

Orange County Beekeepers Association

Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2025

The OCBA March 2025 members meeting was attended by approximately 46 members in-person at the Orange County Extension Office in Hillsborough.

Presentation: Quality Queens From Your Backyard

Ashby Miller is the owner of Ashby Farms in Burlington, NC. He runs ~500 colonies in about 16 different apiary locations. Ashby presented strategies for propagating varroa mite-resistant stock he uses in his business that can be adapted to backyard apiaries.

OCBA Member Survey Results

Prior to the invited speaker talk, Axel Elling, President, presented the results from the OCBA member survey that was sent out earlier in the year. He explained the purpose of the survey was to gain feedback that will help shape policy, decisions, and programming for the OCBA.

- Some key takeaways:
 - o Our membership is primarily made up of members with less than 1 year (36% of respondents) or greater than 7 years (25%).
 - o A majority (75%) reported they attend monthly meetings, and 37% have participated in a collaborative or cluster.
 - o Survey results confirm there is an interest in an Intermediate beekeeping course.
 - o The 3 top reasons why members have quit beekeeping and/or did not renew their membership: 1) colony collapse/loss of bees, 2) expense, 3) physical demands/health reasons.
 - o One of the biggest challenges for OCBA is getting members to volunteer for events, committees, and board positions. 64% of survey respondents indicated no interest in volunteering for our club!
- Some points brought up by members regarding difficulty securing volunteers for committees and volunteering for events:
 - o It was noted that calling something a formal "Committee" is a turn-off. It would be better to be more specific because often, these needs for volunteers are not a large time/effort commitment.
 - o Another member noted that lack of volunteers is a common theme in the multiple bee clubs he is a member of, so this is not a problem unique to OCBA.
 - o Another point was made to highlight opportunities for members who are new to beekeeping to contribute. Most (if not all) volunteer opportunities do not require having passed the certified exam. In fact, anyone who attends these meetings likely has far more knowledge than the general public about bees, beekeeping, and other relevant topics.

Clarity on this could encourage our newer beekeepers to feel confident enough to volunteer.

Club Business

Education Report (Carrie Donley)

- Bee School 2025
 - o Carrie reported that Bee School 2025 has just finished. In all, there were 72 students, which brought in \$2675 in club revenue.
 - o Thank you to the guest lecturers (Carrie Donley, Todd Walker, Don Hopkins, Jeanne Arnts)
 - o Carrie noted that Cluster groups will be starting up soon.

Upcoming Events

- Extraction Workshop
 - o There will be an extraction workshop, scheduled for Saturday June 21, 10 am to noon at the Orange County Ag Center (organized by Randall Austin and Jim Greco)
- Bee Jamboree
 - o OCBA will be organizing this event again this year. More information will be forthcoming (Jim Barrick and Cindy Copolo).

Outreach Report (Jim Barrick)

- Jim presented a new way to present volunteer opportunities. At each monthly meeting, there will be a display set-up with information posted including details. Members can look at the board before and after the meeting and sign up using the sheets provided.
- This month, there are opportunities including:
 - o Pollinator Day at Gold Park in Hillsborough (April 13), presented by the Orange County Master Gardeners.
 - o Information table at the Chapel Hill Public Library (May 3), to coincide with an author event (children's book on beekeeping).
 - o Lavender Farms Event (June 14 and June 15), this is an annual event where OCBA has had an information table for the past several years.
 - o Hillsborough Last Fridays (starting end of March), opportunities include selling honey and other products from the hive.

Other Items (Axel Elling)

- Memberships must be renewed before the end of March if you want to be eligible for the club extractor rental
- There will be another demo at Blackwood Farm Park at the club apiary (this coming Sunday at 2 pm)
- Thank you to all the in-person attendees!

Next Month's Speaker (Mary Ann Rhyne)

At the April 10 meeting, our invited speaker will be **Erin Evans**, Master Beekeeper and Past President of the Maine State Beekeepers Association. Her presentation is titled: Honey, Sex, and Poison – Swarming Secrets Unveiled.

Erika Wittchen
OCBA Secretary