

The Shore Swarm

November, 2015 Vol. 6, No. 11 The Newsletter of the Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore

Greetings, Shore Beekeepers,

We are being skillfully led right now by officers Carol Zuccarino, John Long, and Chris Merritt, backed up by the members who attend the advertised planning meetings. So far this is working well, and there *is* a plan for the coming year. Please note the calendar of meetings and events that is included later in this newsletter.

If you are interested in attending planning meetings, be on the lookout for notices about them from secretary Carol Zuccarino (zuccarinoc@gmail.com). You don't have to take on any responsibilities to attend – just know your ideas are very welcome, always.

There have been some changes recently. We have resumed sending communications to *everyone* on our mailing lists, not simply the current paid members. If you're unsure whether or not you're a fully paid up member with voting privileges, please contact treasurer Chris Merritt (cmpens@hotmail.com) and he'll let you know. If you are not interested in receiving notices and the newsletter from BGEs, please let Carol know.

Many old and new friends braved the nor'easter on October 3rd to hear from German beekeeper, Herbert Haebich. Thanks to Bettina for arranging such an interesting program!



Upcoming Meeting

Don't Miss it!

Tuesday, November 3rd, at 6:30 pm

(That's Election Day...don't forget to Vote!)

At the Barrier Island Center in Machipongo

**Agenda:
"The Monthly Bee Report"
Preparing for Winter**

**Program:
Raising Queens**

Some of our own members recently spent time learning from an expert how to raise queens, and they'll be sharing what they learned with the rest of us.

Future Dates To Remember

Oct. 28	Watershed Festival Onancock School 10 – 2
Nov. 3	Meeting, BIC “Queen Rearing”
December	No meetings
Jan. 9	Meeting, C. of C. Planting for Pollinators
Feb. 9	Meeting, BIC “Business of Beekeeping”
Mar. 5	Meeting, C. of C. Andy Westrich
Mar. 18	Coffee and Lecture On Beekeeping at BIC
April	No regular meeting Beginning Beekeeping Classes, to be held at Experiment Station in Painter.
May 3	Meeting BIC Pam Fisher (President, VSBA) Myths of Beekeeping
June	Picnic, Plant Exchange

Preparing Hives for the Winter

A new beekeeper recently asked about how to help the bees get ready for cold weather:

“I’ve been thinking about what I need to do for winter. I didn’t put a super on the [first] hive but I put one on [the second one] about 2 months ago. I’m thinking I should remove the super before it gets too cold; is that right? Is there anything else I need to do to get the hives ready for winter? Do I feed them all winter?”

These questions were put to some of our members, and here are some answers. Note that there are a variety of “right” answers!

Alex Wilke asked a similar question at the DU event. She had added supers late, in anticipation of fall flow. The supers were not completely full, frames were partially capped, not capped or not used. She asked opinions on what she should do with them. She wants her supers off for the winter.

Licho recommended that she take them off and place them in her bee yard and let the bees clean them up, then store them for the winter. I have the same issue, half way done frames. I plan to set the supers or frames that need to be stored about 20 feet from the hives so there can be a bee free for all. Bees will clean them up! I like to wrap each frame in newsprint, freeze for a couple of days and then store. I read that wax moths do not like newsprint (for whatever that's worth).

While it's still warm, I plan to feed 2 cups sugar to one cup water to the hives that are low on stores (do the lift test). If you are leaving supers on for the winter, remember to get queen excluders off so the queen can move up with the cluster!! Also, add entrance reducers so mice don't take up residence.

When the temp starts averaging below 55 and

hives are still low on stores or later in the winter when stores have been depleted, I'll use WT Wilkins recipe and put sugar cakes right on the frames. (Donna Fauber)

In my opinion (and practice) removing or maintaining supers on a hive comes down to whether or not they have honey in the frames. If I have a full super on the hive at this time of year I leave it. If I have multiple supers each with some honey then I try to combine them to make a full one or in some cases put the medium into a deep box.

If the super is empty I get it off. At the same time bees don't care how large their space is they really only heat the cluster not the rest of the hive. So it doesn't matter how large it is if there is honey all around. They need that for the calories.

Regarding "feeding" all winter I do leave emergency supplies around on top of the bars. Things like fondant, sugar cakes and even patties. If it gets too cold the bees may run out of nearby honey and can't move to the rest of the areas. So some added sugar right near center of the cluster may save the hive. I often do leave some syrup in the insulation box above the screen again as an absolute emergency. I just check it to see if it is going down or if the bees are beneath it. If they are then they have run low and I get them some more. (Russell)

My preference this time of year is to place any supers I need to remove and store on top of the inner cover for a few days. If it is warm enough for the bees to break cluster, they will work that super and carry the nectar and honey down into the brood nest. This is how I clean my honey supers after extraction also. If you have an inner cover with a notch in it, be sure to block it to keep out the neighboring bees!

This time of year, each of my hives is assessed individually for winter stores. I don't like open feeding, though I do it occasionally. Now that I

have more than 10+ hives, it is tempting to open feed, but I do try to only feed those hives that need it. In the winter, I will use the mountain camp method or sugar bricks. Right now I am feeding back the honey I extracted from my hives this summer to those that are light on stores. (Angela)

[T]here are many opinions about the need to feed...some people do and some don't. There is a simple test "they" say you can do to gauge the bees' need for food. It's the "lift test." In fall, try to lift the back of the hive, from the bottom. It should be almost too heavy to budge. Honey accounts for that weight; the bees' weight really doesn't amount to much. By late February, you'll find you can lift the hive more easily. If it becomes too light before the maple trees begin their red colored flowering, you might feed the bees if you haven't before. You might ask "What is *too light*?" I can only say it's probably something that a bad experience will teach you. (Ann)

Greenwing Event

Some of our members recently met at the Ducks Unlimited Greenwing Event to introduce children to bees. Donna Fauber writes that it

...went very well. Susan Harris and Licho went and both were great with the children and all of the questions!!



...we made the seed bombs and turned them into ghosts on a stick!



We took an empty super and a rubber bee stamp and sharpies for kids to stamp and sign the super. We gave out honey samples, always popular with the kids. Licho brought a hive and frames in all stages so we could show and tell start to finish, the frame. Oh. The lives bees are like a big magnet for all ages!! I have the banner and extra ghosts and publications. Will bring them to the watershed event.

PS- almost forgot. We had a 'guess the number of bees' contest. Winner received a free jar of honey. The number in the frames was estimated to be 7K. We had a very happy winner!! I also forgot to mention that we were freezing cold!!!!

And another event.....

On Wednesday, October 28th, our club will be talking bees with every sixth grader on Virginia's Eastern Shore, at the Watershed Festival. This event will be held at the Onancock School from 10 am – 2 pm. The point of the presentation is

to show how our environment (chiefly, our watershed) has changed over the last hundred years. From a beekeeping perspective, the emphasis is on loss of wild flowers and habitat, and paving and development of areas of value to pollinators.

There is a small team of beekeepers planning our exhibit and activities; **if anyone else is free to drop by and offer support, (and lend your voice!) please do, and know that you're wanted!** If you have questions, please contact Mary Walker (mwalker@esva.net) Donna Fauber (dfauber@verizon.net) Angela Barnes (angela.barnes@vdacs.virginia.gov)

What Northampton County's Proposed Zoning Changes Mean for Beekeepers...

Northampton club members may want to know this is in the pipe. It's was up for discussion at the last meeting and there were questions regarding beehives and the numbers proposed. I have emailed Keith Tignor for his thoughts and recommendations, I'll let you know if I hear back and if I do, maybe we can submit a letter from BGES. The next meeting is on 11/2 and I think it would be beneficial for club members to submit letters or be present unless this seems reasonable. I'll have to buy land, more than 5 acres it seems.

Here's what the proposed ordinance says.

Minimum standards for domestic husbandry shall be as follows:

(1) The total number of farm animals shall be as follows:

(a) on lots less than one acre the total number of farm animals shall not be greater than 10 farm animals weighing less than 25 pounds each

and 1 farm animal weighing 25 pounds or more and 3 bee hives;

(b) on lots greater than one acre but less than 2.5 acres the total number of farm animals shall not be greater than 50 farm animals weighing less than 25 pounds each, 2 farm animals weighing 25 pounds or more and 10 bee hives; and

(c) on lots greater than 2.5 acres but less than 5 acres the total number of farm animals shall not be greater than 50 farm animals weighing less than 25 pounds each, 5 farm animals weighing 25 pounds or more and 10 bee hives.

(d) The total number of farm animals on a lot 5 acres or greater shall be based on sound agricultural practices established and promoted by the Virginia Cooperative Extensive Service.

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Thank you!

Donna Fauber

757-331-1246 or 757-618-7196

**Article from the Virginian-Pilot,
10/9/15, shared by Wendy Martin**



Virginia State Beekeepers Association Meeting

Feel like traveling and seeing the colorful fall foliage throughout Virginia? Consider attending the State Beekeepers Meeting at Weyer's Cave November 7th. Check out the VSBA website for more information and to register...you'll learn a lot!

This is not a crazy idea. Build a bumblebee nest!

(Mary Reid Barrow)

In your wildest dreams, it probably never occurred to you to build a bumblebee nest.

But that is exactly what the Virginia Beach Garden Club is going to encourage you to do at their Fall Flower Festival and Marketplace from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday (Oct. 14) at the Virginia Beach Convention Center.

The Pollinator Booth, where you can buy all sort of flowers to encourage pollinators to visit your garden, will be giving away free bumblebee nest kits to the first 25 folks who

visit the booth. And they also will give away directions for building the kits to anyone who wants them. Talk to the garden club volunteers and you will end up not only wanting a bumblebee nest in your yard, but also maybe even loving the fuzzy yellow and black critters.

Bumblebees are great pollinators and they don't have the disease problems that many honeybees suffer from. You can encourage bumblebees to come to your garden by providing a wild grassy area where they can nest or by building a nest for them. Bumblebees, unlike ground bees, are solitary nesters in grass patches above ground or maybe or below ground in, say, an old mouse nest.

The club's simple nest kit, in photo, includes an upside down flowerpot, a piece of slate for a roof and stones to raise the roof to enable the bee to enter the flowerpot holes. A terra cotta or decorative pot would work also as long as it had holes in the bottom. Wire mesh inside the pot holds natural nesting materials, such as dried moss, off the ground to keep the moss from getting wet. A brick can be put on top of the slate to hold it in place.

Build the nest now, the garden clubbers say, and tuck it away in a shady corner of the garden, so it can weather and will feel more natural to a queen bee in the spring. Bumblebee nests can be purchased in many sizes and shapes over the Internet, but directions for a simple flowerpot nest kit, like this one, can be found at:
www.bumblebee.org/nestbox_plans.htm

For more information on the importance of bumblebees, visit:
www.extension.umn.edu/garden/insects/find/bumblebees/

After reading all the good things the site has to say about bumblebees, your wildest dreams just might include a bumblebee nest!

Looking Ahead...

Russell Vreeland is heading up the planning for the Beginning Beekeeping class to be offered by us in 2016.

There are some interesting and exciting changes afoot!

The Virginia Tech Extension/Experiment Station in Painter is a wonderful site for the class, with classroom, kitchen facilities, and best of all, an ideal site to set up and maintain hives for new beekeepers to see and learn from.

Russell is considering offering the class a little later in the Spring than usual, but our club is planning to present 2 preliminary, introductory programs to the public. One of these will be a Friday morning coffee program at the Barrier Island Center on March 18th. Do you know of any northern Accomack sites that might be suitable for the upper shore program? Let Russell know.

Many thanks to Russell for coordinating this class!