

July 2015



# St. Clair Beekeepers Association

## *Bee Buzz*

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Monthly Newsletter of the St. Clair Beekeepers Association

### Special points of interest:

- August is last outdoor meeting
- Check for mites and beetles
- Do your bees have food? Check them!
- Stay cool!

### Our Next Monthly SCBA Meeting Is...

**Sunday, July 26 at 2:00 pm**

The meeting will be held at:

**Ken Schaeffer's Apiary**

**5233 Iris Road**

**Addieville, IL 62214**

**Ken's phone is 618-606-5487 Cell and 618-398-6275 home**

**(Ken will have signs with bee's on them to help your GPS out)**

**Bring a potluck item. Meat provided by the club. Bring your questions!**

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### 2014 Beekeeper of the Year– Ken Schaeffer!

We were unable to present Ken with the award back in November. The official presentation took place at the June meeting. Pictured on the right is President Bill Mattatall, Vice President Kevin Wilke and Ken Schaefer with the plaque.

Beekeeper of the year is awarded to the club member that has done the most to promote and demonstrate good beekeeping, improve the public image of the SCBA and beekeeping industry and provide education to beekeepers and the public.

Ken Schaeffer was nominated by Brenda Tracey for all of his hard work for the club, especially being a great mentor to his fellow beekeepers. He has put on many presentations at our meetings and is always helping someone out. Thanks Ken for all that you do for us.

We will be nominating the next Beekeeper of the Year soon. Any club member in good standing can nominate who they feel meets the qualifications. Nominations are sent in writing, a short narrative saying why this person deserves the award. The Board of Directors then chooses the winner from the list of nominees.



## Summer Meeting, Summer Education!

Meetings when the weather is warm means we go to a members Apiary, have a meeting, lots of bee talk, great food and actually see bees. This is the best hands-on learning you can find. Here are a few photos from the May meeting at Ray and Cookie Chapmans.



The Chapmans have a huge back yard filled with bee friendly flowers all over. And somewhere, nestled behind the blooms, is Ray's Beehives. He was gracious enough to let us have a look in a few.



Just watching someone else work with their bees can give you tips on things you may want to do in your own hives, or you may see a solution to a problem you are having in your apiary.

See the number on the edge of the frame? Ray keeps track of how old the frames are. You want to rotate the old combs and wax out after about 5 years. So much you can learn in just a little bit of time! Join us for the next one.

## Brian Huelskamp, Past Member and Mentor Passed Away

Brian was a member of the SCBA for many years. He passed away of a massive stroke on 7-13-2015. A good beekeeper and mentor he contributed much to the club. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends for their and our loss .

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### Do you know your Varroa Mite Count?

Just as the summer dearth is about to hit, things are getting rougher for the bees. Mites and Hive Beetle populations are now exploding in the hives. This is a good time to do mite counts. Local stores had our basic equipment. Screen, pint widemouth jars, powdered sugar, rubbing alcohol, gallons of water, paper towels. We took a few bowls, small strainer, plastic plates/lids, plastic dishpan and a 1/2 cup measuring cup out to the bee yard.



To the left we have 1/2 cup of bees in a jar. This is about 300 bees. We took them off of frames close to the brood, trying to get freshly hatched bees, this is where the higher mite counts are in the hives. We shook frames into a plastic dishpan then quickly scooped them into the measuring cup. We noted on the jar just how many bees filled that area. We shook the bees to the bottom of the jar and made a note of the height. You can mark it on yours. It was easy then to just keep filling jars from different hives to that mark. The first tests we did we used powdered sugar on them. Just a few tablespoons. Shake well, then add a bit more. Yes, you're going to hurt a few bees because you have to shake a bit vigorously. Then we shook them upside down over a white lid to see how many mites fell. Again vigorous shaking. Some hives only had a few, one hive had over 20 mites.



The mites are reddish brown and about the size and shape of a sesame seed. Photo bottom left is a wide mouth mason jar lid for size comparison. Once these bees were done, we took them back to the hive. Most of them did fine and were flapping their wings trying to make the powder fly off. Eventually they went inside where the other bees could help clean them up, and if there were any mites still stuck to them, hopefully this loosened them enough to fall off.



A mite count of over 10 per 100 bees is a pretty heavy mite load and it's recommended that you treat your bees or do something to bring that population down before the end of Fall.



## Mite counting, continued....

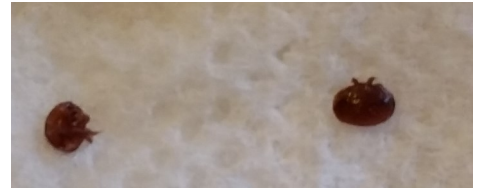
We also did alcohol washes. This kills the bees. 1/2 cup in a jar to the line. Pour alcohol on them through the wire mesh. Then take the solid lid and put it on. Shake really vigorously for at least a minute. We then poured it all through a strainer and shook them in the strainer to encourage any additional mites to fall.



I personally liked the powdered sugar shake better. We even did an alcohol wash on the same bees we did a sugar shake on. We found one additional mite. That was not significant enough for us to really want to use the alcohol further. We were able to count the alcohol washed bees, we had just over 300 (maybe up to 10 more) so we were getting a fairly close number of bees for each test.

### Important tips we learned with doing these tests:

- Choose a warm but not humid day. Humidity makes the sugar clump. Later in the day the bees looked like they were glazed instead of covered in powdered sugar. Casualties galore.
- Before you start, it is a good idea to **find the queen** and make sure she is NOT in your jar, especially if you are using alcohol wash/killing all bees in the jar. We held her in a queen catcher.
- It works best with at least 2 people.
- When you shake the mites out, sometimes it's hard to tell if it is a bee part or dirt, we used a spray bottle to mist water on them to get the powder sugar off and see the mites.
- Keep good records, know which hives had highcounts so you can treat as needed



## Swarm Catching (our own bees, eek!)

We had a call that one of our hives swarmed. We were expecting maybe a small one pound swarm, but we showed up to this huge pile of bees. We had to put them in a deep plus shallow to give them room to spread out so we could move them to a new home.

Send in your photos, articles, swarms and tips!

