began bottling honey for sale with its own label, and today it sells 250 barrels of honey a year packaged in 16- and 24-ounce bottles, as well as in small plastic bottles shaped like bears. It also sells bee pollen.

Today 65 percent of the co-op's income comes from the sale of bottled honey. That made them a good partner for Heifer, because impoverished farmers receiving beehives would immediately have a value-added market for their wares by selling honey to the co-op, which has its own established brand. Bee pollen is sold in bottles of pellets or gel capsules. "Why would anyone buy bee pollen?" a visitor asked.

"Afrodisiaco," Velasquez said. Hoey said bee pollen has long been used as a folk remedy- and as "natural Viagra." Some people also believe it enhances memory as well as being a palliative for arthritis and nausea, says Velasquez.

The cooperative has developed ways of working safely with Africanized bees, Velasquez said, "but now we have other problems." Hurricane Mitch, which dumped four feet of rain on much of Honduras during four devastating days in 1998, altered the flowering cycle in Honduras, forcing beekeepers to change their practices, he said.

Beekeeping suffered heavy losses during Mitch, and Honduras in recent years has had to import honey. But things are gradually getting better, Velasquez said. Two other groups are working with COAPIHL and Heifer to provide hives to poor farmers: the Honduran coffee cooperative AHPROCAFE, which supports small coffee producers with training and technical support, and the Organisma Cristiano de Desarrollo Integral (Christian Organization for Integrated Development) or OCDIH, a Honduran charitable group.

The co-op has placed 130 hives with members of OCDIH and 116 with members of AHPROCAFE. The day after Heifer visited COAPIHL it delivered 70 hives to Heifer partners, with another 50 going out the following day. "Each new hive has the nucleus of bees inside. Each is made up of two boxes stacked one on top of the other with 5,000 to 30,000 bees as starters," Velasquez said. "We recommend at least 10 hives per family to get up to a level that is financially profitable." A single hive can produce about 20 liters of honey every eight to 10 days during a season that lasts two or three months a year. With 10 hives a farmer can expect to collect more than 50 gallons of honey.

Production improves if the bees have the right kind of nectar available to them, so every producer receives 50 tree seedlings suitable for honey production. In addition to providing nectar for honey, the trees help combat the crisis of deforestation taking place in Central America. Plus, coffee grown under shade is environmentally preferable to fields of coffee bushes.

Hoey said Heifer likes using bees because in addition to adding income and improving the environment, bees enhance a small farmer's agricultural activity. "We want to make it sustainable. Heifer is putting together the group, the education, the agriculture, the environment- you just can't do training and production alone. So this is a really good example of how all together we can contribute," he said.

"The key is longevity. I heard this the other day and it really stuck," Hoey concluded. "Knowledge is power, but success comes through organization."

The bees had calmed down so the group left the office for a tour of the co-op. Velasquez showed his visitors a simple wire mesh trap for collecting pollen, beekeeping protective gear the co-op sells to its members, a "spinner" tub with a centrifugal device inside to extract honey quickly from frames removed from the hives, and a vat where the honey is heated to retard crystallization before hand bottling.

He also demonstrated a hand-cranked machine that turns slabs of beeswax into artificial honeycomb. The manufactured combs are placed in frames inside the hives so the bees can spend most of their time making honey. Then the visitors were fitted for beekeeping helmets and gloves to prepare for a visit to the hives that were being readied for distribution by the co-op.

In a back area of the co-op Velasquez opened the lids of a couple of the hives and removed their frames to check for the presence of a queen and the level of activity in the hives.

After that Velasquez, Hoey and several co-op workers piled into two pickups for a trip down a dusty road to the home of Rigoberto Lopez, 50, a farmer who had received 10 beehives from Heifer and would soon plant 50 guama tree seedlings. "I have two objectives," he said, "the bees get a lot of nectar for honey and it provides shade for the coffee."

Once again the group suited up for a short hike into the bushes to look at Lopez' beehives nestled in a grove of shade-grown coffee. After a dose of smoke from the humidor to calm the bees, Lopez pried open the top of the first hive and reached in with his bare hands to withdraw a frame looking for the queen. Lopez just shrugs when asked why he doesn't wear gloves.

He said that after Hurricane Mitch a third of his bees disappeared. "The rain kept them inside for four days and when they emerged they just went spfft!" he said, waving his hand into the distance.

Lopez said he once accidentally knocked over a stack of three hives of Africanized bees when he was outside without his beekeeping gear. He realized that he might lose the bees unless he could set the hives upright, so he replaced them

while being attacked, then fled into his house. He was stung too many times to count. The pain was intense. He became very sick.

If it hadn't happened late in the day when the bees were sluggish he might have been killed, he said. "I've had some interesting times with the bees," he said.

But the bees have been profitable at a time when coffee prices are off. Lopez said he would like to build up to tending 80 hives in the next two years.

To complete Heifer's Cornerstone requirement to "Pass on the Gift," the farmers will repay the cost of the hives in honey, pollen or cash. "Everyone is in agreement," says Velasquez. "They all read their contracts, agreed to the plan and signed. It's like a loan but without charging any interest," which is an important consideration in a culture where banks typically charge more than 30 percent interest on short-term loans.

Velasquez said he is grateful that he can work with Heifer. "We think Heifer is an institution that's really helping people. You're not choking the farmer with interest, what you do is really feasible, and you're giving help to people who really need it."

Ray White is Public Relations Director at Heifer.

