



SEMBA NEWS

Volume 19, Number 4 Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers' Association
June - July 2009

SEMBA SUMMER PICNIC

When: Sunday, July 12, 2009

Where: MSU Tollgate Education Center, Novi, Michigan, 8115 Meadowbrook Road (corner of 12 Mile and Meadowbrook).

1:30 p.m. - Potluck dinner. Please bring a dish to pass, your own table service, chairs, and a card table. Beverages will be provided.

A grill will be available for cooking hamburgers and hot dogs that **you provide**.

3:00 p.m. - Tour of the MSU Tollgate Farm and demonstration and judging of the skeps completed by the skep-making workshop participants.

SEMBA SKEP-MAKING WORKSHOP

On Saturday, May 23rd, members of the skep-making workshop met to cut rye straw on the Robert Schultz farm near Ypsilanti. Each of these members will be drying and preparing the rye for a workshop to be held during the Novi Country Fair at Tollgate Farm on Saturday, June 20th from 10 am to 3 pm. The public is invited. Participants will continue to work on skep construction at home and return to Tollgate on July 12 to finish and display their skeps.

SEMBA COMMUNITY OUTREACH PRESENTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

At the Sunday, April 26th meeting of SEMBA, committee chair, John Kates, announced that a teaching hive, a set of Dadant honey bee prints, and observation hives are now available for SEMBA members to borrow for presentations. The observation hives will be available in three separate locations throughout the Southeastern Michigan region.

If you wish to borrow any of these teaching items, it is important to make your request in advance so that a hive will be ready for pick-up. Call or E-mail John Kates at 313-273-8214 or agingwell@hotmail.com

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In the February 2009 issue of *Bee Culture*, Ann Harman's article, "A Defining Moment", poses the question: Is hobbyist the best description there is for a beekeeper with a few hives? Does the term hobbyist put us in the same category as a stamp collector, a golfer or fisherman?

In the US, hobbyists account for the largest number of beekeepers. Whether beekeepers have two hives or 2000 colonies, they have the same problems and their bees pollinate the same flowers, only on a smaller numerical scale. Hobbyist bees are distributed more evenly across the terrain so perhaps we are getting more efficient pollination and queen-drone reproduction from these bees.

Hobby beekeepers often demean themselves by saying, "I am just a hobbyist". Likewise, the sideliner repeats the same line. Ann Harman believes we need some new terms for beekeepers and she challenged all beekeepers to come up with terms that will give importance to all beekeepers.

At the 71st SEMBA Beekeeping Conference, the following survey was distributed and the numbers listed indicate preferences for a name.

DEFINING BEEKEEPERS BY THE NUMBERS OF COLONIES MAINTAINED (Check one or add your suggestion)

Totally dependent upon beekeeping for income

Suggested name:

Commercial 13

Professional 4

Large -scale 5

Dependent upon beekeeping for a portion of income

Suggested name:

Sideliner 3

Semi-professional 4

Medium-scale 13

Small-scale commercial 2

Not dependent upon beekeeping for income

Suggested name:

Hobbyist 3
Amateur 4
Small-scale 22

Other names suggested: Diversified, Beekeeper
Artisan, non-commercial.

Note: (We would like to include your opinion on naming beekeepers before we pass this information to Ann Harman.)

AFRICAN HONEY BEES FOUND IN UTAH

According to the AP, African honey bees have been found in southern Utah. Seven hives, three feral and four managed hives, were found in Washington and Kane counties containing AHB. All confirmed hives have been destroyed.

~ AP-February 12, 2009.

HONEY BEES CAN GET HOOKED ON COCAINE, RESEARCH FINDS

Cocaine repels many insects — which is why the coca plant makes the chemical in the first place. But in a surprising new finding, U.S. and Australian researchers report that honey bees are susceptible to the drug's insidious lure. They become addicted and even suffer withdrawal symptoms when they no longer have access.

The findings, reported in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*, might help explain the "waggle dance" used by foraging bees to tell their hive-mates where to find food and even provide hints about how the drug works in the human brain.

Entomologist Andrew Barron of Macquarie University in Sydney trained a hive of bees to forage at a nearby supply of sugar water. Then he applied minute quantities of cocaine to the backs of foragers. He and neuroscientist Gene Robinson of the University of Illinois then found that the bees' dance remained tightly controlled, providing accurate directions to the food source. But the insects now demonstrated an unusually strong response to food, acting as though a weak solution of sugar water was actually a much better food source and communicating their findings much more enthusiastically to hive-mates.

The bees grew tolerant of the cocaine, meaning continually higher doses were required to achieve the same effect. But if they were given it for a week and then refused access, they were severely affected, becoming much less able to learn new tasks, such as distinguishing between two scents, the team found. Robinson previously had shown that a chemical called octopamine in

the brains of bees influences their altruistic waggle dancing. The new findings suggest that cocaine interacts with this chemical system, accentuating its effects.

~ *Los Angeles Times*, February, 2009

GENOME BUZZ – HONEY BEE DNA RAISES SOCIAL QUESTIONS

Scientists have officially unveiled the code of the western honey bee, the first genome to be sequenced for an animal with ultra-stratified societies.

The bees are among the select species in which a few individuals reproduce while others in the colony raise the young and do the chores.

The honey bee genome, the whole sequence of its DNA building blocks, shows some patterns that fit old ideas of social living plus some patterns that demand new thinking, reports the consortium of bee-genome researchers.

The scientists report the genome's highlights in the Oct. 26 *Nature*. More than 40 other analyses also appeared in journals including *Science*, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences and *Genome Research*. The sequencing of the honey bee genome is unquestionably a historic event," comments Ben Oldroyd, a bee specialist at the University of Sydney in Australia.

The honey bee's genome is the fifth to be sequenced among insects, says Gene Robinson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a founding member of the bee consortium. Geneticists first did the lab fruit fly, Drosophila melanogaster, and have since published reports on another fruit fly species, the malaria mosquito, and the silkworm. The novelties of the honey bee, *Apis mellifera*, are its 170 genes for odor receptors. The lab fruit fly has 60. "Social life relies heavily on smell," notes Robinson.

The bees, however, carry fewer known immune system genes than the lab fruit fly or malaria mosquito does. That was a surprise, says Robinson, since social life brings extra risks of disease. Perhaps the honey bees compensate through particularly healthful behaviors, such as grooming, or perhaps some undiscovered genes drive their innate immunity. "Either way, it will be interesting," says Robinson.

The honey bees' famous royal jelly, the food

that sets a larva on the road to becoming a queen instead of a worker, comes from proteins encoded by nine genes. The researchers compared them with other species' genes and concluded that they evolved from the so-called yellow gene, which plays a role in fruit fly pigment, for example.

In several groups of genes, such as those for circadian rhythms, the honey bee looks more like a vertebrate than the other sequenced insects. The honey bee also uses a full set of vertebrate like genes for enzymes that regulate the action of other genes. Lab fruit flies use a different system for regulating genes.

Even though honey bees differ radically from fruit flies in their sex determination—honey bee males develop from unfertilized eggs and thus have only one copy of each chromosome, whereas a fruit fly male gets chromosomes from both a father and mother--the two species' sex-related genes still show similarities.

Honey bees can perform remarkable feats of learning and memory, says Adrian Dyer of Monash University in Clayton, Australia. He predicts that having the honey bee genome in hand will spur "insight into how complex behavior patterns can arise in organisms with relatively simple brains."

The new research should also boost efforts to breed hardier honey bees, says Robinson. He says that U.S. commercial honey bee populations have shrunk by up to a third in the past 20 years, mostly because of an invasion of bee-killing mites.

~*Science News*, October 28, 2006, Vol. 170

BEE HIVE THEFT ON THE INCREASE

Nationwide there has been an increase of reports of stolen bee hives. Michigan is no exception. Recently SEMBA member Michael Sautter reported that three of his hives with newly installed packages were missing. A fourth hive was dropped during the heist. Michael's hives were in the Taylor area. If you have any information about these hives, Michael can be reached at 313-383-4595, or mnasautter@ameritech.net

With the high cost of package bees, nucs and equipment, thefts may be on the increase, so take extra precautions.

MICHIGAN POLLINATOR WEEK PROPOSED

Michigan Rep. Mayes offered the following **House Resolution No. 79.**

A resolution to recognize the importance of pollinators to ecosystem health and agriculture in Michigan and the value of partnership efforts that increase awareness about pollinators and build support for protecting and sustaining pollinators by designating June 21-27, 2009, as Michigan Pollinator Week in Michigan. Whereas, Bees, butterflies, and other pollinator species have a critically important role in agriculture in Michigan and help to produce a healthy and affordable food supply and sustain ecosystem health; and Whereas, Pollinators help to produce an estimated one out of every three bites of food consumed in the United States and to reproduce at least 80 percent of flowering plants; and Whereas, Commodities produced in partnership with animal pollinators generate significant income for agricultural producers, with domestic honeybees alone pollinating an estimated \$14.6 billion worth of crops in the United States each year produced on more than 2 million acres; and Whereas, It is in the strong economic interest of agricultural producers and consumers in Michigan as well as the United States to help ensure a healthy, sustainable pollinator population; and Whereas, Possible declines in the health and population of pollinators pose what could be a significant threat to global food webs, the integrity of biodiversity, and human health; now, therefore, be it Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of this legislative body designate the week of June 21-27, 2009, as Michigan Pollinator Week in the state of Michigan; and be it further, Resolved, That we recognize the partnership role that pollinators play in agriculture and healthy ecosystems and applaud the cooperative and collaborative conservation efforts that increase awareness about the important role of pollinators and build support for protecting and sustaining pollinators.

**SEMBA PICNIC, JULY 12 2009
MSU TOLLGATE EDUCATION CENTER,
NOVI, MI
(See page 1 for details)**

**MICHIGAN STATE FAIR, AUGUST 27-
SEPTEMBER 7, 2009**

SEMBA needs members to maintain the SEMBA booth. Contact Ann Kerwin, 313-861-5760 or Bill SIRR, 248-544-8619.

2009 MICHIGAN STATE FAIR

August 27-September 7. **No entries accepted after postmarked date of August 1. (This is a new ruling.)**

Now is the time to prepare your honey and beeswax entries for the Michigan State Fair. There are no new regulations for 2009 but you are reminded of two new regulations adopted in 2008.

- (1) Apiary – Section 3 will be limited to 1 entry per class, per individual and 2 entries per class per household.
- (2) Containers for class 8665 –display of four 1 pound jars of creamed granulated honey--must be in G.C.I. style standard honey glass jars. (These containers are manufactured by the Gamber Glass Container Company.)

For information on fees, rules and regulations, entry form and list of apiculture entries visit:

http://www.michigan.gov/mistatefair_click on Livestock/Agriculture, click on Agriculture Department

Ann Kerwin has been attending meetings of the State Fair Advisory Board to determine the future of the Michigan State Fair. Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm has stated that due to the present economic conditions there will be no State Fairs. Declining attendance, cost of building maintenance and other expenses are concerns addressed by the Board which is considering three possibilities: 1) Privatize the fair; 2) Rent out the fair; 3) The Department of Management & Budget Real Estate Division could put out a "Request for Proposals".

Will there be a Michigan State Fair in 2010? No one knows.

A SURVEY OF HONEY BEE LOSSES, SEPTEMBER 08 TO APRIL 09

The Apiary Inspectors of America (AIA) and USDA-ARS Beltsville Honey Bee Lab conducted a survey between September 2008 and early April 2009 to estimate colony losses across the country. Over 20% of the country's estimated 2.3 million colonies were surveyed. A total loss of 28.6% of managed honey bee colonies was recorded. This compares to losses of 35.8% and 31.8% recorded respectively in the winters of 2007/2008 and 2006/2007. While a decrease in total losses is encouraging, the rate of loss remains unsustainable as the average operational loss increased from 31% in 2007/2008 to 34.2% in the 2008/2009 winter. Source: Mike Hansen, Michigan State Apiarist.

SEMBA Bargain Corner

Honey bee locations available:

Land owner on Whittaker Rd at Paint Creek in South Ypsilanti Township Contact Jerry Ward, jerry@jerryandtabby.com

Land owner on Inkster between Sibley and King. Contact Carol Valentine, 734-782-2179.

Landowner on Spencer Rd in Brighton Twp, between Pleasant Valley and Kensington. Contact Amy Han 810-229-7847 or 248-974-4780 or amyhan@sbcglobal.net

Trinity Presbyterian Church on Gottfredson Road, between Joy and Ann Arbor Road. Contact Peter Schriemer: 734-358-0325 or peter@beyondyourdoorstep.com

Services:

- Honey bee removal service. **Call Don Schram**, 248-310-8205.

Southeastern Michigan
Beekeepers' Association
Organized April 1, 1934

SEMBA Membership
5488 Warren Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 58105

Oakland Beekeepers' Club



Schoolcraft Beekeepers' Club

