



SEMBA NEWS

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Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers' Association

July/August 2004

Upcoming Events

July 18

SEMBA Summer Picnic, Island Lake Recreational Area, Brighton, (see below for details).

July 27

Seven Ponds Bee Club Meeting, Seven Ponds Nature Center, Lapeer County, (see below for details).

August 11-22

Michigan State Fair

SEVEN PONDS BEE CLUB NEWS

The next meeting of the newly formed Seven Ponds Bee Club will be Tuesday, July 27, 2004. Meetings are held at the Seven Ponds Nature Center near Dryden (Lapeer County). Club members will meet at 7 p.m. to examine the club-owned hives located on the grounds of the Nature Center. The meeting (topic to be determined) will be at 7:30 p.m. in the Nature Center Building.

Call Nancy Schlieble at 810-395-7379 for additional details.

HOW ABOUT TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT: A TOP BAR HIVE

If you are not familiar with a top bar hive it consists of least 25 to 30 frameless and foundationless wood top bars to which the bees attach combs, all enclosed in a wood box with a screen floor, and a simple cover to keep out the rain.

I find the greatest advantage of a top bar hive is its simplicity. Even you do not possess the woodworking ability of a Winn Harless you can still make a top bar hive from salvage materials and even boxes and containers such as drawers and packing crates.

Top bar hives predate Langstroth-type hives and have a long history, as the concept is believed to be several thousand years old. Most modern top bar hives are found in Africa. The two different styles are named after their country of origin: the Kenyan with sloped sides and the Tanzanian with vertical sides. The Tanzanian is easier to construct, while the bees in the Kenyan will have much less tendency to adhere the combs to the sides of hive. This flaw of the Tanzanian is corrected if you are a skilled beekeeper with the ability to free the combs (without damaging them) from the sides of the hive (leaving bee space). The bees tend not to rejoin the combs, so this may not create a significant problem if you are gentle when handling the combs.

It is not necessary to exclude the queen from the honey stores as it is when using a Langstroth-type hive. Keeping a full bar of honey next to the brood plus appropriate introduction of bare top bars

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SEMBA SUMMER PICNIC

When: Sunday, July 18th, 2004 at 1:00 p.m., Potluck at 1:30 p.m.

Where: Riverbend located in the Island Lake Recreation Area, 12950 E. Grand River, Brighton, MI.

Directions: Take I-96 to exit 151 (Kensington Rd.) Go south to the Island Lake Recreation area entrance. A daily park entrance fee is required. The picnic will be held in the Riverbend Picnic Area.

Potluck: Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Beverages will be provided.

Program: Informal discussions about the Michigan State Fair, Honey House Regulations, and summer management of your bees.

Judy Forfinski is looking for activities and program suggestions for the SEMBA picnic.

Call Judy at 810-220-1084 or e-mail forfinri@nibusa.com

adjoining the brood in early spring will keep the brood localized.

To harvest the honey you simply take a pair of scissors, snip the comb off the top bar and return the top bar back to the hive for the bees to start over. The honey is extracted by crushing the combs and straining. A lot of beekeepers who have both top bar hives and Langstroth-type hives say honey from the top bar hive tastes better due to it coming from new white combs and not from old dark combs found in Langstroth-type supers, thus they market the honey as premium. Also, if your operation is to mainly harvest a wax crop, top bar hives may be easier and cheaper than using Langstroth-types.

The disadvantages of a top bar hive is it will not store anywhere near as much honey as a Langstroth-type and because the combs are exposed and not encased in a frame are very fragile and require gentler care.

If you are interested in adding one or two top bar hives to your operation I will have plans for both styles of hives at the SEMBA picnic on July 18.
~ Ron Forfinski, SEMBA President

THE SWARM

Just six short weeks ago (mid April) we were all busy nursing our survivor hives back to health from a long cold winter. Now we are hoping that our stronger hives won't swarm. Swarming has been the bane of beekeepers since the discovery of the bee space. I have always found swarms to be a fascinating part of apiculture.

I'll never forget my first encounter with a swarm. It happened in the early '70s when I was 15 years old. It was early spring when my brother Ted and I were helping my dad frame a house he was building in Novi. As I recall, we had a few outside walls up. Something in the sky caught our attention; it was a fast moving black cloud zigzagging straight for us! "Dad, is that a tornado?" I asked. My dad just stood there looking with fear in his eyes. Then we could hear it, a low hum that was getting louder and louder as it got closer to us. Then right before it hit us my dad yelled, "**BEES!**" And bees they were, millions of them or so it seemed to us. I started for the back door and my brother ran to the front. Before we took two steps my dad yelled, "Stop! Don't move!" Somehow he knew that we were in no real danger from the bees, but running in a blind panic through a construction site could pose a real danger to us. So stop we did as that swarm passed right through the stud walls of the house. I still remember the feeling of bees hitting my back and bouncing on the floor only to get up and resume their flight. We all stood there watching them fly off to parts unknown.

We could hardly believe it, all those bees and not one sting. For the rest of the day, all I could think about was those bees. Why did they swarm? Where did they come from? Where were they going? Why didn't we get stung to death? Nature always has fascinated me and that swarm instilled in me a fascination for honeybees. That's still with me 34 years later.

So keep your eyes on the trees for the next month or so for swarms. If you can catch one and hive it, you will be surprised to see how fast the foundation will be drawn out. Of course the swarms won't be from your hives because you have learned from SEMBA how to do everything right so your bees won't swarm. JUST KIDDING.

~ Mike Siarkowski

AFRICANIZED HONEY BEES UPDATE

Adapted from "The Nucleus" June 2004 published by the National Honey Board.

In 1990 an Africanized honeybee (AHB) swarm was identified near the Texas town of Hidalgo. This find heralded the dreaded arrival of the AHB in the US. The Africanized honeybees, brought from Africa, were called Africanized because it was assumed that as they spread they would interbreed with European honeybees and would create a hybridized honeybee.

At first, it appeared the two types of bees easily interbred and resulted in hybridized bees that shared traits of both types of bees. But over time, it seems, AHB traits tend to take over and dominate future generations of bees.

Scientists have identified six major factors that enable AHB to "take over" European honey bees:

- 1) AHB colonies have faster growth rate, which means more swarms split off from a nest and eventually dominate an environment.
- 2) Hybrid worker bees have higher amounts of "fluctuating asymmetry" (small, random differences between the left and right wings) than AHBs, even when raised in the same hive. This can reduce worker viability and colony survival.
- 3) European queen bees mate disproportionately with African drones resulting in rapid displacement of European genes in a colony.
- 4) African queens emerge earlier and are more successful fighters than European queens, giving them a competitive advantage.
- 5) AHB swarms practice "nest usurpation"- invading European colonies and replacing resident queens with the swarm's African queen.

- 6) Some African traits are genetically dominant such as queen behavior, defensiveness and some aspects of foraging behavior.

How far will they spread? As of January 2004 AHBs have been found only in southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It remains a mystery that they haven't progressed eastward into Louisiana, although they were expected there years ago. Experts disagree on which environmental factors have limited AHB spread to date.

ARS Entomologist Jose D. Villa determined that it's not just minimum winter temperature that limits AHB spread, as many had believed. In fact, Villa suggests that high rainfall (55 inches or more) distributed throughout the year, can also create a barrier to AHB spread. If rainfall barrier is a factor, then Alabama, northern Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi are unlikely to be troubled.

In the Southwest, U.S. beekeepers are challenged to maintaining their European hives surrounded by AHB. ARS recommends requeening with European queens of known lineage. ARS also encourages beekeepers to mate queens with European drones.

Although people may only think of the AHBs negative characteristics, they may represent a potential positive. In one study ARS demonstrated a better survival rate than European bees against Varroa mites.

In order to maintain viability of beekeeping and European hives, as well as protect public safety, research on AHBs must remain a priority.
~ Roger Sutherland

THE GENESIS OF BEEKEEPING AT SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE PART 1 OF 4

On February 3, 2004 an article entitled "College Park plan begins to take shape" was published in the Schoolcraft Connection regarding the development of the 43acre parcel of land south of the campus. After reading the article I thought beekeepers might be interested in one of the first business and educational ventures conducted on that site in the early days of the college. While this early project did not come close to providing the now anticipated \$800,000 annual income, the college did gain financially and educationally from our modest effort. Before I tell you how the college gained monetarily, let me provide some historical background that I remember as a first-year faculty member in the Schoolcraft College Biology Department.

In 1964, when classes first convened, the rural land occupied by the college was still being farmed by Bob Sutton whose wife's family owned the land purchased by the college. Their farm home was located on a hill at the southeast corner of Haggerty and 7 Mile Road. Bob farmed the land during the day and was in charge of the college custodial staff at night. At the south end of campus there stood an abandoned orchard; Interstate 275, east of the campus, did not even exist; and a beautiful beech-maple forest, located east of the campus, was used for fieldtrips by the biology department.

In 1965, the Biology Department requested permission to place 3 colonies of honeybees (an apiary) in the orchard area. The purpose was to study and research the honeybee as a laboratory animal because many biological principles are afforded by this insect. Periodically, students in zoology and biology would don protective clothing and observe bees in the colony setting as well as bring specimens into the laboratory; students were fascinated by the complex and highly sophisticated organization of these insects. Often students would come into my office after class to talk about bees and inquire about how they might start colonies. It was about this time that Dean Fred Stefanski was assigned to begin an Adult Education program (now called Continuing Education) and each department was asked to suggest courses that would be of interest to adults. The Biology Department suggested several courses including "Beginning Beekeeping" as one possibility. The beekeeping course was offered and a record number of 35 students were enrolled. We were amazed at the interest--an interest that may have been due in part to a sugar shortage and high sugar prices, that year, coupled with the widespread "return to nature" movement.
~ Roger Sutherland

SEMBA AND THE STATE FAIR

The annual Michigan State Fair is coming early this year – AUGUST 11-22.

This is our yearly opportunity to explain to Metro Detroit-area folks what beekeeping is about and to talk about the importance of bees. It really is a great chance to spread the word about bees, pollination and honey.

As you probably know, each year SEMBA has an educational display booth in the Agriculture Building which is staffed with two or three SEMBA members at a time. These volunteers hand out literature about bees, honey and recipes, answer questions, stamp bees on children's hands and talk about beekeeping. If we have several people scheduled for each time period, they can take turns getting a cup of coffee or looking at some of the fair exhibits.

We are asking all SEMBA members to volunteer to work a half-day period for one day during the fair— 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Help is also needed for set-up on August 10th and for take-down on the 22nd or 23rd. SEMBA members working the booth are given free parking and free entrance passes.

You may sign up at the SEMBA picnic on July 18th. Judy Forfinski, Ann Kerwin and Bill Sirr will be there to take your names. Or, you are welcome to call Ann with your time preference at 313-861-5760, or tear off the form below and mail it to Judy Forfinski, 2260 Northwood Place, Brighton, MI 48116.

~ **Ann Kerwin**

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 State Fair Volunteer Form  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Day and time period preference \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**SEMBA Bargain Corner**

**For Sale:**

- For Sale: New deep and medium supers, frames, bottom boards, inner and outer covers and New 1 and 5 gallon buckets with lids. Please **call Keith Lazar (H) 248-626-2483 (P) 248-815-5522.**
- For Sale: honey, **call Richard Enter, 734-769-9725**
- For sale: 6-5/8 medium supers with drawn comb, good condition. **Call Dick Gerathy, 313-533-2617 or e-mail: [djbeekeeper@msn.com](mailto:djbeekeeper@msn.com)**
- For sale: Four new 5-frame nuc boxes. **Call Dave Kriesch, at 810-395-2037** for details.
- For sale: Stainless steel sinks: one corner model, one single basin, one two-basin unit. **Call Roger Sutherland, 734-668-8568 or e-mail: [rsuther@hotmail.com](mailto:rsuther@hotmail.com)**
- Bottom boards, inner covers, hive entrance screens for transport, also new design bottom boards with screens for Varroa mite separation and inspection. Varroa mite assembly for converting your present boards. 1/8" grid hardware cloth, 36" wide by the foot or 18" x 16 1/4" pieces also for sale. **Please call Michael Kolodziej at 734-425-1396 or e mail [Mziejwood@aol.com](mailto:Mziejwood@aol.com)**

**Services:**

- New! Your very special honey can be put into straws in Roseville, MI. As little as 1/2 pound can be converted into about 40 straws. **Contact Jerry Dunbar 586-770-9953.**

**Wanted:**

- Wanted: 26 used full-depth supers with frames. Call David Zurek, 248-344-8842 or e-mail [djzurek@hotmail.com](mailto:djzurek@hotmail.com)

**Note:** Ads in Bargain Corner are free to SEMBA members. To place an ad, contact Susanne at [souxiseq2@msn.com](mailto:souxiseq2@msn.com) or phone 248-476-4991 or Roger Sutherland at [rsuther@hotmail.com](mailto:rsuther@hotmail.com) \* **Ads will be run for two consecutive newsletters**

Southeastern Michigan  
 Beekeepers' Association  
*Organized April 1, 1934*

  
 Oakland Beekeepers' Club

  
 Schoolcraft Beekeepers' Club



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