

SEPTEMBER 2023

MCBA NEWSLETTER

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

DEREK PRUYNE

Happy September fellow beekeepers!

Every year it comes as a surprise how quickly the fall season creeps in. Although we can see things slowing down in our apiaries on the horizon, September still represents a very busy time for the beekeeper. There is still much to do! And letting your guard down now can lead to disappointment and frustration.

We talk about mites a lot, and rightfully so (more on that later thanks to fellow MCBA member Steve Amelang). But it can't be overstated the importance of promoting healthy bees **right now**. Bees emerging now are very likely to become the nurse bees that help rear our "fat" winter bees. Healthy nurses make healthy winter survivors.

It's also very important to keep a close eye on your "hive space". Queen production has slowed compared to peak season, and poorly occupied supers can lead to additional problems (small hive beetle and wax moths, for example). It can be a tricky balance as we all hope for SOME kind of fall nectar flow. You may also have a plethora of full frames that the bees are just not capping for an ideal end-of-year extraction. So just hang in there and keep a close eye on colony condition as best as possible - the next several weeks are critical!

Cheers,
Derek

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GENERAL MEETINGS

September 28

7:00PM - Montco 4H Center and Zoom

-Main Presentation-

Dr. Priya Chakrabarti Basu

The Many Facets of Honeybee Nutrition

Priya Chakrabarti Basu is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology at Mississippi State University and holds a courtesy faculty appointment at Oregon State University. Priya studies the interactive impacts of multiple stressors on bee pollinators, for example poor nutrition, pesticides and climate change. She uses a wide array of multidisciplinary techniques such as physiology, toxicology, functional biology, multiomics-based approaches and neuroethology.

She is currently serving as the Secretary/Treasurer of the American Association of Professional Apiculturists, the Chair of the Early Career Professionals Committee of the Entomological Society of America and the North American Chair of bee nutrition taskforce for COLOSS, the international bee organization. In addition to the research community, Priya enjoys working with stakeholders, policymakers and the general community in protecting bee pollinators and raising pollinator awareness. Priya enjoys teaching bees to the students at MSU. Priya is also a children's book author to help spread pollinator awareness among young readers. More information about her lab can be found at her lab [website](#).

-Mini Presentation-

Rich Hiltner

Small Hive Beetle Combat

Montgomery County

10-Day Forecast

(www.weather.com)

Sat 09	86°/68°		Scattered Thunderstorms
Sun 10	79°/66°		Thunderstorms
Mon 11	79°/64°		Thunderstorms
Tue 12	82°/67°		Partly Cloudy
Wed 13	78°/64°		Scattered Thunderstorms
Thu 14	74°/59°		Showers
Fri 15	72°/55°		AM Showers
Sat 16	74°/55°		Mostly Sunny
Sun 17	78°/57°		Partly Cloudy
Mon 18	78°/56°		Mostly Sunny

What it means:

This summer has felt somewhat feast or famine with stretches of multi-day heat waves broken up by bouts of heavy rainfall events here and there.

As we come out of what is (hopefully) the last heat wave of the season, the rain in the coming days would be rather welcome.

Although fall nectar flows are localized and somewhat modest in our region, the next few weeks will hopefully yield some sweet results in our apiaries.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS

2023 Bulk Fondant

The bulk resources program will be purchasing fondant for purchase and distribution. Fondant will be in 50 lb boxes, and sold as a whole box (no partial orders)

- Minimum 1 box per order
- Price per box is \$54
- Pick up will be announced once order is placed pending demand
- To place your order, send an email to bulk resources email with quantity, name and phone number : mcbabulkresources@gmail.com
- Details will be communicated once orders are placed via bulk email.
- Payments can be made cash or check
- PLEASE NOTE: failure to pick up on designated pick up date (which will be communicated) will incur storage fees (\$1/ day) if you place an order and fail to pick up your order. After 5 days, your order will be cancelled.

Fondant, in simple terms, is essentially a thick paste of sugar and water often used by bakers for candy making and cake decorating. For us beekeepers, it can be used as an emergency (or insurance) food source in lieu of dry sugar/sugar cakes/etc as a means to prevent winter starvation. While the goal is always to allow the bees enough stored honey for a successful overwintering, winter and early spring conditions can be unpredictable.

2023 MCBA Fall Banquet

Be on the lookout for more details and registration info, but please mark **November 11** on your calendars for our annual Fall Banquet!

NOTE: There is a venue change this year as the event will be held at St. Peters Lutheran Church in Hilltown. This will remain a BYOB event, and we look forward to seeing you all there!

ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS (CONT'D)

Winter Prep and Feeding Chat Open Discussion via Zoom led by Scott Famous

Tuesday, September 19
7PM-8PM

Zoom link will be sent to members a few days prior - no registration required

This is a great opportunity for beginners (or a refresher for more experienced beekeepers) to learn and strategize fall management practices as we inch closer to winter preparation.

MCBA Board of Directors - Elections

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Board of Directors, it's that time of year when we open up the floor for any interested members to be added to the ballot

- NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED! We have a great group and are always looking for new, fresh opinions and ideas
- You must be an MCBA member and interested in having a voice in the future direction of our club
- Open seats: Vice President, Treasurer, 4 general positions
- If you are interested, simply send an email to montcopabees@gmail.com and let us know what position you would like to run for no later than September 29th

Fall PSBA Conference

October 20-22

Ramada by Wyndham State College Hotel & Conference Center

Click [HERE](#) for registration details

2023 EAS CONFERENCE RECAP

Regina Rhoa

Every year the Eastern Apiculture Society (EAS) holds a 1-week conference in late summer. Each year states in the eastern seaboard compete to hold the conference in their state. This year the conference was held at University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Mass. The university was a beautiful campus and a joy to visit. The first 2 days are the optional short courses which have a beginner, intermediate and advanced track. In addition, there is a microscopy and queen rearing workshops available for an extra fee. The next 3 days are the main conference with this year's theme was Past, Present and Beyond, which included theme talks on each. In addition, there were talks on bee health, bee behavior, queen breeding/rearing, bees in education and apitherapy. The conference also offers side trips to visit a local apiary and other side trips. There is even a children program. No excuses to not bring your family.

I have been a beekeeper for 8 years. The first year I was a beekeeper, I decided to go to EAS since it was in New Jersey. I kept meaning to go back, but life or other vacations always seemed to get in the way. Since Amherst was only 5 hours away, I decided to go this year. It was not disappointing. I highly recommend beekeepers to take the time to go to these conferences and learn what is current or upcoming in beekeeping. This year was a powerhouse of speakers including Bob Binnie, Dr. Tom Seeley, Dr. Cameron Jack, Dr. Tammy Horn Potter, Dr. Dewey Caron and Dr. Judy Wu Smart. The star of the show was Dr. Samuel Ramsey. Dr. Ramsey gave an amazing talk on Tropilaelaps mite from SE Asia. Let's not hope it makes its way here. This mite is much scarier than the varroa destructor mite. In addition, Dr. Ramsey entertained the crowd with his singing and performed 3 songs. It was like being in the presence of a rockstar.

Dr. Ramsey is now being sponsored by National Geographic, which is providing much needed support and funds for his trips to SE Asia to study honeybee species unique to SE Asia. He is leaving this month for Japan and Korea. He has also made the cover of National Geographic magazine. An amazing accomplishment for a beekeeping researcher.



2023 EAS CONFERENCE RECAP (CONT'D)

In addition, the conference holds its annual EAS Master Beekeeper testing. This year there were 37 candidates but only 11 passed, which is telling as to how difficult the exams are to pass. Out of the 11 new master beekeepers, only 1 was from PA, while MD took the lead with a whopping 8 new master beekeepers. MD had a large contingent and they use study groups to prepare.

At the final banquet, an award was handed out for the Divelbiss Education Award. This award is presented to a person or couple who has over a period of years reached out to the non-beekeeping public to explain the value of honeybees in our lives. I was so honored to hear that one of our own and my mentor, Jim Bobb, was given the award. Unfortunately, due to declining health, Jim Bobb was not able to be there to accept the award.

So next year, EAS will be held in Maryland on August 5-9, 2024. The conference will now only be about 2 hours away. Come for a few days or the whole week. Plan your summer vacation with old friends and make some new friends, plus learn something new about beekeeping. I hope to see everyone there.

In addition, PSBA is having their annual conference on October 20-22, 2023 in State College PA. Dr. Jaime Ellis and Randy Oliver are the speakers at the conference this year.

Treating Mites is easy and will save you time and money, and some common mistakes

Steve Amelang

I frequently hear about people losing hives in the fall and early winter, typically when they are buying nucs or splits from me or others or on our Facebook site. I thought it might be helpful to do a refresher for treating mites, to help avoid the disappointing experience(s) of losing a colony you successfully raised, and maybe even harvested honey from. Many of you learned how to treat mites in spring, and you've forgotten the important parts, or maybe you didn't appreciate its importance because you were learning it when you were just starting to raise your packages or nucs. This is a simple rehash, from a perspective that I hope will help you learn and proactively do some simple low cost things to avoid varroa mite dead outs. This is not a scientific rehash of a study done, but just my experience in beekeeping layman's terms. **A good percentage of experienced beekeepers have little to no colony losses due to mites, and they typically have many more colonies to manage than small beekeepers. It's not hard to do.**

First important thing to appreciate is that mites should be tested for or treated, from the middle of the honey flow to the first consistent winter weather (typically end of December in our area) when queen stops laying for the winter and you have a good brood break. This period is when colony populations are naturally declining due to diminishing natural food availability. The number of bees in your hives are diminishing but the number of mites are the same or still increasing. This is when the negative effects of mites become more apparent, and can lead to dying or absconding colonies. You can proactively test to see how many mites your colony has or you can do periodic treatments assuming your colonies are building up mite counts(I do not test but I do scheduled periodic treatments starting in June). Unless you have mite resistant genetic colonies, your bees will likely buildup mites, and associated diseases that they carry throughout this entire time period. **Common Beekeeper Mite Problem Scenario:** Fall is setting in and a hive dies/or absconds, or springtime and someone is buying nucs. When the beekeeper is asked did they treat for mites, they say 'Yes, I treated in August with formic pro' beekeeper. One treatment is not enough to address the entire June-December time period that mite levels per bee are increasing. As a result they are dealing with cleaning up a dead out or absconded hive, an ugly job, and spending an average of \$135-200 for a new package or nuc. A few simple low cost mite treatments could have easily avoided this! **Common Beekeeper Mite Problem Scenario:** Same problem as above(dead out/or abscond) but the answer is a little different. 'Yes, I treated/tested diligently many times from June through October! This is a good initial start but I've noticed on my hives when treating that they typically get a LOT of mites in the October-December time period. I don't test for mites but I see the mites on my bottom board white board, after I do my treatments(typically OAV). Bees are raising lots of brood for the

MITES (CONT'D)

winter during this time period, and especially if you are using OAV which doesn't treat capped larvae its critical you treat during this period. It may also be due to neighboring beekeepers who are not treating their hives and are passing their mites on to yours via common feeding places / or dead outs/ absconding..... **Common Beekeeper Mite Problem Scenario:** Same problem as above but answer is 'Yes, I was very busy and treated in December!' The effects of high mite counts are accumulating in your hive and they are not easy to see until its too late(abscond or dead out). During the June-December time period, the bees are negatively affecting winter population buildup numbers, and spreading diseases in the colony as well. They are in a weakened state and not suitably prepared for winter, so when the first cold weather hits(such as a cold rainstorm), you may be surprised with the loss of a colony.

Second important thing to realize mite treatments are only effective for a limited time; THEY ARE NOT VACCINES THAT PROTECT THE COLONY, like a COVID vaccine or small pox. ONCE THE EFFECTIVE PERIOD IS OVER THE COLONY IS AT RISK FOR INCREASING VARROA MITE NUMBERS per bee AND typically treatments are not 100% effective so you may still have residual mites from your initial treatments. This is my best guess but OAV treatments are effective for a couple of days at best, and will not treat capped brood. Mite Away Quick Strips or Formic Pro are effective for about 1-2 weeks depending on how you use them. Apiguard is about 6 weeks.

Third important item to remember, most mites are on the undersides of your bees so visual inspection is not a good judge if your colony has mites. I assume that all my colonies have mites, that's why I treat using a schedule that addresses the mite risk time period. I cringe when I hear beekeepers say I didn't see any mites on my bees so they did few or no treatments. I said this in my beginning years but learned :-). Also you don't normally see the symptoms of mites until its too late, the hive may look like its doing well, but when colder fall/winter weather hits your colony suddenly absconds or dead out.

Fourth important item to remember, your strongest summer hives are at the greatest risk of mite issues! Its a numbers game but I noticed this in the prior two years of my beekeeping and have read this warning in other places. Because your strongest/ or best honey producing hives have the largest number of bees, they may also have the quickest mite to bee count when the hive populations normally decline during the dearth and fall. In 2021 my strongest and heaviest honey producing hive, almost died from SHB in the fall, but I was lucky and noticed the issue and recovered it before it died. In my experience, high SHB numbers are typically an indicator/symptom of another colony problem and not the actual cause of the problem. In 2022, I had another super strong hive and great honey producer and it absconded in October after I had just finished a round of OAV treatments. Very frustrating but made me realize that I must be more conscious of treating my strong hives more frequently than I had been.

If you keep the above items in mind hopefully you can easily keep your colony losses to a minimum, or to zero. The actions needed are minimal, low cost and easy to do. You'll be a happier beekeeper and can avoid having to buy nucs or packages in the spring. 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'

EXHIBITION AT THE EVERHART MUSEUM: WILD BEES

If you happen to find yourselves in the northeast quadrant of the state, consider checking out the Wild Bees exhibit at the Everhart Museum in Scranton. Running through October 1st, *Wild Bees*, a traveling exhibition of work by photojournalist and writer Paula Sharp and photographer Ross Eatman, features colorful high resolution photographs of bees of many varieties in their natural habitats exhibiting their natural behaviors. Beekeeping tools and wares from the Everhart collection are also included.

The following message was sent to MCBA by Camille Dantone (Community and Family Programs Manager):

"I am pleased to invite you and your fellow beekeeping enthusiasts to the Everhart Museum's new exhibition Wild Bees, opening Thursday, June 15! This traveling exhibition by photojournalist and writer Paula Sharp and photographer Ross Eatman features breathtaking high resolution photographs of bees of many varieties in their natural habitats exhibiting their natural behaviors, offering a chance to see the beauty and intricacy of these creatures up close. Beekeeping tools and wares from the Everhart collection are also included.

The exhibition will be on display at the Everhart Museum from June 15 through October 1, 2023. We hope that you come to see this exhibition. In addition to the exhibition, we are excited to inform you that the Wild Bees exhibit will be integrated into our guided tours. Our knowledgeable tour guides will provide insightful information about the featured pollinators, their behaviors, and the importance of their conservation. This added component aims to enhance your learning experience during your visit to the museum.

Furthermore, we are pleased to announce that we will be hosting workshops that draw inspiration from the Wild Bees exhibition. These interactive sessions will provide hands-on learning opportunities and delve deeper into the world of pollinators. Whether you are a seasoned beekeeper or just starting out, these workshops will offer valuable insights and practical tips for nurturing and protecting these vital creatures.

We are also open to sponsorship opportunities for the workshops. If your organization or company would like to support these educational events and align your brand with the promotion of pollinator conservation, we would be thrilled to discuss potential sponsorship arrangements with you. Sponsors will receive prominent recognition during the workshops and gain exposure to a targeted audience of passionate beekeeping and nature enthusiasts.

We at the Everhart hope and believe that you as a member of the beekeeping community will appreciate the stunning visual representations of bees and that it will reinforce your passion in supporting our planet's precious pollinators. Please feel free to contact me at communityfamilyprograms@everhart-museum.org or 570-346-7186, ext. if you have any questions or require additional information."