

THE COMMONWEALTH BUZZ

Volume 11, Issue 2

A PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

May 2010

View from the President

From the President's Desk

I would like to start my first communication as your newly elected President with a sincere appreciation for the 2009 Officers, Ann Harman, Alan Fiala, Frank Wyatt, Deb Parker, Karen Hunt, Keith Tignor and Dr. Rick Fell for their tireless energy and significant contributions to the growth and success of VSBA.

Why You? VSBA is and always has been a member run association. It is our duty to work as a TEAM and strive to achieve the VSBA goals. I encourage each of the 32 local associations and the 928 members to mark your calendar today and plan accordingly so you can attend the next VSBA meeting November 5-6, 2010. Together we can maintain our current momentum, create more knowledgeable beekeepers and increase public awareness by promoting and protecting one of our greatest natural resources, the honeybee. To achieve these goals, your attendance is required, your support is appreciated, and more importantly, the knowledge shared and gained during these VSBA meetings is priceless.

WIIFM? What's In It For Me you may ask? The VSBA fall meeting will have informal, yet highly informative beekeeping workshops that meet the expectations of the first/second year beekeeper as well as providing two days of advanced beekeeping techniques for those with more experience. The meeting agenda includes professional presentations that provide a glimpse into many of the high level beekeeping research projects being conducted by some of the most prestigious researchers in the country.

Why Now? VSBA's membership consists of the youth and young adults that will have the fresh ideas of tomorrow as well as the role models and mentors who have shared their expertise that we all have relied upon today. These individuals, from all across the state align their beekeeping interests and

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Langstroth Award

2010 Langstroth recipient named at Spring Meeting

The 2010 L.L. Langstroth Achievement Award was presented at the April VSBA meeting in Wytheville, VA. This year's recipient is Bill (Billy) Hartis of Fieldale, VA.

Sourwood honey is his specialty. But, Bill has been active in the raising bees and queens since 1940. He served as an officer in numerous capacities with the Southwest Piedmont Beekeepers Association, Virginia State Beekeepers Association, Eastern Apiculture Society, American Beekeepers Federation, and as chairperson for the Virginia Plant Pollination Advisory Board. Besides countless meetings, workshops and classes in Virginia and North Carolina, Bill has made presentations to non-beekeeping groups and provided media interviews on beekeeping, and mentor many beekeepers.

Bill joins past recipients Billy Davis, Art Halstead, Lannie Ballard, Allen Blanks, Ronnie Henk, and Gene Riddle in recognition for their exceptional contributions in the advancement and promotion of beekeeping in the Commonwealth of Virginia. 🐝

*Submitted by Keith Tignor
Awards Committee, VSBA*

Upcoming Beekeeper Events

Heartland Apicultural Society Tennessee Tech University Cookeville, TN	July 8-10, 2010
Int'l Conf. on Pollinator Biology, Heath and Policy College Station, PA	July 24-28, 2010
Eastern Apiculture Society Appalachian State University Boone, NC	August 2-6, 2010
VSBA Fall Meeting Blue Ridge Community College Weyers Cave, VA	November 6, 2010

Legislative Update

General Assembly news and VDACS changes

As most of you know through my e-mail “Legislative Alert” in January, Senator Hanger introduced a budget amendment requesting \$67,000 to be added to the budget for 2010-2011. Senator Creigh Deeds and Senator Harry Blevins were co-patrons on the legislation. If approved, the requested funds would go to Virginia Cooperative Extension, VCE, at Virginia Tech to support the four recommendations outlined in the “2006 Study on the Plight of the Virginia Beekeeper”. VCE ran out of money to support these programs last summer. The 2008 and 2009 progress reports to the General Assembly filed by Dr. Rick Fell are on the VSBA website at www.virginiabeekeepers.org.

So where do we stand at this time? The programs are pretty much in limbo. Senator Hanger and other legislators are very much aware of the problems the Virginia beekeepers are having with their honey bees. As I’m sure most or all of you know, there just isn’t enough money to go around. Senator Hanger, along with others, is trying to see if funds can be found somewhere to support the beekeepers. With the state of the economy, that might not happen until things get better.

Each one of our local clubs needs to invite its local senator or delegate to be a guest speaker at one of its monthly meetings. The legislators need to get to know you; and, your knowing them is critical. When these legislators see legislation to help the Virginia beekeepers come through, they can associate people with it and say, “I have beekeepers in my district who need help”. Then, when and if the economy improves and money becomes available, we’ll have support among the legislators to get the funding we need.

Last fall I asked past-Commissioner Todd Haymore if he would consider having his staff look at the possibility of moving the state apiarist to the marketing section of the VDACS as West Virginia did a number of years ago. By doing this it would hopefully make more money available to help Virginia beekeepers. It was determined that at this time it would not be possible because the marketing sections has no regulatory authority. Marketing, however, has agreed to support the Virginia State Beekeepers Association in helping to write and

obtain grants at our request. Mr. Haymore has since been appointed the Secretary of Forestry and Agriculture under Governor McDonald. It was a real pleasure working with Todd and he was always helpful to me when I had a request.

On May 1st, Matt Lohr became the new Commissioner of VDACS. Mr. Lohr gave up his seat as a State Delegate from the 26th District. He lives in Rockingham County and his family has been running the same farm for over a 100 years. I look forward to working with Commissioner Lohr.

West Virginia has become the first state in the nation to pass a law giving beekeepers immunity from liability for ordinary negligence. Governor Joe Manchin signed the bill into law on April 1st. This law came about as a result of strong support by the leadership of both the WV House and Senate. The father of State Senate President, Earl Ray Tomblin, is a beekeeper. Additionally, House Speaker Richard Thompson was raised by a grandfather who was a beekeeper. The honeybee is also the state insect! The law requires that beekeepers register their hives with the WV Department of Agriculture, WVDA. It also mandates WVDA to promulgate Best Management Practices for beekeepers. All beekeepers who abide by these two provisions will have absolute civil immunity from ordinary negligence. The Department is working on a set of emergency rules that will be in effect soon.

I have received e-mails about Virginia trying to do the same. I belong to the West Virginia Beekeepers Association and also the Lewisburg, WV, club. One main reason this will work in West Virginia and perhaps not in Virginia is that all beekeepers have to register their hives and locations with the WVDA. WV beekeepers will have to be good managers of their hives and be responsible and concerned for their neighbors. If they do not follow certain guidelines they will not fall under this new legislation. Also bee hives in West Virginia have been classified as personal property and tax is paid on the hives.

As these and other issues arise that are important to beekeepers, please, do your part by getting acquainted with your local representatives. It will help all of us in Richmond and we’ll see where we go from here. 🍯

*Submitted by Lannie Ballard
Legislative Liason, VSBA*

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State Apiarist Report

Spring has definitely sprung in Virginia. Cherry, locust, and poplar were in heavy bloom around Richmond over the past few weeks. And, clover is coming on with one of the largest blooms in memory. I noticed similar encouraging signs during recent travels to Southside and the Shenandoah Valley. The numbers of swarms, though, seem down from last year. This may be a reflection of successful swarm prevention management by our beekeepers, or small populations of bees.

Later in this newsletter is a summary report from the U. S. Department of Agriculture and Apiary Inspectors of America Hive Loss Survey. The USDA/AIA survey has been ongoing for three years. Much like our own Virginia winter survey reported losses have been up and down from year to year; but, too high to reasonably sustain the commercial beekeeping industry. It seems the only bright spot are for those raising bees and queens to help replace these losses.

The percentage of hive loss this year in Virginia is better than last year and better than the national average, but only slightly for both. Preliminary figures indicate hive losses over the winter of 2009-2010 were 30.6 percent. Miticide usage continues to drop; while, Fumigilin-B feeding is increasing. The latter is not unexpected considering everyone's concerns regarding *Nosema cerana*.

In response to these losses, and continued unprecedented attendance at beginner beekeeping classes, there is high demand on nucs, packages, and queens. As reported at the VSBA meeting in Wytheville, this presents an opportunity for Virginia's beekeepers. With queens costing \$18 each and bees another \$65 or more (some mail orders are as high as \$150) there is more to be made from your bees than just honey. A number of beekeepers are hoping to break into the queen and nuc market. Check with a local association to find a producer near you.

Regarding the Virginia Winter Loss Survey, many of the local associations have returned their survey forms. If yours has not, be sure to forward your group's information to the Richmond VDACS office as soon as possible. 🍯

*Submitted by Keith Tignor
State Apiarist, VDACS*

President, from page 1

work together making VSBA comparable to our strongest colony in the apiary. The knowledge you will gain and can share with others will be make us all more capable and informed beekeepers. This is a WIN – WIN for me, you, us, and them.

Can our TEAM count on YOU? Beekeeping for many was often viewed as a hobby, for some a lifestyle, and others a full time job. Regardless of your personal reason to be involved, be PROUD to be a keeper of the honeybee. I am confident that the beekeeping lessons shared this fall will significantly improve our current beekeeping awareness and broaden our network of reliable VSBA member resources that are just a phone call or e-mail away as we seek to understand the often complex honeybee. 🍯

*Submitted by Frank S. Walker
President, VSBA*

Together Everyone Achieves More

Treasurer's Report

Notes from the Treasurer's desk

The VSBA membership drive is in full swing as we approach June. Welcome to all those who have become new members of VSBA, and a big “thank you” to all who have already renewed their membership. Thanks also go out to all those local bee club treasurers, who collect and remit VSBA dues on behalf of their members. As a reminder, **memberships become due at the start of the new fiscal year, on July 1, 2010.**

Please take a moment to look at your mailing label (if your newsletter comes regular mail), or your email message --- **if your dues status ends in “2010” then it’s time to renew your membership.** If you do not belong to a local beekeepers’ association, your dues are \$12. If you are a member of a local association, then your dues are \$10, and you can renew either through your local association, or directly with VSBA by sending your name, address, phone number, email address, and the name of your local association to:

Karen Hunt
PO Box 213
Amissville VA 20106.

Please help me by printing clearly. While I try to be good at “cryptography,” it is sometimes a challenge to decipher certain handwriting! Phone numbers are particularly important (especially if I have trouble reading handwriting, or your mail or email is returned as undeliverable) and please don’t forget to include your area code.

Since we seem to get quite a number of “email bounce backs” after each newsletter distribution, please remember to update the Treasurer with any changes to your email address (yep, this is an ongoing, regular Treasurer’s plea). **If you have changed your email address, or you wish to receive your newsletter by email, you can email me at kahu9@juno.com with your correct email address.**

If you have any questions, you can reach me at the address or email above, or by phone at 540-937-4792. And thank you in advance for promptly remitting your dues! 🍯

*Submitted by Karen Hunt
Treasurer, VSBA*

Meeting Minutes

Report from the 2010 VSBA Spring Meeting

The meeting opened with a welcome from President, Ann Harman at 1:02 pm.

Dr. Michael Hood, a professor at Clemson University, spoke on three topics: The Importance of IPM; Effects of Sublethal Doses of Pesticides and/or Wax Moth Control; and, Small Hive Beetle Management. All three topics were very informative.

Dr. Wyatt Mangum updated the members on the Survivor Bees—Decrease Brood Infestation to Survive with Varroa. Later in the evening Dr. Mangum’s topic was “The Langstroth Frame: A Revolution Seen in the Context of the Times”, honoring the Bicentennial of Langstroth’s Birthday.

Dr. Juliana Rangel, from North Carolina State University, spoke on “Nest-Site Defense Between Competing Swarms During House-Hunting.

Nancy Adamson from Virginia Tech presented “Bee Pollinator Complex: Pollination of Berries and Fruits.

Brenda Kiessling and Billy Davis invited everyone to EAS’ meeting in Boone, NC August 2-6, 2010.

On Saturday, Keith Tignor, State Apiarist, gave his report to the membership. Keith then presented the Langstroth Award to Bill Hartis from the Southwest Piedmont Beekeepers Association.

Dr. Rick Fell, a professor at Virginia Tech, gave an update on his research on nosema ceranae.

Beekeeping as a 4-H project is increasing in Virginia. Phil Blevins informed the membership of the workings of his 4-H group.

Billy Davis of the Sustainable Honeybee Program gave an update on the procurement of queens for better genetics and the work his team has been doing.

The Business Meeting was called to order by President, Ann Harman, at 11:33 am. A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to suspend the reading of the minutes and to approve the minutes as submitted in the VSBA newsletter. Treasurer, Karen Hunt, presented the Treasurer’s Report, which will be submitted in the VSBA

See Minutes, page 5

Minutes, from page 4

newsletter. Mountain Empire Beekeepers Association won the attendance award and was presented with a certificate for two queens from the Sustainable Honeybee Program. There was no old business.

A motion was made by Lannie Ballard to donate \$2,000 to Dr. Fell and the Virginia Research Program. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Brenda Kiessling, Nominating Committee Chair, presented the slate of officers for the 2010-2011 term. President-Frank Walker from Tidewater Beekeepers; 1st Vice President-Ann Harman from Northern Piedmont Beekeepers; 2nd Vice President-Pete Ostrowski from Colonial Beekeepers; Secretary-Deb Parker from Northern Piedmont Beekeepers; and, Treasurer-Karen Hunt from Northern Piedmont Beekeepers. Billy Davis moved to approve the slate of officers by acclamation. This motion was seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at 11:50am.

After lunch, 4 workshops were conducted. Billy Davis, Spring Management from the Colony's Point of View; Whitney Long, Designing Your Owen Labels; Juliana Rangel, Doolittle Queen Rearing; and, Dr. Hood, Small Hive Beetle Controls. 🐝

*Submitted by Deb Parker
Secretary, VSBA*

Junior Scientists

Richmond beekeepers recognize youth research

The Richmond Beekeepers Association recognized the work of two young scientist at the 2010 Metro Richmond Science Fair held at Powhatan High School. In addition to a Certificate of Recognition, winners received a \$50 prize. The awards went to:

Junior Division

Brady Brown from Moody Middle School presented work on how pollen affects the lifecycle of a butterfly.

Senior Division

Quinn Brogan from Godwin High School examined the effects of essential plant oils on plant growth to identify alternatives to commercial pesticides. 🐝

Submitted by Tom Orr, RBA

Swarm Research

Bees That Cause Hives to Swarm Found

After a large number of researchers failed in identifying the hierarchy responsible for releasing the call to arms, a group of investigators from the Cornell University, in New York, finally manage to crack the riddle. They show that a small group of individuals, who act as “pied pipers,” are responsible for emitting the calls that make the colony swarm.

This very special class of bees releases a piping signal, which has the sole function of making the entire colony leave the nest in an explosive manner. With the new investigation, researchers have finally managed to track down the exact individuals that are responsible for this, and their discovery is published in the latest issue of the respected scientific journal Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology.

The large honeybee, also called *Apis mellifera*, organizes such mass departures from the hive during the mating season, when workers and queens need to found a new colony at a different location. Beekeepers have known about this habit for centuries, and they even managed to find ways of preventing the mass exodus of bees, but investigators have had a very tough time in understanding how the bees manage to synchronize their behavior. “In this study we wanted to determine what bees are responsible for organizing this mass departure, and how they organize this process in an efficient manner,” explains CU expert Dr Juliana Rangel. Colleagues Sean Griffin and Professor Thomas Seeley also collaborated in the research.

“Our study is the first one to reveal the identity of the signalers that initiate a swarm's departure from the hive.” She mentions that the departure takes place in two stages. First, bees called nest-site scouts release a piping signal that is directly responsible for making the other bees start warming up their muscles for departure. This primes the insects for swarming. The scouts then produce a “buzz-run” signal, which marks the start of the swarming process. Only 5 percent of the bees in the colony are capable of emitting these signals. 🐝

*Taken from <http://news.softpedia.com>
By Tudor Vieru, Science Editor*

New-bee Tips

Finding an elusive queen

The hardest skill to master for many beekeepers, new, experienced, or in-between, is often the ability to find a queen. She may be the largest member of the colony in size. But being only one among 60,000 others can make her hard to find.

The queen can be on any comb; but, is normally found in the brood nest towards the bottom of the hive. Supers, especially those full of honey, can be set aside in order to concentrate on the brood boxes. If there is brood in two boxes it may be best to set the top brood box onto an upside down hive cover. The frames can then be search without concern that the queen will move down into a lower brood box.

Start searching from the outermost frame and work across to the opposite side. The first frame is usually empty of brood. Scan one then the other side of the comb, holding the frame by the outside edges of the top bar. If held properly the frame can be flipped or rotated on the top bar axis to easily view the opposite side. Set the first frame down on edge leaning against the outside of the hive box or hang on a frame holder. This will give more room to remove and replace the remaining frames without fear of damaging the queen by rubbing frames together. Once all have been examined the frames can be replaced to their original positions and the first frame returned to the hive box.

Use as little smoke as possible when looking for a queen. Smoke calms the workers, but can cause a queen to run excessively even onto the inside edges of the hive box. Some races of bees run or form a ball more than others. Selecting stock that runs less may improve the ability to find a queen. Also, color does matter in identifying a queen. Light colored queens are easier to find than dark colored queen.

The best way to find a queen is to mark her thorax with a small dab of paint before she is introduced to a colony. Marking pens and queen holders are available to make this easier. Enamel modeling paint and a toothpick may be used as well. The colors also can mark her age. An international marking code is used with white for years ending in 1 and 6, yellow for years 2 and 7, red for 3 and 8, green for 4 and 9, and blue for 5 and 0. 🐝

Submitted by VaBeeman

Winter Loss Survey Report

Colonies Losses in the U.S., winter 2009-2010

The Apiary Inspectors of America (AIA) and USDA-ARS Beltsville Honey Bee Lab conducted a survey to estimate winter colony losses for 2009/2010. A total loss of 34% of managed honey bee colonies was recorded. This compares to losses of 29%, 36% and 32% recorded respectively in the winters of 2008/2009, 2007/2008 and 2006/2007. In all 4,207 beekeepers responded to the on-line survey and an additional 24 were contacted by phone.

On average responding beekeepers lost 42.2% of their operation, this is an 8 point or 23% increase in the average operational loss experienced by beekeepers in the winter of 2008/2009.

Average losses were nearly 3 times greater than the losses beekeepers reported that they considered acceptable (14.4%). Sixty-one percent of beekeepers reported losses in excess of what they would consider acceptable.

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is characterized, in part, by the complete absence of bees in dead colonies and apiaries. Only 28% of operations reported that at least some of their dead colonies were found dead without dead bees. However this group lost a total of 44% of their colonies, as compared to the total loss of 25% experienced by beekeepers who did not report losses indicative of CCD.

Responding beekeepers attributed their losses to starvation (32%), weather (29%), weak colonies in the fall (14%), Mites (12%), and poor queens (10%). Only 5% of beekeepers attributed CCD as the major cause for their losses.

This survey only reports on winter losses and does not capture the colony losses that occur throughout the summer. Preliminary data from other survey efforts suggest that these “summer” losses can also be significant. All told the rate of loss experienced by the industry is unsustainable.

A news release on the study is at <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2010/100429.2.htm>.

A full report is expected latter this summer. 🐝

Provided by Dennis vanEnglesdorp and Jerry Hayes (AIA), Dewey Caron (Oregon State University), & Jeff Pettis (USDA-ARS)

VSBA MEETING SURVEY

The Executive Committee of VSBA is asking members for information that may promote attendance at the semiannual meetings. Please take a moment to answer these questions and **reply by June 8** by mail or email to:

VSBA Secretary – Deb Parker
2120 Old Office Road
Culpeper, VA 22701
Brokenpost@gemlink.com

1. Member name: _____

I have been a member of VSBA for _____ years.

2. I have attended this many meetings of VSBA: (choose one)

None

1-3

More than 3

3. The place and date of the fall meeting is fixed, but the spring/summer meeting place and date changes each year. VSBA avoids meeting close to holidays.

Without considering when holidays may fall, I would be most likely to attend a spring/summer meeting if it were held in (choose **ONE**):

Last half of March

First half of June

Last half of June

First half of April

Last half of April

First half of July

First half of May

Last half of May

4. For many years, the spring/summer meeting has been two days, the fall/winter meeting one day. We are considering reversing that. What is your opinion? (choose one)

I prefer to keep it as is.

I'd prefer to swap the one and two day meetings.

It doesn't matter to me.

5. We're interested in the reasons for both of your choices. (Optional):

Beekeeping Merit Badge

Oklahoma Scout seeks reinstatement of badge

A 13-year-old Skiatook, OK, seventh-grader from Troop 250 is trying to convince the Boy Scouts of America to reinstate a merit badge for beekeeping, something the organization discontinued in 1995 because of a lack of counselors who were sufficiently qualified on the topic.

Christopher Stowell's interest in honeybees comes from the beekeeping exploits of his parents, Gary and Kimberley. "We're proud of Christopher," his mother said. "He's taken up a good cause." It has been "kind of amazing" how his quest has generated a swarm of interest from average people who have signed an online petition to beekeepers who have volunteered to instruct scouts on the subject.

Deron Smith, a national spokesman for the Boy Scouts of America, said, "We are aware of this youth member's petition and are excited to see his passion for scouting and beekeeping." Should qualified experts in the field of beekeeping

submit a proposal to reinstate the merit badge, he said, the suggestion would be considered.

Haagen-Dazs, the ice cream company that promotes its love of honeybees on the main page of its website, is helping promote Christopher's cause. On-line petitions are available at www.helpthehoneybees.com/#boyscouts and www.experienceproject.com/beepetition. Printable petitions specific for scouts and beekeepers are available at robobushkillfarms.com/christopher-stowell-a-scout-doing-a-beekeepers-job/. 🐝

Taken from Tulsa World

By David Harper

Editor's note: Beefarming was an original BSA merit badge instated in 1911. Renamed Bee Keeping in 1915 and Beekeeping in 1956, the merit badge was discontinued in 1995. The BSA is currently celebrating its 100th anniversary. Several discontinued historical merit badges were reinstated this year as part of the celebration. The national jamboree has been held at Fort A.P. Hill in Bowling Green, VA, since 1981. This summer will be the final jamboree at the Virginia site.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED