

# CENTRAL COAST BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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## **CCBA Monthly Meeting Notes**

Date: Monday, January 16, 2017

Location: Oak Creek Commons Great Room, Paso Robles, CA

Attendance: 30

## **Networking**

### **Welcome/Introductions/New Officers**

- CCBA started in April 2014, so coming up on 3 years
- In 2015 averaged 15 persons per meeting
- In 2016 averaged 22 persons per meeting
- So we are growing! We are anticipating 2017 will be larger
- New leadership team
  - President is Anna Rempel
  - Bruce is VP
  - Sara Copeland is treasurer
  - Meg Henry is secretary (back up is Cynthia LaPier)
  - Cynthia LaPier is tech support
  - John C. and John H. are education
  - Leadership team will meet separately before February meeting to discuss year

### **Practicum: Anna Rempel – Hive Equipment: John Chesnut**

- In January most hives are still in a dormant phase, however, both at the coast and north county bees are bringing in pollen.
- JANUARY POLLENS:
  - John is waiting for fillaree – usually starts the first week of February. It is easy to identify because it is fire engine red and bee after bee will come in with this pollen. Fillaree is a low pasture weed, also called “storks bill” and it is prevalent, anywhere there has been grazing. (Erodium sicutarium). It is an old world Mediterranean plant, but made it to the southwest in the 1500’s, so was here in California before bees or European settlers. In pink the fields will be pink with these flowers.
  - Arroyo Willow – blooms first at coast (3<sup>rd</sup> week January), produces rich nectar (50% sugar) and lemon yellow pollen
  - Eucalyptus Blue Gum – doesn’t produce every year equally well, individual trees bloom at different times, and previous year produces the bloom for the following year.
  - Buckbrush – important early nectar flow
  - White alder – early nutritious pollen (alder is more common in north)
  - Maple (Templeton area) – important source of pollen
- POLLEN BENEFITS
  - Pollen is very important in the spring to provide pollen – this is necessary to provide protein for growing the hive populations

- Not all pollens are equal in their nutritional profile, so you want a complement
- LOSSES
  - John lost a lot of hives possibly due to nosema infestation (infection that multiplies in the bees gut – microsporidium [like a bacteria and fungus combined])
  - There is a virulent southwest Asian strain of nosema that is now common in North America, and its much more aggressive than our north American native nosema
  - Primary sign is weak bees, bees that are crawling, bees that are failing to fee. Classic symptom is
  - John put sugar cake and syrup on his bees in October (and appetite stimulants (wintergreen oil) and they still would not eat. When he dissected, their guts were discolored which is an indicator of nosema.
  - Normal digestive system in bees is almost clear, with nosema color will be milky. But the definitive diagnosis is to do smear and see microsporidium which appear sesame shaped under a microscope
  - We don't have spring starvation here, but the nosema losses went on through December
  - Treatment drug is called fumagillin (spelling?) which is a broad spectrum antibiotic – this drug may not work well on the virulent
  - Nozema (spelling?) is folk medicine approach – it is an high tannic oak bark
  - Scott Jeffrys has told John that if you feed all fall and keep intestines moving, possibly less likely to allow the disease in and keeps the bees active
  - Milan says in Europe they can't use antibiotics, so older be keepers told them the old trick: put warm sugar syrup on the frames (but no not put laundry out to dry)
  - John says in February bees will start doing cleaning flights, so more waste on windows, this is not necessarily nosema
  - Dark honeydew honey should be harvested from the hive in spring so bees will not eat it (it makes great honey, just not for bees to eat. Bees make from oak and willow – these are high in ash and solids and are harder for the bees to digest, so its very hard on the bees. Replace these frames with stored frames from the summer.
  - Anna asks – how do you know if you have that honey? Milan says you can tell because it is very dark
- HARVEST
  - John had LOTS of honey in February last year, but the Eucalyptus is much slower this winter, so there may be less to harvest

- **BOTTOM BOARDS**
  - Are screened bottom boards good? Do we need them? The theory is that the bees will groom varroa mites will fall through screen and fewer will be able to re-infect the hives
  - John builds a lot of screened bottom boards, much cheaper than purchasing. The screen MUST be 1/8-inch mesh. Window screen is too fine for varroa to find its way through. John has about ¼ of hives with screened bottom boards.
  - He does not feel it makes any difference for varroa, but it does make it easier to check the varroa loading and its also possible to check and see how many cappings are falling (so how many drones or workers are hatching), you can also see eggs that the queen has dropped – some queens carry this process on longer than others, but this can be a sign that a new queen is laying, since she will drop a lot of eggs the first few weeks
  - Sheets for bottom board can be coreplex – spray Pam or oil on this to make varroa stick a little
  - Difficulty with varroa monitoring – can't really see true population of varroa in colony versus what bees are grooming off
  - In weak hives you can also see the black segmented droppings of the wax moths, that will let you know the hive has wax moths – this can be an indicator of a close to terminal condition of a weak hive – then moths from come in.
  - If John has wax moths he shrinks the hive size drastically, he will go from full super to nuc box so he has tight bee coverage. Basically bees need to be able to cover all frames
- **HIVES**
  - Good seal cover is VERY important to keep water out
  - Migratory cover will have overlap only on front and back, not sides
  - Telescoping covers fold over all four sides to better seal
  - Inner cover and telescoping cover creates inner space which can be used to create humidity trap to keep water from dripping inside
  - Most commercial hives do not use inner cover
  - European hives some times use burlap inside but this does not allow for “bee space” 3/8” and this is key aspect of modern hives
  - Frames –
    - John uses mostly wax and wire for his frames – he prefers this traditions
    - Partial frames will allow for bees to draw down larger comb and drones. If you are encouraging drone comb, best to remove otherwise, its possible to end up with more mites
    - Plastic foundation is “rite-cell”
    - Pure plastic foundation is a small cell impression (4.9) but John has had nothing but trouble with these

- Bees will always draw on wax foundation before plastic foundation, so if using plastic only give them plastic and give it April to August when production is highest
- Do wax foundations survive in a spinning extractor? JC says first year comb is very fragile, but re-worked comb that has previously raised brood will leave behind the cocoon that nurse bees coat over with propolis so this reinforces the comb and it can be very strong
- Once wax gets very dark, some beekeepers will pull and replace with fresh comb. For issues like paralysis virus, it is a good idea to remove old wax to prevent spread of disease
- John uses wedge top, groove bottom frames only – this is most adaptable to wax foundation. The groove encourages them to complete the frame down to the bottom
- Since we have a short season in California, so if they are building comb, then they are not creating honey
- Swarming may be more likely if they are making more wax, since they are likely to build more cells and queen cells
- This year we are likely to have lots of swarms
- FEEDING
  - JC's run of thumb is to feed protein when the he sees the willows bloom (late winter)
  - Gordon Wadell is to start feeding in fall – supports the bees being higher in fat reserves going into winter. This is the first “food” the colony uses up going into winter
  - John mixes inverted sugar with protein powder and makes his own feed. Can also open feed the powder in a chicken feeder. John puts his patties on the hive, but it can attract ants, so can be a problem some times
- SPLITTING HIVES
  - When is best time to split to avoid swarming?
  - JC and Milan made queens in February last year and did not have good return
  - Just don't have the temperatures in early spring, so try checker boarding, reversing (look these up) – if queen continues to have open drawn comb, not as likely to swarm. So feed that into the box in front of the queen. In April the queen will be laying 3000 eggs per day
  - Also can reverse supers as bees move up, or give them frames to draw comb on

**\*\* WORKSHOP FOR WAX AND WIRE AT JOHNS HOUSE IN FEBRUARY**

**Member dues:**

- Please pay – this year paying members will get a permanent name badge

### **Meeting Calendar:**

- Anna has handed out a tentative calendar for the year with an earlier November meeting to avoid the holidays
- SLO meeting will be at SLO Grange (“SLO GUILD”)

### **Financial Report**

- Current balance is \$ 651.22
- With hive raffle raised \$323 (thanks to JOHN CHESNUT!!!)
- Dale will be handing over to Sara soon
- Anna has purchased tables

### **Networking**

- Sign in/email list – sign up if you want emails

### **Communications Report**

- Nothing to report by Cynthia
- Anna has gotten requests for folks from other areas to JOIN our facebook. We will only let people IN OUR REGION OF SLO join and post. Others outside the area can read only
- Notification – if folks don’t do facebook, how will we notify, send email to our paid members? JC says yes, notify only paying member since classes will need to be small. Cynthia suggests using mailchimp to sort our mailing to paid members

### **Education**

- Anna handed out practicum schedule for 2017
- There will also be some weekend practicum meetings where we go through hives on a topic – topic will parallel Monday meeting topic
- John Hupp is starting a beginning beekeeping class (four weekends) at John Hancock College starting last weekend in January. Call John with questions.
- Sue Hulsmann – Bee Culture offers free magazines to anyone doing educational events – she has extras. Bee culture is also putting out a new beekeepers magazine – TAKE SOME!

### **Public Awareness – which events do we want to support?**

1) List of events CCBA has participated in:

- Conservation Celebration, April
- Earth Day, April
- Cambria Bee Faire, May
- Pollination Celebration (SLO), June
- Golden Oak Honey Festival (Paso Robles), October

2) Discussion on events CCBA will participate in 2017:

- Anna not inclined to participate in Earth Day – it was not well organized and very windy. It was also a long day (must set up before 8 am and can't break down until 5 pm)
- Anna would like to do the Cambria Bee Faire again
- Leadership group will discuss and bring back to group

3) Paso Robles Magazine – Anna will find out about writing an article

4) Changing City Ordinance in Paso, SLO – Anna has not yet convened a meeting, but she is not sure if she has the drive to lead this – will anyone else be able to lead? Brian Larsen volunteered to lead

(other group volunteers - Dale, Sarah C, Jodi, Meg, Terri, Sue & Michael Rosen, Brian Larsen, Bruce Terry)

**Other items:**

- Club extractors –
  - Erin Holden has the extractor for north county
- Need to figure out resource contact list – need to know about how people want to be contacted
- T-shirts – can we make a T for the club? Anna will look into this
- NUCs – John is sold out through May right now, so to supply the nuc market he is going to cut into his resources – he suggests making a bulk purchase of packages to get price break. This could be a process the club could support with – John can do some of this organization
  - Packages are easier to move bees from
  - Packages tend to be \$80-120
  - Oliveras is very hobbyist friendly (Tom Glen is running breeding program)

**Swarm Report:**

- Got about 50 calls for SLO-Coast-South County in 2016, through September, October 2016
- Some are easy, some are in accessible, some are there, some are gone quickly....
- Bruce collected mostly in an apple box, then sprayed down, usually could be done in 10-15 minutes
- Another opportunity to obtain bees
- When they are in walls, removal is MUCH more complicated and potentially messy

Adjourned: 8:43 pm