



*The Monthly Newsletter of the Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association August/September 2018*

## President's Buzz

### Where was I? (August Buzz)

It was a shame that we had to cancel July's meeting due to the conflict with the Summer NCSBA meeting. But it was a worthwhile sacrifice. (By the way, the program has been shifted to this month's meeting.) This summer's NCSBA meeting was probably the best I've been to. In addition to being held at an excellent venue, it had great speakers covering a number of topics that were not only interesting, but also relevant to our work as beekeepers.

Dr. Tom Seeley gave a series of presentations covering the decades of research he and his students have done on communication and decision-making within the honeybee colony. One talk provided research-based insight into optimum swarm bait trap configuration. His presentations on the waggle dance, and how the bees use that to communicate information about a new home or a foraging site, revealed that as a consensus grows among the bees that one location is preferred, some of the bees in the majority will even discourage bees in the minority camp from communicating their discoveries.

Other speakers included Phil Craft, who writes a Q&A column for Bee Culture magazine, Dr. David Tarpy, Frederique Keller, who spoke on apitherapy. Joe Milone, a PhD student at NCSU, provided the results of some excellent research he is conducting on the impacts of pesticide exposure on queen health, mating and colony development.

There were a number of excellent workshops provided at the conference, including one by MeckBee George McAllister, who spoke on the topic of maintaining strong hives through the use of queen castles. Marianne and I enjoyed a talk by Debbie Mitchell on pollinator plants and bee friendly gardening.

I was particularly glad to see a number of the workshops oriented towards new beekeepers, including topics such as "Beginning Bee Biology and Pheromone Basics", "Responsible Beekeeping: Epipen Awareness and Use", "Varroa Mite Management", "Sugar Shakes- Why & How Important It Is!", and a number of others. These were in addition to a number of workshops that appeal to more experienced beekeepers.

I know that for many of us, it's tough to go to these conferences. In fact, Marianne and I have missed more than we've attended. Job, family commitments, financial situations and a number of other things can get in the way. But if you're able to attend, I strongly encourage you come. The Spring 2019



## September Meeting

**September 20, 2018**

**7pm**

**Selwyn Methodist  
Church**

**"Meeting in the  
round"**

**Members will have the  
opportunity to ask and  
answer questions and  
share advice from  
fellow beekeepers**

NCSBA/SCBA joint conference will be held in Monroe, which is not that far away. I hope many of us will take advantage of the close proximity of that meeting.

### **A win for Mecklenburg!**

Three Mecklenburg County queen bees formed a team again this year in a bid to take home a win in the NCSBA Conference Bee Bowl. A total of six teams participated. In the first two rounds, two teams were eliminated, so that by the third round only the MCBA and the Five Counties Beekeepers' teams remained. Many of the questions asked were difficult, and beyond my ability to answer, but the MeckBees team, Libby Mack, Jody Rierson and Jeanie Frye, correctly and confidently answered the vast majority, and pulled out a win over Five Counties.



*In the foreground: Libby Mack, Jodie Rierson, and Jeanie Frye. Congratulations, ladies!!!*

### **Preparing for Winter**

Summer's not even over, and it's already time to start preparing for winter. Why so early? In the Piedmont Carolinas, it is believed that the queen starts laying eggs for the "winter bees" in early September. Because these are the bees that have to survive for months through the winter cold, it is imperative that the larvae be as healthy as possible. There are two key facets to keeping them healthy: Disease control and good nutrition. While there are many diseases that need to be controlled, the biggest group are the various viruses transmitted by our good friend the varroa mite. If you haven't already, please test for varroa mites in your hive. If your count is more than one or two per hundred bees, you should begin treatment right away. There are many treatments available. My preferred, for this time of year, because it works well at our high summer temperatures, is Apiguard. It also provides different dosing options for different colony sizes.

While this is a fairly safe miticide for the bees, you can cause problems, or kill the queen, if you don't apply it carefully. So please be sure to CAREFULLY read the directions. (This is true for any miticide.) You should start with the directions provided with the chemical. But I sometimes find that these don't answer all of my questions, so I also check the product's website for additional info. Another excellent source of information, which you can also use to compare the different products, is the Honey Bee Health Coalition's Tools for Varroa Mite Management, which you can find at:

[https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HBHC-Guide\\_Varroa-Interactive-PDF.pdf](https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HBHC-Guide_Varroa-Interactive-PDF.pdf)



The other tool for developing healthy winter bees is good nutrition. Most areas in Charlotte are experiencing our annual nectar dearth, right now. So check your hives to ensure they have adequate food resources. If not, feed them light sugar water. Pollen patties might be necessary, but our hives seem to have plenty of pollen stores.

If you do decide to supplement their pollen stores with pollen patties, be judicious in their use, as they can be a great breeding ground for hive beetle larvae. Start out with only an eighth or fourth of a pollen patty, and check after a week. If it's not gone, or nearly gone, by that time, stop, or reduce, the amount of pollen patty you are supplying. If you find hive beetle larvae in the leftover pollen patty, remove it, and don't provide any more.

This is also a time of year when some beekeepers will increase the number of hives they have going into the winter by making splits. If you're not sure how to do that, please consult with your mentor.

Hope to see all you this month!

Ed

### **Super Stick Supers** by Gerry Mack

Wax moths just love poorly-stored honey supers. You can seal your supers up with paradichlorobenzene moth crystals (NEVER EVER USE naphthalene moth balls!), but if you prefer an easier non-chemical alternative, protect your valuable wax comb by stacking them in the air and light. This will discourage mama wax moths from raising wax-destroying larvae.

After the honey harvest we stack supers with 2x2 sticks between the boxes. I've tried stacking boxes cross-wise without sticks and using 1x1 sticks but these alternatives don't let in enough air and light. This is not just my opinion – the wax moths told me so.

You can buy 2x2 sticks or rip 2x4s in half. 18" length is optimal for 10-frame boxes (16" for 8-frame boxes) with sticks laid across the front and back.

If you have access to an open covered porch or a carport then you can protect supers from rain while keeping them in the air and light. If not, use double sticks over the top box and then cap with an outer cover and a brick.

Make sure that you've allowed enough space under the bottom box for air circulation and don't let it get full of leaves in the fall. Consider putting a queen excluder under the bottom box to discourage mice from chewing on the lowest comb.

Protect your super comb and have a great harvest next year!



# Giving Talks About Bees to the Community

by George McAllister



Our club receives speaking requests on a regular basis from local schools, clubs and other organizations. Providing speakers to the community is an important role of the club. A better educated community can be proactive in providing a better environment for the bees as well as support our beekeeping activities. The better the environment is for our bees, the more successful we can be as beekeepers. In many cases speaking to groups will encourage someone in the audience to become a beekeeper.

Speaking also makes you a better beekeeper. You always learn something new while doing the research in preparation for your talk. The questions you get from the audience may even prompt you to learn more about beekeeping.

Many times you will receive a gift for speaking. I have received coffee mugs, potted plants, fruit baskets, gift cards and this time a unique gift. On July 22 I spoke to the Eastern Cabarrus County Historical Society about how beekeepers keep bees. As a gift they

gave me an 1870's mantel clock made of cherry wood with the picture of a bee skep. You never know what to expect when giving a talk but it's always rewarding

## What's Blooming in August:

by Matthew Burgoon

### Carolina False Dandelion

**Common Name:** Carolina False Dandelion, Desert Chicory

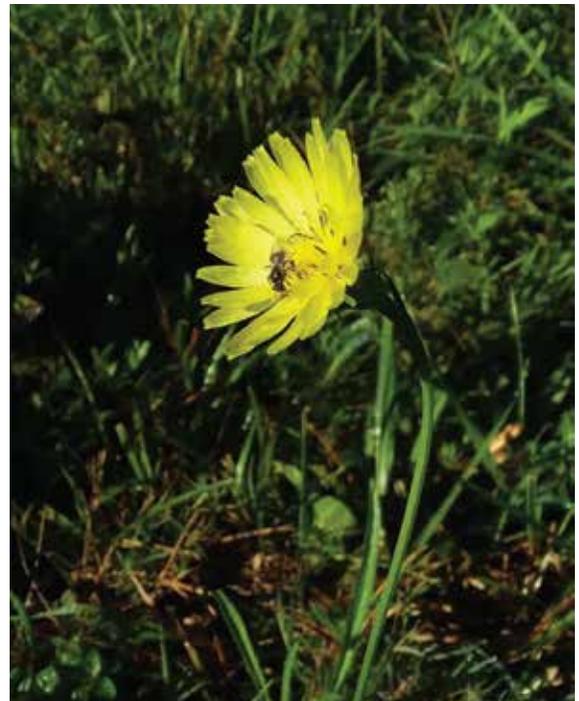
**Botanical Name:** *Pyrrhopappus carolinianus*

**Plant Type:** Biennial herb

**Typical Bloom Period:** May - October

**Nectar Usefulness:** medium

**Pollen Usefulness:** high



While exploring an abandoned farmstead as a kid I found a cast-iron wall decoration. It had a picture of a barn and windmill with a poem, all in capital letters: "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise." Blooming in August, as throughout the summer in Mecklenburg County, is *Pyrrhopappus carolinianus*, commonly called "Carolina false dandelion" or



(What's Blooming in August cont'd)

“desert chicory”. Carolina false dandelion is matinal: it is a “morning person”.

Carolina false dandelion looks a bit like a common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and also a bit like a hairy cat's ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). It can be distinguished by its stem: solid and leaved. A common dandelion has a hollow stem, while cats-ear and false dandelion have solid stems. A specimen of *Pyrrhopappus carolinianus* has some leaves on the budding stem; cat's ear and common dandelion have none. Jan Haldeman has written a fine comparison of the three flowers for the Winter 2012 Journal of the South Carolina Native Plant Society, and the Society website makes all of the back issues of the Journal available: a fantastic resource.

*Pyrrhopappus carolinianus* flowers face the rising sun, and they bloom first thing in the morning. A composite aster (*Astericae Compositae*), they offer plenty of pollen of good quality. It is first-come-first-serve, though, and our honey bees have some competition from a matinal native bee. *Hemihalictus lustrans* is a type of sweat bee — genus *Lasioglossum* — which has a mutualistic association with Carolina false dandelion: the bee forages almost exclusively on *Pyrrhopappus carolinianus*, and the flower reinforces the oligolecty by opening early — sometimes as early as 5:30. Female *Hemihalictus* tear open the anthers and remove the pollen before it is available to our bees and provide cross-pollination for the flower. Most foraging is over by mid-morning, and the flower will be closed by noon.

*Pyrrhopappus carolinianus* is biennial, and can be found along roadsides and meadows and disturbed areas. It has a taproot which was eaten by Kiowa people. It spreads seed by catching the wind in pappus parasols, like a common dandelion. Our honey bees can be encouraged in matinal patterns by facing their hives toward the rising sun to allow the early light through the entrance – so to become more “healthy and wealthy and wise” and forage on Carolina false dandelion.

The following resources were most helpful:

Daly, H. (1961). Biological Observations on *Hemihalictus lustrans*, with a Description of the Larva (Hymenoptera: Halictidae). *Journal of the Kansas Entomological Society*, 34(3), 134-141. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25083219>

Estes, James R. and Thorp, Robbin W. (1975) Pollination Ecology Of *Pyrrhopappus Carolinianus* (Compositae). *American Journal of Botany*, 62(2), 148-15. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1537-2197.1975.tb14046.x>

Haldeman, Jan. (2012) Dandelions, True or False? *Journal of the South Carolina Native Plant Society*, Winter 2012, 10-11. Retrieved from <http://scnps.org/scnps-news/newsletters>



# What's Blooming in September: Kudzu

by Matthew Burgoon

**Common Name:** Kudzu

**Botanical Name:** *Pueraria lobata*

**Plant Type:** Perennial deciduous woody vine

**Typical Bloom Period:** August - October

**Nectar Usefulness:** medium

**Pollen Usefulness:** medium

Within forage range of almost every bee yard in Mecklenburg County is a stand of trees or old buildings or scrapped cars which appears to be covered in a great green blanket: a patch of kudzu. Kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*) was introduced to the United States in 1876 in the Japanese pavilion at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. From the early 1900s through the 1950s it was promoted in the US as a forage crop and erosion control. Now it is sometimes called “the vine that ate the South,” and has been listed as a federal noxious weed since 1998.

Kudzu is so successful here because it grows as much as a foot in a day, it sends down roots from nearly every node of the vine, and those roots form crowns which send out new vines the following year. The crowns grow taproots below the frost line and will come back even after repeated cutting of the vine.



*Pueraria lobata* Kudzu is not our honey bees' favorite. But I have a hunch that forage has been off enough that folks might find some frames of purple honey this year. And it sure does smell good.

A kudzu vine will flower in its third year, if it is exposed to direct sunlight and is oriented vertically. Kudzu flowers grow in clusters on racemes, or spikes, several inches long. They are shaped like typical bean flowers; kudzu is in the Fabaceae family. Each bloom has a top petal called a standard or banner, two wing petals, and two bottom petals fused together to form a keel shape. This is called a papilionaceous configuration. The flower has ten anthers: nine are fused to form a tube which surrounds the stigma; a tenth anther stands freely outside the set. This is called a diadelphous arrangement. The anthers and stigma are hidden between the folds of the keel petals, and a honey bee will expose them while foraging for nectar and pollen, attracted by the bright yellow spot on the purple standard petal.

Pollination and sexual reproduction are not often successful in kudzu: a cluster of fruits will only produce a few viable seeds. Those seeds are difficult to germinate and the seedlings are fragile. A patch of kudzu is most likely a set of clones.

While we do not cultivate kudzu, the uses for which it was popularized are still legitimate: it is an excellent erosion control, a nutritious forage for livestock, and the large taproots yield a very fine cooking starch. It is able to thrive and bloom to provide nectar to our honey bees when weather conditions are not optimal for other plants. Kudzu nectar is rumored to yield honey with a purple color, and with a taste of grape Kool-Aid. Kudzu pollen



*(What's Blooming in September cont'd)*

pellets are yellow.

*Pueraria lobata* is not listed in any of my native plant resource books. Most of the information in the article was gathered from the following sources:

Larry W. Mitich. (2000). Kudzu [*Pueraria lobata* (Willd.) Ohwi]. *Weed Technology*, 14(1), 231-235.  
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3988532>

Kudzu Flowers. (n.d.). Retrieved September 6, 2017, from [http://www.backyardnature.net/fl\\_kudzu.htm](http://www.backyardnature.net/fl_kudzu.htm)

Kudzu (*Pueraria montana* var. *lobata*). (n.d.). Retrieved September 6, 2017, from <https://www.nps.gov/plants/alien./pubs/midatlantic/pumol.htm>

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