

North Carolina
State Beekeepers Association
P. O. Box 33803
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North Carolina

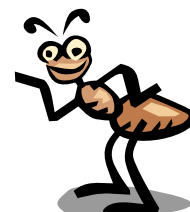
Bee Buzz

Official Newsletter of the North Carolina State Beekeepers Association

Vol. 27, No. 2



Tarheel Beekeepers Celebrate 2005 As Year of Progress and Achievement



The North Carolina Beekeepers Association celebrated a year of solid achievement during its Summer Conference in Marion.

“We’ve recorded an incredible 400 new members this year,” President J. D. Foust announced during his report on the state of beekeeping in North Carolina.” He attributed that jump in membership largely to the Golden Leaf Cost Sharing Grant Program in which 250 new beekeepers were provided two hives each. That project, another highly successful event, attracted some 2,700 applications.

For the conference, more than 400 beekeepers from around the state gathered at Marion to hear experts from around the nation talk about the joys and perils of beekeeping.

Dr. James Tew, professor of Entomology at Ohio State University, and a beekeeper for 33 years, gave an interesting and informative address entitled, “100 Years of Beekeeping.”

Much has changed in the past 100 years but much is the same, Dr. Tew explained.

“Beekeepers use a lot more plastic now,” he said. “Plastic is used in everything from honey jars to frames, foundation and even hive bodies.

Among the facets of beekeeping that have changed the most are: “...more pests, safer chemicals, better gear, new companies that provide beekeeping equipment and supplies, higher prices and fewer of us (meaning beekeepers).”

Among the things that haven’t changed much Dr. Tew cited are: bee stings, bee biology (it really hasn’t changed much in several million years), bee/flower relationships and our passion for the craft of beekeeping.

“We still complain about essentially the same things that beekeepers complained about one hundred years ago – queens, honey, pests and the weather,” Dr. Tew said. “We do essentially the same things that beekeepers did then, except we use more modern devices.”

Also among the things that haven’t changed over the years are bee stings, sounds and smells. The buzz of the bee is still a delightful sound, unless they’re after you. And the smells of new honey, pine wood hive bodies, wax are now as then among the things we enjoy about the honeybee and her world.

More information and pictures of the conference are spread throughout this issue.

2005-06 Officers

New Officers elected at the Summer Conference are: President, J.D. Foust (Wake); 1st Vice President – Norman Faircloth (Guilford); 2nd Vice President – Billy Smith (Stanly); Treasurer – Paul Madren (Surry); Corresponding Secretary – Audrey Moore (Alamance); Recording Secretary – Joe Smith (Stanly); Directors: 1 Year – Ray Revis (McDowell), 2 Year – Jeff Knight (Union), 3 Year – Jeanne Price (Rutherford).

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Scenes From Summer Conference

Marion, NC
July 14-16



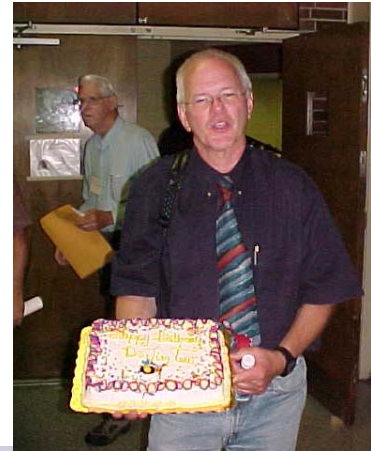
Janet Shisler, Buncombe Chapter President, sells raffle tickets for a handmade quilt to raise local funds.



...lots of stuff to buy



Gadgets, old and new, was the subject of a popular workshop.



Happy Birthday!
Keynote Speaker Dr. James Tew, University of Ohio, was given a birthday cake.



Steve Forrest talked about "The Miracle of Bees"



A Fashion Show of Bee Gear
...you're kidding!

The **NC Bee Buzz**
Is published quarterly by the North Carolina State Beekeepers Association
P. O. Box 33803
Raleigh, NC 27636-3803

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Contributions to the **Buzz** are welcome.

The Mission of the NCSBA is to advance beekeeping in North Carolina through improved communication with members, improved education about beekeeping and support of science enhancing the knowledge of beekeeping.

A record total of 402 North Carolina Beekeepers registered for the 2005 Summer Conference in Marion and enjoyed a variety of good programs, good food and good fellowship as guests of the McDowell, Buncombe, Toe Cane, Rutherford and Henderson Chapters. Keynote Speaker Dr. James Tew said North Carolina Association of Beekeepers is the best in the nation.

From the President

NC State Beekeepers Association

Summer Meeting – The NCSBA summer meet was in Marion, NC July 14-16 and was another great event. Registration for the conference was four hundred and two persons, the largest attendance at an NCSBA meeting in many years. The facilities and the program were all outstanding. The primary location for the meeting was the McDowell High School. A couple of events, however, were at other locations. The reception on Thursday evening was at the Downtown Marion Depot. The community has restored the Depot and is using it as the location for special events. It is a great facility and worked well for the reception. We were welcomed by the Honorable Everett Clark, Mayor of Marion and were served heavy hors d'oeuvres, plenty for supper. A wonderful string band played throughout the evening, playing the old favorite country and mountain songs. Several members of the band harmonized on most of the selections. When we finished eating, and the band stopped, we heard a great speech by Dr. James Tew. Dr. Tew is Professor of Entomology and Extension Apiculturist, Ohio State University. His topic was "100 Years of Beekeeping – A Review" Those who missed it, missed a great treat.

Friday morning started with a very inspiring devotional by Edd Buchanan followed by a warm welcome from McDowell County Commissioner the Honorable Andy Webb. Steve Forest owner of Brushy Mountain Bee Supply followed. His topic was "The Miracle of Beekeeping. During his presentation, Steve Complemented us on the good things that are happening in beekeeping in North Carolina and said NCSBA is about to become the leader in beekeeping in the USA. After the session, Dr. Tew. said, "Steve is wrong. I travel the whole country and no one else is doing anything like North Carolina. You are already the leader." That sounds good but we must keep working to do more.

Other sessions and presenters were: Joy of Mountain Beekeeping and Experience with the Asian Tropilaelaps Mite by Carl Webb of Mountain Honey, Inc.; Breeding for Resistance to AFB by Dr. Laura Decanni of USDA Bee Research Laboratory, Beltsville MD.; NCSU Update by Dr. David Tapy, Extension Apiculturist, NC State University; Ovary Development in Worker Bees Shelly Hoover, Student Researcher, Simon Fraser University; Apiary Inspection: What Historical Records Reveal About Disease by Dennis van Englesdorp, acting State Apiarist, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; and Influence of Brood Pheromone on Honey Bee Foraging Behavior by Dr. Tanya Pankiw, Assistant Professor of Entomology, Texas A & M University.

J. D. Foust

There was a good list of workshops. Some were given on Thursday afternoon and again on Friday afternoon.

The annual NCSBA business meeting was on Friday morning. The NCSBA Constitution was amended to allow elected NCSBA officers to serve no more than three consecutive years, There was a report on the progress of the fund raising campaign for a permanent exhibit at the North Carolina State Zoo. and officers were elected for 2005-2006. All of the incumbent officers were reelected except Mellie Swaney whose term as director expired and he was not eligible for re-election. Jeanne Price was elected for a 3 year term as director, the office vacated by Mellie.

Attendance for the awards banquet on Friday evening was 200. After a delicious meal, we were entertained by Doug Elliott and his son Todd, beekeepers from the Rutherford County Chapter. Their act consisted of humor and music with Doug playing the harmonica and Todd on the fiddle. Doug followed with a few great stories. Todd was also winner of the State 4-H essay contest and received honorable mention in the National essay contest conducted by the American Beekeeper Federation. Charles Heatherly of Wake County was given the 2005 Person of the Year award and Debbie Roos of Chatham County was the winner of Extension worker of the year. Winners of the Honey and Cooking With Honey contests will be shown elsewhere in this magazine.

The conference ended with a great bar-be-que hosted by the local beekeepers.

Those who missed the 2005 NCSBA Summer Meeting Missed a great conference.

Zoo Project Campaign – Chairman if the Zoo Exhibit committee reported that \$31,000 has been raised for a permanent honeybee exhibit at the North Carolina State Zoo. That does not include tickets sales for the lawn mower raffle which they reported are going well.

Chancellors' Honeybees – On May 18 we put 2 hives of bees on the grounds of the home of UNC Chancellor James Moeser. The Chancellor's wife Susan who has had experience working for two summers while in graduate school and their gardener are working the bees. The following week, on May 18, we placed 2 hives of bees near the home of NCSU Chancellor James Oblinger. There will be a little friendly competition between the blue and the red.

Planning and Goals Committee – 2005 has been a great year for beekeeping in North Carolina. We had the cost sharing where 500 hives of honeybees were distributed to 250 new beekeepers, In the chapters where bee schools were offered, the enrollment was extremely large. Membership in the chapters has had record growth NCSBA has gained almost 500 new members. Both spring and summer meetings have set new attendance records. All of these good things have happened because we all worked together. That is good and we should be proud. There is much more we can do. It may not happen if we don't do some constructive planning for the future. I have appointed a new Planning Goals Committee to look into the future and recommend a course of action to help NCSBA move progressively thru the 21st Century. The committee members are the six regional representatives plus a chairman. They will be seeking information from all NCSBA chapters as well as individual members. Please share your thoughts with your regional representative and with the entire committee.

Chapter-of-The-Year – Stanley County Beekeepers was chosen Chapter-Of-The-Year.

Term Limits – The NCSBA Constitution and By-Laws have been amended to limit the tenure of elected officers to three consecutive years. The purpose of the change is to get more new people into positions of leadership. That is good but it won't completely successful if we don't extend it to the committee leadership, too. We can't make the changes all at once but there must be a start. I am interested in getting some new people into committees this year. If you are interested in serving on or chairing a committee this year, please let me know. I would like to try to get you involved. Let's all work to make 2005-06 another great year for beekeeping in North Carolina...

NCSU and UNC Chancellors become state's new beekeepers in friendly competition to see which makes best and most honey.



Sen. Fountain Odom gives NCSU Chancellor Jim Oblinger, a brief orientation on beekeeping as J. D. Foust (left) and Dr. David Tarpy (right) watch.



Susan and UNC Chancellor Jim Moeser, greet Sen. Fountain Odom as he prepares to unload their new bees.



Melissa Beeson Farley, a nurse, of Elizabeth City, picks up her "cost sharing" bees as part of the Golden Leaf Grant.

Formic Acid Treatment for Mites Now Approved in North Carolina

No Pesticide License Required

By Dr. David Tarpy

Over fifteen years have gone by since the introduction of varroa and tracheal mites, and we are still faced with the ongoing struggle of keeping our colonies healthy from these two parasites. We originally treated our colonies for varroa using fluvalinate (Apistan[®]), but some mites have become resistant to it and it has lost efficacy. This forced the Section 18 emergency registration of the organophosphate coumaphos (CheckMite+[®]), but the mites are now beginning to show resistance to it as well. Beekeepers are able to treat tracheal mites with menthol, but it is often difficult to know the degree of infestation within a colony since the mites are microscopic. These problems have prompted the development of several alternative means of mite control, including screened bottom boards, mite-tolerant stocks, and Apilife VAR[®].

Several years ago, there was another product called Apicure[®], the active ingredient of which was formic acid. Treating a colony with formic acid controls both varroa and tracheal mites by turning the hive into a “fumigation chamber”, where the formic acid vapors actively kill the mites. While formic acid treatment has been shown to be quite effective in the control of varroa mites, Apicure[®] was removed from the shelves because of packaging problems.

After several years of research and development, there is now a new delivery system of formic acid that has been recently granted Section 3 registration from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the control of varroa and tracheal mites in beehives, and North Carolina is one of 34 states that have received registration to use this new product. Mite-Away II[™] is a ready-to-use product consisting of a fiberboard pad soaked with 250 ml of 65% food-grade formic acid inside a perforated plastic pouch. The pad and pouch are contained in an outer package that is removed prior to application, and only one application is required per treatment period.

Application of Mite-Away II[™] requires the use of spacers beneath the pad, which is placed on the hive top bars. This provides enough air space to permit the formic acid to adequately

volatilize and fumigate the hive. The label states that the pads should remain in the hive for 21 days, and that honey supers must be removed before and during treatment. The product cannot be used during a honey flow, and the daily high temperatures must be between 50°F and 79°F. If temperatures exceed 82°F during the first week of treatment, it must be removed from the hive as it may result in a significant loss of brood and adult bees. Small colonies (fewer than 6-20 frames of bees) can themselves be overwhelmed by the fumes. If treatment is conducted before a honey flow, honey cannot be harvested within two weeks after the end of treatment.

Care must also be taken by the beekeeper while applying formic acid, as it is highly corrosive and poisonous to humans, thus proper precautions must be taken to avoid exposure. The label requires coveralls, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, socks, shoes, protective eyewear or goggles, a bee veil, and beekeeping or acid-resistant gloves (latex gloves will degrade upon exposure to formic acid and therefore are not adequate). Avoid contact with skin, eyes, and clothing, as formic acid can cause skin burns or even be fatal if inhaled or swallowed.

The current availability of Mite-Away II[™] pads is somewhat limited, thus there may be some difficulty in locating the product. A list of U.S. suppliers and additional information can be found at <http://www.miteaway.com> or toll-free at 866-483-2929.

This product does not require a pesticide license for beekeepers to use.

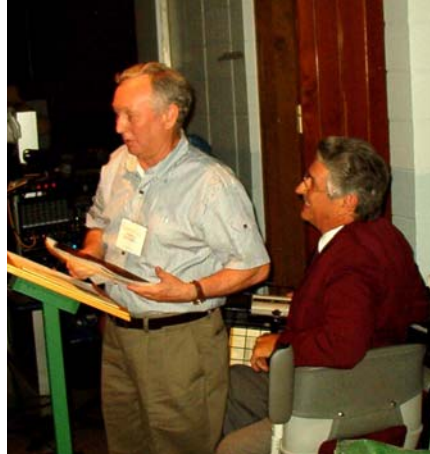
“Recommendations for the use of chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University or North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact an agent of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.”

Person of the Year

Charles Heatherly, Wake County Beekeeper and editor of the Buzz, was cited for improvements to the quarterly newsletter of the North Carolina Beekeepers Association since becoming editor two years ago, and for his apiary activities for more than a decade in being selected as the 2005 Person of the Year. He keeps bees in Wake County for pollinating strawberries and melons and then takes them to Wilkes County for harvesting sourwood honey.

“Charles has been a strong force in the positive development of beekeeping in North Carolina,” said Dan Kirby, Chairman of the Awards Committee. “When NCSBA lost its Executive Secretary and the membership was faced with the task of publishing its newsletter, the North Carolina Bee Buzz, Charles willingly became its editor and publisher. Historically the Buzz had been eight pages folded that carried mostly announcements. Under Charles’ leadership it became a 16-page magazine with feature articles to help readers become better beekeepers.”

Heatherly also is interested in the medicinal value of honey and other products from the hive



Dan Kirby, Awards Committee Chair, presents Charles Heatherly with 2005 NC Person of the Year Award. Photo by David Martin



NCSBA President, J. D. Foust, presents Debbie Roos with the 2005 Extension Agent of the Year Award.

Extension Agent of the Year

Debbie Roos, Chatham County Extension Agent, has been named 2005 Extension Agent of the Year by the North Carolina Beekeepers’ Association. As the Extension Agent for sustainable agriculture in Chatham County, she was recognized for her participation in a number of activities supportive to beekeepers.

She helped organize and then participated as a student in the country’s beekeeping school this past spring. She created a website and newsletter for the Chatham Beekeeping Chapter.

Ms. Roos organized an advisory committee of beekeepers to advise on the types of workshops and seminars and other training programs that were helpful to area beekeepers.

“Debbie’s enthusiasm is contagious, though she is not yet a beekeeper, she is very active in helping her neighbors who have recently become beekeepers,” said Martha Almond in nominating her for the award.

2005 Golden Achievement Chapter Awards Chapter of the Year Stanly County

The Stanley County Chapter of the North Carolina Beekeepers Association won three of the six Outstanding Achievement categories in the 2005 Golden Achievement Chapter Awards and was named "Chapter of the Year" in the first Golden Achievement competition.

Look in a future edition of the NC Buzz for a more in-depth profile of the Stanly Chapter and what its members do to earn title as the Best All Round group of North Carolina beekeepers.

Presentation of these awards was made during the Summer Conference in Marion. Listed below are other recipients and the category in which they excel.



Outstanding Achievement

Member Services – Meetings and Communications

Toe Cane Chapter (Yancey & Mitchell)

Community Service and Outreach

Stanly County Chapter

Member Services – Benefits

Buncombe County Chapter

Master Beekeeping Program

Stanly County Chapter

NCSBA Service, Leadership and Participation

Craven County Chapter

NCSBA Project Fundraising

Stanly County Chapter

Meritorious Service

Member Services – Meetings and Communications

Moore County Chapter

Community Service and Outreach

Coastal Plain Chapter

NCSBA Service, Participation and Leadership

Mecklenburg Chapter

NCSBA Project Fundraising and Support

Coastal Plain Chapter

2005-06 NCSBA Officers

New Officers (l-r)

J. D. Foust, President;
Jerry Isley, Region Rep;
Paul Madren, Treasurer,
Norman Faircloth, 1st VP;
Don Moore, Director;
Billy Smith, 2nd VP,
Jeanne Price, Director; Joe
Smith, Director; Audrey
Moore, Recording Secretary;
Greg Clements, Director.



Young Rutherford Beekeeper Wins 2005 Essay of the Year

Honeybees and Honey in Symbolism

by Todd Fishman Elliott

Ever since I can remember I have helped my dad with his honey bees. Recently I started keeping my own hive. I learned at a very young age to enjoy honey but I never thought of the symbolism of honey bees. So I decided to take the challenge and do this essay. It has required lots of interesting research. I hope you enjoy this diverse illustrated essay because I enjoyed writing it.

It is fascinating to look back through time and see all of the symbolic ways that bees and honey have been used in the postal service. Dr. Ken Pruess, a professor of Entomology at the University of Nebraska, has made a life-long hobby of collecting postal and other memorabilia that has to do with honey bees. These are a few items from his collection that depict bees and honey. This is the first bee stamp that was issued. It came out in 1884. If you look closely you will see the old-time type of beehive called a skep. The skep, which was made of straw, is symbolizing a postal box and the honey bee is a symbol of the hard working mail carrier. The National Temperance Relief Union made an engraving that showed a beehive to symbolize the ideal home because honey bees are orderly, well-organized and protective of their home and family. The bee colony is a symbol of a happy home even though that is not always true in nature because drones get kicked out in the winter, queens kill other queens and workers are known to rob.

During World War II there was a well-trained naval construction battalion. They were called the Sea Bees and their logo was a machine gun-toting bee. They were famous for being able to work with few resources and under many difficult conditions which is how they came to call themselves the Sea Bees. Honey bees' work is similar because they often do not have many resources and also work under harsh conditions.

During the early 1900's there was a Minneapolis based flour company called Queen Bee Flour. Its name symbolized that the company's flour was high quality. The logo on the right is from one of their business letters sent in 1913.

Honey bees have been used as symbols for thousands of years. One of the first symbols the honey bee represented was the Greek goddess Artemis whose temple was in Ephesus. They made coins with bees on them to symbolize her. The bees were bigger than life size and were very well depicted. The high priest of this temple was called the king bee and the virgin priestesses were called Melissae meaning honey bees in Greek. This beautiful honey bee coin is from Greece. Bees did not only represent Artemis but they represented families and small rulers. There are many different types of ancient bee coins that have been minted. Greece was not the only country that produced bee coins. Belgium minted quite a few with detailed engraved images of bees and beehives on them. This coin says POTIAR UT POYIAR which means, "I will try, till I have what I want." As you can see the bear is hungrily trying to rob the hive of its honey and the bees are fiercely trying to protect it. This coin was minted in Brussels, Belgium in 1630.

The next coin was minted in Antwerp Belgium. It shows the hand of God coming out of the clouds holding the beehive. It says DULTIA MIXTA MALIS which means sweet-

ness is mixed with pain. This symbolizes that bees produce sweet honey but they can take arms at any moment and inflict pain.

In ancient Egypt taxes were often paid with honey. Bees and honey were sacred symbols of royalty because bees have such a developed community of workers dictated by a queen.

The Egyptians admired honey bees so much that they carved them on the walls of their tombs. You can see one on the right.

In Greece and Rome bees and honey were symbols of fertility and love. Greeks believed that Cupid dipped his arrows in honey to fill the lover's heart with sweetness. This painting of Cupid being stung by bees was painted by Lucas Cranach in the 1500's. It shows the two sides of love, pain and joy. The Greek gods of Mount Olympus were believed to drink honey to gain more knowledge, learning and wisdom. In the Jewish tradition to welcome a sweet new year Jews dip apples in honey. In Hebrew *dbure* translates out to mean bee and *dbr* translates out to mean speech. Honey represents well spoken people and we still say when someone speaks beautifully that they have a "honeyed tongue." Honey has very often been a symbol of riches and sweetness in many ancient cultures and traditions and that is still true to this day.

There is a song by Van Morrison written in 1971 called, "Tupelo Honey". Tupelo honey is one of the world's best honeys. It is from the Deep South and it is very fragrant and delicious.

*She's as sweet as tupelo **honey**.
She's an angel of the first degree.
She's as sweet as tupelo **honey**
Just like **honey** from the bee.*

Finding all of these different and amazing symbols has broadened and opened my mind to the way humans have thought about honey bees. As these symbols show honey bees were and still are a very important part of life.

**2005 Essay Winner
Todd Elliott and his
father, Doug, also
entertained Conference
attendees with music
and beekeeping stories.**



**Cooking With Honey Competition
Summer Conference 2005
July 14-16, Marion, NC**

Best in Show

Honey Apple Cake, Terry Harris

First Place

Honey Apple Cake, Terry Harris
Peanut Butter Skops, Grace Martin
Honey Pepper Pickles, Terry Harris
Honey Wheat Bread, Teresa Green
Baklava, Ellen McCarter
Wild Blackberries, Louise Barbee
Honey Berry Pie, Terry Harris

Second Place

Blackberry Jam, Teresa Green
Blueberry Coffee Cake, Ellen McCarter
Roasted Pecans, Louise Barbee
Choco-Honey Bars, Louise Barbee
Honey Apple Pie, Louise Barbee
Honey Cranberry Nut Cookies, Angi Stowe
Honey Blueberry Muffins, Ellen McCarter

Third Place

Poor Man's Pie, Louise Barbee
Monster Cookies, Ann Marie Green
Honey Berry Cake, Terry Harris
Peach Jam, Teresa Green
Beet Pickles, Louise Barbee

Best in Show

Honey Apple Cake Recipe

By Terry Harris

Mix: 2 eggs, 1 cup vegetable oil, 1 cup honey, 2 cups flour, 1 teaspoon allspice, 1 teaspoon soda, 1 cup butter milk, 1 cup dried apples, 1 teaspoon vanilla.

Bake @ 300 degrees for 45 minutes. For icing: ½ cup sugar, ½ cup honey, ½ cup butter-milk, ½ teaspoon soda, ¼ cup butter, 1 teaspoon vanilla. Melt and pour on hot cake.

A Buzz in the Tree House

By Gayle Young

The Zoo Committee of the NCSBA wants to keep you up to date on how our efforts to build a permanent bee exhibit, a portion of the Tree House area which is a two million dollar project at the NC State Zoo in Asheboro, is moving along.

At this point we are focused on raising the \$160,000 needed and are well under way with that. Numerous publications including American Bee Journal, Brushy Mountain Bee Farm catalog, and NC Farm Bureau magazine have included articles to get the word out and offer its readers an opportunity to contribute. We are attempting to present our slide show to each NCSBA chapter and each county Farm Bureau chapter and have already spoken to a large number of these groups.

The Zoo Committee has sent information to each NCSBA chapter thru its leadership about the "NCSBA \$50,000 Club". This fund raising plan is in addition to the John Deere lawnmower raffle headed by Bill Waddell and concluding on October 22, 2005 at the State Fair when the lucky winner will be chosen. Please purchase raffle tickets to support our efforts, and continue to raise funds thru your local chapter in whatever manner your group decides. Tickets can be obtained by calling Bill at 336 634-0197 or additional information from Gayle Young at 919 360-6589 or Irvin Rackley at 252 236-4560.

As of July 1st we have approximately \$32,000 in gifts and pledges which is about 20% of our goal. Gifts range from \$10 to \$5000. We will go all the way if everyone pitches in. Let's put our heads, hands, and hearts together to support the honeybee!

Telling The Bees



Robert Horn,

Cleveland, Jan. 8

Hoyt Cowan,

Lowell, March 7

William H. Montgomery,

Mount Airy, June 11

**Honey Competition
2005 Summer Conference
July 14-16, Marion, NC**

Best of Show

Virginia Webb

Light Honey

1. Ruben Hill
2. Mellie Swaney

Amber

- 1 Paul Madren
- 2 Mellie Swaney
- 3 Chris Mathis

Comb Frame

- 1 Chris Stowe
- 2 Paul Madren

Comb Sections Light

1. Chip Stowe
2. Angi Stowe
3. Paul Madren

Comb Cut Chunk

- 1 Chip Stowe
- 2 Paul Madren
- 3 Angi Stowe

Comb Chunk Light

- 1 Chip Stowe
- 2 Paul Madren

Honey Gift

1. N'ann Harp
2. Virginia Webb
3. Angi Stowe

Photography

1. N'ann Harp
2. Dan Kirby
3. Ellen McCarter

Scrapbook

Honorable Mention
Ellen McCarter



1st Place Photography

N'ann Harp, Toe Cane Chapter

All You Ever Wanted to Know About Honey Bee and Her World

(And need to know if you're going to write another book on the subject.)

A review by
Charles Heatherly

Was royal jelly, a routine product of the prodigious bee hive, man's "original viagra" first discovered in ancient China?

Did Socrates, the father of modern medicine, understand the healing powers of honey?

Do bees dance to convey the distance and direction to new sources of nectar?

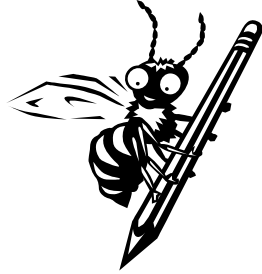
The answers to these and many other intriguing questions are the fodder of Professor Stephen Buchmann's 224 page treatise "Letters from the Hive: An Intimate History of Bees, Honey and Humankind."

The honeybee has been a keen topic of literary lore ever since Sue Kidd's "The Secret Life of Bees" hit the best seller list a few years ago.

Buchmann's book is a treasure of facts and figures about this tiny creature that produces sweet honey and pollinates a third of our food crops. In addition to a lot of extraneous information about the honeybee and her role in our world today, it includes a great deal of history and biology of interest to the serious beekeeper. It is a delightful book, informative, thoughtful and yet passionate about a subject to which he is obviously devoted.

"If we were to reply to your letters, care of the hive, there is a lot we could say," concludes Buchman, hobbyist beekeeper and Professor of Entomology at the University of Arizona at Tucson.

"Some of the letters would be thank you notes for all the honey you've produced over the millennia. Others would convey sincere apologies for shameless plundering of your nests. It would be nice if we express our interest in experiencing your world. Perhaps you'd let us hitch rides on your fuzzy backs as you pay your amorous, pollen gathering calls—those all-important visits that get



bountiful harvests of fruits and vegetables on our tables and enrich our lives with seductive scents, brilliant colors and unforgettable tastes, none of which would be possible without you."

In this brief account of the life of the honeybee, which actually boasts a history dating back millions of years, Professor Buchmann entertains us with bits and pieces of the recorded history of the honey bee that goes back at least 6,000 years. We know that from cave paintings found in Valencia, Spain depicting "honey gathering" activities of these early nomadic hunter/gathering people.

And finally, Professor Buckmann concludes, "I expect many of our letters to the hive would be unabashed love letters, for not only do we crave your honey, but we also love and admire you—so much in fact, that we have painted your images on cave walls, enthroned you among our gods, set you up as political icons, invented rituals to honor and celebrate you, and applied the products of your industry to nearly every aspect of our lives from meals to medicine, intoxicants to antioxidants, candles and lubricants."

In answer to the questions posed at the beginning, "Yes," the early Chinese rulers turned to royal jelly as a source of potency. Royal jelly is a nutritious rich substance that nurse bees feed certain female larva so that it will become a future queen. Today, royal jelly is a highly sought after ingredient used in cosmetics, so desirable in fact that it fetches up to \$300 an ounce. It must have worked as a potency cure in ancient China because their descendants outnumber the rest of us on the planet today.

Socrates used honey extensively in his medical applications, for treating wounds, burns and digestive disorders.

Bees do dance to communicate direction and distance but you must read the book to learn the intriguing story of just how they do that.

"Letters from the Hive: An Intimate History of Bees, Honey and Humankind," by Stephen Buchmann, with Banning Repplier, Bantam Books, NY 2005, 224 pp. \$24.