



NEW MEETING DATE FOR AUGUST!

Due to the Northwest Washington Fair conflicting with the MBBA meeting on the third Wednesday, the AUGUST meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 9th.

Meeting Date: Wednesday, August 9
 Time: 7 PM
 Place: Gateway Centre Suites,
 1313 E. Maple St, Bellingham, WA
 The Rainier Room, Ste. 301

SUPPORT OUR NEIGHBORS, THE SKAGIT VALLEY BEEKEEPERS, AT THEIR FAIR



You can go south to see the Skagit Valley Beekeepers booth from August 9–12 at the Skagit County Fairgrounds. They always have a fun and informative booth. Get info at: Skagitcounty.net/fair

REMEMBER THE FAIR!



THE NORTHWEST WASHINGTON FAIR RUNS FROM AUGUST 14–19; THE MBBA BOOTH IS REVISITING THE THEME:



People responded well to last year's "Save the Bees" theme, with information on how to support pollinators, not necessarily by getting into beekeeping, but planting for bee-friendly flowers and avoiding pesticides.

Also, for all non-MBBA members, stop by the booth to find out how you can join at new membership prices. For all information regarding tickets, hours, and events, click on: nwwafair.com.

Bee Bits is the newsletter of MBBA, the Mount Baker Beekeepers Association
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OUT ON THE ISLANDS, A FUN FAIR WITH A HONEY OF A THEME



<http://www.sjcfair.org/>

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEPTEMBER

A few tickets are still available for the Randy Oliver event in September!

Randy Oliver began beekeeping in 1966 and currently manages more than 1,000 hives in California, he is the director of the go-to website scientificbeekeeping.com. A careful researcher, and the author of a monthly column in American Bee Journal,

Oliver will address the topics "Reading the combs to understand colony conditions over the season" and also speak on his



Randy Oliver

recent research on varroa mite management, including the most current information on his experiments using oxalic acid applied dissolved in glycerin.

Where: Everett PUD Auditorium, 2320 California Street, Everett, Washington

When: Saturday, September 9th, 2017.
Doors open at 12:30 PM and the talk runs from 1:00 to 5:00 PM

Price: \$25 (tickets are available through www.brownpapertickets.com by searching for Randy Oliver)

POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP

POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP MITE-A-THON

The first annual Mite-A-Thon will take place from Saturday, September 9 to Saturday, September 16, 2017, and we invite you to participate!

The Mite-A-Thon is a national effort to collect mite infestation data and to visualize varroa infestations in honey bee colonies across North America within a

one week window. All beekeepers will be asked to participate, creating a rich distribution of sampling sites in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Their varroa monitoring data will be uploaded to www.mitecheck.com. (Not active yet!)

OBJECTIVES: 1) Raise awareness about honey bee colony varroa infestations in North America through effective monitoring methods. 2) Management strategies will be made available for discussion within bee organizations utilizing Mite-A-Thon partner developed information and outreach materials.

PARTICIPANTS: All beekeepers are welcome to participate - we need bee associations to help lead this effort!

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

1. Encourage your members to participate in September, through meetings, newsletters, emails, social media etc. - <http://www.pollinator.org/miteathon>
2. Teach new beekeepers how to monitor for mites in August. <http://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroa/>
3. Help your members prepare their monitoring materials.
4. Support your members in making sure they are able to monitor mites effectively and report their data.

DATA COLLECTION: Participants will monitor the level of mites (number of mites per 100 bees) using a standardized protocol utilizing two common methods of assessment (powdered sugar roll or alcohol wash) and then enter data, including location, total number of hives, number of hives tested, local habitat, and the number of varroa mites counted from each hive. The published information will not identify individual participants.

COST: There is no cost. You can create your own test materials or kits can be purchased online. Some scholarships are available (js@pollinator.org).

CONTACT: Miteathon@pollinator.org or 415-362-1137. Learn more and stay up to date at <http://www.pollinator.org/miteathon!>



**FROM THE BLOOMBERG DAILY NEWSLETTER:
"BEES ARE BOUNCING BACK FROM COLONY
COLLAPSE DISORDER"**

A video accompanying the article can be found at:
bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-08-01/good-news-for-bees-as-numbers-recover-while-mystery-malady-wanes

--By Alan Bjerga, with assistance by Agnieszka De Sousa

- **USDA Survey Indicates Colony Collapse Disorder losses are down 27% from 2016**
- **Varroa mite main scourge while beekeepers replenish hives**

The number of U.S. honeybees, a critical component to agricultural production, rose in 2017 from a year earlier, and deaths of the insects attributed to a mysterious malady that's affected hives in North America and Europe declined, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture [honeybee health survey](#) released Tuesday.

The number of commercial U.S. honeybee colonies rose 3 percent to 2.89 million as of April 1, 2017 compared with a year earlier, the Agriculture Department reported. The number of hives lost to Colony Collapse Disorder, a phenomenon of disappearing bees that has raised concerns among farmers and scientists for a decade, was 84,430 in this year's first quarter, down 27 percent from a year earlier. Year-over-year losses declined by the same percentage in April through June, the most recent data in the survey.

Still, more than two-fifths of beekeepers said mites were harming their hives, and with pesticides and other factors still stressing bees, the overall increase is largely the result of constant replenishment of losses, the study showed.

"You create new hives by breaking up your stronger hives, which just makes them weaker," said Tim May, a beekeeper in Harvard, Illinois and the vice-president of the American Beekeeping Federation based in Atlanta. "We check for mites, we keep our bees well-fed, we communicate with farmers so they

don't spray pesticides when our hives are vulnerable. I don't know what else we can do."

Environmental groups have expressed alarm over the 90 percent decline during the past two decades in the population of pollinators, from wild bees to Monarch butterflies. Some point to a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids as a possible cause, a link rejected by Bayer AG and other manufacturers.

[To Save Bees It Would Help to Know Why They're Dying: QuickTake](#)

In the USDA study, beekeepers who owned at least five colonies, or hives, reported the most losses from the varroa mite, a parasite that lives only in beehives and survives by sucking insect blood. The scourge, present in the U.S. since 1987, was reported in 42% of commercial hives between April and June this year, according to the USDA. That's down from 53% in the same period one year earlier.

Among other factors, beekeepers said 13% of colonies in the second quarter of this year were stressed by pesticides, 12% by mites and pests other than varroa and 4.3% by diseases. Bad weather, starvation, insufficient forage and other reasons were listed as problems with 6.6% of hives.

Colony Collapse, while not a main cause of loss, has perplexed scientists for more than a decade since the phenomenon of bees seemingly spontaneously fleeing their hives and not returning was first identified in the U.S.

As beekeepers have worked to improve hive conditions, the syndrome has waned as a concern, said May Berenbaum, head of the entomology department at the University of Illinois and a winner of the National Medal of Science.

"It's been more of a blip in the history of beekeeping," she said in an interview. On the other hand, "it's staggering that half of America's bees have mites," she said. "Colony Collapse Disorder has been vastly overshadowed by diseases, recognizable parasites and diagnosable physiological problems." In the survey, a hive loss was attributed to colony collapse if varroa or other mites were ruled out as a cause; few dead bees were found in a hive, a sign that they fled; a queen bee and food reserves were



*"Coming in for a landing"
Photo by Jan Olafsson*

both seemingly normal pre-collapse; and food reserves were left alone after fleeing.

May said his losses are highly variable depending on where his hives are located and may be affected by farmers improperly spraying pesticides. "It's really tricky" to tease out factors behind bee deaths, he said. "Maybe it's pesticides, maybe it's not. But when I eliminate everything else, it's a distinct possibility."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing neonicotinoids, proposing bans on spraying them and several dozen other pesticides in fields where bees have been brought in to pollinate a crop.

A pair of scientific studies in *Science* last month linked neonicotinoids to poor reproduction and shorter lifespans in European and Canadian bees. The research was funded in part by Bayer CropScience and Syngenta AG, the makers of imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam.

"There are numerous things impacting bee health," Syngenta Chief Executive Officer Erik Fyrwald said in an interview in Brussels last month. "One of the very minor elements there is pesticides. So it's amazing to us that the discussion is, as a whole, about pesticides. Not only pesticides, just specifically neonics."

SWARMED AND DANGEROUS: NEW YORK CITY'S BEE COP

From the *Wall Street Journal*, 8-2-17
--By Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Ben Kesling



Darren Mays

The city's go-to guy for winged invaders totes a vacuum cleaner.

Officer Darren Mays is a beat cop by night and NYPD's official beekeeper by day. He removes stray swarms from across the city and raises honeybees on the roof of his precinct headquarters in Queens, N.Y.

An owner of Arturo's pizzeria in Greenwich Village called the New York City hotline on a recent afternoon for help to break up a rowdy gathering outside before somebody got hurt.

Officer Darren Mays had already pulled a shift at the 104th precinct in Queens, but the New York Police Department dispatched him to Arturo's. It was the kind of trouble Officer Mays was best equipped to handle. He traded his 9mm pistol and handcuffs for a hedge-trimmer, vacuum and white veiled hat. Gotham City has its Batman. New York City has its bee man.

That day, thousands of bees had followed their queen to a tree in Arturo's West Village neighborhood, scaring passersby as the swarm scouted for a spot to land for a new colony. Officer Mays, the city's go-to guy for bee swarms, directed colleagues to string a yellow police tape perimeter around the tree. Then he rode a NYPD cherry picker to the high branches for a look.

Like Batman, Officer Mays, 46 years old, has a back story. Growing up in South Carolina, he said, he and his brother couldn't understand their neighbor's beekeeping. "Why would you raise bees if they're going to sting you," Officer Mays said, recalling his views as a boy.

He thought much the same as an adult. But during a 2008 visit to a friend's house in Worcester, Mass., he was persuaded to take a closer look at the beehives his friend had acquired. Officer Mays knelt close to the hive and was immediately mesmerized by its droning buzz, he said.



WANTED: MBBA is seeking to fill the position of Secretary. Duties are flexible, depending upon the experience and willingness of the volunteer. Obviously, there is no salary, except for the feeling of satisfaction from helping your fellow beekeepers. (Although you don't have to be a beekeeper to apply!) Contact Daryl Hill at daryl198229@yahoo.com.

Getting Started with Bees
Hive Inspections
Vacation Care for Your Hives
Queen Introduction and Marking
Custom Apiary Maintenance

Michael Jaross
Whatcom Bee Help

A Consulting Service for Beekeepers
<http://whatcombeehelp.com/>
(360) 483-9754

Officer Mays's wife was so impressed that the following Christmas she bought her husband a hive. In the spring of 2009, Officer Mays bought bees and eight books, including, "Beekeeping for Dummies." He joined the NYPD in 2001 to chase crooks, not bees. But after learning about beekeeping, Officer Mays informed the department of his new skills. Officer Mays was assigned a bee-wrangling partner—Dan Higgins, a former counterterrorism detective and beekeeper.

Bee swarms create problems in densely populated cities, Mr. Higgins said: "In nature, it happens in the middle of the woods. In New York City, it happens in Grand Central or Park Avenue where there are 500 or 600 people.

New York City is responsible for protecting public areas from swarms, a job that falls to police. Anthony Planakis, who was the NYPD's bee specialist in the 1990s and 2000s, said the department kept a beekeeper because no other city agency wanted the job. Some police departments in Maryland, Virginia and Arkansas also don the white beekeeper's veil to protect and serve.

Elsewhere, bees are generally dispatched by animal-control departments.

Chuck Wexler, the executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, said police were well suited for the job, though he conceded a swarm "scares the beehobies" out of some officers who would prefer facing criminals.

"All kidding aside, it's a dangerous task," he said, "but if not the police, who?"

After capturing a swarm, most bee cops either give the insects to beekeepers or adopt them. Officer Mays keeps a hive on the roof of the Queens precinct, in addition to the four he keeps at home in Orange County, N.Y.

See a video with more of Officer Mays and his roof-top hive at: wsj.com/video/new-york-city-cop-by-night-beekeeper-by-day/9DD02348-AB07-4E11-925F-EEA191CD0BCC.html

One of his first assignments this year was a bee swarm wreaking havoc at MYPD headquarters near City Hall. By the time Officer Mays arrived, the bees had fled. Before long, another swarm was spotted uptown, covering a large flower pot outside Mount Sinai Hospital.

Officer Mays, when facing a 30,000-strong swarm, relies on old-fashioned police skills. "Anytime you go to work on the beehive you always talk to them," he said. "Same thing with people in the street, especially in a domestic situation. You got to force them into a calm manner and get their demeanor down."

After talking to the bees, Officer Mays breaks out a vacuum that connects to a temporary hive. Once all the bees are sucked into the hive, he picks it up and puts it in the car.

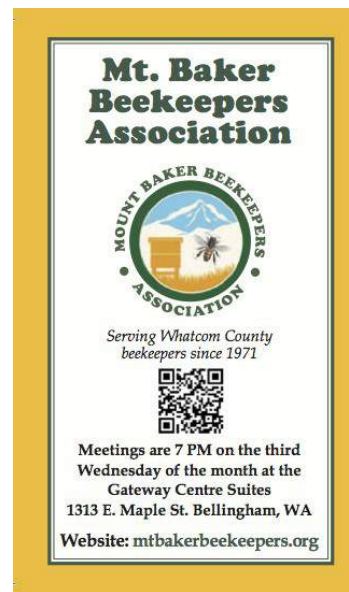
Officer Mays said he has been stung more than 400 times over the years. Among his lessons has been the importance of capturing the queen bee, which, he said, was "the reason life goes on" at the hive.

As Officer Mays worked the bee swarm from a cherry picker by Arturo's pizzeria, a detective from the NYPD's Emergency Services Unit watched from the ground. He would rather face any other kind of perp, he said, as long as "they don't sting."

From his perch 20 feet in the air, Officer Mays accidentally cut off a tree branch with the hedge-trimmer. The branch fell hard to the ground, scattering bees and rubber-necks in all directions. Officer Mays calmly rode the cherry picker to the ground to vacuum the rest of the swarm. After passing on a few bee facts to the thinned-out crowd, Officer Mays placed the temporary hive in the back seat of his car.

By around 7 p.m., Officer Mays took stock of his operation: one hive of bees recovered; one sting suffered.

--Lisa Schwartz and Mariana Alfara contributed to this article



Carry them with you!
There will be extra MBBA cards available for those who would like to encourage new members to join. Pick them up at the meeting or the Northwest Washington Fair.