



nnjbees.org

May 2018



NORTHEAST NEW JERSEY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

A division of New Jersey Beekeepers Association

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Meeting on: **Friday, May 18th at 7:30 PM**

Location: **Ramapo College of NJ, 505 Ramapo Valley Rd., Mahwah, NJ 07430**

 *Bee Enthusiasts & Bee Curious Always Welcome!*  *Look for the Bee-u-tiful Yellow Signs* 



Sell It or Swap It

This Friday, grab any equipment you'd like to sell or trade and bring it to our monthly meeting. We will have our very

own Bee Equipment Swap meet.

(with a portion of all sales beeing donated to the club.)





Message from the President:

Hello Northeast NJ Beekeepers,

It may be May, but it seems more like Ground Hog's Day with one crazy weather day after another. Every day that we have more rain, or colder than normal weather, all I can think is, more hives will be swarming. It's always important to be checking your hives for signs of swarming, and when the weather keeps all your foragers inside the hive and not out flying around, it is even more important. You have to make sure your bees have plenty of room, so they don't feel overcrowded. As I've previously noted, I like to use my supers as a way to provide extra room and hopefully to prevent swarming. Yes, the queen lays in my supers, but as long as all the brood hatches out before I extract, I am still in business. For me, having brood in my supers for 21 days is better than swarming. But always remember, what worked one year, might not work the next.

For example, this year, I put my honey supers on early, but I have one super-strong hive that has so many bees. This hive was an over-wintered nuc that was 4 boxes high. It was so strong coming out of winter that I transferred it from the nuc boxes into a traditional 2-deep hive. Once I had the bees in the hive, I realized that my nuc had more bees in it than any of my other hives. It was a beast! A few days after I transferred it into the hive, I put on two supers, mostly to give them room, and certainly not for honey production since the nectar flow has been so slow to start in my area.

A few weeks later, after a few days of rain and cold temperatures, I was doing a hive inspection, and saw a bunch of queen cells. I was bummed, but not surprised because the queen was at least two years old, and the number of bees in the hive was staggering.

So, I was careful not to damage too many of the cells, and I went through the hive to find the queen. I was pretty confident she was still there and the hive had not swarmed because of the bees' calm demeanor, and the sheer number of bees. It took a lot longer than I would have liked, but once I found the queen, I took the frame she was on and put her in my quiet box. I added another frame of brood from that hive, and one full frame of honey from another. I brought the queen and those frames to my other bee yard and created a nuc.

My logic was the original hive was determined to make a new queen, and if I took the old one, and I chose how many bees to take with her, all the other bees would remain in the hive since they'd think they swarmed and it was too late for them to join their queen on her swarming party. Since there are so many bees and so much brood left in the hive, I am hoping that I don't lose too much honey production time as the new queen hatches, mates, and gets down to laying. If this works, I will be happy because I really like the genetics of that queen, and allowing that hive to requeen itself will mean that most of the queen's genetics will continue with her daughter. If it doesn't work, then the good news is that I won't have lost a big chunk of my workforce to a swarm.

It will be a few more weeks before I know if I was successful or not. More important, this is what I love about beekeeping. Just when you think you know what to do, the bees toss you a big ole curveball. That's why it's important to go into your hives and see what your bees are doing. Look at the frames in your hives and always be ready to completely change course with what you thought you'd be doing to doing what your bees need you to do.

I am still anxious to see what this year's honey crop is going to be like. If I compare how much I have today with how much I had at this time the past two years, I get depressed at how far behind my hives currently are. But, the year is far from over, so we'll just have to wait and see what the next 6-8 weeks will bring.

Until then, I'll be looking for more swarm cells and doing my best to keep my bees from taking any road trips.

This Friday's meeting should be a good one, so please bring your questions, and also bring your stuff, as it's another sell it or swap meeting. If you have bee stuff you're not using, bring it to the meeting and get some cash or some equipment you can use.

I look forward to seeing every one and your bee stuff this Friday!

Bee well,

Frank Mortimer
President, Northeast NJ Beekeepers



Beekeeping in May

by John A. Gaut
Master Beekeeper, EAS

Many folks are talking about how crazy this spring has been. It seem like I hear this every year. Spring is a time of transition, from winter to summer. Temperatures will fluctuate and weather will be cold and rainy, then hot and sunny. I guess some expect the weather to transition smoothly from cold to warm. Spring and Fall always have wide swings in temperature. The bees are fantastic at maintaining a constant temperature and humidity in the brood nest even with the wide temperature variations. I have several hives with data monitors, Broodminder and others. It's amazing how constant the colony maintains 92F and about 60% Relative Humidity in the brood nest even though the overnight temperatures may plunge to near freezing and the day temperatures can soar into the 80's.

May has had some good foraging weather for the bees so far. Most of my colonies are bringing in a little surplus nectar. All the colonies are bringing in enough nectar to feed the brood and some are storing honey in the supers. The rain will interrupt the bees from gathering nectar and pollen for a day or two and should enable a good nectar flow once we get some sunny days again. Other areas are reporting nice nectar flows; enough to put some good weight in the supers.

My area is just a few days behind "normal" this year. The last two years were ahead of the normal temperatures by about two weeks. So this year may be behind the last few years by about 3 weeks. Variability in the timing of seasonal changes from one year to the next is the reason beekeepers cannot simply go by a calendar for hive management. Beekeepers need to understand the actual environment outside the hive and the current condition inside the hive to make good beekeeping decisions (e.g. if and when to reverse brood boxes and add honey supers). Part of the reason I and many beekeepers like beekeeping is that you really tune into the weather and environment around you.

I have been very busy with swarm management and queen rearing. I did have a batch of queens destroyed by a rogue queen. The queen actually emerged in an earlier cohort but I did not realize it until she had killed nearly all the queens in the cohort that followed. Below is a picture of the cells. The new queen chewed through the side of the cells and then stung the queens in the cells. The bees then cleaned out the remains. I did find the rogue queen a few days later. Below is a picture of the damaged cells.



Swarming is a very natural behavior in the spring. Reproducing is a very high priority once the bees have survived the winter. Most colonies survived the winter in very good condition, so now they want to swarm. The activities and behaviors of honey bees haven't changed much in thousands of years. Swarming is one of the behaviors. I try to minimize swarming by keeping the brood nest as uncontested as possible. I'll remove frames of capped brood and bees and put them in weaker colonies if needed. I put empty frames of comb in the empty spaces to give the queen plenty of room to lay. I keep open comb above the brood nest, or at least a mix of comb and foundation for nectar and honey storage. I look at the colonies about once a week to verify they are not over populated, the queen has plenty of room to lay and there is open comb above the brood nest. If I find active queen cells (queen cells with eggs or larva), and the queen is still laying, I will cut out the queen cells and aggressively remove capped brood and bees. This often gets the colony out of the swarm preparation mode.

There were a few questions about inspecting the colony after it swarms. I usually do not go into the colony for two to three weeks after it swarms. A colony typically swarms any time after the first queen cell is capped. If the hive is opened up too soon after a swarm, the queen cells will likely be damaged. If all the cells are damaged, the colony will become queenless. Once a cell is capped, the queen will not emerge for 8 days. The new queen then needs to mature for a few days, take her mating flight(s) and then begin laying eggs. The earliest a queen will lay after she has emerged from her cell is about 13 days; usually a few days more. There is really no reason to inspect the colony until about 3 weeks after it swarmed. If you do not see eggs, look again in a week. If you do not see eggs a month after the swarm, the colony may be queenless. I will add supers to the colony during the 3-week period if needed; I will not disrupt the brood nest so I do not damage the queen cells or disrupt the queens mating flights. Finally, I will look at the queens laying pattern after a month to verify she has a good pattern. If not, I replace her with a queen that does.

A Varroa treatment tip for swarms: I have treated swarms from an unknown source with an Oxalic Acid dribble to knock down any mites they may have brought along with them. (The unknown source could be a feral hive or another beekeeper; the mite levels are unknown and could be high.) Treating a swarm with Oxalic Acid dribble is very easy and inexpensive. Since there is no brood, the treatment is very effective. I

use a solution of 2.8% Oxalic Acid and Sugar Syrup (1:1). Once the swarm is established in a hive (a few days to a week), I treat each seam of bees with 5 mL of the solution or a maximum of 50mL per colony.

If you bought Nucs through the club, they should still have an ApiVar strip. This strip should remain in the hive until at least June 1st and removed before June 14th. The strip can be repositioned to the brood nest area if necessary. Once the ApiVar treatment is finished, you will want to check the mite count in late June. If it is high, treatment will be needed.

Keep feeding the new nucs and any swarms you catch. Both need to draw out comb and the nectar flow may not be strong enough to support comb building. Swarms are “primed” to build comb; if they are fed they will build comb quickly. Bees that are producing wax need a lot of carbs and some pollen. There is usually enough pollen coming in; they need sugar syrup! Randy Oliver did a little experiment feeding 1:1 syrup or 2:1 syrup to see how they build comb. He found both mixes worked equally well. Other researchers have found similar results. The difference was the bees needed twice as much of the 1:1 syrup as the 2:1. I usually feed a thicker syrup to reduce the number of times I need to feed. His article has other useful information too: <http://scientificbeekeeping.com/light-or-heavy-syrup-for-drawing-foundation/> It is important to continuously feed the colony. If there is an interruption in feeding, the wax producers will shut down and then a new generation of wax producers must be engaged before comb building begins again.

For the rest of May and early June I will continue swarm management efforts and hopefully adding more honey supers. I will also be checking for mites again. Keeping mites low is necessary for the colonies health. Once the mite levels get high, reducing the mite population is difficult and the colony suffers.

I will miss the meeting in May. My wife and I are in Morocco. Below is a picture of a Moroccan bee. This bee was foraging in a local market in Casablanca. I think the bee is *Apis mellifera intermissa*, a North African race of honeybee found north of the Sahara from Lybia to Morocco. This race of bee is very similar to our European races, but highly adapted to conditions in North Africa.



Northeast NJ's Newest & Cutest Member



Svea Mortimer, 3 ½, successfully completed her first hive inspection, seeing the queen in one of her hives. Svea has her father's need to make *everything* neat and tidy, and she happily repainted some hive bodies.



“Waggle Dance- Say what?”

Pascack Valley High School visited by Beekeeper

By Susan Lindstrom

The Environmental Club recently invited Frank Mortimer to come talk to the students about the importance of bees in the environment and economy, as well as how bees have adapted to establish and maintain their hives. Frank brought an observation hive which interested the students very much as well as other beekeeping props. His discussion centered on dispelling any bee myths that the students brought to the classroom as well as having honey available for tasting.

The students were very engaged throughout the presentation and could not believe the distances that honeybees fly to determine good sources of pollen and nectar as well as how they communicate directionally through an intricate dance.

Some of the topics that Frank spoke to and answered several questions about were the “Girl Power” of the hive, how many eggs a queen will lay per day, what are the jobs of worker bees and drones. He assured the students that honeybees do not “sting” unless threatened.

Some questions he responded to from students were:

Why do bees swarm?

What is killing off the honeybee?

The importance of bees to pollinate crops.

Can eating local honey help allergies?

At the presentation conclusion, the biology students came away from the presentation with a better appreciation of a small buzzing insect in its environment. Perhaps we will see the families and the students at our next honey tasting event.

Bee Day at Pascack Valley High School



Photos by Dave Lindstrom

Sell It or Swap It!

Do you have bee equipment that you never use, just sitting in your garage taking up space?

Have you ever bought some bee equipment that you never use and you'd like to get rid of?

Is there any equipment you've been meaning to buy, but just haven't gotten around to getting it yet?

If you answered, Yes to any of these questions, then our May 18 meeting is just for you! At May's monthly meeting, we will be hosting our Sell It or Swap It Meeting. Grab any equipment you'd like to sell or trade and bring it to our monthly meeting. We will have our very own Bee Equipment Swap meet.

Since the club is sponsoring this event, we ask that you donate 10% of the money you make from the items you sell to the club. So, if you sell something for \$10, that's only \$1 to the club. (And if you sell something for \$1 million dollars, then that's a mere \$100,000 to the club!)

So dust off all your stuff, and bring it and your cash to Ramapo College on May 18th at 7:30 pm.

Your auctioneers,

The Officers



Northeast New Jersey Beekeeper...

Public Group

Joined ▾

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Notifications

...



Our Facebook Group has **over 1795 fans** from all over the world! It's a great place to connect to other beekeepers, so be sure check out all the great bee pics, bee stories, and bee info.

Remember: <http://www.nnjbees.org> **is your website!**

Check that site for everything Northeast New Jersey Beekeeping!

❖ Volunteers ❖	
Celia Miller	Refreshments – Cakes, cookies, brownies, tea, etc.
Jennifer Phillips	Refreshments – Cakes, cookies and other treats
Billy Neumann	Club photographer
Hugh Knowlton	Workshop/Event coordinator
Mike Miller	Club apparel
Bob Slanzi	Meadmaster

Next Month

**NJ State Apiarist and Beekeeping Superhero,
Tim Schuler!!!**



The First Rule of Bee Club: Tell Everyone about Bee Club!