

# the Forager



January 2009

Newsletter of the Tidewater Beekeepers Association  
www.tidewaterbeekeepers.net

Vol.6 No.1

**President: Joe Taylor, Vice President: Bob Montcalm, Treasurer: Rick Fisher, Recording Secretary: Paul Kist  
Webmaster & Newsletter Editor: Pam Fisher. Deadline for the newsletter is the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month**

## *A Message from our Vice President, Bob Montcalm*

Happy New Year to all,



We are happy to hear the Joe Taylor is recuperating from his recent illness. Joe seems to have nine lives and I hope that he is back chairing the meetings soon. Floyd and Carol Watkins are recovering comfortably at home. Let's keep all three of these club members in our thoughts and prayers.

Well, January and February are probably the slowest months for beekeepers. If you have ensured that the bees have a good food supply and all your woodenware is assembled, painted and ready to go, it is just a waiting game now. We had a 70-degree day on the Sunday after Christmas and I had one Camellia bush in bloom; the bees were on it like it was pure honey.

As Joe mentioned at past meetings, the TBA hopes to participate in the preparation and presentation of a beekeeping educational class sponsored by the State Agriculture Dept. at the Suffolk Armory location again this year. Attendance last year was overwhelming and demonstrated the interest from the public for information about beekeeping. I'm sure that TBA members will be there and happy to help out with whatever needs to be done.

A healthy and happy New Year to all TBA members and let's hope for better honey production from our girls this year!

*Bob Montcalm*



**Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 13, 2009 at 7:00 PM**

**Location:** Towne Bank Hall, 137 Mt. Pleasant Rd., Chesapeake, VA 23322

**Program:** Basic Bee Biology

**Speaker:** Chuck Spann

## **TIDEWATER BEEKEEPER "YARD NOTES"**

**For**



**January**

Periods of mild weather have allowed the bees to make cleansing flights and collect pollen, but they are also consuming their winter stores at a faster rate than if they were in a cold winter cluster. Check your hives by lifting them; do not open them up if bees are not flying. A quick heft from the back is all that is needed to make sure that the hives are well stocked; it should feel as if they are full of lead. Supplement light hives with a 2:1 sugar syrup when the weather is mild (one cup of water to one pound of sugar). Bees will not consume syrup when the temperature drops below 50°F.

Another side effect of the warm weather is earlier brood production. Purchase and assemble honey supers so that large populations in early spring can take advantage of the first nectar flow. Large populations also mean earlier swarming behavior, so research swarm management techniques such as making splits and the Demaree method. Consider setting out bait hives to catch those swarms that do form.



## Founders' Day

Our annual Founders' Day dinner is coming up in February and no plans have been made to date. The Founder's Day dinner is a potluck meal in lieu of the monthly membership meeting. It is open to TBA members, their spouse or guest and family members. Please come to the January membership meeting prepared to discuss and vote on a location for the dinner. Volunteers are needed to coordinate the banquet and help with the cleanup afterwards.

### 40 Years of ABJ Available Online

The Albert R. Mann Library at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY maintains *The Hive and the Honeybee* website which offers literature on bees and beekeeping books to the public. The first 40 years of *American Bee Journal* are now available at the website to anyone with an Internet connection. To view the collection:

<http://bees.library.cornell.edu/b/bees/index.html>



The Mid-Atlantic Home & Flower Show will be held February 13<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. TBA will have a booth where we can sell honey and hive products in the lobby with the other associations and societies. This is a wonderful opportunity to educate the public about protecting honeybees with good gardening practices while stressing the bees role as pollinators in our food supply. Exhibit hours are Friday and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM and Sunday from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM so many volunteers are needed. Carol Watkins will be coordinating volunteers. Please call her with the day and time that you can help staff the booth. If you have products to sell, please let Carol know that also. You can reach her at (757) 563-2275 or [beelady1952@aol.com](mailto:beelady1952@aol.com)



## TBA Christmas Party

The annual TBA Christmas Dinner was quite a hit! We were all thankful for the quick thinking of Steve Black and Joe Taylor who secured the Suffolk

Ruritan Club when our original location was unavailable at the last minute. Thanks also go to Lisa Wiggins for her heroic efforts in coordinating the guest list. We started off with a lovely selection of appetizers supplied by many club members and then participated in a group prayer led by C.E. Harris asking for Joe's recovery. A generous dinner buffet, provided by the club, followed and Frank Walker took the ample leftovers to the Union Mission. All in attendance recognized Rose Nichols for her tireless efforts in not only decorating the hall, but also preparing much of the food. Judy Ferguson led the gift exchange, which included much merriment as items were unwrapped and the favorites changed hands many times. We were treated to a surprise visit from Kathy Taylor with some promising news about Joe's condition. Thank you to all the club members who participated in making the Christmas Dinner a wonderful evening of good fellowship!

## TBA Telephone Tree



Most TBA members receive club communications via Email but there are a few members who do not have Email access. These people are frequently unaware of last-minute club offers or events that are scheduled after *the Forager* is published for the month. TBA would like to institute a phone tree where members with Email access would notify other members without Email in order to ensure that everybody is informed of club news. If you have Email and would like to participate in a telephone tree, please contact Pam Fisher at [editor@tidewaterbeekeepers.net](mailto:editor@tidewaterbeekeepers.net). If we can get a couple of volunteers, it should only take a few phone calls to keep everybody up to date.





## Beekeeper Study Group

Pam Fisher and Bob Schwartz would like to assemble a study group of club members interested in participating in the Virginia Master Beekeeper Program or those just wanting to learn more about beekeeping. A sign-up sheet will be circulated at the next monthly meeting for people who would like to get together and study as a group. The group will use the study guide provided by the state to research and discuss the topics covered on the first, or Qualified Level, exam. Even if you do not want to take the test, you are encouraged to attend just to expand your beekeeping knowledge

and share your wisdom with the group. The study guide is available on the VSBA website at:

[http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org/Master/MBStudyGuide\\_Qualified.pdf](http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org/Master/MBStudyGuide_Qualified.pdf)

The group will decide where they would like to meet and how often. If you cannot attend the next membership meeting, but would like to participate in the study group, please contact either Pam Fisher at [editor@tidewaterbeekeepers.net](mailto:editor@tidewaterbeekeepers.net) or 545-5076 or Bob Schwartz at [moonlightbeekeeper@hotmail.com](mailto:moonlightbeekeeper@hotmail.com) or 357-7829 to be added to the group list.

## Road Trip

TBA Members, Mike & Cindy Huffman, were kind enough to offer to pick up equipment from Dadant in Lynchburg for other club members while picking up their own order. Several people took them up on their proposal and saved on shipping costs. A big club THANK YOU goes out to Mike & Cindy for their generosity and thoughtfulness.



## New TBA Recording Secretary

Hats off to Paul Kist for filling the Recording Secretary position vacated by Ed Cart. Ed has a scheduling conflict since TBA meetings have moved to Tuesday evenings and he can no longer attend our meetings. Many thanks to Ed for the wonderful job he did as Recording Secretary; we will all miss his smiling face at our monthly meetings! Thank you, Paul, for agreeing to take on this essential duty.



## Beekeeping Events

### **American Beekeeping Federation**

January 13-17, 2009

North American Beekeeping Conference  
John Ascuaga's Casino Resort Hotel in Reno/Sparks, Nevada

<http://www.abfnet.org/node/12>

### **North Carolina State Beekeepers Association**

March 6 & 7, 2009

Joint spring meeting of NCSBA and The South Carolina Beekeepers Association  
Baxter Hood Conference Center at York Technical College in Rock Hill, SC

<http://www.ncbeekeepers.org/meetings.htm>

### **Virginia State Beekeepers Association**

April 17 & 18, 2009

VSBA Spring Meeting  
Northampton Community Center in Hampton, VA

<http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org/meetings/meetings.htm>

### **Eastern Apicultural Society**

August 3-7, 2009

EAS 2009

Holiday Valley Resort in Ellicottville, NY

<http://www.easternapiculture.org/programs/>



## Crop Insurance for Beekeepers



Crop insurance was made available to beekeepers for the first time through the USDA's federal Risk Management Agency. The experimental apiculture crop insurance program is tied to either a rainfall or vegetation index, depending on the particular area of the country in which the hives are located. The amount of rainfall or the amount of greenness will determine whether beekeepers are eligible for a payment.

"We're not insuring the bees. We're not insuring the honey. We're not insuring the bees' health," said Shirley Pugh, spokeswoman for the Risk Management Agency. "We're insuring the conditions that the bees might require for expected (honey) production."

"It's only available in selected states and counties to test each index in various climates, soils and weather conditions," Pugh said. "We made it available in six regions across the country: the warm and humid Southeast, the cool and humid Northeast, the Northern Great Plains, the Southern Great Plains, the semiarid Southwest and the intermountain region of the Northwest."

The program also does not insure against Colony Collapse Disorder since scientists have been unable to determine its cause.

Pugh said it will likely be several growing seasons before officials decide whether to make the insurance program permanent.

More information is available at: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/policies/ri-vi/apiculture.html> or <http://www.rma.usda.gov/pubs/2008/apiculture.pdf>

## Honeybees Deter Caterpillars

From *Current Biology*,  
23 December 2008

Honeybees may do more for plants than just pollinate their flowers. The sound of honeybees foraging overhead may keep caterpillars below from eating, says researcher Jürgen Tautz of the University of Würzburg in Germany.

In tests, Tautz and his colleague Michael Rostás report that caterpillars within a bee flight path ate only about a third of the leaf area they consumed in a bee-free zone.

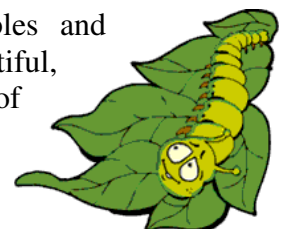
Soybeans inside tents with caterpillars suffered more damage from the pests' feeding when bees were excluded than when the pollinators flew back and forth over the plants.

Tautz has only tested the idea in a controlled environment. He and his colleagues put up a pair of tents covering bell pepper plants, as well as soybean plants. A beehive opened into one tent and about 50 bees flew over the plants on the way to sugar water feeders in the tent corners. The other tent excluded honeybees.

As a sample pest, Tautz chose the beet armyworm (*Spodoptera exigua*), a caterpillar that feeds on some 50 plant species. Armyworms are relentless feeders, but they stop moving, and sometimes drop off of their host plant if a wasp flies by. Plenty of wasps eat caterpillars, and Tautz says that he's found sensory hairs on caterpillars, including beet armyworms, that detect the wasps' wing beats. Honeybees don't hunt caterpillars, but Tautz postulated that, to a caterpillar, bees' wing beats might sound similar to wasps'.

That seemed to be the case in his experiments. In tents with bees flying over plants, caterpillars did less damage to leaves than in quiet tents, the researchers report.

Tautz says he can imagine that gardeners might someday take advantage of this effect. "Alternating rows of vegetables and flowers not only look beautiful, they may reduce the use of pesticides," he says.





## GMO Corn Toxin Affects Bees

From *Catch the Buzz*,  
30 December 2008



A recent study found that honeybees fed on the active form of purified Cry1Ab protein, the genetically modified protein found in GM Bt corn, can be affected in the learning responses necessary to associate nectar sources with odorants.

The scientists wanted to determine if GM Bt is one of the causes for colony collapse disorder, a mysterious affliction that is killing honeybees worldwide.

In this study bees consuming artificial nectar containing 5000ppb of Cry1Ab continued to respond positively to a learned odor even in the absence of a food reward, while normal bee behavior is to become discouraged and seek more abundant food sources.

This learning response is important in bee foraging behavior and it has attracted the attention of CCD researchers since it is known to be inhibited by the insecticide imidacloprid.

The new finding is particularly interesting since it lends weight to a previous suggestion that Bt toxins may have other, non-lethal effects which become apparent only when the normal (i.e. lethal) effect is absent. If there were to be multiple modes of Bt action then many more non-target organisms would likely be at risk from GM Bt corn. Bt Researcher Angelika Hilbeck says that more research is needed that looks at the impacts of both the Bt toxin and imidacloprid on bee behavior.



## Importing More Than Honeybees From Australia?

The U.S. has had a ban on importing honeybees from other countries since the 1920s. However, in 2005 the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) began allowing European honeybees to be imported into the US from Australia to help commercial beekeepers replenish their colonies and meet pollination demands. In May 2007, a species of honeybee *Apis cerana*, otherwise known as the Asian honeybee, was discovered in Australia for the first time. Australia immediately began containment and eradication efforts. While the Asian honeybees are restricted to an area approximately 1800 miles from the location where package bees are produced for US export, it is a major cause for concern. The world's most destructive honeybee pest, the mite *Varroa destructor*, originated with *Apis cerana* and migrated to European honeybees when the two species came in contact with one another in Asia. Another recent problem of US honeybees, *Nosema ceranae*, which is a form of bee dysentery linked to CCD, also originated with *Apis cerana*. As if this were not enough, Asian honeybees have another mite pest, *Tropilaelaps clarae*, which normally attacks only the Asian bees but will migrate to European honeybees given the chance. European honeybees have no resistance or tolerance to *Tropilaelaps clarae*, not having evolved with them. They decimate a hive, leaving no survivors. It is not known if Asian honeybees also carry other diseases and viruses detrimental to European honeybees.

So what is the US doing to ensure that the European honeybee packages from Australia don't contain any *Tropilaelaps clarae* or other new pests or diseases? Prior to the discovery of *Apis cerana* in Australia, attorneys drafted a trade agreement asking the Australians to certify that the bees are pest-free prior to shipping. Even with the discovery of the Asian honeybees, further examination of the bees upon arrival in the US would be considered restraint of trade, a punishable offense. The law says the sending country has the responsibility of making sure their bees are free of any of the problems cited in the trade agreement.

As a beekeeper, are you feeling a little anxious right now?