

# M E C K B E E S



Mecklenburg Beekeepers Association  
Meets the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7 pm  
2219 Tyvola Road  
Marion Diehl Park and Rec Building  
Mailing address: 121 Hermitage Rd Charlotte NC  
28207  
704-358-8075  
Visit our website at



President -  
Wayne Hansen

Vice President -  
Richard Flanagan

Treasurer -  
Libby Mack



Chaplain -  
Gene Shannon

This month's  
refreshments are  
provided by Linda and  
John Preston

## This Month's Meeting/Program

### March 19th



Christopher Horrigan from  
McDowell Nature Center will  
come and share his experience  
working with our government  
on training honey bees to sniff out  
explosives. He will also share what is going  
on in our park and rec centers here in  
Mecklenburg County.

## Honey Bee Arts & Crafts Festival



May 16, 2009 - Don't miss the first  
annual Honey Bee Arts & Crafts  
Festival in historic downtown Marion!  
The fun begins at 10:00 a.m. ends at  
5:00 p.m. Arts and crafts and food ven-  
dors, live performances, street music and  
more. Admission is Free!  
Call 828-652-8610.

## Updates and Information

### *Beekeepers Yearly Management Calendar for March*

Take out Apistan strips they should be in for 45-56 days only. Medicate with Fumidil-B for Nosema.

### *Speakers for 2009*

**March 2009**

**Christopher Horrigan  
Research on bomb sniffing  
bees**

**April 2009 Don Hopkins  
Bee disease updates**

**May 2009 Gary Cathey  
Mead Making**

**June Pot Luck Dinner**

**July Greg Clements  
Bee Vision**



Assimilation lights change the growing conditions in the greenhouse: days become longer and in winter months the artificial light (which is poor in UV) dominates the natural light. Bumblebees have difficulties with their orientation when there is little UV light, and this hinders effective pollination. It is possible to release the bumblebees only during favorable light conditions by timely opening and closing the flight hole. This not only improves the pollination performance, but also increases the development and lifespan of the colonies. With WIRELESS BEEHOME it is possible to open and close the flight holes automatically.



**March 2009**

February is such a short month that the March Bzzz will likely be short also. By now, Bee School is half-way to completion! March will be another full month as the bees start to swarm (and I do have a bait hive up) and the NC/SC Bee Meeting the first weekend in Rock Hill is a good way to stimulate the bee-keeping economy.

I haven't heard back from anyone yet on doing the exhibit one weekend at the zoo. But then I forgot to mention it at the meeting this past week. Probably still some time on that, but choice weekends may disappear. (See last months Bzzzz for more info.)

This is the time of year when I wish the weather had been just a few degrees warmer in January so I could have painted those new deep boxes to swap out with an old one or two that needs another coat of paint. Working with the new bee students is a lot of fun and always a learning experience. When somebody asks a question and I get a strange look on my face, it's not because I think it's a strange question, it's just that I asked the same thing not that long ago.

It is amazing that even beekeepers who have been keeping bees for quite a few years will learn something new. One recent weekend, several of us were wondering why adult bees eat pollen, and what do they use it for? In our memories, only bee larvae were fed the pollen. It turns out that the bees need to consume some if they are to produce royal jelly in mass quantities for a queen, especially if raising queens for swarming, supersedure, or because conditions are right and the beekeeper asked them to.

Have a great March, and we'll see you around the bee yard!  
Wayne Hansen

**Answer to bee crisis: amateur beekeepers?**



[22 FEB 09 By Georgina Gustin](#)

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

FENTON ? Beekeeping has been dubbed "farming for intellectuals." The layered hives, the sociology of the insects and their intriguing life patterns have long provided an obsession for anyone disposed to backyard science. But these days, bee-keeping hobbyists may be more than just enthusiasts with funny netted hats. They could provide a vital link in replenishing the world's disappearing bees and the estimated \$15 billion in crops that depend on them.

**Climate crises to sour honey prices**



[16 FEB 09 Business-](#)

Day

Eli Greenblat - THE nation's biggest honey producer has warned that retail prices for the sweet spread could soar this year after Queensland floods, drought in NSW and the Victorian bushfires destroyed bee production and cut supply. Capilano Honey managing director Roger Masters said honey supply in Australia would be jeopardised by poor weather, with wholesale honey prices already up 12 per cent in the past week.

## Africanized bees found in Utah for the first time

SALT LAKE CITY – Africanized honey bees have been found for the first time in the Beehive State. The bees, long the subject of lore as "killer bees," were recently discovered in Utah's Washington and Kane counties, the state Department of Agriculture said Wednesday.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed that seven hives — three in the wild and four managed by private beekeepers — contained Africanized bees. The hives have since been destroyed.

The bees in Utah do not appear to be widespread and no injuries to people or animals have been reported.

State and local officials have been anticipating the bees' arrival since they showed up in Mesquite, Nev., in 1999, just a few miles from the Utah line.

"We've been saying not if but when for a long time," said Larry Lewis, a spokesman for the state agriculture department.

The bees are the result of interbreeding between European honey bees and bees from Africa. They were inadvertently released in Brazil in the 1950s. They were first spotted in Texas in 1990 and have since been found in several other states, including California, Florida, Arizona and Nevada.

Although Africanized bees look like European honey bees, they tend to get irritated faster, respond with more firepower and stay mad longer than other bees, said Kirk Visscher, a professor at the University of California at Riverside, who has studied Africanized bees since 1985.

Their stings aren't more powerful than other bees but they are more aggressive and swarm more often. "The danger is getting a large number of stings in a short period of time," Visscher said.

Attacks on people and animals have happened, but are relatively rare, he said. Africanized bees have linked to the deaths of 14 people in the United States since 1990, Utah officials said.

"This discovery makes it imperative that we think differently about honey bees in our state," Leonard Blackham, Utah commissioner of agriculture and food, said in a statement.

Local officials plan to ramp up education efforts for homeowners and others about how to keep homes and buildings bee-free and what to do if they encounter a disturbed hive.

"These bees don't go out and intentionally look for people to sting. They're just defending their hive," Lewis said.

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On the Net:

Utah Department of Agriculture: <http://ag.utah.gov/>

**These are African Bees. This Photo was taken in South Africa and is courtesy of [Zach's Bee Photos](#). You can't tell these Bees from other bees by just looking at them.**





# DUES DUES DUES DUES DUES DUES

Yes, it's that time of year, time to renew your membership in our county association, and if you're not yet a member of the North Carolina State Association, consider joining up there, too. Both organizations deliver great value for your membership dollars, so support your beekeeping associations.

Mail this form and your check made out to Mecklenburg County Beekeepers to:

Mecklenburg County Beekeepers 121 Hermitage Rd Charlotte NC 28207

You can also get discounts of 20-25% on Bee Culture and American Bee Journal.

See Libby for a coupon or to pay directly for the subscription.

## Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association

Please Print Clearly

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Send newsletter via \_\_\_\_\_ email (thanks!) \_\_\_\_\_ paper

Number of hives: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Year 2009

Bee School \$30 \_\_\_\_\_ I am registering for Bee School

Includes 1 year membership in County Association

I heard about the bee school from \_\_\_\_\_

County Association \$5 I am a \_\_\_\_\_ New Member

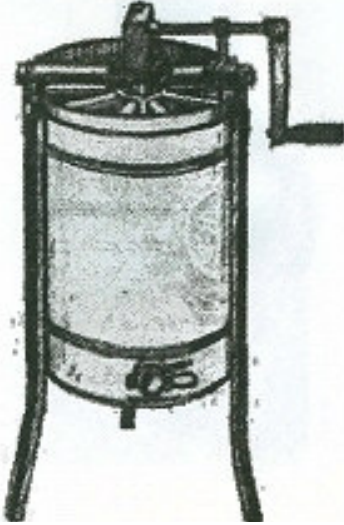
\_\_\_\_\_ Renewing Member

State Association \$15 I am a \_\_\_\_\_ New Member

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewing Member

### Total Payment





# It's Harvest Time!

We have the following equipment available for extracting honey:

- Extractor (manual)
- Uncapping tank (use your own excluder)
- Bucket with valve
- Electric uncapping knife

**The charge is \$2 per day to borrow the extractor.**

You will want to use your own filters and food-grade plastic buckets.

To obtain the equipment:

- Call Jimmy Odom to arrange a time to pick it up.  
Phone: (704) 408-2726  
Address: 17026 McKee Rd Charlotte NC 28278
- When you pick up the equipment, take an envelope and card to mail in your payment
- Return the equipment **promptly, clean and dry**
- Mail your payment in the envelope provided

With the growth of the club, there is heavy demand for the extractor in the summer months. There will be a waiting list, so be prepared for a short wait, and when you get the equipment, please return it promptly so the next person on the list can get it. Please don't pass it on to someone else who isn't on the list. Thanks!



## The Numerate Honey Bee

Published: Tuesday, January 27, 2009 - 20:28 in [Biology & Nature](#) Learn more about: [honey bee plos one wurzburg university](#)

The remarkable honey bee can tell the difference between different numbers at a glance. A fresh, astonishing revelation about the 'numeracy' of insects has emerged from new research by an international team of scientists from The Vision Centre, in Australia, published January 28 in the online, open-access, peer-reviewed journal *PLoS ONE*. In an exquisitely designed experiment, researchers led by Dr. Shaowu Zhang, Chief Investigator of The Vision Centre and Australian National University and Professor Hans Gross and Professor Juergen Tautz of Wurzburg University in Germany, have shown that bees can discriminate between patterns containing two and three dots – without having to count the dots.

And, with a bit of schooling, they can learn to tell the difference between three and four dots.

However at four, bee maths seems to run out: the team found their honeybees couldn't reliably tell the difference between four dots and five or six.

In the study, the bees flew through an entry of a Y-maze marked with a pattern of either two or three dots, which were signposts to the reward. They then had to choose between two patterns by correctly matching the number of dots, to find where the reward was – a feat they then managed to repeat reliably once they had learned that two dots at the first entry meant they had to look for two dots at one of the second pair of patterns, where the reward was hidden. Careful control over the experimental environment showed the bees were not using colour, smell or other clues to find their way to the hidden sugar-water reward, says Dr. Zhang. "My colleague Professor Srinivasan has demonstrated that bees can count up to four landmarks on their way from their hive to a food source. This new research shows they can tell the difference between different numbers – even when we change the pattern, shape or the colour of the dots!"

Presenting blue and yellow dots, stars and lemons, or random patterns didn't fool the clever insects, which continued to reliably navigate their way to the reward once they had figured out and memorized what the signs meant, based on number. To begin with, the bees spent quite a bit of time scanning the dots. On later visits they zipped straight past them, once they knew what they meant.

"Bees can definitely recognise the difference between two, three and four – although four a little less reliably. This is a process known as 'subitizing' – which means responding rapidly to a small number of items.

"We think the bees are using two memory systems," Dr. Zhang says. "First is working memory, which they use to recall the number of dots that point to the reward. The second system is to use memory rules. We found this out by changing the pattern of the dots - but the bees still managed to locate the reward."

The experiment also demonstrates the remarkable learning power of social insects, which have to go out foraging over long distances – the Vision Centre team has tracked bees over distances as great as 11 kilometres – and then find their back to the hive, and out to the food source again reliably.

Dr. Zhang says the ability to discriminate between different numbers is part of this navigation, perhaps as bees pass clumps of two trees or three trees on their way to the food source, or use similar patterns among flowers or other landmarks as they draw close to it.

"There has been a lot of evidence that vertebrates, such as pigeons, dolphins or monkeys, have some numerical competence – but we never expected to find such abilities in insects. Our feeling now is that – so far as these very basic skills go – there is probably no boundary between insects, animals and us."

The tantalising question is whether bees can actually perform elementary arithmetic - and Shaowu and his colleagues are already planning an experiment to explore it.

The team's paper "Number-based visual generalization in the honeybee" appears in the international scientific journal *PLoS ONE* January 28.

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