

Franklin County Bee News

“Dedicated to the Art of Beekeeping”

Franklin County Beekeeper's Association Winter 2007

If you would like to bring refreshments to share at a meeting - contact Tom Graney 413-773-9810, tegraney@aol.com. Also, bring your items for the monthly raffle.

January 17th, 2008 7-9PM at the CISA Office building, One Sugarloaf St. South Deerfield, MA. "Movie night". We will watch several new DVD's on honey harvesting, mites and queen rearing.

February 21st, 2008 7-9PM at the CISA Building.

"Pollen Identification & Use". Alice Armen, Master Gardener and Beekeeper will introduce us to the complex and amazing world of pollen.

March 20th, 2008 7-9PM at the Mount Holyoke College Greenhouse.

"Taste of Spring". Greenhouse manager and FCBA member Russ Billings will provide a special tour of the MH annual bulb show. Always a welcome event & popular meeting. Refreshments and a short program. Bring a friend to share an early taste and smell of spring.

April 17th, 2008 7-9PM at the CISA Building.

"Spring Management". What's new in our understanding of colony buildup, disease & pest control, and queens? Plenty of time for discussion & comments.

*Our programs may change. We send email reminders & agenda to members a week before a meeting. Please check to see that we have accurate contact information.
The FCBA newsletter is available to all dues paying members. Annual dues are collected during October.*

From the President – Dan Conlon

In 2008 Massachusetts Beekeeping has many events to improve our skills as beekeepers, meet researchers, and to reach out to the public. These opportunities are about staying current with the fast changing world of honeybee research. All beekeepers need to update their expertise if they are to be successful managers of their colonies. Make a New Years resolution to take advantage of some (or all) of the following programs.

- Bee Schools are offered by six county associations. Our neighboring clubs; Worcester & Hampden County are within driving distance and offer programs that are good for new beekeepers and as a review for experienced beekeepers.
- March 8th, 2008 8AM-1PM – Worcester County Bee Association, Knights of Columbus Hall, Leicester, MA. Spring Meeting with guest speaker Maryann Frazier of Penn State. Topics: Colony Collapse Disorder, and Nutrition in the Beehive.
- March 29th, 2008 – MASSACHUSETTS BEEKEEPER'S ASSOCIATION will hold their spring meeting at the Topsfield Fairgrounds, Topsfield, MA. Hosted by the Essex County Beekeepers Association. Thomas Seeley PhD (see bio) will give two talks on feral colonies and using honeybee behavior to manage colonies. Best Management Practices and other speakers (TBA) will also be on the agenda. Visit www.massbee.org for additional information & state events.

Dr. Thomas D. Seeley is a Professor in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University, where he teaches courses in animal behavior and does research on honey bee behavior.

He began keeping and studying bees in 1969, while a high school student, when he brought home a swarm that he had collected in a hastily constructed "hive." When a college student, he worked each summer in the laboratory of Dr. Roger A. Morse at Cornell, where he learned the craft of beekeeping and began probing the inner workings of the bee colony. Thoroughly intrigued by the smooth functioning of honey bee colonies, he went on to graduate school at Harvard University where he studied under two ant men (Drs. Bert Hölldobler and Edward O. Wilson) and began his research on bees in earnest.

His research focuses on the functional organization of honey bee colonies and has been summarized in the books The Wisdom of the Hive (1995, Harvard University Press), Honeybee Ecology (1985, Princeton University Press), and Swarm Intelligence in Bees (forthcoming, in 2009). All are wonderful reads for anyone interested in the biology of honey bees.

- April – Package bees will be arriving. Order early as bees will once again be in demand. At Warm Colors Apiary we have already sold a third of our packages within a week of setting the 2008 prices.
- June 21st, 2008 – "Third Annual Field Day" hosted by the Franklin County Beekeepers Association. 9:30AM – 3:30PM. Live bee demonstrations & workshops. This is the best opportunity to learn from state and regional beekeepers practical approaches to honeybee management. UMASS Agronomy Farm, River Rd. South Deerfield, MA.

As we enter the 2008 year, beekeeping continues to have an uncertain future. The one positive outcome of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is that it has gained the public's attention, and created unprecedented awareness & concern. The honeybee's importance to our food supply and the environment cannot be overstated. The success of plants that provide food to all creatures is more than having a plethora of choices in the marketplace; it is the continuation of the web of life that evolves all living creatures. Evolution allows for diversity that increases the likelihood of species survival. The tiny honeybee is one of the most significant, and efficient, pollinators on the planet; increasing the genetic diversity of plants, and she is in trouble. Her genetic diversity has been reduced and with that her ability to adapt to new threats. In my mind this makes all beekeepers incredibly important to the planet. We have, for whatever personal reasons, chosen to be the protectors and guardians of the honeybee.

I hope everyone has a successful 2008 season. - DC

Treasurer's Report - Cynthia Allen

Our bank balance is currently \$1660.74. Our membership stands at 91--41 individuals and 25 families! Our club is very close to having 100 members! If there is a '08 or later after your name you do NOT owe dues. If you have a '07 after your name you do owe. Dues are still a reasonable \$10/individual and \$15 for families.

Membership privileges include being able to take out books from our lending library, 10% discount on woodenware at Warm Colors Apiary, 25% discount off subscriptions to Bee Culture and American Bee Journal magazines and of course this newsletter.

Send a check made out to FCBA to: Cynthia Allen, 28 Laurel Mountain Road, Haydenville, MA 010139

The FCBA newsletter is available to all dues paying members. Annual dues are collected during October.

The Beekeeper's Calendar

On this cold December morning, I am reflecting on the 2007 season. It is snowing and that makes me happy. You can remember last December when it was warm and the bees stayed active into January. It turned bitter cold as we began the New Year. There is something comforting about winter and having snow in December. Spring of 2007 was good for growing bees, and for crop pollination. We harvested better crops in July, and mid-August, compared to 2005-06. August & September became dry resulting in below average Goldenrod and fall honey. A few beekeepers reported a late fall flow, but many of our colonies have gone into the winter light on honey reserves. Cold weather should slow them down and minimize consumption. Prepare for late winter and early spring feeding.

On average, a colony consumes one pound of honey per week during the non-brood rearing period. In late February, when the queens resume egg laying, incubation temperatures are increased and consumption can increase to four pounds per week. In March, I will begin checking all colonies for honey. I would not do this under normal conditions, but my calculations tell me the colonies will have good food reserves until March. I will add a pollen patty in mid-February to increase the brood nest. No sugar, but plenty of pollen or substitute. I am not a believer in spring feeding or emergency feeding. You do it when you have to but it is not as good as leaving adequate honey in the fall. The weather conditions may inhibit the colony's ability to use sugar, and process it. If you do need to feed in the winter use cane sugar and feed it, dry over the cluster. This is the simplest method and is better for emergencies. Remember the rule; "Once you start feeding pollen or sugar, keep feeding until natural forage is available".

Another concern is the feeding of High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS). I have used corn syrup for several seasons, but have reconsidered using HFCS as a bee feed. Having reviewed reports from U.S. Canadian and Australian research projects, two concerns were repeated. The first concern points to a potential toxic effect when corn syrup is overheated (not lethal to bees, but may make a colony sick & weak). The second is granulation in the comb when stored as a winter food. Corn syrup granulates in the comb, and becomes too hardened to be usable by the bees (Australian report on feeding honeybee colonies). Several research groups are studying HFCS to confirm its effects on honeybees. If you use HFCS, feed it during spring buildup or during periods of rapid consumption. Then granulation is not a concern. Store it in a cool, dark location. High quality syrup should be clear (no yellowing or tint) and it should taste sweet. Be wary of cheap sources of syrup; ask why it is cheap? Poor nutrition is a common concern in many reports describing pre-conditions to Colony Collapse Disorder, and is considered a preventable stress condition that results in weakened colonies. All of us should review feeding practices to ensure our bees are getting what they need.

For those of you asking when do I wrap my hives? It is time. I have for most of my beekeeping life aimed at wrapping and having reducers, etc. in during Thanksgiving week and removed in March. This was never a hard fast rule, but usually the weather tended to become cold and stay cold during that stretch of winter. Dewey Caron made the comment, during his October presentation at Frontier High School that most beekeepers are starting the season about ten days earlier than in the past. The average temperatures are warming earlier in the spring, staying warm later into fall and winter. It is true that I no longer try to winterize my hives in November. I wait for nighttime temperatures to hit freezing on a regular schedule. Clustering starts at 45F and below that they stay clustered. This is a good time to have the hives buttoned up. If you get it

done earlier that is probably not going to hurt anything, just do not over-insulate and create an overheating problem inside the hive. The bees should stay clustered in cold weather and that requires protection that regulates the heating and cooling inside the hive.

The goal as I see it is to create a gradual temperature change that is less shocking or stressful to the bees. Slow and easy. Let the hive breathe; moisture needs to escape, and air exchanged to eliminate CO2, and bring in O2. Again this should be a gradual process that reduces extreme environmental changes within the hive. The winter cluster needs time to adjust during these cold spells, and rapid changes in temperature, moisture, or location of honey in the hive can wear out the winter bees and lead to starvation and disease. The winter cluster is a superb mechanism for survival and the beekeeper should respect the fact that bees (when healthy & well provisioned) know how to prepare for winter. The overzealous beekeeper is another concern the bees must face. We all love to manage our bees, and can, unintentionally, mess up what Mother Nature has perfected.

Planning, reflection on the 2007 season, and beekeeping resolutions for 2008 are my next agenda items. I will do everything right next year. I will follow my own advice and do those tasks I know work, and are worth the time. I will not get behind on managing my bee yards. It will be a perfect year. Optimism and saying it often enough just might make it true. Actually, I think I said this last year?



Ever wonder what comb drawn 'naturally' in a bee skep looks like?

Happy Holidays! See you next year. – DC

Honey Recipes

Braised Lamb with Honey and Almonds

This is adaptation of Mark Bittman's dreamy lamb stew. It's sweet, nutty and crunchy with an exotic aroma.

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, roughly chopped
- 2 pounds boneless lamb (from shoulder or leg)
- salt and pepper to taste

1/2 cup honey
1 clove garlic, minced
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
1/4 teaspoon cayenne, or to taste
1 teaspoon ground caraway
1/2 teaspoon ground fennel (optional)
1 cup chicken stock
1 cup whole blanched almonds
chopped fresh parsley for garnish
lemon juice to taste

1. Put oil in a large, deep skillet and saute onion over medium heat until soft (about 10 minutes). Remove onion and saute lamb chunks. Season with salt and pepper. Pour honey over browned lamb, stirring until honey coats lamb. Add onion, garlic, spices and stock.
2. Cover pot and simmer until meat is tender, about an hour.
3. While stew is cooking put almonds in a skillet and stir over medium heat until lightly browned and fragrant.
4. Taste meat and adjust seasoning. Stir in almonds and sprinkle with some lemon juice and parsley.

Serves 4

Submitted by Cynthia Allen

Membership

Membership in the Franklin County Beekeepers Association is open to anyone with an interest in beekeeping. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individuals and \$15.00 for families and are collected in October. Membership includes 4 newsletters, 25% off subscriptions to the American Bee Journal and Bee Culture magazines, and 10% off woodenware at Warm Colors Apiary, South Deerfield, MA.

Send dues (check payable to FCBA) to: Please include Name, address, phone, and email address.
Cynthia Allen – FCBA Treasurer
28 Laurel Mountain Rd.
Haydenville, MA. 01039

FCBA Correspondence to:
Dan Conlon
2 South Mill River Rd.
South Deerfield, MA. 01373



/Type

Let the bees clean up honey from extracted comb, This will prevent fermentation when stored for the winter.



Lorenzo Langstroth was once minister of the 2nd Congregational Church in Greenfield, MA. This marker can be found to the left of the church and reminds visitors that Langstroth was the inventor of the movable frame be-hive.

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2008 OFFICERS and DIRECTORS			
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Send us your ideas for future newsletters. Do you have a recipe to share, equipment you want to sell or swap? Questions you want answered about bees & beekeeping. We will do our best to include your ideas and contributions in future newsletters. Send announcements and articles to Tom Graney for our next newsletter. Deadline for the spring issue is March 20th 2008.