

Mountain Empire Beekeepers Association

Minutes

February 25, 2016

President Tim Service called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, Thursday, February 25, 2016, in Room 201, Galax Hall, Wytheville Community College. Thirty-one members and prospective members attended.

The meeting began with a pop quiz on last month's Bee Biology presentation. President Tim asked four questions; three questions were answered correctly by members. The word of the month was "proventriculus", a part of the bee stomach.

Guest Speaker:

Tonia Moxley of Rough Cut Apiaries in Christiansburg spoke to us about Kenyan top bar hives.

- There is evidence of bee hives from 6,000 years ago in hieroglyphics from ancient Egypt. [The shape of the] hives don't kill bees; mites, weather, bad management, etc., kills bees. The box doesn't affect the bees. Top bar hives are no more natural or organic than Langstroth hives. Top bar hives are easier on the beekeeper's body, causing fewer back problems than Langstroths. Bees remain calmer in top bars because they are not disturbed as much when the keeper needs to open the hive. If you decide to buy a top bar hive, be cautious--there is no standardization of dimensions. Use a guide to help attach comb. You must inspect hives once a week until the brood nest is established to ensure that comb is being built properly.
- Tonia makes her hive 4 feet long, seventeen inches high, and 19 inches wide. Start from one end with 8 bars; close off the rest of the hive until they outgrow the first eight frames. To extract honey, use three food grade buckets, strainers, scraper. Cut and crush the comb, strain and drain. You get more wax harvest with top bars than with Langstroths.
- Treating for mites is difficult in top bars. If you buy package bees, get untreated ones. Top bars are treatment-free hives. You will have a higher mite load than with Langstroths. However, the loss rate has been reducing.

Bee Biology: Tongues. The part of the bee tongue used for gathering nectar is the **LIGULA**. The outer parts of the tongue draw together around the ligula to make a straw. Honeybees use tongues for:

- Water and nectar gathering
- Housecleaning and grooming
- To feed each other
- Making honey

Bees in the News

- Jonathan Lundgren--started research farm to do bee and plant research. Blue Dasher Farm in South Dakota. See bluedasher.farm for full information on his research.
- GMO beets: all sugar beets are now GMO; this has implications for feeding bees.
- Almond bloom: 1.8 million hives in California are pollinating almonds; there have been a marked increase in hive thefts in areas where large quantities of hives are used for pollination.
- Ignoble Prize awarded to a researcher in physiology and entomology for the most and least painful places to get stung. [Sec. Comment: beekeepers could probably have determined this for free.]
- Apitherapy Workshop will be held Mar. 19 & 20 in Hot Springs, NC. Cost is \$200. See beehealing.buzz for details.
- Shenandoah Valley Beekeepers will host an all-day seminar by Michael Bush at Blue Ridge Community College, on March 12. Full information at: shenvalleybeekeepers.org/upcoming-events/.

Minutes of the January meeting were reviewed. Mick Cunningham moved, and Gary Tolley seconded, to approve the minutes as posted on the MEBA website. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Mick Cunningham presented the current treasurer's report, and a proposed budget for 2016. Those reports are attached. The balance on hand as of February 25 was \$5,239.50. The report was filed for audit. Tim Service moved, seconded by Kathy Houndshell, that the budget be approved as submitted. Motion passed.

Following presentation of treasurer's reports, Mick related information about the Pollinator Protection Plan meeting he attended in Roanoke on January 28. That report is also attached.

Old Business:

- Wytheville Farmer's Market. MEBA is invited to have a display and presence at the market on May 14. We may sell honey, but the primary focus is education. Gaynell Shawver will work on displays.
- Future speakers for meetings: Tim has scheduled a guest speaker for most meetings in 2016 based on input from members at the January meeting.
- Raffles at meetings: Gaynell moved, and Jeff White seconded, that MEBA hold a paid raffle each month (\$1 per ticket or 6 tickets for \$5). A medium super has been donated for the March raffle. Proceeds will be used to procure raffle items of value, and to raise funds for MEBA programming.
- Bulk sugar purchase. Clyde King reported that Dutch Pantry in Rural Retreat can get 50 lb. bags of cane sugar from Mexico. He will check on the price of a ton of sugar. Mick Cunningham reviewed the arrangement with Wal-Mart for bulk sugar purchase. A complete pallet of sugar must be ordered. Once we get comparative information we can determine which source to use.
- Members report on woodware produced by Carroll County High School shop. The quality varies but the shop teacher, Alan Webb, will let you inspect the items you purchase. Contact Alan Webb, 276-733-7571, to order.

New Business:

- One of the possible events discussed in January was a field trip to Black Snake Meadery. The Meadery opens in April. We will follow up on putting together a field trip.
- Kathryn Grogan, a graduate student at Virginia Tech, needs help with research on the effects of pesticides on bees. Anyone wishing to participate should
- Tina asked for help on the MEBA website and Facebook page. Anyone interested in providing content for the website or taking over the Facebook page should contact Tina.
- Renee Neff reported on the Virginia State Beekeeper Association meeting. Topics covered were raising queens. A teaching apiary has been set up at Blue Ridge Community College.
- Anyone interested in ordering nucs from Tim Holt \$115 can contact Gaynell Shawver at gashaw1977@yahoo.com, or Tim Holt, 132 Holts LN, Siloam, NC 27047, 336-710-4904

What We Should Be Doing in the Next Month

- Continue feeding fondant or dry sugar and pollen patties.
- Look for mouse damage in hives.
- Clean up any deadouts
- Prepare equipment for spring
- Do maintenance on bee yard

Raffle: a raffle for a bottle of Honey-B Healthy, 5 frames (assembly required), Mountain Empire baseball cap, and a bee calendar was held at the end of the meeting.

Announcements:

- J.L. Crigger is making hemlock bottom boards for \$30 and hemlock supers for \$15. He contributed a medium super for the March raffle.
- Next month we will have a demonstration on making our own Honey-B Healthy.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Cunningham

Secretary, MEBA