MARYLAND STATE BEEKEEPER'S ASSOCIATION

THE BEELINE

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President's Message

by David G. Smith

What a winter! Just the temperatures for the past few months, and those of the previous winter, tell the story - it was cold, and the bees suffered.

MD Average Temp

	'03-4	'02-3
Dec	38	37
Jan	32	31
Feb	34	33
Mar	43	45

One commercial beekeeper tells me he lost 70 to 80 percent of his colonies. Another beekeepers started the winter with 21 colonies and by March had lost nine. Although the final results have yet to come in, it appears that we have two winters of high losses among the beekeepers in Maryland. It is for this reason that the theme of our June meeting will be *Getting Ready for Winter*. Between the speakers and the questions from the floor we should be able to address all of the key points, and possible ensure better success in over-wintering our colonies during the 2004-5 winter - and right after the June meeting is the time to start your planning for the winter. So, Please Come to the joint meeting with the Delaware beekeepers in Denton, Maryland, on June 19, AND try to bring a beekeeper from your area who is not a member of MSBA!

Something has changed. When I started beekeeping in the mid-1940's the terms "feeding for winter" and "winter losses" were not in my vocabulary of beekeeping terms. The winters in Indiana were a lot colder than here in Maryland, so we should be able to rule that out as a changing factor. One issue that is significant is the nectar flow. Back then I needed a step-ladder to super my colonies in the summer - more honey than I knew what to do with. Comparing that to the recent harvests in MD leads to a possibility that we might be taking too much honey from our colonies. Is old (and possibly chemically contaminated) comb driving the bees up in the supers, leaving the over-wintering supers almost void of honey and thus requiring a heavy feed? Obviously mites are a problem (or more so the virus). Are we entering the Fall/Winter with sub-standard bees that do not have the physical ability to make it through a cold winter? Is the location of our apiary a factor (wind/humidity)? These, and many more, are the subjects that will be addressed at the June 19 meeting. Come, contribute to the discussions and help MSBA have another beneficial meeting.

Your Executive Board has been working on a number of key issues, a few of which might be of interest to you and thus are summarized below:

- We are working to enhance the web page to provide you with better information regarding beekeeping in Maryland as well as beekeeping in general. Check the page from time to time to see the changes:
- The Board approved -
- The Board has –

In closing, I again ask that you attend the June meeting and that you attempt to bring an individual from your area that has yet to join MSBA, OR who has not been attending our meetings.

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SUMMER MEETING

June 19, 2004

VFW HALL
DENTON, MD
Program information Inside

News from the Apiary Inspection Office

By Jerry E. Fischer, Office of Apiary Inspection, Maryland Department of Agriculture

APIARY INSPECTION: The year 2004 to date, has 929 registered beekeepers, with 9,330 colonies in 1300 apiaries. There still remains approx. 330 beekeepers (that have bees) that have not re-registered their bees for 2004.

To date this year, apiary inspectors have examined 1,117 colonies in 103 apiaries. Majority of these inspections was for the colonies that will be leaving the state for pollination of agriculture crops in Delaware, Penn, Virginia and West Virginia.

Apiary Inspectors will continue, with random inspection of apiaries, assisting beekeepers with manipulations, mite surveys and other related problems.

The Inspection Programs primary goal (controlling of AFB), is to examine 1/3 of the colonies in one year. It is recommended that beekeepers inspect their colonies at least two times a year (spring & fall). For Apiary Inspection requests, contact: State Apiary Inspection Office. Phone: 410-841-5920

COLONY CONDITIONS: With the many phone calls and contacts at local meeting, it has been determined the past winter losses were approx. 50%. The highest percentage of this was due to starvation. Most colonies went into winter with low stores. Colonies with adequate stores, during January still starved due to cluster not being able to move in contact with honey. The surviving colonies have shown to build up quite rapidly, with the early blossom, due to good ground water.

With the brood growth and the very wet, cool spring that we have experienced so far, I anticipate swarming to be high.

Colonies are being re-established with packages and nuc's.

VARROA & TRACHEAL MITES: The two parasitic mites, must still remain a major concern for the beekeeper. Our job is to maintain healthy bees, to keep the infestation below the threshold level. Survey to determine if treatment in necessary, don't just treat. Alternate controls to eliminate resistance. The MDA has received approval for two substances, under SPECIAL EXEMPTION (Section 18) for your use. These are CheckMite+ (Coumaphos) and API LIFE VAR.

SMALL HIVE BEETLE: There had been several incidents of SHB in Maryland during 2003. The colonies were treated with a control and ground treated with GardStar to prevent reproduction. This spring we will be moving bees in and out of the state for pollination and receiving packages, which has the potential of infesting with the SHB. If during your routine hive manipulation you detect or suspect SHB, contact the Apiary Inspection Office.

BEEKEEPING SHORT COURSES: Spring of 2004, through the Local Beekeeper Associations, has provided 8 Beekeeping Short Courses. Total number of students was 174, with 144 students (new) that never had bees in the past. WELCOME to the fascinating world of the HONEY BEE.

VALUE OF HONEY BEES TO MARYLAND: The majority are hobbyists who keep their colonies in state year round. A few semi-commercial beekeepers move 1500 colonies of bees in and out of state for pollination services. Colonies are moved with in the state for pollination of many field crops, as strawberries, cherries, apples, cucumbers melons and pumpkins. With honey being the primary goal of the hobbyist, an estimation of approx. 46 lbs. of "liquid gold" is extracted per colony a year. The largest percentage of this honey being, Tulip Poplar and Black Locust which comes from flowering trees which does not yield a

Cont. p.3 col 2.

Pollination Information

Dewey M. Caron, U of Delaware

An estimated 90% of flowering plants, those that feed us and other organisms, bring diversity to our planet, and insure proper ecosystem functions, need pollinators. One of every three bites of food is courtesy of a pollinator. But we don't have to look far to see that the critical plant-insect interaction of pollination and pollinators especially are in trouble - honey bees, our most dependable pollinator, are suffering from mites and keeping sufficient numbers of colonies healthy to pollinate farmers fields and orchards is a constant challenge. Native pollinators such as pollen and mining bees face constant threats from pesticides, disappearing habitats and declining populations.

A broad based coalition was formed in 1999 to address educational needs to conserve pollinators and pollinator-plant interactions. This organization (NAPPC - North American Pollinator Protection Campaign) seeks to coordinate 40 affiliated organizations (U of Maryland & Delaware are two) that are working to implement, promote and support a clear, continent-wide, coordinated Action Plan for pollinator conservation efforts (see website Http://www.nappc.org). Toward that goal, several individuals, including Barry Thompson, Past President MSBA, Kimberly Winters NAPPC Coordinator (her office is at University of Maryland) and myself, were invited by the Council of State Governments to an Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) Symposium this past month in Rhode Island to help EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), office of Pesticide Programs and Research and Development scientists, evaluate the possibilities of using bees and pollinators as bio-indicators of environmental health. EPA is considering the feasibility of using honey bees and pollinating insects as test organisms to determine the overall state of health of our planet. Dr Jerry Bromenshenk of U of Montana, (who several years ago developed the technique of using experimental colonies at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD to monitor for environmental contaminants), demonstrated how useful honey bee foraging and bee products are to measure environmental features. Also on the program was Danny Weaver of the American Beekeeping Federation and Dr Sam Droege of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. EPA scientists will now consider the feasibility of developing a protocol that uses bees as environmental monitoring test organisms. To help educate the public, NAPPC affiliates have teamed up with the US Botantic Garden on the Mall in Washington, DC to develop a Great Pollinator Partnership Exhibit this summer. The exhibit includes photographs and garden activities all summer-long on the essential values of pollinators and their plant hosts. See the website www.usbg.gov for a schedule and information on the exhibit. Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA has opened a new Bee-aMazed garden exhibit directed to youngsters on bees and pollination. See www.longwoodgardens.com/whatsNew/ for a dynamic view of display and children's pages that are outstanding.

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Apiary Inspection (cont. fm p.2)

fruit.

CHALLENGES: 1986 – **Tracheal Mite** 1987 – **Varroa Mite** 1998 – **Small hive beetle**

This assault of mites and other factors has had a significant impact on Maryland beekeeper**s.** This affecting the numbers of beekeepers and colonies available for pollination of our many crops. It is estimated that only 70% of the crops needing pollination, receive bees, and those that are, receive less then the numbers required for adequate pollination services.

ETO – FUMIGATION: MDA operated the (ETO) fumigation for diseased and suspect equipment during the past winter. There was 24 complete loads fumigated. This equipment was worth a value of $18,333.80 if beekeepers had to replace.

INSPECTION ENHANCEMENT FUND: 162 individuals or Associations have contributed $4,449.00 to the Inspection Enhancement Fund. These contributions are greatly appreciated, for 100% goes towards contractual salaries. ONLY because of this contribution can we continue the inspection program that we have provided in the past.

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Mark your calendars:

COMING EVENTS

The following events were announced at the MSBA Board meeting. Locations and details to be announced. Please note that the dates may be tentative and subject to confirmation of location approvals:

Joint MSBA /DSBA Summer Meeting
Sat. – 19 JUNE 2004
VFW Denton, MD

MSBA Honey Show/ Annual Meeting
Sat. – 13 November 2004
MDA Annapolis, MD

Upcoming National Meetings:

EAS 2004 Short Course & Conference
August 9-13, 2004
Seven Springs, PA

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Summer Meeting

Lunch / Refreshments

Refreshments will be provided during Breaks at the meeting.

The VFW will prepare a lunch plate for members to purchase which will consist of a chicken entrée.

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Summer EAS Meeting-7 Springs Resort, PA 2004

EAS Annual Conference 2004 will be close to home this year! The conference will be held at the 7 Springs Mountain Resort in the hills of south central Pennsylvania the week of August 9-13, 2004. The planning has been well underway to make this a great experience: it is a great chance to learn a lot a lot about beekeeping plus see a terrific part of the country and talk with fellow beekeepers. Dewey Caron has put together the meeting agenda of two basic parts: a 2 1/2 day Beekeeping Short Course and a 2 1/2 day Conference and Workshops.

The Short Course runs from Monday morning through noon on Wednesday (August 9-11). The Short Course is developed as a multi-level beekeeping experience useful to beginning and advanced beekeepers. The basic level is designed for beekeepers with 0-5 hives or less than 5 years experience; a 2nd level is designed to help advance those beekeepers who are already producing a honey crop. Instructors this year include Clarence Collision of Mississippi State, John Skinner of University of Tennessee, Marla Spivak of Minnesota, Jeff Pettis of USDA and several Master Beekeepers.

The main Conference and Workshops starts after lunch on Wednesday and runs through Friday evening (August 11-13). Main speakers include Jim Tew of Ohio, Mike Stangellini of NJ, Jennifer Berry of GA and a host of locals from Penn State, Mike Embrey of MD and Dr Caron with his collaborator from Bolivia. New this year are concurrent speaker sessions on Thursday and Friday with special sessions and workshops on marketing bee products and organic honey. Don't miss this great opportunity to reestablish friendships, make new friends, and improve beekeeping skills.

Reprinted from the Newsey Bee, April 2004

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JOINT
MARYLAND / DELAWARE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS
SUMMER MEETING

VFW Post #7937, 11348 Greensboro Road, Denton/Greensboro, Maryland

8:30 Coffee & Donuts

9:00 Welcome
- David G. Smith MSBA President

9:10 Biology of the Wintering Bee
- Dennis VanEngelsdorp - Acting State Apiarist, Pennsylvania State Department of Agriculture, Harrisburg

10:10 Break

10:30 Varroa Mite Thresholds
- Dennis VanEngelsdorp - Acting State Apiarist, Pennsylvania State Department of Agriculture, Harrisburg

11:30 Lunch

12:45 Apiary Inspection Updates
-Jerry Fischer - Maryland State Bee Inspector

1:00 Why Keep bees alive all summer only to lose them Over Winter
- Dr. Larry Connor, Wicwas Press, New Haven, CT

1:50 Break

2:10 The Fall & Winter Feeding of Bees for a Strong Colony in the Spring
- Dr. Larry Connor, Wicwas Press, New Haven, CT

3:15 Close

Directions:

Coming from the Western Shore: Cross the Bay Bridge and continue on Route 50 East until you come to Route 404. Take a left onto Route 404 and continue on to Denton bypass. Route 404 intersects with Route 313 on the north side of Denton. Take a left (north) onto Route 313. The VFW is about 1/2 mile north, on the west (left) side of the road. Coming from the NE part of Maryland (Elkton area) or Northern Delaware: Take Route 213 South to Galena or Route 301 from Middletown. From 301 turn left at junction of 544/313 onto Route 313. Continue on 313 thru the town of Goldsboro and on toward Denton. The VFW is about 1/2 mile north of the town of Denton, on the west (your right) side of 313.

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Eastern Shore Apiary Program

By Mike Embry

The University of Maryland's Eastern Shore Apiary Program (ESAP) was started in 1996 to aid beekeepers on the Eastern Shore of Maryland with research on problems unique to this area of Maryland. It is based at the Wye Research and Education Center in Queenstown, Maryland and is funded through the Department of Entomology's Agricultural IPM programs under Dr. Galen Dively. Since then the program has expanded to become a member of the Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium (MAAREC) to work on research and extension problems that overlap state boundaries. This has become more important with issues like Varroa Mites, resistant American Foul Brood and Small Hive Beetle. It has also happened at a time when funding and grants have become more of a problem for all bee researchers and multi-state cooperation has become more important in achieving funds.

One of the main research programs that MAAREC and ESAP have been developing is IPM strategy that could be implemented to aid beekeepers in the control of these pest problems. Items such as screened bottom boards, mite counting boards, rotation of chemical treatments, new treatments such as thymol and others have been worked upon. Research on other IPM controls is still being looked at such as 4.9 wax foundation and brood interruption.

A new area of ESAP work has been in the promotion of other native pollinators, evaluating riparian zones for their ability to promote native bee species and to increase the number of bee forage plants for all bees within these zones. This has become more important with the increased development of the Eastern Shore and the harvesting of flowering hardwood trees. ESAP is also undertaking a study on Small Hive Beetle beginning this year. Small hive beetle became established on the Lower Shore of Maryland this past year. What is not known is whether it can survive, reproduce and over winter on left over discarded cantaloupes in cultivated fields. If this can occur we could be looking at a never ending supply of Small Hive Beetles.

Since 2001 ESAP has also gone international. EASP has been promoting IPM control methods for honey bees through the USAID's Farmer-to-Farmer Program. ESAP has been active in Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia, Turkmenistan and most recently in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has recently begun using the European Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera*, as a replacement of the Asian Honey Bee, *Apis cerana.* It is a very poor country and beekeepers there do not have the funds to pay for most of the chemicals that we have become reliant upon for pest and disease control. So where else to implement the IPM control methods that MAAREC and others have been developing to see if they will control the pest and disease problems and allow the beekeepers there to produce quality honey and make some income. In this most recent trip there are some new serious pest and disease problems that have started. In the Asian Honey Bee the disease Thai Sac Brood has been found in parts of the country. This disease is a deadly virus and so far no controls have been effective. This is important to us here in Maryland and in other places because of its potential to spread to the European Honey bee. It has been raised in laboratories on European Honey bees but so far not in the field and mutation is always a possibility with a virus.

The other potential threat that has already spread to the European Honey Bees in Bangladesh is the mite, *Tropilaelaps clareae.* This mite has already been found in Africa where it is having an effect on African Honey bees. So far, brood interruption and the use of Formic acid are the only control methods available. ESAP with the cooperation of non-government honey bee organizations in Bangladesh has started a program of queen selection, (honey production, good brood pattern, and hygienic behavior) for a breeding program that is to begin there this December. We should know in about five or so years whether we will be successful. At issue again is the lack of good funding for this type of work. Although the Farmer to Farmer program through Winrock International has started these projects with ESAP this is not the main idea behind the Farmer to Farmer Program. Other sources of funding are needed to continue this kind of work before these problems start spreading to our own backyards.

ESAP will continue to work for beekeepers on honey bee problems in Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond.

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Check your label!

….If your mailing label on this issue of the Beeline indicates that your MSBA membership has expired this is your last issue unless you update your membership. Please send your $10 annual membership dues to our Treasurer Christine Goldsmith, 1766 Bloom Rd., Winfield, MD 21157

Buzz about Books:

The Secret Life of Bees

Author Sue Monk Kidd recalls growing up in a big country house in Georgia, where bees lived for many years inside the wall of the guest bedroom. "I remember my mother cleaning up puddles of honey that seeped out, and the unearthly sound of bee hum vibrating through the house." It was this memory that sparked the idea for her widely acclaimed first novel, *The Secret Life of Bees*. A coming-of-age story in the same literary tradition of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* or Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*, the book is set in 1964 and tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. Following the only clue she has about her mother's past, she arrives in Tiburon, South Carolina, and is taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters. Here is she introduced to their mesmerizing world of bees and honey. Slowly she discovers the true meaning of family, learns about the divine power of women and unlocks a dark secret about her mother's death.

"There's a mystique about bees," says Kidd, "a kind of spell they weave over you, and I fell completely under it [while researching the book]. I read bee lore and legend that went back to ancient times. I discovered bees were considered a symbol of the soul, of death and rebirth." Kidd knew she couldn't find out all she needed to know from books, so she visited an apiary in South Carolina. "When the beekeepers took me out to the hives, I was unprepared for the rush of fear and relish I experienced when the lid on the hive was lifted. I became lost in a whirling cloud of bees. So many, I could hardly see. The scent of honey drifted up, bee hum swelled, and the smoke meant to calm the bees rose in plumes all around us. Beekeeping, I discovered, is a thoroughly sensual and courageous business. I got through my bee education without a single sting."

The Secret Life of Bees, a *New York Times* bestseller and a choice of "Good Morning America's" book club, is a remarkable story, ideal for book club discussions or simply to enjoy and share with someone you love.

***The Secret Life of Bees*, by Sue Monk Kidd; Penguin Books, paperback, $14.00**

Form and Function in the Honey Bee

Leslie Goodman
International Bee Research Association
18 North Road
Cardiff CF10 3DT
United Kingdom
January 2003
0-86098-243-2 softback
0-86098-223-8 hardback

Nine chapters (220 pages including index, 340 diagrams, photomicrographs, and color
illustrations) The chapters include: Antennal sense organs - Vision in the bee - Dorsal ocelli - Bees' response to gravity - Feeding (using mouthparts, tasting food, collecting pollen) - Respiration - Flight - Glands (Nasanov, queen pheromones, tarsal gland, and beeswax) - Defending the colony (stinging)

An outstanding book in which Goodman (and the two colleagues who finished the book after Goodman's death in1998: Richard Cooter, Professor of Applied Entomology, Univ. of Greenwich and Pamela Munn, Deputy Director, IBRA) succeed admirably in achieving her stated purpose "to take the reader through major structures and activities of the honey bee … to give the reader a comprehensive understanding of how and why the honey bee behaves as it does." I found particularly interesting the entire chapters (2 and 3) on vision, the evaluation of wings (Chapter 7) and the "construction of comb" (p.176) and the concept of "wax mirrors." The authors evidence a healthy perspective on current knowledge regarding bee behavior. Are all the answers there? No. Sprinkled throughout the book are cautionary phrases "is thought to", "not known", "hypothesis" and "whether or not." Just thumbing through the large (almost 10" x 14") volume is a feast for the eyes; and the text, while fairly detailed, is not overwhelming (even to the uninitiated.) The references are current, with several citations in 1999, 2000 and 2001. The hardbound edition is a bit pricey (55 Pounds, British), so one may wish to choose the softbound version at 25 Pounds, British. The book may be ordered from IBRA or now may be available through one of the U.S. sellers of bee books.

Barry Thompson (2004)

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What a difference a year makes!

HOW BAD WAS YOUR BEEKEEPING YEAR '03?

By Bill Troup

(*an excerpt from a letter written by a MD beekeeper to his Canadian counterpart in response to the above question…)*

Happy New Year to you, Keith, & I hope you are enjoying it so far……We had a horrible honey year down our way and perhaps most of the eastern Mid-Atlantic States experienced the same. The month of April was beautiful with some rain but mostly warm and conducive to good apple pollination. The bees came back from apples about 5 May 2003 & just (were) bubbling over. We did some last minute swarm prevention, supered & waited for the locust bloom. Well, we got our wish with a 2 week long locust bloom, white & heavily hung, but along with this came the rain & more rain & more rain + more rain & swarms & more swarms + more swarms until about the 21st of June did it finally straighten up. We missed our main honey flow months of May-June & of the 2 week long locust bloom, the bees may have gotten out to work 3-4 days & by this time they were so confused and off schedule they produced little to no honey. We generally harvest honey on the 4th of July. Well it was not even worth the effort for a few supers so I marked a bunch of supers on 28-29 June as empty & no work, went to a buddy's wedding over the 4th of July in New Jersey. I came home, reworked a few supers around on some colonies to try to get the to finish them off & took off for Kentucky for K.A.S. Bee Convention (a scaled down E.A.S.). I came home & checked supers by 1 Aug 03 before E.A.S. in Maine & (all) of those I marked empty on 28-29 June were still empty. I took these supers off & stored them away. The mother colonies were heavy with winter feed at this point, which was some consolation to no surplus honey crop. We still had Aug, Sep, & Oct yet for the bees to maintain themselves on these winter food stores & with no guarantee of a fall flow for them to put weight back on. Well, just as I figured, by Labor Day as I was medicating for mites, a lot of those May & June swarms & increase colonies were starving. Some had no stores at all. I just had to combine them with a strong colony. Of those that had some stores, I started to feed & fed clear thru Thanksgiving. I saved most of them (25-35 colonies) but lost another 20 simply to starvation. I should have checked all of them on 1 Aug 03 & saw their condition and started to feed then. As it was, I fed over 1,500lbs of sugar in 2:1 heavy syrup. What a job! Next year I'm going to try to obtain a source for high fructose corn syrup (#55) & feed this. Mixing up all that sugar with water is too labor intensive. Of those new increase colonies & swarms started back in May-June, not a one had to draw out foundation since I had extra drawn combs to start them on. So you can just see how bad it was when colonies started on drawn combs could not even put enough winter stores thru May, June, July & Aug & were starving by Labor Day. Not a pretty picture & totally caught me off guard that it could have been that bad. But as you know Keith, that's what beekeeping is all about- it is farming & you're at the mercy of Mother Nature & the weather all the time. No two years are ever the same & we have had two bad years back to back. We need a good year here in 2004 to bail us out. Honey prices are up and we need a good year to make some honey…and some money!

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CAPTURING THE SWARM

By Dean Burroughs, Master Beekeeper

Two questions: 1) Is it worth collecting? 2) Should I charge a fee?

It's swarm season March through June in the Mid-Atlantic region. Your own personal hive may swarm, or more frequently, you get a phone call from a nervous neighbor or unknown person in town. Hmmmmmmmm! As any beekeeper knows, a prime swarm is a beautiful sight and the cluster may contain a queen and 2,000 to 30,000 bees. This is nature's natural way of the colony reproducing. The average lay person does not know these facts and taking the call may require an attempt to inform and educate that person.

In answering the phone, a nervous and anxious person usually responds, "Hurry! There's an angry swarm of killer bees in my yard." (Swarms are not defensive and chances are remote in the East that they're Africanized bees.) This person explains to you that the swarm is the size of a basketball and hanging only 3 feet from the ground. Even though the caller is sincere about the description, from experience, I have answered similar calls and found the swarm or a hornet's nest (surprise) 30 feet up a tree.

Immediately two questions must be answered—

1) **Is the swarm worth collecting?** It's tempting to answer the call immediately for the purpose of replacing stores and for filling those empty bee boxes. Who among us has not lost their share of bees to diseases and swarming the past few years? Or consider that you already have two hives in the back yard. You hesitate because by increasing in numbers your neighbors may complain or your wife will threaten to leave. Important points to ponder, don't you think? O.K. then, more likely, if the swarm is conveniently located and you want to strengthen a weak hive or desire to really increase your numbers, you go. Perhaps too, you enjoy nature and saving bees from a declining state is important for you to respond to the call. The reason or reasons to act could be one or all of the above.
2) **Should I charge a fee?** More and more frequently now, beekeepers are charging to collect swarms. Maybe rightly so. Pest control companies will charge a fee in responding to swarm calls, so why not beekeepers? That is a choice each beekeeper must make depending on his or her personal circumstances. Some beekeepers in the area are charging $25 or so for collecting swarms that are conveniently located in distance and site. I know of one swarm located high and in the walls of a local school gymnasium where exterminators charged several hundreds of dollars to remove it. Out west, (Texas, California, Arizona) I understand swarm control businesses have formed for the sole purpose of capturing the Africanized bees and they charge $150 up, per swarm, for their services.

Personally, I do collect swarms on the Eastern Shore and limit my trips to a 10-mile radius from home. Also, I very carefully screen calls to determine the situation and only collect swarms conveniently thrown on a bush, low hanging limb, mailbox, etc. I do not tear into the wall of a building to extract swarms nor will I climb 30 feet up a tree and risk a broken neck. I do not charge a fee. In averaging a collection of 15-18 swarms each spring, I'm registered w/ the local Agricultural Extension Agency and I have a friend in the tree trimming business. These contacts call me frequently. Lastly, in March of each year I write and send letters to all local pest control companies informing and educating them about swarming and the plight of the declining bee population. (Copies of this letter available upon request.) I receive repeated calls from these companies or their clients and this symbiotic relationship enables us to save and preserve our wonderful and most efficient pollinators.

So, there are many variables and a host of reasons to consider whether or not the swarm can or will be collected. Most of all take a moment and answer the two proposed questions. Then you pause for a time, deliberate, calculate and plan a course of action. What's that? I have an emergency call? A swarm? Excuse me, I gotta go!

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Beekeeping in Florida

By David G. Smith

One of the more interesting web pages on the internet is that of the Florida Department of Agriculture's web page. For example, the web page lists all of the registered beekeepers in Florida, a most useful tool in contacting those involved in the industry. Check the site:

http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/plantinsp/bees.html

The web page also summarizes beekeeping in Florida as follows:
"Florida's honey industry is consistently ranked among the top five in the nation with an annual worth of $13 million. In addition, the Florida honey bee industry benefits our state's fruit and vegetable industry by providing an estimated $20 million in increased production numbers created by managed pollination services that are available in no other way. There are over 100 varieties of popular fruits and vegetables that use pollination to ensure fruitful crops.

Seventeen million pounds of honey are produced in Florida each year and enjoyed around the world as the sweetener of choice.

Honey bees, otherwise known as the *Angels of Agriculture*, are the strongest link in the chain between food producers and consumers."

One significant aspect of beekeeping in Florida is the registration requirement: "Beekeepers having honeybee colonies within Florida must have a certificate of registration from the Division of Plant Industry and pay an annual fee not to exceed $100. This fee is based on the number of honeybee colonies." For example, a beekeeper with one to five colonies must pay a fee of $5, and for six to 40 colonies a fee of $10, etc.

A fabulous web page is that of the Florida State Beekeepers Association http://www.flareal.com/fsba.htm which has a great link to a NOVA presentation of interesting aspects of bees and beekeeping. Check it out, and note the posting of their History, ByLaws, a membership application, events, and even a classified section. Also, check out the link to the "Story Board" where you can find an interesting article by Laurence Cutts regarding his trip to Australia.

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MY TRACHEAL AND VARROA MITE CONTROLS

Bob Cory Maryland Inspector, Ret. ,Dunkirk, MD
Letter to the editor, June 2002, ABJ

Trachael Mites

Spring of 1993, when inspecting Elmer Hertzler's bees in Charlotte Hall, MD, I was amazed to find 3 strong colonies with supers full of honey. We were both surprised to see all that honey before the nectar flow, but it wasn't hard to figure out. The tracheal mites were fairly new to that area of southern Maryland and the winter of 92/93 was when the first heavy losses due to Tracheal mites occurred. Having previously inspected adjoining farms and finding dead and robbed out colonies explained, much to his delight, where all the honey had come from.

In the summer of 1992 enroute to Alaska, we stopped in Seattle, WA, and visited Seattle's Farmers Market, a great place to see. At the market, I chatted with Tim Woodhouse, a Northport, WA, commercial beekeeper. I later found out that Tom is the brother of a lady from my church here in Maryland. Tom told me all he did for Tracheal mite treatment was to put a slab ofCrisco grease on the top bars of each hive. At a late Summer Bee Meeting of the Association of South Mainland Beekeepers, I spoke of his method, but also cautioned not to give up on the menthol until one was sure the method worked. Elmer heard about the grease treatment and here is what he did and what I have been doing ever since. He applied about 1/4 inch of Crisco grease (no sugar) on a 3 inch by 5 inch piece of corrugated cardboard, then divided his only packet of menthol 3

ways (about 3 Tbs each) and patted the crystals into the grease. The treatment was placed on the top bars of the upper brood box about mid September and Voila, strong healthy colonies in spring of 1993.

I've been touting this method ever since, but with little success with my fellow beekeepers. It doesn't impress them that my winter losses remain below 10%. The menthol/grease/cardboard treatment here in Southern Maryland must be applied between intervals at least three times before the cold weather sets in. The treatment is still effective the following spring and the cardboard remains until a new treatment in autumn.

A very limited survey (only 36 beekeepers) sees Caron and Hubner ABJ Nov. 2001, indicates only 5% of the beekeepers are still using menthol. In conversations, I've also learned that many beekeepers in the Maryland area don't use menthol or apply it incorrectly.

In a July AP, report cited by Caron and Hubner, S.Manning erroneously reported that I lost 7 of 15 colonies last winter. In fact, I lost 4 of 20 from Varroa before the winter started and 2 of 16 over winter from starvation see letter 2000/2001 Winter Losses (Varroa).

It took a little over one hour to prepare menthol /grease/cardboard treatments for 22 colonies and only seconds to place it on top bars. Try it; you might like the results --strong, healthy, productive and gentle colonies.

Varroa Mites

Four years with NONE --that is no winter losses. Then came last winter when I lost 4 of 20 colonies from varroa mites in October 2000 and then 2 colonies from starvation over winter of the remaining 16 colonies. The losses are easily explained. February 2002 all my bottom boards were replaced with screened bottom boards designed by myself, then built and improved on by Israel Hertzler of Charlotte Hall, MD.

In mid-August 2000, my sticky board sliders were installed and monitoring for Varroa mite fall began. I never saw more than about 12 mites per 24 hour period. By mid September crawlers and wingless bees became alarmingly abundant. Hive inspections revealed heavy mite loads and crashing colonies. Apistan strips were applied and were totally ineffective. Early October Checkmite strips were applied to all colonies and a heavy mite fall ensued. At the end of the debacle, 4 of 20 colonies were lost and 4 were weak and low on food stores. The other 12 were in good shape and made it through the winter with no further losses or feeding. Before sticky board monitoring, the Varroa were monitored visually and with ether roll checks. When 20 or more mites from a composite sample showed up on an ether roll test, then all colonies are treated. This year the sticky boards are used only as indicators and have been backed up with ether roll tests and drone picks. This year no Varroa treatments will be given, as they ate at extremely low levels. The 2001 starvation losses, 2 of 16 colonies, occurred because I experimented feeding dry sugar in October to the 4 weak colonies and by early Februaiy 2001, two had starved and the other two were rescued by feeding sugar water.

In 8 years of coping with Varroa this was my first loss. Success in coping with this pest can be attributed to the fact that regular checks with drone picks in the spring and ether roll test late summer/autumn kept me on top of the problem. Finally, spring of 2001, of my 14 remaining colonies, 12 splits were made, 6 Weaver All American Queens were introduced, and 6 made their own queens. 940 Ibs. of honey was harvested, 3 colonies were sold, 15 colonies rented for pollination and 22 colonies went into winter heavy with natural stores and NO FEEDING.

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THE BEELINE

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