The Diablo Bee

Newsletter of the Mount Diablo Beekeepers Association

March 2008

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www.diablobees.org

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Next meeting:
7:30 pm – 03/13/08
Heather Farm Garden Center
1540 Marchbanks
Walnut Creek

HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS ISSUE

What's the Buzz?

Impromptu Guest Speaker

Bill Cervanka was called upon to be an 11th hour speaker when our scheduled guest was unavoidably delayed.

Based on feedback from attendees, Bill's speech was extremely well received, and Bill should definitely be invited back as a scheduled speaker (and not because we don't have to pay him an honorarium to do that, although it does help our club's bottom line!).

THANKS, BILL!

Meetings

Our next meeting is March 13 at 7:30 PM at the Heather Farm Garden Center in Walnut Creek.

Announcements

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Please send interesting bee articles via email to:
ersten3@yahoo.com

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Membership Dues

Your $15 yearly dues should be sent to:

Jeff Peacock, Treasurer
Mount Diablo Beekeepers Association
3341 Walnut Lane
Lafayette, CA 94549

Or…. you can give Jeff your check at any monthly meeting.

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If you have an active email address, you will receive this newsletter by e-mail unless you inform Kim Coleman at:
Kdeem@caleng.com
that you wish to receive a hard copy.

Oregon Bees Love Berries, May Help Fill Gap Caused By Colony Collapse Disorder of European Honey Bees

ScienceDaily (Feb. 14, 2008)

Bringing grains of pollen to waiting blackberry and red raspberry blossoms may be the special talent of a small, emerald-green bee called Osmia aglaia. That's according to Agricultural Research Service entomologist James H. Cane, who - in outdoor experiments in Oregon and Utah - has studied the pollination prowess of this 3/8-inch-long bee perhaps more extensively than any other scientist.

The hardworking bee, native to Oregon and California, may help with pollination chores, augmenting the work of America's best-known crop pollinator, the European honey bee Apis mellifera.

In recent years, hived honey bees across the country have been hit hard by a mostly mysterious condition known as colony collapse disorder. That problem - and others caused by mites, beetles, diseases and Africanized honey bee - have added even more urgency to the need to find proficient pollinators among America's wild native bees, noted Cane.

He's based at the ARS Pollinating Insect Biology, Management and Systematics Research Unit in Logan, Utah. In one series of experiments, Cane showed that O. aglaia bees work quickly, visiting just as many red raspberry flowers, and nearly as many blackberry blossoms, as do honey bees, in the same amount of time.

Both kinds of berries are mostly self-pollinating, meaning that they can form fruit without the need for insects to bring pollen to them. But better berries result if honey bees or O. aglaia visit red raspberry flowers, Cane found. The plump, well-formed fruits were 30 percent bigger than those on red raspberry plants not visited by either bee species.

Adapted from materials provided by US Department of Agriculture.

Wild Osmia aglaia bees (below) are promising pollinators of blackberry plants. (Credit: Photo above by S. Ausmus)

Sacred Insects of Ancient Egypt

According to one Egyptian myth, honey bees (scientific name *Apis mellifera*) were the tears of the sun god *Ra*. Their religious significance extended to an association with the goddess *Neith*, whose temple in the delta town of Sais in Lower Egypt was known as *per-bit* - meaning 'the house of the bee'. Honey was regarded as a symbol of resurrection and also thought to give potection against evil spirits.

Small pottery flasks, which according to the hieratic inscriptions on the side originally contained honey, were found in the tomb of the boy-king, Tutankhamun.

Honey bee (*Apis mellifera*)

Throughout ancient Egyptian history the bee has been strongly associated with royal titles. In pre-dynastic and early Dynastic times, before the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, the rulers of Lower Egypt used the title *bit* - meaning 'he of the bee', usually translated as 'King of Lower Egypt' or 'King of North', whereas the rulers of Upper Egypt were called *nesw – bit*, meaning 'he of the sedge', translated as 'King of Upper Egypt' or 'King of the South'. In later times, after the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, the pharaoh rulers used the title *nesw-bit* - meaning 'he of the sedge and the bee', which is conventionally translated as 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt' or 'King of the South and North'.

Hieroglyph inscription *nesw-bit* ('he of the sedge and the bee'), which was part of royal titles from the 1st Dynasty onwards and translated as 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt'. It was used as a prefix to the throne name (prenomen) of the pharaoh king.

Bee glyph carved on a stone scarab amulet (*c.*1700 BC)

Beekeeping is depicted in Egyptian temple reliefs as early as the 5th Dynasty (2445-2441 BC). These show that apiculture was well established in Egypt by the middle of the Old Kingdom. Records from at least one tomb workers' village during the New Kingdom (1550-1069 BC) indicate that the workmen there kept bees and this was doubtless true of other communities throughout Egyptian history. Beekeeping is also depicted in some 18th and 26th Dynasty tombs. Bees were certainly of great importance in providing honey, which was used both as the principal sweetener in the Egyptian diet and as a base for medicinal ointments. The Egyptians also collected beeswax for use as a mould-former in metal castings and also for use as a paint-varnish.

The bee hieroglyph was used to represent the word *bit* - meaning 'bee' or 'honey', or the royal title 'King of Lower Egypt' or 'King of the North'.

Myths, Legends and Folklore About the Bee

In early traditions, bees were believed to have originated in paradise and were known as "little servants of Gods". It was considered bad luck to kill one.

In Wales a bee buzzing around a sleeping child means the child will have a happy life and a virgin can always walk safely through a swarm of bees.

The Romans believed a swarm of bees was bad luck and that they were divine creatures which originated directly from the gods.

According to legend the first beekeeper was Bahus (god of wine), who domesticated them during his travels in Frakia.

Jupiter was said to have been fed and protected by bees when he was hidden in a grotto by his mother Rea, on Ida Mountain.

Bees are symbolic of sexuality, chastity, fertility, purity and care. They are also considered to be an image of a human soul due to their natural ability to find their way home from great distances.

In ancient times it was believed that bees were attracted to the sounds of clanging metal and thus bees were associated with the love of music.

The Hindu gods Vishnu, Krishna and Indra were referred to as "nectar born ones" (Madhava) and were often represented as bees perched on a lotus flower.

The Egyptian sun god Re was believed to have created bees and humans from his tears. Burying the nobility in honey was a common practice in Eygpt as a form of embalming the dead. The Eygptians also placed bees and honey in tombs as offerings to spirits of the dead.

Mead or honey wine is one of the oldest alcoholic beverages in the world and was drunk in countries such as Ireland, Ethiopia, India, Germany and Greece. Because mead was believed to be the drink of immortality, bees were legally protected in Ireland.

A long believed myth about bees is that they do not sting at night, which in fact is incorrect, they will sting at anytime for protection.

Bees, supposedly being capable of "virgin births", became symbolic of the Virgin Mary.

St Ambrose of Milan is the patron saint of beekeepers and it was said that as a child, his father found the sleeping boy covered in a swarm of bees.

What's Wrong with the Modern Honey Bee?

By Chelsie Vandaveer

Gray's Manual of Botany (1989 reprint, 1950 edition) called it, "A most beautiful tree, sometimes 40 m. high and with trunk 2-3 m. in diameter...." The tulip poplar (Liriodendron tulipifera) is among the tallest growing of the North American hardwoods; it blooms in May or June with pale green and orange flowers, one at the tip of each branch.

Tulip poplars belong to the Magnolia family, one of the few tree families which bloom with large, attractive flowers. Tulip poplar flowers provide nectar to attract pollinators, so much nectar that sometimes a fine mist of the sugar water can be felt under the tree.

Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) must visit between a hundred and a thousand flowers of typical nectar plants like clover or thyme to fill their honey stomach. A tulip poplar flower produces enough nectar to fill the honey stomach in one visit. The honey from tulip poplar is dark and appears a deep crimson when held up to light.

But an unforeseen problem has arisen with honeybees and tulip poplars. In an effort to create 'more-honey' honeybees, we bred bigger honeybees. Tulip trees grow so tall that even wild honeybees have trouble flying to the flowers.

Dee Lusby explains, "...the aerodynamics change for flight...Bigger bees cannot fly so high as the wind currents even a few meters higher than the normal 15-20 feet make flying unstable for them."

In 1785, George Washington planted two tulip trees at Mount Vernon. These 217-year-old trees stand about 100 feet tall; the lowest branches are higher than bees can fly. The trees did not produce seeds for many years. To ensure seed from these trees, every year since 1989, arborists with the National Arboretum

pollinate the flowers with cotton-tipped swabs from a lift bucket.

Newbee Nuggets…….

Opening the Hive and Working the Frames

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After the initial smoking of the hive entrance, pry up the top cover just far enough to smoke under it. Put the top cover back down for 15 seconds more. Now open the hive.

Give it a bit more smoke down between the frames. From this point let the bees indicate the need for more smoke. When you see rows of bees peering at you from between the top bars it's time to turn them around with some more smoke. While working the bees, try not to wave your hands over the top bars or cast your shadow over the hive (Note: if you can't be both, down or cross wind, and not overshadowing them, I would be more concerned with the shadow).

Prying frames apart should be done with your hands out past ends of the hive so the bees don't see the motion (another use where the Maxant hive tool shines). When lifting frames your hands come up the outside of hive to grasp ends of top bar (Note: I consider frame grips useless get used to holding the hive tool between the palm and last three fingers while examining frames). Be careful not to squeeze bees or roll them between the frames.

When examining frames, remove an outside frame to get enough room to remove others one at a time without rolling or injuring bees. Because of the usual irregularities of the frames, you should always try to reassemble brood supers back the way they came out. Also, when brushing bees off the comb for extracting, use short flicking strokes to dislodge, rather than rolling the bees.

To recap, avoid the following: jarring or vibrating, casting a shadow on an open hive, keeping hive open for long periods, pinching or rolling the bees, breathing on them, and not explaining to the bees what you're doing and why your doing it. I always enjoyed talking to those sweet little girls. By just following these few simple rules, you can significantly reduce the number of stings you get. Thus beekeeping is much more fun, because regardless how well protected you are, it is no fun working angry bees.

Recipe of the Month

BANANA POPS
(makes 8 servings)

Ingredients

1-1/3 cups	ground toasted almonds, ground coconut, candy sprinkles or graham cracker crumbs
4	just-ripe bananas
½ cup	honey
8	popsicle sticks

Directions: Spread ground nuts (or other topping of choice) on a plate or plates. Cut bananas in half crosswise. Insert a craft stick into each cut end. To assemble, hold each banana half over plate or waxed paper to catch drips. Coat each banana evenly with honey. Roll banana in topping of choice. Place pops on waxed paper lined cookie sheet, and serve at once.

Nutritional Information Per Serving : *Calories: 224 . Calories from Fat: 39%. Carbohydrates: 35.2 g. Cholesterol: 0 mg. Dietary Fiber: 3.26 g. Fat Total: 11.6 g. Protein: 4.98 g. Sodium: 3.8 g*

CLASSIFIEDS:

Judy Casales (510-881-4939) has a four-frame electric extractor and stand she's selling for $250.

Steve Gentry (925-254-8063) is looking for help to sell his bee products (honey, creams, lotions, candles, etc) at several farmers markets.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Lois Kail has kindly offered her renowned seamstress services to repair members' bee suits. Lois will donate the money she collects to the club. The only thing Lois asks is that before giving her your suits for repair, please wash them (wow, shouldn't that be obvious to us all?!). Contact Lois Kale (925 356-2602) or lkail@juno.com

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