

# THE BEE HERDER

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[www.MedinaBeekeepers.com](http://www.MedinaBeekeepers.com)



## Association Officers

President: Paul Kosmos

[president@medinabeekeepers.com](mailto:president@medinabeekeepers.com)

330-239-1379

Vice President: Peggy Garnes

[vp@medinabeekeepers.com](mailto:vp@medinabeekeepers.com)

330-723-6265

Secretary: Kim Barkfelt

[secretary@medinabeekeepers.com](mailto:secretary@medinabeekeepers.com)

330-225-7641

Treasurer: Toni Watson

[treasurer@medinabeekeepers.com](mailto:treasurer@medinabeekeepers.com)

330-650-2243

Newsletter Editor: Tania Jarosewich

[Tania@HinckleyHoney.com](mailto:Tania@HinckleyHoney.com)

Webmaster: Mike Rossander

[webmaster@medinabeekeepers.com](mailto:webmaster@medinabeekeepers.com)

Refreshments Coordinators:

Elle Jisa [ejisa@roadrunner.com](mailto:ejisa@roadrunner.com)

Sheila Mauer [spmaurer01@gmail.com](mailto:spmaurer01@gmail.com)

Directors:

2020: Laurene Kiel, [lkiel59@gmail.com](mailto:lkiel59@gmail.com)

2021: John Vrtachnik,

[jvrtachnik@windstream.net](mailto:jvrtachnik@windstream.net)

2022: Ron Spring, [springdv@gmail.com](mailto:springdv@gmail.com)

Medina County Bee Inspector:

Ron Zickefoose

[ronz@asap-homes.com](mailto:ronz@asap-homes.com)

330-466-3642

State of Ohio Inspector:

Barbara Bloetscher

[bbloetscher@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:bbloetscher@agri.ohio.gov)

614-644-5839

Join the MCBA to take advantage of a great lineup of virtual speakers. Start or renew your membership [online here](#) or by sending in the membership form included later in this newsletter.

### ***December 21, 7:00 PM - virtual Zoom Meeting - Jenny Harper, Cooking with Honey***

Join us for a fun presentation about cooking with honey from an expert in the world of cooking!

Jenny worked for Nestlé USA, based in Solon, OH, for over 32 years. During her tenure, she worked in a variety of jobs from developing preparation directions for STOUFFER'S® and LEAN CUISINE® product lines to product development for a variety of frozen, refrigerated and shelf stable Nestlé products. During her last 23 years with Nestlé, she worked in and managed the Test Kitchen on such brands as NESTLÉ® TOLL HOUSE® (morsels and baking ingredients), CARNATION® Milks and LIBBY'S® Pumpkin. She was responsible for consumer recipe development on the baking website, VeryBestBaking.com.

Jenny has a passion for food history and culture. She loves sharing this knowledge with others and feels there is much left to learn. Many opportunities came her way for travel all over the world, cooking and sampling foods in many kitchens - Germany, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and South Africa. When not in the kitchen, she enjoys gardening, spending time with family and friends and keeping up with all things food related!

Keep an eye on your email and the MCBA Facebook for information on speakers for upcoming meetings.

## Ten Minutes with the Bees

By Paul Kosmos, MCBA President

### The Bee Yard in December

Sometimes those of us who have more experience get the opportunity to tell others what we think works, and what doesn't. We even tell you when what we think works... doesn't! So, I'll pick on myself this time!

I'd like to try it one more time. Let's talk about varroa. By now we have drummed it into everyone's head to check regularly for mites. Problem is, many of us don't do what we are supposed to do when we are supposed to do it. There are so many excuses we make... too busy, bad weather, supers are on (a valid one), or simply not believing you have a problem.

And don't say you didn't see any on the bees! They are tiny, hiding under the sclerites of the honey bees' abdomen, where they eat body fat. And 70% hide in the capped brood, where they reproduce.

So why am I bringing this up again? The last two years I had very few mites in my hives (I used to be the mite king!). I picked up a VSH queen the year before and perhaps the genetics spread when mating new queens.

As a result, I was a little lax this year (yes, I admit it). I relaxed and checked only the insert for drops and the drone comb each time I inspected a hive. Found almost none. But then in mid-September I found a few on the insert (natural drop). A couple days later I found more. So, I treated (OXA vapor) on Sept 29.

**NOW FOR THE POINT OF THIS ARTICLE!** After you treat, you absolutely have to check the insert in the bottom board after 24 hrs. How else are you going to know if your treatment killed any mites, or how big a problem you had? **BUT THERE'S MORE.** You have to check each day for about a week. (Just check the insert, wipe clean). Why? I'll use my actual figures to explain.

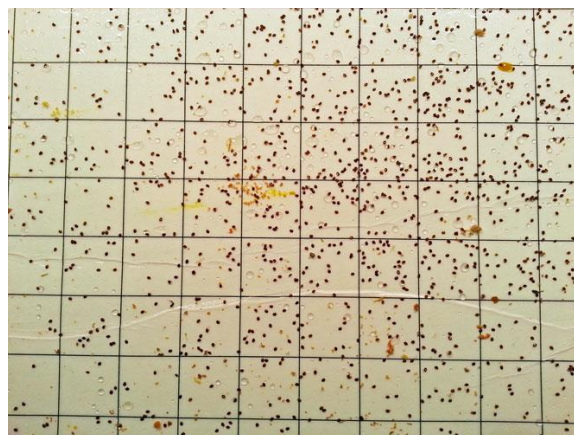
Varroa drop after treatment: (4 worst hives)

24 hrs. 910, 715, 372, 75

Day 2 160, 440, 290, 200

Day 3 265, 279, 103, 210

Total drop for 7 days: 1774, 1953, 1780, 874



*One Hive Dropped 1953 mites in 7 days!*

Believe it or not, while those numbers are too high, they are not unusual **FOLLOWING** a treatment. But they are way too high. I kept checking and two hives kept dropping mites. One dropped nearly 500 and one 200 during the second week. I had to retreat those two hives.

This is why it is so important to monitor the effectiveness of your actions, whether treating or just doing tests. How else to know if the time you are spending, and the money, are worth the effort and if those efforts are helping your bees.

**Once you see the drop** you *will* want to check more often, and treat as necessary. We all lose some hives. If the mite load is too high, the bees will be physically weakened going into winter. You may have lots of bees, but few or weak winter bees. They may not be able to survive for 5-6 months! This time it's my bees that may be at risk for being lax.

## Medina has Two Winners in the OSBA Ohio 4-Partnership Program!!!

We are excited to announce that Chloe Howard and Natalie Cunningham have been selected to participate in the 2021 OSBA Scholarship Program. It will be fun to welcome them at a future Zoom meeting and introduce them to our members. Each will receive a 2021 MCBA membership and be invited to the Beginner Class as our guests.

I know all of you share my excitement to introduce some younger members to the world of Beekeeping!



*Chloe Howard*



*Natalie Cunningham*

## The Northeast Ohio Bee Yard – December

- When temperatures are 50 degrees or warmer, peek under the inner cover. If the bees are clustered at the top, it might mean that they have eaten through the bottom box and could run short on stores. Consider putting on a winter patty, fondant, or other emergency food.
- This time of year, when there is very little brood, is a good time to treat with vaporized oxalic acid. Vaporize monthly through the winter. As days start lengthening after December 21, the queen will slowly start to build out the brood nest. Mites in the hive will begin to reproduce under the capped brood. Act now so that your colony comes into the spring with as few mites as possible.
- Protect your hives from the winter elements: wrap your hives with tar paper or insulation board, place a piece of insulation board between the inner cover and top cover, and place a heavy rock or brick on top of hives to keep the lid from flying off in a heavy wind.
- What are your 2021 beekeeping goals - honey production, preventing or catching swarms, splitting, successfully overwintering a hive? Are you planning to try new techniques or practices? Think about whether you will need to replace or invest in new equipment, attend specific classes, or read bee books. Take a look at the 2021 calendar and, based on your 2020 records, make plans for the upcoming season. If you find your 2020 records lacking – maybe that will be one of your 2021 goals.
- If your colonies have already perished or if you would like to start keeping bees in 2021, now is the time to order one or more packages or nucs. Think about ordering several different types of bees so that you can observe the differences and decide which works best with your beekeeping practice.

## Ohio State Beekeeping Association (OSBA) Live Webinar Training

The Ohio State Beekeeper's Association holds free, live Zoom conference calls on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month from 7:00-8:30 pm. [Information about the webinar series can be found at this link.](#) Upcoming speakers include **January 10, 2021** – Mr. Matther Mulica – Honeybee Health Coalition and **January 24, 2021** – Mrs. Jennifer Berry – Oxalic Treatment.

## 2021 MCBA Membership Application / Renewal

In this time of social distancing, MCBA offers members webinars and lectures by local and national beekeeping experts organized by the MCBA and other bee clubs, a monthly newsletter, and email updates with timely information. Choose the \$20 option for emailed newsletters or the \$25 option if you would like to receive a printed newsletter mailed to your postal address. Membership provides one vote in MCBA club matters and includes one family member in activities other than voting.

Renew your membership [online here](#) or complete the form below, make a check payable to Medina County Beekeepers Association, and mail to Medina Beekeepers, PO Box 1353, Medina, Ohio 44258.

**Membership Form** - Please complete so that we have current roster information for the newsletters!

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (Optional) # of colonies: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2021 MCBA Beginner Class

MCBA is scrambling to plan, schedule, and produce the 2021 Beginner Class. Yes, I said scrambling! Covid has forced us to expand our knowledge and use of tools to deliver virtual content. That has been one plus, and now we need to move up another step to deliver events with Zoom presentations, videos, and live interaction. For example, it would be difficult to show a newbee how to inspect a hive using only slides. We are also concerned about establishing rapport with new beekeepers and members so the course is a “real” experience. Stay tuned - updates and announcements will follow shortly.

## Club History – First Issues of the Bee Herder

A few years ago, Jeff Ott, co-host with Kim Flottum of the Beekeeping Today Podcast, mentioned that he was the first editor of the MCBA Bee Herder newsletter. Jeff is not only skilled at beekeeping and podcasting, but also in archiving. He saved these first issues and, after 30 years, was able to find the first two issues of the newsletter, February 1990 and May 1990!

The top topics were tracheal mites, national beekeeping certification, Africanized Honey Bees (AHB) 150 mile south of Texas, and threats from pesticides. AHB and pesticides are still of concern but we do not worry much about tracheal mites these days. Although there is no national beekeeping certification, there are many high-quality certifications offered by local and regional beekeeping clubs and universities. There was only a brief mention of our number one problem, varroa mites. It was moving to see how many club members mentioned in that newsletter are still actively contributing to the club and the beekeeping community. Some things change, but our interest in learning together and helping one another to be better beekeepers is a wonderful and longstanding tradition in our club.

For 30 years our newsletter has tried to provide our members with range of useful information. As Jeff said in the first issue, please submit ideas for stories, articles, news events, information for members, or suggestions ([Tania@HinckleyHoney.com](mailto:Tania@HinckleyHoney.com)). We wish you happy holidays and a wonderful start to 2021!

Watch for copies to be posted in the January issue!

## The Bee in Folklore & Mythology (Thanks to Chris Fullerton for submitting!)

The bee features as much in folklore from around the world as it does in our gardens in summer time. Yet, in this article, I can only scratch the surface of this vast body of information. Bees show up in human art forms almost as soon as mankind learned to create them; they are depicted in ancient rock art from around the world, for example from the Paleolithic in Spain and from the Mesolithic in India and are mentioned in some of the earliest forms of writing in the world. Bees crop up everywhere from poetry to prose and even in our everyday sayings: we can be as 'busy as a bee', we 'make a bee-line' for things, we can get 'a bee in the bonnet' and the term 'bee's knees' now famously refers to something fabulous, although originally it referred to something small and insignificant.

Bees are linked with magic, love, industriousness and creativity. The mere presence of bees on a farm or near a dairy or factory was said to improve the productivity. Bees create honey, create noise, pollinate, and the Queen Bee who births her subordinate bees, is the epitome of creation itself. And, if you think the use of the term 'honey' in terms of love is something from the age of pop songs, think again, the Sumerians and Egyptians were doing it in poetry around four thousand years ago! Bees have also been used as a kind of love test: there was a custom in Central Europe of Brides to be walking their partner past a beehive or nest to test the future faithfulness of their husband to be - if they were stung it was curtains for the marriage idea...

To the Vikings mead, made from honey, was one of the main ingredients, along with the blood of Kvasir, of the Mead of Poetry, a magical brew that could give the gifts of wisdom and poetry and immortality to anyone who drank it. In many parts of the world bees are considered to be able to grant the gifts of poetry, eloquence and song to mankind. To the Greeks they were the 'birds of the muses'. Widespread throughout the British Isles is the belief that bees buzz or hum a special hymn at midnight on Christmas Eve and in the Irish poem, *King & The Hermit*, dated to the seventh century, bees are '*the little musicians of the world*'. Bees are also credited with understanding many languages.

In Ancient Egypt, the bee, in particular the honeybee, was one of several royal symbols, and was used consistently for over four thousand years. The bee represented the Pharaoh's sovereignty over Lower Egypt and the Pharaoh was often referred to as 'He (or She) of the Sedge and Bee. To the Ancient Egyptians, the Pharaoh was a God King, and this association between Bees and Deities seems to be as old as religion itself. Bees were supposedly born from the tears of the Sun God, Ra. The Temple of Neith, The Goddess of the Night, was known as 'The House of the Bee and the sanctuary of Osiris, God of the Underworld and Death, was the 'Mansion of the Bee'. In times past many people were convinced that the Queen bee was in fact a King. If a swarm of bees settled on a person it was believed they would attain leadership or even kingship. In Poland, Michel Wiscionsky was chosen as King because bees landed on him during the election.

In Ancient Greece the priestesses who attended the Goddess Demeter were known as *Melissae* meaning 'bees'. This name of Melissae for priestesses is also used by several modern Goddess groups to honor bees and their Goddess as their 'Queen Bee'. The original Melissa was a Greek Nymph who came to care for the infant Zeus, shielding from his father Cronus who intended to eat every one of his offspring. As punishment for protecting Zeus, Cronos turned Melissa into an earthworm; later the adult Zeus took pity on her and changed her into a bee. The Ancients had several Bee Gods and Goddesses, such as the Lithuanian Bee Goddess Austeja and her husband the Bee God Babilos, the Roman Goddess Mellonia and the Slavic God Zosim; bees were also associated with other Deities such as Artemis, Brighid, and Rhea.

Bees of all kinds were thought to have special knowledge and the ability to tell or see into the future. In Greek mythology the God Apollo was taught how to see into the future by the Thriae: the three pre-Hellenic Bee Goddesses, Melaina, Kleodora and Daphnis.

According to folklore from Britain and Ireland, if a bumblebee buzzes around your house or at your window, it brings news that a visitor will soon arrive, and the bumblebee is even supposed to tell you the visitor's gender; if it has a red tail (like the Early Bumblebee or Red-tailed Bumblebee) the visitor will be male, if the tale is white (as with the White-Tailed Bumblebee, Heath Bumblebee or Garden Bumblebee), the visitor will be female. However, if anyone killed the visiting bumblebee, the visitor would bring nothing but bad news (which serves them right)!

Bees symbolize wealth, the wealth of knowledge or the wealth of good luck as well as meaning wealth in the financial sense. In Wales it was very lucky if bees of any kind set up home in or near your home, as they were said to bless it with prosperity. Finding a bumblebee on a ship is good luck. Should a bee land in your hand then it allegedly means that money is coming your way. According to Irish and British folklore, you must never buy bees with normal money, only with gold coins (8), although, if possible, it is best to barter over them, so as not to offend them, or to receive them as a gift, so that no money changes hands at all. If a single bee enters your house it is traditionally a sign of good luck coming to you, usually in the form of money, but to have a bumblebee die in your home brought bad luck and poverty.

Even in modern folk magic bumblebees serve as a as a charm for health and wealth. Bee stings were said to treat the pain of rheumatism and arthritis (something modern science is investigating), and honey has been used in folk magic to treat just about any and every ailment mankind has ever been known to suffer with. The Witchcraft Museum in Boscastle retails a charm, promising health, happiness and good fortune that features three ceramic bumblebees in a blue pouch - this is a vast improvement on the old folk charm it is based on, found in Dawlish, that sadly featured three dead bumblebees in the bag. Bees have long been associated with witches and witchcraft: one Lincolnshire witch was said to have a bumblebee as her familiar animal, another witch from Scotland allegedly poisoned a child in the form of a bee, and in Nova Scotia a male witch was accused of killing a cow by sending a white bumblebee to land on it.

Omens have been read in the flight of bees, as well as the flight of birds, for centuries. When bees swarm it is usually considered an ill omen. If bees swarmed onto a dead or rotten tree, it was said to portend the death of one of the family who owned or lived near the tree. When bees become lethargic it augurs misfortune and if they are busy buzzing away then they augur good fortune. Many ancient writers, like Aristotle and Pliny, considered bees to be able to predict the weather. There are many traditional rhymes in German, French and English that describe how they allegedly do this. A traditional rhyme tells us:

**'When bees to distance wing their flight  
Days are warm and skies are bright  
But when their flight ends near their home  
Stormy weather is sure to come.'**

**Another rhyme, probably the best known of all, tells us :**

'A swarm of bees in May  
Is worth a load of hay;  
A swarm of bees in June  
Is worth a silver spoon;  
A swarm of bees in July  
Is not worth a fly.'

If a bee buzzes over a sleeping child in its cot it is said to portend that the child will live a long, happy, healthy and prosperous life and if the bee touched the child's lips it would be a great poet according to Greek folklore. If a bee lands on your head, folklore suggests that you will be successful in all your endeavors! There is an odd belief that virgins can pass through a swarm of bees without being stung and if bees nested in the eaves of a house it was said that the daughters of the house would never marry.

Bee dreams have a myriad of meanings depending on what the bees in your dream are doing. If they swarm, it suggests that you will be overwhelmed or experience bad luck. To dream of being stung is to be betrayed by someone you know. However, if you dream of bees happily buzzing, then the dream augurs good fortune for the day ahead.

Like butterflies, bees are symbols of the soul and its ability to pass or fly between worlds in Egyptian, Greek and Celtic mythology. In one Ancient Egyptian ritual in *The Book of Am-Tuat*, the voice of the soul is compared to the humming buzz of bees and in another ritual, *Kher-Heb*, the soul is referred to as '*going about as a bee, though seeest all the goings about*'(9). There are also stories, especially from Germany, where the souls of the sleeping, leave their bodies in the form of the bee that flies from the mouth, and should the bee be trapped or waylaid, then the soul is unable to return to the body. Bees also offered protection for the soul. In the Ancient Egyptian ceremony of the *Opening of the Mouth* (where the soul was released from the body) there is the *line* '*The bees, giving him protection, they make him to exist*.'

Bees are also linked with fairies, partly due to their winged nature, but also thanks to the 16th century Italian poem, *Orlando Furioso*, by Ludovico Ariosto, which features a good fairy with the very apt name of Melissa. From the Isle of Man comes the tale of a group of fairies who, as they flew about, made a noise similar to that of a buzzing bee. Bees, like fairies, are often considered guardians of the natural world, because of their vital role in the pollination of many plants.

Speaking to a bee, either a honeybee or bumblebee, harshly was thought to drive it away, as was swearing (8). Bees had to be spoken to in very specific ways. 'Telling the Bees' is an old English folk custom where honeybees are treated like members of the family and kept up to date with all the goings on. Many of us are familiar with the tradition of telling the bees when someone in the family, especially the bee's primary keeper dies, but traditionally all family news, including births, marriages, etc., and even news about visitors, was told to the bees as a courtesy. There is a caveat to this, you had to be careful who told the bees what; for example, only the Bride should tell the bees of an upcoming wedding and not anyone else, no matter how well intentioned they were. It was believed that failure to tell the bees of important news would result in them flying away, dying or stopping honey production. In both Britain and America, honeybees were even invited to Weddings (13) and Funerals (14), and if they didn't make it, then food and drink from the wake, or a piece of Bridal cake was left by the hive.