SEMBA NEWS

Volume 23 Number 3 Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers' Association
March/April/May 2013

SEMBA BEEKEEPING FIELDTRIP

When: Sunday, June 9, 2013, 1 to 5:00 pm
Potluck: 1:00 pm
Bring a dish to pass, your own table service and beverage. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Clay Ottoni by June 2. ceottoni@gmail.com or call 248-454-9800.
Where: Dave Anthony's beekeeping operation, 1268 Nichols Rd., Swartz Creek, MI 48473, 810-621-4371.

Dave Anthony, past president of the Michigan Beekeepers' Association, runs a large-scale honey operation with a state-of-the-art extraction facility and supplies package bees and nucs. Dave will have 3 or 4 areas for presentations so we can break-up into smaller groups suited for open discussion. Attendees will be able to see his extraction operation, equipment assembly system, queen-rearing operation, and view his method of keeping bees.
Door prizes- queens and nucs

LOST AND FOUND

The following items were left at Schoolcraft College during the 75th Annual Conference: a glove, an ear-ring, a pair of eyeglasses, two scarves, and two serving platters. If you have lost any of these items, please send a description of your lost item(s) to ceottoni@gmail.com.

SEMBA ANNUAL PICNIC
When: Sunday, July 21, 2013
Where: Tollgate Education Center
Details in the June newsletter.

2012-2013 WINTER-LOSS SURVEY

1) How many of your hives were alive in September 2012? _____

2) How many hives are alive now? _____

Please email your response to rsuther@sembabees.org or call 734-668-8568 with the information.

NORTHERN BEE NETWORK

The Northern Bee Network, a new organization dedicated to supporting MI bees and MI beekeepers, will be purchasing Buckfast Queens to bring to MI. Expand the genetic diversity of your apiary by purchasing a queen bee originating at Brother Adam's breeding program at Buckfast Abbey in England and imported through the Canadian Buckfast breeding program.

The Buckfast queen you purchase will already be mated and will have already proven herself with prolific production of eggs and outstanding laying pattern. Numerical records are kept on every Buckfast queen in the breeding program, and only the top queens are kept and sold. Cost is $50, which includes all transport and border costs, and supports the Northern Bee Network. You can get more information and purchase a queen here: http://www.wildrosemeadows.com/forsale/buckfast If you have questions, please contact the coordinator of the Northern Bee Network: Meghan Milbrath, meghanom@gmail.com.

BEE PRODUCTS ON THE MEDICAL FRONT

Melittin, the toxic component of bee venom, penetrates HIV and other viruses, essentially killing the pathogens, say researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. They hitched melittin to nonoparticles with molecular stopgaps that prevent damage to healthy cells. Used in a vaginal gel, the toxin could prevent HIV transmission, and researchers hope the findings could be used to treat other infections. St. Louis Post-Dispatch (3/7/13)

Medihoney is being used on ulcers that have been unresponsive to other medical interventions. For more information see: http://www.dermasciences.com/products/advanced-wound-care/medihoney/inside-the-u-s-/

HONEY ARE YOU FOR REAL?

A laser device developed in the hopes of measuring carbon on Mars may soon be used here on Earth to root out counterfeit foods – and make sure that honey, olive oil and chocolate are what they claim. A cheap fake honey concocted from sugar would be unmasked simply by laser-scanning the carbon dioxide released from burning a few milligrams.

Seven years ago, the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory – RAL – in England embarked on a 'blue sky' space research project to develop a new laser technique for identifying isotopes in space. Today's equipment is large, bulky and stationary. Samples of, say, polluted soil must be collected in the field, put in a flask and brought to the lab for testing – clearly unsuitable for space testing. But the new laser 'isotope ratio-meter' from RAL Space could change that.

"You take a laser, whose optical frequency or 'color' can be continuously adjusted, beam it at a gas sample, and detect the level passing through the gas," explained Dr. Damien Weidmann, Laser Spectroscopy Team Leader at RAL Space. "The demonstrator project made it possible for us to prove its potential and to attract the interest from a company that could take it and use it for a specific application on Earth."

European Space Agency, (2/11/13)

CHINESE ANTIDUMPING CHARGES

Federal prosecutors said that two of the nation's largest honey processors bought illegal Chinese imports of the sweetener, avoiding tens of millions of dollars in antidumping duties.

Authorities said Wednesday that Honey Solutions, of Baytown, Texas, and Groeb Farms Inc., of Onsted, Mich., reached deferred prosecution agreements with the federal government over the illegal imports.

Prosecutors also charged five individuals, including four honey brokers, with participating in an alleged scheme that prosecutors say resulted in the evasion of more than $180 million in duties and the sale of honey containing an unapproved antibiotic. "Schemes like this result in legitimate importers and the domestic honey-producing industry enduring years of unprofitable operations," said Daniel Ragsdale, deputy director for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Prosecutors said Groeb Farms admitted that executives bought illegally imported Chinese honey, which wasn't labeled as coming from China. The company agreed to pay a $2 million fine and put in place a corporate compliance program. In a statement, Groeb Farms said it regrets past errors and the senior executives who misled the company's board and its customers are no longer employees. Federal officials said there were no findings of illness or other public health consequences associated with the honey.

Source: Catch the Buzz, February 2013

BEES ATTRACTED TO CONTRASTING COLORS WHEN LOOKING FOR NECTAR

Flower colors that contrast with their background are more important to foraging bees than patterns of colored veins on pale flowers according to new research by Heather Whitney from the University of Cambridge in the UK and her colleagues. Their observation of how patterns of pigmentation on flower petals influence bumble bees' behavior suggests that color veins give clues to the location of the nectar. There is little to suggest, however, that bees have an innate preference for striped flowers. Venation patterns might be prevalent in nature because they can be useful nectar guides.

Source: Springer's journal, *Naturwissenschaften -The Science of Nature*

BEES USE THE 'FORCE' TO CHOOSE THE BEST FLOWERS

Bees can alter the electrical charge of the flowers they touch. A new study finds that bees use these electrical cues to help them choose flowers with the most nectar and pollen. The team's experiments confirmed those earlier results, as well as the effect an arriving bee can have on a plant's electrical traits. Essentially, as the bee approached and landed on the flower, the bee transferred some of its charge to the plant stem, driving the plant's charge positive for up to nearly two minutes. (By contrast, the changes a bee can trigger to a flower's scent, shape, color, or even humidity, last from several minutes to hours, the researchers note.) Wanting to push further, the researchers conducted a series of tests.

First, they wanted to see to see if bees actually use these electrical changes to help them learn more quickly which flowers to target. To do this, they turned bees loose on identically colored steel disks used as stand-ins for flowers. Some disks carried a liquid bees find distasteful. The others had a nectar-like liquid.

When the scientists added a 30-volt charge to the disk with the nectar, the bees accurately picked out the nectar-bearing flowers 81 percent of the time during the final 10 visits of the 50-visit training session. When there was no electrical difference, the bees did little better than a coin toss in picking out the flowers offering the nectar-like reward.

Next, the team wanted to see if bees responded to patterns in voltage distribution across a flower. So some faux flowers were given a bull's-eye pattern in which the outer ring received the highest positive voltage, while the center was held at a negative voltage. A single voltage was applied to the other flowers. The bull's-eyes also held the nectar-like reward, while the uniformly-charged flowers got the bitter vetch.

Here, 70 percent of the bees went to the bull's-eye flowers by the end of the training session. When the bull's-eyes were removed and same voltage was applied equally across both the sweet and the sour flowers, a smaller group of bees culled from the larger group couldn't tell the difference at the end of a 50-visit training session until they took a sip. They moved more randomly among the flowers.

Finally, the team conducted a test to see if color and electrical cues worked in concert to aim bees at the nectar-laden flowers. Using color alone, it took 35 visits to the flowers for the bees to hit the 80-percent success mark by the end of the training visits. For bees using color and electrical cues, it took only 24 visits. Taken together, the team says its results show that electrical fields play a "thus-far under-appreciated role in plant-insect interactions."

~Source: Christian Science Monitor, (February 2013)

MSU TO LEAD $1.6 MILLION GRANT ON NATIONAL CROP POLLINATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded Michigan State University $1.6 million to lead a national crop pollination research and extension project. The five-year project will focus on supporting specialty crop yields and profit by supporting wild and managed bees. It is part of the USDA's $101 million initiative to support the nation's specialty crop producers.

There are many variables when it comes to growing specialty crops in Michigan and around the country, and the weather isn't the only one. Specialty fruit, tree and nut growers also need the help of some small workers – pollinators, or bees. Rufus Isaacs, MSU entomology professor, and his team will look at specialty crop pollination and develop region and crop-specific Integrated Crop Pollination management approaches to diversify pollination sources and maintain consistent crop yields. These may include honey bees, wild bees and alternative managed bees such as bumble bees.

They also will examine adding habitat for honey bees to provide them with food when crops are not in bloom. The extension component of the project will develop recommendations on how to manipulate farm landscapes to support native bee and honey bee populations, by drawing on the team's research in specialty crop farms across the nation including almonds in California, cherries in Michigan, pumpkins in Pennsylvania and blueberries in Florida.
Source: MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter, (February 2013)
See more at:
http://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2012/msu-to-lead-16-million-grant-on-national-crop-pollination/?utm_source=Dean%27s+

CAFFEINE SHOT IN NECTAR: FOR BEE MEMORY, NOT BUZZ

A new study says honey bees get a shot of caffeine from certain flowers, and it perks up their memory. That spurs them to return to the same type of plant, boosting its prospects for pollination and the future of the plant species. Maybe it shouldn't be a surprise that one of the flowers is the coffee plant. Its nectar offers about as much caffeine concentration as a cup of instant coffee, according to researchers. But some citrus plants serve caffeine too, albeit in lower concentrations. It's found in the nectar of orange and grapefruit blossoms. The caffeine helps a bee remember that the flower's scent promises a tasty payoff, the researchers said. So the bee will seek out those flowers, transferring their pollen. For the complete article go to:
http://bigstory.ap.org/article/caffeine-shot-nectar-bee-memory-not-buzz

BEEKEEPING MEETINGS IN SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN

Oakland Bee Club

Meets at 7:00 pm at the E.L. Johnson Nature Center, 3325 Franklin Rd., Bloomfield Township, MI. For information contact Dennis Holly 1-248-542-1316 or Hollysapiaries@yahoo.com. Future 2013 meeting dates are: May 7, June 4, July 2, August 6, September 3, October 1, November 5, and December 3. The April meeting will be Wednesday, April 17, from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm, at 23094 Roanoke, Oak Park, MI 48237 and will cover package-bee installation and nuc making.

Monroe Bee Club

Meetings in Monroe are held the 3rd Monday of (most) months, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm, at the MSU Extension Building, 963 South Raisinville Road, Monroe, MI. For information contact Bill Bray at braybill@hotmail.com.

Ann Arbor Backyard Beekeepers

The Ann Arbor Backyard Beekeepers usually meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. To be notified by email for the date and agenda, contact Richard Mendel, brescue@att.net.

SEMBA MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If you receive your SEMBA Newsletter by email and your dues are payable in April, you will receive an email notice with a renewal application. Prompt attention to the notice would be appreciated. If you receive your newsletter by postal mail and your mailing label denotes A13, a renewal application is enclosed.

SEMBA Bargain Corner

For Sale:

~ Comb honey. Call Winn Harless, 734-453-2914.

~ Bees. 3# Packages, pick-up April 11 and April 27, ($88 each). Five-frame medium Nucs, pick-up mid May, ($110). Italian & Carniolan Queens, pick-up 3rd week of April. Bob Jastrzebski, 734-748-2185 or bob@cimsurf.com.

~ Bees. 2# packages ($73), 3# packages ($83), queens ($22), from H+R in Georgia. Arrival date April 28. Orders will be taken by Mike Siarkowski, 517-545- 0824. For more information call Shawn Shubel, 517-548-5176.

~ Beekeeping supplies and equipment. Contact Keith Lazar, keithmlazar@hotmail.com or phone 248-626-2483.

~ Nucs. All natural, chemical free 5-frame nucs with Michigan survivor genetics. Target pick-up date April 20. $135 each, no box deposit, no frame exchange. Contact Don Schram at 248-310-8205 or email don.schram@gmail.com for an order form.

~ SS Dadant Little Wonder four-frame hand- crank extractor. SS Kelley water-jacketed capping melter with immersion heater, 19" diameter, 14" high. Stand included. SS storage tank, 18" diameter, 26" high, with gate. Contact R. Sutherland, ruther@sembabees.org or call 734-668-8568.

Wanted:

Two used bee hives for property in the Carleton area or someone to place bee hives on property in exchange for some honey. Email grhgrah5@aol.com or phone 734-748-4055 after 5:00 pm.

Southeastern Michigan
Beekeepers' Association
Organized April 1, 1934

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

Oakland Beekeepers' Club

Schoolcraft Beekeepers' Club