

Orange County Beekeepers Association

Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2022

Nancy Oglesby, OCBA President, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone for the January meeting.

Nancy Oglesby, OCBA President, introduced our speaker, **Dr. Bradley Metz**, from the NC State Applied Ecology school. Brad is a researcher in Dr. David Tarpy's lab, of the NC State Apiculture Program. He is the lead scientist in charge of the Honey Bee Queen & Disease Clinic, and runs a research program concerning honeybee male reproduction and quality. The topic of his presentation was global pollinator decline, causes, solution, and barriers.

Presentation: "Bees and the Anthropocene" -- Dr. Bradley Metz

Anthropocene = "Era of humans"

Types of Pollinators: It's not just honey bees! It's only because we manage them that honey bees are the main focus in the media (honey bees can be considered an agricultural product – they are the cattle of the insect world). There are specialists and generalists (honey bees are technically generalists) Is there really a problem with competition between honey bees and native bees? Dr. Metz noted competition is not really a major factor in a typical environment. Maybe in special circumstances like in high altitude climes, deserts, etc.

The most common question from the general public: "How are the bees?", which is actually 2 different questions:

1. How are honey bees? (agricultural question)
2. How are native bees? (a conservation question)

Historical view: In the 1980's the varroa mite was introduced into North America. By the 1990's the introduction of Africanized bees began. "Colony collapse disorder" (CCD) enters the lexicon in the mid-late 2000's and this was when concern over honey bees was publicized.

Colony Collapse Disorder: "CCD" is NOT due to a single reason. It is multiple factors:

- Parasitic mites (Varroa destructor)
- Pathogens (viruses, bacteria, and fungal pathogens)
- Pesticide exposure
- Poor nutritional environment
- Management stress (ie, in the case of large scale migratory beekeeping: travel, inbreeding)

Furthermore, these factors all interact and amplify each other: varroa mites introduce other pathogens, which both affect reproductive fitness and cause stress. Monoculture agriculture (eg, almonds especially) have a huge effect on macro-micronutrient exposure.

Dr. Metz also noted a newer accepted term instead of CCD is: "Pollinator Decline"

A global evaluation of factors driving pollinator decline identified changes in land cover, land management pressures, and pesticide use as the top causes of pollinator decline globally. ([A global-scale expert assessment of drivers and risks associated with pollinator decline | Nature Ecology & Evolution](#) Dicks et al. 2021)

The presentation concluded with a discussion of:

What can we do to reduce pollinator decline?

Individual and systemic changes are required.

- Individual:
 - “give up” your lawn (helps honey bees and other pollinators)
 - plant more native plants, even a small 8x8 “pollinator pocket garden” will be utilized. (eg, <https://www.tinkerscreek.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Pollinator-pocket-garden-web-version2-1024x791.jpg>)
 - let your lawn go fallow
 - build habitat, including bee/wasp hotels
 - plant a vegetable garden: “Victory Gardens” and localized small scale agriculture
- Systemic/Societal:
 - pressure your government and major industry interests to effect change
 - increasing undisturbed land is key
 - “rewilding” spaces within urban environments (wastewater collection areas etc)
 - prioritize land conservation, dedicating land to wild use

In conclusion, “How can I save the bees?” is **not** become a beekeeper and raise more bees, but instead do some of the above things.

Four organizations to support:

1. Project Apis m. <https://www.projectapism.org/>
2. Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation [The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation](#)
3. North Carolina State Beekeepers Association <https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/>
4. Pollinator Partnership <https://pollinator.org/>

Club Business:

Topics / Announcements (Nancy):

Pre-meeting Dinners:

Nancy announced a new plan for the pre-meeting social time. Starting next month we will be changing our pre-meeting dinner plan from pizza provided by the club to potluck dishes provided by volunteers. Sign up sheets were passed around for February and March.

Blackwood Farm Apiary:

The hives that OCBA manages at Blackwood did not overwinter. If anyone has a split or catches a swarm, consider donating to this apiary. The club will give some OCBA SWAG to the donor!

Cynthia Woodsong and Lisa Vogel are the current managers of the hives at Blackwood. They would like to switch from 10-frame to 8-frame equipment and are looking for someone willing to “swap”. Please contact Nancy Oglesby if interested in making this trade.

Blackwood Farm Park has been closed for renovation for about a year and will probably open this spring or summer. Once open, we plan to start having open field days at the hives when any club member is welcome to observe and/or participate in hive inspections and other activities. These will happen on days when the Blackwood beekeepers are planning to be there and will be announced a week or so in advance

Beekeeper Surveys from NC Department of Agriculture

From Nancy: Many of us have received surveys in the mail from the NC Department of Agriculture. I talked to someone from that office about them. We are all encouraged to fill these out either online or on paper and return them. They use this information to get an idea of how many bees are in NC and how much honey is produced. There is no cross-reporting with other agencies. This information is compared to other states and potentially helps justify the money the state spends supporting beekeepers (eg, state inspectors, etc).

Spring Field Day/BBQ Fundraiser

The OCBA is planning a spring field day/BBQ fundraiser for the NCSU endowed professorship. A sign up list was passed around to enlist volunteers to help plan this event. Janet Staats (OCBA Vice-president) will host the event at her farm in northwestern Orange County.

Membership

MaryAnne Rhyne (Membership co-director) reminded us that it is time to renew your OCBA and NCSBA memberships. While anyone can attend our monthly meetings, those with current OCBA memberships can participate in the listserv, the bee collaboratives/clusters, journal discussion group, swarm patrol, and if you renew before the end of March, you can rent the club's honey extraction equipment.

Bee School

Randall Austin, Education Director, reported: we still have room for people to enroll in bee school, which starts this week. Even after bee school has started, people can still sign up because they can catch up by watching recordings of earlier classes.

Apprenticeship Beekeeper Program

Vicki Robertson (Mentorship co-director) introduced the new apprentices and (hopefully) pre-apprentices who attended the meeting. We will have three apprentices next year and two other applicants who will participate in the program and may be apprentices next year. They are Olivia Yang, Kiera Byrd, and Mateo Aguirre. Two others in the program who were not able to attend are Clare Godinez and Minerva Greeson.

Outreach

Dawn Rogers, Community Outreach Director, introduced Victoria Hill and Robert King as the new Outreach Co-directors. Busy season for outreach is coming soon, watch the listserv for announcements

Door Prizes

1. Candle mold (donated from David Bailey)
2. Wood cutting board
3. Honey bee wrapping paper

Note: From now on door prizes will just be given out for those who attend the meetings in person to simplify distribution and pick-up of prizes.

Next Month's Speaker

The speaker on February 19th will be Martin Crompton, Vineyard and Project Director at Union Grove Farm Union Grove Farm (former site of Maple View Farms). Martin's work focuses on regenerative farming, sustainability, energy efficiency, and waste reduction.

Erika Wittchen
OCBA Secretary