

OCBA Up to the Minutes News

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TheOCBA.org

September 2018

Editors Note: This newsletter is typically an amalgamation of the OCBA meeting minutes, prepared by Cynthia Speed, and contributions from members who have been involved in various OCBA activities. This month Hurricane Florence canceled our monthly meeting. Consequently, there were no meeting minutes to crib from. The editor put out a call for help with content and the stories flowed in. Thank you to all of our contributors.

OCBA CANCELS SEPTEMBER MEETING IN RESPONSE TO HURRICANE FLORENCE THREAT

OCBA's monthly meeting scheduled for September 13th was canceled as Hurricane Florence approached the Triangle. OCBA's executive board weighed the storm's expected arrival time with the potential hazard to members and our speaker driving to and from the Unitarian Church meeting site. Ultimately the decision to cancel was based on the safety of all concerned.

Board members now have a greater appreciation of the difficulty of the decisions faced by school administrators, public safety officials and municipal government representatives as they evaluate weather related closures. Fortunately, September's featured speaker, NCSU's James Withrow, has agreed to present his research to OCBA at a later date.

OCBA APPRENTICE PROMOTES BEEKEEPING AT EAST CHAPEL HILL HIGH SCHOOL

Megan Talikoff is hoping to start a Bee Club at ECHHS. She hosted an information table during the school's Club Week, wearing 'bee-wings' and promoting the club with posters, information, and what she referred to as "please join" candy. Megan reported, "The table went very well! We had about 40 people sign up."

Megan is also hoping to help ECHHS earn Bee Campus USA status. The Bee Campus program is similar to the Bee City program. Nature Conservancy recently announced a small grant program to support K-12 schools seeking Bee Campus designation.

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

The asters are blooming! Our bees are bringing home nectar from fall blooming asters and goldenrod. Asters are often found in ditches and along roadsides in North Carolina. These native wildflowers come in yellow, blue, lavender, and white. Many are small and virtually inconspicuous. Others are quite showy.



Crooked-stemmed Aster (Aster prenanthoides)

As we go about our fall inspections many of us will notice an odd, unpleasant odor coming from our hives. Our minds immediately leap to thoughts of dreaded American or European foul brood.

Relax! In one of his classic articles [What's That Smell?](#), **Randall Austin** discussed the source of this mysterious odor. It is uncured aster nectar. As the nectar is cured into honey the smell dissipates. New beekeepers can check out Randall's article to be prepared for one of the smelly surprises of autumn.

NCSBA EXPANDS CERTIFIED HONEY PRODUCER PROGRAM WITH SOURWOOD TESTING

By Randall Austin

The NCSBA has had a Certified Honey Producer Program for several years (<https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/honey/real-nc-honey>). Participants who verify that they are qualified NC honey producers can purchase specialty labels for their bottles and are listed in the NCSBA's Honey Registry so buyers can find them.

Now the NCSBA is going a step further with sourwood honey certification. Sourwood honey is a premium-cost product and it is easy to deceive the public with fake versions of the honey. With the new program, NC sourwood honey producers can have their honey tested by Nuclear Magnetic Resonance profiling (NMR) on a 50/50 cost share basis. Participants can then advertise that they are an "Official Sourwood Producer of the NCSBA" and distinguish themselves from questionable suppliers. They can also participate in a special sourwood honey sales program at the NC State Fair. In return, the NCSBA will gain a scientific understanding of the unique chemical properties of sourwood honey, and may be able to translate that into promotional opportunities.

Note that WE CANNOT AND DO NOT PRODUCE SOURWOOD HONEY IN PIEDMONT NORTH CAROLINA. We do have a few sourwood trees around here but they are not abundant nor do they produce nectar in the same way they do in the mountains. However, many beekeepers in Orange County carry their hives to the mountains for the summer and come back with sourwood honey crops. If you would like to participate in the new certification program, contact Kenny Jones at kfjr72@nc.rr.com or Rick Coor at rdcoor@gmail.com.

HURRICANE FLORENCE CHALLENGES LOCAL BEEKEEPER

By Celeste Mayer

In July I moved a hive from my backyard to friend and neighbor's yard. She had the perfect spot in her back yard on the neighborhood lakefront. Everything was going great . . . strongest hive I have ever had and my friend and her husband were enjoying daily observations of the hive. Then came

Hurricane Florence, and while many experienced the worst in the eastern part of the state, here in Orange County we were mostly spared. Still each day I watched the water level. The water in the lake Sunday evening September 16th was a foot below its highest ever mark and 4 feet below the base of the hive that was set back about 10 feet.

However, Monday morning when I left for work I could see the lake was very, very high and the stream at the outlet was a raging river. Flash flooding! I did a fast U-turn back to check on



the hive. All that was left was my base and the landing board caught on the chair that prevented them from also being washed away. It was a sad day.

Encouraged by a post to the OCBA list about a possible swarm, at the end of the day Tuesday, I set up a

bait box and was delighted to see bees straight away appearing and going in, several exposing the Nasonov gland and fanning at the entrance. There was a small cluster on a tree and I thought hopefully perhaps the queen was there.

On Wednesday morning, I sent a message to **Ian Rasmussen**, one of OCBA's 2017 apprentices, asking for his company. Ian and his family also live in the neighborhood. We planned to check at the end of the day and I went to work. Late that afternoon I got a call from Ian's mother Kathleen that Ian, Silas and Leif had taken the canoe out in search of my equipment and found all three boxes partly on dry land, and they were covered with bees! How did I get so lucky to have these wonderful friends who are also capable beekeepers! Unfortunately, there are no photos of the heroic rescue. Kathleen shared, "The boys were quite a sight paddling away in their bee suits with a trail of smoke behind their canoe!"



Ian, Leif and Silas Rasmussen set out to rescue the hives

I rushed home and by the time I got there the trio had just about finished moving the boxes back to their original area. Ian stayed to help me with the dirty work, though there was plenty of mucking in the mud up to this point, we had a different kind of dirty work ahead of us. All the boxes were found with frames still in place because I haven't learned yet to scrape off the propolis where the frames are seated.

The driest box was found upside down and contained one frame with multiple emergency queen cups – also oriented upside down (2.5 days after the flood). We salvaged this box and put it on top of the box I set up on Tuesday after confirming the queen was not there. The other two boxes, were disgusting with hive beetle larvae in the brood frames, mold in the capped honey frames and so many drowned bees. But robbing bees didn't seem to mind – they were everywhere! I planned to assess again on Thursday to see how many bees I actually had.

A quick check on Thursday revealed about 4 frames of bees working hard to clean out dead brood. The upside down queen cups were in the process of being reoriented! I saw what looked like viable larvae in two of them.

Certain the queen was gone and dubious about the hive's ability to requeen, I went to Bailey's Friday morning. When I arrived David let me know the bad news - no queens, the hurricane had affected the shipment arrival. However, hearing the story of the survivor bees, David offered at a discount a queen with her own survivor history – one that he had previously decided had been there too long to sell. It all seemed meant to be!



Re-established hive

Back at the hive, I saw the queen cups had clearly been re-oriented, but now looked empty except for a very puny one that had been further drawn out and sealed (4 and a half days since they were flooded). I installed the queen and did not disturb the queen cell. I noticed lots of discarded bee pupae on the screened bottom board.

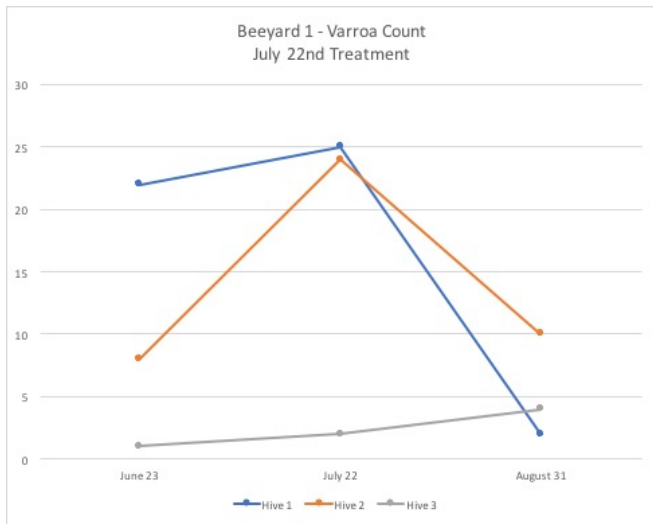
Checking again three days later and 1 week since the flood, the queen was still in the cage covered by attentive bees. I also noticed the previously sealed queen cell was now open and empty. I released the queen, closed up the hive and reflected on the week. I'm grateful for this experience, both the learning had and yet to come. And yes, Ian, is right about the wisdom of placing a hive close to a lake.

VARROA BY THE NUMBERS

By Ryan Chamberlain

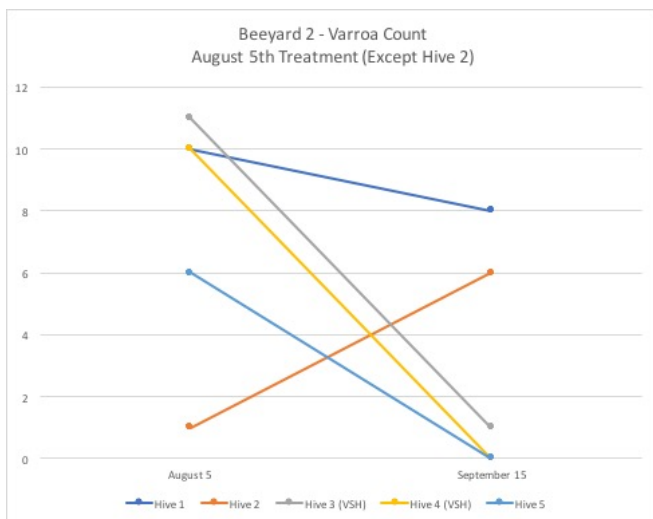
It is a fact that all beekeepers and honeybees have to deal with varroa. If you're not treating for this problem, then there's only one place your varroa count will go, and that's up. Even with treatment, there is no surefire way to completely eradicate the problem.

I've kept, what I think, are fairly decent records on all the hives I maintain for the duration of what we'll call "varroa season". The only treatment I've used so far this year is Apiguard, due to its more generous tolerance of high temperatures. All full doses, followed up by the second part of the dose 2 weeks following the first. My bee yards are scattered across Durham, Chapel Hill and Hillsborough. I have various reasons, including poor planning and supply limitations, as to why some hives in specific yards were not treated. These are noted in the charts. I'll also admit that my personal treatment threshold is higher than the recommended number.

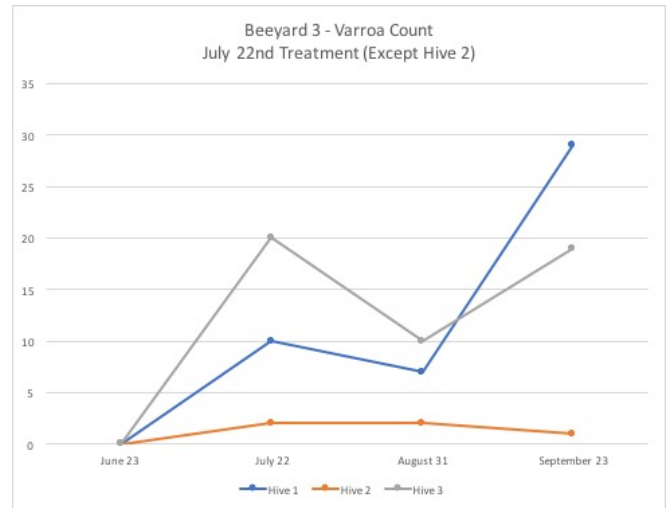


This is merely a presentation of data, draw your own conclusions.

Bee Yard 1: Everything seems run of the mill here. Recorded a mite count high enough to treat in July, and numbers came down substantially in August. Was not yet equipped to treat on my June visit, thus the delay in treatment.

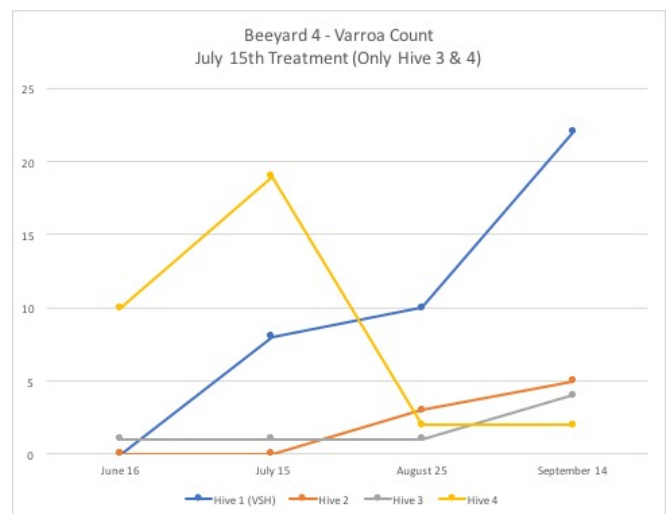


Bee Yard 2: No real surprises here either. Counts went down after treatment. I felt as though Hive 2 was too small for treatment, and lo and behold the number of mites went up in the following month! Note also that Hive 3, a Varroa Sensitive Hygiene colony, had the highest mite count in the yard!

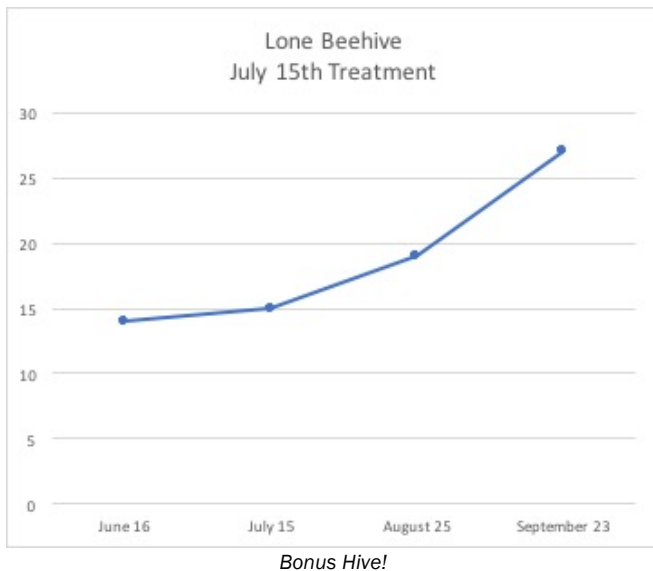


Bee Yard 3: I feel like this is a good example of the possibility of getting a poor sample. The powdered sugar I was using in June was crunchy, not really powdered, and it seems to have given me mite free colonies! This made me suspicious. Afterward I began using better practices to keep the powdered sugar powdered. July showed dramatic increases. Treatment follow-up showed good results in mite reduction. Recently, the numbers were through the roof. I'll be applying Formic Pro to these colonies.

Bee Yard 3 Hive 2 has some stellar varroa housekeeping, no idea what's going on there. Ironically, I found this colony as a swarm in a trashcan.



Beeyard 4: More expected trends. Drop or constant mite count in treated hives. Steady or slight increase in subsequent month. Note the steady growth in Hive 2, which did not receive treatment. Further note that Hive 1 (untreated) is a Varroa Sensitive Hygiene colony.



A local beekeeping expert suggested that I imagine where these numbers would be without treatment. Last year a colony at the same site (winter loss), went from 1 mite in July to 30+ in September with an Apiguard treatment in between in August.

APPRENTICES - A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Lisa Vogel, Director of OCBA's Apprentice and Mentorship Programs, has already begun efforts to recruit beekeeping apprentices for 2019. Lisa is proud of the quality of current and past apprentices and wants to assure that our tradition of excellence continues.



2018 apprentices Catherine Trusky and Megan Talikoff

"I have sent flyers to all Chapel Hill/Carrboro middle and high schools as well as the county middle and high schools and public charter schools in Orange County." Lisa has also contacted the home school association, but has not yet received a response. She will work with 2017 apprentice, Ian Rasmussen's parents, to make sure that homeschooled students are aware of the apprentice opportunity. In addition to the county's schools, Lisa is planning to contact 4-H clubs and Boy Scout and Girl Scout associations.

Megan Talikoff, one of our current apprentices, advised Lisa to focus on the middle schools since that is the age group with the most longevity as local beekeepers and club members.

Applicants must be between 10-16 years old to be eligible for the program.

GIRL SCOUT GOLD AWARD BENEFITS OCBA

By Cynthia Speed



Jennifer shares her completed project with Cynthia

Jennifer Persia and I met at the Orange County Public Library in Hillsborough recently. Jennifer is the Girl Scout who chose to work with OCBA for her Gold Award project. The Gold Award in Girl Scouts is comparable to the Eagle Scout Award in Boy Scouts, the highest award that can be achieved. The meeting wrapped up the second half of her project.

Jennifer collected materials for us to enhance our Outreach Services to children. In doing so, she has made it possible for more members in the club to become involved in outreach. Her contribution included books, action project ideas for children, and talking points already prepared so that more members will be willing to approach sharing beekeeping knowledge with the community. She was delightful to work with and her willingness to be involved in creating a workable and practical solution to help educate the public is greatly appreciated.

HONEY TASTING WITH MASTER BEEKEEPER, SUZY SPENCER



Our October speaker, Suzy Spencer, is an expert on honey tasting. She will explain the difference between taste and flavor, and lead a demonstration to illustrate. She will show honey tasting wheels and explain. Then we will taste some different honeys. She has been to several training programs in honey

tasting, including at UC Davis, and with a well-known Italian honey expert.

Mark Powers attended Suzy's honey tasting session at the NCSBA conference in New Bern this spring and her recent Durham County lecture/demonstration. She is a delightful and knowledgeable Master Beekeeper. She also has an observation hive built into her house!

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SPEAKERS

October 11 Membership Meeting – Suzy Spencer, of 5 County Beekeepers Association, will conduct a honey tasting seminar and teach us the nuances of honey tasting.

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 3rd Annual *Hors d'oeuvres for Honey Lovers*. OCBA will provide the beverages.

Upcoming Outreach Events:

September 29 – Blackwood Farm Park LocalFest 2018! [Orange County LocalFest](#) is a diverse, family-friendly festival that celebrates and promotes local food, local music, the local economy, and the county's heritage and culture.

October 7 – Historic Hillsborough Half Marathon. OCBA has been asked to distribute honey stix to runners in the Historic Hillsborough Half Marathon. Please consider helping. Set up will be at 7am! Come on all you early risers and join in the fun!! At least 2 volunteers are needed. We will set up a table and canopy near Gold Park. Ideally, the event organizers would like us to dress in "beekeeper garb" and or as a honey bee. Volunteers can contact **Chris Apple** at chrisapple1231@gmail.com.

October 13 – Thinking About Beekeeping? John Rintoul will make an *Introduction to Beekeeping* presentation at the Orange County Public Library in Hillsborough to share information with potential beekeepers about the cost, rigors and time commitment demanded of successful beekeepers.

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.