

OCBA Up to the Minutes News

Volume 1, No. 4

TheOCBA.org

April 2018

OCBA GROUP DINNER SETS ATTENDANCE RECORD

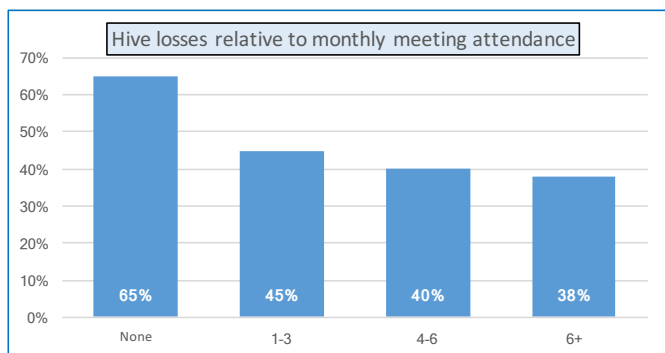
18 members met for dinner at Radius Pizzeria prior to our April membership meeting. This represents an all-time attendance record. Members are encouraged to attend this group dinner prior to the monthly meetings for fun and comradery. The group meets at 5:00. The speaker scheduled for the evening's presentation is often in attendance. Beekeeping lore – both real and apocryphal – is shared. Come join the fun in May.

FIRST YEAR BEEKEEPERS – OVERWINTERING SUCCESS

As the 2018 Bee School graduates start hiving their bees the 2017 graduates are reporting on their first year successes and challenges. 34 members of the 2017 class graciously responded to an online survey asking them about their first year as beekeepers. It is important to note that this survey does not meet the rigors of scientific statistical methodology. Nonetheless, the raw data is interesting.

As a group, new beekeepers who participated in OCBA's Cluster Mentorship Program successfully overwintered 55% of their colonies. Those who did not participate in the Cluster Program overwintered 40% of their colonies.

Attendance at OCBA's monthly meetings also seems to benefit new beekeeper success. Beekeepers who attended no monthly meetings during the year suffered colony losses of 65%.



We can also happily report that both of OCBA's 2017 Apprentices successfully overwintered 100% of their hives. Congratulations to the apprentices, Ian Rasmussen and Sarah Stern, and to their mentors, Celeste Mayer and Jim Evans!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT AND FORAGE FOR YOUR BEES

Geneva Green, OCBA member and Master Beekeeper, was the featured presenter at OCBA's April membership meeting. She focused on the range of pollen and nectar plants available for our bees both in the landscapes around our homes and moving out into the surrounding suburban and rural communities. Her interactive presentation approach engaged the audience. She reminded us that a honey bee produces 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey and flies 1½ times the earth's circumference during its

brief 6 week lifetime. Using her own home as an example, she described forage that was available within ¼, ½, 1, and 3 miles of her colonies. She illustrated her presentation with beautiful slides of nectar and pollen plants often used in foundation plantings, flower beds, and garden fields. She challenged beekeepers to provide good sources of pollen and nectar in their landscape plantings. She seemed impressed and delighted at how knowledgeable the membership was when they were quizzed on the identity of many of the plants. She recommended visiting Wikipedia's lists of [Northern American nectar sources for honey bees](#) and [Pollen sources for honey bees](#).

Members left with sound ideas of what to plant for pollinators especially those who won the door prize raffles of two large buckets of a mix of honey bee attractive plants donated by Geneva, one mountain mint in a small tote bag, one borage, and a mountain mint donated by our members.

Geneva's presentation was very popular with OCBA members. 70 members and visitors filled the room to hear her presentation.

SPRING SPLIT DEMONSTRATION WORKSHOP

On Thursday, March 29, fourteen OCBA beekeepers gathered at OCBA's demonstration hives at Carrboro High School (CHS) for a spring split demonstration workshop. John Rintoul and Chris Apple demonstrated the basics of splitting a strong colony to head off a spring swarm. Two prior attempts to schedule a weekend workshop failed because the weather refused to cooperate.

As with all things in beekeeping, the ultimate decision to split the hive was made with an eye to working with the weather rather than working toward a weekend. Fortunately, 20 beekeepers indicated that they could probably work around a mid-week hive splitting demonstration – and 14 of the 20 ultimately attended the Thursday afternoon event.



Enthusiastic mid-week turnout for Spring Splits Workshop

By way of preparation, participants in the workshop were directed to Randall Austin's comprehensive [May 2016 article](#) on splitting a colony. Chris and John advised participants that the actual split process would follow one of two paths depending on the decisions already made by the colony. If there were multiple swarm cells present, multiple splits were possible. In the absence of swarm cells the queen would be moved to a nuc with 2 frames of brood, 2 frames of food, and one frame of drawn comb while the original colony would be left to make a new queen.



Looking for the queen

Upon inspection, only one uncapped, occupied swarm cell was found. The swarm cell was left with the original colony while the queen with brood, food and a *soupeçon* of nurse bees from 2 additional frames took up new residence in the nuc. It is hoped that this minimal disruption will prevent Hive 1 from swarming this spring.

The nuc was fattened up at John's apiary in Chatham County at the CORA Community Food Bank Garden before being moved to OCBA's demonstration hives at Blackwood Farm Park between Hillsborough and Chapel Hill.

START COUNTING YOUR MITES NOW

Monthly monitoring is critical to the success of your colonies



Photo credit: Stephen Rintoul

If we learn nothing else as beekeepers we learn the importance of monitoring the mite load in our hives. If you haven't yet assessed your mite load in 2018, now is the time to sample. If

you have a problem with your colonies and call the state inspector, you know that the first question that will be asked is "What is your mite count?" Surprise them. Be prepared with an answer.

A great place to start is by reading Randall Austin's [How Might We Smite Mites?](#) The article discusses testing and treatment of varroa mites.

CERTIFIED BEEKEEPER PRACTICAL EXAM

Keep learning your beekeeping craft

OCBA's demonstration hives at Blackwood Farm Park and Carrboro High School (CHS) exist for community and beekeeper education. You are eligible to take the Certified Practical Exam with an OCBA proctor if:

1. you are an OCBA member
2. you are an NCSBA member
3. you have successfully completed the written portion of the Certified Beekeeper Exam (likely for all OCBA Bee School grads)
4. you are in your 2nd year or more of beekeeping

Contact [Randall Austin](#), OCBA's Master Beekeeper Program liaison, if you are interested in taking the exam. [John Rintoul](#) can arrange to meet you at the CHS hives as weather and scheduling permit.

THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE AN ORANGE COUNTY APIARY

When a mosquito control company placed advertising signs along the Whitfield Road right-of-way Mark Powers and Karen Lauterbach were concerned. The signs were spaced every half mile or so. Mark and Karen's bee yard is nearby. To raise awareness of the hazard of indiscriminate mosquito spraying, Mark responded with his own interpretation of "Three Billboards Outside of an Orange County Apiary."



Photo credit: Karen Lauterbach

Mark's response highlighted the environmental tension between the public's interest in protecting bees and the public health concern about mosquito management and control in light of the Zika outbreaks in the subtropical regions of the southeastern US. Helping the non-beekeeping public think through these countervailing health and food policy considerations is one of the education voids that informed beekeepers are well-equipped

to address. OCBA endeavors to raise the public's bee-consciousness regarding ways to effectively protect beneficial insects while also respecting and responding to valid public health concerns.

TAKING BEEKEEPING FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Bee School Field Day

After 3 weeks of rainy and "too cool for bees" Saturdays, OCBA's Bee School graduates were finally able to get their hands in bees. On April 14, Randall Austin's apiary in northern Orange County served as the site for the 2018 Hands On Bees Field Day. The field day was very well attended even though many of the new beekeepers had already hived their first packages.

Randall demonstrated lighting a smoker - a critical skill for all beekeepers - and responded to questions and comments about what went well and what when wrong for those who had already installed their packages. Cool and wet weather played havoc for some.



Beekeepers split up into their mentorship clusters to inspect beehives. Cluster leaders moved through each hive to identify key elements of an active colony - workers, drones, queens, eggs, larval and pupal brood, small hive beetles, brood patterns, honey, nectar, pollen, and bee bread. Cluster leaders demonstrated sugar shakes for varroa management.



GIRL SCOUT PROJECT AT OCBA

Cynthia Speed serves as an advisor to Jennifer Persia, a local Girl Scout working on her Gold Award Project. The Gold Award

is the highest award a Girl Scout can earn. Jennifer is developing a member survey to help OCBA better understand the diversity and breadth of our membership. Jennifer distributed some copies of a member survey that she developed and explained that it would be an ongoing system for effectively polling members and compiling their individual expertise/experience. This would help us better target requests for assistance and potentially improve our outreach and education.

The second part of her project, still in progress, is the creation of a second traveling box for community presentations. This would make it easier to solicit more outreach volunteers if age related talks and tools were already prepared. The club must be responsible for maintaining, updating and making additions as technologies change and new information becomes available because the project must be sustainable. The survey is expected to be rolled out to members shortly. Jennifer plans to return to show us what we will find in the new outreach box.

OCBA DOOR PRIZES FOR APRIL

Door prizes at this month's meeting were pollinator plants provided by Geneva Green. To be eligible for OCBA's door prize giveaways you must be a member. Join OCBA now.

OCBA MEMBERS SUPPORT BEE RESEARCH

Fifteen OCBA members volunteered to assist a research project undertaken by Dan Charbonneau. Dan is a postdoc who is working at NCSU's Apiculture Research Center this summer to evaluate the role of workers in the selection and care of larvae destined to become queens. Dan's research design requires him to be able to identify individual worker bees as they tend to 'future queen' larvae. Identification of individual bees is accomplished by affixing numbered ID tags to 900 worker bees every 3 days.



OCBA member, Sheri Gant, needed 2 pairs of glasses to tag this bee

OCBA members who have already or will soon participate in tagging bees for this research include: Chris Apple, Jeannie Arnts, Carol Carter, Ryan Chamberlain, Sheri Gant, Brad Kosiba, Jessica Mjelde, Mark Powers, John Rintoul, Dawn Rogers, Jerry

Schoendorf, Mark Smith, Cynthia Speed, Tim Struttman, and Tommy Tuck.



Tagged and painted and ready research subjects

WHAT ARE THE BEES EATING NOW?

Perhaps we should focus instead on what are the bees NOT eating now. As the Piedmont hardwoods start to bloom the bees have a veritable smorgasbord of pollen and nectars from which to choose. Among the many forage choices are two standouts.

Tulip Poplar, the nectar champion of the NC Piedmont, is starting to bloom. This is the primary nectar source for many of the Piedmont's bees.



Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

From the Burford Holly, a landscaping favorite, to the stately American Holly the various members of the Holly family (*Ilex* genus) provide great nectar and pollen forage for bees in April.



Dwarf Burford Holly (*Ilex cornuta* 'burfordii')

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SPEAKERS

OCBA's website now features a calendar on the home page where members can stay informed about upcoming speakers, field days, community outreach events and other information of interest to our beekeeping community.

May Meeting – A representative of Bee Downtown will speak about the challenges and opportunities of urban beekeeping. Catherine Trusky, 2018 OCBA Apprentice, will talk about her experiences with stingless bees in Central America.

June Meeting – Randall Austin will focus on management of small hive beetles and Varroa mites in his presentation "Some Pests and Treatments."

OTHER EVENTS OF NOTE

April 28 – CORA Community Garden Annual Open House 9-12. John Rintoul will staff an education table to familiarize visitors with bees, beekeeping and pollination.

June 23, Granville County Bee Jubilee 9:00-4:00 at the Granville County Expo Center in Oxford. OCBA will sponsor and

info table and lip balm sales. Volunteer with Chris Apple and Cynthia Speed.

June 18-24, National Pollinator Week. Be prepared to volunteer with Chris Apple for multiple community outreach events that are likely to be scheduled in Orange County.

July 19-21, North Carolina State Beekeepers Association Summer Conference will be held in Flat Rock. Plan now to attend. You can register online or at the door. If you attend, please fill out an [Individual GAP Form \(Box D5\)](#) and pass the completed form to Cynthia Speed or John Rintoul.

August 18, National Honey Bee Day. Be prepared to volunteer with Chris Apple for multiple community outreach events that are likely to be scheduled in Orange County.

August 13-17, [Eastern Apicultural Society](#) Annual Meeting in Hampton, VA. This conference will feature Randy Oliver and Jamie Ellis among other prestigious beekeeping experts. 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.