

The Shore Swarm

The Newsletter of the Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore

February, 2019

www.bgesva.org

From our president, George Brown:

"In the winter they became quite uneasy, and February 11 I took out five colonies, which flew a little, and then I put them back. They continued to become more and more uneasy and to be affected with diarrhoea, and, February 22, I took them all out and found only twenty-three alive. They flew a little, but it was not warm enough for a good cleansing flight; and soon after there came a cold storm with snow a foot deep, and by April I had only three colonies living, two of which I united, making a total of two left from the forty-five or fifty."

The above passage was written by C.C. Miller, describing his losses in the Winter of 1871-72. As one can clearly see, over wintering of bees is perhaps the greatest challenge of beekeepers. On the shore, our weather is a lot milder than that experienced by Dr. Miller. However, I'll bet ours is far more unpredictable! Dr. Miller later on describes how his goal was always, above all, to make certain his bees had sufficient stores to make it through the Winter. He would feed in August and September, so the bees would

have time to store and cap the syrup. He stored his bees in a cellar, taking care to make sure it was well ventilated in order to prevent excessive moisture, which is deadly to a colony of bees.

If you are fortunate enough to still have some colonies, you can tell a lot by simply observing the hive on a relatively warm day like today (23 January), after a few days of bitter cold. Hopefully, you will see a lot of flying bees, cleansing themselves, performing undertaker duties, etc. We still have February and the dreaded March to get through, but at least January is nearly behind us.

**February Meeting
In Chincoteague**

**Saturday, February 2nd
10:00 am**

**Chincoteague Movie
Theater "Annex"
4074 Main Street**

**Here are some directions from
Michele Birch:**

Turn Right once you get to
Chincoteague.

The movie theater/annex is on
the Left in the middle of the
downtown shopping area.

You can park on the street or
across the street
in the 2 public parking
areas next to the medical center
and the old bridge.

February Meeting Program

- George Brown will discuss a new technique for dealing with the dreaded “Varroa destructor.”
- Bettina Dembek will introduce an intriguing new idea about Bee Havens.
- We’ ll discuss what’ s going with bees at this time of year generally, what we can do to help them, and what’ s going on in our own hives.
- Further discussion of the Heritage Festival (February 23rd) and the Beginning Beekeeping Class, to be held at the Old Onancock School on Saturday, March 9th, and Saturday, March 16th.

Heritage Festival

Our Outreach Coordinator Tara Southard is coordinating our participation in this fun, lively, very well-attended event at the Community College. We’ve learned over the years that this is one of the best ways to publicize the Beginning Beekeeping class. If you’d like to help, or have honey to sell, please get in touch with Tara.

Hands On Beekeepers

We recently heard from Steve and Kacey Jones who have a bee and beekeeping business in Chesapeake. Last year they delivered many orders to our members at one of our meetings, and they also supplied nucs for some of us. Here’s what’s new with these friends:

2018 was a year of change for Hands On Beekeepers We completed the transition with our business partner Andy Westrich (Hampton Apiary) with the buyout and added some new product lines to the store. Andy is still part of the operations and continues to assist supporting beekeepers in the peninsula area of Virginia. Andy is focusing more on teaching with his freedom from the daily activity of the store.

Since we last visited we have added several new products lines to our store, to include the AZ Hive (Drebbieville Hive), TopBar and a host of other items for the bees and beekeepers. We are the local retailer for Dadant and Sons, Beeline Apiaries and Woodenware, TheBee Shop (Drebbieville AZ Hives), OxaVap (Oxalic Acid Vaporizers) and several other select manufacturers. In addition to supplier of local NUCs (langstroth mediums and deeps) and AZ frames. We also keep premium queens, local as well as reoccurring orders from commercially producers in CA and WVA.

Our website is handsonbeekeepers.com and Facebook is Hands On Beekeepers.

We look forward to hearing from you on ways we can best serve the membership of the Guild.

V/r,

Steve and Kacey Jones

*sales@handsonbeekeepers.com
ph# 757-408-5201*

Bee Apparel

From Michele Birch:

The new BGES T-shirts for the club were designed by Michele Birch and 2 orders were placed and she plans to deliver the last order at the Feb meeting.

If you didn't get a chance to order a T-shirt, No worries, the club bought

a dozen and they can be purchased from Leilani Brown.

A story of Beetle Larvae, by Russell Vreeland

I know I have written about hive beetles before but this is a story you need to hear.

As most know, the 2017/2018 season was a disaster for many BGES. I lost all of my hives and when you begin with 17 that is a lot of woodenware and deadout frames. There was so much, I had to store the stuff in my office closet (way at the back). Now I did check all of them as I put them away but truthfully I did not have the room to freeze everything. So you can guess what is coming. It wasn't too long before I had moths flying around and it took a while to figure out what they were because I couldn't find them in the closet. I did figure out they were wax moths and took care of that. But that isn't the story... this is.

Somewhere around 6 months after storing this stuff I came in startled to find a bunch of white larvae on the floor by the door. Now in fairness to my stupidity here, we had just discovered termites in the closet wall (requiring major tear outs) and lots of ants infesting the rear of the

office building (needing sprays through the cement pad and traps). The owner was going crazy and now I am finding larvae which we at first thought were related to the other problems. Well after vacuuming them up I returned to find even more and always by the door. It turns out they were our friendly SHB larva now hatching in my dead woodenware.

But here is the amazing part and why I didn't initially recognize the little blighters. As I said all of the woodenware was stored in the back of the closet area which is about 20 feet long. I was finding the larvae around the front door and in my office near the windows. The larvae were dropping out of the stacked boxes, traveling 20 feet along the floor of the dark closet then turning left to go under the closet door (Fig. 1).



Now mind you, they were attracted to that sliver of light (BTW the lights in the lab were NOT on – I turned them on to get the picture so you can see it). The back door was closer but it did not have windows. Once under the door the larvae

turned left (Fig. 2) and headed toward the lighted front door (Fig. 3). As they crawled, they passed right by an office without lights and either went left into my office (left in Fig. 3) or straight to the front (Fig. 3) door where they collected on the tile. This total path is over 150 feet long, and they moved as well on the tile as the carpet.

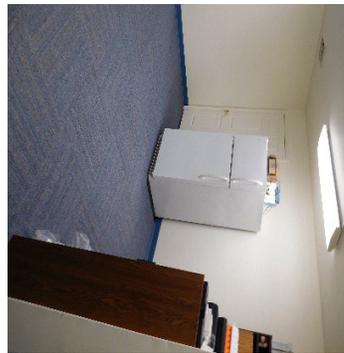


Fig. 2: First part of path

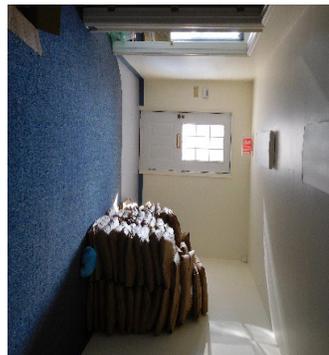


Fig. 3: Final target

Okay so what is the significance, other than Russell screwed up? Well first, when people tell you SHB larvae are attracted to light believe it! These things actually saw only a few photons (that is how they found the closet door). It is not UV light such as what attracts bees, because

those door windows are thermal panes and glass blocks UV light. If you think that putting your hives on a board or cement pad will stop them, forget it. Unless you are willing to pave your entire yard and put an elevated ring around the edge the larvae will find the dirt. So get those SHB traps in the hives and under the hives. A second lesson is that if you lose a bunch of bees I do recommend storing your wooden ware inside. Here's why. Despite my working hard to kill every adult beetle I could, I didn't get them all. But not one of the larvae survived, they simply could not get out of the sealed front door. The adult beetles didn't survive either, I either found them or they died of old age. Having all of this on the floor was no fun, but vacuuming them up was a perverse pleasure.

So I am now certain this woodenware is free of beetles because I haven't seen one in months and I broke their life cycle when they couldn't reach dirt. If you store the extra stuff where these things can reach dirt (they still had plenty of energy by the front door) there will be more beetles waiting to get you in the spring. The only other storage possibility (other than insecticides) is to have yourself an industrial sized freezer where you can stick entire hives. Just so you also know, I sent these pictures and the information to one of the world's experts on SHB (Dr. Christian Pirk in Johannesburg South Africa). I

know him from writing the book. Seeing what I documented, he began working on a lighted trap that will attract beetle larvae but not bees. I will let you know what I hear from him.

I still have a few moths though those things are immortal – I'll have to break down and use some crystals on that one.

Russell