



The Buzzzzz

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Photo by Randy Fox

Getting to Know Each Other!

by Vicki Basham

This month, we're getting to know Michael O'Dwyer. As his name suggests, he was raised in Ireland - Dublin, to be exact. As a young boy,

interview, he was battling ants in the remaining colony. But after applying some Tanglefoot. He was able to keep the ants at bay.

When asked if he had any advice for new beekeepers, he strongly suggests that they attend bee guild meetings. He found them to be very helpful for gathering information. He



he spent his summers in the country with his grandparents, and he remembers seeing beehives at the farm. But it wasn't until a couple years ago that Michael began to think seriously of getting bees himself. He started attending our meetings in the fall of 2012, and then made the plunge the following spring by buying and installing two packages of bees.

"I have yet to see a queen," he says. "I've been very hands-off with the bees. I didn't even see them in the beginning when I first released them; they were both well covered with attendants."

Both colonies did well through the 2013/2014 winter season, but only a couple weeks ago one of the colonies absconded. At the time of our

also enjoys reading books as an additional way to learn about beekeeping, and has especially liked "The Backyard Beekeeper" by Kim Flottum.

Guest Column

Honey Semantics
by Heather Oliver

When most people think of honey, they often picture the sweet stuff from the honey bears of their childhood. As beekeepers, we see honey in various stages and know that liquid gold is just one of the forms this product can take. With and without our manipulation, honey can

acquire varying flavors and textures. Consumers typically see honey in three forms; liquid, creamed and comb. Some beekeepers maintain there are definite differences among these products, while others consider the verbiage simply semantics. Below are a few discrepancies defined.

Raw versus commercial honey:

There is no official definition of “raw honey”, and the term “commercial” mainly refers to what you might find in the grocery store. The differences mainly lie in the way the honey is processed. Raw honey exists as close to its natural state as possible outside of the hive. Raw honey has not been pasteurized and is minimally filtered. Commercial honey has been heated and filtered, sometimes to the extent that pollen is virtually undetectable in the final product.

Comb versus chunk honey:

While these two products seem the same, there is a subtle difference. Honeycomb literally refers to the sections of hexagonal wax the bees have constructed for the storage of honey and pollen, and the rearing of brood. You might see sections of honeycomb sold at your farmer’s market under the label “comb honey”. Luckily these sections are filled with capped honey, and not brood. Chunk honey differs from comb honey in that liquid honey has also been included in the packaging.

Creamed versus whipped honey:

These types of honey might also be referred to as spun or churned honey. There is debate as to whether they are truly the same product under different names. The subtle differences are whether or not a starter is used and/or heat is applied. In both products, a small amount of liquid honey is incorporated into a larger portion of crystallized honey. Generally, the process of creaming honey is accelerated by adding a bit of already creamed honey, similar to adding an already existing starter to sourdough bread. This honey is sometimes brought to room temperature on a stovetop. Conversely, whipped honey commonly has just three components; liquid honey, crystallized honey and a stand mixer on high speed.

As beekeepers, we have the information to label these products appropriately. You can call them whatever you want. I will continue to call them all “delicious”.

President's Message Small Hive Beetle

by Wayne Pitts

Endemic to sub-Saharan Africa, the small hive beetle, *Aethina tumida* was first discovered in the United States in 1996 and has now spread to California. It was first reported in the Bay Area several years ago. The movement of migratory beekeepers from Florida may have transported the beetle to other states. Recent findings also indicate transport of the beetles in packages. The small hive beetle is



A Small Hive Beetle

not a problem in a well-populated and healthy hive. The bees simply round them up and keep them in propolis prisons, feeding them regularly. The problem occurs when the hive loses population and the beetles gain control. As the larva feed on the honey, they also defecate, producing a messy slime.

How do we naturally control them? The beetles like to hide in crevices where the bees have difficulty capturing them. Seizing upon this behavior, beetle traps have been developed that are narrow enough to fit between frames. A small amount of olive oil is added. Once the beetle enters the cavity and hits the oil, it can't

escape. These devices are rather inexpensive and are very effective. I have been using them for about 3 years in my hives and haven't had an out of control beetle invasion. I change the oil about once a year.

July in the Beeyard

by Dave Stocks

As July begins, the bees should be at their strongest point of the year. Depending on your management style, you should now have two full boxes of brood and honey. This may be two deeps or three shallows if you're using Langstroth's. If you haven't done it yet, add supers if needed, especially if you're expecting a mid to late summer nectar flow. Top Bar beekeepers are probably noticing expanding brood. They should consider manipulating frames by putting empty frames between two brood frames to give the queen room to lay. Also, consider harvesting some honey frames if you feel they need the room.

Some areas don't see a late summer nectar flow. In those cases, especially if you have already harvested honey, make sure the hives have sufficient stores to prevent starvation. This is especially true with any late season divides.

A related problem to bees being short of food is robbing. Stronger hives will readily steal from weaker hives. Consider reducing the entrances on weaker hives to give them a better chance of protecting their stores. This will also help the hives defend against yellow jackets.

Varroa levels will begin to increase rapidly during the month. You must stay vigilant. However you chose to treat for mites, remember it cannot be done with honey supers on. Evaluate the extent of the infestation and decide on either honey production or treatment.

With the very hot weather of July, you are likely to see large amounts of bees hanging on the outside of the hive. While it could be a sign of overcrowding, most likely it is one of two other issues. First, just like humans, bees

produce heat. It takes an extreme amount of energy to maintain the hive temperature. This is more easily accomplished if some of the hive hang out on the front porch. The second reason bees may be hanging outside the hive involves the length of time it takes the house to put away nectar and pollen. During a good nectar flow, the field bees are returning faster than their loads can be put away. The field workers hang out waiting their turn to off load. Consider putting an empty box on the bottom as a waiting area.

Hopefully, by this time, it has become habit, but don't forget water. The bees need it now more than ever.

Drippings From The Extractor

by Dave Stocks

Just when it seems we have it all figured out, something new comes along and throws a whole new spin on things. For several years now, environmentalists preached the evils of neonicotinoids. One recent study contends that neonicotinoids may not be as detrimental as previously thought. In research done by Gus Lorenzat, an entomologist at the University of Arkansas, very low levels of neonics were found in the pollen and nectar of cotton, corn and soybeans grown in trials. The neonics had been used as a seed treatment. Lorenzat said the findings are important because activists groups and some beekeepers are using claims, such as those he cited on the Internet, to call for the withdrawal of tolerances for compounds such as Transform, which was recently registered for use in cotton.

"We can't grow cotton in the Mid-South without Transform and similar compounds," said Lorenzat. "It is not economically feasible given the levels of insects we're seeing. If you're interested, you can read the articles on the University of Arkansas research at <http://deltafarmpress.com/cotton/new-research-indicates-neonicotinoids-not-showing-plant-pollen> and

<http://entomologytoday.org/2014/02/06/neon-icotinoids-barely-found-in-pollen-of-seed-treated-plants/>.

While this research seems to indicate that neonics may be a misunderstood child, others still advocate the harmful effects of pesticides in pollen and nectar. Michelle Colopy, of The Pollinator Stewardship Council, wrote in the July issue of *Bee Culture Magazine* that "crop pollination exposes honey bees to pesticides which alter their susceptibility to the gut pathogen *Nosema ceran*." Research found that, on average, pollen contained nine different pesticides. Some samples contained a high of twenty-one pesticides. In a related article in the June 2014 issue of *Bee Culture*, it was reported that Jennifer Berry, a researcher at the University of Georgia, needed pure beeswax for a research project on the effects of miticides on bee health. The pure wax was necessary to eliminate all other variables. She could not find it in the U.S. Even wax from beekeepers who were treatment free contained varying levels of pesticides.

Let's compound the problem. In a recent edition of *The Buzz*, both Wayne and I reported on the 80,000 colonies that were either damaged or destroyed in the Central Valley at the end of the almond pollination. Originally, it was reported that the cause was the misuse of the fungicide Pristine. That now seems to be only partly correct. It appears that farmers, in an attempt to reduce operating costs, were tank mixing more than one chemical. Rather than making several trips through the orchard, by combining chemicals, they did all their spraying with one pass, a big savings on fuel and labor, etc. The problem was that although each chemical was registered for its intended use, the combination was lethal.

So what's the point of all of this? Despite research findings such as the University of Arkansas report, pesticides are having a detrimental effect on our bees. Even if we as beekeepers practice treatment free methods, our bees are still exposed to pesticides. It would seem to me that as stewards of our environment, we need to advocate for stricter

pesticide regulations. Next month, hopefully, we'll talk about how to do that. (Note: The opinions expressed above are my own and not necessarily those of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association.)

Help may be on the way! President Obama has set aside \$50 million in his 2015 budget proposal to enhance research on pollinator health and habitat. This includes not only honey bees but all pollinators including native bees and butterflies. My only concern is that he has tabbed the Department of Agriculture and EPA Directors as co-chairs. These are the same folks that don't want GMO labeling or more restrictive pesticide labeling! To read the whole proposal, go to cnn.com and search for politics/honey bees.

Plant of the Month **Phacelia tanacetifolia**

by Randy Fox

Phacelia tanacetifolia is a versatile plant that is used extensively in Europe, both as a cover crop and as bee forage. It is also being increasingly used in California – especially in vineyards. *Phacelia* is quick to grow and flower and grows well in dry soil. It winterkills at about 18°F. In cooler regions, it can be used as a cover crop between summer cash. *Phacelia* is listed as one of the top 20 honey-producing flowers for honeybees and is also highly attractive to bumblebees and syrphid (hover) flies. *Phacelia*'s habit of flowering abundantly and for a long period can increase beneficial insect numbers and diversity because it provides high quality nectar and pollen. *Phacelia tanacetifolia* is an herbaceous, non-leguminous, flowering annual in the Hydrophyllaceae family. It's native to the arid southwest region of the United States and Mexico. Height ranges from 6 to 47 inches. The foliage appears ferny, and the flowers are in flat-topped clusters in shades of purple or occasionally white. Spring and summer-planted *phacelia* flowers approximately 6 – 8 weeks after germination. Flowering continues for 6 to

8 weeks. Phacelia is a long-day plant and requires a minimum of 13 hours of daylight to initiate flowering (roughly mid-April to early September in the mid-Atlantic). Phacelia is comparable to buckwheat in many ways. Cultural differences are that buckwheat germinates more readily - especially at higher soil temperatures, and phacelia is more tolerant of cold and drought.

Phacelia seed needs dark for good germination – bury the seed a 1/4 inch. Phacelia seed also requires cool soil temperatures for germination (although it will grow well in hot, dry soil). Research reports indicate the optimum soil temperature for germination is between 37 - 68°F (soil temperatures closely follow air temperatures). Wet or compacted soils reduce germination success. A nurse crop such as buckwheat germinates reliably quickly and serves to protect the ground from erosion and shelters the second crop as it germinates more slowly. Suitable nurse crops, when phacelia is used as an insectary planting, would be quick-germinating, insect-friendly herbs and flowers such as borage cosmos, achillea, and buckwheat. Planting phacelia before a rain or lightly irrigating after planting may improve germination rates.

Phacelia is highly attractive to honeybees, bumblebees, and syrphid flies, and these insects are valuable pollinators. Syrphid fly larvae are voracious feeders on aphids and young caterpillars. Phacelia is also reputed to attract other beneficial insects, such as, parasitic wasps and minute pirate bugs. It provides both pollen (for protein – needed for egg production) and nectar (for carbohydrates – needed for energy). Insectary plants are those with high volume, quality nectar, and/or pollen that are extremely attractive to beneficial insects. They are planted for the primary purpose of attracting pollinators, predators, and parasites of pest insects. Phacelia's habit of quick growth and long flowering make it highly suitable as an insectary plant. It can be succession sown so that it is in flower all season, or it can be sown at a specific time to build up beneficial insect populations in anticipation of their need to

control a crop pest. One caution – if you have a large area of phacelia planted, time the planting so that phacelia flowers are not blooming when you need a crop pollinated. Phacelia flowers are so attractive to pollinators that the flowers would compete successfully for pollinator services against most other flowering plants.

Calendar of Events

Meetings

July 1, 2014

Gilroy Beekeepers Association - 7 PM
Gilroy Old City Hall
7400 Monterey
Gilroy, CA

<http://www.uvasgold.com/gba/>

Topic:

Field trip to a bee yard
(See directions below)

July 2, 2014

Santa Cruz Beekeepers Guild - 6:30 PM
El Rio Mobile Home Park
2120 N. Pacific Ave
Santa Cruz, Ca

<http://santacruzbees.com>

Topics:

Managing hive health
Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

July 5, 2014

Monterey Bay Beekeepers - 8 AM
2450 N. Fremont St. Monterey, Ca
<http://www.montereybaybeekeepers.org/>

July 7, 2014

Santa Clara Valley Beekeepers Guild -
6:15 PM
1292 Minnesota Ave.
San Jose, Ca

<http://beeguild.org/>

Topic:

Marketing your hive products

Classes/Workshops/Meetings

August 2-3, 2014

2nd Annual Treatment Free Workshop
Medford, OR

Details at www.blisshoneybees.org

September 6, 2014

Intermediate Beekeeping w/ Serge
Labesque
San Mateo, CA
Contact

<http://www.sanmateobeeguild.org/> for
details

September 17-20, 2014

Western Apicultural Society Annual
Meeting
Missoula, Montana

http://ucanr.edu/sites/was2/Conference_Information/

November 18-21, 2014

California State Beekeepers Association
Valencia, CA

<http://www.californiastatebeekeepers.com/events.html>

Gilroy Beekeepers Association July Meeting announcement

The July meeting (July 1, 2014 at 7pm) of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association will be held at 9567 Estates Drive, Gilroy. We will have the opportunity to go through as many hives as time allows to look for what is right or wrong. Please bring your protective equipment, especially veils. If anyone has extra equipment, please bring it for new members that have not had a chance to purchase theirs. There is no drinking water or restroom facilities available at the site. Please plan accordingly.

Directions to 9567 Estates Drive

From the south

1. Take the Leavesley RD exit off of Highway 101 in Gilroy
2. Go east on Leavesley RD approximately 1 3/4 miles
3. Make a left turn onto New AV. Signs will indicate Coyote Lake/ Harvey Bear County Park
4. Travel approximately 1 3/4 miles
5. Make a right turn on Bannister Ave. This will be just past Buena Vista AV
6. Travel approximately 1/4 mile
7. Make a right turn onto Estates DR.
8. The meeting site is on the right just past 9567 Estates DR. Please do not go in the driveway. Parking is available on the street. If your vehicle permits, you can also park in the field just south of the driveway.

From the north

1. Take the San Martin AV exit from Highway 101.
2. Travel east on San Martin Ave to where the road makes a series of turns (right/left/right) and becomes New AV. This will be immediately after the entrance to Harvey Bear County Park
3. Travel approximately 5 miles to Bannister AV. If you reach Buena Vista AV (Satori Cellars) you've gone too far!
4. Make a left turn onto Bannister AV
5. Travel approximately 1/4 mile.
6. Make a right turn onto Estates DR.
7. The meeting site is on the right just past 9567 Estates DR. Please do not go in the driveway. Parking is available on the street. If your vehicle permits, you can also park in the field just south of the driveway.

If you're lost or have questions, please call Dave at 408-605-3977. We hope to see you there!