

# OCBA Up to the Minutes News

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## HURRICANES AND BEEKEEPING MEETINGS

What is it with hurricanes? Did Michael and Florence have it in for beekeepers? For the second consecutive month, the threat of high winds and heavy rains moved OCBA to cancel its monthly meeting.

This month 5 intrepid members braved the elements to gather at Radius Pizzeria for the monthly pre-meeting dinner. Rather than sharing stories about bees they shared stories about their respective adventures traveling to Hillsborough for the meeting. During a discussion about buffeting winds and roads littered with tree debris, **Ryan Chamberlain** received a text from his wife. The text included a picture showing how narrowly one of his hives had escaped a falling tree. With that information Ryan sent a message canceling the meeting and advising all members to "stay safe and stay home."

Bare minutes later the owner of Radius stepped in to the Fireside Room to advise everyone that the restaurant would be closing. Trees were falling throughout Hillsborough. Restaurant staff were concerned about getting home safely. Other staff had already called in advising that they couldn't get in to work.

Ryan's final call was to Suzy Spencer, the planned speaker for the evening, to let her know that the meeting was canceled. She had just arrived in Hillsborough from Raleigh. Nonetheless, she was understandably in agreement with the decision to try for another time.

## REGISTRATION UNDERWAY FOR 2019 BEE SCHOOL



2018 Bee School

Online registrations are rolling in for [OCBA's 2019 Bee School](#). If you have friends or family interested in beekeeping let them know that the class is likely to fill up quickly. 14 participants have already spoken for the 75 available slots.

The 10-week school begins January 15, 2019. **Randall Austin**, OCBA's Director of Education, is once again coordinating all coursework and arranging experienced beekeeping faculty for

the school. OCBA's Bee School has been fully enrolled every year for more than 6 years.

## FIRST ANNUAL ORANGE COUNTY LOCALFEST A SUCCESS

*By Chris Apple and Cynthia Woodsong*

Orange County's first LocalFest at Blackwood Farm Park seemed to be a great success. OCBA's information table was no exception. OCBA volunteers used the opportunity to educate the public about the importance of honey bees, native pollinators and local beekeeping.



While **Chris Apple** set up the table, **David Eckert** headed up to our demonstration hives to grab a frame of lively bees for the observation hive. The bees are always a big hit with young and old alike. We also had some beautiful little booklets published by the North Carolina Department of Transportation highlighting the pollinator plantings along our roadsides. The booklets contain a great deal of information about growing each of the plants and were eagerly sought after by folks interested in gardening for pollinators.



Photo courtesy of Patrick Gale  
View from the top of 'honey bee hill' at Blackwood Farm Park

At 11:00 **Cynthia Woodsong** and **David DiGiuseppe** did sugar shakes of all the Langstroths and chatted with several small groups of interested people who had the stamina to hike



to the top of 'honey bee hill.' Cynthia and David maintain OCBA's demonstration hives at Blackwood Park.

Volunteers worked in shifts of two people each two hour period. Chris Apple and David Eckert worked from 9 to 11, **Lou Rascoe** and **Carrie Donley** covered from 11 to 1, **Ryan Chamberlain** and **Larry Arnold** were there from 1 to 3, **Erika Wittchen** and **Cynthia Speed** manned the table from 3 to 5 and **Megan Tallikoff** came at 5 to help Chris put the bees back and pack up for the day.

## READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

*Fall testing scheduled for Journeyman and Master Beekeepers*

The Master Beekeeper Program will be holding Fall Testing for Certified, Journeyman and Master Beekeeper candidates on October 27, 2018 from 9:00 am till noon, at the Alamance County Center located at 209 N. Graham Hopedale Road, Burlington, NC 27217.

## NEAR MISSES AND DIRECT HITS

Hurricane Michael presented more challenges for Orange County beekeepers than last month's threat from Hurricane Florence. We asked members to send us their stories and their pictures.



*Photo by Ryan Chamberlain*

Location, location, location! As beekeepers know hive placement is one of the key considerations to support healthy bees and assure good forage. **Ryan Chamberlain's** dramatic photo of

the *almost* catastrophic damage to two of his hives is perhaps the best example of maintaining healthy bees by proper hive placement. And in this case the forage came to the bees rather than the bees flying to the forage.

Other beekeepers weren't as fortunate. **Carrie Donley's** bees suffered a direct and violent hit. Carrie provides a more detailed account of her ordeal later in this edition of the newsletter.



*Photo by Carrie Donley*

Lisa Vogel's hives also avoided a close encounter of a pine kind.



*"Queen Pearl's near brush with death"*

*Photo by Lisa Vogel*

**Brad Kosiba's** hurricane prep consisted of "feeding those colonies that I was feeding." He then staked the hive stands to the ground using 18" rebar on two diagonally opposite legs. He strapped the rebar to the hive stand legs with large zip ties. The hives themselves were moved together and strapped down with ratchet straps.





While many of us mistakenly assumed that a hurricane making landfall 550 miles southwest of Orange County would not be a threat to our hives, other beekeepers prudently prepared for the worst. **Lauren Carreto**, a first year beekeeper, tied her hive to a garden cart with ratchet straps just as she had for Florence last month. The cart was further weighted with a couple of cinder blocks. Lauren reported that her technique worked well for both hurricanes. She also reported, "a friend from bee school who keeps two hives at my place did not tie down this time and both her lids blew off."



*Photo by Lauren Carreto*

## **MICHAEL'S FURY CRUSHES HIVE, BUT NOT BEEKEEPING SPIRIT**

*By Carrie Donley*

The text from my husband Patrick said "Crap. You are not going to like this." He attached the picture below. I could immediately see that a tree was down, but then I started to look at the surroundings. The two raised beds in the picture are right in front of where my bee hive is located. That bit of lighter colored wood in the center of the picture is my hive. The ground was soaked from lots of previous rain, and at the tail end of Hurricane Michael, the wind kicked up, and took out a number of trees in our area. This was one of them.



*Big tree meets small hive – angry bees to follow!*

After receiving Patrick's text I immediately jumped into the car and drove over there. My reaction was so emotional. At first for the destroyed bee hive. I was assuming the worst. Then my eyes scanned the length of the tree, and I realized which one had come down. The massive one in the back yard. How lucky we were. The house was not touched, and no one was hurt. This tree probably came down less than an hour before Patrick went to check on the house. While I was mourning the loss of the hive, I was relieved that the tree was no longer a threat to the house and that no one was hurt. I was reminded how precious life is, how things can change at any minute, and how I need to be grateful for each day.



It was starting to get dark, and we eventually headed home knowing that there was nothing that could be done that night. I sent an e-mail to the OCBA listserv describing my situation and asking for help. One of my cluster mentors, **Brad Kosiba**, offered to come over the next day to help assess the situation, and another member, **Valerie Bateman**, offered to loan me a new hive.

The next morning, as soon as the sun came up, I headed over to the hive to take another look. I had to cut a few branches out of the way to get a better view, and this is what I found. A hive that was destroyed, but a number of frames that looked like they may have survived. There were bees on them as well. There might be something to save.

I called Brad, and told him that I planned to pick up a used hive and get back in touch with him once I had that. Valerie had quite an assortment of hives with both 10 frame and 8 frame equipment. My hive had been a 10 frame hive, but when it was full of honey it was almost impossible for me to lift on my own. I had thought of switching to 8 frame equipment, but didn't know how or when I would be able to do this. This seemed like the perfect opportunity, and I took some of both types of equipment just in case.



Brad arrived at around 1:30 that afternoon. By then there were many more bees flying around than there had been in the morning. It had been cold overnight (55 degrees), and it was now warming up, so the bees were becoming more active. Some



of these bees were probably mine, but many were likely robbers. We wanted to make quick work of this. As we started pulling frames out of the tree, we quickly assessed them. Intact and relatively sturdy frames went straight into one of the new hive boxes. If the frame was still sturdy, but the comb was slightly damaged, we tried to press it back into place with our hands, and then put it into the box. Other frames were damaged so much that we weren't going to be able to repair them, but some had large sections of comb that we would try to salvage. They were set aside.

During this sorting process we were also looking for the queen. If she had died, this effort would be futile. At this time of year there are very few if any drones around, so even if my bees could produce a new queen, she would have no one to mate with. Finding the queen was crucial. On the 4th or 5th frame we pulled, there she was! With eyes on the queen, we knew there was hope for this hive!



Remarkably, we had found 13 frames that were in pretty good shape, and we had room for 3 more in the two 8 frame boxes. We had some empty frames and were able to carefully rubber band large sections of comb into them. Given the situation, this was the perfect way to transition from 10 frame to 8 frame equipment (although I wouldn't recommend this particular method to anyone else...).

Once the bees were settled in their new home I felt so much better. These bees had a chance! I made sure that there was an entrance reducer on the hive so that the bees had a small entrance to defend against robbers. I also planned to make up some sugar syrup to start feeding them. Because the temperatures were in the 50's there's a chance that the brood won't make it. If that's the case, these bees will need all of the help they can get in order to make it through the winter.



*Re-established hive*

## BRIGGS AVENUE

**Mark Powers** is giving Durham Tech students and other Briggs Avenue Community Garden volunteers a taste of beekeeping. The garden is part of Durham County Extension's community education program. While most of the volunteers are not able to become beekeepers at this point of their life, under Mark's supervision the potential beekeepers have an opportunity to get hands on experience with bees.



*Mark (far right) with the Briggs Avenue Beewatchers*

Mark noted that participation in the beekeeping group is fluid with members moving in and out of the group. Recent immigrants and local residents ages 18 to 65 have participated.

Mark says, "We talk about threats to bees. I emphasize varroa, nutritional challenges and bad beekeeping. We talk about the social structure of the hive (they love hearing about queens), bee development and hive inspection."

## STATE FAIR WINNERS – EARLY RESULTS

Dawn Rogers was OCBA's ribbon winning champion at the State Fair. She took 1st place for her honey spice cake, 1st for her caramels, 1st for her lotions, 2nd for her gift basket, and 3rd for her soaps. An impressive showing across multiple categories.

Erika Wittchen was also a 1st place winner for her pie.

In the extracted extra light honey category Mark Smith earned a 2<sup>nd</sup> place award and Ryan Chamberlain took 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Mark Powers also earned 3rd place for his chunk honey.



*OCBA's State Fair Exhibit*

Sadly, OCBA's exhibit effort did not earn a ribbon this year. But two graphic art entries included with our exhibit were awarded second and third place ribbons. The identity of the beekeepers who submitted these two entries was not available as this edition of the newsletter went to press. **Rob Jewett** lead OCBA's exhibit effort.

## OCBA HELPS MARATHON RUNNERS GO THE DISTANCE

*By Chris Apple*

At 6:15 AM in pitch blackness, I pulled up to the Gold Park entrance only to find the gate locked. **Lou Rascoe** and **Maryann McCullough** were to meet me there to set up a table to distribute honey straws to the runners. As I tried to make other arrangements, a patrol car drove up. I began pleading with the officer to open the gate. She cut me short to explain that was why she was there.



*Lou Rascoe and Maryann McCullough cheering on marathon runners*

The gate was opened and in the dark (headlamps and cell phones lit) the three of us lugged a heavy table and all our paraphernalia about a half mile down the Riverwalk where we set up a table. We wore fun bee themed costumes and played loud disco music on a boom box to motivate the runners. Dodging man-eating mosquitoes, the three of us had a great time cheering the runners on. We snipped the ends off of about 500 honey straws. We were all pretty sticky by the end!



*Got Honey?*

## UPCOMING EVENTS AND SPEAKERS

**November 8 Membership Meeting – Guy Fricks** of Fricks Farm and Apiaries will talk about artificial insemination of queens. **Catherine Trusky** and **Megan Talikoff** will talk about their beekeeping apprentice year.

**December 13 OCBA Holiday Gathering** – Come and share your best finger food with friends and beekeeping colleagues at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual *Hors d'oeuvres for Honey Lovers*. OCBA will provide the beverages.

### *Upcoming Outreach Events:*

**October 27 – Thinking About Beekeeping?** John Rintoul will repeat his *Introduction to Beekeeping* presentation at the Chapel Hill Public Library to share information with potential beekeepers about the cost, rigors and commitment demanded of successful beekeepers.

### *Other Events of Note*

**October 27, 2018 – Master Beekeeper Program Testing.** Written testing for Journeyman and Master Beekeeper certification will take place from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Alamance County Agricultural Center, 209 N. Graham-Hopedale Road, Burlington, NC 27217. No written test will be given out after 10:00 am. This is a great opportunity to take a test without having to travel to one of the NCSBA conferences.

**November 30 – December 4 2018 [Apimondia Symposium](#), 'The Role of Bees in Food Production.'** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. If you attend, please fill out an [Individual GAP Form](#) (**Box D6**) *Attended a national or international beekeeping meeting and pass the completed form to Cynthia Speed or John Rintoul.*

**March 1-2, 2019 – North Carolina State Beekeepers' Association Spring Meeting**, Monroe, NC (east of Charlotte) at the Union County Extension Complex. This will be a joint meeting with the South Carolina Beekeepers' Association.

**July 15-19, 2019 – Eastern Apicultural Society's Annual Meeting** in Greenville, SC.

**August 8-10, 2019 – North Carolina State Beekeepers Association Summer Meeting**, Hickory, NC. Note that the date is a month later than usual to avoid a conflict with the Eastern Apicultural Society's meeting in Greenville, SC.

**September 8-12, 2019 – [Apimondia International Apicultural Congress](#)**, Montreal, Canada. Plan now to attend.

**Spring 2020 – North Carolina State Beekeepers' Association Spring Meeting**, New Bern, NC. For beekeepers who really plan ahead.