

# The Shore Swarm

## April, 2019

The Newsletter of the Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore

### From the President

Hello Fellow Beekeepers

Here we are on the cusp of April and the weather seems to have finally turned for the better. Leilani and I moved into a house last autumn and on our property is a small, mature orchard. We weren't sure how many of the trees were living but now many are beginning to bloom. One large apple tree has been in full bloom for about a week now. It's wonderful to sit beneath it and take in the sweet smell of Spring. Unfortunately, having lost all of my hives last year, I have no bees to take advantage of these blossoms. Even more depressing, to date I have seen only a single, lonely honey bee visiting this fantastic source of nectar and pollen. Hopefully, she will go home and convince her sisters to follow her back. Today is supposed to be sunny and warm, with a high close to 70F so I'm hoping to see more. There has been a steady stream of smaller bees and some bumble bees so at least we will get some fruit. I've set up some swarm traps hoping the fruit trees will draw enough scouts to give me a chance to capture one. The door is open and the lemongrass oil attractant has been dribbled inside the traps. I didn't win the Powerball so hopefully lady luck will provide me with a "free" colony.

**George Brown**

### Meeting this Saturday

Historic Onancock School

10:00

April 6<sup>th</sup>

Program: The A-Z Hive

Presented by Hands On Beekeepers

Be there!

The Hands On Beekeepers will also have their "mobile store" on site, in case you're interested in examining things, asking questions, or placing or picking up orders.

Paul Kist shows the new beekeepers different types of equipment during our recent Beginning Beekeeping class. Paul has helped



hundreds of beekeepers get their start here on the Eastern Shore.

## Beekeeping Class

Leilani Brown organized our class this year, and pulled together the talents of many of our members to present topics and provide some wonderful food. She sends thanks to all who participated.

The class numbered about 18 interesting and interested “newbies.” We hope to provide some good open hive experiences and mentoring for this new class.



(George Brown discusses basic bee social life with the new class.)

Our newest beekeepers might have got the impression that beekeeping is a gloomy and doomed enterprise these days! So many of our speakers and other members have experienced some painful losses this year.

But amongst the guild membership there are still many very healthy hives that are doing their “Spring Thing” right now. The nectar flow is on and pollen and nectar and brood are abundant all of a sudden. We look forward to sharing the happiness of witnessing all this increase with our new beekeepers.

## Mentors Wanted

Several of our new people requested mentors after taking the class. Leilani is seeking willing beekeepers for the following places:

- Cape Charles
- Mappsville
- Greenbush
- Assawoman
- Sanford
- Atlantic

Remember, you don’t have to be an expert to be a mentor! Just be willing to share what you know and go alongside someone who’s just starting out.

If you can help, please contact Leilani at [luv2kayak802@yahoo.com](mailto:luv2kayak802@yahoo.com).

## IN SEARCH OF:

The Guild’s been missing its supply of Outreach Materials. Our club

banner (rolled up inside its multicolored storage bag) and a clear plastic tub of hand-outs and interesting bee things has not been seen since fall. Please keep an eye out for these important things.

## **AVAILABLE:**

The Guild maintains some extractors for members to borrow. Let an officer know if you're in need of one.

## **Sources of Equipment:**

Catalogs from different bee supply companies were distributed during the class. These are great for learning from, for perusing and comparing many different ways of housing your bee colonies.

In addition, many local businesses are now carrying products. Check out

- Thomas' Gardens
- Parksley Livestock
- Tractor Supply

Hands On Beekeeping will be bringing their mobile store to our meeting on Saturday. If you'd like to look at their offerings (and perhaps place an order), you can find them at [www.handsonbeekeepers.com](http://www.handsonbeekeepers.com).

Don't forget your fellow beekeepers! Many of our members have extra equipment on hand and are willing to

lend in an emergency, i.e. when that catchable swarm comes your way!

## **Who Dat Pollinating My Plants?**

Russell Vreeland

Say the words “native pollinators” and what comes to mind? Bees of many stripes, butterflies for certain or for some folks Hummingbirds and bats. Fair enough. The thing is how many of you would think “Oh yeah beetles!” Don’t feel down if you didn’t think that, few people would. The problem is these little girls are likely the oldest pollinators - having been doing it since the advent of flowering plants. Unlike the chicken or egg argument we actually have some indication that Beetles were here first (complete fossils have been found in the Mesozoic – ca. 200 million years ago). We also know that those early beetles were the first to visit the early angiosperms (i.e. Magnolia) so the pollination part may have come second. Still not totally sure what I’m getting at? Well how about a little factoid – Bee pollinate about 40,000 plant species – Beetles do the job for over 210,000 species. So over 5x the number of plants need beetles more than bees.

One difference is in how and what they do. Beetles, unlike bees, often carry out their functions by chewing through the petals and other floral parts. They defecate in the flower parts so they are referred to as “mess and soil” pollinators. That may actually mean that the beetles pass the pollen through their gut, so pollination defecation – but I can’t be sure occurs in here as I can’t find that info. Also since they do some damage to the plants they pollinate, many people try to get rid of them even though they are doing a valuable service.

Recognize, I am talking about our native beetles here and I have pictures of some of them for you. We are not talking about the more damaging invasives like Japanese Beetles, small hive beetles or Emerald Ash Borers – those you can freely wipe out.

Pollinating beetles find their flowers by smell and sight (they have color vision). The scents that will attract beetles are generally sweet (Crab Apples); spicy (Chimonanthus) or fermented (Calycanthus). Around here they are the primary pollinators of Magnolias, Pond Lilies, Goldenrod, Spirea, Chestnuts and Pecans. The flowers that attract them are basically bowl shaped with exposed anther and pistils, White, dull white or green, open during the day, have a strong spicy odor (sometimes disagreeable to humans – like a linden tree); they may be moderate honey producers. Beetles will appreciate large solitary flowers (like Magnolia) or smaller clusters of flowers (like Goldenrod or Chestnut). So Not all beetles are bad.

Some of our native pollinating beetles are shown below. I haven’t tried to ID these beetles or the flowers I just wanted to give you some examples. Keep in mind this is only some of our good beetles. Also here on the Eastern Shore we do have some endangered beetles so unless you are

certain the beetle you are seeing is invasive  
maybe just leave them to their job. They  
don't sting either.

