

Toronto Beekeepers Collective (TBC)
Monthly Meeting (via ZOOM)
May 17, 2021
7-8:45 p.m.
Agenda and Meeting Notes

Meeting called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Members attending: Alana, Alison, Allan, Amanda, Anne, Audrey, Bernie, Christine, Deirdre, Gita, Helen, Jessica, Jonathan, June, Kerry F., Kit, Laura, Luc, Lynne (note-taker), Maker, Manny, Maria, Maureen G., Maureen (Mo) P., Melanie, Nancy, Nicki, Orlando, Patricia, Patrick Arteaga (new beekeeper), Robin, Roy, Savino, Sierra, Sophie, Susan W., Tesla, Winnie

Regrets or not registered on the Zoom call: Alessandra, Connor, Deborah, Gillian, Humza, Jeff, Jude, Julien, Kathleen, Kerry G., Marie, Maryama, Niyi, Oliver, Robert, Sue G.

1. Welcome (Anne/Robin)
2. ABC Bees: Les Crowder's natural beekeeping: top bar hives will be next meeting
 - Robin reported on presentation by Shelley Hoover on queen rearing
 - Shelley noticed that queens are only lasting a year so now and will need to be replaced more frequently
 - Temperature is important - if queen has been "chilled" during transit, the sperm count is affected and she has fewer fertile eggs to lay
 - Producing our own queens is a good strategy - very expensive to get queens this year and hard to get
 - Queens that are mated in Spring are more viable and productive than those that mate later in the season; encourage mating early in our own queen stocks
 - Shelley is not breeding but she is selecting carefully for disposition, hardiness, overall good health, and resilience
 - Beekeepers across Canada, especially commercial beekeepers, have lost up to 90% of their hives this year after the winter
 - Let the bees' behaviour guide what we do with the hive - do they think they're queenright? Are they crochety? They'll let you know if things are wrong, if you watch.

- Queens prefer the dark so will scoot to the dark side of a frame to escape sunlight; keep this in mind when looking for the queen on a frame
- A poor brood pattern can be the bees' problem for not cleaning things out – leave them to sort things out and check back in a week or two and things may be better
- Robin will post notes on queen rearing to the Member's Forum.

3. Beekeepers' Report (Luc/Alana)

- **Alana:** Bees at Emmett Garden and at Birchmount are “super strong” coming out of winter; has added a third box to accommodate the increase in bees this spring
- With rain and cold, discouraged from splitting hives, but lots of swarm cells were being produced, so she has done splits recently as weather has warmed
- Lots of swarms this spring – likely to continue throughout June
- **Luc:** have dealt with some swarming already – a “year of swarms”
- Have been doing splits, including “walk away splits” (“WAS” in hive notes); will leave a split with eggs, larvae, and young bees to develop its own queen where the originating hive keeps the old queen
- DVP still the smallest yard, but shaping up to be a booming year for bees – again, swarms and splits!
- Some people interested in purchasing TBC bees – may be possible sometime in June; still early enough for new hives to get established and grow
- Luc anticipates the queens he is rearing will be ready next week but all are spoken for; strong focus on good genetics, strong gene pool in his queen rearing.
- Despite ongoing limitations on bee yard experience, we will likely have lots of honey
- BCCF and OSC are also doing well; there are hive notes – where can we see them? Jonathan says he has added them to the TBC members' site; updated regularly. Here's the link:
 - <http://torontobeekeeping.ca/members-area/hive-notes/> (requires login)
 - Or on the website, sign into the Member's Area, then click on the “Hive notes” tab on the drop-down menu
- Maureen asked if there is need for equipment. Supers needed at FRY (though some will be freed up following harvest) and Patrick says deeps are needed at BCCF.

Maureen says she lives close to the supplier on Ossington so can readily pick up equipment as needed.

- Maureen asked about the low hives. Luc hasn't seen them yet. Horizontal set-up results in loss of heat for the bees. Luc says they require more juggling of comb; also frames are harder to get to - i.e., if you want to get to frame #7, you have to work your way through the others to get to that one. Patrick showed us his top bar hives in his yard. Divider board may be needed? Luc says not necessary. The best feature of top bar and long Langstroth (what we have) hives is that they are easy on the back!
4. Pollen traps timing (Nancy)
 - Nancy wants to bring 2 pollen traps to BCCF on Friday to set up in hives
 - Will leave for June installation, then ensure they're collected a couple of days later
 - Watch on sign-up to be involved in pollen collection
 - New style of traps being installed this year seem less aggravating to the bees
 - Thanks to Nicki for donating to pollen traps!!!
 - First-timers will be paired with an experienced collector
 5. Fairmont Royal York harvest (Melanie, Luc)
 - Chef is understaffed, so wants to wait to do harvest until after planting is done this week-end
 - Will arrange for groups of 5 to work together (COVID requirements) in teams for 2 hour shifts across the day. Likely some time in the first two weeks in June. Do members prefer weekdays or week-ends for working at FRY? (Poll taken in chat - pretty equal division.) The full harvest is currently in freezers and will be put in warming boxes in advance. We will be focused on getting it done as quickly as possible. Should be done in two days but may be doable in one. Box lunches included! Better than bitcoin, or at least dogecoin.
 - Sign-up will be available for teams of 5 at different times; newbees encouraged to attend. A great opportunity to learn about how to do a harvest. And don't forget Chef's box lunches!
 6. Committee Reports
 - Finance (Nancy, Jessica): nothing new to report; progressing well with Friends of the Environment grant (raised beds; 2 accessible hives, reporting)

- Equipment (Robin/Maureen): not much to report; relying on Luc and Patrick to advise on what is needed where and when. Robin thanks Maureen for checking out the yards regularly!!
- Website (Jonathan/Melanie): Hive notes are up; Jonathan added the Sign-up link to the website; suggests cleaning up resource links – will think about that. Will remove posts to Bees in the City 2020, and to cancellation of mead workshop! Will post a “what’s new” photo or photos to indicate that things are happening with the TBC even with COVID. E.g., new raised beds, swarms, splits, etc.
- Social Media (Jessica/Jude) – Jessica also invites photos to post to TBC social media. Will give TBC a profile and presence. Things are happening!
 - o Q&A in chat: Q: How do we send pics to the instagram account? A: (From Jessica): You can send them in a message to the TBC Instagram account. Q: For clarity, how do you do that? A: If you have Instagram you can send a message from your personal account to the TBC account . When you open the message it will give you the option to send a picture. However, if you don’t know how to send pictures through Instagram you can email Jessica at jess_robertson@msn.com as well. Members can also post pics of pollinators on Facebook, TBC website, etc. (How about a waggle dance on TikTok?)
- Education (Audrey/Maria):
 - o Point person for BeeNews: Hamza volunteered to put together a newsletter every two weeks or monthly – people are invited to send materials to Humza’s e-mail. Q: Where can I find Humza’s e-mail? humza_raza96@hotmail.ca OR under Members’ Area on website, click on “Member’s List” from the drop-down menu. Direct link here (requires login): <http://torontobeekeeping.ca/members-area/members-list/>
 - o Citizen Science (Maria) – insects get a bad rap. We need folks who can observe insect life and contribute information to Citizen Science sites online. Examples include “Pollinator Watch” – also connected to

iNaturalist. There is also Bumblebee Watch. Check out those links. Xerces people are doing lots of education. At first meeting of TBC in 2000, members discussed the importance of learning about native bees. Maria also suggested checking out the *Bees of Toronto* guide which can be downloaded (along with other guides). Free of charge. Will encourage an appreciation of all those insects and pollinators that have been the stuff of nightmares. Time for a change of mind.

- Here are the links from Maria:
 - <https://earthwatch.org/earthwatch-at-home/pollinator-watch>
 - <https://www.bumblebeewatch.org/>
 - <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/8eb7-Biodiversity-BeesBook-Division-Planning-And-Development.pdf>
- o World Bee Day is Thursday, May 20th.
 - <https://www.un.org/en/observances/bee-day>
- Membership (Nicki/Lynne/Christine/Kathleen)
 - o Helen will be going to Norway for three years and will be leaving us for that time. Bon voyage, and hope to see you back with us at TBC in three.
 - o Kathleen will be moving to her family farm near Ottawa. Kathleen is a longtime TBCer who did volunteer time with the Membership Committee and served as a chair triad member for 3 years. We'll miss you, Kathleen, and you're always welcome for a visit!
 - o Nancy reported that the TBC had dedicated a free membership to each of the Community Gardens, and had issued an invitation for same. Laura Hammond at Birchmount and Charlene at Emmett will be sending in applications shortly.
 - o Membership Committee is working on updating the Member Handbook.
- Health & Safety (Bernie/Helen/Alana)
 - o Bernie requests being taken off the committee
 - o Helen has been speaking with FoodShare to see what needs to be put in place in terms of workplace safety compliance. Helen and Orlando will talk in a couple of days.

- o Need someone new to support Alana for this committee going forward!
 - Accessibility (Lynne/Kerry/Maria)
 - o Kerry - raised beds - built and delivered courtesy of Maureen's son, Will. They will beautify corner of parking lot at OSC yard. Working on soil delivery to OSC, then soil to beds and planting. Will be planting native plants and herbs (parsley, dill, etc.) - herbs to attract butterflies. Access to water? An outside panel that requires a key - ask at front desk. That will be required for planting, but OSC staff will do ongoing watering. (Thank you, OSC staff!!) Beds are standing height and narrow so easily accessible for planting, maintaining, etc. Likely to be low maintenance once planted. Should thrive with lots of sunshine. Native perennials from members welcome - if sun tolerant! Send an e-mail to Kerry with offers of plants.
7. "Ask Me Anything" with Patrick Arteaga - questions about your bees, our bees, Patrick's bees, the world's bees!
- Discussed splits - why they happen and what to do with a swarm - how to make the hive split sufficiently strong that it could swarm later in the season.
 - Discussed "walk-away splits" and where to put the queen that swarmed.
 - Patrick showed us a queen rearing frame - new to him for a try-out.
 - Patrick toured us around his bee yard, virtually. Lots of questions and discussion.
8. Any Other Business
- Chat discussion: Robin asked for any members who might want a swarm or who might be willing to help out with a swarm (on short notice!) to post to the chat. Several volunteered their "swarm availability" along with the name(s) of bee yard(s) where they could assist. Any who are willing but did not post to the chat are welcome to e-mail Robin.
 - o Volunteer swarm helpers include: KerryF, Allan, Bernie, Amanda, MaureenG, Nicki, Gita, Jessica, Helen, Savino, SueW, Kit, Robin, Anne, Lynne
 - Anne will send out a posting to members about sign-up for bee yard visits. Luc has done up the schedule (thanks). Also

please remember safety protocols for COVID when in the yards. FoodShare will require members to complete a screening form online for going to any yard visit.

- Please sign up for only one date for now so everyone gets a chance to do one. Then will be notified when more openings. With COVID limitations on numbers, the idea is to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to sign up for at least one yard visit.
- And just as we were signing off, a message in the chat from Susan Wood that bears repeating ... "A big thank-you to the hard-working committee leads for all that you're doing to keep the TBC active and vigorous during all the lockdown." Copy that!

Meeting adjourned 8:45 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 17th