

Orange County Beekeepers Association

Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2023

Janet Staats, OCBA Vice President, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone for the April meeting. The meeting was attended by 48 members (7 via Zoom, and 41 in-person at the Orange County Extension Office in Hillsborough).

2022 OCBA Apprentice Presentation #1

“My Experience with the Apprenticeship” – Ripley Florek

Ripley was introduced by one of her mentors, Vicki Robertson. Ripley talked about her experience as a first year beekeeper. She gave a really professional PowerPoint presentation containing many great photos taken throughout the year (for each season). She mentioned bee school, having a whole team of mentors, participating in a first year cluster, and attending the OCBA monthly meetings as great opportunities to meet other beekeepers, compare notes, and to learn from each other.

Ripley successfully overwintered her 2 hives and they are currently doing well. In March, she observed the Queen in one of her hives had died. Fortunately the workers had already made queen cups and were in the process of re-queening. Her second hive was doing well and ready to split, so she donated one half of the split to a member of her cluster group.

Ripley took advantage of the opportunity to participate in two Outreach activities on behalf of the club: working the booth at the State Fair, where she fielded questions about honey bees from both adults and children; and the Holiday Parade in Hillsborough. Ripley made some of the float decorations (paper mâché bees!), helped with set-up, and also handed out candy while walking beside the float during the parade.

She concluded that the apprenticeship taught her so much and it was a lot of fun!

Presentation:

Following the OCBA Apprentice presentation, Janet Staats introduced our speaker, **Diane Currier**. In 2014, Diane founded Honeygirl Meadery in Durham. From www.honeygirlmeadery.com: “Honeygirl Meadery is an award-winning urban meadery in the heart of downtown Durham NC specializing in small batch seasonal meads.” They source all of their ingredients locally, including local honey! (with the exception of occasional special varietal honeys sourced globally)

“Mead Making” – Diane Currier (Honeygirl Meadery)

Diane first took us through her evolution from starting as a home brewer (of beer) to becoming a successful mead maker and business owner. She became interested in mead in 2004 after a walk through a meadow of fireweed flowers and tasting fireweed mead at the Ring of Fire Meadery in Homer, Alaska. She strives to make mead that expresses the essence of the flowers/nectar sources from which the honey is derived. Making mead has an element of surprise – you will never get the exact same batch twice because of the different flavor profiles of gathered honey that can change by location, season, and year.

The other thing she loves about mead is: while all mead is fermented with honey, there are unlimited ways to add seasonal fruit, fresh herbs, and spices to produce unique mead styles.

Diane spoke off the cuff with some general guidelines/recommendations on small batch home brewing of mead. An advantage of small-scale home brewing is the ability to experiment, so have fun with it! Traditional mead is simply honey, water, and yeast; however, even with just these 3 basic ingredients, variation in honey type, water source, and strain of yeast used can change the flavor of the resulting mead. Adding fruit makes a type of mead called “melomel”. You can experiment with the ratio of fruit to honey. Blueberry and strawberry mead are especially popular in North Carolina.

At the end of her talk, Diane fielded a lot of great questions from the audience, including how much honey do you use in a single year? The answer was mind boggling: 6 to 12,000 pounds of honey annually!

Club Business:

- Nancy Oglesby passed around the sign-up sheet for food for the next meeting.
- She noted that the raffle for the extractor is doing great!

Announcing the Honey Bee Jamboree:

- June 3rd, 3-7pm: 6702 Doc Corbett Rd, Cedar Grove
- Food: BBQ pig, chicken, sides from Hillsborough BBQ
- Meet Dr. Tarpy and his team
- Raffle to win a honey extractor (proceeds going to the NCSU Endowed Professorship fund)
- “Black Jar” honey competition (judged by attendees)
- Honey dessert competition (best looking, best tasting, overall winner)
- Equipment swap
- Family-friendly bee-themed activities

Outreach

Dawn Rogers announced the following upcoming Outreach Events:

- April 26th, 5:30 – 7 pm: Glenwood Elementary Education Night
- May 6th, 8 am – 4 pm: Hillsborough Garden Tour Plant sale
- May 24th, 1 – 3 pm: Chapel Hill High School (Tiger Fest)
- June 3rd and June 10th, 8 am – 4 pm: Sunshine Lavender Farm

Other Announcements:

Announcement 1: The June Meeting will kick off with a new idea, “Meet the Locals” format. 4 or 5 different people, 5-10 min talks on a variety of topics (their choice). Nancy passed around a sign-up sheet for interested participants.

Announcement 2: The OCBA website “Resources” page could use an update. Nancy circulated a sign-up sheet and will send out an email so people who are interested in advertising their local honey, hive products, and services can add their contact information to be included on the webpage.

Announcement 3: Together with the Durham Beekeepers association, a plan is in the works to have a “friendly” honey competition between the clubs. More information will be forthcoming.

Next Month’s Speaker

The speaker on May 11th will be Ryan Adams, who is an Extension Associate in the Center for Integrated Pest Management at NC State University. He will talk about how beekeepers can battle insects, disease, and weeds, using Integrated Pest Management practices and reduce their use of insecticides and herbicides.

Erika Wittchen
OCBA Secretary