

# SWEET TALK

The newsletter of the Greene County Beekeepers Association

**BEE Aware--  
Odds and Ends:**

*Bill Starrett*

By the time you read this we should be in the middle of the main honey flow for Greene County. Under normal conditions May is when we get our honey crop. Because of the cold spring the season has been running about a week or so later than normal, so I expect the nectar flow to last into mid-June. Hopefully you have had your honey supers in place since late April or the first of May. Fruit trees appeared to have a snowball bloom and be in full bloom when we had two nights of heavy frost in late April. Whether the frost killed much of the bloom is yet to be determined at this writing but the bees made good use of the bloom while it was available. Most fruit trees can only physically carry the weight of a 10% crop so some frost kill may have helped reduce the thinning process orchardists practice but it negatively impacts the amount of nectar the bees could have gathered.

As has been mentioned many times the bees need lots of open comb space during the main honey flow in which they can deposit small amounts of nectar to dehydrate it and reduce the moisture content to 18% before consolidating the ripe honey and storing it in the honey supers. Therefore the bees need open comb space well in excess of what will be needed to store the honey crop. Failure to provide adequate open comb invites swarming if the bees begin to use the brood nest to cure incoming nectar creating congestion in

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**The Place to Bee on**

**Tuesday, May 19 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Welcome (7:00 – 7:05)**

Welcome all members, especially new members

**GCBA Business: (7:05 – 7:10)**

Volunteer lists—Refreshments (most important!)

Updates from Outreach (7:10 – 7:15)

OSBA– Terry

4-H– Dan

Bee-Short

Practical beekeeping session (7:15-7:45)

Supering—Dan O’Callaghan

**Refreshment Break (7:45 – 8:00)**

**Speaker::** Nina Bagley, Nina’s Village Apiary

**Topic:** Preparing Now for Winter Success

Door prize drawing and Wrap-up

**GCBA 2015 Board Members:**

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| President:      | Dan O’Callaghan                                 |
| Vice-President: | Chuck Roach                                     |
| Secretary:      | Patti Procniar                                  |
| Treasurer:      | Tom Davidson                                    |
| Communications: | Terry Lieberman-Smith                           |
| Webmaster:      | Dan O’Callaghan                                 |
| At-Large:       | Sam Bernard, Fran Davidson, Carol & Dave Locker |
| Past President  | Dave Foubert                                    |

## President's Letter

As I write this, black locust trees have just started blooming! Fruit tree bloom is about done, but dandelions are still everywhere (at least in my yard), clover and alfalfa should begin blooming soon. In my area, black locust bloom usually signals the start of the main honey flow, so get your honey supers on your production hives if you haven't already done so. Even with the cool early Spring we have had this year delaying the flow a bit, our late April early May hot/dry spell indicates a really promising honey season, nectar secretion increases with heat!

May is typically one of the busiest months in the apiary. Swarm season is here...are you ready? Are you monitoring your overwintered hives for swarming and taking proactive steps to keep them home? If you are collecting swarms, is your equipment ready? Do you have enough supers to support the main honey flow—and are they on the hive(s)? It is best to have more supers (of drawn comb, not foundation) on the hive than you think you need so that the bees have lots of room to store the high-moisture nectar crop. Where are your bees located in the colony? If the brood nest is up against the honey supers, you may want to manipulate the hive to move them to the bottom box(es). What does the bee population look like? Any hives need to be split soon? What does the brood pattern of the queen look like? Do you want to breed your own from one of them? Do you plan to make summer nucs? If so, you should be deciding which hives you want to make increase from now.

Reports from those who installed packages are really variable this year. Some are reporting great success, others are reporting queen acceptance issues, spotty brood, and poor build up. This is the same pattern as in the last few years. There does not appear to be any near-term answers to why the variability is so great. Queen issue seem to be the 'new normal' for bee packages.

The next Greene County Beekeepers Association meeting is Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, and is a great place to swap beekeeping stories and bolster your beekeeping know-how! Our Bee-Short session will discuss basic supering guidelines, techniques and options. Our Guest Speaker is Nina Bagley of Nana's Village Apiary. Nina will cover some of the year-long activities and beekeeping practices to prepare hives for wintering success. Yes, we do know it is only Spring, but nearly all honeybee activity is geared towards preparation for and survival of the Winter--and beekeepers need to do the same.

A reminder--the GCBA is YOUR local association—please be actively involved, and let us know what we can do to make the GCBA an effective and valuable resource for YOU!

Dan O'Callaghan

## **BIP and Bee Culture Surveys Show just over 40% of US Colonies had to be replaced last year. From Catch the Buzz**

Beekeepers across the United States lost 42.1% of their honey bee colonies in the year through April with summer losses outstripping winter losses for the first time in five years, an annual survey shows.

The survey by the Bee Informed Partnership working with the Apiary Inspectors of America finds that while winter loss rates improved slightly compared to last year, summer losses – and consequently, total annual losses – were more severe.

The survey asked both commercial and small-scale beekeepers to track the health and survival rates of their honey bee colonies.

More than 6,000 beekeepers from all 50 states re-

sponded to this year's survey. All told, these beekeepers are responsible for nearly 15% of the country's estimated 2.74 million managed honey bee colonies.

Commercial beekeepers were hit particularly hard by the high rate of summer losses, stoking concerns over the long-term trend of poor health in honey bee colonies.

"We traditionally thought of winter losses as a more important indicator of health, because surviving the cold winter months is a crucial test for any bee colony," says Dennis vanEngelsdorp, an assistant professor of entomology at the University of Maryland and project director for the Bee Informed Partnership.

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## GCBA Meeting Minutes for 4/21/15

### Patti Procuniar—Secretary

65 attendees

Dan O'Callaghan opened the meeting and asked new members to introduce themselves. Bill Starrett reported that the bee clinic on 4/18 was a success and that 12 people attended.

Terry reported on OSBA. Nina Bagley will be the mentor for the new at the Ohio State House hives. Honey-bee license plates are available and \$15 from sale of plate goes to OSBA. Their website has had over 4300 hits. Terry reminded members to take survey to report winter losses. Go to the Bee Informed Partnership (Google) to take the survey. Nationwide partnership results are given to beekeepers.

4H News: Three new beekeepers, however 2 may not be interested in starting a hive. Fran reported on apiary visits. Anyone who wants to sign up can do so. Bring protective gear. You can watch or help install bees.

Bee Short by Terry Lieberman-Smith: "Fooling Mother Nature" George Imrie - Pink Pages is good reading for swarm season. Brood Breeding is at its peak and occurs before the major nectar flow. Three suggestions to prevent swarming: 1) Prevent congestion by reversing the hive bodies. 2) Have a queen less than one year old. 3) Have excessive numbers of supers to prevent the claustrophobic feeling in the hive. Pay attention during hive visits. Overabundance of pollen can cause congestion. Look for queen cells Burr comb is extra wax where you don't want it. Provide an upper entrance to reduce traffic congestion. Add plenty of room for the queen by replacing some of the honey frames with drawn foundation. Walt Wright's checkerboard method is not good in cooler climates. You will mess up the brood chamber and they won't be able to keep warm Another method is to swap hive locations with a weaker hive.

**Snack Break:** Thanks go to Sharon Sawyer and Bob Wheeler for the snacks and drinks.

**Gardening for HONEY Bees by Macy Reynolds:** Plant the flowers close to the hives. Assure pesticide free plants, control all season bloom and know what plants have created the honey. Place plants close together to crowd out weeds. Plant a meadow, curve the edges so your neighbors don't think they are just weeds! Diversity is important. BEE Gardening Goals: Abundance, Sequence, Diversity & Education

Macy suggested the following plants for honeybees: Crocus, Prairie Flower, False Sunflower, Blackeyed Susan, Echinacea, Ashy Sunflower, Goldenrod, Compass Plant, Sneezeweed, Obedient Plant, Sedum (especially Autumn Joy), Joe Pye Weed, Ironweed, Asters. Dandelions and Clover are a good source of food for the bees.

Annuals: Zinnias, Sunflowers, Cosmos. Herbs: Thyme, Oregano, Saliva, Catmint, Hyssop

Trees: Apple, Maple, Tulip Tree, Sumac, Black Locust

Shrubs: Blackberries, Elderberries, Button Bush, Serviceberry, Pussy Willow

The MEEC plant sale at Bergamo is a good resource for native plants.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm



## What's Bloomin'

### Pollen Sources Walnut

**Nectar:** Ground-ivy, Sour Gum Tree, Buckthorns, Viburnums, Locust Trees, Tulip Poplar, Common Privet, Basswood, Linden, Candytuft, Lambs Ear, Vetch, Sedum

**Nectar and Pollen:** Crabapple, Apple, Serviceberry, Shadbush, Hawthorns, Blackberries, Chives, Cotoneaster, Leopard's Bane, Redbud, Strawberry, White Sweet Clover, Salvias

## Treasurer's Report

Balance 4/1/2015	\$4066.68
Check 1135 Picnic raffle items	(42.65)
Deposit Dues 5/4/15	<u>\$ 135.00</u>
Balance 5/09/15	\$ 4159.03

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## Basic Buzz in the Beeyard

### May —"Spring is Busting out All Over"

### June

- Monitor colonies for queen cells.
  - Control swarming.
  - Add more supers as needed (oversuper).
  - Place queen excluder below shallow super on colonies for comb honey.
  - Install packages on foundation.
  - Split strong colonies.
  - Capture swarms.
  - Cull and replace defective combs with full sheets of foundation.
  - Begin implementing an IPM program for the control of mites.
  - Add room for bees, either by honey supers, or deeps - remember the 7/10 rule - when they have filled 7 of the 10 frames, its time to add space!
- Continue to check for queen cells.
  - Rear queens if you prefer your own stock.
  - Check colonies for disease and monitor for mites.
  - Remove comb honey supers when properly sealed.
  - Provide plenty of super space.
  - Control swarming.
  - Capture swarms
  - Plan for your Fair entries!

**Bee Aware** (Continued from page 1)

the brood nest and swarm preparations. Normally this won't be an issue with colonies started with packages and only pertains to over wintered colonies of normal strength.

Once the bees load queen cells little short of radical manipulations can prevent the swarm from emitting. Sometimes switching the location of the hive containing swarm cells with a weaker hive reduces the population to the point that they can't launch a swarm and they will tear down the queen cells. Splitting the hive without concern for which half contains the queen will sometimes prevent the swarm, but swarm cells in the half with the queen often swarm despite the split. Breaking the colony up into several nucs utilizing the queen cells in each can effectively stop the swarm but that means making increase with previously prepared equipment. Obviously prevention is easier than stopping a swarm once cells are started.

**The Fairs...The Fairs....****just a few months away!**

Start thinking about your honey for the fair— Greene County, Montgomery County, Clark County, or even the Ohio State Fair. Fair books will soon be available. Take pride in your girls' hard work and show it off at the fair.

The prize money isn't bad either!

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"But we now know that summer loss rates are significant too. This is especially so for commercial beekeepers, who are now losing more colonies in the summertime compared to the winter. Years ago, this was unheard of."

Beekeepers who responded to the survey reported winter loss rates eased from 23.7% last year to 23.1% this year, while summer loss rates increased from 19.8% to 27.4%.

Among backyard beekeepers – defined as those who manage fewer than 50 colonies – a clear culprit in losses is the Varroa mite, but among commercial beekeepers, the causes of the majority of losses are not as clear.

"Backyard beekeepers were more prone to heavy mite infestations, but we believe that is because a

majority of them are not taking appropriate steps to control mites," vanEngelsdorp says. "Commercial keepers were particularly prone to summer losses. But they typically take more aggressive action against Varroa mites, so there must be other factors at play."

This is the ninth year of the winter loss survey, and the fifth year to include summer and annual losses in addition to winter loss data.

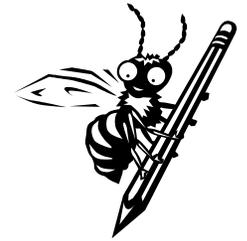
The survey is part of a larger research effort to understand why honey bee colonies are in such poor health, and what can be done to manage the situation. Colony losses present a financial burden for beekeepers, and can lead to shortages among the many crops that depend on honey bees as pollinators.

Estimates of the total economic value of honey bee pollination services range between \$10 billion and \$15 billion annually

."The winter loss numbers are more hopeful especially combined with the fact that we have not seen much sign of colony collapse disorder (CCD) for several years, but such high colony losses in the summer and year-round remain very troubling," says Jeffery Pettis, a senior entomologist at U.S. Department of Agriculture and a co-coordinator of the survey.

Interestingly, an independent colony loss survey just released by *Bee Culture* magazine found similar losses, just over 40%, but more inclined toward winter losses than summer losses. Winter losses for *Bee Culture's* survey were extreme in the northern third of the US – over 50% -, and almost benign in the southern third –hovering around 15% - with the central and western US averaging about a 35% loss over all.

## Staying Ahead in the Hive



### MAY

19 Tues GCBA Meeting— Nina Bagley, Guest Speaker

### JUNE

16 Tues GCBA Meeting— Rodney Richardson, from OSU Beelab

### Remember to register your hives:

[http://www.agri.ohio.gov/public\\_docs/forms/plant/Plnt\\_4201-002.pdf](http://www.agri.ohio.gov/public_docs/forms/plant/Plnt_4201-002.pdf)

## Newly Named Bacteria Help Honey Bee Larvae Thrive

by Kim Kaplan

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientists have identified a bacterium that appears to give honey bee larvae a better chance of surviving to become pupae.

Molecular biologist [Vanessa Corby-Harris](#) and microbial ecologist [Kirk E. Anderson](#) at the [Carl Hayden Bee Research Center](#) in Tucson, Arizona, have named the new species *Parasaccharibacter apium*. The bee research center is part of the [Agricultural Research Service](#), USDA's chief intramural scientific research agency.

Honey bees have been under nearly constant and growing pressures from a whole host of stressors—diseases, poor nutrition, sublethal effects of pesticides and many others, especially for the last 30 years. It has been known that a number of different bacteria live within adult bees and in the hive, and scientists have been studying if and how these bacteria help deal with some of these stresses.

This is the first bacteria found to offer a benefit to bee larvae. In laboratory experiments, bee larvae fed *P. apium* had about an average of 30 percent better survival compared to those fed a sterile control.

How *P. apium* confers this survival advantage to the larvae is not yet known, according to Corby-Harris. So far, the researchers have found *P. apium* only in honey bees and their hives. While *P. apium* found in

honey bee hives is a distinct and new species from any previously identified, it has very close, naturally occurring relatives found in the nectar of many flowers, including cactus flowers, daisies, thistles and apple blossom.

The genome of *P. apium* has been sequenced and they are beginning to dissect the functional properties that distinguish flower-living Acetobacteraceae from those that have coevolved with the honey bee hive. Pinpointing these ecological differences will be key to understanding the function of *P. apium* in honey bee hives, Anderson explained.

With minimal sampling effort, *P. apium* was found in nearly every one of the healthy managed bee colonies examined by the researchers. A future study will explore the abundance of *P. apium* in weak or struggling managed bee colonies.

While the mechanism by which the bacteria benefit the larvae remains to be studied, the importance is clear enough that Corby-Harris and Anderson are already field testing its use along with a number of other bacteria that may benefit the pollination and honey-production industry as potential management tools.

[Read more](#) about this research in the May 2015 issue of *AgResearch* magazine.