



SEMBA NEWS

Vol. 13 No. 7 Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers' Association August 2003

Editor: Susanne Sadik souxsie2@msn.com

Upcoming Events:

August 15 through September 1

Michigan State Fair – SEMBA will be maintaining a beekeeping education booth at the fair. Call Bill Sirr at 248-544-8619 or Ann Kerwin at 313-861-5760 if you are interested in helping at the booth

September 3

Annual SEMBA Planning Meeting – SEMBA, Oakland Bee Club, and Schoolcraft Bee Club, will be meeting at 7:30 p.m. to discuss meeting dates, events, etc.

September 9

Schoolcraft College Bee Club Meeting – Tour the VisTaTech Center, followed by a talk by Dr. Zachary Huang from MSU in the lower level of Waterman Center

What's Inside SEMBA News

Upcoming Events
School Bee Club Meeting Details
Program Notes for the 9/9/03 Mtg.
SEMBA Planning Meeting
SEMBA Website Report
Heartland Apicultural Society
Queen Rearing with the Hoffman's
Bee's Wax
Importance of Bees in War (Part 2)
Bargain Corner

SCHOOLCRAFT BEE CLUB MEETING DETAILS

The Schoolcraft Bee Club Meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 9, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the VisTaTech Center located on the Schoolcraft College campus. The entrance to the VisTaTech Center is located at the north end of the Waterman Center adjacent to the north parking lot. Please meet in the lobby of the VisTaTech Center. There will be a program after the tour of the VisTaTech Center, which will feature Dr. Zachary Huang of Michigan State University. The program Dr. Huang is presenting will be "Beekeeping Education and Research at Michigan State University." Please note: refreshments are welcomed.

PROGRAM NOTES ON THE SEPTEMBER 9TH MEETING

For the past 27 years, the SEMBA's annual Bee School has been held in the Schoolcraft College Waterman Center. In 2001, work began on the VisTaTech expansion of the Waterman Center and this year extensive remodeling has been done in the area where our bee school was held. To show our appreciation for the years of free use of the Waterman Center as well as for other services provided by the college, SEMBA contributed \$1000 to this project. In addition, several SEMBA members also made individual contributions. As part of our meeting on Tuesday, September 9, 2003, there will be a special tour of the new center. The Grand Opening will be on Friday September 5, 2003 at 5:30 p.m. Following the tour, our members will assemble in the Lower Waterman Center where Dr. Zachary Huang, assistant professor of entomology and apicultural specialist at MSU, will present a review of education programs and beekeeping research conducted by Dr. Huang, MSU doctoral students, and postdoctoral researchers. Dr. Huang is also interested in ideas from SEMBA beekeepers so this will be an interactive program. Proposed changes in the ANR Week Beekeeping program will be discussed. Please attend and bring along your questions and suggestions.

-- Roger Sutherland

SEMBA PLANNING MEETING

The annual SEMBA planning meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 3, 2003, at 7:00 p.m. in the Lower Waterman Center, Schoolcraft College. SEMBA, Oakland Bee Club and Schoolcraft Bee Club meeting dates, beekeeping events and the annual bee school will be discussed. A critique of the Michigan State Fair beekeeping booth and the agenda for the October 19, 2003 SEMBA annual meeting will also be considered. All SEMBA members are welcome and encouraged to attend. We need new ideas.

SEMBA WEBSITE REPORT

"I am very pleased with the amount of traffic the website is generating. Approximately 10 people per day are looking at the site. Each person tends to look at -- on average -- four pages. The newsletters are very popular and not just the most recent. The month of February, 2003 newsletter had 67 requests versus 61 for June, 2003. There were also many requests for the October and November 2002 newsletters. Hoffman's syllabus was also popular. In total we served over 42 megabytes this month. This is not a lot when compared to Microsoft (I'm sure they serve that much per second!) but considering who and what we are, I think this project should be considered successful."

(Membership note: *Five new members have been added within the past three weeks as a result of the website.*)

Please send your questions, comments and suggestions to the web master at: tosk@comcast.net

-- Tom Lisk

HEARTLAND APICULTURAL SOCIETY

There were about five members of SEMBA spotted at the Heartland Apiculture Society (H.A.S.) Conference in Midway, Kentucky this past July (10-12). This was the H.A.S. second annual conference. There were about twice as many people as last year. As word spreads, I predict it will double again next year. The price was right, the food was excellent, as were all of this years speakers. The weather cleared up after the first day and I was able to pick up some needed equipment from the vendors at a decent price. Some of the classes I attended were: building a honey house, extracting honey, queen insemination, releasing a queen in a hive, swarm control, swarm catching, mite control, and moving hives. I skipped out early Saturday evening to drive 2 ½ hours to my brothers place and checked our 4 hives there, but all in all the H.A.S. Second Annual Conference in my opinion was a great success.

-- Winn Harless

QUEEN REARING WITH THE HOFFMAN'S

August 2, 2003 was a day like no other. For those experienced beekeepers who have sat, squinting for hours grafting young larvae into queen cups; you may look back on the novice grafter and chuckle fondly, remembering a time when it may not have come so easily. I can only hope my day will come. Why was August 2, 2003 so special? It marked another year's successful queen rearing class for Earl and Carol Hoffman and an extraordinary opportunity for beekeepers to learn the finer points of grafting. Earl and Carol Hoffman presented to a good sized class of bee school students (past and present), interested hobbyists, and commercial beekeepers. The class was packed with information that spanned all levels of experience. Nothing can beat the ease of using a Chinese grafting tool, yet the sturdy German tool presented a real challenge. For anyone interested in raising your own queens, this would be the class for you. The Hoffman's did present a second queen rearing class on August 10, 2003 as a follow up to see how well the larvae took. A fifty percent success rate is pretty good for a bunch of greenhorns!

-- Susanne Sadik

BEE'S WAX

Well, they say summer is here. Time to make sure the solar furnace is clean and in working order. If you don't have one, make one or pick one up from a bee supplier. All that wax you have collected while working on your bees, which you've been saving and not leaving on the ground to draw critters, should be put into the furnace. Come back after a day or two of sun and you will have some nice wax. Clean no; some of the junk in the old comb is also in your block of wax and the rest is on the tray in your furnace, hard as a brick, and very hard to remove. Thus, an easy job has turned into work. There must be a better way and there is. Put the old comb wax into a nylon hose. Light colors will not work as well as dark. Place the hose full of wax into the furnace. After a day or so your wax will be clean. While it is still hot (warm) remove the hose, your furnace will also now be clean -- finished. Have you ever tried to put anything into a nylon hose except a leg or a hand? Forget it. The solution: pick up a piece of PCV pipe 4" dia x 6" or so long, and smooth all the edges.

Feed the nylon hose a little at a time over the PCV pipe. You can now fill the hose with your wax. Do not over fill the hose. You can now put your nylon hose into your solar furnace. This has worked for me for years.

-- *Bill Sirr*

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEES IN WAR TIME (Part 2 of a two part series)

BEES AT SEA

From a later era comes another story (of questionable truth) about bees and pirates. According to the story, a 17th-century-merchant ship, bound for Cuba and Mexico, sailed from Barcelona carrying bees, which had established a hive under the upper deck near the bow. The crew took the presence of the beehive as a good omen, and let it alone. Their beliefs seem justified by fair winds and a quick trip through the Atlantic Ocean chill, which kept the bees quiet. In the warmer waters near the Caribbean, the bees continued to cooperate and merely sortied from their hive for short distances.

Near the ship's first destination, pirates struck. Damp powder prevented the merchantman's crew from firing their guns, a problem the pirates did not have. The merchantmen took several poundings from the pirates' cannons, including one in the ship's bow. The pirate vessel closed and the buccaneers prepared to board at the bow of the merchantman. The vibration of the cannon ball in the bow, followed by the collision of the two hulls, understandably set off the bees. The pirates found themselves under attack from an unanticipated enemy. They cast off and quickly pulled away. Falling to their knees, the merchantmen's crew thanked god for their deliverance.

As the crew enjoyed liberty ashore at Santiago de Cuba, the bees gathered pollen from the exotic flowers of Cuba. Convinced of the power of the bees, the sailors were concerned when some of the heavily laden bees fell into the water. So a canvas platform was prepared for the bees to land on before their makeshift hive's entrance. The ship then continued on without incident to its Mexican landfall.

BACK ON LAND, YEARS LATER

During the Civil War at Antietam, attacking Federal troops advancing through a farmyard were routed, not by the heavy gunfire they faced, but by enraged bees shattered by Confederate artillery fire.

There's also a well-known case of British troops, in action in German East Africa during WW1, encountering maddened bees, but, as at Antietam, it appears accidental.

During the Vietnam War, Viet Cong guerrillas were masters of improvised weaponry, and before attacking, were known to lob 30 or more nests of hornets and wasps into military outposts. They also set up ingenious booby traps, placing nests, with firecrackers attached, along trails. When an enemy patrol walked past a nest, a patient VC would set off the firecracker.

FROM WEAPONS TO CAUSING WAR

On a few occasions, bees have been less the weapon than the cause of war or near war. There is a tale in Ireland, that Congal, the king of Ulster, was stung in the eye and blinded by a bee during a visit to the home of Domnall. The supporters of Congal Caech (One-Eye) demanded retribution—the eye of Domnall's firstborn son. Domnall quickly ordered the beehive destroyed, hoping the gesture might satisfy the Ulsterman. It did not. Ulster went to war against Domnall but lost.

THE "HELPER" BEE

Aside from military uses, there are instances in the historical record where bees helped civilians. For example, a group of nuns in Beyenburg (Beetown in English), Germany, drove off a band of robbers by releasing bees into their convent yard before seeking cover.

Another story tells how a Swiss beekeeper smuggled a cargo of fine Italian honey into Switzerland. He had an Italian beekeeper park a stash of honey right at the border. The Swiss took his own beehives and set them about 1,000 yards away. The bees went straight for the available honey and took it back to their hive, 200 pounds of it.

Today, bees are being examined as a possibly cheap and effective way to clear deadly minefields. Landmines are a cheap weapon in war, but they are usually left in place after the shooting stops. Worldwide, huge tracts of productive land are unusable, too dangerous to clear because of their mines.

Bees may provide the astonishing answer to the problem. At Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico, and at the University of Montana, researchers hope to make bees into biological mine detectors. They are trying to train the bees to respond to the odor of TNT, the primary

landmine components, as if it's food, and then track the bees into minefields with tiny rice-sized radio tags attached to the bees' bodies. Mowgli would be thoroughly

confused by the technical aspects of the proposal, but he would need no convincing of the martial value of the Little People of the Rock.

SEMBA Bargain Corner

For Sale:

Michigan Beekeeping calendars, \$5.00 plus shipping cost of \$1.50. **Contact Mary Sutherland, 734-668-8568**, e-mail rsuther@hotmail.com.

New wooden ware, assortment of honey bottles, 4-frame stainless steel motorized extractor, 25 frame galvanized motorized extractor, observation hive, and much more. Desire to sell as package. **Call Charles Bode at 586-725-8163.**

NEW 1 & 5 Gal. buckets w/ lids, New medium and deep supers and frames available. **Keith Lazar, (248) 815-5522 or Home (248) 626-2483**

Wanted:

Ron Rittner, 150 Elizabeth Lane, Rochester, MI wishes to have bees placed on his land. For details **call Ron at 248-651-1333 or 248-840-3790 (cell phone).**

Ann Kerwin would like to purchase a stainless steel extractor. **Call Ann at 313-861-5760.**

Question and Answer:

What do you think of polystyrene hive bodies? Would they be better than standard wood for the Michigan winters and hot summers? Are they durable? Have you or any other SEMBA members tried them out? Please contact John Piette at jpiette@umich.edu if you have an experience with or information about polystyrene hive bodies. If you would like to submit an article about the use of polystyrene hives please contact Susanne Sadik at souxsieq2@msn.com.

Note: ads in the Bargain Corner are free to SEMBA members. To place an ad contact: Susanne Sadik at souxsieq2@msn.com or Roger Sutherland rsuther@hotmail.com.

Southeastern Michigan
Beekeepers' Association
Organized April 1, 1934



Oakland Beekeepers' Club



Schoolcraft Beekeepers' Club



SEMBA Membership
5548 Warren Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-9425