



# WAKE COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

## MARCH 2009



**Next Meeting: March 10th, 2008 @ 7:30 pm**

Location: Wake County Commons Building, Carya Drive.  
The topic will be "Retrieving Swarms" by Ricky Barbour.  
Gabe Walker, Gary Beasley, and Joe Verlinden have signed up to bring refreshments.

### February Meeting Summary

Thank you to Ben White, Rick Kelly Craspe, and Kristi Bright for bringing refreshments to the February meeting. Larry will be traveling to Charlotte to pick up the T-shirts and hats he ordered for the club. He will have them at the next meeting. At the Beginners Beekeeping Class in March, there will be Door Prizes including 10 complete hive give aways. Certified and Journeyman tests will be offered after the Workshop. At 12:00 the practical portion: going into the hive will begin, the written portion of the test will follow. Member participation in this type of thing will score us points for the 2009 Chapter of the Year. Our 2008 Chapter of the Year submission totaled 8000 points. Our last entry in 2006 contained 3000 points. The Chapter of the Year is announced at the Summer Conference that will be held in either N. Wilkesboro or Charlotte.

\*\* If you joined the NC State Association independently (not as part of your WCBA membership) please let Vivian ([vivnwhit@earthlink.net](mailto:vivnwhit@earthlink.net)) know, these count as points to the Golden Achievement Program. At the past officers meeting it was voted to change/update some parts of the WCBA constitution. One change is gender terminology, all officer duties are described as "He will..." this will be changed to "He/She". The swarm list guidelines are as follows:

There are 3 lists: Removal from structure, observe, and catch.  
There are people still empty slots for people to sign up to bring refreshments.

We are in the process of updating our website. We would like to recognize the hard work of members who volunteer for positions that are not technically on the "Board of Directors". Personally I greatly appreciate the Secretary Assistant, Connie Hallman, for taking care of Name Tags. She hauls them to and from meetings, organizes and alphabetizes them. Also, We all need to thank Bill Cole our Webmaster. He maintains the website, editing and changing it so that it is up to date. He has posted all the past newsletters so new beekeepers can look back and learn tips and good information from past speaker and newsletters. He also expediently posts the new newsletters on the web. I try to have the newsletters done and emailed by the first of the month. If you fail to get one, or accidentally delete it, you can always go there and download one.

Most importantly to me, he made it so much easier to send out the newsletter and announcements. I am not a computer guru, so I don't know the terminology, but he put the database in a form so that I can send one "announcement" to everyone. Prior to this, I would have to send out several emails for the newsletters, and had no organized way to update email addresses that changed.

### **Bring your checkbooks to the next meeting:**

If you ordered T-shirts and hats they will be at the next meeting. If you didn't, there are extras....  
T-shirt & Hat Combo: \$15.  
Hat: \$8  
T-shirt: \$7.50  
Checks or exact change preferred!

## **Board of Directors**

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### **Phone Mentor:**

Jerry Brantley 919-269-9333

### **Website:**

[www.Wakecountybeekeepersassociation.org](http://www.Wakecountybeekeepersassociation.org)  
Yahoo group:  
wakecountybeekeepers  
To subscribe send mail to  
[wakecountybeekeeperssubscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:wakecountybeekeeperssubscribe@yahoo.com)  
Back copies of newsletters and the bylaws are available on this yahoo group.

### **Location of Club Extractors:**

The club owns extractors that are available for members to borrow.  
Ricky Barbour: Zebulon 269-0108  
Whit Joyner: New Hill 387-0164  
Raleigh Myers: Raleigh 787-0058  
James Knox: Raleigh 847-5098.

Our Speaker for February was James Knox, presenting "Preventing Swarms". We all know James as one of our expert members and mentor. He has been keeping bees long before many of us, even thought about bees. He tells us, if our weather stays mild like it currently is, the girls will want to swarm if we do not take preventative measures. Dr. Tarpy said last year they had a swarm the first of March. In addition, there were more swarms than usual last year. James reminds us about the "birds and the bees, and the flowers and the trees, and... a thing called love" He stated it more matter of fact: Everything in the plant and animal kingdoms are designed to duplicate, boys chase the girls, and girls chase the boys.... Bees duplicate by swarming. As the sun passes the equinox, daylight hours increase, the queen ramps up egg laying and the population will grow. As the population increases, they will feel they need more room. A swarm, consisting of the old queen and a bunch of bees will exit the hive and hang on a near by tree. Several "scout" bees will look for a new home. They will go back and forth, and "discuss" areas to go. For a few hours they will argue it out and reach an agreement then move to the new home. You may ask: Why should you get a swarm? James states the obvious: they are cheaper than buying a new package of bees.

Why not let your bees swarm? First, they may leave you, and be taken up by a neighboring beekeeper. If you want to make honey you definitely do not want a swarm. 60,000 bees may make twice as much honey as 2 hives of 30,000 bees will make. If you pay attention to your bees now you will see they are bringing in pollen and nectar for more brood rearing. Maple blossoms in the tree-tops and camellia are blooming now.

The queen was laying 10-20 eggs a day at Christmas time. She will build up to a few hundred a day as spring nears. If you want to help them build up fast feed them (but make sure they have plenty of room.) Once you start, don't stop.

What bees need to swarm?

1. Good food source (during nectar flow).
2. A Good Queen.
3. Crowding in the hive.

What to do:

1. You cannot control the food source, and you wouldn't want to risk starving them anyway...
2. If your queen is young, she is less likely to swarm. If the queen is 2 years old, you have a 50-70% chance of swarming. If your queen is 3 years old, you have almost 100% chance she will swarm. This is why James tells us to re-queen annually. He reminds us, different beekeepers will advise otherwise, Dr. Ambrose at NC State tells us to re-queen every other year.
3. Crowding: Give the queen space to lay eggs. At this time you would not want to limit her with a queen excluder. Any queen worth anything needs 2 deeps. Most queens will move up. Weather permitting; you want to reverse the hive bodies (move the brood down to the bottom, and empty box up). Usually you do this once a year. The queen will circulate through the 2 full deeps you give her to use. Some time, they may run out of room with the 2 deeps. Prior to the nectar flow you will want to throw a couple of supers on. James brags that he had one hive produce 55 gallons of honey in one year. Some people go through hives and cut out queen cells. This may help, but once they make up their mind to swarm, it is impossible to stop them.

You don't want to control but prevent swarming. To prevent swarming: Have

a good queen and give them plenty of room.

James tells us, when the population increases, they decide to swarm: They will form committees; one group will take charge and cut off food to the queen, putting her on a diet, so she is lighter and able to fly. They exercise her to get her down to flight weight, as another team hunt for a new home or temporary one. Mid morning, they will take off; looking like bees are pouring out of the hive. If they go to swarm and the queen cannot (because she is too heavy, or her wings are clipped), she will crawl back to the hive. Within 20 minutes, the girls will realize she is not with them and return. In a few days when a new queen emerges, they will take one and take off. When the bees are swarming, they are gentle and will not sting you on purpose. If you walk in the flight path, one may run into you accidentally.

If your bees are swarming, or a recent split, you will not get much honey from them. What James likes to do is have 2 deeps full of bees, add 2 more deeps between the two boxes. Make sure there is a good queen in the bottom, go thru the top and cut out queen cells in about 3-4 days. You will have increased population, stifled any chances of swarming and get a lot of honey!

All hives will build queen cells (remember “the birds and the BEES”) another thing you can do with them is get a nuc box, put one frame of brood and nurse bees, one frame of honey and a few empty frames and wait a few weeks- you will have a new young queen that the bees like and a new hive. Make sure you do this at a time where the weather is good and there are plenty of drones around, so the queen can mate.

James tells beginner beekeepers it is a good idea to have at least 2 hives. This is good in case you need to go into that hive. He does not recommend queen excluders. He has been keeping bees for 30 years and has only used one once or twice. If you have 2 deeps on and you see wax along the top of the frames, add a super. You want to add a super when they are 2/3 full.

How many do you put on at once? 1 or 2. If you cannot check them every week, add 2. If you can check weekly you can add one at a time. During the nectar honey flow they can produce an average of 1 full medium super a week. In a strong hive you will get at least 4 supers of honey full during a 4-week nectar flow.

If you lose a swarm this year- don't feel bad, half of us will. Swarms are easier to prevent than control, follow James' guidelines and hopefully you will keep your bees.

### **Questions:**

#### **How far will a swarm move from a parent hive?**

Usually they stay within sight 100-200 ft from the hive while they get organized, then they may move on as much as a mile or mile and a half. Basically they go as far as they need to. If you are expecting a swarm, you can put an empty hive body out as a bait hive; it can be only a single deep. You do not want it too close to the parent hive- just like you don't want to live too close to your parents. The best idea is to put it on the opposite side of your house. In your bait hive, do not put drone comb, you may just want to put foundation. You do not want to bait wax moths; swarms will be in comb building mode anyway.

In spite of all your efforts you may still have a swarm.

#### **Would you want to split a strong hive?**

If you want maximum honey – No

If you want to have another hive- yes. If you see a swarm cell, pull it out and put it in a nuc box. Or you can just split them, without checking for the queen and let one hive make a new queen. Set the split hive near, the field bees will go to the original hive. Move the new hive a hive width away every few days until you get it where you want it.

#### **What about a weak hive?**

If you have a weak hive you can make it stronger by combining it with a stronger hive. You need them strong by mid march for the April Tulip Polular flow. Or you can take capped brood out of a strong hive or switch the hives locations so that the field bees go into the weaker hive.

**Does the bait hive need a pheromone?** No, but it won't hurt anything if you want to use one. Bees are attracted to places bees have lived before. Some people use comb and lemongrass essential oil as an attractant. You can also grow lemongrass, it is a tropical so move it inside for the winter. I brought some at Whole Foods last year and stuck it in dirt with water. I have 4 plants of it now.

**If you re-queen every year, what time of year do you do it?** Spring is best mostly- that is when the queen gives out. The beginning of the nectar flow is when it is most important to have a strong queen. During the nectar

flow is also the best time to put a new queen in. If you re-queen in the fall the prices of queens are cheaper. You can also do it in the second weekend of November. You can create a nectar flow by feeding them if you want to requeen at a different time.

James uses his own queens- he has a good mix of genes thanks to swarms and his years keeping bees. You can also purchase good queens.

With a swarm, how soon do you re-queen them, since she is an old queen? They will raise a better queen than any queen breeder can.

### **Bee-leive it or not:**

The hive that I talked about a few months ago getting knocked over when the high was in the 40s (that I left lie for a few days because I thought they were dead) is doing well. Maybe that helped harden them; they fly at colder temps and are more active than our other hives.

### **Upcoming Events for 2009:**

Wake County Beginner Beekeeping Class: March 14<sup>th</sup> @ the Raleigh Police Club

NCSBA Spring Meeting: March 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> is held with SCSBA in Rock Hill, SC.

NCSBA Summer Meeting will be held July 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>. The location is to be determined, possibly Charlotte or Wilkes County.

Southeast Organic Beekeepers Conference: February 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in West Palm Beach Florida. <http://seobc.beekeeperspb.com/>

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Organic Beekeepers Conference: February 27<sup>th</sup> – March 1<sup>st</sup> in Oracle, Arizona information on Organic Beekeepers Yahoo Group.

Northeast Treatment Free Beekeeping Conference: July 31<sup>st</sup>-August 1<sup>st</sup> near Boston, Massachusetts: <http://BeeUntoOther.com/>



### **Mentor List:**

Here is the mentor list so far: If you are a mentor and have a preferred contact method- let me know. If you want to be added to the list let me know also.

Last name	First name	City	Home phone	Email
Currin	Andrew	Willow Springs	919-868-4014	acurrin@embarqmail.com
Pulley	Barry	Raleigh	919-266-2543	bpulley@nc.rr.com
Grable	Chris	Raleigh	919-844-686	cpgrable007@hotmail.com
Kraus	Connor	Holly Springs		cwk390@gmail.com
Gass	D.J.	Apex	919-363-2941	dj_gass@adp.com
Borge	Frank	Apex	919-303-9774	fabeez261@yahoo.com
Cook	Jim	Youngsville	919-321-0217	jimcook@operamail.com
Hanser	Kathryn	New Hill	919-387-7631	kahanser@yahoo.com
Williams	Larry	Fuquay-Varina	919-557-6050	Larry.a.williams@usps.gov
Kelly-Crapse	Rick	Fuquay-Varina	919-577-9103	rc8653@att.com
Barbour	Ricky	Zebulon	919-269-0108	RickyBarbour86@yahoo.com
Huffman	Tim	Zebulon	919-269-6790	timjoehuffman@aol.com
Green	Larry A.	Wake Forest	919-556-9212	TLCLarry@nc.rr.com
Hughes	Shannon	Fuquay-Varina	919-342-5570	webmaster@hugheshoney.com

## What To Do this Month in the Bee Yard in March:

Copied From NC Cooperative Extension Website

Continue to check the honey supply in the hive during March. The colonies should gain strength rapidly as the increasing amount of brood hatches. There should be plenty of pollen and some new honey available by the end of the month.

If there is honey and brood in the brood chamber and the queen is there, the excluder can be put on. If the queen is in the supers, she should be put in the brood chamber and the excluder put on at least three weeks before the start of the poplar honey flow so the brood in the supers will all be hatched. Do not put the queen in the brood chamber if there is no honey there. Put a quart of sugar water in the brood combs, and then put the queen there.

Clean the excluders each year, especially if there is a lot of comb and glue on them (and there will be if you use the all wire excluder). When removing the wax and glue, be very careful not to spread the wires even a little or the queen will go through it into the supers. After cleaning most of the wax and glue from the excluder, the cleaning can be finished by immersing it in hot water for a few seconds, or holding it over a flame until the wax and glue are melted, then wiping it with a rag before the wax and glue harden again.

There are several types of queen excluders. Some are all wire with no rims. Some are all wire with wooden rims and some with wooden rims and alternating seven wires and wooden strips. There are also excluders made completely of plastic. Prices are variable depending on the materials utilized in the excluder and most beekeepers have individual preferences based on initial price, durability, and effectiveness. If you utilize wooden queen excluders, remember that on one side of the wooden excluders, the wood strips are flush with the rim. This side goes next to the brood chamber. On the other side, the wooden strips are 1/4 inch below the rims; this gives the proper bee space between the excluder and the super above it. One last observation concerning queen excluders, some beekeepers think of them as "honey excluders" since they can potentially reduce the overall honey crop.

When the colony dies, except from disease, the brood combs should be saved. If the colony dies from starvation, there will be some, or many, bees head down, deep in the cells. Some of these can be removed by holding the frame horizontally and tapping the underside of the frame with a hive tool. When a new swarm is put on these combs, they will remove the bees that are left. If you cannot catch a swarm, buy five frames of bees and brood from a beekeeper, and swap him the five empty frames, and you will soon have a strong colony. Sometimes the brood combs in a hive with bees in it will mold during the winter. In the spring the bees will clean these combs before using them.

Get the supers of comb ready for the new colony. Use clean, bright extracted comb from the year before or new foundation. In a short honey flow, you will get at least a third more honey by using comb with the cells already drawn out. Do not use comb from the year before for eating, it will be tough.

New foundation in cold weather is very brittle. Store it in a warm place before putting it in the frames. In very warm weather, it will become limber. Store in a cool place before putting it in the frames. Do not handle a super of new foundation in a vertical position, the foundation might sag and come out of the bottom bar.

When applying wired brood foundation, be sure the hooks on the wires are at the top behind the slat that holds the foundation. The metal bound, plastic base foundation does not need wires, and the bees cannot gnaw the edges of the foundation. The two holes in this foundation go at the bottom of the frame. These holes allow the bees to go from one frame to another without going over the bottom bar. If given to a strong swarm, or used as a super during a heavy honey flow, the bees will do a good job of drawing out the foundation. If used as a super, the honey can be extracted, and then used as brood comb. Good brood combs with nearly all worker cells are very important, as this comb will last 25 years or longer. New foundation, both super and brood, is high in price, and keeps going up. Save all scrapes of comb, and cut out super comb that is not fit to use and melt it into beeswax. Beeswax can be exchanged, pound for pound, for new foundation with a charge of less than a dollar for working the wax into foundation.

Lastly it is recommended to thoroughly inspect all of your colonies for queen rightness and evidence of any and all bee diseases. Take appropriate action if any problems are noted.

This time last year was when Andy and I planted clover for our bees. Now is the time to think about bee friendly landscaping.

## Landscape Planting for Bees

Prepared by: S. Bambara, Extension Specialist 1/93

Increased urbanization of our rural areas has destroyed native forage vegetation in many places. In addition, many of our hobby beekeepers living in the suburbs enjoy watching bees work the flowers. With this in mind and because honey bees are so important for pollinating agricultural, horticultural, and wild plants, there is at least one small thing we can do to support our state insect.

Most houses and yards are landscaped, so by merely making certain choices, nectar or pollen producing plants can be used with little or no additional cost. Though they have only a tiny effect on a single hive, every little bit contributes and the more people use these plants, the more significant will be the total benefit. Below are listed some plant material which can be used around homes, parks or city streets. All are highly attractive to bees except where noted. Attractiveness may vary in different regions. Most of the berry and seed bearing plants also produce good forage for birds.

This list is not complete and all plants may not thrive in all parts of the state. Consult any reference on landscape plants or your Cooperative Extension agent for further information about how to use some of these. You may also want to visit local gardens or plantings for ideas.

### Ground Covers

Ladino clover - blooms late spring-summer  
Crimson clover - blooms late spring  
Ajuga - blooms spring  
Hyacinth - blooms spring  
Strawberry - blooms spring  
*Ampelopsis brevipedunculosa* - blooms late spring

### Large Shrubs

Red Bud (*Cercis*) - blooms early spring;  
Apple, Crabapple (*Malus*) - blooms early spring;  
Willow (*Salix*) - blooms early spring  
Golden Rain Tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*) - blooms summer  
Sourwood (*Oxydendron arboreum*) - blooms midsummer;  
irregular nectar production  
Sumac (*Rhus*) - blooms summer/fall; shrub or small tree;  
Holly (*Ilex*) - blooms spring; many species achieve tree status if unpruned\*  
Beebee Tree (*Evodia danielli*) - blooms late summer  
Hercules Club (*Aralia spinosa*) - blooms late summer

### Large Trees

Maple (*Acer* spp.), especially *A. rubrum*, *A. ginnala* - blooms early spring; good nectar production  
Linden, Basswood (*Tilia*) - blooms in spring; excellent nectar production  
Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) - blooms spring; inconsistent nectar production  
Tulip, Yellow Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) - blooms spring; fast growing; excellent nectar production  
Black Gum, Tupelo (*Nyssa*) - blooms spring; Tupelo requires moist soil  
Persimmon (*Diospyros*) - blooms late spring

\*Also provides food/cover for birds.

### Shrubs

Barberry (*Berberis* sp.) - blooms spring; evergreen\*  
Viburnum - blooms most of summer; deciduous  
Privet (*Ligustrum*) - blooms late spring; may produce bitter nectar  
Graph  
Abelia - blooms summer/fall; evergreen; mildly attractive  
Quince (*Chaenomeles*) - blooms spring  
Blueberry (*Vaccinium*) - blooms spring  
Silverberry (*Eleagnus*) - blooms late spring; deciduous; fragrant\*  
Nandina - blooms summer; mildly attractive  
Holly (*Ilex*) especially *I. burfordi*, *I. cornuta*, *I. rotunda*; blooms  
spring; almost all species excellent nectar source; may require pruning\*  
Pussy  
Euonymus - blooms summer;  
Silverling (*Baccharis halimifolia*) - blooms fall; native aster shrub in  
coastal plain and piedmont  
Peppercorn (*Clethra alnifolia*) - blooms late spring; native coastal plain  
shrub, survives piedmont; evergreen\*



# Happy St. Patrick's Day!

