



# SEMBA NEWS

Volume 21 Number 6 Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers' Association

October, 2011

## SEMBA'S OAKLAND CHAPTER MEETING

When: Tuesday, October 4, 2011 at 7:30 pm

Where: E.L. Johnson Nature Center, 3325 Franklin Rd., Bloomfield Township, MI.

Program:

"Honey of a Summer 2011". Honey tasting and discussion of honey flow this summer.

Refreshments are welcome

## SEMBA ANNUAL MEETING (PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT)

When: Sunday, November 13, 2011 at 1:30 pm

Where: Lower Waterman Center, Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road Rd., Livonia, MI. (Please park in the North parking lot and enter through the VisTaTech entrance.)

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

**Program: 2:30 p.m.**

Agenda:

Committee reports  
Election of officers  
Beekeeping class graduation

Other program details will be included in the next SEMBA Newsletter.

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

## 2011 SEMBA BEEKEEPING COURSE FOR BEGINNERS CONCLUDES

A message from Richard Mendel, a Beginning Beekeeping course instructor:

*"Congratulations to everyone for such a successful hive moving weekend. That was the last big hurdle in your quest to becoming a Beginning Beekeeper. If you moved your hives on Friday night or Saturday morning, you have experienced the unpredictability of Mother Nature and some of the challenges you will deal with as true guardians of our tireless little pollinators. It is interesting to note how a little adversity will bring out the, 'I can get through this' energy in each of us. We, the instructors, wish to voice a big "JOB WELL DONE" cheer to everyone for your spirit, heart and willingness to put your head down and into the wind, and move forward with the task in hand."*

A message from Jane Reed, a Beginning Beekeeping course member:

*Dear Beginner Beekeeper Community,*

*"It's hard to believe six months have passed since that first bee conference weekend in March where we all sat wide eyed and overwhelmed learning some of the new words and equipment associated with beekeeping and hoping we had what it took to keep bees. And now here we are amusing, educating and impressing others with our bee knowledge - and accepting the realization that a lifetime will not be long enough to know it all. Nevertheless, in just a few weekends we will graduate to continue our bee-adventures."*

## RETAIL HONEY SALES

As the contact person for the sembabees.org web site, I receive a number of requests for names of beekeepers who sell raw, unfiltered local honey from the area in which they live. If you are a SEMBA member interested in having such requests directed to you, please inform me by calling 734-668-8568 or e-mail [rsuther30@gmail.com](mailto:rsuther30@gmail.com)

## WHITE HOUSE BEES DELIVER RECORD CROP

The Single hive, which has produced a massive 225 pounds of honey this year — is apparently located in a sweet urban spot with little competition.

As a second-year beekeeper, allow me to express some genuine awe over the honey production of the White House bees. The single hive, located on the South Lawn near Michelle Obama's vegetable garden, generated a record 225.5 pounds of honey this year — up from 134 pounds in 2009 and 184 pounds in 2010. "It's just craziness," White House carpenter and beekeeper Charlie Brants told U.S. News. "They really did well this year."

No kidding. In my first year, I managed to barely harvest 40 pounds of honey. I'll be lucky if my scales hit three digits this year — and that's with hives located in the rural countryside with access to fields and fields of wildflowers. Ironically, according to Kim Flottum, editor of *Bee Culture*, that may actually put me at a disadvantage.

"Urban colonies in a long-season location, near lots of water and lots of ornamental plantings, with little competition and almost no pest pressure seem to do quite well," he told the magazine. "The White House hive is in honey bee heaven as far as location is concerned."

An analysis of the honey earlier this year by Texas A&M University revealed the dominant pollen source as clover — along with dogwood, cherry, crepe myrtle, elm, magnolia trees, honeysuckle and even poison ivy. Brandts says this year's crop tasted the same, but with hints of basswood.

It's likely that the White House kitchen will once again make use of the sweet stuff for official state dinners and the limited edition "White House Honey Ale." Michelle Obama has also made it a tradition to present the honey as gifts in special glass jars to foreign leaders and guests.

~Source: *Mother Nature Network*, Aug. 25, 2011

## CRITTERVISION: SEE

### LIKE A BEE

When a bee flies into your garden, it doesn't see what you and I see. Flowers leap out from much darker-looking leafy backgrounds, and they have ultraviolet-reflecting landing strips that show the way to the nectar. Some spiders might even have evolved to exploit these displays, spinning UV patterns into their webs that could work to fool a bee into thinking that it was making a beeline for a tasty treat.

If the bee manages to resist the spider's trap, she finds her way back home by checking the

pattern of polarised light in the sky. All this is seen through the pixellated window of mosaic vision, with each unit of the insect's compound eye providing one of the 5000 dots that make up an image.

It's a world of vision that it is difficult to imagine, but we might get some clues from people with aphakia: a condition in which the lens of the eye - which normally absorbs UV light before it can reach the retina - has been removed in surgery or lost in an accident. Bill Stark, an insect-vision researcher at Saint Louis University in Missouri, lost the lens in his left eye after an accident when he was 10 years old. He says he can see UV light as a kind of "whitish blue", which he would see washing the scenery at a funfair, for example. Because the sight in his left eye is not great, however, he cannot see the subtle patterns in flowers that bees do.

Mind you, even if Stark's vision was corrected his experience of UV could not match that of a bee, says Lars Chittka, a sensory and behavioural ecologist at Queen Mary, University of London. "Bees have a specific UV receptor - humans don't," he explains. "These people see UV with their blue receptors, because the sensitivity of our blue receptors extends weakly into the ultraviolet. But humans can't perceive UV as a separate colour."

The complexity of the bee's colour system is nevertheless comparable to human vision, since, like humans, they only have three colour receptors - for UV, blue and green, compared with the human set-up of blue, green and red. This means that false-colour photographs, in which red has been filtered out and UV has been added in a colour visible to human eyes, gives us a close approximation of the patterns a bee sees.

Besides their UV vision, bees can also detect the polarisation of light. "Just like you see red from blue they see one polarity from another," says Stark. Air molecules in the atmosphere scatter photons to create a pattern of polarised light arranged around the sun, for example. This helps bees to navigate by the position of the sun even when the sky is cloudy. Since polarised light is measurable using relatively simple detectors, we can again create images of the kind of information they can pick up.

If a bee's-eye view of the world seems alien to our own, it is nothing compared with that of some insects and birds, which have four, five or even six colour receptors, allowing them to perceive colours that it is impossible for us to

experience or even imagine. For them, the three-colour world of human vision would be as dull as greyscale.

~Source: *New Scientist Life* 22 August 2011 by Caroline Williams

### **SEMBA SWARM REPORT FOR 2011**

The [sembabees.org](http://sembabees.org) website now lists 32 SEMBA members who do swarm removals in thirteen counties in S.E. Michigan. In a recent survey, 25 of those beekeepers reported a total of 37 swarms retrieved from April 23 to September 18, 2011 This compares to 155 in 2009 and 153 in 2010. There were several reports of swarms of first-year hives.

### **MICHIGAN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION (MBA) FALL MEETING SCHEDULED**

The MBA Fall Conference will be held on December 2 and 3 this year at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing Registration is now open (early registrants get a discount!). More details will be posted on the MBA web site: <http://www.michiganbees.org/>

### **MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2011 SEMBA PLANNING MEETING**

Present were: Don Schram, Bill Sirr, Tom Lisk, Rich Wieske, Winn Harless, Clay Ottoni, Keith Lazar, Richard Mendel, Roger Sutherland, Eric Sink, Ann Kerwin, Mary Sutherland.

#### **Announcements:**

A memorial contribution in honor of Larry Yates was made to the Fremont Area Foundation.

Forty-two swarms have been reported this year. There were 145 last year.

There are hives at the Henry Ford Nature Center and Rich Wieske is advising the care takers.

At the SEMBA summer picnic, a cooking contest was held. Ann Kerwin was the only contestant.

Schoolcraft College has authorized SEMBA's free use of facilities for 2 years.

SEMBA by-laws have been amended and membership cards are not required.

MBA's Annual Conference will be held Dec.2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kellogg Center in E.Lansing.

Treasurer's report from October 1, 2010 to September 8, 2011: Income, \$5,458, Expenses, \$3,559.54. Members Randy and Sandy Graichen have volunteered to audit the books.

A committee was set up to coordinate the 2012 Beekeeping Conference. Members are: Keith Lazar, Don Schram, Richard Mendel and Roger Sutherland (advisory). The conference date is March 17, 2012 and Dewey Caron will be the keynote speaker. Richard Mendel will contact Tom Seeley as a possible speaker for 2013.

SEMBA's Fall Meeting is Sept.18, 2:30 pm. (No Potluck.)

SEMBA's Annual Meeting will be Sunday, Nov.13, 2011. A potluck dinner will start at 1:30 pm and the program will begin at 2:30 pm. The speaker may be Mike Hansen. The agenda will include election of officers. Nominations were made for President, Clay Ottoni; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Pres., Richard Mendel; Secretary, Randy and Sandy Graichen, Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

The 2011 Advanced Bee Class Graduation will be held. It was Moved, Seconded and Approved to have beekeeping courses (advanced and beginning) in 2012 with the same financial terms. 80% of class revenue, after expenses, goes to instructors, and 20% retained by SEMBA. Instructors will set numbers, times, etc. and provide a syllabus.

### **EDUCATIONAL DISPLAY ITEMS WANTED**

SEMBA member Catherine Lee Howard, is seeking beekeeping educational display materials to use in school and group demonstrations. Contact her at 734-697-4481.

## SEPTEMBER SEMBA MEETING REPORT

The September 18, 2011 SEMBA meeting, held at Schoolcraft College, attracted 45 beekeepers who heard three excellent programs.

Eileen Dickinson presented a power-point program on the Top-Bar Hive, covering construction, maintenance, advantages and disadvantages. If you wish to obtain more information check out the book *Barefoot Beekeeping* by Philip Chandler. If you go online, the following sites will provide more information:

[www.biobees.com](http://www.biobees.com), [www.stellerapiaries.com](http://www.stellerapiaries.com), [www.beethinking.com](http://www.beethinking.com), [www.thegardenhive.com](http://www.thegardenhive.com)  
[www.goldstarhoneybees.com](http://www.goldstarhoneybees.com), [www.backyardhive.com](http://www.backyardhive.com), [www.themelissagarden.com](http://www.themelissagarden.com)

Charles Durbin demonstrated his Warre' hive that he constructed. One of his Warre' hives is maintained at the nature center in Farmington Hills, MI. Two other hives are maintained in Ann Arbor. Charles stressed the low maintenance advantages of minimal visits to the hive. Harvesting honey, feeding, controlling moisture and other maintenance measures were also discussed. You can learn more about the Warre' hive, developed by Abbe' Warre', online by going to: [http://www.natural-beekeeping.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/beekeeping\\_for\\_all.pdf](http://www.natural-beekeeping.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/beekeeping_for_all.pdf)

Winn Harless concluded the program by discussing early Fall maintenance procedures to get colonies ready for Winter. Fall feeding, including medication, was discussed and demonstrated. To determine the amount of Varroa mite infestation in both Fall and Spring, the sugar roll and alcohol procedures were described. Information on determining threshold numbers was provided by Don Schram.

### SEMBA Bargain Corner

#### **For Sale:**

- Four strong hives (with this year's queens) with metal stands, 2 hive bodies and 2 honey supers. Will include enough honey to see them through the winter. Also have processing equipment, used two years, and in very good condition. I'll only sell the equipment when the bees are sold. Contact Kathleen Carter [248-374-9683](tel:248-374-9683) or e-mail [kcarter@federalapd.com](mailto:kcarter@federalapd.com)
- Honey Straws: Have your special Honey transferred in straws. The Honey can be transferred raw – unfiltered, thereby preserving its nutritional value. **Contact Jerry Dunbar for details 586-770-9953.**
- Two-frame motorized extractor for rent. The rent is \$25 a day, plus a deposit. The inside wall and floor have been freshly coated with food grade epoxy. The baskets which hold the frames are ten inches wide. This extractor is mounted on a table with its motor and 110 volt outlet. If you have any questions please call Mazin at [\(313\) 999-3180](tel:313-999-3180), or e-mail [m7mav@yahoo.com](mailto:m7mav@yahoo.com)

Note: Ads in the Bargain Corner 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*

Affiliated Chapters  
Oakland Beekeepers' Club



Schoolcraft Beekeepers' Club



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