
THE COMMONWEALTH BUZZ

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March 2009

View from the President

Opportunities for Beekeepers

In spite of what the groundhog said several weeks ago our bees are gearing up for spring. Beekeepers wish the calendar would speed up so they can start the beekeeping season.

It really is astonishing to see the interest throughout the state in becoming a beekeeper. Many of the local associations are offering courses for beginners. Other states are finding the same interest. True, not all those who take a bee course will become beekeepers. But it is reassuring that the honey bee has inspired them to learn about this fascinating insect.

An added benefit of the increase in interest is the increase in local associations - both in number and in membership. Virginia now has 26 local associations, some of them newly formed.

I think we can all help our "newbees" and newly-formed associations by offering our services as speakers at their meetings. Although experienced beekeepers can have widely different opinions on how to do something, a fresh voice can only help encourage discussion and learning.

Along with interest in bees an interest has developed in improving and expanding bee pasture. As suburbia creeps into rural areas, bee pasture is lost to asphalt parking lots, carefully-groomed grass and increased indiscriminate use of pesticides and herbicides. Not only are honey bees threatened but also other native bees, as well as other beneficial insects.

As beekeepers we need to find ways to inform the non-beekeeping public that they can contribute to the health and well-being of honey bees and other pollinators. Perhaps we need to change the designation of "weeds" into "plants friendly to pollinators."

I recently had an article in *Bee Culture* asking for suggestions on renaming our traditional categories

See President, page 2

Spring Meeting News

VSBA upcoming meeting in Hampton, VA

The next meeting of the Virginia State Beekeepers Association is April 17 and 18, 2009, in Hampton, VA. The Colonial Beekeepers Association is hosting this year's Spring meeting at the Northampton Community Center.

Speakers for the meeting include Nancy Ostiguy from Penn State University. Dr. Ostiguy has been working on sustainable and organic agriculture and environmental consequences of pest control strategies. Dr. Ostiguy will be joined by Juliana Rangel from Cornell University. Ms. Rangel will report on her work with behavioral ecology and genetics of swarming honeybees. From Virginia Tech, Dr. Rick Fell and Nancy Adamson will cover research from Blacksburg. And, Dr. Wyatt Mangum will update us on the mysteries of Varroa mites.

Often overshadowed by nearby Virginia Beach and Williamsburg as a vacation spot, Hampton offers an array of attractions for its visitors. The largest stone fort ever built in the U.S., Fort Monroe is headquarters for the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command and home to the Casemate Museum chronicling the Coast Artillery Corps.

A modern look at our world is found at the Virginia Air and Space Museum in Downtown Hampton. As the visitor center for NASA Langley Research Center, the museum houses the Apollo 12 Command Module, an actual DC-9, and other aeronautical attractions. Just a few steps away is a working carousel built in 1920.

Buckroe Beach is just minutes from Downtown Hampton. Watch shipping in the Chesapeake Bay, cast a line out from the shore to satisfy that itch to fish, or take along a few bread crumbs for the seagulls as waves gently lap against the sands of this unspoiled beach. A concrete promenade offers a modern equivalent of a stroll down the boardwalk.

For information on lodging, dining, and driving directions for the meeting turn to page 6 of this newsletter. 🍷

AHB Expansion

Utah added to the list of infested states

Utah is known as the Beehive State. Earlier this month a new bee set up residence in the state – Africanized honey bees. The state Department of Agriculture recently announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed seven colonies of AHB in two counties. Four of the colonies are managed hives, all have been destroyed.

State official anticipated AHB arrival in Utah since their arrival in 1999 just a few miles from the state’s southern border in Mesquite, NV. "We've been saying not if but when for a long time," said Larry Lewis, a spokesman for the state agriculture department.

First appearing in the United States in 1990 Utah becomes the newest in a long list of Southern and Western states with this potentially harmful pest. Utah joins California, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico in the West as the 10th state to find established AHB colonies. Africanized bees have been linked to the deaths of 14 people in the United States since 1990, Utah officials said.

Although Africanized bees look like European honey bees, they tend to get irritated faster, respond with more firepower and stay mad longer than other bees, said Kirk Visscher, a professor at the University of California at Riverside, who has studied Africanized bees since 1985. Their stings are not more powerful than other bees but they are more aggressive and swarm more often. "The danger is getting a large number of stings in a short period of time," Visscher said. Reaction to bee venom can lead to shock and possible death.

"This discovery makes it imperative that we think differently about honey bees in our state," Leonard Blackham, Utah commissioner of agriculture and food, said in a statement.

Local officials plan to increase education efforts for keeping homes and buildings bee-free. Other program will instruct citizens what to do if they encounter a disturbed hive. "These bees don't go out and intentionally look for people to sting. They're just defending their hive," Lewis said. 🐝

*From The Associated Press
Mike Stark*

President, from page 1

of beekeepers: hobbyist, sideliners, commercial. Asking for funds to support a hobby does not really convey the importance of keeping bees. As funding is being tightened in all areas, using other names could help. Have you any suggestions? If so, please let me know.

And while I am asking for suggestions, do you have any for speakers or topics for the programs at VSBA meetings? Let us hear from you. Our contact information is in this newsletter and on our website.

I'll see you soon in Hampton! 🐝

*Submitted by Ann Harman
President, VSBA*

Treasurer's Report

Your mailing label or email message contains your renewal date. Membership is effective from July 1 to June 30. The current VSBA dues year is noted as "2008-2009". Dues are \$10 for local association members and \$12 for non-local members. You can renew your membership through your local association or directly with VSBA by sending payment with your name, address, phone number, email address and name of your local association to: Karen Hunt, PO Box 213, Amissville VA 20106. 🐝

*Submitted by Karen Hunt
Treasurer, VSBA*



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www.virginiabeekeepers.org

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State Apiarist Report

Update from Winter meetings

Earlier this month, February, I had an opportunity to meet with other state apiarists, university researchers, USDA officials, and industry leaders. Much of the discussion centered on exotic pests, CCD, pesticides, and the general (poor) health of hives. The main point taken was beekeepers need to be aware of what their bees are exposed to during foraging flights and through hive “management.”

Pesticide contamination of wax and pollen is shockingly high. This is not surprising, particularly with regard to miticides. Bees, and beeswax, are sponges soaking up everything they come into contact. The physical and behavioral characteristics that make them great pollinators also leave them susceptible to environmental hazards.

Dwindling populations, failing queens, low honey stores, and less brood have become the norm rather than the exception. Possible explanations include drought, inbreeding, chemical contaminants, and high fructose corn syrup. With the exception of the latter I am sure all contribute to the problem. HFCS, on the other hand, as long as it is properly stored, i.e. keep it out of the sun and from overheating, was found to be fine.

The simplest means of increasing hive health is to observe a routine rotation of stock, both wax and queens. Exchanging old wax for new foundation removes both chemical and disease contamination. A rule of thumb is to replace 2 to 3 frames from every box, both brood and supers, with new foundation each year. Every 5 to 3 years all old combs would be removed along with AFB spores, Apistan infused wax, and other contaminants. The same goes for queens. Replace queens regularly, preferably from different sources.

Traditional sources for queens and packages are now havens for pests like small hive beetles and Africanized bees. Like your mechanic, inspectors are not infallible. Your mechanic probably does not pull every tire to inspect your brakes during an inspection. Likewise, inspectors may only take a random sample in an apiary. Be sure you plan your purchases accordingly to avoid SHB, AHB, and other problems. Your hives are the best resource. 🐝

*Submitted by Keith Tignor
State Apiarist, VDACS*

Dadant Makes a Move

Lynchburg store closes

There are changes underway at the Virginia Dadant and Son’s office. In the 1950’s Dadant and Son’s acquired the Lewis Bee Supply Company in Lynchburg, VA. Since that time the warehouse and offices had become a mainstay of Carroll Ave. But, after nearly 6 decades in Lynchburg Dadant has decided to move south to Chatham, VA. The office has the same beekeeping equipment and supplies available; and, the same staff to serve its customers. But, the location has changed to provide expanded selection and services.

At 10,000 square feet the new facility in Chatham is larger than the Lynchburg office. Besides providing space for new offices and warehouse storage the facility will contain a show room and media room. One of the main goals of the move is to provide better service and more options to beekeepers. The Chatham show room meets this goal by providing more space to display available beekeeping equipment.

A new feature to the office is a customer media room. Visitors may view videos or read back issues of ABJ at their leisure. Another new service is a ready supply of high fructose corn syrup. A 5000 gallon tank has been installed to meet the demand for sugar syrup. This new feed source will be available in March.

Mark Bennett, manager of the office, stated “we’ll have a larger inventory on hand this year to better service people’s needs.” The office plans to reach out more to its larger hobbyist client base. The modern facility and expanded show room will allow visitors to see and evaluate more of the company’s cataloged items. And, with continued high demand for beekeeping supplies the larger warehouse space will increase on-hand inventory to fill orders.

If you are in the neighborhood stop by and see what the staff and building have to offer. The new address for the Virginia Dadant and Sons office is 820 Tightsqueeze Industrial Rd., Chatham, VA, 24531. You may still reach them by telephone at the old toll-free number of 1-800-220-8325, locally at 1-434-432-8461, or by FAX at 1-434-432-8463. 🐝

*Submitted by
VABeeman*

The People's Garden Project

USDA initiates community gardens

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today "broke pavement" on the inaugural USDA The People's Garden during a ceremony on the grounds of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) commemorating the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln founded the Department of Agriculture in 1862 and referred to it as "The People's Department" in his last annual message to Congress. The Secretary declared the stretch of pavement permanently closed and returned back to green, and encouraged other Administration officials and the general public to join in to protect the Chesapeake watershed.

"It is essential for the federal government to lead the way in enhancing and conserving our land and water resources," said Vilsack. "President Obama has expressed his commitment to responsible stewardship of our land, water and other natural resources, and one way of restoring the land to its natural condition is what we are doing here today - "breaking pavement" for The People's Garden."

During the ceremony, Secretary Vilsack announced the goal of creating a community garden at each USDA facility worldwide. The USDA community garden project will include a wide variety of garden activities including Embassy window boxes, tree planting, and field office plots. The gardens will be designed to promote "going green" concepts, including landscaping and building design to retain water and reduce runoff; roof gardens for energy efficiency; utilizing native plantings and using sound conservation practices.

The new garden will add 612 square feet of planted space to an existing garden traditionally planted with ornamentals. The garden will showcase conservation practices that all Americans can implement in their own backyards and green spaces. As a component of the garden, pollinator-friendly plantings will not only provide important habitat for bees and butterflies, but can serve as an educational opportunity to help people understand the vital role pollinators play in our food, forage and all agriculture. The garden plot is adjacent to the site of the USDA Farmer's Market. 🌱

From USDA Release No. 0042.09

Telling the Bees

Homer Patrick Powers, Jr. Remembered

Pat Powers, 86, of Denver, died at home with family around him on January 25, 2009. Born and raised in Gallup, NM, Pat served in England and France during WWII. He graduated from Denver University in 1950, married Carol Anne, and became the Colorado State Entomologist. As a researcher and a beekeeper, he was sent to Brazil in the mid 1960s by the U.S. State Department to teach modern beekeeping and assess the Africanized-bee situation.

In 1970, Pat became the Virginia State Apiarist, living for 35 years in Richmond, VA. He was active in the Richmond Beekeepers Association, Apiary Inspectors of America, and the Eastern Apiculture Society. In the early 1970's, he worked with USDA to build one of the first ethylene oxide (ETO) fumigation chambers for experimental use on bee equipment. Virginia used this versatile tool for over 25 years in the treatment of diseased bee equipment. In 1977, Pat was instrumental in the establishment of the Virginia Plant Pollination Advisory Board which continues to bring beekeepers, growers, and educators together to ensure a continuing source of pollinators for Virginia's agriculture. Following his retirement in 1989, Pat remained in Richmond until 2005 when the lure of his children and grandchildren drew him to Denver, CO.

His love of family, New Mexico, Navajo lore, beekeeping, and knowledge will be greatly missed by all who were honored to know this unique gentleman. 🌱

Submitted by Frank Fulgham

Michael S. Huffman

TBA member, Michael S. Huffman, 62, a native of Hampton and 25 year resident of Smithfield, VA, passed away Jan. 14, 2009, in Hampton. A graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, He served in the U.S. Army and the Coast Guard Reserves. Mike loved all animals, especially his beloved horses, dog, and cats. Club members will remember his selfless act of picking up equipment for others from Dadant even when gravely ill. Our sympathy and prayers go out to Mike's widow, Cindy and his family. 🌱

From The Forager Newsletter

Bee Garden Update

Winning Haagen-Dazs garden design announced

The Sausalito-based Sibbett Group created a series of interconnected gardens to win the international bee-friendly garden design competition, a gift to the University of California, Davis, from the Haagen-Dazs(R) brand.

Last December Haagen-Dazs ice cream committed \$125,000 to the UC Davis Department of Entomology, with \$65,000 earmarked for the garden. The key goals of the garden are to provide bees with a year-round food source, to raise public awareness about the plight of honey bees and to encourage visitors to plant bee-friendly gardens of their own.

"The winning design fits beautifully with the campus mission of education and outreach, and it will tremendously benefit our honey bees at Bee Biology," said Lynn Kimsey, professor and chair of the UC Davis Department of Entomology and director of the Bohart Museum of Entomology. "The garden will be a campus destination."

"Incorporated into each of the four sections are gathering spaces that serve as orientation points for guided tours, facilitated programs and 'chat time' with beekeepers and entomologists," the team judging the garden entries explained. Identification labels will help visitors know more about the plants, or what they can plant in their own yards. The design also includes a "Learning Center" building and paths labeled "Orchard Alley," "Save the Bee Sanctuary," "Round Dance Circle" and "Waggle Dance Way."

The Haagen-Dazs brand launched the "Haagen-Dazs Loves Honey Bees" campaign in February 2008, committing a total \$250,000 donation for bee research to UC Davis and Pennsylvania State University, and redoubled its efforts in 2009 with a second \$250,000 donation.

During the last several months, the public has answered the Haagen-Dazs brand's call to action by donating more than \$30,000 to support additional honey bee research at UC Davis. In addition, numerous companies have launched programs to donate a portion of their proceeds to UC Davis honey bee research. 🐝

Taken from Catch the Buzz

Legislative Update

News from Richmond

Budget cutting was the dominate theme at this year's General Assembly session. Cuts in school staffing, prisons, jobs, and reductions in transportation funding were necessary in the wake of the economic downturn. Beekeeping was not spared the budget axe. Despite several attempts to continue funding in the biennial budget, beekeeping fell to the fate of many other programs. Local associations and beekeepers should continue contacting their representatives in hopes we can have this brought up again in next year's session.

Governor Timothy M. Kaine announced a new website, Stimulus.Virginia.Gov, for citizens, groups, and others to share proposals for the federal stimulus package. Evaluation of submitted projects will begin on Friday, March 6, 2009. I will try to submit a request to get funding for what we have already started in help for beekeepers in Virginia. If any of you have suggestions on other possible projects to fund please let me know and soon at lballard@ntelos.net. 🐝

*Submitted by Lannie D. Ballard,
VSBA Legislative Liaison*

Upcoming Meetings

NCSBA/SCSBA Joint Meeting York Technical College Rock Hill, SC	March 6-7, 2009
KSBA Spring Meeting Henderson Co. Ext. Offices Henderson, KY	March 7, 2009
Virginia Agriculture Week	March 15-21, 2009
WVBA Spring Meeting Fairmont, WV	March 28, 2009
VSBA Spring Meeting Northampton Comm. Center Hampton, VA	April 17-18, 2009
Eastern Apiculture Society Holiday Valley Resort Ellicottville, NY	August 3-7, 2009
VSBA Fall Meeting Blue Ridge Comm. College Weyers Cave, VA	Nov. 7, 2009

Meeting Lodging Options

Motels near Northampton Community Center Area

Be sure to reserve your accommodations early to avoid overbooking. A block of rooms is available for beekeepers at the Holiday Inn on Mercury Blvd in Hampton, VA less than 2 miles from the meeting site. The VSBA rate is \$79/night (plus taxes). Refer to the VSBA meeting and beekeeping when making a reservation to receive the lower rate. Deadline for reservations is March 17, 2009.

Holiday Inn
1815 W Mercury Blvd.
Hampton, VA 23666
Phone: 757-838-0200
Fax: 757-896-3353
e-mail: reservations@hihampton.com

Other accommodations nearby in Hampton:

Comfort Inn, 1916 Coliseum Dr.
Phone: 757-827-5052

Quality Inn, 1813 W. Mercury Blvd.
Phone: 757-838-8484

Ramada Inn, 1905 Coliseum Dr.
Phone: 757-827-7400

Red Roof Inn, 1925 Coliseum Dr.
Phone: 757-838-1842

Additional lodging options can be found at www.hamptoncvb.com/go/visitors/accomodations.

For your dining pleasure visit one of these nearby establishments during your visit to Hampton:

Andrea's Pizza Shop, 114 W. Mercury Blvd.

Applebee's, 2159 Coliseum Dr.

Country Grill (ribs), 26 E. Mercury Blvd.

Cracker Barrel, 106 Marketplace Dr.

El Azteca, 2040 Coliseum Dr.

Marco's Pizza, 3322 W. Mercury Blvd.

Olive Garden, 1049 W. Mercury Blvd.

Peking International Buffet, 55 Towne Centre Way

Texas Steakhouse & Saloon, 2203 W. Mercury Blvd. 🍷

Directions to VSBA Meeting

Navigating through the Hampton area

From I-64 traveling East

I-64 exit 261A onto Hampton Roads Center Parkway. At stoplight turn left onto Big Bethel Road. At Big Bethel and Todd's Lane turn left and continue - making a left on Macon Road in front of Davis Middle School.

From I-664

I-664 exit 5. Turn left at the light at the bottom of the exit onto Jefferson Avenue. At Jefferson Ave and Mercury Blvd stoplight bear right onto Mercury Blvd. Continue on Mercury Blvd. At Mercury Blvd and Big Bethel Rd turn Left onto Big Bethel Rd. At Big Bethel and Todd's Lane turn right and continue - making a left on Macon Road in front of Davis Middle School.

From James River Bridge – Rt 17

Continue on Mercury Blvd. At Mercury Blvd and Big Bethel Rd turn Left onto Big Bethel Rd. At Big Bethel and Todd's Lane turn right and continue - making a left on Macon Road in front of Davis Middle School.

I-64 from Southside Hampton Roads area

I-64 exit 263A – the second Mercury Blvd exit towards the James River Bridge. At the Mercury Blvd and Aberdeen Road turn right onto Aberdeen Road. Travel one block. At the Aberdeen Road and Todds Lane stoplight turn left onto Todds Lane. Continue on Todds Lane to Macon Road stoplight. Turn right on Macon Road in front of Davis Middle School.

Parking

After entering the driveway, bear to left and follow parking lot to the far end.

For detailed driving instructions use www.mapquest.com or maps.google.com for the following address:

1435-A Todds Lane
Hampton, Virginia 23666

Drive time from Richmond is 1 hour 20 minutes. 🗺️

VSBA Spring Meeting

April 17-18, 2009

**Northampton Community Center
Hampton, VA**

**March 17th is the deadline to reserve a room at the Hampton Holiday Inn
under the special VSBA meeting rate. See page 6 for details.**

Karen Hunt
P.O. Box 213
Amisville, VA 20106

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED