

Spilling the Honey

GBA Monthly Newsletter

Editors: Gina Gallucci and Linda Tillman



Members meeting and gathering at the reception at GBA's spring meeting. Photos by Linda Tillman

Message from our President: Jerry Edwards

It was good to see all of you who attended the state meeting at Lake Blackshear and a hearty **Thank You** to the officers who worked so hard to put it together. The location was lovely, the resort comfy, and program informative. Plan now to attend the September conference which will be held in the North Georgia area. Our goal is to meet at various locations throughout the state to optimize attendance and interest in the state organization. Presently, we are reviewing the surveys and will use them as the basis

for the next meetings. If you have any suggestions, please email ideas to any officer or board member, as we welcome your input as we strive to strengthen our organization.

Jerry Edwards, President GA Beekeepers
Saving the World, One Bee at a Time



More photos from reception. Photos by Linda Tillman

We have many other fun photos from the spring meeting. To see them, [click here](#)

A report from the front

The "Spring" meeting of the Georgia Beekeepers Association was in a lovely location at the Lake Blackshear Resort in Georgia Veterans Memorial Park near Cordele, Georgia on February 8 and 9. About 120 people attended the conference which began with a reception and “pay as you go bar,” as Bear Kelly said, following

the board meeting on Friday night. Chatting with other beekeepers from all over the state was lots of fun.

Saturday was filled with talks by Georgia beekeepers and Dave Kelton (an Alabama beekeeper). We heard about Russian bees, nosema, raising queens, making candles, making jam. Keith Fielder spoke philosophically about the relationship of the small beekeeper to the bigger picture and Linda Tillman spoke about the importance of working on certification at bee institutes like Young Harris. Jerry Edwards, our president, said what we need is for all of us to educate people about honey bees.

The meals were delicious at the Lake Blackshear Resort. Breakfast and lunch were opportunities to share ideas with fellow beekeepers and reconnect with old friends. The vendors had tables full of beekeeping items and seemed busy throughout the day. Some of us had ordered ahead from vendors and were able to pick up items at the conference rather than pay for shipping.

All in all, people seemed to enjoy the meeting and the venue. There were lots of laughs and good visits with fellow beekeepers.

*"The Russians are stronger than Italians bees because they have stronger mandibles because of their diet - they eat bones and Italians eat a diet of pasta."
Sergey Volzhskiy*

John Wingfield (on the right in the photo below) shared this story:

At the GBA Meeting, my door prize number was called. I went to the front of the room to claim my prize, a cap. On the return to my seat the gentleman in the photo complimented me on my new cap. I asked him if would like it. "Yes," was his immediate and very pleased answer. I handed the cap to him and took my seat. Later at the breakout session on queens I sought him out and we made this photo. I do not know his name.



You see, my wife does not like me to wear a cap. Never has, never will, at least in her

presence. So I could keep my wife happy and make some stranger happy too.

Editors' note: The "stranger" is Chris Pahl who was attending his first GBA meeting. He is a member of Metro Atlanta Beekeepers.

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The ongoing message at the conference was that GBA needs to increase its membership. Many local Georgia club presidents are not members of GBA and each of them should be to strengthen the organization. So in that direction, instead of a beekeeping quote, we offer this:

***"People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society."***

***.....Vince Lombardi***

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Note about the GBA meeting from MABA member, Chris Pahl:

I really enjoyed attending the 2013 GBA meeting at Lake Blackshear Resort. I drove down from Atlanta and it was really nice to get out of the city and see another part of our beautiful State. I made some really great new friends but also saw familiar faces from my local bee club. As a small beekeeper and not having a woodshop, the various vendors who attended helped me get stocked up on my seemingly endless need for various beekeeping supplies. I think one of the benefits of attending beekeeper meetings is keeping up on the newest hive management techniques and learning the actual science behind the honeybee and beekeeping. We had an excellent presentation by David Kelton on Nosema and a basic scientific technique for identifying the spore within the colony, and how to identify under a microscope. I look forward to the next meeting.

Chris Pahl

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## Understanding Swarms

By Steven Page Certified Beekeeper GMBP

Colonies of bees and humans have some of the same goals. The primary goal is to survive. A secondary goal is to perpetuate the species, which for honey bees requires a colony to produce a reproductive swarm typically just prior to deciduous tree leaf-out.

The timing of the swarm at the beginning of the main nectar flow offers the best chance for swarm survival.

Not all colonies swarm. This can be explained by understanding the phase of maturity of the colony and the strength of the colony. A weak colony will not produce a swarm because a swarm would threaten the colony's survival.

- First year colony – getting established
- Second year colony (one of the following)
  - Still getting established, great honey producer
  - Gets established early (mature) – produces a swarm
  - Starts the year mature – produces a swarm
- Third and subsequent year colonies – produces a swarm

So what can a beekeeper do to reduce the chances of swarming and increase honey production?

The beekeeper needs to understand the mature colony's goals and functions during the late winter, in the Atlanta area this is January 20 to March 31. It would be earlier in South Georgia and later in the mountains.

The mature colony's goal in late winter is to swarm. The colony spends the winter under the honey cap. In January the queen starts laying eggs and the colony consumes honey opening up comb in the bottom of the honey cap for brood rearing and nectar storage.

If the colony has adequate stores of honey, feeding syrup will only help the colony prepare and successfully produce a swarm. However it is very important that a colony

with little stored honey be fed to prevent starvation prior to main nectar flow. This does not require feeding continuously. The syrup will be stored along with nectar and after an adequate number of frames are full, stop feeding. The amount to feed will depend on; the honey remaining, weather and time remaining until late March.

The colony must shut down queen laying in preparation for swarming weeks before swarm cells are started. This is accomplished by filling cells of emerging brood at the top of the brood nest with nectar or pollen reducing the size of the brood nest.

Opening up the honey cap can help prevent swarming. Only supers of drawn comb will work. Foundation will not work because the colony cannot make wax yet. Adding empty drawn comb prevents the colony from completing all the preparations to swarm. The large area of empty comb is used by foragers to store all the nectar they can find and the queen uses it to lay many more eggs than would be possible otherwise. If the colony is unable to fill the entire hive with nectar by early April, they will abandon the goal of swarming for the goal of winter survival. The colony will collect nectar and store honey until the nectar flow ends in May in preparation for the coming winter.

Two cautions when working in a hive in late winter.

1. Keep the honey near the brood.
2. Keep the brood frames together.

The following is a method to open up the honey cap while observing the cautions above.

A few assumptions.

- The hive consists of a deep and a shallow super.
- The deep super has some combination of brood, pollen, honey and empty drawn comb frames.
- The cluster and brood are in the deep super which is on the bottom board.
- The shallow super is mostly full of capped honey and is on top of the deep super.

- It is late January and the weather is sunny and warm enough to inspect the hive.
- Two extra shallow supers of empty drawn comb are available.

Open up the hive and check that the cluster is in the deep super. Leave the deep super on the bottom board. With the super of honey nearby, place a shallow super with no frames on the deep. Add frames to the super by alternating a frame of capped honey then a frame of empty honeycomb. Place another empty shallow super on the hive. Add alternating frames of honey and empty comb just like the first shallow super but alternate the empty and honey frames from the bottom shallow super. For example, if the bottom shallow has an empty frame of drawn comb on the left, the second shallow super will have a frame of honey on the left. Add another super of empty drawn comb.

See the graphic below.

This is a front view of the hive. You're looking at the ends of each frame.

Each letter represents a frame and its contents.

Brood = B, Honey = H, Empty = E, Pollen = P

Before

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |               |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| H | H | H | H | H | H | H | H | H | H | shallow super |
| E | H | P | B | B | P | H | E | E | E | deep super    |

After

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |               |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| E | E | E | E | E | E | E | E | E | E | shallow super |
| H | E | H | E | H | E | H | E | H | E | shallow super |
| E | H | E | H | E | H | E | H | E | H | shallow super |
| E | H | P | B | B | P | H | E | E | E | deep super    |

Notice how the empty and full shallow frames alternate both vertically and horizontally.

I successfully used this method last year on two hives; each produced 100 pounds of honey. Last year's main nectar flow was early and intense. Many hives swarmed because of the continuous availability of nectar from early February all the way into the main nectar flow.

This method of swarm control was developed by Walt Wright. It is named Nectar Management or Checkerboarding.

Many of Walt's writings including Nectar Management can be found on the Bee Source website: <http://www.beesource.com/point-of-view/walt-wright/>

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Dear Aunt Bee,

Lucky me, I got a swarm call. When I went to the call the bees were a little high up in the tree. I bent the branch down and clipped it off but when I did, it split and some of the bees fell onto the ground. I crawled around and tried to get the little buggers, but sometimes I couldn't tell the bees from the leaves.

I'm a big guy but I wanted to cry partly because I think I lost about 1/3 of the swarm and partly because the stings on my knees hurt like HE-double hockey sticks. I do think I got the queen because the bees stayed in the nuc box I brought.

What should I have done? I wished I had had a net like those trapeze people use in the circus.

*Signed,
Scattered and Blue*

Dear Scattered and Blue,

I always have a bed sheet in my swarm kit. When I get to the site, I spread the sheet on the ground under the swarm. That way if part of the bees don't make it into the box I brought, then I can see them on the sheet and they are relatively easy to collect. I also carry a plastic milk carton, with the pouring spout cut off. I use this to scoop any bees that fall onto the sheet.

Good luck with the next time - and I hope you get a next time,

*Signed,
Your Aunt Bee*

(This tip was originally shared by Cindy Bee in a talk she gave to MABA on how to catch a swarm)

Aunt Bee will be a semi-regular feature of our newsletter. Chris Pahl suggested we try this type of column. If you have a tip for beekeeping, send it to us and we'll turn it into an Aunt Bee letter.



March Street Cred:

This is an interesting [audio and article](#) about bees and electric charges. You can read more about it [here](#) on National Geographic as well.

Another humorous take on bees from NPR can be [found here](#).



GBA Club of the Month

The SOWEGA Beekeepers Association

The SOWEGA Beekeepers Club is a relatively new organization which began in 2011 in Albany, Georgia. Our mission is to provide members and the community with technical beekeeping information and an awareness of bee and beekeeping habitat, biology, and safety. We have very diverse experience levels from beginner to 70+ years. Our members live throughout the southwest Georgia area. We have several members who have completed single and multiple levels of certification from the UGA Beekeeping Institute and 2 certified Welsh Honey Judges. We also have a member beekeeper/videographer, who has made the best beekeeping DVD on the market! "My Hive Tool" is sold at Rossman Bee Supply.

The SBC has a unique relationship with Chehaw Wild Animal Park. We maintain a training apiary of 4 hives, which will increase to 10, supplying Chehaw with honey for sale in their gift shop. The apiary provides honey bee educational opportunities for SW Georgia. Long range plans are to build an observation hive for the park visitors.

We have members who appear on our local TV stations to promote honey bee education. Also, we have members who speak to schools, civic clubs, and at public events. Our annual Honey Show occurs in conjunction with the Exchange Club Fair in November each year. Our 2nd bee school is scheduled for April 6, 2013 at Chehaw Park. Details can be found at our website at www.sowegabeekeepers.org.

We meet at 6:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of every month at the Chehaw education center in Albany Georgia. New members and visitors are always welcome. Thanks, GBA, for highlighting our club.

Kent Simmons, President

Upcoming Bee Events

- **Queen Rearing and Breeding Class Workshop**

March 1 - 2 Foley Alabama

Roger Bemis, Fee \$50 Starts at 9 AM. Bring your hat, gloves and coveralls. You will be working in the bee yard most of the time. No meal provided. For more information call: 251-213-0168 or email: bemisroger@yahoo.com or write to PO Box 353, Bon Secour, AL 36511. Nice door prize!

- **North Carolina & South Carolina State Beekeepers Associations**

Joint Spring Meeting

March 1-2, 2013

Rock Hill, SC

- **Macon County Beekeepers Bee School**

Saturday, March 9 8:30 - 12

Tuesday, March 12 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Thursday, March 14 6:30 - 9 PM

Saturday, March 16 8:30 - 3 PM

Location: Macon County Extension Office, Thomas Heights Rd, Franklin, NC

To register: Contact Janet Hill 828-369-9819 or janet28734@gmail.com

- **SOWEGA Bee School**

April 6, 2013 Chehaw Park

Details: www.sowegabeekeepers.org

- **Young Harris Beekeeping Institute**

May 9 - 11, 2013

Young Harris College, Young Harris GA

Registration opens March 4, 2013 - and fills up quickly - register early

Grow our Membership!

Your editors, Gina Gallucci and Linda Tillman

Gina and I had a great time at GBA. As co-editors, we actually occupy only a single voting position on the board. At the board meeting on Friday night, we solved that problem by voting together, raising two hands as one on each issue. Luckily we agreed on everything on which we voted!



Gina and Linda at GBA February 2013

If you are receiving this newsletter, you are probably a member of GBA. Please pass it on to a friend who is not and encourage them to join. If the leadership of your local club is not a member, find out why and let us know. If GBA is to serve the members, we need to know what they would like from us in order to keep people motivated to be a part of the organization.

Gina and Linda

Note: You can read this newsletter and all of our newsletters online at:
<http://spillingthehoney.blogspot.com>

GBA Officers 2012

President – Jerry Edwards

Vice-President – Bear Kelley

Treasurer – Roseanne Dorn

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Middle GA director – Steve Prince

South GA director – Fred Rossman

Past president – Steve Nofs

Newsletter Editors – Gina Gallucci and Linda Tillman

Webmaster – Bill Owens