



ALAMANCE COUNTY BEEKEEPERS

August 2007

Meeting: Our annual Ice Cream Social will be at Don and Audrey Moore's Apiary on August 18th at 3 pm. We will have a variety of programs for you. From 3-4:30 pm we will have a field trip to the bee yard. Then from 4:30 to 5:30 we will learn to identify trees. Finally, we will all enjoy some sweets. Many thanks to Sam Finely for a very interesting article.

In the bee yard:

Start planning to re-queen in late August or early September. It is important to remove the old queen prior to putting the new caged queen in the hive. Once you put the new queen in leave her alone for several days, then do a quick check to make sure she has been released from the cage.

Honey in the news:

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved the first wound dressing that contains honey. The product is made with Manuka honey (from Australia). The dressing contains the honey, which is reported to have superior antiseptic properties.

Announcements:

Heritage Days at Cedarock Park will be held on August 25th. Talk to one of the Board members if you are interested in helping out.

Our September meeting will be on the 20th at 6:30 pm at Western Charcoal Steakhouse. Brandi Woods and Pat Jones will present "Honey Tasting: Various Honeys." If you have any interesting flavored honey that you would like to share please bring it to the meeting. Joel Jefferies will write the article.

Farm to Table will be happening in late September also. It is a great event to share beekeeping to young students.

I would like to share an article that I found in my daddy's files after he died. The article is from the Burlington Times News dated October 13, 1974.

Bees are Among Oldest Insects

Swarm of Bees in April
Worth a starched apron,
Swarm of Bees in May
Worth a stack of hay,
Swarm of Bees in June
Worth a silver spoon,
Swarm of bees in July
Ain't worth a fly.

So says an ancient rhyme of the country people. In this day and age many people have lost contact with nature, but it is not so with the beekeeper. He cooperates with nature on a scale that most people would not believe possible. Of those who coexist and drew sustenance from the natural world, perhaps the beeman's level of involvement is least understood.

And rightly so. It is difficult to imagine a more unusual relationship than this symbiosis between man and insect.

Bees live in almost every part of the world. But of the 10,000 species of bees, only the honeybees produce the wax and honey used by man. Bees are the only insects that make food for man.

Bees are among the oldest insects. Some who were trapped in amber, have been dated to be 50 million years old!

Prehistoric men were the first to discover that bees produced a delightful food and often robbed hives that they found in hollow trees. Later men discovered that they could put bees to work near their homes in crude hives. European farmers build straw hives called skeps, that looked like baskets turned upside down.

Commercial beekeeping began in the United states in the 1880's. In the present it has grown to a large and lucrative industry with beekeepers tending around 5 million hives which produce annually 250, 000, 000 pounds of honey.

Perhaps Alamance County's oldest and most knowledgeable bee farmer is Carl Noah, a retired 76 year old former carpenter. He has been working with bees for 55 years.

"I began working as a boy," he says in his distinctive, high-pitched voice. "I recon I was about 15 years old when I first started swarming bees."

"My father and my great grand-daddy both tended bees," he smiled. "So I guess it was just natural for me to take it up."

Noah, who once had 57 active hives now has 17. “I tried selling it for a while, but so many people wanted honey, I just couldn’t keep up with the demand,” he laughed. “So now I only give it to my daughters, good friends and grandchildren. They are crazy about it. My wife is too, but I just don’t care for it a bit. You know when you’ve had something like that all your life, you don’t put too much store by it.”

I learned about bees from practical experience,” said Noah. “I found out how they make hives by looking at the honeycombs we used to find in bee trees.”

“People used to ‘course’ bees to find where their combs were in the woods,” he said, creating a mini mystery for me.

Coursing, he explained involved tracking bees in flight to their hives. First, two leaves were smeared with honey, then a bee was captured in hands and allowed to gorge on the honey.

“You release the bee once he gets his fill and watch him until he starts on a straight course,” said Noah. Once the bee got his bearings, he went straight to the hive from whence the term “making a bee-line” evolved.

“It seems like it takes a bee one second to fly a yard,” Noah remembered. “Some fellers could go straight to the bee trees by watching the bee and timing him.”

Noah has seen a decline in the bee population from year to year. He puts most of the blame on insecticides, but says that dysentery sometimes destroys hives too.

It seems the encroachment of man affects nature at every turn and bees are no exception when the natural environment is changed. But, since they have survived for 50 million years, the chances are good that they’ll be here at least as long as the men who admire and use them!

Submitted by Sam Finley