



# SEMBA NEWS

Volume 21 Number 1 Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers' Association  
January 2011

## SEMBA WINTER MEETING

**When:** Sunday, February 13, 2011

**Where:** Lower Waterman Center, Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road Rd., Livonia

**Potluck: 1:30 p.m.** Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Coffee and tea will be provided by SEMBA.

Bring beekeeping items to sell, swap or give away. New hive wood ware will be available for purchase.

**Program: 3:00 p.m.**

"Understanding and Complying with Beekeeping Ordinances" (See program note below.)

## PROGRAM NOTE FOR FEBRUARY MEETING

Beekeeping ordinances vary greatly from one municipality to another. Some do allow beekeeping while others specifically ban the practice citing it as a public or private nuisance. There are some municipalities which have no ordinances at all dealing with honey bees. Clay Ottoni, attorney and beekeeper, will help us sort out the meaning of several ordinances provided by our members and sent to him by **February 1, 2011**. Therefore, we are asking you to obtain a copy of the beekeeping ordinance from your municipality and send it to Clay by postal mail, P.O. Box 300611, Waterford, MI 48330-0611 or by e-mail to [ceottoni@gmail.com](mailto:ceottoni@gmail.com)

**Please note that many of the ordinances for cities and municipalities are available on line at: <http://www.law.msu.edu/library/substantive/local.html>**

## REMINDERS

March 11 & 12, 2011, MBA's ANR Week Beekeeping Conference, Kellogg Center, E. Lansing, Michigan.

March 19, 2011, SEMBA's 73<sup>rd</sup> Beekeeping Conference, Schoolcraft College, Livonia, MI.

## STAR THISTLE CONTROVERSY HEATS UP

~ Source: The Michigan Beekeepers' Association web site, November 23, 2010---

As many beekeepers in Michigan know, there is a plan to release in Michigan several types of insects as a form of biocontrol for star thistle (spotted knapweed). There is considerable controversy as to the impact of this plan, as many beekeepers, particularly those in the northern portions of the state, rely on this very prolific plant as a source of honey. It has been estimated that the value of star thistle for honey production could reach \$40 million annually. While the plan includes overplanting of star thistle stands with native wild flowers, there is general acknowledgement that this remedial step may not fully replace the "value" of star thistle when it comes to honey production.

A group of beekeepers who feel directly affected by this plan have raised concerns. As a result, they were invited to participate in a November 29, 2010 meeting. (Previously, at an MDA hearing in April 2010, MBA President Roger Hoopingarner testified on the spotted knapweed 'star thistle' issue.) After the November 29<sup>th</sup> meeting, Hoopingarner was asked by Terry Klein to provide information on his stance. The following provides a portion of his position:

"This letter is in response to your request for information regarding my stance in defending Michigan beekeepers at the spring 2010 meeting where the decision was made to release two additional species of insects for the biocontrol of spotted knapweed (star thistle). The thrust of the meeting, in my opinion, was that Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ohio had released these insects with success and that Michigan should follow suit. The basic reason for the introduction is to reduce the stands of spotted knapweed as it is an introduced, invasive weed, and that the managers of natural areas would like its removal. Since these insects have already been released in surrounding states their entry into Michigan is only a matter of time. I pointed out, at the meeting that this plant species supplied a minimum of 40 million dollars a year to Michigan's beekeeper.

“Dr. Landis acknowledged this fact, and his proposal included the over-planting of the test sites with several species of native, pollen and nectar producing plants.

“With this knowledge, I agreed with the others at the meeting, to go ahead with the release of the insects. While the release in Michigan may speed up the process of elimination of spotted knapweed as a major honey source, its fate is predetermined by the release in other nearby states. The plan of planting native plant species to replace the knapweed is a good, even if unproven, idea. I believe that this makes the Michigan introduction plan a better one, and their inclusion in the plan recognizes by Dr. Landis, and others, that honey bees and Michigan beekeepers are important.”

Dr. Hoopingarner’s entire statement can be read by going to <http://www.michiganbees.org/>

### **THE MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU ANNUAL MEETING WAS HELD DECEMER 1-4, 2010**

Attendees as delegates to this meeting representing Washtenaw County, District 3, were Mary and Roger Sutherland. At this annual meeting, the proposed resolutions submitted by the Policy Development Committee of the Michigan Farm Bureau were debated. Resolution (SR 28) MICHIGAN BEE INDUSTRY reads as follows:

“Honeybees are an important resource to Michigan agriculture, both for the honey they produce and the pollination of crops. Some pesticides used on crops can harm honey bees and may even destroy whole colonies. We urge beekeepers, farmers and commercial pesticide applicators to cooperate to reduce the loss of honey bees in Michigan from pesticides. We support research efforts to find practical, effective methods to control or reduce the infection of varroa mites, tracheal mites, small hive beetles in honey bees and colony collapse disorder. Beekeeping (apiary) is a specialized form of agriculture and should be recognized as such by local, state and national regulatory bodies. Imported honey must meet U.S. standards and follow the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) system.”

An amendment to Resolution (SR 28), Michigan Bee Industry, approved by the delegates, reads: “Michigan Farm Bureau disapproves any effort to eradicate spotted knapweed (star thistle) in the state of Michigan.”

### **SEMBA PHOTOGRAPHER**

In response to SEMBA Webmaster Tom Lisk’s request, we now have an official SEMBA photographer - MaryCarole Haering. Thank you, Mary Carole.

### **MORE AFRICAN HONEY BEES FOUND IN GEORGIA**

ALBANY, GA -- Two more colonies of Africanized “killer” honey bees have been found in Dougherty County near the area where a man died from an attack in October. Since 73-year-old Curtis Davis’ death, the Georgia Department of Agriculture has monitored swarms and tested suspect bees. 90 samples were tested, confirming two more colonies in Southwest Georgia.

The Department of Agriculture is still unsure of how the Africanized honey bees arrived in Dougherty County. Both newly discovered colonies have been destroyed.

Africanized honey bees are occasionally found on cargo ships that come from South or Central America. Beekeepers are the best defense Georgians have against Africanized honey bees, according to the Department of Agriculture and the University of Georgia.

State agriculture officials say budget cuts have affected the Georgia Department of Agriculture’s ability to offer services but that they are evaluating how to best monitor for Africanized honey bees in 2011. The department plans to resume trapping in middle to late February when the bees become more active.

~Catch The Buzz, December 2010

### **INDIA- 600 HONEY BEE COLONIES IN A TREE**

A Banyan tree near Bangalore, India, which houses over 600 honey bee colonies, is all set to enter the Guinness Book of World Records. Located at Ramagovindapura, near Nandagudi, which is 36 kilometres from Bangalore on Chintamani Road, this tree houses the highest number of honey bee colonies. The centre of apiculture studies and environmental specialists have also proposed the site, also called Apis Dorsata bee nest site, to be recognised as a world heritage site so that it could be preserved, and awareness about the significance of the bee colony can be created.

~ApiNews, No. 65, November 2010

### **MBA MEMBERSHIP THROUGH SEMBA**

Membership in SEMBA qualifies you to join MBA at the discounted rate of \$25-single or \$30-family. Membership in MBA is now paid directly to the MBA treasurer. To join or renew MBA,

make your check payable to MBA, indicate the name of your local club on the check, and send it to the MBA treasurer, Steve Tilmann, 2441 N. Stine Rd., Charlotte, MI 48813.

### **NEW PROCEDURE FOR HONEY BEE MAGAZINE ORDERS**

To order beekeeping magazines at bee club discounted prices, call the publishers directly and indicate to them the name of your local club. For *Bee Culture* call: 1-800-289-7668. For *American Bee Journal* call: 1-888-922-1293 or 1-217-847-3324.

### **ADVANCED BEEKEEPING CLASSES TO BE OFFERED**

For the first time, SEMBA is offering a series of advanced beekeeping classes. Topics to be covered will include: raising your own queens; selecting for better breeding stock; making nucs (each student will receive a free queen cell for his/her nuc); introducing a queen to a laying worker hive; overwintering nucs; removing bees from walls and trees; catching swarms; rendering wax; and making more advanced equipment.

Prerequisites for taking the advanced classes are: must be a current SEMBA member with at least four years of beekeeping experience or have completed the SEMBA beginning beekeeping course; have at least one active hive from which to make nucs; have two nuc boxes; and have your own queen-marking equipment.

~Submitted by Winn Harless (734) 543-2914

### **73rd SEMBA BEEKEEPING CONFERENCE AT SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE**

SEMBA, in cooperation with the Schoolcraft College Beekeepers' Club and the Oakland Beekeepers' Club, will hold its 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Beekeeping Conference on Saturday, March 19, 2011 from +8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., in the VisTaTech Center at Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, MI. Major speakers will be Roy Hendrickson, an Ohio commercial beekeeper, and Roger Hoopingarner, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University and former Apicultural Specialist, Michigan State University. Sessions during the day-long program are designed for all beekeepers, both novice and experienced, or anyone interested in honey bees. Admission is free to SEMBA members. A \$10.00 registration fee is charged at-the-door for non-members. A potluck lunch is held at noon, with coffee and tea provided. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. The complete program and other details of the

conference will be listed in the February SEMBA Newsletter.

### **TOP BAR HIVE PLANS AVAILABLE**

The January, 2011 issue of *Make Magazine* features plans for a top bar hive:

<http://www.velacreations.com/bees.html>

~Submitted by: Judy Durfy

### **MID WINTER REFLECTION ON THE PAST SEASON**

It's mid winter and I'm sure many of you, like myself, are enduring some serious beekeeping withdrawal symptoms in these cold dark days of winter. I have my bee magazines and have attended a couple of SEMBA planning meetings where I could talk with other beeks, which has a little, but what really lifted my spirits was seeing the bees flying from all my hives and nucs during the warm-up the first of January.

Like most beekeepers, I don't like sharing my short comings, but we're all friends here, right? (Just don't tell anyone else.) As we all know, last summer was bad for bees. It started out okay, but after I harvested my honey in July, the hot dry weather of July/Sept set in. When I put on honey supers, I don't bother my bees much at all, so after I extracted, I put the supers back on for the fall flow. I also made 6 nucs to over winter. Little did I know we were in the start of a drought that would last the rest of the season! I did notice that the bees weren't filling up the supers, but they did do a nice job of cleaning them.

What really woke me up was when I checked my nucs in late August; they all had queens, some sealed brood, but no honey or pollen reserves! My other hives weren't much better, so on went the protein patties and sugar syrup. Man, did they go through the feed. I fed 'till late November and some hives were still on the light side. This reminds me of what Kim Flottum once wrote, "Take care of the bees in July that are going to take care of the winter bees."

I promise, Kim, I'll do better next year. I hope all of you have a better year as well.

~ Mike Siarkowski

## Genetic weapon developed against Varroa mite

To tackle this particularly nasty pest, bee researchers and parasite specialists came together to harness a method called RNA interference (RNAi). The treatment is now at an early, experimental stage but could be developed into an anti-Varroa medicine. The method enables researchers to 'switch off' genes in the Varroa mite, a parasite that targets the honey bee. The scientists say this could eventually be used to force the mites to 'self-destruct'. This involves putting a tiny chunk of genetic code into an organism. This code cancels out a specific gene, essentially switching it off. The researchers added this piece of genetic material to a solution that they soaked the Varroa mites in. They described in the journal *Parasites and Vectors* that, via this soaking, their experimental treatment found its way into the mites and switched off the gene they were targeting. Dr Alan Bowman from the University of Aberdeen who led the research said, "In the experiment, we've targeted a non-lethal gene. Because we were able to monitor it, we have successfully silenced it. Now, we'll be looking to target genes which, when we silence them, the mite won't be able to function." In the coming years, the researchers hope to develop this into a medicine, which could be added to the bees' food in order to protect them against Varroa. "The mites hide in the food that is being provided by the other bees in the colony for honey bee larvae," Dr Budge explained. "They will hide for several days in that food, so [a beekeeper could] put the treatment into the brood food and the mite, through its normal behaviour, would come into contact with that treatment." This could solve a conundrum for beekeepers - how to tackle the mites without damaging the bees they live so intimately with. "It would be completely selective - it wouldn't target the bees and wouldn't affect any other pollinating insects, such as ladybirds." Professor Francis Ratnieks, a bee researcher from the University of Sussex, cautioned that it would be a long time before this technique could be applied in the control of Varroa. "It may be possible to use gene knockout techniques such as RNAi to learn more about the physiology of pests and to use this to develop ways of controlling them, maybe by the development and application of novel pesticides," he said. "But to do this is a huge undertaking involving [many years] of testing and certification."

~Contributed by Judy Durfy

Source: *Parasites and Vectors*

<http://www.parasitesandvectors.com/content/3/1/73>

### SEMBA Bargain Corner

#### **For Sale:**

- ~72 frame stainless steel extractor. New drive wheel and motor, \$1200. Call Blanche Barber , 248-634-7017.
- ~Glass jars that hold 2 lbs of honey. Each case has 12 jars. \$5 per case. Call Rich Marshall, 734-759-1030, or BettyBeeApiary@gmail.com
- ~Bring your new and used beekeeping items to the February 13, 2011 meeting to sell, swap or to give away.
- ~Nuc boxes and custom-made beekeeping jackets. Call Don Schram, 248-310-8205.
- ~ Bee Keeping Equipment, [keithmlazar@hotmail.com](mailto:keithmlazar@hotmail.com), Keith Lazar C 248-361-1710.

#### **Wanted:**

- ~Location for a few hives in the Macomb County/Oakland County area. Maybe around Imlay City, too. Call Allen Coin at 586-731-4658. *If no answer then please leave a message.*
- ~ MBA needs volunteers to help with the spring meeting. Contact Steve Tilmann, [treasurer@mba-bees.org](mailto:treasurer@mba-bees.org)

Bargain Corner ads are free to SEMBA members. To place an ad contact Roger Sutherland, [rsuther@hotmail.com](mailto:rsuther@hotmail.com)

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

SEMBA Membership  
5488 Warren Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-9425

Oakland Beekeepers' Club



Schoolcraft Beekeepers' Club



Seven Ponds Beekeepers' Club

