

# Spilling the Honey

GBA Monthly Newsletter

Editors: Gina Gallucci and Linda Tillman

February 2015



Christine Fahrnbauer's goats in the snowstorm last February (2014)

## February Presidents Message

Here we are into February and by now you should have signed up for the Spring Meeting being held at the beautiful Lake Blackshear Resort near Cordele on February 13 and 14. There is still time to pre register. Heck, we will even take you at the door on the day of the event. However, pre-registration helps us in planning meals, seating, programs, etc. It also helps the vendors as they bring so much (or not enough) of their product for you. So immediately after you read the rest of this wonderful newsletter, keep your computer on and [shift over to the GBA web site and sign up](#).

Last month, our Northeast Director, Slade Jarrett, and I flew out to Anaheim, California to attend the American Bee Federation Conference. As I sat in the various workshops and seminars, I realized the enormity of the honey bee situation in our world. Since there are over a quarter million "known" beekeepers in the United States and untold numbers of labs, PhDs and committees studying the plight of the Honey Bee, I know that we must never stop all the efforts that are on going to save the little critter. As a concerned group, we have to put this in high gear and work to the successful survival of our beloved honey bee.

Most of the clubs in Georgia have beginner's beekeeping classes about this time of the year. That's wonderful because your effort introduces more folks to the bee world. I know that Potato Creek beeks had about 30 and MABA had around 100 in their classes. As the rest of the state clubs present programs, please send me your attendance numbers and I will report on this at the fall meeting.

(continued from pg 1)

We need these kinds of numbers as they do so much for us in the bee world. I realize that not all of these newbees will become beekeepers, but they will have been introduced to the bee world and will help take better bee care for tomorrow.

In our world, we have hobbyist, sideliners and commercial beeks. Hobbyists turn into sideliners and into commercial beeks over time and continue the work of so many before them. We revised the junior beek program in Georgia last year and I hope that you will consider this as you present programs this year. Please keep up the good work you are doing in and for your community and especially for the honey bees! In nature, honey bees don't need humans to survive; but we humans need honey bees to survive! Humans have created most of the problems for bees and humans can fix it.

I also would like to take a minute and welcome the newest club into the Apiary. Thanks to the work of our Southeast Director, Rhett Kelley and the newest Club President, Holly Nielsen for forming the Altamaha Beekeepers Association. They meet in Lyons, Georgia (near Vidalia) and will be presented at the board meeting at Lake Blackshear. Welcome ya'll!

***Bear Kelley,***  
President, Georgia Beekeepers Assn.



Have you ever wondered how you could get a grant to help with a beekeeping project?

Would you like to put some new swarm catching tricks up your sleeve before the calls start coming this spring?

Did you know that Georgia Tech isn't just the home of the yellow jackets, it's also home to the Urban Beekeeping Project?

You'll learn about all these things—and much more—at the GBA Spring Meeting! This conference has something that will inspire everyone—hobbyists to commercial beekeepers—to gear up for spring beekeeping adventures.

### **GBA Spring Meeting & Beekeeping Conference February 14 • 8:30 - 5:00 Lake Blackshear Resort in Cordele, GA**

[Click here](#) to view the program for the meeting.

The GBA Board will be meeting on Friday the 13th from 7 - 8 at the Lake Blackshear conference center. After that there is a reception for all—not just board members— so plan to come.

The reception includes a cash bar and some goodies to munch on and most importantly, an opportunity to talk and chat with your fellow beekeepers.

To reserve a room at the Lake Blackshear Resort at the special Georgia Beekeepers rate, call 1-**800-459-1230** and use the code **200981**. Online registration is no longer available, but you can register at the door.

It's Valentine's Day and the hotel has a special Valentine's dinner and dance Saturday night. If you'd like to stay on and celebrate Valentine's with your honey, the hotel will give you the same discounted rate for Saturday night as they will for Friday night. You do need to **make reservations for dinner** at the hotel that night if you want to enjoy their special Valentine's dinner.

You've been busy preparing your equipment for spring, now come and prepare your mind!

## *Club Meetings Throughout the State*

| <b>Club Name</b>          | <b>Speaker/Topic</b>  | <b>When</b>              | <b>Where</b>                                      | <b>City</b>      |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|------------------|
| Cherokee                  | <b>Dana Stahlman:</b> Queen issues  | Thurs<br>2/19<br>7 PM    | Holly Springs Baptist Church                      | Canton, GA       |
| Coastal Empire            | <b>No speaker:</b> FUNdamentals of Beekeeping   | Sat<br>2/28<br>8 - 4     | Oatland Island Wildlife Center                    | Savannah, GA     |
| Coweta                    | <b>Steve Page:</b><br>Nectar Management,<br>Checkerboarding                             | Mon<br>2/9<br>7 PM       | 255 Pine Rd                                       | Newnan, GA       |
| Eastern Piedmont          | <b>Jennifer Berry:</b> What we need to be doing now to keep our bees alive              | Mon<br>2/2<br>7 PM       | <a href="http://epba.club/">http://epba.club/</a> | Watkinsville, GA |
| Gwinnett                  | <b>Mary Cahill-Roberts:</b> Late winter/Early Spring inspections                        | Tues<br>2/10<br>7 PM     | Hebron Baptist Church                             | Dacula, GA       |
| Lake Country              | <b>Keith Fielder:</b> Managing Honey Bees across the Year                               | Mon<br>2/16              | Hancock Extension Office                          | Sparta, GA       |
| Lake Hartwell             | <b>Bob Binnie:</b> Tour of his new facility in Lakemont on Hwy 441                      | Sat<br>2/7               | Hwy 441   | Lakemont, GA     |
| MABA                      | <b>Bob Binnie:</b> Beekeeping Equipment and Honey Harvesting                            | Wed<br>2/11<br>7 PM      | Atlanta Botanical Garden                          | Atlanta, GA      |
| NE Ga Mountain Beekeepers | <b>Nicholas Weaver:</b> Preparing for Spring Build-up and Management                    | Thurs<br>2/12            | Habersham Cty Extension Office                    | Clarkesville, GA |
| Ogeechee Area Beekeepers  | <b>Linda Tillman:</b> Simple Beekeeping: Techniques to make your Beekeeping Life Easier | Thurs<br>2/26<br>5:30 PM | Fordham's Farmhouse Restaurant                    | Statesboro, GA   |
| Tara                      | <b>PN Williams:</b> Making Splits and Catching Swarms                                   | Mon<br>2/16<br>7 PM      | 752 Main St                                       | Forest Park, GA  |
| Tri County                | <b>Bob Binnie:</b> Beekeeping Equipment and Honey Harvesting                            | Mon<br>2/9<br>7 PM       | 2595 Highway 323                                  | Gillsville, GA   |
| Troup County              | <b>Bobby Torbush:</b> Making Mead   | Mon<br>2/16<br>7 PM      | Ag Building                                       | LaGrange, GA     |
| West Georgia              | <b>Buster Lane:</b> Nucs, Packages and Swarms   | Mon<br>2/23<br>7 PM      | Douglasville Extension                            | Douglasville, GA |

## ***GBA is developing a speaker list***

*We know there are many beekeepers out there with knowledge and skills to share. We are in the process of creating a list of speakers to help local clubs with ideas for their meetings. We plan to keep this list on the GBA website so that club meeting organizers can use it easily.*

*If you are someone who would like to be asked to speak to bee clubs, [please click here](#) to provide us with your information so you can be contacted by local clubs. If you heard a speaker at your own bee meeting and think another club would also enjoy hearing that person, [please also fill out this form](#).*

### **Reminders of upcoming beginning beekeeper courses sent in by club presidents:**

Chattahoochee Valley Beekeepers Spring Beekeeping Course Oxbow Environmental Learning Center six, two hour sessions over six consecutive Saturday afternoons, 3PM to 5PM, beginning February 14, 2015 Call Paul Berry, 706-527-0739

Cherokee Beekeepers Club presents Beeschool 2015 at First Baptist Church Holly Springs, 2632 Holly Springs Parkway, Holly Springs, GA 30142 Visit [www.cherokeebecclub.com](http://www.cherokeebecclub.com) or email [weeksworks@gmail.com](mailto:weeksworks@gmail.com) for preregistration

Coastal Empire Beekeepers Association (CEBA) will present a FUNdamentals of Beekeeping at Oatland Island Wildlife Center on Saturday, February 28th from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. [www.oatlandisland.org](http://www.oatlandisland.org) or call (912) 395-1500.Greg

Forsyth Beekeepers Club WHAT: Beginning Beekeeping Short Course Day 1 Sawnee Mt. Preserve Visitor Center, Cumming GA March 7th, registration starts @ 8, classes start @ 9:00 [www.forsythbeekeepersclub.org](http://www.forsythbeekeepersclub.org)

### **Lake Country Beekeepers Association Successful Short Course**

The Lake Country Beekeepers Association conducted a Beekeeping Short Course on Saturday, January 24th at the Central Georgia Technical College in Milledgeville, GA. Over 40 new and experienced beekeepers and their families attended the day long program.



The event featured well known beekeeping educators and advocates, Mr. Keith Fielder, Georgia Master Beekeeper from the University of Georgia Putnam County Cooperative Extension and Mr. Bruce Morgan of Morgan Apiaries. Their extensive presentations covered topics such as bee biology, equipment, diseases, what happens inside a colony throughout the year, how to purchase bees and where to locate your hives. Beekeepers were reminded to choose site location carefully and to feed their bees.

President Bruce Morgan commented, "The short course is essential for beginning beekeepers and is an event that builds local club membership." This was the 3rd annual short course sponsored by the Lake County Beekeepers Association, founded in 2013.



The LCBA meets the third Monday of each month at the Hancock County Extension Service, 12534 Augusta Hwy 16 in Sparta, GA. To join LCBA, call Bruce Morgan at 478.357.4029 or email [rbmorgan@hughes.net](mailto:rbmorgan@hughes.net) or visit

[morganhoney.com](http://morganhoney.com).

## BEEKEEPERS OF GILMER COUNTY CLUB

### A Z HIVE PROJECT

*Starting March 2015, Beekeepers of Gilmer County Club will begin managing three AZ and four Langstroth bee hives. The project will be used by BGCC members for membership and community education.*

*During this past year, BGCC has been consulting with Janko Bozic, an expert in the management techniques of the AZ hive. Prof. Bozic, entomologist and professor at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, is currently working on translating into English “AZ Hive Management Techniques” and “Transitioning from Langstroth Hives to AZ Hives”. At the GBA 2014 Spring Meeting there was an opportunity to view this very interesting European style hive.*

*The BGCC will again display an AZ hive at this year’s GBA Spring Meeting, Feb. 13th and 14th. Please stop by our table and have a good look at this unique beehive. In response to the many requests by GBA members to obtain AZ hives, production of the hive in the U.S. will hopefully begin in the near future.*

*If you or your club is interested in learning more about the AZ hives please contact BGCC President, John Tackett, at [770 530-8997](tel:7705308997), or Mary Lou Blohm at 706 636-1514.*



Alan Hix, charter president of the Chattooga Beekeepers Association, was presented this very special plaque in appreciation for his service from 2012 – 2014. He brings over ten years of experience in beekeeping to the group and it was through his efforts the Chattooga Beekeepers Association was established.

### Queen Markings

Submitted by Bear Kelley

Now that spring is upon us and we are making splits, getting nucs, packages and generally expanding our apiaries, marking of this year’s queen should be a concern for you. This year’s color for the queen marking is **Blue**. The table below will help you through the years with queen marking.

- White..... year ending in 1 or 6
- Yellow..... year ending in 2 or 7
- Red.....year ending in 3 or 8
- Green.....year ending in 4 or 9
- Blue.....year ending in 5 or 0

Marking her highness is essential in tracking her age and discovering if you find a markless queen that she has swarmed and they have replaced her. Most of the bee suppliers offer marking pens at reasonable rates. You can probably get one from a vendor at the Lake Blackshear meeting.

**Want to know what an A Z hive looks like? Come to the spring meeting to see one in person.**

## MELIPONA

By Barbara Phillips, MD, MPH and beekeeper

Our beloved honey bee, *Apis mellifera*, has a tiny charming endangered cousin in the Yucatan, the 'Mayan Honey Bee'. The 'stingless bees' (Meliponini) inhabit the tropics worldwide and are composed of a diverse group of over 500 species. *Melipona* is found only in the tropics of the New World, from Mexico to Argentina, and includes over 50 reported species.

*Melipona yucatanica* & *beecheii*, the charming little cousins of our own *Apis mellifera* are about the size of a large red ant and do have rudimentary stingers, but they are ineffectual for defensive purposes, thus they are called the 'Stingless Mayan Honey Bees'. They were widely cultured by the Maya for thousands of years, valued for their delicate floral tasting honey and revered as sacred. Their Mayan name is *xunan kab*, "royal or noble lady bee."

Mayan honey bees nest in hollow logs or trees and build a small wax/propylis tube at the entrance of the log for entry and exit. They were considered a Mayan family treasure, several log hives were hung around each home and passed down through generations, some hives reported to last over 80 years. Sadly, today these amazing creatures are highly endangered due to massive deforestation, pesticides and new age agricultural practices, specifically the widely adopted practice of mono-crop cultivation. In addition, they are being replaced as honey producers with Africanized honey bees which can yield upwards of 100kg of honey per year per hive and are much hardier and easier to manage. Today there are fewer than 70 *Melipona* beekeepers in the Mayan lowlands, decreased from thousands in the 1980's.

I had the unique pleasure of visiting a Mayan honey producer in the Yucatan this December and was thrilled to see, photograph and be visited by these amazing creatures. *Melipona* don't sting, but they like to get into your hair if you approach their hive and can bite producing a small welt smaller than a mosquito bite which fades rapidly. They also store their honey quite differently than *Apis* in that the brood is concentrated in the center of the log hive and the honey is stored in vertical 'pots' at the periphery of the hive.

The log hives are 'capped' at both ends with wood or stone discs for easy removal of the honey and minimal damage to the hive. The traditional alcoholic Mayan drink, *balche'*, is similar to mead as it is made from fermented honey and the nectar, sap and/or bark of



the *balche'* tree. It was used in medicinal and spiritual practices, and reported to have psychotropic properties. I haven't had the pleasure of drinking authentic *balche'* but look forward to my next visit to the Yucatan. For international Meliponini conservation efforts currently underway see: Apimondia and Bee World.

References: Ramirez, S.R., et al. Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution, 56(2010) 519-525.  
 Wikipedia, Stingless bees. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stingless\\_bee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stingless_bee)  
<http://www.uqroo.mx/libros/maya/diccionario.pdf>  
<http://www.apimondia.com>  
<http://beeworld.org/> 2005 Comprehensive Guide – Conservation Efforts

"We need to behave more like a bee society, where each of our small actions can contribute to a grand solution. Let planting flowers be the driver of large-scale change."...Marla Spivak, TED talk

## Local Boy Makes Good!

To Bob Binnie's surprise, he received a phone call from Carl Chesick, head of the Center for Honey Bee Research in Asheville, NC after the judging of the Black Jar Contest put on by the Center.

Carl said, "Bob, you've won the Black Jar Contest!" Bob reports that he was waiting for the punch line when Carl said, "We're sending you a check for \$1000, for real!"

In the Asheville newspaper Bob Binnie's South Dakota honey was announced as the winner. Bob's business and reputation are in the state of Georgia. That year Bob had 442 or so hives in South Dakota. Since Bob assumed the Black Jar judges were overwhelmed with sourwood and tulip poplar, he decided to enter his South Dakota honey.



When asked what makes that honey a winner, Bob said it is flavored with clover, alfalfa and sunflower. "A little sunflower goes a long way," says Bob. Like many spices if you put a lot in while cooking, it ruins the dish, but a little sunflower makes a slight cinnamon taste to the honey.

### ***What is the Black Jar Contest? by Carl Chesick, Center for Honey Bee Research***

The idea for the Black Jar Contest evolved from a conversation with Bob Binnie during which he mentioned the idea behind Black Jar Tastings. He has been entering every year to support our work - but none of us expected him to win. The jars were all covered in brown paper and given arbitrary four digit numbers indexed in a sealed envelope. We had newspaper reporters and photographers present in the final judging . When the six judge panel's scores were tabulated, I was shocked to hear the grand prize winner's name: Bob Binnie!

*Bob Binnie* is now inscribed on a brass plaque on the black jar trophy. (Pictures at [chbr.org](http://chbr.org)) It will stay at front until next year's winner dethrones him. Previous Winners are moved to the back but stay on. There's room for ten names altogether and we have plans for an 'Invitational Challenge' of the decades winner's - kinda like the Masters in golf).

The Center for Honey Bee Research is the logical choice to run such a contest because it's difficult for organizations with changing officers to keep annual events from stumbling.

We started the Black Jar Contest as a way to bring attention to real beekeepers and to educate the buying public that honey is not the generic product they are used to buying. We want them to know that honey is like a snowflake - no two exactly alike - and that diversity is a reflection of the unique plants, climate and soils of the area in which the honey is produced. We stress the

difference between pure honey and high-heat, micro-filtered blends of multi-national 'honey' filling the shelves of supermarkets. By staging a high profile event, we are able to publicize the plight of pollinators in a positive and 'feel good' atmosphere that respects the sacrifice and hard work of beekeepers.

The Center's goal in offering lucrative cash awards is to encourage the participation of as many beekeepers as possible - from as many places as possible. Entry fees cover those awards, and we hope to increase the Grand Prize every year. In 2015 it will be \$1500! The additional two jars accompanying each entry represent a valuable contribution to the Center's work. We hope entrants who don't win feel good about their participation. Not only does the Contest raise awareness (and the price of honey) but it places their product in new markets. Each jar bears the personalized label of the beekeeper who produced it. If a tourist buys the jar that customer gets the satisfaction of supporting the Center, AND they get a unique and delicious liquid they wouldn't find anyplace else - hopefully resulting in phone calls like "Hi, we bought a jar of your honey, and we're wondering how we can get more?"

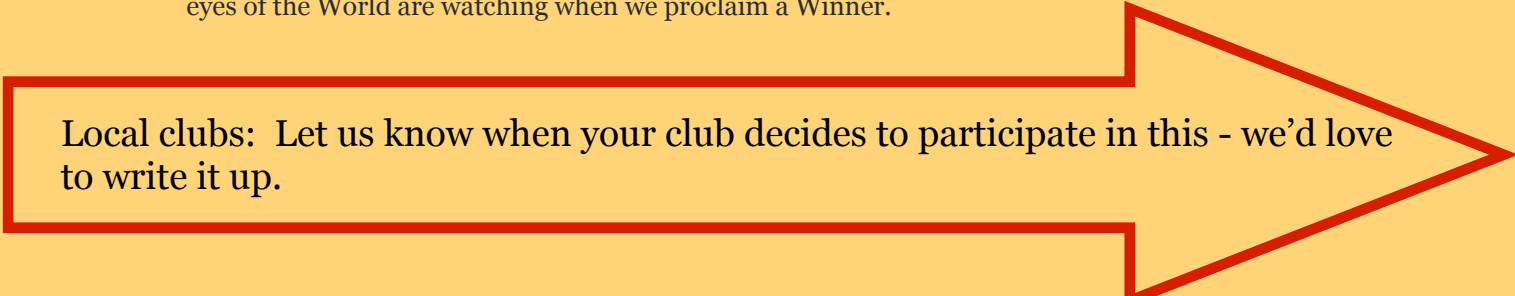
Due to the fragile nature of glass jars and the weight of honey, the Center expected the Contest to be local in nature - but it hasn't turned out that way - because beekeepers are proud of their bees the world over. Oddly enough, there isn't another competition like this anywhere and our Black Jar has filled a vacuum to become the means for determining "The World's Best Tasting Honey."

We in the Southeast are familiar with varieties like 'Locust' 'Gallberry' 'Tupelo' and 'Sourwood', but folks in Idaho are convinced 'Snowberry' is the dog-diggety. 'Fireweed' is really tasty and I can attest Bob Binnie's 'clover with a hint of sunflower' doesn't taste like Sue Bee to me. What about those cactus honeys from the Southwest? Goldenrod from the Northeast granulates quickly but it makes a wonderful creamed treat. In Turkey, a nation with double the number of colonies found in the US, 'Chestnut' is a category of high refinement. We don't even have that species (Sweet Chestnut) on our side of the Pond. Last year's Grand Prize winner from South Africa keeps Cape honeybees who make honey from plants found nowhere else on the planet. He was able to increase his price five fold and was featured on the cover of his National Beekeeping magazine as a result of his win.

Of course there's no such thing as the best tasting honey. Not only are they all good, but no two tastebuds are the same. In the many blind tastings we've held, every panel of judges brings a different set of criteria. I've been privy to reviewing their scores and it amazes me how one judge's '9' is another's '2'! One judge (a chef) on this year's panel made the comparison of cilantro in cooking: pointing out that for everyone who loves it in food, there is another who will disdain to touch it. It no doubt makes a difference what order the samples are presented (arbitrary in our tastings) or even what a particular judge ate earlier. In my mind this makes for a wide open melee where anyone can win.

Honey Tasting Contests are fun and beekeepers are energized by the competition. I think every club should hold their own blind tastings and crown a champion. They can be as creative or formal as they like, and when all is said and done that club can sponsor their entry in the Center's International Black Jar Contest. Pay the fee on behalf of their member and maybe pay them for the two extra jars? A \$40 investment? Think of the bragging rights if they win! I've been discussing the possibilities with many club officers and I think we could have State Winners from Georgia, North and South Carolina, and maybe Tennessee if we get enough participation. I need help promoting this idea, so please talk it up with friends and family.

It takes time to collect and catalog entries - and remember, honey is being harvested in the Southern Hemisphere right now - so we have already begun accepting entries for 2015. We'll take however many entries we have on Oct. 15, 2015 and pick our Winner - but if an entry arrives late it will automatically be entered in the next year's Contest. The Center for Honeybee Research looks forward to your participation and support. Beekeepers in the Southeast can be proud the eyes of the World are watching when we proclaim a Winner.



**Local clubs: Let us know when your club decides to participate in this - we'd love to write it up.**



***Dear Aunt Bee,***

My hives have screened bottoms. What is the right height from the ground to place the hives, to keep as much cold out in the winter, and still provide ventilation?

***Worried about Warmth******Dear Worried,***

In an effort to get expert opinion about your question, we contacted Jennifer Berry of the UGA bee lab.

*Jennifer says, "There is no 'right' height to place a colony. According to Dr. Seeley's work, feral swarms prefer a cavity 3 meters off the ground. But it would be a bit inconvenient for us to work bees at that height.*

*Every colony that I have, whether at the lab or at home, is usually around 6-8" off the ground. All colonies are on bottom screens, but by November we have inserted IPM boards (solid sheets of corrugated plastic) to decrease airflow especially during cold, windy days which could wick away the warm air surrounding the cluster.*

*Also, here in the south we don't need to worry so much about ventilation since we have periodic warm days that the bees are able to fly/move about, therefore condensation doesn't collect as bad or rapidly on the inner covers.*

*One more point: some folks think that the bees are actually keeping the entire inside of the hive warm. This is a misconception. Actually the external temperature of the cluster is usually around 46 degrees and the internal temperature during broodless times can be as low as 55 but usually in the upper 60s to 70s. When the queen starts building up brood for spring, minimum temperatures around the brood are in the upper 80s to 90s."*

Have fun setting up your own preference for the height of your screened bottom board with the advice we've just gotten from Jennifer Berry.

Hope your bees kept warm this winter,

***Aunt Bee***

## Honey Cheese Bars Recipe

TOTAL TIME: Prep: 25 min.

Bake: 30 min. + cooling

YIELD: 16 servings

### Ingredients

1 cup all-purpose flour  
 1/3 cup packed brown sugar  
 1/4 cup cold butter, cubed  
 1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts

### FILLING:

1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese  
 1/4 cup honey  
 2 tablespoons milk  
 1 tablespoon lemon juice  
 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 1 egg, lightly beaten  
 Additional honey, optional

### Directions

- 1. In a small bowl, combine flour and brown sugar. Cut in butter until crumbly. Stir in walnuts. Press onto the bottom of an 8-in. square baking dish coated with cooking spray. Bake at 350° for 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned.
- 2. For filling, in a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, honey, milk, lemon juice and vanilla until blended. Add egg; beat on low speed just until combined. Pour over crust. Bake 20-25 minutes longer or until set. Cool completely on a wire rack. Drizzle with additional honey if desired. Cut into bars. Refrigerate leftovers.  
 Yield: 16 bars.

from: [www.tasteofhome.com](http://www.tasteofhome.com)



This is a photo of the new officers of the Altamaha Beekeepers Association.

They formed on 5 Jan 2015 and meet in Lyons, Ga (near Vidalia)

They are (L to R)

Ron Wilkes Sec/Treasurer; Bear Kelley, GBA Pres; Holly Nielsen, President; Monty Usher, VP; Rhett Kelley, SE GA GBA Director; Seated in Front Johnny Jones



For a good laugh, try this in the park of your choice:

[youtu.be/kGOXQ8MQaAw](http://youtu.be/kGOXQ8MQaAw)

## *The Final Buzz*

We all getting ready to start the next beekeeping season with a great GBA spring meeting. Our friends and teachers are what make these meetings so enjoyable.

Please bring your camera and share your time with all of us in our next newsletter. See you soon.

Your Editors,

*Gina and Linda*