

Orange County Beekeepers Association Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2021
7:00 - 9:00 pm via Zoom

Carrie Donley, OCBA president, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She explained that the meeting would begin with an educational program followed by the business meeting. The meeting was attended by 61 people.

Carrie introduced our speaker, Dr. Jaime Ellis, whose talk was titled “What’s Killing Honey Bees?” Jamie Ellis is the Gahan Endowed Professor of Entomology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology at the University of Florida. Currently, Dr. Ellis and his team have over 30 active research projects in the fields of honey bee husbandry, conservation and ecology, and integrated crop pollination. Also, he is the host of a popular podcast, “Two Bees in a Podcast.”

Dr. Ellis began his presentation by noting the many resources available on the University of Florida’s [Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab](#). He explained that honey bees are important to humans because 10 to 20 percent of the world’s food supply - fruits and vegetables that add to the variety and nutritional value of our diets - depend on honey bees for pollination. Dr. Ellis reviewed the loss rates of managed honey bee colonies, which is generally reported to be 40% per year. However, the number of colonies has been increasing over the past several years, with a one percent increase per year. Dr. Ellis said the heroes in this story are the commercial beekeepers, who split their colonies to recover losses. This is economically feasible now, but would not be if prices for pollination services plummeted. Dr. Ellis said a good resource for monitoring the status of honey bee colonies in the United States is the [Bee Informed Partnership](#).

Dr. Ellis discussed several factors associated with poor honey bee colony health. He said the three most important causes of the loss of honey bee colonies are varroa mites, poor quality queens, and poor nutrition. He said beekeepers should use varroa resistant stock. Researchers are looking for new treatments for varroa, but this will take time. Dr. Ellis recommended the [Honey Bee Health Coalition](#) for more information about how to control varroa mites.

Membership

Wayne Vanderberg reported that 72 new people have joined OCBA and 142 have renewed their membership. With our 44 lifetime OCBA memberships, that brings our total membership to 258. People have until the end of March to renew their membership if they want to be able to rent the extractor. Wayne and his membership co-chair, Mary Anne Rhyne, will be sending out reminders about membership renewal before the end of the month. Those who have not yet renewed their membership can do so via the website. Click on “Membership” in the top navigation, and select “Renew your Membership” from the dropdown box.

Bee School and Certified Testing

Randall Austin said we had 173 registrants in Bee School at last count. He said people could still join and catch up by watching the recorded sessions. The 50-question NCSBA certification

written test will be administered outside at city and county parks, with the exact locations to be determined. Individuals do not have to be an OCBA Bee School student to take the test, but they do need to be members of the NC State Beekeepers Association. Randall will send an email to the OCBA listserv with more information about testing, including how to sign up.

Clusters

Vicki Robertson reported that 31 people have signed up for clusters. People can register on the website to be in a cluster until next Wednesday, March 17.

Collaboratives

Jayne Stuart reported that the collaboratives are designed for beekeepers who have been keeping bees for more than a year and who are members of OCBA. Collaboratives meet monthly to describe what is going on in their hives. Collaboratives are more conversational, while clusters are instructional. Signup to participate in a collaborative will be on the OCBA website from March 15 - April 15.

Outreach

Dawn Rogers said she is looking for people to join the outreach team. She is also looking for new ideas about how to conduct outreach in the era of COVID. She has a list of potential volunteers from the membership renewals, and if anyone would like to be added to the list of potential volunteers, they should contact Dawn at dawnrogers006@gmail.com. She is especially interested in adding people to the outreach team who have video and other technical skills.

Master Beekeeper Study Group

David Eckert reported that the first meeting of the study group will be on Thursday, March 18. So far, 15 people have signed up. The group will meet every 2 weeks, and sessions will be held via Zoom with each participant presenting a topic from the [NCSBA advanced beekeeper curriculum](#). The goal of the study group is to prepare individuals to take the NCSBA journeyman and master beekeeper exams.

Kiva

John Rintoul shared information about [OCBA's Kiva Lending Team](#), which supports beekeepers throughout the world who do not have easy access to credit as they build their beekeeping businesses. Kiva.org it is a non-profit group that provides a funding network to pool microloans from individuals to respond to the needs of small dollar borrowers. These are borrowers who lack business clout or collateral to qualify for mainstream, commercial loans. Kiva lenders can choose individual borrowers based on a number of criteria – country, occupation, gender, etc. OCBA's Kiva Lending Team was created in 2017. Since then the team has made 30 loans to beekeepers and other agricultural producers in 19 countries, including the U.S. John has prepared a step-by-step guide for using Kiva. If you have any questions about KIVA or the OCBA Kiva Lending Team, contact him at beecd@icloud.com.