MeckBees.org

# the honeycomb

The Monthly Newsletter of the Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association June/July2018

## President's Buzz

**Where was I?**

I'm beginning to wonder if old age is starting to play games on my mind. Last month, I wrote an article (most of which is folded into this month's article), and was sure I e-mailed it to our newsletter editor, Rachel. A week or so later the newsletter came out, and my article was missing. I asked Rachel why she left it out, and she replied that she never got it. So I checked, and sure enough, there was no record of an e-mail transmitting my article to Rachel, not even a draft or outbox copy. So I'm hoping I actually send this article to Rachel this month. Mental slips are so much fun!

**Is Anybody Out There?**

I have to admit that I sometimes wonder if anyone's reading the newsletter. In April, though, I got two clear indications that folks do.

The first occurred the evening of the April meeting, when Marianne and I met up with Johnny and Linda Preston. Johnny remarked on the article I'd written about the queen piping in a hive I opened up. He went on to tell me about his similar experience with queens sounding off and shared an audio recording on his phone from one of his hives.

The recording was so cool that during the announcements portion of the meeting, Johnny—who's usually a shy and reserved guy in front of crowds—enthusiastically got up before everyone and played his recording into the microphone for all to hear. An interesting discussion among everyone in attendance ensued, including an observation by one experienced beekeeper that the sound shared by Johnny wasn't queens "piping", but queens "quacking", which is produced by queens that are still in their cells.

The other indication that the newsletter is getting read came from an informative note I got from Andrew Thiessen who informed me that notching cells with eggs was unproductive, because cells with damaged eggs are NOT converted to queen cells, but are simply cleaned out by the bees. To get the notched cells to be converted to queen cells, it is imperative that they be cells with day old larvae.

That would explain why so many of the notches I've made didn't result in queen cells. I have to admit that I have done a lot of notches with egg cells because—at least for my vision, which isn't the best—it's easier for me to find

### *July's Meeting --Cancelled--*

Due to a conflict with the Summer NCSBA meeting, the July MCBA meeting has been cancelled.

If you are addicted to getting together with other beekeepers at least once a month, and are in danger of suffering withdrawal symptoms due to this meeting cancellation, we encourage you to consider attending at least one day of this summer's NCSBA meeting, which runs from Thursday July 19 through Saturday July 21.

You'll get to hear great speakers talk on a wide range of topics that will help you become a better beekeeper. You'll meet new beekeepers, get to talk to a wide variety of bee equipment suppliers, and hang out with other Meck Bees. Plus you get to visit beautiful Brevard, NC.

If you're interested, please check out the NCSBA website at www.ncbeekeepers.org for more information.

those day-old larvae.

So, if you read my article in April's newsletter, and latched on to my statement about notching cells with eggs or day-old larvae, PLEASE don't notch egg cells, and work hard to locate those day-old larvae cells. (Thanks, Andrew, for the very instructive note!!)

**An Easy Swarm**

We had one hive that beat us to the punch this year. We opened it up one day a couple of months ago to find swarm cells. They weren't capped, yet, and the queen was still present. So we made a small split by removing the queen and a couple of frames (she's doing quite well in her new abode). A week later, when the queen cells were capped, we removed all but one frame with queen cells.

The new splits are doing quite nicely, and we expected the mother hive to be doing the same, but instead, got a text early last month from the homeowner where the hive resides. She was out of town, but one of her neighbors told her about a huge swarm in her yard. I was working in Charlotte (a very rare occurrence in my current job) that day, so Marianne contacted me. She got together the necessary equipment, and got there first. When I arrived about 30 minutes later, she had just finished setting things up. She had put a sheet on the ground next to the young tree (shorter than me) and placed a hive box with frames and attractant in it. To her disappointment, the bees in the tree hadn't seemed to notice the hive just a couple of feet away.

The bees were wrapped around the trunk of the young tree, which sport -ed an odd "bald" area on the trunk, not even waist height off of the ground. I moved the open hive next to the tree, gently bent the tree (which is quite flexible, thanks to its young age) so that the bees were hanging over the open hive, and gave it three hard shakes. Virtually all of the bees dropped into the hive.

In very short order, a number of bees stuck their hind ends in the air, and fanned their wings to spread Nasanov scent into the air to let their sisters know they had found their new home, and the queen was with them. So we closed up the hive (except the entrance), and left it there for the remaining bees to find while we enjoyed dinner at the Landmark. Upon return, all was quiet, and we whisked the girls home with us, where they are rapidly building out come of fresh frames in anticipation of their queen laying.
While we are happy to have the swarm, the downside is that examination of the hives on that property a couple of days later revealed that it was the new queen with the one hive that we worked so hard to keep from swarming that had swarmed. I won't say it was a lot of hard work for nothing, because we've gotten a number of new colonies out of the process. But it was disappointing that with our best efforts, the girls went ahead and did what they had set out to do, especially since that hive was making honey for us.

What's in a name?
In case you haven't noticed, yet, Mouzon United Methodist Church, where we hold our monthly meetings, has a new name. The church is very active in the Selwyn community, and felt that the name of the church should reflect that. So their new name is Selwyn United Methodist Church. There will likely be

some confusion over the next few months or so about the church name. (For example, when I recently checked Google Maps, they still show Mouzon UMC for the church's name.)


A community block party was held at the church on the last Saturday in April, to which all organizations that partner in some way with the church were invited. Marianne and I hosted a table for the MeckBees, and got to meet a number of church members, members of the Vietnamese church that uses the same space as MeckBees, and other folks who have been touched by the church's ministries. A large number of folks came by to view the bees and ask us questions, or share their own bee stories with us. Many were young children who were curious and excited to see our bees. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to know the folks here at the church that provides the space we meet in.

**Visiting other bees**

As I write this, Marianne and I are returning home from a weekend visiting our daughter and her husband here in New York City. While we have no desire to live in NYC, we thoroughly enjoy our visits with them, which give us an opportunity to not only catch up with them, but to also meet with their friends and do a little sightseeing.

This trip included a visit to the Whitney Museum of American Art, which is currently hosting the works of Grant Wood, who is best known for his American Gothic painting. In addition to viewing some great paintings by Wood and other artists of his era, we also enjoyed the architecture of the building. On our way out, we noticed some lavender colored flowers with "spikey" flower petals and foliage that looked like that of lilies. Flying among them was a solitary honeybee who eagerly flew from bloom to bloom, obtaining nectar and pollen. On the one hand, I was disappointed, but not surprised because of the small number of flowers, that there was only one bee. On the other hand, I was delighted and interested to see this young lady so eagerly applying herself to these flowers.

My only question: What is this plant? Anyone want to offer a suggestion?

Hope to see all you next month!

Ed

# 2018 MCBA Trivia Contest is Challenging and Fun

Over sixty brave souls attended this year's Meck Bees Trivia Contest. There were even a few young folks who came with their parents to help.

Split into eight groups, the teams tried to best one another but, in the end, only a single table was declared the winner. The questions were both challenging and fun.

The questions ranged from facts about honey bees and beekeeping to industry practices and key players in the beekeeping world. Here are a few samples. How many are you able to answer without assistance? (I'll publish the answers in next month's newsletter.)

- What common antiseptic available in the drugstore is also found in trace amounts in honey?
- What type of honey is prized for its exceptional medicinal properties?
- What age bees are best at making wax?
- What product is approved for storing wax combs to repel wax moths?
- True or False: Commercially processed wax foundation has been purified from pesticides?
- Who is the NC Dept of Agriculture Bee Inspector for Mecklenburg County?
- What beekeeper bred honeybees on the Isle of Wight?

If you were unable to make this year's trivia contest, I hope you'll join us next year. It's both fun and educational.

***Our trivia grand master and her handsome assistant***

***And the winners are....***

# What's Blooming This Summer: Allium

*Matt Burgoon*

**Common Name**: Garden Onion, Field Garlic, etc.
**Botanical Name**: *Allium cepa L., A. lineale*
**Plant Type**: Perennial bulb
**Typical Bloom Period**: June-August
**Nectar Usefulness**: excellent
**Pollen Usefulness**: very good

***Allium cepa***

A national restaurant chain offered a free "Bloomin' Onion" on Monday. Of course, I heard about it on Wednesday after. Had it been a blooming onion in the proper sense, *Allium cepa* in bloom, the reward would still be available. Onions and garlics, *Allium spp.*, are blooming this summer in Mecklenburg county, and our honey bees love them.

The *Allium* genus includes several hundred species of plants including garlics, leeks, onions, and chives. Most are perennial with true bulbs — a complete plant is inside the bulb, and reproduce vegetatively by dividing their bulbs underground. Further vegetative spread is accomplished by species such as A. lineale which develop bulbils at the top of the stalk with the flowers. These are not seeds; they are clones which will drop around the mother plant and grow into a clump.

***Allium lineale***

*Alliums* also reproduce sexually. They grow a stalk with an inflorescence enclosed in a veined sheath called a spathe. The spathe opens to expose a head of florets arrayed in a globe — this bloom pattern is called an umbel (think "umbrella"). Each floret is a perfect flower with prominent sepals. Pollinated flowers produce seeds in capsules.

The combination of bulb division, releasing bulbils, and producing seeds is a successful combination for *Allium* spread. *A. lineale* — field garlic — shows up and forms clonal clumps in pastures, lawns and unkempt fields. It is listed as a noxious weed in several states — "noxious" being a legal designation to authorize intentional control/eradication efforts against an invasive weed. Dairy farmers do not like field garlic, as it taints the flavor of the milk. Beekeepers don't mind quite as much.

Honey bees love *Allium* species because the nectar contains a high concentration of sugars. Many surveys find onion and garlic nectar to be at least around 50% sugar (1:1 sugar to water), and as much as 75% sugar (3:1). *Allium* florets secrete a high volume of nectar, and most species continue secretion for as long as 144 hours, until the tepals and stamens wilt. So a foraging bee which finds a patch of onions will likely dance excitedly upon return to the hive, and that rich nectar will be available for several days. In Garden Plants for Honey Bees, Peter Lindtner rates garden onions as an excellent nectar source and very good pollen source; he observes pollen pellets to be greenish-yellow.

Keep your eye out for "Bloomin' Onion" and also for blooming onions. They really are a sweet treat, not to be missed.

Most of the information in the article was gathered from the following sources:

On nectar and pollen values:

Garden Plants for Honey Bees
by Peter Lindtner;
Publisher: Kalamazoo : Wicwas Press, 2014.

# 2018 Summer Solstice Picnic

As we have done for many years, Meck Bees celebrated the summer solstice at Lake Norman. Many of our members came to Greg and Margie Clements' beautiful home to enjoy the water, food, music and fellowship. Many thanks to Gerry and Libby Mack for their organization of the event, and to others who provided canopies, coolers, ice, desserts and other things to make the picnic a big success. Here are a few images from the day...


Looking for a parking spot?
Not a problem . . . as long as you're a beekeeper!

There were games to play . . .

Beautiful music to listen to...

Along with apian friends to help you with your food . . .

Of course, if you get a group of beekeepers together, they're always going to talk about their bees or their latest beekeeping gadget. Here, Tommy Helms shows off a horizontal hive he's built for another Meck Bee.

Cool water to swim in . . .

There were plenty of beautiful spots to enjoy your food

# Observations Observations Observations

*by Rachel Woodhouse*

This year, my beekeeping life has certainly been eventful. In the spring I started with 3 very strong hives. Well... every single one of my hives swarmed. One hive was SO overpopulated that even though I witnessed the swarm and am positive they reduced the population significantly, it was still packed with bees afterward and it felt like it had little impact on the density of the population. One hive swarmed and landed about 20 feet away in a vibernum shrub. It was a super easy capture and I was able to put that one on my property. This was the only swarm I captured. The hive it swarmed from was also so populated that it felt like the swarm made little difference. I ended up taking some extra food and brood frames from that hive and gave it to the caught-swarm hive so I could help give them a little head start as well as give the original hive a little extra space again. Well... that queen has been such a prolific layer that I was able to make a split from that hive on Father's Day by literally taking half of the hive--an entire deep box full-- replace it with a new deep with just foundation frames, and they're already almost finished building it out. And I haven't been feeding them. They are the hardest working bees I've ever seen!

My goal for this year was to get back to four hives (I lost one hive my first winter and didn't bother re-establishing it last year), but that was where it was going to end. When that crazy hive became overpopulated again, I definitely didn't want to risk losing that amazing queen, so a split for Father's Day was my big idea. I have 3 hives on my property and the crazy one on my parents' property. So, although I added the second hive to my parents' property out of my own necessity, I decided to invest in an observation hive for my dad as a Father's Day gift. He loves to show his friends the bees, but he doesn't want to suit up to see inside the hive. Bee Built (which is the company that manufactures the boxes for the polarizing Flow Hive in the U.S.) sells hive bodies with plexiglass windows to look through.

*My dad's new observation hive*

At my own home, I actually gave the Flow Hive a run. My bees were very happy to propolize everything and fill in the gaps in the cells, but once that work was done, they ignored the super completely. Well, the super for the Flow frames is an 8-frame deep langstroth body but it also has a plexiglass viewing window, so I ended up taking the Flow frames out and just converting the box into the 2nd brood box for my captured swarm. So, although my personal experience with the Flow Hive as a honey super was a bit disappointing, using the box as an observation hive has been incredibly fun. The bees from the captured swarm have finally started building frames, so I get to see what they're doing. I caught these photos of the bees "milking" each other. I can't remember whether or not I even knew they did this, but I certainly had never seen it happening! Bees taking wax from other bees' wax glands to build out the frames. They really don't seem to care when I take the cover off the window, either, so I can be a peeping tom and leave them relatively undisturbed. Now my dad can do the same at his house, and his box has 2 windows!

*Through the window of my converted Flow super*

*The bees "milking" each other for wax as viewed through the observation window*

Another fun thing I've noticed about the bees is the way they drink water. I have a large koi pond/multi-level water feature at my house that I put in for my pet ducks about 8 years ago. Lucky for me, it's a wildly popular drinking hole for the ducks, but also birds, rabbits, lizards, snakes, frogs, butterflies, my cats, my dogs, my pig, and, of course, the bees! There are hundreds of bees drinking from my pond at any given time, with no exaggeration. One day a week or so back I had to actually get into the koi pond to do a little maintenance and I was able to see the bees drinking from just a few inches away. When the sun is hitting them correctly, you can actually see as water fills their bellies (I'm being anti-scientific terms in this article because 'bellies' sounds cuter) and their abdomens extend like water balloons. When they've had their fill they fly off looking obviously bottom-heavy and not nearly as graceful as when they arrived. The whole thing is very Disney-cartoony and adorable.

I also noticed that a few bumblebees came in for a drink. Bumblebees certainly have an advantage in water situations, as they are able to spread-eagle and land on top of the water, take a drink, and fly off. From an evolutionary standpoint, I wonder why they're able to walk on water but honeybees are such hapless drowners.

*The bees drink safely from an algae-covered rock on the pond.*

*The very animal-friendly koi pond*

*The "bee garden" at my house has wildflowers planted in front of the hives, a vegetable garden behind the hives, a pig-proof fence to keep Cupcake out, and the pond is in the distance past that white pergola. The converted Flow super is now the top brood box on the left-hand hive.*

# In the Beeyard

*David Segrest, NC Master Beekeeper*

An interesting time in the beekeeping cycle is approaching. The bees have been working hard making honey. Two events in their life are getting ready to have a tremendous impact. Number one, a bunch of greedy beekeepers are going to steal most of their surplus. Number two, the flowers are going to dry up. Other bees are going to be going for the little bit they have left.

It is a good practice to begin this next cycle with a few special activities. First, as soon as the supers come off the treatments should go on. Treatment should be followed by feeding. This is also a good time to plan the summer splits. A split usually needs to be fed to build up brood. The robbed hives need food anyway so get some extra profit from the food. Colonies are especially susceptible to robbing at this time of year. A robbing screen is a good first defense. Having the right amount of space is a good second line. Small hive beetles and wax moths can sense a weak hive or a hive that is oversized for its population.

Robbers bring varroa and diseases. Keeping the robbers out is key to going into winter with strong colonies. A lot of colonies are going to die in the fall. All the bees don't necessarily die. Many of them drift to other hives taking their problems from the original hive with them. Be vigilant. Robbing screens may not keep drifters out. Frequent varroa inspections are necessary. If sugar or alcohol shakes are not convenient, use the sticky board about once a week. If the mite drop passes the threshold, do the sugar or alcohol tests and follow up with a quick treatment.

Splits can be made with introduced queens or a "walk away" split. The type chosen will depend on the beekeeper's goals. Introduced queens are good to introduce new genetics. Walk away splits are good to propagate using the traits the beekeeper has been selecting. In the spring a walk away split is very easy and almost always successful. In the fall, the long term success will be based on food supply. Feed like crazy. Don't use a supplement because it attracts robbers.

Many members have requested a meeting focused on splits. Hopefully that will come soon.

## 2018 MCBA OFFICERS

**President**: Ed Moyers (meckbeespres@gmail.com)

**Vice President**: David Segrest (meckbeevp@gmail.com)

**Treasurer**: Jeff Dieker (meckbeetreas@gmail.com)

**Membership Secretary**: Dietlinde Zipkin (meckbeesec@gmail.com)

**Chaplain**: Tommy Helms

**Webmaster**: Kevin Freeman (meckbees@gmail.com)

## Contact Us

Email us with questions at meckbeespres@gmail.com

Picture and Article Submissions are always needed and are greatly appreciated.

**Email submissions to:**

Rachel.E.G.Woodhouse@gmail.com

# Mecklenburg County Beeke

## 201 8 Dues Form (January 1 thru December 31 )

Note: State registration is now handled separately through the state website
Please see link below

(Please print clearly)

Today's Date_____

MCBA Annual Dues: $5 I am: New ☐ Renewing ☐ N/A ☐

*First Name:_____*Last name:_____

*Address:_____

*City:_____*State:_____*Zip code:_____

Phone:_____*Email:_____

County of residence:_____

How long have you kept bees? _____(yrs) Number of hives_____

How would you like to be involved with the Club? _____

_____

*This information (name, mailing address, email address) will be provided to all members of the Mecklenburg Beekeepers (and to members ONLY - no one else will receive this information from us). If you DO NOT want this information shared, please opt out by initialing here. _____

Please make check payable to MCBA and mail completed form to:

Dietlinde Zipkin
MCBA Secretary
201 Foxlair Ct.
Matthews , NC 28105

For state membership registration or renewal , you'll find a link on the NCSBA home page:
https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/

Benefits of state membership include :

- Subscription to the quarterly Bee Buzz newsletter
- Notices of bee-related education opportunities
- Member discounts to the state conferences and other education opportunities
- Discounts on magazines such as the American Bee Journal
- Copy of the Yellow Book statewide membership directory
- Annual beekeeping calendar