

the Forager



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Newsletter of the Tidewater Beekeepers Association
www.tidewaterbeekeepers.net

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**President: Joe Taylor, Vice President: Bob Montcalm, Treasurer: Rick Fisher, Recording Secretary: Ed Cart
Webmaster & Newsletter Editor: Pam Fisher. Deadline for the newsletter is the 25th of each month**

A Message from our President, Joe Taylor

Hello fellow beekeepers,



I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. I hope no one tried to give their bees any turkey. Sugar syrup would have been just fine. Now is the time to be working on your hives and equipment for next year. Spring will be here sooner than you think.

I am sorry that we couldn't find a place more centrally located for our Christmas dinner but on such short notice Steve and I did what we thought was the best that we could do. For anyone who doesn't know where the Ruritan Club house is located on Kings Fork Rd. in Suffolk please give Steve or me a call and we'll help with directions. I would also like to thank Rose for her setting up the place for our dinner. I have realized that when things are not going as planned I can make a few phone calls and TBA members are always ready to assist and I thank all of you. I hope to see all of you on Dec. 15th here in Suffolk.

Respectfully,

Joe Taylor



Next Meeting: Monday, December 15, 2008 at 5:30 pm

Location: Kings Fork Community House/Ruritan Club, 1600 Kings Fork Rd., Suffolk, VA 23434.

Program: CHRISTMAS PARTY in lieu of regular meeting.



TIDEWATER BEEKEEPER "YARD NOTES"

For



December

Hopefully you took advantage of the long fall season and fed your bees since many hives were light going into winter. Check the weight of a hive by trying to lift it from the rear... it should feel very heavy. If you have any light colonies, it's not too late to get some sugar syrup on them – use 1 cup of water to 1 pound of sugar at this time of year.

Check under the telescoping top for condensation. Provide ventilation by propping up the telescoping top so that it slopes towards the rear. Moisture is a bigger concern than the cold for colonies during the winter. Make sure that your hives slope forward so that any precipitation rolls off the front and not into the hive entrance.

Do not open the hive on cold days. Wait until you see bees flying on a warm day before quickly checking to ascertain the strength of the hive. Don't try to find the queen; you will only do damage to your colony from the cold.

Now is the time of year to take inventory of your equipment, repair the old and order new. Talk to other club members before you order so you can combine orders and take advantage of volume discounts. It's also time to plan and place your package bee and queen orders.



New TBA Meeting Time & Location

In order to accommodate our growing membership, TBA has moved the meeting location to Towne Hall, a wing of Towne Bank. Towne Hall is located near the intersection of Mt. Pleasant Rd. and Battlefield Blvd. in Chesapeake at 137 Mt. Pleasant Road.

In lieu of our December meeting we will meet for the Christmas Party at Kings Fork Community House/ Ruritan Club (where we had our Founder's Day dinner last year) from 5:30 to 9:00 PM

Starting with January 13, 2009, our meeting date will be moved to the second **TUESDAY** of each month at 7:00 PM in Towne Hall.



The Gift of Bees



TBA members approved a \$90 gift of three colonies of bees, complete with instructions in beekeeping, as a holiday charitable contribution. The colonies will be donated through Heifer International, an organization devoted to helping struggling communities worldwide obtain a sustainable source of food and income.

Heifer promotes beekeeping because bees are useful in many ways. They increase pollination, which boosts crop production, benefiting a whole village. 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.

One of the cornerstones of Heifer's philosophy is *Passing on the Gift*, which allows families and individuals who have received animals to be donors themselves. This means that the first swarm or split from the donated hives will go to another needy family within the village. This spirit of goodwill ripples through the community as animals are passed on and bonds are formed in a group effort to better their own lives.

For more information, visit the Heifer International web site at:

<http://www.heifer.org/>



Christmas Party Rescheduled

Steve Black and Joe Taylor accomplished the near-impossible feat of arranging our annual Christmas Dinner within days of being told that the original venue would not be available. The Christmas Dinner, which will be in lieu of the December monthly meeting, is rescheduled for Monday, December 15th. The Party is open to beekeepers, their families and guests. We will meet at the Kings Fork Community House/ Ruritan Club (where we had our Founder's Day dinner last year) from 5:30 to 9:00 PM. Kings Fork Community House is located at 1600 Kings Fork Rd., Suffolk, VA 23434.

The dinner will consist of a buffet by Ricky & Ron's catering which will run \$12.00 per person. Please RSVP to Steve at 757-255-4176 or sblack@exis.net to ensure adequate supplies. Since the club is writing a check for the building rental and the buffet in advance, no refunds will be available for cancellations.

The Party will include a gift exchange in lieu of the raffle. Those persons who bring a **wrapped** 'bee-themed' gift valued at under \$15 may participate in the exchange. We will begin by drawing a ticket and that person will have a choice of any of the wrapped gifts. The holder of the second ticket will also have a choice of any of the wrapped gifts or the opened gift that the first person chose. This continues until the last person chooses either the last wrapped gift or any one of the previous opened gifts. The exchange is always a lot of fun and it is the one time you do want to be last!



November Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the November membership meeting are available to TBA members on our website at:

http://www.tidewaterbeekeepers.net/members/meeting_minutes.html





Tiny Radio Tags for Bees

From *National Geographic* magazine

Until now, tracking insects such as bees has proved difficult. They fly too far too fast to be chased on the ground, and they're too small and nimble to monitor from the air. As a result, scientists are largely in the dark about basic questions involving bees' movements.

Zoologist Martin Wikelski, is pioneering the use of super small radio tracking tags that fit on the backs of bees, a technological breakthrough that may provide him and other scientists with a direct view of the pollinators' flight patterns. This could someday help them understand what's causing the honeybees' decline.

The transmitters are small and light enough to attach to the backs of bees from two relatively hefty species, the orchid bee and the carpenter bee. Even loaded up with these backpacks, nearly a third of their body weight, "they fly beautifully," says Wikelski.

The transmitters allow the scientists to track the insects as long as the bees remain within a few miles of their receiver.

Most bees are much smaller than orchid and carpenter bees used in the study. For now, Wikelski says, the radio tags for the carpenter bees are as small as current technology allows. But he hopes his engineering colleague, James Cochran, will be able to shrink them by another 40 percent.

Tiny tracking tags should eventually enable scientists to tackle a laundry list of questions, including how bees and other pollinators interact with flowering plants and address growing concerns about the future production of crops such as apples, melons, and almonds that require bees for pollination.

Scott Hoffman Black, executive director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, an organization based in Portland, Oregon, that advocates for the protection of pollinators, says tagging bees in food-rich and food-poor landscapes may lead to better, more efficient uses of farmland.

For now, all these possibilities remain to be explored. But, says Wikelski, "We're at the verge of something very exciting." And much of this growing understanding of bees and other vital pollinators will be thanks to the amazing shrinking technology of the radio tag.



Grant Money Approved

TBA member, Art Halstead, proposed a \$100 grant to Dr. Wyatt Mangum, mathematics professor at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia, to fund his research into honeybee colonies that co-exist with Varroa mites. The motion carried with a unanimous vote of approval.

Dr. Mangum's research started inadvertently when he decided that maintaining honeybee colonies for pollination in North Carolina was too time consuming given the distance of the hives from his home in Fredericksburg. Upon attempting to return his colonies to Virginia, Dr. Mangum found the hives to be infested with Small Hive Beetles (SHB). At that time, Virginia was under SHB quarantine and Dr. Mangum was forced to leave the hives unattended in North Carolina. He fully expected the colonies to perish with no management or pest intervention, upon which time he intended to move the empty equipment back to Virginia. Much to his surprise, some of the colonies not only survived, but also flourished. Dr. Mangum has been making splits from the surviving colonies each year and has presented his findings at several Virginia State Beekeepers Association meetings. The next step in his research is to try and replicate the same results in another location. He has asked for and received funding from VSBA to help offset his transportation costs from Virginia to North Carolina. TBA is proud to also sponsor this worthwhile research project right here in our own back yard.

Package Bee Orders

Reservations for all 50 bee packages, which TBA requested from Brushy Mountain for Spring 2009, are filled! Floyd Watkins will attempt to get another commitment from Brushy Mountain for additional packages at a later date, but the club must find another volunteer to pick up the bees. If you would like to place your name on the waiting list for additional packages, please contact Carol Watkins at 563-2275 or Beelady1952@aol.com.





New Beekeeping Publication

There is a new beekeeping journal available called *BeeCraft America*. It is only available on-line and it is created by the same people who publish *BeeCraft, the Official Journal of the British Beekeepers' Association*. The new version is geared toward North American beekeepers and it is co-edited by Dr. Dewey M. Caron and Ann W. Harman. A sample copy is available for viewing at their website:

<http://publishing.yudu.com/Ajz8w/BCAEAS08>

To subscribe, send an Email with your name and Email address to secretary@beecraft.com. The magazine plans to begin actual publishing in mid 2009



Varroa Mites Prefer Old Comb

We all know that replacing some frames of old brood comb with new foundation annually is good beekeeping practice, but a new paper published in Argentina may give us even more incentive to do so. The research uncovered evidence that Varroa mites prefer old brood comb to new brood comb. In a study conducted by Jorge Marcangeli and Natalia Damiani in the spring of 2005, the researchers placed an old frame (2 years old) and a new one in the middle of the brood chamber of 20 Langstroth hives. After the brood was capped in each frame, the frames were removed and the brood uncapped in the laboratory. The total number of adult female mites was counted and the infestation level calculated by the number of infested cells divided by the total number of uncapped cells. Results showed significant differences between old and new comb infestation levels: 13.52% in old comb and 6.18% in new comb. The same results were observed in the average number of mites in the combs: 443.3 in old combs and 217.85 in new combs. Mites showed a strong preference for the scent of old brood cells in the comb and these same scents helped to mask the mites' presence, preventing the honeybees from using hygienic behavior to identify and eliminate the mites.



Honey Ice Supplement



Integrated Beverage Group, Ltd. is introducing Throat Cooler, the non-medicated natural alternative for dry or scratchy throats, hoarseness, minor throat irritation or allergy throat discomfort. Throat Cooler is an ice supplement made with real honey and 100% of the daily value of Vitamin C to support a healthy throat and immune system. Studies have shown that medicated over the counter products are not as effective as the tried and true natural ingredients, Honey and Vitamin C, found in Throat Cooler and Children's Throat Cooler. The fruit-flavored supplements come in easy to use pre-portioned pouches, which are frozen and the contents squeezed into the mouth and allowed to dissolve slowly.

Hive Carrier Gift



Many thanks to TBA member Nick Delphia who donated a two-man hive carrier, which he fabricated, to the club. It requires two people to use, but all you do is unfold the carrier and place it over a hive that has been stapled or strapped together. As you pick up the handles of the carrier, the tabs that extend from the cross bar will slide into the handholds of the hive and you can lift and carry the hive any place you like. If you have not used one of these devices, you will be amazed at the ease with which you can lift and move a hive. Thank you Nick for your generosity (and for sparing us from aching backs)!

Happy Holidays!