



## The Shore Swarm



The Newsletter of the Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore

November, 2014

[www.bgesva.org](http://www.bgesva.org)

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Greetings BGES,

As we head into winter much of our preparations should be well along by now. My queen excluders are off, those extra supers without much action have been removed to "tighten up" my hives a bit, and my feeders are in place as are my bottom board closers. I've not yet reduced my top screen covers to small vent holes, but that will come with the first cold snap. For our program in November (Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> at the Barrier Island Center) we'll bring a look at what's happening inside our hives over the winter; it should be most interesting. Hope you can join us.

The Board of Directors is beginning the planning for the next New Beekeepers Course to be offered on February 7 and 14 (one class, two sessions). Details will be coming soon, but now is the time to think about family, friends and neighbors who might be interested. We need more pollinators (and beekeepers) on the Shore. I'm getting excited about receiving my VA Pollinator License Plates, due out this month.

Many thanks to Mary Walker, Donna Fauber and Ann Snyder for handling the BGES teaching exhibit at the Watershed

Walk in Onancock on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. About 300 sixth graders from Accomack County

participated. Live bees are always a hit. I ran a teaching station about the Shore's fresh water, so I know just how hectic, but fun, the event was.

Remember, no meeting in December, so I'll wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year now (was I first?)!

Keep buzzin',

*John Chubb, BGES President*

### Upcoming Meeting

**Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>**

**6:30 pm**

**Barrier Island Center, Machipongo**

### Special Guest Speakers

**Matt Cormons**

**"What's Going on in the Hive from November Through March?"**

And

## **W. T. Wilkins Candy Board and Candy Patties**

### **What's the Buzz?**

We are expecting a great program featuring Matt Cormons and W.T. Wilkins at our November meeting on Tuesday. For those who have not yet had the pleasure of meeting Matt, he is a native New Yorker, biologist, farmer and long-time beekeeper in Accomack County. He will be sharing with us his knowledge of the special adaptations winter bees make to the cold weather, and sharing with us his own practices to assist them.

W.T. Wilkins is well-known to those who have attended the annual open hive day in Northampton. He has, in a fairly short time, distinguished himself as a very respected, competent, intrepid, intuitive and knowledgeable beekeeper, who keeps his hives healthy and productive year after year. He will be showing us how he uses a candy board, and describing how he feeds bees during the winter.

In light of the following from Angela Barnes, we will all benefit from learning how to support bees through what might be a very cold winter:

Hope you are doing well. I am going to miss everyone at the meeting next week. I had a very disappointing fall with my Apiary in that the nectar was not in abundance as it had been last year. Many of my inspections, including my own yard, are showing very low stores and some weak colonies. They all seem to be finding and storing pollen fine, but nectar is very low. I hope the beekeepers on the Shore have had a chance to assess their hives and are feeding if needed. I spoke to Matt Cormons

yesterday and I believe he is going to touch base on this next week.

Angela has shared a recent newspaper article which you'll find on the back page of this newsletter.

### **Watershed Festival**



The assignment Mary, Donna, and Ann took on for the Watershed Festival was to explain how the world of the 1850s differed from the world of today, from the perspective of beekeeping. It was an awesome job to explain this to successive groups of 6<sup>th</sup> graders throughout the day, and a challenge for the vocal chords!

In the picture above, Mary discusses how the 1850s development of the Langstroth hive, with removable frames, allowed beekeepers to take honey from bees without destroying their hives. She compared the modern hive to the skep – the traditionally built straw hive of earlier times.

Donna discussed the work of pollination that bees do, and how in the 1850s, there were many more wild places and wild flowers left to provide forage for pollinators than there are now. The sixth graders learned of the

importance of leaving some places un-mowed so that flowers can bloom for the bees.

Donna also gave the children a pollination exercise. She filled a large bowl with Cheetos, and sprinkled some Starburst candies in. As the children reached into the bowl to find the candies, their hands became coated with the pollen-like cheese powder from the Cheetos. This was an incredibly popular and messy activity!

All of this for a jar of honey!



### David Fluhart writes the following:

#### Telling the Bees

Dr. Holman C. (Skip) Rawls, a friend to bees and a member of BGES, died on October 9, 2014.

Skip lived a very full and productive life in Virginia Beach where he was a husband and father, a well-respected oral and maxillofacial surgeon, a retired naval officer, world traveler, and churchman.

He also owned a farm in Northampton County, and kept several hives of honeybees here, and this is how we were fortunate to know him. He will be very missed.

Here is Dave, presenting a jar of Quinbee Honey to the Executive Officer (XO) (Second in Command) Captain Jeff Craig.



License Plates

## and Bumper Stickers

# Pollinator Conservation Short Course

Eastern Shore Community College  
Melfa, VA  
Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

The Xerces Society for invertebrate Conservation, the USDA Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension program, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service are pleased to present this course.

The full-day training will provide you with the latest science-based approaches to increasing pollinator populations for improved pollination and crop production. Leave with the tools necessary to assess, create, protect, and manage habitat for these vital insects.

To register for the Pollinator short course, contact:

Sara Morris  
The Xerces Society  
503-232-6639

[shortcourses@xerces.org](mailto:shortcourses@xerces.org)

The cost for attending is \$25.00 for the first 60 registrants and thereafter is \$45.00 per person. Registration includes lunch and a copy of Attracting Native Pollinators.

Samantha Gallagher designed the beautiful Virginia Pollinator License plate, worked hard to gather the necessary signatures and fees, and successfully shepherded the plate through the Virginia General Assembly, and finally to the Governor's desk, where it received an *almost* final signature. She had thought that by November the plates would be in production and would begin appearing on vehicles throughout Virginia.

Now however, Samantha has come up against the immovable power of the DMV, where time is measured not in minutes but in 30 day increments! Samantha doubts we will see the plate before the New Year, but will keep us informed.

In the meantime, here's a cute bumper sticker that was recently seen:

# I'VE GOT HIVES!

## The Un-named Column

Russell Vreeland

October 2014

This month is the end of my story. As I mentioned last month Angela and I found the Queen in that troubled hive. After giving her some more workers from a strong hive, changing all of the woodenware and 80% of the frames I went back a couple of days later. At that time the Queen was out of her corner and exploring frames. The bees were flying and it looked somewhat normal. I went back at the end of seven days and everything (except the beetles) was dead. There was not a live bee in sight in that hive. This went so fast and was so extensive I personally suspect a viral assault of

some type although there were no physical symptoms (like deformed wings, bloated bees or anything). Sadly things were already so degraded I could not send anything for analyses so I don't have any idea why this happened.

Once again I have reminded myself to never move either woodenware, sick bees or a failing Queen into a healthy hive. I suspect that had I done that here I would have lost more than a few frames. As it was I removed wax from 30 frames, disinfected the frames in hot water and iodine, did the same with all of the woodenware and now it will be stored for several months before use. If this indeed was a viral (or other microbial attack) disinfection and storage is critical. Microbes can and will reside in the spaces between cellulose fibers of the wood for frames, boxes or anywhere infected bees touch. Most pathogens cannot survive hot soapy water (my disinfectant is a soap with tamed iodine). I use it because it doesn't leave a residue but the iodine binds for a while and helps work over time. If something like this happens to you (I hope not) clean everything including your hive tools, since I use plastic frames I soaked them after scraping. If you use wooden frames, toss them. They will have the worst contamination.

Now to something a bit neater: One thing that is just amazing to me about worker bees is their sensitivity to chemical stimuli. We have all heard stories of bees trained to find explosives (they will cluster on land mines or on a car containing drugs. In fact the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) spends more on bee research than nearly any other agency. Anyway I have been reading something for an upcoming book. It turns out that about 3% of all drone eggs in a hive are laid by workers but only 0.1 % of live drones were actually laid by a worker. But that is not the entire story because it appears that every hive really has several un-related laying workers at all times. What happens is called "worker policing" and workers on the comb are able to distinguish, remove and destroy 98% of all un-

fertilized eggs laid by workers. At the same time, they leave 63% of the un-fertile eggs laid by a Queen. This happens even if the eggs are from a different Queen, if they are mixed up (worker eggs next to Queen eggs) are even from different hives. Somehow our bees can actually sense the caste of the bee that laid the egg! They do it constantly, thoroughly and are pretty darned accurate. Pretty cool.

Hope your bees are healthy.

-Russell

The Rotarian Magazine, (July, 2014) had a lovely article about honeybees that included the following facts:

People have trained bees to send messages (in lieu of pigeons), sniff out bombs at Heathrow Airport (in lieu of dogs), and search for land mines in Croatia. The poet Virgil stored his valuables in beehives. During the first century B.C., people in present day Turkey used honey made from rhododendron flowers to poison Roman troops. Bees have been used in battles for centuries. The Viet Cong hurled bees' nests at American soldiers during the Vietnam War. Rock art in Africa, India, and Spain shows that early civilizations hunted for honey. Alexander the Great was sent home after his death in Babylon in a coffin filled with honey. Honey is as effective as a common over-the-counter cough suppressant.

-Diana Schoberg

### **VSBA Fall Meeting**

Don't forget the fall meeting to be held at Weyers' Cave on Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. This Sunday is the last day for early registration.

[http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/877  
593](http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/877593)

*From the Editor*

Our club enjoyed a fascinating talk last month from Felicite Barrouette ("Licho") about beekeeping in Belize, and his plans to grow his apiary here. We look forward to hearing more!

Don Forbes reported that woodenware stored on his property had recently been stolen....Beekeepers, be vigilant and beware!

Don't miss the meeting Tuesday, and

**DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!**

## Honeybees need fall's foliage to stay healthy

BY PETE OSTROWSKI  
Colonial Beekeepers Association

One of the major problems honeybees are having these days is finding enough nutrition to stay healthy.

It may be hard to believe that an insect needs a balanced diet, but it is true, especially for honeybees. Honeybees put up pollen (protein) and nectar (carbohydrates) for winter stores. Fall often provides a nectar and pollen flow that will allow the bees to hopefully finish filling their pantry in preparation for the winter.

Honeybees do not hibernate but rather cluster into a tight ball. The outer bees are an insulating layer and the inner bees vibrate their wing muscles, similar to our shivering, to create heat. This requires a lot of energy that is supplemented by the pollen and honey reserves that the bees accumulated in the fall.

Some of the fall foliage that provides great amounts of nectar and pollen for the bees are goldenrod and asters. These perennial flowers often grow wild along unmowed areas and in vacant lots and fields. Before hooking up the bush hog, restraining the weed eater or pumping up the Roundup, think about the bees and other pollinators that are looking for this resource to survive. Letting the fencerow over-



PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER OSTROWSKI

Bees work the honeycombs in hives at the home of Peter Ostrowski.

grow until November gives everyone a break.

Goldenrod is often confused with ragweed and gets cut down with a vengeance by those with allergies. These are two very different plants, one being very beneficial to pollinators.

"Goldenrod has pretty golden flowers and heavy pollen that does not fly around very much. Bees and birds love it," says Master Gardener Donna Katsurani in an examiner.com article on allergies. "Ragweed, however, sends its pollen into the wind to reproduce, where it causes many more problems for allergy sufferers."

Now is a good time to consider what you might be planting next year to help out our pollinators. Pollinator conservation can go beyond passive habitat preservation to active habitat improve-

ment by installing permanent pollinator pastures.

Pollinator pasture is a permanent planting of flowering annuals or perennials designed to attract honeybees, bumblebees, butterflies and other pollinators over many weeks or months. The goal is improved bee nutrition to encourage high bee numbers, either by attracting them to the area, by increasing the number nesting in the area or by increasing their reproductive output.

The long-term payoff of perennial pastures may be good, especially since non-honeybees tend to nest near where they were reared the previous year. Bigger is better but every little bit can help, even that 4x4 plot you don't know what to do with in your back yard.

The Colonial Beekeepers website, colonialbeekeepers.com, offers files to view and download with lists of annual and perennial plants that are beneficial to honeybees and other pollinators, along with nectar and pollen bloom times.

So next year you can proudly proclaim, my lawn mower isn't broken, I'm raising these weeds.

*Ostrowski is a longtime beekeeper from Gloucester and a member of the Colonial Beekeepers Association. For more information, go to colonialbeekeepers.com.*

