September 2018

September’s Ramblings of a Bee Bumbler, from your PRESIDENT

*LBA Newsletter Editors
Before I forget, here are some important points to jot down.

The **Fall Field Day will be October 27th at the Baton Rouge Bee Lab.** Pre-registration will begin September 15. You can register via the LBA website: ([http://labeekeepers.org/](http://labeekeepers.org/)).

The **LBA website** is still a work in progress and the new webmaster company is working at updating the site. Please be patient.

Check out the **LBA Facebook page**, ([https://www.facebook.com/groups/LouisianaBeekeepersAssociation/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LouisianaBeekeepersAssociation/)). It’s been up and running for a while, but yours truly failed to pick up on its presence. (I can’t be everywhere). Nola Ducote (Lake Area Beekeepers Club ([https://www.facebook.com/groups/lake.area.beeks/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/lake.area.beeks/)) in Lake Charles is the manager for the page.

The **LBA Annual Conference will be in Lake Charles this year at the West-Cal Arena and Events Center, Thursday and Friday, November 29th and 30th, and Saturday, December 1st.**

A new beekeeping club has been formed in the state:

**NATCHITOCHES BEEKEEPERS CLUB**
Johnny Adams
318-332-5372
honeybeeman1967@yahoo.com
Meeting Date: 2nd Monday of the month, 6:30 PM
Location: 560 2nd Street, Natchitoches

This fall’s harvest of honey returns appears to follow 2017’s fall and 2018’s spring returns. This trend appears widespread amongst CENLA beekeepers. The weather has played havoc once again and the nectar flows were/are disappointing. I hope beekeepers elsewhere in the state are doing better. Between the rains and temperature variations this summer the floral sources just haven’t produced enough for my bees to surplus. Of my seventeen hives I will probably harvest from half of them and if lucky I may take away 1-2 supers from each. This is a far cry from a few years back when it was common to see 3-4 supers per hive in the spring and again in the fall. On the bright side, all of my hives are strong and I’ve not had to provide extra feed and have not lost any hives. I normally raise and sell some nucs each year and I always keep some in reserve as fallback colonies if needed should one or more of the mother colonies begin to fail.

I’ve several articles and websites to share with you in this newsletter. If I were choosing a theme for this letter, I guess I’d title it, “Native Pollinators and their Ilk”. Most of us don’t think much about other pollinators than honeybees, but we should. Enjoy.
NOTE, this is the second to last newsletter I will be submitting through the LBA. This December 31st, 2018. I will be retiring from the LBA board after 18 years. As the BBB editor I think I took over from Jimmy Dunkley in or around 2009 though with the years since retirement from the Forest Service my mind and memory have gone south. {FYI: Jimmy had been the Big Kahuna BBB editor since Moses left Egypt. He was a difficult act to follow and I hope I did him justice in maintaining a good newsletter, out on time and continuously for this last decade. (FYI: Kahuna is top witch doctor in Hawaiian ancestral culture}).

Articles of Interest
I recently received a newsletter from Bee City USA (July and August 2018), “Did You Know That a Third of Bee Species are Pollen Specialists? - Bee City Check it out and if interested you can follow the links and join their mailing list.
The U.S. Postal Service issued a series of postage stamps last fall (2017) of North American pollinators.
Finally, I am presenting an article entitled, The Bee Hotel. Part one of this article (pages 1-3) is given with this issue of the BBB. Part two, (pages 4-6) is presented in the BBB#6, out this November.

Did You Know a Third of Bee Species are Pollen Specialists?

Pollen specialist bees are very particular about what they feed their babies. While many bees are named for their nest-building style like miner, digger, mason, leaf-cutter, carder and carpenter bees, in the case of some bees, they really are what they eat--Sunflower, Blueberry, Cactus, Mallow, Hibiscus, Squash, Orchid, Passion Flower, and Spring Beauty bee. This is why Bee City USA stresses planting a diversity of locally native plant species.

Male squash bees awaiting female bees on female squash flower. Photo: Nancy Adamson

According to Paige Embry, “Specialists may be...
uber-specialists and use only one species of plant, or they may be moderately picky and go after a group of related plants. Some of the bees that appear to like only one plant may actually find pollen acceptable from a variety of related plants. If, however, only one of their acceptable plants is in bloom when they fly, they appear to specialize on just that one plant. I’ve known quite a few toddlers like these bees. Some toddlers want to eat nothing but pepperoni pizza but are fine with macaroni and cheese and possibly peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (as long as they are the proper brands)."

Other excellent resource books follow.

**Attracting Native Pollinators**, by the Xerces Society

**The Bees in Your Backyard, by Joseph Wilson & Olivia Carrill**

**BEES, An Identification and Native Plant Forage Guide** by Heather Holm

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**U.S. Postal Service issued a series of stamps of North American Pollinators in the fall of 2017.**

I’m about a year behind in getting the following information out but the US Postal Service began issuing a series of stamps on Native Pollinators in the U.S. in the fall of 2017. Here is a synopsis and some pictures to go with these stamps (Courtesy of Pest Control Technology, October 2017).
“Bees, butterflies and other pollinators sustain our ecosystem and are a vital natural resource,” said U.S. Postal Service Judicial Officer Gary Shapiro, who dedicated the stamps. “They are being threatened and we must protect them.”

As the USPS press release noted, a bee buzzing around the patio might prompt anxiety while a butterfly fluttering over the lawn inspires childlike wonder. But both of these insects are simply going about their business, providing the vital ecological service of pollination.

As with their fellow pollinators — other insects, birds and bats — they are rewarded with sweet nectar as they shuttle pollen from blossom to blossom. The plants are rewarded too. They can then produce the seeds that bring their next generation. Humans also benefit. We can thank insect pollinators for about one-third of the food we eat, particularly many of the fruits and vegetables that add colorful variety and important nutrients to our diet.

Monarch butterflies (Danaus plexippus) and western honeybees (Apis mellifera), also called European honeybees, are two of North America’s most iconic pollinators. Both travel far and wide. Monarchs can flutter thousands of miles in one of nature’s most wondrous migrations, a multigenerational round trip that can cross southern Canada, the north-south breadth of the contiguous United States, and deep into Mexico, where they rest for the winter before returning north.

While western honeybees do not naturally migrate such distances, beekeepers truck their hives on long-haul migrations, accommodating agricultural growing seasons around the nation. These bees are far and away the continent’s most vital pollinators, servicing almond, citrus, peach, apple and cherry tree blossoms, plus the blossoms of berries, melons, cucumbers, onions and pumpkins, to name just a few. Surpluses of honey created from nectar by honeybees as a nonperishable food source for their hives is yet another benefit to humans.

In this modern world, these pollinators need mindful human intervention in order to thrive. The hives of western honeybees have lately been saddled by parasitic mites and plagued by Colony Collapse Disorder, a mysterious condition which disorients bees and causes them to abandon their hives. While monarch butterflies, utterly dependent on milkweed plants throughout their range and specific mountain forests in Mexico, face collapsing populations as these habitats disappear to accommodate farming, urban development and illegal logging.

Throughout North America, a number of pollinator protection efforts are taking place, including those being undertaken by the National Pest Management Association, which is working with federal and state regulators, and other stakeholders to ensure an appropriate relationship exists between the safety of the American public and the essential role bees play in our environment. The Protect Pollinators stamps are being issued as Forever stamps. Forever stamps are always equal in value to the current First-Class Mail one-ounce price.
The Bee Hotel (Part 1 of 2; Part 2 will be featured in the BBB #6 out this November 2018)
///PROTACTING POLLINATORS

Impervious to educate about the natural world with a proper owner's prerogative to call it a pest or the considers a pest? Many of these awkward situations involve species with a scary demeanor, masking a benign temperament — black rat snakes and laced killers immediately come to mind. But to my way of thinking, the pinnacle of common pseudo-pests are the smaller milking or digger bees in the families Andrenidae, Halictidae and Colletidae. Diminutive, fuzzy and industrious, they hardly seem like the type of animal that would provoke a call to the exterminator. But they tend to appear suddenly and in large numbers, coursing back and forth over their nesting grounds and, to him: average Layperson, closely resembling truly pestiferous yellowjackets! workers (also often unfortunately referred to as “ground bees”) which become numerous much later in the season.

In an ideal world, the technician answering this type of call would be informed enough about the fine points of Hymenoptera biology and would point out our critical truths to: 1) Most of the bees flying around are totally harmless males, which cannot sting; 2) Stings by the non-aggressive females are extraordinarily rare and only happen by improbable accident; 3) the bees will disappear in a few weeks in any case; and 4) Most important, these insects are not just inoffensive but providers of what are now fashionably referred to as “ecosystem services” to mankind because of their vital role as pollinators. In real life, on the other hand, it is a highly unusual pest control firm. In no matter how enlightened the management, that will naturally walk away from a request to treat an aggregation of solitary bees.

It’s a thorny issue, but there is, in fact, a compelling and relevant way that we care for ourselves balancing the ledger with a gesture of pollinator promotion that is a natural fit with our image. We can, at least symbolically, give honus back to the bees.

TRAPS, BINDERS & HOTELS, providing artificial nesting cavities for solitary bees and wasps is a venerable past that has evolved three basic lineages over the years. At first, the emphasis was on basic biological study. Published accounts go back to the legendary naturalist Jean Henri Fabre in the early 1900s, who used reeds for the purpose and throughout the first part of the century several researchers followed suit with a variety of methods. However, no person did more to popularize the concept than Karl Krombein, one of the world's great hymenopterists, who in 1953 began systematically setting out pine blocks with bores of several different diameters to lure in solitary wasp and bees species that normally would either excavate tunnels in natural plant material or (much more often) use pre-existing cavities, such as hollow stems or the galleries of other insects, in which to nest (photo above). The blocks were then split lengthwise to inspect the contents and subsequently taped back together for re-use. His unique masterpiece: Trap-Nesting Wasps and Bees: Life Histories, Nests and Associates (Smithsonian Press, 1987) provided 11 years' worth of data gleaned from more than 3,400 traps utilized by about a hundred species and almost as many parasites and predators that exploited them. It's still the definitive reference work on the subject.

At about this time, that same Karl Krombein was perfecting techniques that used artificial nest sites purely for observational purposes, an entirely different application was being explored by agricultural researchers in the Western U.S. and Canada. The goal was to create a system to propagate large numbers of certain bees in the family Megachilidae so that they could be efficiently deployed...
Internet Sites You Might Find Useful

- There’s more to pollination than just bees. [https://www.beecityusa.org/identifying-pollinators.html]
- Backyard Bees of North America Poster; The Bees in Your Backyard – Facebook; www.beesinyourbackyard.com; by Joseph S. Wilson and Olivia Messinger Caril (Princeton University Press); joeswilson@gmail.com [Note: I purchased three of these posters for $50.00]

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Advertising is an important marketing tool for beekeepers and your beekeeping business is important to the Louisiana Beekeepers Association. Give us an opportunity to provide a portion of your advertising needs in 2016.

Remember, for only $25.00 annually you can advertise your company products in six issues of the Bayou Bee Bulletin. Your business ad can also be carried on our web site, labeekeepers.org for $50.00. Please contact Robert Taylor, our webmaster for details rt@honeybeeremoval.com; Phone: 985-969-4647).

Remit your advertising fee to LBA Treasurer, Ms. Beth Derr; Ph. 936-591-2399; Jefferson, TX 75657; beth@labeekeepers.org and forward your company’s camera ready, 4 inch by 3 inch jpeg ad image to Mr. Tim Haley, LBA Newsletter Editor, at: tamh212@suddenlink.net
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