

“The object of this association shall be to encourage better methods among the beekeepers of the State, to promote cooperation, to reach a common understanding regarding our problems and their solution, to maintain friendly and helpful relations with those forces which are working to better the beekeeping industry, to develop markets for beekeeping products, to foster a spirit of friendliness among the beekeepers of the State and especially among the members of the association, and to do such other things as will tend to improve beekeeping conditions.”

— Constitution of The North Carolina State Beekeepers Association, adopted January 11, 1917

There's an organization in North Carolina that most normal people have never heard of. Founded in 1917, it is the oldest and largest of its kind in the United States. Its 4,369 active members are in 80 chapters scattered across NC. Not only does it work to influence legislation, finance academic scholarship and develop tools to combat fraud that would harm its members' reputations, it gives out awards for the most delicious muffins and brownies.

Huh? What is this secret wackadoodle group? Is there some sort of government registry so I can be warned if one of them lives in my neighborhood?

Don't panic. This largely unknown organization is The North Carolina State Beekeepers Association. Yes, some of its members are a little strange – they keep honey bees, on purpose!!! But the organization provides a whole lot of value, so you can't blame people for wanting to be a part of it.

Two statewide conferences per year

One of the most noticeable benefits of membership is the right to attend two major conferences per year. The “spring” conference is normally held in March and the summer conference is usually in July (but not in 2019). The tradition has been to rotate the spring and summer conferences between the eastern and

western ends of the state. Every second year, the spring conference is conducted jointly with the South Carolina Beekeepers Association in a location near the state line.

The conferences feature world-class speakers such as Tom Seeley, Jim Tew, Gloria DeGrandi-Hoffman, David Tarpy, Jennifer Berry, Jamie Ellis, Marion Ellis, Jerry Hayes, Larry Conner, Phil Craft and many others whose names you'll know if you keep up with top-notch beekeeping literature and academic research. Workshops cover a vast range of topics from winter feeding to queen rearing to candle making, with everything in between.

The summer conferences host the same honey bee-related competitions as the State Fair, including the ever-popular Cooking with Honey contest. Honey must be the primary sweetening ingredient; otherwise you are only limited by your imagination.

Last summer's conference was held in the mountains at Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock, just outside of Hendersonville. Over 600 people attended; most were hobbyists with a hive or two. That kind of attendance is largely unheard of, even for most well-known regional conferences. If you've never been, I think you may be missing something. At least 600 people seem to agree.

Next year's (2019) spring conference will be held March 1st and 2nd in Monroe (Union County), just east of Charlotte. It is a joint meeting with South Carolina.

The 2019 summer conference will be in Hickory August 8th through 10th. Note that the date has been moved from the normal mid-July date to avoid any conflict with the Eastern Apicultural Society's (EAS) annual meeting which will be held July 15th to 19th in Greenville, SC.

Planning ahead, the 2020 spring conference will be held in New Bern.

Certified Honey Producer Registry/ Locator Map

Genuine NC honey producers can separate themselves from out-of-state honey suppliers, resellers and honey packers by signing up with



the NCSBA Certified Honey Producer Registry. Participants can purchase "Certified NC Honey" stickers for their jars and are listed on the NCSBA's website so that the public can search for local honey suppliers. There are now 191 beekeepers registered with the service and the numbers are growing every day.

New this year is an add-on to the Certified NC Honey Program for sourwood honey producers. For a greatly discounted fee, beekeepers can have their sourwood honey tested for authenticity and can label their product as proven genuine. With the huge amount of fake and suspect sourwood honey being sold across the state, this service is a great way to winnow out the real deal from the fraudsters.

Born & Bred Queen Rearing Program

Started several years ago by the NCSU Apiculture Department, the Born & Bred Queen Rearing Program is now run entirely by the NCSBA. The goal is to wean our state off of queens imported from Georgia, California and elsewhere. Not only would a thriving local queen-rearing industry allow for queens to be selected based on suitability to our seasons and flora, it also would give buyers the ability to

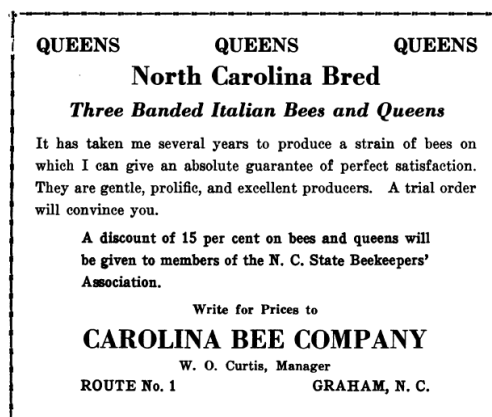


Specialty stickers for honey containers (left) and the on-line Certified Honey Producer Locator Map are tangible benefits of the NCSBA Certified Honey Producer Program.

both encourage and scrutinize producers with respect to queen quality and queen-rearing objectives. For example, there are complaints in the industry that not enough is being done to further Varroa-tolerant genetics. If a local producer with hundreds of regional clients rather than thousands of faceless out-of-state customers perceived that his clientele were serious about improved genetics and were willing to pay for it, perhaps there would be more incentive to move in that direction.

Born & Bred teaches beekeepers how to raise queens both for their own use and particularly for sale to others. Experienced instructors conduct multiple workshops around the state based on a standard curriculum.

There is discussion at the NCSBA regarding tweaking the program next year to incorporate a chapter-based, hands-on educational model. Stay tuned for more information on the NCSBA website.



North Carolina queen breeding isn't a new idea, as shown in this advertisement from the 1924 edition of *The North Carolina Beekeeper*.



Quarterly magazine

NCSBA members receive “Bee Buzz”, a high-quality quarterly magazine dedicated to North Carolina beekeeping. Each issue includes the latest in NCSU apicultural research, articles

written by State Apiary Inspectors, hints and tips from around the state, chapter news and other items of interest. Submissions from readers are encouraged.

If you haven't seen the “Bee Buzz” lately then you haven't seen it. Today's version is a modern, colorful, well-edited publication that is every bit as good or better than the popular national beekeeping magazines. You can receive it electronically and/or in the old-fashioned print form.

Honey Bee Lending Library

Do you have a burning yearning for learning but no cash for expensive beekeeping books? The NCSBA, in cooperation with Wayne Community College's Erwin Library, has books and DVDs that members can check out for the cost of postage. The items are sent directly to you and you send them back to the library when you are done with them. As of this month, the listing of available items is ten pages long.

Master Beekeeper Program

NCSBA's Master Beekeeper Program is the oldest and largest state-run program of its kind in the US. Around 500 new initiates become Certified Beekeepers each year, largely as a result of testing conducted at local chapters' bee schools.

Testing for the Journeyman, Master and Master Craftsman levels is only done at state association events. Written tests for all levels are conducted at the summer and spring conferences and a special fall testing event.

For more information, see July 2014's “[Are You Ready for a Challenge?](#)”

The Yellow Book

The Yellow Book includes chapter information (meeting times/places/contacts) and a directory of members. It is extremely helpful for answering questions at fairs and community events as well as being an invaluable networking aide.

NC Zoo Honey Bee Exhibit

Do you feel that you belong in the zoo? The NCSBA has a cooperative agreement with the NC Zoo in Asheboro to provide informed volunteer docents for the fantastic Honey Bee Exhibit. This is the exhibit that the NCSBA raised the funds to design and construct. NCSBA volunteers don't face requirements and commitments that are as rigorous as “regular people” zoo volunteers, so this is a great way to have fun and share your beekeeping enthusiasm with the public.

And more!

There are lots of other NCSBA projects and programs to take advantage of, such as spending an afternoon at the NCSBA Honey Sales Booth at the State Fair, the Golden Achievement Program for chapters, and of course the collection of resources and information on the NCSBA website. As they say on TV, “you may expect to pay \$1,000 or more for all of this value.” But annual dues are only \$15 per year. Fifteen. Five plus ten. About the cost of a movie and popcorn. If you can get more value for less elsewhere, then catch me at the Spring Conference in Monroe -- I'll let you take me to lunch so you can explain how that's done! In the meantime, visit the NCSBA website (<https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/>) for information on how to take advantage of all of these opportunities, and more.

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