

Grant County Beekeepers

Meeting Notes

8 August 2018



In attendance: 11 beekeepers and “friends of bees.”

Meeting start time: 6:05 P.M.

Guest speakers:

Rowena Cardoza and Ken Sexton, beekeepers:

Rowena and Ken presented aspects of honey harvesting and processing from Langstroth hives. Rowena brought her hand-cranking, 4-frame extractor, bought online for about \$90. She explained the process of uncapping the honey in the frames and placing them in the extractor, where the honey is spun off. Ken showed a Dadant® clear, food-grade plastic uncapping tub (25" x 18" x 9") used for dripping honey off Langstroth frames. Both have spigots for pouring honey into jars or other food-grade, nonmetal containers.



Susan Clair, beekeepers:

Susan presented on honey harvesting and processing from top-bar hives. Harvesting is accomplished by gently brushing the bees from the comb and then slicing the entire comb off the top bar, so it falls into a 5-gallon bucket. Susan uses simple kitchen implements: potato masher, nonmetal pot or bowl, colander, shallow glass baking pan, and small-mesh strainer. Some honey will already have started to drain off the comb into the bottom of the bucket. Using the glass baking pan and potato masher, the comb is crushed to loosen the honey from the wax. The broken-up honeycomb is run through the colander to remove large pieces of wax. The honey is then run through a strainer with cheesecloth—or other clean tiny-mesh fabric—to filter out remaining pieces of wax and “bee parts.” The strained honey flows directly into a jar or other food-grade, nonmetal container.

General discussion and announcements:

- Open discussion about the bees that stung people in the dog park was the first item on the agenda. Bees from one of Susan Clair’s two hives—unusually agitated when the hive was opened Sunday morning—flew around the general area of her home, including the dog park, and stung some people there. Someone called the Silver City Police, who came out quickly. The unfortunate incident was taken seriously by Susan, who closed the hive at the first indication of unusual agitation. Silver City Police, WNMU Police, Fire, and Rescue personnel came to the scene. After sincere apologies, Susan promised to have the hive removed that evening because they are no longer “urban quality” bees. Of note, the bees are not Africanized because they had been routinely out of the hive, foraging daily in neighborhood gardens, without bothering anyone. If they were of the Africanized strain, they would be relentlessly stinging people every day. For some unknown reason, the bees were triggered when the hive cover was removed, although the bees had been smoked. Further, this particular hive had remained calm for the entire time the other hive—2 ft. away—was open and being checked. During the episode, Susan spoke with police personnel and locked up the dog park because she was still wearing her bee-protective clothing. She reunited the man, who was stung, with his dog, which was still in a protected area of the dog park, and she drove the same man’s car to him because it was parked curbside near her home. She arranged for a rural beekeeper to come to her home that same evening, to help close up the hive and remove it to a distant location away from residential homes. By Monday morning, the dog park was back to normal.

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Along with a pasted-in copy of *Silver City Press* Editor Christine Steele's news article about the dog-park bees, Town Commissioner Lynda Aiman-Smith posted the following item to our website Forum:

"Because of the seriousness of this incident, the Town attorney has prepared and two Councilors (I am one) will introduce a Notice Of Intent of an ordinance change requiring permitting of bee hives in Town, and having the beekeeper certify the bees are not aggressive and the beekeeper will assume any liability."

(Note: Christine Steele's August 8th article was published before she had obtained the police report, with no input from Susan or any of Susan's immediate neighbors, and without stating that the hive in question had calmed down before noon and had been removed at the soonest possible time—that evening. Since Thursday, Susan has exchanged emails with Christine Steele, providing her with additional information and working toward speaking with Steele—either by phone or in person—to develop a follow-up article about the incident. As of the morning of August 10, Steele was still waiting to obtain a copy of the police report. Her time will be consumed next week, with an important news story and will be unable to speak with Susan until the following week.)

Discussion among meeting attendees ensued about the pros and cons of registering in-town beekeepers: Ken Sexton discussed the permit process implemented in West Virginia, which includes the following (also, see attached file for the full document):

- 1) Beekeepers must adhere to proven "Best Practices" of beekeeping.
- 2) Beekeepers will allow state inspectors to inspect the hives to ensure nonaggressive bees.
- 3) If beekeepers agree to the State's requirements, they are then absolved of liability from any problems that might arise from their hives.
- 4) If beekeepers do not agree to the requirements, the State can remove the hives.

A pertinent comment within this discussion was, how to prove *whose* bees sting anyone. Clearly, in the Sunday dog-park incident, the bees came from Susan's hive. But, typically, it's not possible to prove which hive bees originate from because they can fly up to 5 miles for foraging opportunities.

Another comment was offered about the proliferation of "Bee Clubs" springing up on U.S. college campuses because bees are essential to the general food supply and to a healthy ecology, and beekeeping is an important activity. Bee Clubs are an effective way to teach responsible beekeeping.

If GCB website Forum members would like to contribute more comments to this discussion, please go to the Grant County Beekeepers website, Forum page, and express your ideas. Thank you.

- Ken Sexton spoke with Exhibit Superintendent Annie Townsend, about the possibility of the Grant County Beekeepers hosting a booth at the Grant County Fair, Sept. 21–22. Indoor and outdoor booth space is available. Ken will obtain more details, so the GCBs can decide whether to host a booth.
- Susan Clair gave a "Honeybee & Friends" presentation at the 2018 Hummingbird Festival, on July 29, at the Mimbres Culture Heritage Foundation.
- Susan will give another honeybee presentation, sponsored for the second year by the Upper Gila Watershed Alliance, at the Silver City Library, October 20, at 10:30 A.M. For the month of October, Grant County Beekeepers will display a honeybee exhibit in the glass cabinet across from the check-out desk. A few volunteers are needed, to help create the honeybee display. More information will be forthcoming. In the meantime, contact Susan, if you'd like to join the bee-exhibit team.
- Next beekeeping-mentoring session: In mid-September, at Ken's hive; date still to be confirmed. Please contact Susan Clair, if you're interesting in attending (clair@nmia.com).

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- Happy news: Beekeeper Frances Higgins, who gave a demo on the “Flow” hive at our June meeting, gave birth on Tuesday, August 7th, to a daughter, Axin Jo, 5 lbs-13 oz. Both are doing great!
- The fundraising hat was passed around, to collect money for our use of the facility. Because our group is relatively new, we had been excused from paying the fee from August 2017 through February 2018. Since March and from now on, we need to pay for using the facility. *Thanks, everyone!*

\$0.00 left over from the hat collection at our June meeting
+ \$24.00 collected at this July meeting
\$24.00 total
- \$24.00 deposited into The Commons donation box, in a marked envelop from our group
\$0.00 remaining cash to carry over to the next meeting



Next meeting – September 12, at 6:00 P.M.:

Presentations:

Karen Prevost and Jerry Medina will demo candle making, so we can make use of discarded wax after the honey harvest.

Ken Sexton will provide a summary of his Friday, Sept. 7, session of the Native Plant Society Annual Conference—“The Gila’s Bees”—featuring Olivia Messenger Carril, author of *The Bees in Your Backyard: A Guide to North America’s Bees*. The session is now full, so we’re fortunate that Ken can provide an overview of this session in which he’ll “...walk through pollinator habitat, learn about the requirements and ecological connectedness of native bees in New Mexico, use a net to nab a bee and look at it up close, and learn how to identify a handful of the more than 1000 species that live here. Olivia will also give suggestions on the best ways to take photos of a bee for later identification.”

Susan Clair will provide a summary of her Friday, Sept. 7, session—“Planting to Attract Pollinators and People”—at the Native Plant Society Annual Conference, featuring WNMU Grounds Director Kristi Dunn, who presented at the January meeting of the Grant County Beekeepers. This NPS session will include “...a stroll through the garden areas of the Western New Mexico University campus to highlight the plantings that have been created with an eye to attracting pollinators. (And Students!). WNMU has given Kristi a unique opportunity to create different plantings and pairings on this historic campus.”

Silver City is fortunate and pleased to host the 2018 Native Plant Society National Annual Conference. For more information, visit this website: <https://www.npsnm.org/events/2018-annual-conference/>

Beekeeper Meeting Location: The Commons (was The Volunteer Center) - 501 E. 13th St. (at Corbin).

Note: Because we’re in “honeybee season,” our meetings will have a substantial portion of time devoted to hive health, working the hive, beekeepers’ experiences and observations at their hives, best practices of beekeeping, and Q&A from attendees. We’ll love to hear from you, to make these information-sharing sessions interesting, useful, and lively. Come join us!

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Deferred action item:

- Contact David Esperanza at Esperanza Winery, in Mimbres; he likes to work with small groups and might have suggestions for collaborations.

We invite everyone to visit our website. Become a member—it's free! www.grantcountynmbeekeepers.org

Meeting adjourned: 7:30 P.M.

Respectively submitted,

Susan

Susan Clair

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