



The Diablo Bee



Newsletter of the Mount Diablo Beekeepers Association

May 2007

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Next meeting:

7:30 pm – 05/10/07

**Heather Farm Garden
Center**

**1540 Marchbanks
Walnut Creek**

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2007 MDBA Calendar of Events

May 10	General Meeting, 7:30, Heather Farm.
May 17	Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

May Meeting



Jim Millet will be speaking on artificial insemination of queen bees.

What's the Buzz?



THANK YOU!



Thanks to Steve Gentry, our guest speaker at the April meeting. He talked about spring hive management and integrated hive management. Thanks also to Gary and Joan Lawrence for hosting the Bee Work Day.

THE DAY AFTER

I am reflecting today on yesterday's wet and wonderful bee work day. I am grateful to all those who helped make it such a learning experience for us all.

FIRSTLY, to the experienced beekeepers who led us into the mysteries of the hive:

Mary Andre, who delivered with husband Dennis Hoaglund 87 packages of bees on Friday morning, and handled all the ordering and bookkeeping of this transaction.

Steve Gentry, the kind guru of honeybees, who showed us what to expect from a diminished colony, as he took apart, cleaned, gathered honey from, treated, and reassembled a hive.

Stan Thomas, who installed two packages of bees in hives. Mike Stephanos, who showed us how he gathered a swarm, and installed it in a small nuc box. Mary Andre picked up

this hive after dark last night, and will use it in a demonstration hive to take to schools.

Jay Todesco, who took apart a thriving hive to seek out queen cells to split the colony and put 5 brood frames in a new nuc. He found no queen cells, so he reassembled the hive on a new foundation.

Ray Hicks, who helped everybody generally, and then brought in a gathered swarm from his car, killed its queen, and added one of Mary's gentle extra queens. I will take this box, plus one of the new boxes, to the Episcopal Bishop's Ranch in Healdsburg on Thursday, to replace the two colonies they lost to CCD.

Pitter Scanlan, who opened the demo hive with marked queen to show to those interested. Jonathan Winter, who with son Noah, instructed us in manual extraction.

SECONDLY, to all those who helped so generously:

My sweet and gentle wife Joan who baked and served breakfast treats and made the coffee that warmed us.

Karleen Rudolph who brought chocolate coated strawberries and skewered fruit, and some other generous woman who brought a cake.

Lois Kail who greeted people, got them to make name tags, and generally coordinated.

Cevina Targum, who ministered with ointment to those (few) who got stung.

Jeff Peacock, who took pictures that may appear on our website, and of course gathered in membership dues.

Joan and I are especially thankful for the tidiness and care of all our guests yesterday - to those who mopped the floor, swept the garage, picked up outdoors and indoors, and expressed in so many ways their appreciation. It was amazing how everyone remained cheerful and upbeat while soggy and wet.

We have never ever lost anything on these bee work days, and sometimes we gain. This year it is a nice pair of leather gloves, and a black umbrella. They can be reclaimed with a phone call.

Gary Lawrence



HAIL THE QUEEN BEE!



Michael Kliks points to a queen bee that has a larger abdomen and more of a creamy yellow color than normal bees. [CLICK FOR LARGE](#)

By Nina Wu nwu@starbulletin.com

The queen bee is the mother of all bees in a hive.

She's larger than all the other bees, given that she's indulged with royal jelly at birth. The queen reigns supreme, as she lays all the eggs in a colony, up to 50,000, which includes the worker bees and drones she will mate with. Through hormones, she instructs each bee what their role is.

The queen bee is also one Hawaii's most sought-after exports.

In Hawaii, the production of queen bees is actually more lucrative than the production of honey, according to those in the industry.

The market, which the state records but doesn't disclose due to confidentiality restrictions, is captured by a small handful of breeders on the Big Island.

Michael Krones, owner of **Hawaiian Queen Company Inc.**, is one of them. Hawaii-bred queens are in high demand, not only because they are mite free, but because they can be bred earlier in the year due to Hawaii's warm climes.

"I call them prima donnas," said Krones, who considers queen-rearing an art and a science. "They're beautiful, new queens that have no traces of diseases and no exposure to chemicals like the mainland U.S."

Krones ships between 6,000 to 8,000 queens a month during the peak season. He's already got two years' worth of queen bees reserved by a loyal base of buyers.

"There's a deficit of about half a million queens, and no one can fulfill the deficit," he said.

During the first half of the year, from January to April, he ships mostly to the mainland, and then to Canada in the early summer months.

Kona Queens Inc. at Captain Cook on the Big Island, one of the largest producers of Italian and Carniolan queens, ships them all over the world.

Big Island Queen, another company, also sells the queens.

Depending on the quantity ordered, the queens sell for between \$13 to \$18 apiece, not including shipping.

They're packed up into mini cages and battery-style boxes, each with her own small court of attendants to feed and serve her.

"They're special ladies," said Krones, who is also experimenting with developing a more disease-resistant and productive breed.

The average lifespan of a queen bee is two to three years, though she can live up to five or more, and produce 800,000 eggs during her lifetime.

UPDATE – In March, a few bee colonies on Oahu were found infested with Varroa mite. The mite has not yet been found on the Big Island, the presence of which could devastate the Queen Bee industry there.



ARE MOBILE PHONES WIPING OUT OUR BEES?

Scientists claim radiation from handsets are to blame for mysterious 'colony collapse' of bees

By Geoffrey Lean and Harriet Shawcross Published: 15 April 2007

It seems like the plot of a particularly far-fetched horror film. But some scientists suggest that our love of the mobile phone could cause massive food shortages, as the world's harvests fail.

They are putting forward the theory that radiation given off by mobile phones and other hi-tech gadgets is a possible answer to one of the more bizarre mysteries ever to happen in the natural world - the abrupt disappearance of the bees that pollinate crops. Late last week, some bee-keepers claimed that the phenomenon - which started in the US, then spread to continental Europe - was beginning to hit Britain as well.

The theory is that radiation from mobile phones interferes with bees' navigation systems, preventing the famously homeloving species from finding their way back to their hives. Improbable as it may seem, there is now evidence to back this up.

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) occurs when a hive's inhabitants suddenly disappear, leaving only queens, eggs and a few immature workers, like so many apian Mary Celestes. The vanished bees are never found, but thought to die singly far from home. The parasites, wildlife and other bees that normally raid the honey and pollen left behind when a colony dies, refuse to go anywhere near the abandoned hives.

The alarm was first sounded last autumn, but has now hit half of all American states. The West Coast is thought to have lost 60 per cent of its commercial bee population, with 70 per cent missing on the East Coast.

CCD has since spread to Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. And last week John Chapple, one of London's biggest bee-keepers, announced that 23 of his 40 hives have been abruptly abandoned.

Other apiarists have recorded losses in Scotland, Wales and north-west England, but the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs insisted: "There is absolutely no evidence of CCD in the UK."

The implications of the spread are alarming. Most of the world's crops depend on pollination by bees.

Albert Einstein once said that if the bees disappeared, "man would have only four years of life left".

No one knows why it is happening. Theories involving mites, pesticides, global warming and GM crops have been proposed, but all have drawbacks.

German research has long shown that bees' behaviour changes near power lines.

Now a limited study at Landau University has found that bees refuse to return to their hives when mobile phones are placed nearby. Dr Jochen Kuhn, who carried it out, said this could provide a "hint" to a possible cause.

Dr George Carlo, who headed a massive study by the US government and mobile phone industry of hazards from mobiles in the Nineties, said: "I am convinced the possibility is real."

The case against handsets

Evidence of dangers to people from mobile phones is increasing. But proof is still lacking, largely because many of the biggest perils, such as cancer, take decades to show up.

Most research on cancer has so far proved inconclusive. But an official Finnish study found that people who used the phones for more than 10 years were 40 per cent more likely to get a brain tumor on the same side as they held the handset.

Equally alarming, blue-chip Swedish research revealed that radiation from mobile phones killed off brain cells, suggesting that today's teenagers could go senile in the prime of their lives.

Studies in India and the US have raised the possibility that men who use mobile phones heavily have reduced sperm counts. And, more prosaically, doctors have identified the condition of "text thumb", a form of RSI from constant texting.

Professor Sir William Stewart, who has headed two official inquiries, warned that children under eight should not use mobiles and made a series of safety recommendations, largely ignored by ministers.

Newbie Nuggets.....

Almost all honeys will eventually naturally granulate (crystallize), most within a few months while others remain liquid for longer. In England, such naturally granulated honeys are called 'set honey'.

The speed and the texture that the honey granulates to has nothing to do with its purity or moisture content, but depends on the proportion of the various sugars in the honey, which, in turn depends on the floral sources used by the bees. The speed of crystallization is mostly a product of the ratio of the two main sugars of honey, dextrose and fructose. If a honey has a high dextrose to fructose ratio, it will granulate rapidly with a fine crystal. If it has a high fructose content, it will granulate slowly and often with crystals large enough that you can feel their sharpness on your tongue.

You may be tempted to discard honey that has crystallized. That is not necessary. This hardened honey can be restored to a flowing condition by submersing a bottle of the crystallized honey in a warm water bath. Do not microwave it, as high heat will destroy the health benefits of raw honey. Honey keeps almost indefinitely -- edible honey has been unearthed from Egyptian ruins.

Announcements

 Please send in your favorite honey recipes or bee articles via email to ersten3@yahoo.com or Kieran@usmones.com

 Kelly Knapp and Debbe Holeman are interested in giving homes to bumble bees and any other native bees. Also, they want to learn about restoring native bee habitat. Please call 925 634-4584 or 240-1930 or email kellysmiles75@yahoo.com

☞ *Major Branzel has bees for sale. Nucs, packages, hives. Please call (707) 643-9433 for pricing.*

☞ **Contra Costa County Fair** is coming up Thursday, May 31 through Sunday, June 3. Anyone interested in participating can email me (Judy Casales) at info@dominiquenhoneybees.com or call at 510-881-4939. Thanks!

Recipe of the Month

PEANUT BUTTER AND HONEY CANDY

- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 cup powdered milk
- Melted Chocolate

Mix peanut butter and honey, then add powdered milk. Put on wax paper and pat down to 1/2 inch thickness. Add melted chocolate on top and let cool

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