



Alamance County Beekeepers

February 2020 Newsletter

Monthly Meeting

February 20 | Ag Building
Potluck @ 6:00 | Program @ 7:00

Rafael Cabrera

The Value and Benefits of
Hive Monitoring

Rafael Cabrera is founder and General Manager of [Solutionbee](#) LLC. A graduate of Stevens Institute of Technology and NCSU, Mr. Cabrera has held various leadership positions in product management and general management, including setting up businesses in Romania and China. He speaks English, German, and Spanish fluently and specializes in technology startups. When not working or throwing the football with his son, he can often be found studying Chinese, a lifelong endeavor for Mr. Cabrera, if a little futile.

Bring a dish of something delicious to share with your fellow beekeepers, and enjoy some social time at 6:00. It will be another great evening!



Message from Ira

Will it stop raining ? As warm as it is, I'm sure your bees are eating up a lot of their reserves.



After last month's presentation, we are going to hear from Rafael about Solutionbee, the manufacturer of the scales that George McAllister (and a few of us) uses. Come join us for the presentation and a covered dish dinner. Bring your favorite dish and enjoy the fellowship.

Ira



Honey bee foraging for pollen on winter honeysuckle, *Lonicera fragrantissima*, Arbor Gate Garden, 2/11/2020.
Photo by Geoff Leister.

Bees in the News

Click on the headline to read the article.

[First Beehive Uses of the Currently Registered Active Ingredient *Bacillus thuringiensis*, subsp. *aizawai* strain ABTS 1857](#), EPA, 1/10/2020. "EPA is proposing to register a pesticide product containing *Bacillus thuringiensis*, subsp. *aizawai* strain ABTS 1857 (Bta ABTS 1857) to prevent and control wax moths in beehives. This product offers beekeepers a new tool against destructive wax moth larvae."

[Mite-destroying gut bacterium might help save vulnerable honey bees](#), Elizabeth Pennisi, Science, 1/30/2020. By genetically modifying a bacterium that lives in the honey bee gut, researchers in a lab environment have figured out how to trick the *Varroa* mite to destroy some of its own DNA, thus killing many of the mites parasitizing the bees in the experiment.

[Making Oscar history, 'Honeyland' shatters borders](#), Jake Coyle, AP News, 2/4/2020. The film tracks the life of Hatidze Muratova and her sustainable methods of wild beekeeping. "Muratova takes half of the honey and leaves the other half for the bees, a balance that allows the combs to continue and flourish. But when a chaotic and unruly family of nine moves in next door and tries to crudely practice beekeeping with less patience, *Honeyland* becomes a starkly simple environmental allegory."

[Some of Australia's Smallest Species Could Be Lost to Wildfires](#), Helen Sullivan, NY Times, 1/9/2020. Included among the threatened animals are Ligurian honey bees on Kangaroo Island: "One-third of Kangaroo Island, a government-declared bee sanctuary off South Australia, has been burned so far this fire season, threatening the "last remaining pure stock" of Ligurian honeybees in the world, the [ABC has reported](#)."



Wildflower of the Year

Marsh-pink
Sabatia angularis



The Garden Club of North Carolina, Inc., and the North Carolina Botanical Garden co-sponsor the NC Wildflower of the Year program. They have chosen Marsh-pink as the wildflower of 2020. This stunning biennial is also known as rose gentian, rose pink, or bitter-bloom. Its nectar is a food for several species of bees. Read more [here](#).

If you have a garden space that has moist soil, and sunlight, Marsh-pink would be a terrific plant to add to your pollinator habitat. To receive seeds for this wildflower (available while supplies last), send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to

2020 NCWFOY
North Carolina Botanical Garden
Campus Box 3375, UNC-CH
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3375

Protecting Our Pollinators

Check out this beautiful new quarterly magazine, [2 Million Blossoms](#). Its mission:

"We strive to awaken readers to the vast diversity of pollinating insects and animals. Our goal is to delight, entertain and name those well-adapted creatures buzzing through our world, because the more we know about pollinators, the better we can provide habitat. Our quarterly magazine offers short and long form articles exploring how bees, birds, butterflies and bats enhance our planet."

Volunteer Opportunity

Arbor Day Celebration

March 21 | 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Beth Schmidt Park | Elon

Join your fellow beekeepers on Arbor Day, and share your knowledge of bees and habitat with members of the visiting public. Caitlin has created a place for you to sign up: <https://tinyurl.com/w2e6k4w>, but you can also just come on out! And remember, the hours you volunteer will count toward Master Beekeeper credits.



A Change as Sweet as Honey!

ACBA Treasurer Sarah Stevens is happy to announce that our Beekeepers Association is now accepting credit cards.

You can now pay membership dues and buy merchandise with this added option. She hopes this enhancement will allow you to take advantage of some of that nice merchandise you may have been eyeing (if only you had remembered your checkbook or cash)!



Sugar Cakes in Winter

Geoff Leister

January 10

My bees seem to be bringing in a lot of pollen protein from flowering Camellias, but they are missing out on carbohydrate sources during this time of year. Their winter stores are being used, but they are not diminishing rapidly, so there is no harm in winter feeding to give them a boost and to make sure that they can maintain a heat-productive cluster when cold air returns.

I decided to try, for the first time, a wet sugar mix that I packed into square bird suet containers. I decided against adding just dry sugar to a sheet of newspaper placed on frame tops, known as the Mountain Camp Method. With this weekend and the next week's above-normal daytime temperatures, wetted sugar is more likely to stay in the hive. It has been reported that sometimes bees will start moving dry sugar granules outside of their hive when temperatures are warm and honey store use is very low. I will know in a few days which hives are utilizing the sugar cakes. Any leftover cakes can be used to make up 1:1 syrup for spring use, if necessary.

In addition to wet sugar, I added an eye dropper of Honey-B-Healthy, Amino-B-Boost and honey from my apiary. The components were well mixed in a large bowl. I followed the suggestions posted [here](#).

It was very easy to add the sugar cakes to each my hives, since I had shims located on the top the second brood box of each hive.

I have added a few photos of the method I used. I placed the packed sugar cake on top the paper towel in a plastic food tray for transport to the hives. Grabbing the blue towel ends made it easy to lift the sugar cake out of the plastic container and placing the cake and towel gently on top of bees (they move) and frame tops.

This is my first time using sugar cakes. In the past, I have used 2:1 syrup in 1-gallon zip lock plastic bags during winter warm periods. That method worked well, but the bees would drain a bag in a day or two. The sugar cake or dry sugar method allows bees access over the winter and stored food becomes limiting.

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Sugar Cakes in Winter, continued from page 3

January 11

I checked the Correx sheets for sugar granules today after feeding sugar cakes yesterday. My strongest hives in terms of hive weight and bee populations are moving the sugar around the hive, but some sugar drops to the Correx sheets. Less populated hives appear to be accessing the sugar cake, since little to no granules had fallen since yesterday. These sugar granules are very hygroscopic so bees are gathering sugar water off the Correx sheets, since the sheets do not fit tightly. The rain overnight and this afternoon helps in wetting the sugar on the sheets. As I pulled the sheets for mite counts, 10-15 bees were accessing the sugar water on the sheets on several hives. I do not observe bees carrying sugar granules outside of the hive. I will continue to monitor the hives. I do not yet see any blue paper towel fibers falling to Correx sheets.

January 16

This afternoon I added wet sugar to all 7 hives. My mixture did not harden into "brick." I think I made the wet sugar mixture too thick, because I am using shims. After setting overnight, the wet sugar was hard on the very top surface, but not deeper into sugar. Actually, I am thinking there is more surface area exposed so more bees should have easier access to the sugar. I did use a half sheet of newspaper to hold the sugar. These hives received about 2 lbs of wet sugar each. So the next 2-3 weeks of winter weather should hold the bees over. Evidently February will be much colder than normal, and wetter.



January Meeting Notes

George McAllister, our presenter, harvested 748 pounds of honey from his five city hives last year. How did he do that? By making sure he always had enough bees available to do the job that needed doing. He showed how even a few days without a full population of workers, a ready queen, or enough developing brood could significantly diminish harvest.

That's where the queen castle usage comes in. By using these mini-nucs, he has workers, queens, and brood ready at all times to fill in his hives where needed.

He gave us a chart that showed seasonal usage of a queen castle, and then demonstrated how he manages his apiary. He looked like the conductor of an orchestra — a beautiful thing! And we were sold on queen castles!



4-H Beekeeping Essay

This year's North Carolina 4-H Beekeeping Essay contest topic is "Overwintering: Bee Survival through the Cold Season."

Instructions: Honey bees have developed special skills to overwinter in the United States. Please discuss one of these skills and then include a discussion about what you do to prepare your hives for winter. Include a photo of one of your hives, either using infrared technology or showing winter wrap, hay bales, special feeders, etc., to demonstrate how you prepare your hives for winter.

Youth are encouraged to explore more about the fascinating story of the hardworking honey bee by participating in the [North Carolina 4-H Beekeeping Essay contest](#).

The essay provides a platform for youth to creatively express their working knowledge and research of the craft of beekeeping. This year's essay is generously sponsored by the North Carolina State Beekeeping Association. Essays are due **March 15th at 5:00 p.m.** and should be emailed to liz_driscoll@ncsu.edu.



BEES Class Announcements from NCSBA

This spring, the NCSU Apiculture Program will be holding TWO different beekeeping trainings, one for beginners and one for intermediate beekeepers:

'Beginner' online BEES school

Perfect for wanna-be beekeepers who couldn't make their local bee school!

WHEN: March 4-25th

WHERE: Online Beekeeper Education & Engagement System (BEES)

HOW: Students will enroll in the 'Beginner' level BEES courses and learn the online content on their own time and at their own pace. Each Wednesday evening, we will hold virtual "office hours" with Dr. David Tarpy to discuss what you have learned and answer any lingering questions. An optional in-hive field day will be offered at the NCSU Lake Wheeler Honey Bee Research Facility in Raleigh on March 28th (rain date April 4).

INFO: <https://www.ncsuapiculture.net/online-beginner-bees-school>

'Intermediate' BEES Academy

Great way to prepare for the MBP Journeyman exam!

WHEN: March 3-4th

WHERE: Craven County Extension Center, 300 Industrial Dr, New Bern, NC 28562

HOW: Two full days to immerse yourself in the theoretical and practical aspects of beekeeping. Mixture of both live and pre-taped videos from the Beekeeper Education & Engagement System (BEES) as well as hands-on activities. Numerous members of the NC State Apiculture Program will help you build upon your current knowledge of beekeeping by exploring a wide variety of topics.

INFO: <https://www.ncsuapiculture.net/bees-academy-home>

Calendar

Intermediate BEES Academy

March 3-4 | New Bern

Beginner Online BEES School

March 4-25

NCSBA Spring Conference

March 5-7 | New Bern

NC 4-H Beekeeping Essay Due

March 15

Arbor Day Celebration

March 21 | Beth Schmidt Park

Duke Gardens Spring Plant Sale

March 28 | Durham



This Month in the Bee Yard

Courtesy of Nancy Ruppert

- Noticeable pollen flow under way, especially red maple. Brood build-up intensifying.
- Minimal if any nectar available---most hives need feeding (1:1 syrup in most cases, unless honey stores very low [i.e., <1/2 super left]).
- Combine hives if needed (see January).
- Repair/replace equipment if needed; move hives if needed; keep learning.
- During last half of February, consider adding super/hive body of wax foundation to allow bees to draw out more comb for spring. (Feeding or nectar is required for this.)
- Replace a few (<4) frames where comb is old or has excessive drone cells.
- Some hives may need treatment for Nosema disease, especially if too cold for cleansing flights.
- Get your name on the swarm-catcher list, if you wish.
- Make plans to attend the annual NCSBA Spring Meeting in March.

<https://growingsmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CALENDAR-FOR-BEEKEEPING-IN-CENTRAL-NORTH-CAROLINA.pdf?fw=no>

State Fair Ideas

Are you crafty? Is there a hobby you enjoy that you could express with a honey bee theme? Then there's a category for you at the NC State Fair: Bee-Themed Crafts!

Quilting * Jewelry-Making * Paper-Making * Sewing * Print-Making * Painting * Wood-Working * Metalwork * Glass-Blowing * Stamp-Making * Weaving * and more!

Factors judged are creativity, appearance, originality, and quality. Start planning now!



Officers for 2020

President : Ira Poston
Vice-President : Mike Ross
Recording Secretary : Sheyenne Michelizzi
Treasurer : Sarah Stevens
Program Chair : Caitlin Vatikiotis-Bateson
One-year Director : Chuck Couch
Two-year Director : Johnny Mills
Three-year Director : Paul Jollay
Webmaster : Geoff Leister
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