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# THE COMMONWEALTH BUZZ

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Volume 15, Issue 2

A PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

April 2014

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## *View from the President*

Spring is finally here and my hope for all of you is that your bees survived. If so, wonderful, but if not, please don't be discouraged. Try to figure out what happened and prepare yourself to approach this season with a renewed commitment to resolve those issues. With that in mind, it is clear that our biggest challenge is the varroa mite and its debilitating impact on the strength of the new bees along with the diseases that result from them. For this problem, there are at least some remedies that we can take to mitigate the impact on our colonies; however, I am becoming increasingly concerned with another, more insidious problem with environmental chemicals for which we have no remedies under our control.

Concerns have arisen in recent years over some agricultural and suburban landscape chemicals used in our country. Rigorous science has determined that, properly used, these chemicals are not the direct cause of problems in the hive, such as colony collapse disorder. However, the products are not always used according to directions on the label. And product testing does not address all possible impacts of misapplication.

In my opinion, a number of actions could help improve the situation. Virginia does not have a hive registration process, which could map apiary locations where agricultural chemical application practices might need to be modified and create a framework for applicators to provide notification before they spray. Additionally, long-term studies could help determine the cumulative effects of improper application on beneficial insects, particularly on bees compromised by parasites – and the diseases transmitted by the parasites. Additionally, rigorous enforcement of application protocols, with substantial penalties, including steeply

*See President, page 2*

*At a Glance...*

## **VSBA Spring Meeting**

**When: June 13-14, 2014**

**Where:** Brookville High School, 100 Laxton Rd  
Lynchburg, VA 24502

**Registration form:** Inside back page. New option for online registration also available (see page 4)

**Online registration:**

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/>

**Early registration discount:** Postmarked or online by 22 May.

**Hotel Discount:** Register early!!! See Page 5.

**Lunch:** Options—a short drive from the meeting.

**More info:** <http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org/>

## **Spring Meeting 2014—Details**

This year's spring meeting, hosted by the Piedmont Beekeepers Association, will be held at the Brookville High School in Lynchburg, VA (we are pleased to meet where the school mascots are *The Brookville Bees*). Speakers:

- Jaime Ellis, Associate Professor of Entomology at University of Florida
- Steve Repasky, EAS Master Beekeeper
- Dick Rogers from the Bayer Bee Care Center

Registration opens on Friday, June 13, at 12 noon and the meeting program begins at 1 p.m.

Registration will re-open on Saturday morning at 8:00 a.m. Be prompt, as the meeting program will begin at 8:45 a.m. The program will include presentations from the three speakers, a business meeting with elections, a report from the State Apiarist, a legislative report and an update on the Master Beekeeper Program. Workshops will be available on Saturday afternoon. 🐝

*Deb Parker*  
VSBA Meeting Chair

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*President, continued....*

escalating charges for repeat offenders, could increase compliance with the existing rules.

A recent report from Florida offers an example of why I suggest that penalties be adjusted. The report indicated that an application of chemicals in direct conflict with label requirements resulted in the loss of 1,300 colonies; the farmer was fined \$1,300 (the equivalent of \$1 per hive). To me, that does not describe an effective policy to protect bees.

Another substantial issue is the propensity of some municipalities, lawn services, and homeowners, to treat all real or perceived landscaping problems with chemicals.

So what can we beekeepers do? It is an uphill climb but whenever I get a chance to talk to folks about bees, I am now bringing this issue to light. Garden clubs, neighbors, children's groups, extension agents, agricultural producers and many others need to hear this message.

Everyone asks about the loss of the bees, so let's let them all hear about their role as well. There are serious scientists in our field who are beginning to look at the honeybee as the "canary in the mine" – the sensitive species that warns us of danger – in this case created by our continued chemical pollution of our environment. For one, I would like to hear that there is a significant focus from concerned legislators to help mitigate this problem. 🐝

*Bill Bundy  
VSBA President*

**Spring Meeting—2014**

**Supplemental Information**

A list of attending vendors and a detailed agenda will appear on the VSBA website: <http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org/> We will update information on Spring Meeting 2014 as these additional details become available.

**Please Register in Advance:** It makes life easier for our volunteer meeting planners! We ask that you pre-register if possible, so we can include you in the count that helps us arrange meeting rooms with adequate occupancy capacity.

**Seeking Hosts for the  
2016 VSBA Spring Meeting**

Help us bring the 2016 spring meeting to a location near you. This is a wonderful member benefit, which will make it easier for more beekeepers in your area to travel a short distance and attend the state meeting.

VSBA pays all expenses and arranges the speakers and the program. The host club forms a committee of local members to help identify a venue and coordinate local logistics (after all, you know your region best!).

To receive an information sheet on typical host club duties, contact the VSBA Meeting Committee Chair, Deb Parker (contact info in box below). Then talk to your local beekeeping association members about hosting in 2016!

VSBA will work with your club (or a pair of neighboring clubs) to host the meeting in your region. Although still two years away, this is the time to begin organizing the event at a comfortable pace. 🐝

<b>Virginia State Beekeepers' Association</b> www.virginiabeekeepers.org	
<b>President</b> Bill Bundy	703-779-0894 loudounbee@aol.com
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Vice President</b> Robert Stapleton	804-672-8408 rbrtstapleton@yahoo.com
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President</b> Ann Harman	540-364-4660 ahworkerb@aol.com
<b>Secretary</b> Deb Parker	540-222-5430 brokenpost@gemlink.com
<b>Treasurer</b> Barbara Ruslander	804-572-5956 ruslander.barbara@yahoo.com
<b>Meeting Comm. Chair</b> Deb Parker	540-854-4883 brokenpost@gemlink.com
<b>Legislative Chair</b> Lannie Ballard	540-291-2538 lballard@ntelos.net
<b>Nominating Comm. Chair</b> Billy Davis	loudounbee@aol.com
<b>State Apiarist</b> Keith Tignor	804-786-3515 keith.tignor@vdacs.virginia.gov
<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Whitney Long	703-447-4985 whitneylong@earthlink.net
<b>DEADLINE for next VSBA newsletter:</b> July 2, 2014 Submit to the editor, add "VSBA" to the subject line	

## ***State Apiarist's Report***

It's Spring. Yes, it snowed last week. ...And, the way things have been going, it will probably snow again before this article goes to press. But, it's April. Daffodil, forsythia, cherry and redbud blooms have come and gone. Dogwood and azalea are starting or are in full bloom. Worker bees are returning to hives laden with pollen. Brood production is booming. All this means that swarm season is upon us.

Hive brood box reversals should have started in March. Don't forget to make that next reversal to reduce congestion in the brood area. If you missed the first reversal, or the second one (or maybe a third one), check for swarm cells on the lower edges of the brood frame.

Selective splits to reduce brood nest congestion are an accepted swarm prevention and inexpensive way to replace winter losses. If you use a 'walk-away' split leaving the bees to raise their own replacement queen, make sure the stronger hive (usually the original hive) is the one left queenless. You should be rewarded with more queen cells and stronger, longer-lived queens from the more populous colony.

Reports of winter losses are coming into the Bee Informed Partnership. Virginia seemed to fare well...until the big freezes in January and February. High temperatures the last week of January and second week of February were closer to or below the normal lows. Roanoke had not seen this many days with single digit temperatures since the winter of 1993-94. The intermittent hints of Spring in February and March were confusing to the bees and frustrating to their beekeepers.

Overall, it looks like the bee population survived well, just not as strong as we may have liked. Some beekeepers were more heavily impacted, losing most or all of their hives. Others were pleased with the winter survival losing less than 10 percent in many cases.

Remember, preparation for next winter starts now with strong, healthy hives headed by young, vigorous queens. Combine colonies when appropriate, split when necessary, and requeen when needed. Getting your hives off to a good

start will mean less work and greater success in the long run.

On a personal note, I wish to thank all the individuals across the state that sent cards, emails, made phone calls, and offered condolences following the passing of my Father.

I lost several friends along with my Father over the past few months. The outreach from the beekeeping community to my family and others was an appreciated encouragement. Thank you for your sympathy and support. I will miss listening to my Dad complain about his time-share in Nags Head, seeing Ronnie Henk sitting behind his video camera, and the many little things from others that enriched my days. They had a profound impact on my life and of countless other individuals; and, will be missed. 🐝

*Keith Tignor, State Apiarist  
VA Dept. Agriculture & Consumer Affairs*

### ***Langstroth Award***

## ***Do You Know an Exemplary Beekeeper?***

The Virginia State Beekeepers Association is soliciting nominations for the L.L. Langstroth Achievement Award.

The award recognizes the achievements and contributions of Virginia's beekeepers in the advancement of beekeeping.

Nominations must be received by VSBA on or before June 1, 2014, to be eligible for consideration.

Submissions should include pertinent information on the activities and contributions of the nominee to beekeepers and their community. A list of recommended information is available upon request.

The recipient of the 2014 L.L. Langstroth Achievement Award will be announced on June 14, 2014, at the VSBA meeting in Lynchburg, VA.

For further details on preparing and submitting a nomination, contact Keith Tignor by email at [keith.tignor@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:keith.tignor@vdacs.virginia.gov). 🐝

*New Online Registration Option*  
***Here Comes Our Next Meeting***

This year you have two ways to register for the VSBA spring meeting: mail-in or online.

***Mail-In:*** find the registration form for traditional mail-in registration at the end of this newsletter.

Prices for current members are discounted from prices for expired members and non-members. A check must be included with your registration form for the mail-in method (sorry, a check is the ONLY option for mail-in registrations). Payment for early registration must be post-marked by May 22, 2014. Late registration by mail must be post-marked by June 6, 2014.

OR

***Online Registration:*** An online registration option, through Brown Paper Tickets, will also be available to CURRENT VSBA MEMBERS only.

Prices are the same as for mail-in registrations but the late registration cut-off date is a little different. You may pay through Brown Paper Tickets using a credit card (sorry, no PayPal or debit cards). Early online registration will be available from April 30 through May 22, 2014. Late online registration will cut off June 9, 2014.

Access online registration at  
<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/>

If you are not sure if your VSBA membership is current, check with your local club Treasurer, or with me. You may text, phone, or email me:

Barbara Ruslander, 804-572-5956 or  
[Ruslander.barbara@yahoo.com](mailto:Ruslander.barbara@yahoo.com)

*Barbara Ruslander*  
*VSBA Treasurer*

***Beekeeper Conduct at Meetings***  
***Appropriate Foraging Behavior During Presentations***

Beekeepers attend meetings to gather information that will help them become better beekeepers. The speakers have worked hard to develop their expertise and are generously sharing their knowledge and new information.

***Annoying...and potentially illegal:*** Two things can happen at meetings that are quite unfortunate. The speaker at the front of the room gives a presentation. Meanwhile, people in the audience are photographing using flash lighting. While the light flashes can disturb other members of the audience, the real victim is the speaker, who typically finds the light annoying and distracting. This is rude behavior on the part of the audience. However there is also another problem with the photography: it directly copies information.

***Understanding Copyrights:*** When a presenter designs and presents a PowerPoint or writes a presentation, that information is the property of the author, the presenter. That work is under copyright protection the moment it is created and fixed in a tangible form that can be viewed either directly or with the aid of a machine or device. Copyright exists from the moment the work is created: it is automatic—registration of the copyright is not required. (The presenter/author must register the copyright only if he or she wishes to bring a lawsuit for infringement of a U.S. work.)

Therefore, photographing, taping or otherwise directly copying a presenter's work should never be done without the direct consent of the presenter. When foraging for information, a member of the audience may take and carry away notes, but the authors' copyrights must always be respected. 🐝

*Submitted by: A Concerned Beekeeper*

***Beekeepers and Community***  
***STEM Fair Award***

Reaching into their community, the Richmond Beekeepers Association (RBA) got involved with the 2014 Metro Richmond Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Fair. The club provided two judges (RD Radford and Valerie West) and special awards for projects potentially relevant to beekeeping.

Two students received RBA certificates and \$50 prizes for their projects. Jaideep Damle was the recipient in the Junior Division for his research into the best finishes to prevent rotting of wood (e.g., hive woodware). Suraj Bala received the Senior Division award for his experimentation with pyrethrin insecticides (might affect bees). 🐝

## Register Early for Group Rate

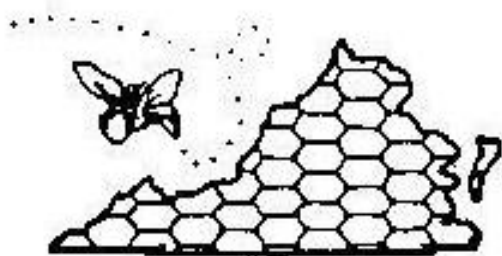
### Hotels for VSBA Meeting

The Program Committee has contacted several hotels in the area for group rates:

- **Econo Lodge**, 2400 Stadium Road, Lynchburg (6 miles from meeting location), 434-847-1045, has rooms available at the group rate of \$69.99 per night plus tax for rooms with double beds (\$79.99 for a king bed). Please note that this group rate is only available until May 8th. Please remember to mention that you are with the Virginia Beekeepers Association.
- **Hilton Garden**, 4025 Wards Road, Lynchburg (4.25 miles from meeting place), 434-239-3006 has rooms available for a rate of \$110 per night, plus tax and a \$1 occupancy fee. This rate includes a hot continental breakfast. Please use the group code ID VSB to obtain this rate. The group contract rate offer expires May 23rd. You may also book online at <http://lynchburg.hgi.com>.
- **Holiday Inn Express**, 5600 Seminole Ave., Lynchburg (4.3 miles from meeting place), 434-237-7771, has rooms available at the rate of \$109 per night, plus tax and a \$1 occupancy fee. This rate includes a hot continental breakfast. You will need to mention Virginia State Beekeepers Association to get this rate. Register by May 26<sup>th</sup> for the group rate. Note that this hotel requires individuals to hold the room on a credit card or pay a \$150 deposit at check-in. The hotel does allow guests to pay with cash at check-out.

We hope to see you in Lynchburg in June! 🐝

*Deb Parker*  
VSBA Meeting Chair



## 2013 U.S. Honey Production

### Honey Prices at Record High

**U.S. Honey Production Up 5 Percent:** Honey production in 2013 from producers with five or more colonies totaled 149 million pounds, up 5 percent from 2012. There were 2.64 million colonies producing honey in 2013, up 4 percent from 2012. Yield per colony averaged 56.6 pounds, up 1 percent from the 56.0 pounds in 2012. Colonies which produced honey in more than one state were counted in each state where the honey was produced. Therefore, at the United States level the yield per colony may be understated, but total production would not be impacted. Colonies were not included if honey was not harvested. Producer honey stocks were 38.2 million pounds on December 15, 2013, up 20 percent from a year earlier. Stocks held by producers exclude those held under the commodity loan program.

**Record High Honey Prices:** Honey prices increased to a record high during 2013 to 212.1 cents per pound, up 6 percent from 199.2 cents per pound in 2012. United States and state level prices reflect the portions of honey sold through cooperatives, private, and retail channels. Prices for each color class are derived by weighting the quantities sold for each marketing channel. Prices for the 2012 crop reflect honey sold in 2012 and 2013. Some 2012 crop honey was sold in 2013, which caused some revisions to the 2012 crop prices.

**Virginia Results:** Despite the cold spring and extended rainfall in 2013 the number of production hives in Virginia increased to 5,000 colonies, up 25 percent from 4,000 in 2012. Hive production dropped 15 percent to 35 pounds per hive in 2013. The average price per pound for Virginia honey increased to \$4.23 in 2013, a 12 percent increase in value. Overall value of honey production in Virginia was \$740,250.

Details from the March 21, 2014, honey report may be viewed at:  
<http://usda01.library.cornell.edu/usda/current/Hone/Hone-03-21-2014.pdf>. 🐝

*From: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA*

## ***Legislative Update***

By the time you read this, the Virginia General Assembly will have finished its current session, closing several previously open issues.

***Home Products Bills Die:*** This portion of the legislative update follows up on two bills that I described in the VSBA January 2014 newsletter. As you may recall, HB135 and SB176 both dealt with selling home products and both had potential impact on beekeepers. HB135 was introduced by Delegate Robert Bell from the Charlottesville area. SB176 was introduced by Senator Richard Black from the Leesburg area.

HB135 was the first bill introduced. After speaking with Delegate Bell on January 6<sup>th</sup> he said he would redraft his legislation so it would not affect Virginia small beekeepers who produce less than 250 gallons of honey per year. On January 20, 2014, by a voice vote the Sub-Committee recommended that HB135 be tabled. Delegate Bell did not redraft his bill and reintroduce it after it was tabled. He just let it die in Committee.

SB176 was the second bill and was introduced by Senator Black. I had the same discussion with Senator Black that I previously had with Delegate Bell about its adverse effect on Virginia beekeepers. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Senator Black asked that his bill be stricken, meaning he no longer wanted it to be considered for legislation. So, that bill died also.

***Pollination License Plate Lives:*** SB259 introduced by Senator Deeds, asking that a new "Pollination Plate" license plate be issued, passed both the House and the Senate. The Governor signed off on SB259 April 4<sup>th</sup> and this regulation will go into effect on July 1, 2014. The plates should be available through the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles in early 2015.

***What You Can Do to Support Beekeepers:*** If either of the Home Product bills had gone through the legislative process and become law, it would have voided everything we had accomplished in the past relating to the small beekeepers who produce less than 250 gallons of honey per year. Citizen awareness, input, and involvement are required for our legislative

system to work properly. You can help...

***Keep Track of Bills:*** If you would like to track any bill you may do so at:

<http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/>

In the *Track Bill* box type in the *Bill Number* then *GO*. You will be able to work through the bill history.

***Educate Future Generations:*** One of the best options for our legislative future is ensuring that young people understand the process and are comfortable participating. Leading by example, I made a trip to Richmond on February 20<sup>th</sup> to take my eleven year old granddaughter to meet Senator William Stanley and others. The House and Senate were in session so, in addition to discussing a favorite issue with a senator, she got to see government at work and votes taken on bills. It's never too early to get our kids involved in government. 🍯

*Lannie Ballard*  
*Legislative Chairperson*

## ***Project Apis m.*** ***Support Acknowledged***

At the November 2013 VSBA meeting, the membership voted on a funding request from Project Apis m. After the favorable vote, the VSBA Treasurer sent the requested \$3,000. Project Apis m. subsequently acknowledged the funding with a beautiful thank you letter.

Project Apis m. or PAm, describes itself as "the go-to organization at the interface of honeybees and pollinated crops." VSBA members who are interested in Project Apis m. and its work can visit the organization website at:

<http://projectapism.org/>

The web site, still under development, already includes links to considerable resources for beekeepers and informing the public. Topics for best management practices (BMPs) include updates on honeybee diseases, pests and nutrition. For example, the Nutrition tab has a link to video of Dr. Marla Spivak's popular "TED" talk (technology, entertainment, and design lecture series) of last summer, on the importance of bee nutrition and how we can all help. 🍯

# VIRGINIA STATE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

## Spring 2014 Meeting June 13 - 14, 2014

Hosted by Piedmont Beekeepers Association

At Brookville High School 100 Laxton Road Lynchburg, VA 24502

**~ EARLY REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS MAY 22, 2014 ~**

Please use separate registration forms for different individuals at different addresses

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ (PLEASE PRINT)

If Vendor, Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

~ Vendors & Children 18 years and under MUST Register but attendance is Free ~

### EARLY REGISTRATION Must be postmarked by May 22, 2014

#### CURRENT Members (including members' spouses):

You MUST be current before submitting registration at this rate

	NUMBER	AMOUNT
<u>both</u> days: per person \$30 x _____	=	\$ _____
<u>one</u> day: <b>Friday</b> per person \$25 x _____	=	\$ _____
<b>Saturday</b> per person \$25 x _____	=	\$ _____
TOTAL		\$ _____

#### EXPIRED Members / NON-Members:

Want to become a member? See VSBA website for member form  
<http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org/>

	NUMBER	AMOUNT
<u>both</u> days: per person \$40 x _____	=	\$ _____
<u>one</u> day: <b>Friday</b> per person \$35 x _____	=	\$ _____
<b>Saturday</b> per person \$35 x _____	=	\$ _____
TOTAL		\$ _____

### LATE REGISTRATION Postmarked between May 23, 2014 and June 6, 2014 or Walk-Ins

#### CURRENT Members (including members' spouses):

	NUMBER	AMOUNT
<u>both</u> days: per person \$40 x _____	=	\$ _____
<u>one</u> day: <b>Friday</b> per person \$35 x _____	=	\$ _____
<b>Saturday</b> per person \$35 x _____	=	\$ _____
TOTAL		\$ _____

#### EXPIRED Members / NON-Members:

	NUMBER	AMOUNT
<u>both</u> days: per person \$50 x _____	=	\$ _____
<u>one</u> day: <b>Friday</b> per person \$45 x _____	=	\$ _____
<b>Saturday</b> per person \$45 x _____	=	\$ _____
TOTAL		\$ _____

Make check payable to: **VSBA**

Mail to: **Barbara Ruslander**  
**2949 Pocahontas Trail**  
**Quinton, VA 23141**

Questions? [Ruslander.barbara@yahoo.com](mailto:Ruslander.barbara@yahoo.com) or 804-572-5956

## ***Observation Hives***

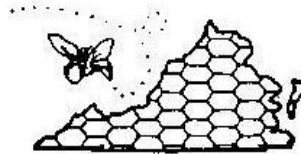
### ***A Source of Information***

Master Beekeeper Frank Linton believes that observation hives can be as educational to beekeepers as they are for members of the public.

“There is a lot going on in a honeybee colony; and the more we understand about colony activity, the better beekeepers we will be. Unfortunately, we usually keep our bees in wooden boxes and we cannot see what they are doing without disturbing them. Fortunately, bees do not much mind living in glass houses, i.e., observation hives, where we can see what they are doing without disturbing them” says Linton, a VSBA member.

He has been maintaining observation hives in Virginia since 2005. Now, he is also maintaining an informative web site to help other beekeepers select, install, and maintain an observation hive, whether for a short-term exhibit to educate the public, or as a permanent installation in the guest bedroom (as at his house).

On the website (<http://thebeepeeker.com/>) you will find illustrations of various observation hives; things to consider before you buy or build one; and sources of additional information, including links to suppliers of ready-built observation hives and fact sheet containing instructions on how to build your own. 🐝



Barbara Ruslander  
2949 Pocahontas Trail  
Quinton, VA 23141

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED