

The Shore Swarm

The Newsletter of the Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore

August, 2019

From our president, George Brown:

Goldenrod grows in abundance in several varieties, and while other insects may be seen upon it in great numbers, a bee is seldom seen upon it. Much the same may be said of the asters. In some places both these plants are said to be well visited by the bees." So stated Dr. C. C. Miller in his book, "Fifty Years Among the Bees." In western Pennsylvania, Goldenrod is definitely "well visited by the bees" and is a good sign the autumn nectar flow is on. Goldenrod does well in the hotter and drier last days of summer and first days of autumn. It can be found alongside just about every highway and byway and along the borders of fields. The characteristic "stinky socks" smell is associated with the bees drying the Goldenrod nectar. The smell can be overwhelming but fortunately the resultant honey is still delicious.

I'm seeing Goldenrod now here on the shore. Some areas have received some rain, but here just south of Onancock we've had nothing. Hopefully, the Goldenrod will thrive nonetheless and my 5 hives will get a good build up going into the colder months.

Please attend the September meeting if at all possible. Our state apiarist, Keith Tignor, will be doing a presentation and will go over the 2019 Annual North American Mite-a-Thon taking place between 7 and 14 September 2019.



September Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 3rd

6:30 pm

Barrier Island Center, Machipongo

Guest Speaker – Keith Tignor, State Apiarist

(Bring your questions...he has the answers.)

Bee there!

Upcoming Events:

October 5th BGES meeting, Historic Onancock School, 10:00. Speaker: George Waldenmeier of Bee Busters, talking about his work with all the other hymenoptera. He knows bees and you'll pick up a lot of helpful information from him.

November 2nd, VSBA Fall Meeting, Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, VA.

Club News:

Our own Mickey and Tim Palmer have embarked on the path to becoming Master Beekeepers. This is a rewarding and not easy venture, with tests both written and practical, going through the apprentice, journeyman, and master levels. There are not many master beekeepers in Virginia. Frank Wagner coordinates this program, and the testing is offered at the VSBA meetings twice yearly, and at the Eastern Apicultural Society meeting annually.

Annual Picnic:

Our members have enjoyed 2 great get-togethers at the home of George and Leilani. In June we met for a demonstration of the "On the spot" method of creating splits from strong hives. We saw how George made notches in likely looking brood cells in order to trick his bees into raising queens for him.

When we gathered for the picnic last month we saw how each of these nucs had become flourishing queen-right colonies.



These vigorous new colonies of bees were guests at the BGES picnic in July, and were full participants in the honey tasting contest.

Many thanks to George and Leilani for hosting.

New officers for 2019-2020 are George Brown, president; Thor Gormley, vice president; Teresa McCready, secretary, Nancy Gormley, treasurer, Sandie Hearn, programs.

Fall Flowers

You may notice your bees are less idle and less irritable as fall comes and the summer nectar dearth ends. In spite of drought, wildflowers are beginning to bloom. Goldenrod, Michaelmas daisies and other asters are the showy ones that we know help the bees lay in their winter honey supply.

You may not be so aware of the remarkable sumac tree (*Rhus* spp.) which blooms during July and August. It puts out creamy white to yellow spikes of flowers at the ends of its branches, and these are great for both pollen and for nectar. Sumac honey is bitter when new but ripens to a golden amber with a mild flavor, (Major Flowers Important to Honey Bees in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic States; Ann Harmon and D. Sammataro).

This tree typically appears in hedgerows, wood edges, and neglected areas. In fall its foliage

turns a gorgeous orange/red. In winter its small berries are food for wildlife – and can be used by us as well. “Sumac spice” is a great source of Vitamin C, and is a staple of Mediterranean cuisine. The dried clusters of berries are said to make an excellent smoker fuel.

Of course, this small tree is easy to mistake for the similarly appearing “poison sumac” which is nowhere near as useful to us and to bees!



This is “winged sumac” which is common here on the Eastern Shore. It’s a beauty!



And this is Poison Sumac. Note the red stems and smooth edges of the leaves.

Used Equipment for Sale

Most beekeepers have been taught that it’s risky to buy used equipment, and we repeat this warning to new beekeepers. We’re cautioned that old equipment may harbor pests from old bee colonies and that it may transmit disease.

Still, we re-use our own equipment, and received frames of unknown origin when we purchase nucs. One reason prospective beekeepers give for deciding *not* to pursue their interest after taking a beginning class is that the costs are unexpectedly high. This is why the Commonwealth of Virginia has a program to offer financial support for new beekeepers.

There are many beekeepers in BGES who have decided to downsize so there is a lot of unused equipment at this time that’s available for free or at greatly reduced cost. This (almost) monthly newsletter space can be a place to bring buyers and sellers together. Many of us believe that used

woodenware that's been thoroughly scraped, scrubbed, rinsed, and air-dried in bright sunlight is quite safe to re-use, especially here on the shore where foulbrood and other such persistent disease is unknown. This is something we can ask Keith Tignor about when he visits us in September.

Here are some items that are offered at this time. If not priced, will accept best offer.

- 3 clean food grade 5-gallon buckets
- 2 clean food grade 5 gallon buckets with spigots (one at the base, and one on the underside)
- 1 honey strainer that fits on top of a 5 gallon bucket, and various mesh strainers
- pith helmet
- 1 sticky board
- 1 complete set of flex-molds for beeswax nativity set, with can of spray release (12 pieces) \$100
- 1 hand cranked honey extractor \$100
- 1 new observation hive (in box, never used) \$100
- Smoker
- Bee brush
- Cell protectors ("queen cages") Bag of about 75.
- Simple Frame lifting hive tool
- 1 size 2x beesuit with separate veil.
- 1 size 2x ventilated beesuit with zip on veil
- 2 new cardboard nuc boxes
- 9 wooden nuc boxes
- 25 medium boxes with frames, lids and bottoms, used.
- 6 deep boxes with frames, lids and bottoms, used.

If you're interested in any of these items, please contact Beverly Cline, at 350-1487.

Beekeeping System Part 2: The Results So Far

Russell Vreeland

This is the second part of my report on my new beekeeping system. Just to review the set up: No hives are larger than one deep and one medium, all entrances are kept at the bottom and are no larger than 1.0 – 1.5 inches in size. No upper entrances and if I want honey only one medium hive box is placed

above a queen excluder. In the spring you allow the hives to swarm and don't make splits. So, what are the results of this after one year?

First let's go over what I do now. The truth is I am finding this system a whole lot easier. Part of the research showed that every time a beekeeper smokes and enters a hive they lose up to 15% of the young and even decrease the honey production. So, a weekly "inspection" causes losses. Now I only go into my hives about once every 6 weeks and the actual recommendation is once a quarter. That means that especially in summer I can choose my days, leaving the girls alone when it is hot and not sweating as much myself. I have also found that things are a lot less crazy when I go in and I can do a lot more before the stinging starts. Still the real point isn't how I feel, it is how are the bees doing?

Last year I started using this system with 5 packages. One didn't take, but its companion did so well it swarmed in 6 weeks and simply moved into the dead out box where it is still doing well. Since last April I have lost only one other hive (oddly the one that swarmed in 6 weeks). I have had one hive lose its Queen and I broke down and purchased another one. I put her in two weeks ago and haven't bothered them since. Once again, the advice I received is just leave them alone. So far, there are still bees flying in an out of that hive so maybe in a week or so I'll check on her but it will happen quickly, or maybe I'll wait a bit longer. I still have 4 hives remaining and all doing well. But how about other stuff.

I did treat for mites back in February and I followed them with drop boards. It took all summer for the mites to build at all and I treated again in August but otherwise I have done nothing. All summer my hives were literally boiling over with bees and larva. They were jammed at every entrance and there was constant activity. In previous years, since moving my hives here from PA, from April through October I battled Small Hive Beetle invasions especially in one apiary. This year, I didn't see a single hive beetle in any of my hives, until I had the one that lost its Queen and then I saw only two larva that I killed. I am pretty sure this is largely due to the simple fact that the beetles can't get in. Even when I saw one adult in the Queenless hive it was being constantly attacked by the workers and running for its life. It lost that when I introduced my hive tool. So, at this point it seems as though the bees are doing better with the parasites.

At least three hives did swarm in April. None went to my bait hives, one sat in a tree and debated for 7 days so I finally hived it myself. It didn't make it and I realized that I let it go too long. I gave one swarm to John Long and it is still doing fine at last report. The third one I saw landed on the tree and left again in an hour before I had chance to catch it. All three were really big swarms. I'm not sure what happened in the fourth hive which is in an out yard, but I suspect it swarmed and was fine.

Now the big one – with only one super on each hive what about honey? Well, it was a banner year! Every hive filled an entire super, every frame and all of the honey was well cured at only 18.2 % water after extraction and mixing. FYI – I never fed these hives so there was no sugar honey. In the end I pulled nearly 150 lbs. from four medium supers and all of the hives were still too heavy to lift. That means every hive had at least 100 lbs. left. Also, I was able to harvest early in June and the supers went back on to see if I can collect some more this fall. I will let you know how that works out.

In the end, I know that this is only one year, but overall, I am finding my beekeeping experience to be easier to work. This system seems to allow the bees to take better care of themselves, the hives are stronger and heck I am getting more honey. I am going to keep working my bees like this and if any one

wants more information (or some extra woodenware) please give me a call. I will continue to report to you.

Russell

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