

 *Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern* 

Shore 

*The Shore Swarm
Newsletter*

March 2017

BGES Leadership

President: Ann Snyder Vice President: Licho Berrouette
Treasurer- Phil Harris Carol Zuccarino- Secretary Tara Southard- Outreach Coordinator
George Brown- Web Master Estelle Spachmann- Newsletter Editor



A Message from Our President

Dear Beekeepers,

It's the 21st of February and a sunny, calm day outside – just the sort of day to get the bees out and flying! The maples are starting to bloom and small flowers like dandelions, veronica, and purple nettle are starting to color our drab lawns and roadsides. There is still some winter ahead, but the bees know the nectar flow is on!

At the end of February last year my husband spotted a beach-ball sized swarm from one of our hives and we managed to catch it. I am hearing reports from our members of signs of awakening hives about to explode with population: drones emerging, lots of pollen being hauled in. Be alert! Even though it's only February, the bees are busy and the colonies are in an expansive mode.

Some beekeepers move the now-vacated bottom hive bodies to the top position on hives, to give the bees more room to expand. In the process, beekeepers can replace the darkest, most used

frames and comb with fresh new ones. This is one way to delay a swarm...we think! It's an opinion.

I also hear that many have lost at least one hive over the winter. I suppose that once you've experienced this tragedy you're entitled to be called a real beekeeper. Loss happens. It's an inevitable part of beekeeping today, and that's why it's wise to keep at least 2 hives – insurance against a 100% loss. An informal survey at our next meeting will let us know whether we Shore beekeepers fared any better or worse than others in North America.

At this moment, some members of our guild are preparing for a big event at the Hermitage Festival on the 25th. It's one of our best opportunities to share our beekeeping knowledge with the public. Many thanks are sent to those who are involved with this.

Also, March 4th will be the first of 2 sessions of our Beginning Beekeeping class. It is not too late to volunteer to help with this class and lots of help is needed. Guild members are always welcome to simply come for a refresher course themselves, or to mingle with the “new-bees” and help answer questions.

Because of the class, there will be no regular meeting in March, but we are expecting some special guests at our April 1st meeting in Painter. UVA student Jessie Thuma will be presenting original research concerning Eastern Shore bees along with one of her professors. There's been some talk of going out to lunch together after the meeting; if you have extra time, join us.

There's been discussion of the need for a member directory, so we can contact each other easily. You'll probably be asked if you'd like to be part of this, and what contact information you'd be willing to share.

Happy, sunny days ahead –

Ann



Beginning Beekeeping 2 day course

March 4 and March 11

8:30 am – 1:30 pm

at the Virginia Tech Agricultural Research and Extension Center

in Painter

Mason Bees

By Russell Vreeland

It has been a while since I have talked about some of our native bees so I thought for this first 2017 article I would talk about one of the more common little critters (Mason Bees - and they are rather cute for a bee –picture below). Mason Bees are part of the bee family known as *Megachilidae*. As an aside all of these bees are really easy to identify. Their name, when loosely translated, essentially means huge antennae and all of these bees have them. Mason bees actually do have representatives in two genera (*Osmia* and *Chalicodoma*) and include native critters like the orchard mason bee, [*Osmia lignaria*](#) and the blueberry bee, [*O. ribifloris*](#). The very common Horn-faced bees are really not native-- but full disclosure--these are the insects that began my life as a beekeeper.

These bees are really neat and easy to keep. They are so docile you can sit in front of the container and they barely even care if you are there. You put their containers out around Good Friday, they hatch and pollinate everything in sight while collecting pollen (they are actually better than our honeybees). This goes on for about 3 weeks, then the adults die and you pick up your little Mason Bee nest and put them into the garage until next year. One thing: you do need to change the tubes or clean the house every couple of years. If you don't they get taken over by huge numbers of red mites and it is really sad. I had some that got away from me and the poor things were so covered in mites they couldn't fly. Okay so what happens to all of this pollen they collect?

They stock the small cells in their home (see some examples below) with the pollen, then lay an egg. After the egg is laid Mom closes the cell with mud or any moist building material they can use (hence the name MASON). When the cell is finished, Mom does something really cool. While the mud is still damp she presses her head into the mud wall creating an indentation in the cell wall. She does this for each of the cells she makes as she backs out of the crevice. Each cell is a little less than an inch long. So picture this: in each bee cell there are two mud walls one convex and the other one concave so a cell would be:) [pollen and egg]).

So what right? Well when the new baby bee hatches she needs to get out of this dark cell and there is no way to know which direction you are facing so which way do you go? Well Mom has provided the answer, because as she made the wall and backed out she pressed her head into the outside making it concave but causing the other side to bulge in. So what does the baby do? Well it feels the walls, then it digs out through the wall that bulges in because the other one only leads to the sisters (or a dead end.) I have always thought that was just the coolest move. Oh, one last thing: the hatching appears timed so the bee closest to outside hatches

first (a male no less) then the next (a female) and so on to the back of the crevice or tube. Smart little bees!

The nests are easy to make or get (see below). In fact, now you can even buy mason bees from several of our common honeybee suppliers. So get some or make them a nest and attract some of your own!



A Mason bee (left) and a common nest of bamboo tubes (right).



More Information: Crown Bees Chalet

For anyone trying to get into bees on an easier level.

Add gentle bees to your backyard for spring or summer pollination of fruits, nuts, berries, vegetables and flowers with a premium kit developed by Crown Bees! Spring mason bees and summer leafcutter bees make wonderful garden companions that won't travel far from their home. The bees nest in provided holes where they deposit pollen, lay eggs, and continue pollinating your yard for many weeks! More information at:

http://www.tractorsupply.com/tsc/product/crown-bees-beeworks-chalet-with-bees?cm_vc=IOPDP1



BGES meetings alternate locations between the Barrier Island Center(BIC) in Machipongo and the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center located in Painter, VA.

To learn about what happens at the AG Center, visit their website:

<http://www.arec.vaes.vt.edu/eastern-shore/>

Meeting Schedule:

Location	Day/Date/Time
AG Center Painter	Saturday/April 1 @ 10:00 AM
BIC Machipongo	Tuesday/May 2 @ 6:30 PM
AG Center Painter	Saturday/June 3 @ 10:00 AM
BIC Machipongo	Tuesday/July 11 @ 6:30 PM

Outreach

Tara Southard led representatives of the Beekeepers Guild in spreading Bee Awareness and Information at the Heritage Festival at the Eastern Shore Community College on Saturday, February 25. The BGES members distributed informational flyers and packets of wild flower seeds. Honey was available for purchase as well.

The Lemon Tree gallery in Cape Charles is featuring a month of Bees. Russell Vreeland and Mary Walker have coordinated this opportunity to inform the public about beekeeping. Russell's presentation on *Attracting Pollinators to Your Yard* will be at the Lemon Tree Gallery on Saturday, April 29 at 11:00 AM.



A Whole New Drone?

From an article by Brandon Turbeville

As the bee population in the United States continues to decline, some scientists are working on a backup option which many people are calling the robobee. Eijiro Miyako, a chemist at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology in Japan, writes about the combination of a computer drone and a gel.

Miyako and his team used a four-propeller drone to which they attached horse hairs in order to mimic the fuzzy body of a bee. They coated the horse hairs with the gel so that pollen would stick to the horse hairs which would then be carried from one plant to another.



Did You Know???

THE LABEL IS THE LAW!

If you who treat your hives for honey bee pests or diseases, there are rules and regulations that you must follow as a Pesticide Applicator. Whether you are putting pesticides or antibiotics in your hives, you become legally responsible for reading, interpreting and applying that product as specified by the Label. The Label is the Law!

“Pesticide product labels provide critical information about how to safely and legally handle and use pesticide products. Unlike most other types of product labels, *pesticide labels are legally enforceable*, and all of them carry the statement: “It is a violation of Federal law to use this product in a manner inconsistent with its labeling.” In other words, the label is the law.” - <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-labels/introduction-pesticide-label>

When you put anything in your hive with the intention of using that product as a pesticide, then that is exactly what it becomes - A pesticide application. This is true whether you dump a cup of essential oils in the hive in hopes that it kills Varroa, or you go to the hardware store and purchase Wood Bleach to use as an Oxalic Acid treatment for Varroa. The one thing both of these have in common is that neither is labeled for pesticide use against those pests. What does this mean? It means that you are not only breaking the LAW, but you could be putting your honey bees, yourself, and your customers or anyone who consumes your honey in danger.

Questions about pesticide use for honey bee pests and diseases that you are still unsure of after reading the label should be directed to a Pesticide Investigator or your State Apiarist. If you are unsure if a product is registered for use for a certain pest or do not understand the label, please contact the Office of Pesticide Services (804-786-3798). Keep in mind that you could potentially harm your bees, yourself and possibly your customers if you do not follow the LABEL.

How can you find out if a product is registered for a certain pest?

There are databases listed at the following website that can be used to check the state registration status of a pesticide or to find a registered pesticide for a specific pest.

<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticide-product-registration.shtml>

Membership DUES:

BGES dues \$20 State dues \$10 Membership runs from June 30-July 1. Application is on BGES website. IF you have not yet paid your dues for this year, please mail your check to our treasurer Phil Harris at 20496 Seaside Road Cape Charles, VA 23310

The BGES has a Facebook page. Log on to see some of the latest escapades of fellow BGES.

The official website for the BGES is <http://www.bgesva.org/index.html>

Any news worthy items-feel free to forward to emspachmann@gmail.com for possible inclusion in future newsletters.

Angela Barnes posted this photo on Facebook: A swarm discovered on February 24, 2017. Check your hives!



Websites that may be of interest:

<http://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroa/>

<https://beehealth.bayer.us/~media/Bayer%20CropScience/Country-United-States-Internet/Documents/Bee%20Health/The-Varroa-Mite-Guide.ashx>

<https://beehealth.bayer.us/~media/Bayer%20CropScience/Country-United-States-Internet/Documents/Bee%20Health/Healthy%20Colony%20Checklist%20Form.ashx>

The Last Word

Which is greater:

- A) the total number of Nuclear warheads in the world
- B) the total number of pesticides registered for use in the United States
- C) the total number of bullets fired for every insurgent killed in Afghanistan and Iraq
- D) Total number of medicinal drugs approved for use by the US FDA since 1827.

No fair hitting Google for the answer - wait till the next Newsletter!