President’s Column

A beginning beekeeper decided to learn about beekeeping practices and signed up for classes sponsored by the local bee club. On the first day of class the instructor, a master beekeeper, said, “Some of you may feel a little intimidated and overwhelmed when it comes to beekeeping but please don’t be. If anyone in this room feels especially ignorant about beekeeping please stand up.”

No one stood up. After a long pause, the student stood. "Fine," said the master beekeeper instructor. “You’re feeling bewildered about how to keep bees successfully, are you?”

“Not exactly,” said the student, "But I hate to see you standing all alone.”

SABA’s library is packed with books, DVDs, and pamphlets on how to keep bees successfully. One would think that reading one author is enough preparation to become a beekeeper but the science of beekeeping (and the art of beekeeping) is forever changing.

The rewards of beekeeping can be found in any number of approaches we beekeepers elect to follow. My advice is to follow your passion but temper it with an open mind to alternative methods of beekeeping. Enjoy!

A second Beginning Beekeeper class is scheduled for (mostly) Monday evenings, beginning March 25. SABA is offering this 6-part class geared toward new beekeepers, and to find out if beekeeping is right for you. You’ll learn how to buy and assemble equipment, where to place your hives, how to acquire bees, how to care for your growing colonies and how to prevent, identify and treat diseases. An “open hive” class is included. More class information and registration can be found at our website,

In February I attended the Tidewater Beekeepers Association meeting in Norfolk Virginia while visiting with my in-laws. Coincidentally this club is also sponsoring new beekeeper classes this spring. They have approximately 100 students registered for their class. Interest in entering the world of beekeeping is not limited to upstate New York!

A tip of the bee veil to Anne Frey for moving the bee yard visit initiative forward. This spring and summer SABA members will be hosting bee yard “open houses” at multiple apiaries. Amy Carman will be coordinating these events and will be publishing the “when and wheres” soon. Books and periodicals play a valuable part in our education as beekeepers. These field events are a great opportunity for beekeepers of all skill levels to get together to put those words into action – in the bee yard!

Bee happy,
David Wood
Calendar - Use This to Mark Yours!

March 16, Saturday,
9:30 am-5 pm
It’s the SABA Seminar!!
Details, page 3.

March 18 membership meeting at cooperative extension, 50 West High St., Ballston Spa. See full details below.

March 25, April 1, 8, 15, 23 at 6:30-9 pm, Beginner School at cooperative extension, 50 West High St., Ballston Spa.

April 15 Board meeting at cooperative extension, 50 West High St., Ballston Spa. 7pm

April 27 Bee yard visit/Lunch. Details, see page 4.

May 20 membership meeting at cooperative extension, 50 West High St., Ballston Spa. 7:00 Ask a Bee informal Q+A, 7:30 meeting proper.

Notes from Mike Blendell, 1st V.P.

Please join us at the March 18 meeting:

7:00 PM
* Attendance Sign-In
* Ask A Beekeeper Advice Corner
* Lending Library
* Dues Renewal

7:30 PM - 9:00 PM
♦ (short) Business Meeting

♦ Program, Bee Wellness: Healthy Bees/ Healthy Hives. Varroa destructor Mites may be the single largest menace to beekeeping. Bee Wellness class graduates will give presentations on mite identification, hive evaluation, and mite load monitoring. Sugar roll and alcohol wash methods will be demonstrated, as will the use of a sticky board as a monitoring instrument. Mite test jars will be given out, provided by Linda Armour. A "post mortem" on one (or more) winter dead out hives will also be performed and discussed.

If you have any ideas for topics or speakers, let me know since I’m always looking for good ideas.

The Care and Feeding of a Mentor

by Anne Frey

A Mentor is a person who can show you their hives, look in your hives, answer questions via email and phone. If you’ve only ever learned through books, listening to presentations and viewing slides, mucking about on your own or - God forbid - watching YouTube, you’ll be amazed at how quickly you learn after getting a mentor. Dan Kerwood is spearheading SABA’s Mentor Match Up.

But what about the mentor? Do you, the needy protege, just get all this help - like winning a lottery?

YOU WIN THE PRIZE OF X AMOUNT OF ADVICE
PER MONTH FOR LIFE

Hopefully this is not the case. Many experienced beekeepers have horror stories about the needy newbee who called when they were desperate, way too late to make changes to a hive, and after being given advice which they ignored or didn’t have time for. There is also the needy newbee who wants the mentor to initiate every inspection, and otherwise ignores their colonies.

To the “students”: remember, it is more polite to visit the mentor’s bee yard, rather than expect him/her to drive to your location every time. Also, consider emailing your questions rather than calling if it is not an emergency. Observe the bees. Prepare clear questions. Observe the bees some more.

As a periodic thank you some people give their mentors homemade pies or jams. Some pay them for gas, or bring a six-pack. Some mentors need help with their heavy lifting. Perennials have been known to change hands. Very rarely, a per-hour fee is charged.

And you mentors shouldn’t let yourselves get burned out. You are needed! If you feel you’re being taken advantage of, speak up! People are generally nice, but sometimes they don’t think and need a friendly nudge.

The Bee Man

In celebration of National Agriculture Week (March 18th-22nd), volunteers throughout the state will read a book with an agricultural theme (this year it is honey bees) to second graders.

To sign up, contact your County Cooperative Extension.
The seminar pre-registration deadline has passed, but don’t worry! You can be a walk-in at the Seminar. We’ll start the meeting at 9:30 a.m. sharp, so please get there early to park and walk the half block to the Museum entrance, pay and have a bit of time for a coffee and snacks. Doors open at 8:30. The Museum doesn’t really open until 9:30, so let them know you’re there for the bee meeting if they don’t want to open the door!

Walk-in fees: $30 for SABA member or $35 for a non-member. No lunch is included for walk-ins, but please join us in the cafeteria with your bag lunch!

For the second year we will be in the Huxley Theater inside of the NY State Museum on Madison Ave. in Albany. Adam Finkelstein of VP Queens will speak on queen rearing and care, Karen Rennich of the Bee Informed Partnership will tell us what works and doesn’t work for colony survival, based on thousands of nationwide surveys. Jon Zawislak of the University of Arkansas will enlighten and entertain us on the topics of Genetics and Speaking to Non-beekeepers about Bees. They think differently.

If you’re interested, meet at about 6pm at the The Treviso, Friday 3/15 to have dinner with the speakers.

Contact Anne Frey with questions: 518-895-8744 or annef@capital.net. Also see the website www.adirondackbees.org.

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**Honey Bee Corner**  *The challenge of the nectar hunt*  by Dick Johnson  www.catskillbees.org

Flowering plants don’t always make it easy for the foraging bees to harvest the sweet treasure of nectar. Of course the only reason that the nectar is offered is to attract insects and birds to transfer pollen for the fertilization and production of their seeds. Pollen from these plants is sticky and needs a vector such as an insect to move it. This is called “entomophile pollen”. Those other plants that produce lighter weight, wind blown pollen (the stuff that makes you sneeze) have no need to produce nectar as they do not depend on insect vectors to spread their pollen (called “anemophile pollen”). The clever design of many flowers assures that as the bee enters the blossom that it brushes up to the pollen on the anthers before it gets the reward of the sweet nectar. Every country boy and girl has learned to taste the sweet nectar from the honeysuckle flower by pulling out the protruding pistil from this deep-throated flower.

The best quality and quantity of nectar often is produced by blossoms that make it more difficult for the bee to harvest the nectar. For example the trumpet vine and the honeysuckle flowers have rich rewards but the long, deep corolla make it hard for the “short tongue” honeybee to reach. Even the common, bright red clover flower makes it hard for the honeybees to get to the nectar. Humming birds and bumblebees with their long tongues have an easy time collecting this nectar but honeybees sometimes figure out how to get their share too. Tantalized by the fragrance of that hidden treasure within the long trumpet the bee sometimes chews a hole in the side of the flower and reaches in to get some of the “good stuff”!

Another commonly grown, valuable forage crop makes it even harder for insects to pollinate them. The alfalfa flower, in it’s attempt to assure that any pollinating insect gathers it’s share of pollen, has a mechanism that strikes the entering bee on the head and clamps down on the tongue as the bee reaches for the nectar. Of course as the young bees, just learning to pollinate, experience this, they are discouraged and go elsewhere. The more experienced honeybees have learned to enter the alfalfa flower on the side avoiding the punishment. Alfalfa used to produce an abundance of honey in our region however farmers mow the plant just before blooming, as the forage crop is more nutritious at that time. Alfalfa is grown in the western states where it is irrigated by those huge circular devices. Flying over the plains states, you may see those large green circles in the otherwise dry desert and these are often alfalfa fields. Another reason to grow it there is because the “alkali bee”, an efficient pollinator of alfalfa, prefers to raise its young in the sandy, alkaline desert soil. Although this native bee is a solitary type bee (does not build a social colony) it makes up for the numbers by its efficiency of pollination. For some reason this small bee is able to enter the alfalfa flower without triggering the trapping action and so is more effective.
Swarm Hotline

To help provide the community with one stop shopping for bee swarms and questions, SABA has set up the swarm hotline. This hotline is available to the public or to a beekeeper who needs help catching a swarm. Once a member of the swarm team confirms that the swarm is honey bees, they dispatch a SABA member to relocate the swarm. Members can sign up to be contacted at the general meeting, or by emailing Ian Munger at beekeeper@bluelinehoney.com

To reach the swarm hotline, call 518-38-SWARM.

SABA's Old-Style Swarm Call List will be ready for your names and numbers at March meeting. Later, the list will be sent to Cornell Cooperative Extensions for them to help unhappy homeowners find a beekeeper when a swarm arrives on their property. If you can't sign the list on 3/18, email David Wood to add your name.

Google Beekeeping Discussion Group

This is a method to discuss beekeeping with SABA members, by using email. If you have a question and want to get a quick few opinions, give it a try. People can also show a photo of something interesting, or pass on news of a beekeeping sale, etc. Among recent topics: hive autopsies, dysentery, a Brushy Mountain Bee Farm Webinar, decrystallizing honey, a homeowner seeking a beekeeper for pollination, etc.

SABA members may join this discussion group by sending an email to Ian Munger at:

beekeeper@bluelinehoney.com.

Bee Yard Visits/ Lunches Planned

by Anne Frey

After I asked Bruce, the Webmaster, to send an invitation to the membership inviting people to host bee yard visits, a small flood of responses revealed it was a popular idea. It’s always fun to look into beehives, but if you only have a few, and you’re only supposed to open them every 3 weeks or so and keep them open for 15 minutes, how can you learn? Now you can visit others’ hives all around the SABA area, and have a nice lunch to boot.

Each bee yard visit will also be a potluck lunch, so bring along something to share with about a dozen people. The hive inspections will take place all over and cover a variety of seasonal tasks. Hopefully, every host will show how to check for Varroa mites, which will be taught and demonstrated at the March 18 meeting. But practice makes perfect! Mites should be checked every month, and the numbers recorded for each hive so trends can be observed. Some colonies may have mite numbers skyrocketing early and need some sort of intervention, while other colonies won’t need it.

Amy Carman has volunteered to coordinate and organize the yard visits, and will keep a page on the internet for all to check. So far we have yard visits on 4/27, 5/11, 5/18, 6/1, 6/8, 6/15, 7/20, 8/11 and 10/19. If you would like to join the movement and host one at your bee yard, contact Amy. Her email is smallbluehouse@gmail.com. Come join us!
Early in the spring of 2011, I placed a ‘swarm trap’ in the crotch of a maple tree about 18 feet off the ground, facing towards the southeast and within 20 feet of my 5 hive apiary. Over the course of the summer and as the wind blew, the trap tipped downward and was no longer parallel with the ground as first installed.

Periodically I would check the trap by looking at it from ground level. Over the course of the summer I didn’t see any activity and thought the effort of getting the trap up there in the first place was all in vain.

When the word went out that hurricane Irene was about ready to blow, I decided to take the trap down since it looked like it was about ready to fall out of the tree crotch anyway. When I put the ladder on the tree and stepped up about 3 rungs I noticed bees coming going and coming from the trap. Now I really needed to do something! Irene was at the doorstep! I climbed the ladder to a point where I could untie the trap from the crotch of the tree. I tucked the trap under one arm and slowly lowered myself to the ground. Of course I was dressed for the occasion – bee suit with no smoker. When I got to the ground I placed the trap in a large pail facing the same direction as it was when it was located in the crotch of the tree. There were still many bees flying around the crotch looking for their home which was now on the ground. Apparently, some bees made the connection as to where their house went and spread the word to those foragers who were just coming back to the hive and only looking in the crotch of the tree and not the ground.

By the time I got to this point, it was almost dark and starting to rain since Irene was on her way. I pounded some stakes in the ground around the pail that held the trap and covered everything with a plastic tarp, leaving a small opening for the bees to come and go if they needed. The next day, the rain had stopped so I uncovered the pail/trap and decided to take the trap apart. My plan was to install the bees in a deep polystyrene hive which I placed within a few feet of the pail/trap. When I took off the top of the trap, I was amazed by the number of bees. It was PACKED, not only with bees, but with brood and comb. In fact the trap was so full they didn’t have space enough to store a supply of honey for the winter which was only a few months away. My timing and initiative saved this swarm from starving, I’m sure.

There were nine individual rows of comb, all filled with brood. I reached into the trap and gently removed each row and stood them up between the solid Pierco frames in the deep super, leaving enough room for the brood to be maintained. Unfortunately, I did not have wooden frames without foundation to tie these rows of comb in, which would have been the preferred way to make this transfer. I did what I could with the equipment I had at hand. I then set the trap next to the entrance to the hive so all the bees would eventually be together. Many of the bees were still in the trap wondering what the heck had happened. I was sure I moved the queen into hive when I made the transfer since all the bees that were still in the trap moved quickly into the hive over the next few hours. They knew where ‘mother’ was.

I began feeding the bees right away since the honey flow was beginning to wane and I wanted to make sure they had enough food to last the winter. The following spring of 2012, I found them to be pretty healthy. In fact, I was able to take a super of honey off the hive this fall. It was certainly worth the effort and this hive is now one of my strongest hives. Hopefully in the spring of 2013 when I take the hive completely apart, I will be able to get to the bottom deep and see how they maneuvered around my first attempt to transfer rows of comb from a swarm trap to a regular hive just before a hurricane was to arrive. Something like: “BAPTISIM BY FIRE” maybe?

Promotions Officer Needed

The promotions officer position for SABA is an opportunity to get to know the rest of the membership. The job entails informing the members of upcoming meetings through newspaper, cooperative extension, and online announcements, attending bi-monthly board meetings and providing input to the club operation. The promotions officer also coordinates the SABA booth for the Saratoga County Fair each summer. The booth is educational outreach to promote beekeeping in the community. It is also a fund raiser for the club and an opportunity for members to sell their honey. It’s the promotions officer who recruits members to work the booth and procures honey and candy to sell. My last four years as the promotions officer have been enjoyable and offered me the opportunity to make a contribution to the club. I would be happy to help the new promotions officer take over this important position.

Cheers, Morgana
Bait Hives = Free Bees

by Anne Frey

Winter is a good time to work on equipment. Along with building and repairing supers, brood boxes and frames, think about the possibility of making bait hives.

A bait hive is a swarm-trap box. I have captured some nice swarms in boxes set in trees, and it seems easier than answering a swarm call, which may come at an inconvenient time. Another type of bait hive is made of pressed wood pulp and can be purchased from supply companies. As you read on page 5, these attract swarms nicely too.

When you are looking over your equipment this winter, you may find a deep brood box that just doesn’t seem good enough to use on hives anymore. Don’t throw that on the burn pile! Swarms looking for a home like these old boxes best. After trial and error, and then reading the “Bait Hives” bulletin from Cornell Cooperative Extension (in SABA’s library), I’ve learned that an old brood box, with a tightly attached bottom and top works best. The size of a deep box is about the size swarms prefer, according to the bulletin. If you screw the top on, it is easy to remove the screws later to get the bees out, and it is secure for traveling before that. The entrance should be a 2 inch hole drilled into the front, and covered with hardware cloth, or with a nail driven near it and bent across. This stops mice from going in.

The old bee home scent is the “bait” what attracts scout bees from a hive about to swarm. You can put a few pieces of dark comb in the bottom if you want, but don’t put lots of it, or any frames. It will just attract wax moths and your box won’t have any bees to fight the moths. I’ve tried pheromone lures, which are supposed to attract swarms and never caught a swarm in a bait hive with lures. It has always been in empty brood boxes.

To choose a spot for your bait hive, look for a spot about eight feet off the ground, shaded partly, but with a clear flight path to the entrance. I have set a hive in the main crotch of a large white pine with success, and also attached them directly to tree trunks and caught swarms. For the second method, attach a sturdy board vertically to the back of your box so that it extends past the top and bottom. Then this gets nailed and tied to the tree trunk. Make sure everything is secure. I once had a bait hive catch a swarm, and when I came back at dusk to take it down, and it had fallen to the ground during the day! The bees that had arrived after their new home had fallen still wanted to go to the spot on the tree trunk where it should have been. They were clustered there, all forlorn, while the box on the ground was quite angry.

Bait hives should be placed early in the spring, by tax day if possible. After that, check often. You don’t want them to start building comb in there. When you catch a swarm, pour it into an empty brood box, with frames, preferably one frame with brood from another hive. This ensures that the new swarm will not leave. It is best to isolate new swarms from your home yard by about 3 miles, until you have determined that are not diseased.

SABA Library Additions – DVDs!

by Jennifer Ford, Librarian

A lot of folks have expressed an interest in having more DVDs available in our library. Some have pointed out that they don’t even own a VCR anymore! So, we’ve added the following DVDs to the library collection:

♦ The Quest for Local Honey (recently review in Bee Culture magazine)
♦ Organic Beekeeping 101
♦ Natural Beekeeping with Ross Conrad
♦ Brushy Mountain Bee Farm – The Magic of Mead
♦ Brushy Mountain Bee Farm – Free Bees for You!
♦ An Introduction to Beekeeping

The SABA library also already owns the following DVDs.

♦ Ulee’s Gold
♦ Bees: Tales from the Hive
♦ Keeping Bees and Producing Honey
♦ Health and the Hive
♦ Queen of the Sun
♦ Sister Bee
♦ Silence of the Bees

DVDs are available for checkout at each general membership meeting. Because DVDs are in such high demand, please try to return them at the following meeting.

As always, if you hear of an item that you would like to see in our lending library, please don’t hesitate to let me know!
Take a Hike!

by Anne Frey

One of the background pleasures of beekeeping is learning about flowers. This can connects a person’s “other” life with their beekeeping life. As you walk, jog or bike, or even drive along the road you will see dozens of kinds of wildflowers. With experience you can identify flowers from a speeding car. It’s more enjoyable to take a walk down that road and find those patches of blooms, and then see if there are bees on them. Then, try and find out what they are called. Audubon or Peterson field guides are helpful.

Check out the table below for a short list of blooms in the area. Fred Ludewig helped me out with the Ballston Spa data. These blooms seem to be the most attractive to honeybees. Bees do visit many other weeds and trees, but the group below seems to cover the big ones. On the way to finding that out, I kept a list of over 50 species for some years. It kept me in touch with the bees. It seemed exciting to see a new type of flower I had never noticed before, then go look it up. And after a long long winter, after wondering whether we really ever had other seasons, I have been known to jump for joy upon seeing the first pussy willows in the spring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duanesburg</th>
<th>Ballston Spa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pussy willows</td>
<td>April 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Maple</td>
<td>April 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandelion</td>
<td>May 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locust (brief, only some yrs.)</td>
<td>June 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White clover</td>
<td>June 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow sweet clover</td>
<td>June 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staghorn sumac</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>June 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milkweed</td>
<td>June 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basswood</td>
<td>July 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White sweet clover</td>
<td>July 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various goldenrods</td>
<td>August 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple loosestrife</td>
<td>August 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various asters</td>
<td>Sept. 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Good Bee Seed Mix Found in PA

The Ernst Conservation Seeds Inc. company has one of the best flower seed mixes I've seen, for planting native species in areas you want to grow wildflowers. Some of the types are a PA variety, but that's not too different than NY. Bees love these wildflowers, and in fact often prefer them to ornamentals. A variety of pollen sources gives bees a more complete diet.


Did you know that inexpensive quality plants are available from County Soil & Water Departments? The easiest way to get an order form is to Google the county name and "soil and water conservation district", then go to tree and shrub program and all the information is there including order forms and directions. This program is for pick-up only. Purchases are not shipped. If you are willing to drive a little, you can pick a county other than our own.

Albany County seems to be the least expensive with a good selection and many of them have exactly the same stocks. Washington County seems to be one of the most expensive. These are great deals on plants but these are smaller than you would find in the nursery. It will be several years before getting fruit or having a full hedge.

This information was tracked down by SABA member Brian vanWormer.
Wanted/For Sale

For sale : 3-lb packages w/ Italian queens. $95 per package; $50 deposit per package. For marked queens, add $2.50 per queen. Available 5/19/2013. Pick up in Round Lake, NY (21 miles north of Albany, NY). Aaron Morris aaronqmorris@gmail.com 518 899 6113

For sale : SABA T-Shirts $14 each. Proceeds from sales go to SABA’s Wolf-Lounsbury Young Beekeeper Award fund. Choice of light blue or chocolate brown. Buy shirts at meetings & at seminar! Also on website! Reserve your size/color today. annef@capital.net

For Sale : New nuc boxes, hives. Made of Amish rough cut pine. Hives consist of 2 deeps, 2 mediums OR 5 mediums, screened or solid bottom board, inner & outer cover. Frames not included. Assembled with glue and 3 inch screws. 2 coats of paint applied. Dan Kerwood 774-0475

Reminders

Beeline Deadline for the May issue is April 29. Please submit your articles, photos, announcements, etc. to the Editor via email annef@capital.net. Photos should be reduced in size before sending.

AMAZON When you decide to shop online using Amazon.com, please go to SABA’s website first and then click on the Amazon link. Your purchase on Amazon will earn SABA a little money!

Thank You ...

... to all who donated items for the Seminar

... to Chris Cripps for bringing his a compound microscope to the club. It will be useful checking for Nosema.

... to Betsy Bashaw for donating a 2 frame extractor to SABA for members to borrow. This is SABA’s second one.

... to SABA for getting accessories for the above extractor, such as uncapping tub, knife, strainers, stand.