

Orange County Beekeepers Association

Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2024

Janet Staats, OCBA President, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone for the January meeting. The meeting was attended by ~38 members (7 via Zoom, and 31 in-person at the Orange County Extension Office in Hillsborough).

Hive Chat

“Hive Chat” will be a new addition to our monthly meeting agenda. At the beginning of each meeting, one of our members will take the floor to moderate a discussion on a different topic each month. The idea is to have an informal forum to talk about experiences, field questions, and promote discussion amongst members. This month’s topic is:

“What’s happening in our apiaries right now and in the next 6 weeks?” - with OCBA member John Rintoul.

- Discussion topics included using the FLIR camera to visualize location and size of the cluster within your hives, oxalic acid treatments, and supplemental feeding at this time of the year (candy boards and mountain camp method).
- What are bees foraging on this time of year? Not too much blooming currently, but in the next month or so we will see start to see blooming plants such as: red maple, dandelion, henbit, deadnettle, chickweed, camellias, quince, flowering plum, and cherry.

Presentations

1. Overview of OCBA

Nancy Oglesby (immediate past president) provided an overview of OCBA, member benefits, volunteer opportunities, and introduced the current OCBA Executive Board members:

- President: Janet Staats (new)
- Vice-president: Elisa Bailey (new)
- Past President: Nancy Oglesby
- Education Director: Randall Austin
- Mentorship Co-directors: José Olmedo (new)
- Membership: Leif and Ginia Roll, and Cindy Copolo (new)
- Secretary: Erika Wittchen
- Treasurer: Jim Greco
- Outreach Co-directors: Jeanne Arnts (new) and Victoria Hill

2. Member Survey Results

Earlier in the month, current Vice-President Elisa Bailey sent out an online survey to all OCBA members. Tonight, she provided an overview of some of the results:

- Demographics of survey respondents: ~10% beginner, 45% certified, 35% journeyman, 5% master, and 5% hobby beekeeper.
- 80% of respondents would like to have a membership directory.
- The majority of respondents (45%) said they attend 9-12 meetings per year, and 25% and 30% said they attend between 5-8 or 1-4 meetings per year, respectively.
- The majority (~68%) of respondents would like to have food during the meeting. Preferences (in order of response) included: potluck appetizers (~33%), potluck dinner (~22%), volunteer sign up for dinner, or meet at a restaurant (~5% each).
- Reasons for attending OCBA monthly meetings: hearing about honey bee research from nationally recognized speakers (60%), having local speakers on topics such as hive management (40%), a place to talk to other beekeepers and socialize with friends (45% and 25%, respectively).
- Reasons for not attending OCBA monthly meetings: the speaker/topic that month did not interest me (25%), family/work commitments (25%), day or time is not convenient (25%).
- Are you interested in OCBA offering opportunities to further your education in the NCSBA Master Beekeeper program: ~40% of respondents indicated yes (willing to pay for advanced classes outside of the club meeting and/or interested in the study group OCBA organizes (~20% each). ~36% indicated it depends on what is offered, and ~26% indicated they are happy where they are at.

3. Blackwood Farm Park Updates

Cynthia Woodsong gave an overview of club activities at Blackwood Farm Park.

<https://www.orangecountync.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Blackwood-Farm-Park-2>

- History: The park was opened in 2015, OCBA placed an apiary there in 2016.
- The park has hiking trails, fishing pond, picnic areas, historic farmhouse, barn, and other outbuildings.
- In 2021 the park was closed for renovations, and it recently reopened in 2023. New facilities include a large picnic shelter, amphitheater, and the new location for the OCBA apiary, adjacent to the Park Office.
- In 2023, the OCBA apiary consisted of several Langstroth hives: 3 maintained by Lisa Vogel/Cynthia Woodsong which also served as demonstration hives for OCBA learning events, and 1 hive which was for one of the OCBA clusters (managed by Celeste Mayer).
- Coming soon: OCBA has been developing a sign to be placed at our apiary with some information and photos of beekeeping in a historical context in Orange County.

Club Business

Janet Staats provided the following updates:

Upcoming Events

- The pollinator plant walk will be postponed due to expected bad weather. Will be rescheduled for later in the spring.
- NCSBA Spring Meeting: a reminder that it will be held March 7-9, in New Bern. More information can be found on the NCSBA website.

Call for Volunteers

- Bee Jamboree: looking for volunteers to help with a planning committee. Planning will start within a couple of weeks. The event is tentatively planned to be held at Blackwood Farm Park.
- Mentor for the Blackwood Farm Apiary Cluster
- Need someone to manage the Support and Recovery Program. Maybe a couple of people?

Membership

Cindy Copolo (Membership co-director) reminded us that it is time to renew your OCBA and NCSBA memberships. While anyone can attend our monthly meetings, only those with current OCBA memberships can participate in the bee collaboratives/clusters, journal discussion group, swarm patrol, and the Master Beekeeper Study Group. If you want to rent the club honey extraction equipment, you must renew your membership before the end of March.

Education/Bee School

Carrie Donley on bee school sign-ups:

- ~60 sign-ups so far, but close to 100 are expected based on prior years. There is still room for people to enroll in bee school, which starts this week. Carrie noted that people can still enroll even after bee school has started, because they can catch up by watching recordings of earlier classes.

Outreach

Jeanne Arnts and Victoria Hill (Outreach Co-directors):

- A busy season for outreach is coming soon, watch the listserv for announcements.

Honey Tasting Results

Winners of our informal honey tasting:

- 1st Place: Rich and Connie Guerin, with a light, spring honey
- 2nd Place: Blackwood Farms OCBA Apiary honey, submitted by Lisa Vogel and Cynthia Woodsong
- 3rd Place: Dawn Rogers, with a peach flavored creamed honey which had won a blue ribbon at the NC State Fair

Door Prizes

Next Month's Speaker

Cory Stevens is a Past President of the Missouri State Beekeepers Association. He was certified as a Master Beekeeper by the Eastern Apicultural Society in 2013 and earned a MS in entomology from the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. Cory and his wife Jaime own Stevens Bee Company where they have selected a VSH line of bees they call "Missouri Mite Hunters".

Erika Wittchen
OCBA Secretary