

# Susquehanna Beekeeper's Association

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## President's Message

*I am going to precede my planned message with an urgent reminder to register your honey bee colonies with Maryland. As Cybil Preston emphasized at the SBA February meeting, hive registration is a key metric for determining funding for the inspection program.*

*Let us get every SBA hive and beekeeper counted!*



I have very hungry bees this year! I've been feeding since December, starting with fondant leftover from last year. When that was gone, I tried making a sugar and water paste that I froze. That worked ok but was crumbly. I next tried making my own fondant. It wouldn't have won any cake decorating awards, but the bees didn't seem to mind. The good news is that all five of my hives are still buzzing. When the temperatures get consistently above freezing during the day I will switch to syrup. If you believe the groundhog, we have a few more weeks of winter remaining. Check your bees and keep them from starving.

Beekeeper newbies will be soon starting the 2015 Beekeeping Short Course at Harford Community College. Please consider being a mentor

to a new beekeeper. The 2015 Bee Supplier List has been distributed. This is a great resource of local suppliers of packages, nucs, and queens.

Get your orders in NOW to ensure you get the bees you need for 2015. The SBA will have a "BeeWare" Swap Meet at the Fallston United Methodist Church parking lot on

Saturday, March 21 from 10 until 1130 (set up at 0930). A couple of local bee equipment suppliers have been invited. Don't miss this great opportunity to sell extra equipment, pick up some bargains, and enjoy some bee-talk!

We hope to be able to offer SBA members a hands-on bee course this spring. The course will target 2<sup>nd</sup> year beekeepers on how to better manage their bees and build a sustainable apiary. We are researching speakers for the remainder of year with the goal of providing relevant, informative, and entertaining presentations. If you have any suggestions contact me or one of the board of directors. See you at the 11 March meeting!

-Harry

# Requeening a Drone-Laying Colony



Spotty drone brood

“There are two main subcategories of drone laying hives: 1) a drone laying queen, and 2) laying workers.”

Multiple eggs in a cell



**Why does a hive become a drone laying colony?** Here are the possible situations that could result in a drone laying colony: the queen runs out of sperm, the queen dies, the queen is unsuccessfully superseded, or the queen is accidentally killed by the beekeeper with no viable brood present. When the hive has been queenless for a period of 20 or more days with no possibility of making a viable queen, laying workers will usually appear. But there are some cases where laying workers will never appear, and the colony will just slowly dwindle until wax moths or small hive beetles take over and finish the destruction.

There are two main subcategories of drone laying hives: 1) a drone laying queen, and 2) laying workers.

If you have a drone laying queen, then she has run out of sperm. The presence of **both** worker brood and drone brood does **not** mean the queen is a drone layer (yet). But if the queen **has** run out of sperm and now lays only unfertilized eggs (the ones that become drones), and you look in the hive still finding worker brood, it can take another 21 days before all those workers hatch! Meanwhile, the drone brood increases

BY JOE LEWIS

steadily. So you really have to pay attention and take a look in the hive more than once every 3 or 4 weeks, or you can be surprised (in a bad way). (Note: Don't just “take a look”, but know **what** you are looking at and **what** it means. This takes time, practice, and more than one hive for good comparisons.)

If you have laying workers, some of the workers have developed their ovaries and egg laying capacity, and will be secreting small amounts of queen pheromones, enough to make the hive **THINK** they are still queenright! These workers may be slightly larger and longer than normal workers, but you probably will not be able to tell the difference and may never know which bees are the drone layers. The tipoff is when you see multiple eggs in the cells, scattered eggs, eggs attached to the sides of cells and/or see a lot of scattered worker cells that are being converted to drone cells. Good queens usually lay eggs in regular patterns and only a very young queen will make the temporary and infrequent mistake of laying more than one egg in a cell.

**Some alternatives for a drone laying colony - 1)** Combine the hive with a queenright hive or nuc using the

# Requeening a Drone-Laying Colony

“newspaper” method. (So now you are down one hive, but you can likely make a split later. This is a good reason for always raising a nuc and keeping it in standby.) **2)** Introduce a capped queen cell from another colony --- this works about 80% of the time, but it works better the earlier you catch the situation. **3)** Give the queenless colony a frame or two with eggs and brood from another colony. I would give this a 30% success rate, providing there is still plenty of bee strength left in the hive.

**4)** Gently move the brood and bees from the drone laying colony into another hive a short distance away. Then add frames with brood and eggs back into the original hive or after a day or so introduce a new queen or queen cell. The theory is that the drone laying workers will remain on the brood comb while most of the other bees will go out, and return to the original hive. Later the drone laying frames can be combined and absorbed into other strong hives. This might work 20% of the time. (Mileage may vary.)

**What the internet and some books say to do (they are WRONG!)** – Conventional wisdom, the internet, beekeeper old wives’ tales and some books say the way to requeen a drone laying colony is to take all the frames out 15 yards or so in front of the hive and shake the bees on the ground. Then return the frames and introduce a new queen, hoping the drone-laying workers don’t fly back to the hive. However, this almost always fails. Another alternative, re-queening the hive with a known good queen, has a less than 3% chance of success, no matter how slowly you do the queen introduction. Don’t waste your money.

**Requeening a drone laying colony with a queen cell** – While prevention is better than the cure, the best method of requeening a drone laying colony is to use a capped queen cell. And, you ask, where can I quickly get a queen cell? Of course: from your *Russian hive* that always keeps a queen cell (or five) in reserve! The Russians are notorious for keeping “just in case” queen cells on hand, sometimes tearing them down and rebuilding them through the season or holding 10 virgin captives during swarming season. If you have enough hives and want to have this option, always keep at least one hive of Russians from which to harvest queen cells.



Russian queen

**More Insurance:** If you are trying to raise a few of your own queens, be sure to add a frame of eggs and young larva just before you think the virgin queen is ready to go out on her mating flight. This will ensure that if she gets lost or eaten by a predator and fails to return, your bees, if there are enough of them, can still raise an emergency queen to replace her if needed. Otherwise you may periodically wind up with some laying workers because about 33% of virgin queens can fail to return to the mating hive!

*Joe Lewis is a retired Army officer and a sideliner beekeeper in Bel Air, MD where he raises the bees for Harford Honey. He is the author of the previous articles in the newsletter of SBA (see the archives).*

# Notes from the Apiary: February



*"I hope that you took advantage of the nice warm day we had Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup> and checked out your bees."*



I usually open the hives and look around in January, but with the weather being so cold there was very little that could be done. I made some sugar cake and placed it into the hives back in early January just to be on the safe side, as I knew that with the cold weather it was unlikely that the bees would be out and about.

I went online to find out what was used to make fondant and I don't believe I will try using it again. The recipe I found for fondant starts with marshmallows and corn syrup. Anyway, I found a recipe for sugar cake that is even easier than the sugar candy especially as there is no cooking involved. You just take 5 lbs. of sugar, add 7.5 ounces of water, and stir until well mixed. Spread out on wax paper in a pan at least ½ inch deep. Score the mixture into usable sizes, and place into the oven with the oven light on overnight. The next morning you will have a firm cake of sugar that can be placed into your hive knowing that only sugar is in that cake.

I hope that you took advantage of the nice warm day we had Sunday,

BY ROBERT CROUSE

February 8<sup>th</sup> and checked out your bees. As it was below 50 degrees, I did not go down into the hives, except for one nuc. There were a small group of dead bees at the top where they had been feeding on the sugar cake. I broke the seam between the boxes and tilted it back to see lots of bees just starting to enter the top box. So I closed it back up as all was well. I guess that those dead bees did not stop feeding and got caught in a cold spell.

As our central Maryland major nectar flow occurs in May and June, this means that beekeeping begins in late January or early February. Now is the time to do your equipment inventory and order the foundation, etc. that you need for the new season. By April you should be concentrating on cleaning out the hives, reversing brood boxes, feeding and doing early season medications as needed.

Check out the bee sources and prices for this spring, as I believe you will see some shocking price increases. I would advise if you plan on bee purchases this year that you get your orders in NOW.

# Eastern Apiculture Society (EAS) 2015

Have you ever considered taking a “Beekeeping Vacation”? Well, now is the time to get your passport renewed as EAS Conference 2015 will be taking place in Guelph, Ontario (about 1.5 hours north of Niagara Falls, New York). EAS is one of the largest noncommercial beekeeping organizations in the world. Every summer, EAS conducts its week-long Annual Conference of lectures and workshops in one of the 26 member states or Canadian provinces. This year’s EAS conference will be held at the University Guelph, Ontario, from August 10 through August 14. The conference usually brings in about 600 to 800 beekeepers from around the world.

The event is made up of the Short Course, running from Monday to Wednesday, and the conference, running from Wednesday to Friday. Normally about half of the attendees stay the whole week, with the other half coming just for the conference. The Short Course will contain classes for beekeepers of all levels and special events such as an open apiary with Langstroth, Warre, and Top Bar Hives, a microscope workshop on bee anatomy, a Honey Show for you to enter your bee products, and classes on all aspects of beekeeping. The conference will consist of over 100 different talks about all aspects of bee-

BY TIM MCMAHON

keeping, including classes on queen rearing, mead and beer brewing and integrated pest management. Along with the workshops, there are many social events such as a tour of a large commercial beekeeping operation, a meadery and the Niagara

Butterfly Conservatory. In one week’s time, you can learn more about beekeeping than you ever possibly imagine.

I first attended EAS several years ago in Boone NC, and the experience was so great that I became a lifetime member. I’ve not missed an EAS conference since. Every year I go with a set of questions I try to find the answers to from the best minds in beekeeping (can’t get much better than that!). Maybe the best thing about the EAS was that I get

to talk bees all week long and no one says that they had heard enough (normally my family asks me to shut up after the first 2 minutes or so). You can find out all about the specific topic covered and how to sign up at the EAS webpage here <http://www.easternapiculture.org/>.

I hope to see you there. EAS 2016 is scheduled for New Jersey, 2017 in Delaware and 2018 in Virginia. Come and join the fun!



# Bees in Literature

SUBMITTED BY BARBARA KREAMER

“Bee Guys”

Three bee guys were scared for their lives.  
They broke out of their hives,  
then broke out in hives.

They screamed, "We miss our honeycomb home!"  
and three wives from the hive screamed, "Honey, come home!"

*from Bo Burnham's book Egghead or You Can't Survive on Ideas Alone*



How then, she had asked herself, did one know one thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were. Only like a bee, drawn by some sweetness or sharpness in the air, intangible to touch or taste, one haunted the dome-shaped hive, ranged the wastes of the air over the countries of the world alone, and then haunted the hives with their murmurs and their stirrings; the hives, which were people.

*from The Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf*

## Claudia's Corner

*“And Jim said you mustn't count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck. The same if you shook the tablecloth after sun-down. And he said if a man owned a beehive and that man died, the bees must be told about it before sun-up next morning, or else the bees would all weaken down and quit work and die. Jim said bees wouldn't sting idiots; but I didn't believe that, because I had tried them lots of times myself, and they wouldn't sting me.”*

*—from The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain*

## Reminders, Odds and Ends

- Check out [honeyflow.com](http://honeyflow.com) for an interesting look at the possible future for honey harvesting!
- Watch [this short video](#) for a look at a beehive-inspired tree house.
- SBA Introduction to Beekeeping - March 6th through April 17th, 2015, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Harford County Community College
- March 11th, 2015 (Wednesday) at 7 p.m. - SBA General Meeting - David Papke, speaker
- March 21st, 2015 (Saturday) 10 am – 1130 am – SBA Bee Ware Swap Meet - Fallston United Methodist Church Lower Parking Lot
- University of Maryland Beginners Beekeeping Course – March 28 -29, 2015 - University of Maryland, College Park
- April 8th, 2015 (Wednesday) at 7 p.m. - SBA General Meeting – Speaker TBA
- May 13th, 2015 (Wednesday) at 7 p.m. - SBA General Meeting - Peter Lindtner, Author of Garden Plants for Honey Bees Author will have books for sale at meeting.
- June 10th, 2015 (Wednesday) at 7 p.m. - SBA General Meeting - Kristen Traynor, Author of "Two million blossoms: discovering the medicinal benefits of honey" Ms. Traynor will be giving 2 presentations: One on varroa mites and second of natural beekeeping. Each presentation will last roughly 30 to 40 minutes.

...additional info is on the SBA website home page

## SBA Logo

Did you know SBA has a logo and you can get it embroidered on hats, t-shirts, polo-shirts, and sweatshirts? The logo is on file with Marywood Embroidery, Bel Air. Call Ben at 410-838-3160 to place an order.



## Susquehanna Beekeepers Association

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|                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
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