



*The New Mexico Beekeepers Association is a non-profit organization of private beekeepers, commercial beekeepers, persons interested in promoting the importance of the honey bee in the environment, and businesses related to the honey industry.*

NMBKA Quarterly Newsletter

2014 Issue 1 (April)

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## Save the Date

Our Mid Annual Meeting will be held June 14th in Albuquerque. We have some exciting presentations in line for you. See you there?

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## We Want YOU!



### Help Us Thrive!

Active, engaged members build a strong, vibrant organization. (Page 3)

### Help Your Bees Thrive!

Choose to become a Certified Beekeeper. New program this year! (Page 2)

Editor Needed!

Sad, but true! (Page 2)



Jessie Brown shows the St. Mary's Youth Bee Club how to look for drones and newly emerged queen bees at Yerba Buena Farm, Strawberry Fields, Jamaica. Jessie travelled to Jamaica through USAID's Partners of the Americas Farmer-to-Farmer Program to teach economically sustainable beekeeping.

## From the President – *Jessie Brown*

Greetings all. I am pleased to be serving as President of the New Mexico Beekeepers Association with the vision to create a New Mexico where every person is aware of and positively impacts the ecosystem of pollinators.

This vision sounds like a lofty goal, but it is actually what we as beekeepers do everyday in our communities. When I get into a beehive, I notice incredible things like what pollen is coming into the hive, seasonal changes, and plants that produce nectar in my neighborhood. This love of beekeeping is easy to share with

the community around me. Neighbors who initially were scared of my hives now have pollinator friendly plants in their yards to entice bees to pollinate their apple and cherry trees. The children in my seven-year-old's class that I speak to when visiting schools will grow up knowing about the importance of honeybees in our environment. I am positive that we all are individual stewards for honeybees in our communities. We just need to think in a much larger scale to share this knowledge at a statewide level.

Your elected board for the New

*(continued on page 3)*

## CALENDAR

## Certified Beekeepers Apprentice Program

### April 18, 2014

Deadline for applying for the Certified Beekeepers Program. Apply online (or mail in form). See article to immediate right.

### May 10, 2014

Annual field day at Hays Honey Farm. Call (505) 869-2369 for more info and to sign up [abqbeeks.org/events/joe-wesbrook-1](http://abqbeeks.org/events/joe-wesbrook-1)

### June 14, 2014

NMBKA Mid Annual Meeting. Location to be announced



## New Mexico Beekeepers Association

### NMBKA

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Albuquerque, NM 87194

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web: [www.nmbeekeepers.org](http://www.nmbeekeepers.org)

### 2014 Association Officers

**President:** Jessie Brown

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The Certified Beekeepers Apprentice program, new in 2014, is organized through the New Mexico Beekeepers Association in cooperation with the City of Albuquerque. The program will provide quality education on backyard beekeeping in the context of responsible urban farming for the Albuquerque metropolitan area. The program is planned as a two-year curriculum seeking seven objectives:

1. Community education and outreach
2. Consistent training on best practices in beekeeping
3. Maintain online resources and open beekeeper meetings for education and outreach
4. Provide mentoring access for beekeepers
5. Promote the development of healthy, gently hives suitable for an urban environment
6. Provide volunteers for community hives

7. Support streamlined approach for managing swarms

Sessions for the 2014 Certified Beekeepers program are scheduled for seven Saturdays: May 10 and 31, June 14 and 28, July 12 and 26, and August 9. Each session will include three classroom presentations by experienced local beekeepers and a supervised hands-on segment, using top-bar and Langstroth hives, on the premises of the City of Albuquerque's Open Space Visitors Center. Students

who complete the two-year curriculum and 40 hours of volunteer service will be awarded their Beekeepers Certification.

### For more information:

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To enroll for 2014, complete the application and either submit it online or print and mail the paper application before April 18, 2014.

### Online:

[tinyurl.com/NMBKA-2014-1](http://tinyurl.com/NMBKA-2014-1)

### Paper (pdf format):

[tinyurl.com/NMBKA-2014-2](http://tinyurl.com/NMBKA-2014-2)

## Gratitude

They say it takes a village to raise a child. The same might be said about beekeepers. We're blessed to have so many gracious and helpful 'old timers' nurturing our ranks.

Chances are, you've been the beneficiary of someone's assistance: a swarm to start you out, a loan of hive parts, help capturing your first swarm, over-the-shoulder review of your hive health, or a needed queen cell.

Take a moment to say "Thank you." Your gesture will be much appreciated and remembered.

## Plan Ahead for our Mid Annual Meeting

Join us for the New Mexico Beekeepers Association's Mid Annual Meeting on June 14th in Albuquerque.

Our guest speaker is Laura Fergusson, Director of the College of the Melissae 'Center for Sacred Beekeeping' and contributor to the development

of the International Natural Beekeeping Federation. Topics she will speak about are "The Sacred History of Beekeeping" and "Comparison of Beekeeping Cultures and Markets between Peru, Jamaica and USA."

More information to follow.

## Help Us Grow: Volunteer Today!

April is National Volunteer Month! We extend a huge thank you to the NMBKA Board, Committees, and Support Services. We also extend a thank you to all of those helping and organizing local beekeeping groups around New Mexico, as well as to beekeeping mentors and educators.

If you have extra time and

want to have fun, the NM Beekeepers Association is looking for volunteers. We are searching for help in the following areas: (1) Events Planning, (2) Marketing, (3) Education Committee, and (4) Beekeeper Professional Development Committee.

If you are interested in any of these areas, contact us at [secretary@nmbeekkeepers.org](mailto:secretary@nmbeekkeepers.org).

## From the President *(continued from page 1)*

Mexico Beekeepers Association has worked hard on our organization's foundation in the last couple of years. We have established our 501c3 status, built an interactive website, created bylaws, and are working on guidelines for funding and chapter membership.

My goal for the next year is to work on four 'nectar sources' to help our organization prosper. First, let's continue developing ourselves into a world-class organization. Secondly, let's support and drive the market for local beekeepers' goods and services through beekeeper professional development. Thirdly, let's enable and develop educational opportunities to drive awareness of

pollinators and the ecosystem, for beekeepers and the general public. And finally, let's engage the community and policy makers through outreach and advocacy to drive adoption of pro-pollinator beliefs and public policy.

I welcome your ideas on how we, as an organization can thrive in these four *nectar sources*: organizational development, beekeeper professional development, educational opportunities, and outreach and advocacy.

Buzz, buzz,

*Jessie Brown*

## From the Editor

Your prodigal editor is reminded of that old saying from Robert Burns, "The best-laid plans of Mike and men often go awry." (Or was it, "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions"?)

Clearly I haven't lived up to the goal of publishing a timely quarterly newsletter, and for that, you have my deepest apology. Despite my best intentions, life has dealt too many obstacles that keep me from fulfilling this commitment, so the Board has been looking for someone to step in. *Might that someone be you?*

I hope to publish another issue very soon, in order to provide additional information about the exciting 2014 Pollinator Benefit Lecture Series, which begins May 3rd and continues through June 7th across New Mexico. So, if you've ever wondered what editing the newsletter would involve, first let Jessie Brown know of your possible interest, then contact me to arrange some time to discuss the various aspects. Perhaps the job seems a bit daunting on your own, but you might want to serve as an associate editor for a while. That's a possibility.

My wife recently convinced me it's time to let go of yet another of my volunteerism commitments. I'll be scaling back my beekeeping activities in general in order to attend to my health needs and to transition from my current government consulting work to some private sector initiatives here at home and in Brazil.

Mike Kruchoski  
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## Topbar and Langstroth – *Les Crowder*

*Hello New Mexican beekeepers and friends.*

I am presently in Covelo, California, and the bees are building rapidly on fruit trees, manzanita and mustards. I have just returned from a month of meeting beekeepers in Venezuela, two days in Baton Rouge at the American Beekeeping Federation, and then a month among beekeepers in Jamaica. I am at this time hoping to raise queens in California in the late spring and summer, then to spend time in Jamaica in the fall and winter, but there are many uncertainties.

It seems wherever I go there is a Langstroth vs. topbar debate going on. Even in Texas there seems to be a sudden surge in topbar interest that is being met with some heated arguments. It is just a shape of box, yet some people get very upset over which box you choose. I may attract some of the debate, as I am a topbar advocate. But many different kinds of people are choosing topbar hives across the U.S. and around the world, and it cannot be just because people are trying to be “alternative” or hip. Some alternative hives, such as the Warre hive, seem already to be fading in popularity, but the topbar hive is still expanding rapidly, even in areas where nobody seems to be as pushy for them as me. Texan beekeepers are beginning to choose the topbar hive in a big Texan way.

Left to their own decision-making, bees will live in many kinds of materials, and in shapes of various horizontal

and vertical dimensions. Anybody who does bee removals has seen bees in all kinds of spaces. These include natural cavities in trees, niches in cliffs, and in manmade spaces, such as big spools for electrical wire, drawers in abandoned desks, bird houses, parapets around flat roofs, and water meters. I once took bees out of a bench-like area that turned out to have been a long unused outhouse toilet. Bees want a space about 40 liters (10 gallons) with a small hole near the bottom – and like to be above the reach of bears. We want to keep them in a space where we can inspect the comb and harvest honey, beeswax, queens, and propolis. We often hope to get the hive to pay for itself or even make a little money. There were once days when a tidy sum could be made, but drought has now made that difficult in New Mexico.

In Jamaica I recently talked to Miguel, the president of the Saint Ann’s Bee Farmers Association about beeswax products. I had not met him before, and he did not know that I was a topbar beekeeper. He is one of the larger beekeepers in Jamaica, with 200 hives. He said he has been getting a lot of beeswax because he is using some topbar hives. Most Jamaican beekeepers make their own hives, and the cost of making a hive is calculated in time rather than dollars. He said he could make ten frames in a day, starting with wood he had cut with a chainsaw from a tree in the forest. There are a lot of precision cuts in a frame. Ten frames fill one Langstroth box,

a complete Langstroth hive consists of around 50 frames and the five boxes to put them in, plus a top and a bottom. I have made many Langstroth tops and bottoms, just a few boxes, but never tried to make a frame. Miguel can make five complete topbar hives in one day. He was worried that if he went topbar he would have trouble selling nucs, but now he has customers asking for topbar nucs. He and many Jamaicans are ‘done’ with frames. Their reasons are very practical. They are not idealists or hippies. Miguel said that he thought topbar hives made more honey. I said that was debatable and needs to be tested. But the ease of making a topbar hive and its low cost mean that, in many cases, the first few quarts of honey pay for the hive and the profit starts sooner, and that is a major factor in the shift to topbar hives. And that is true in Jamaica or Manhattan, New York. Topbar hives can be made from blue plastic barrels, wicker, sticks and fabric, willows, cob, adobe, stone – just about as many materials as bees put themselves into.

Topbar hives require that bees make more combs, and those combs get destroyed to harvest the honey. Many Langstroth advocates say that topbar hives require too much wax-building from the bees. They say that the building of new comb is “hard on the poor bees.” Bees use eight pounds of honey for making three ounces of beeswax. The lost honey production is smaller than we might think, but there is a tremendous gain in beeswax production. Beeswax

*(continued on page 5)*

## Topbar & Langstroth *(continued from page 4)*

used wisely can earn a beekeeper as much as honey. And beeswax holds oil soluble toxins that are unfortunately still abundant in our environment. Moving beeswax through the hive cleans out the toxins from the bee's bodies and the combs.

The chemical problem with keeping old comb is only part of the problem. In the 1970s, Dr. Elbert Jaycox found that old comb in the brood nest, with its accumulated cocoons and larval fecal matter, was detrimental to the hive. The bacteria and molds growing in the old combs made bees more likely to come down with brood diseases (European Foul Brood, American Foul Brood, Chalk Brood), and resulted in reduced honey production, reduced brood production, and darkened honey. He came to the conclusion that combs should be culled from the brood nest every 3-5 years or when light no longer passed through the combs when held up to the sky. That is the reason I began experimenting with topbar hives in 1979. After 16 years of experiments with topbar hives, I set up 30 topbar hives as a business model and have never regretted it. I realized that frames were (for me) delicate and expensive, and made work for me all winter cutting out old comb, scraping wax, and putting in new foundation that cost money. I experimented with foundationless Langstroth beekeeping and liked it, but the frame was still delicate and expensive. And more and more of them were plastic. The combs in foundationless Langstroth were just as easy to

break as topbar combs. I had both Langstroth and topbar hives for almost 20 years. I decided in 1995 that I was done with frames and phased out my Langstroth hives. I could make ten or more topbar hives for the price of one Langstroth hive.

The topbar hive's main drawback is that they require more frequent manipulating in the area where the bees are building. Spacing the hive to prevent cross-combing takes me about 2½ minutes per hive every two weeks. That's time enjoyably spent, by my way of seeing it.

Harvesting honey from topbar hives does not require setting up and getting an extractor all sticky, and that makes it easier to harvest small batches of honey for breakfast (in a colander and large bowl) or at the end of a locust tree bloom. When I had Langstroth hives, I used to wait until I had at least 50 supers to extract before I set up the extractor and harvested honey. Storing those supers until the end of the summer is a job I don't miss.

Langstroth hives can be supered and left on their own for long periods of time without much concern for cross-combing. Langstroth hives can be used just as "organically" as topbar hives; foundationless frames do not dictate cell size to bees, do not require contaminated beeswax or plastic foundation, and with care it is possible to get the combs out without killing bees; and bees do not need toxic treatments in any kind of hive. Langstroth hives are just more

complicated and therefore more expensive or time-consuming to make. I acknowledge that I am biased, but my bias is based on many years of experience with both kinds of hives. Topbar hives are on a steady increase all over the world. At some point in the future they are no longer going to be seen as an alternative hive.

I recently did some body surfing in the sea in Jamaica. You have to pick a wave and try it. Some waves don't rise as well as others. I feel that 30+ years ago as a new beekeeper, I looked out and picked a treatment-free wave and a topbar wave. They combined well and are steadily still rising after all these years. I was the only topbar keeper I knew for many years. And then Kirk Webster (of Vermont) wrote in the *American Bee Journal* about treatment-free beekeeping. Then came Tomas Urrea, then TJ, then more and more, and now there are topbar hives everywhere I go. I respect any beekeeper who does not use toxic treatments in her/his hive of any kind. I help people with Langstroth hives often, and when I do, I am reminded that I do not miss frames at all.



## 2014 North to South NM Pollinator Benefit Lecture Series

These are historic and challenging times for pollinators and their stewards. It indeed takes a community to help raise pollinators to support healthy habitats, food, and medicine production. The United States is home to a mixture of honeybee strains. But over time, their gene pool has bottlenecked, and one environmental crisis after another is afflicting bees' health and productivity. Contamination and compromised resources have created unhealthy habitats. It is up to beekeepers to create and promote positive stewardship. One such endeavor is through the mission of northern NM's Rocky Mountain Survivor Queenbee (RMSQB) Cooperative. The RMSQB Cooperative is helping to build capacity through professional development opportunities, honeybee stock improvement and sustainable management programs, rural entrepreneurship, native/alternative pollinator promotion and production, and apitherapy.

The RMSQB Cooperative began as an out-of-pocket pilot project in the spring of 2011 by three northern NM beekeepers in Rio Arriba, Taos, and Mora counties. Its roots are based on the Southwest Survivor Queenbee Project, initiated in 2007 and funded by a Western Sustainable Agriculture Research Education (SARE) grant ([www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org)). In 2012, the RMSQB Cooperative received a Farmer/Producer grant from the Western SARE, so we were able to operate from Santa Fe to Fort Collins and support nine beekeepers across 500 miles.

In 2013, the RMSQB Cooperative was recognized by the City of Santa Fe for its local honeybee stock improvement program and was presented with the Climate Adaptability award from Sustainable Santa Fe. In

2013-14, the cooperative was awarded with an Agriculture Advance and Product Promotion grant from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture. Funds from this grant helped to further the establishment of honeybee stock improvement mating apiaries in northern NM for regional fortification. It also supported professional development opportunities for participants – including a trip to Apimondia: The World Beekeeping Conference, which was held in Kiev, Ukraine, in early October 2013, and attended by over 10,000 beekeepers from around the globe.

This spring, remaining NMDA grant funds for the RMSQB Cooperative are being used to meet educational outreach objectives, which include the upcoming 2014 North to South NM Pollinator Benefit Lecture Series, featuring world renowned pollinator scholars. It will offer seven lectures and two field practicums around the state. The cost is \$15 per lecture and \$45 for the field practicums. First to visit, in early May, is Dr. Thomas Seeley, conservation biologist from Cornell University and author of *Honeybee Democracy*. Dr. Seeley's scientific work has primarily focused on understanding the phenomenon of swarm intelligence (SI), the solving of cognitive problems by a group of individuals who pool their knowledge and process it through social interactions. Through SI a group can overcome some of the cognitive limitations of its members. SI has relevance to other animals, including humans. Wherever there is collective decision-making, we can examine natural systems that have evolved sophisticated mechanisms for achieving SI. In recognition of his scientific work, Dr. Seeley has received the Alexander von Humboldt Distinguished U.S. Scientist Prize,

been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, received a Gold Medal Book Award from Apimondia for *The Wisdom of the Hive*, and been elected a Fellow of both the Animal Behavior Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His most enduring honor is having a species of bee named after him: *Neocorynurella seeleyi*.

Dr. Seeley's visit is the kick-off to the 2014 lecture series. He will be presenting the keynote address for the Northern NM Rocky Mountain Sweet Spring Sting Symposium on Pollinator and Human Health at St. John's College in Santa Fe. This symposium includes a special screening of "The Art of Mayordomia" on acequia ancient waterway traditions connecting biodiversity with habitat and stewardship. The next day, Dr. Seeley will offer another keynote address at SMU-Taos. He will then conduct a guided nature walk through the SMU-Taos campus, sharing information about locating feral colonies and their importance to biodiversity, their connection to managed hives, and how we can learn from the bees that continue to adapt to environmental pressures, such as viruses and *Varroa destructor* mites.

This series will bring two more knowledgeable researchers to our enchanted lands this year. Information about their backgrounds and presentations will be in our next newsletter soon. The lectures are open to the public, and the Rocky Mountain Survivor Queenbee Cooperative would like to encourage everyone to attend.

For more information and to register online, visit us at [www.survivorqueenbees.org](http://www.survivorqueenbees.org) or email me, Melanie Kirby, at [rmsqbcoop@gmail.com](mailto:rmsqbcoop@gmail.com).

## Membership Form

Join us! **Dues are \$30 for the year for a family. \$15 for July-Dec.** Members receive perks like free admission to events, website listings and newsletters! If you wish to receive paper newsletters instead of email, it's an additional \$5 per year.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**All members can advertise on our website for free!** If you wish to have your information added to the Bee Services section of our website, please fill in the following information and circle yes or no:

-Do you want to be listed for swarm capture?                      yes                      no

-Do you want to be listed as a bee educator?                      yes                      no

-Do you sell queens or bees?                      yes                      no

-Do you want to be listed for selling honey?                      yes                      no

Do you sell wax, pollen or propolis? \_\_\_\_\_

-Do you sell hive equipment?                      yes                      no

What kind of equipment do you sell? \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you want to be listed in our bee services area?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone, Email or Website: \_\_\_\_\_

City or Area of the State you are located: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out the above information, include dues and mail to:

**NMBKA**  
**PO Box 7188**  
**Albuquerque, NM 87194**

Checks can be addressed to NM Beekeepers Association

If you have any questions, email the Board at: *informbka@gmail.com*



## 2014 North to South NM Pollinator Benefit Lecture Series

Dr. Thomas Seeley, conservation biologist, Cornell University

Saturday, May 3, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., (l) St. John's College, Santa Fe

Sunday, May 4, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m., (l) Southern Methodist Univ - Taos, Taos

Dr. Juliana Posada-Rangel, Assoc. Professor of Entymology, Texas A&M Univ

Thursday, May 22, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., (l) NMSU - Alcalde Sustainable

Agriculture Research Farm and Center, Espanola (with Dr. Shengrui Yao & Dr. Steve Guldán)

Friday, May 23, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m., (l) Albuquerque Bio Park Education Center

Saturday, May 24, 2:00 - 5:00 p.m., (p) Zia Queenbees, Truchas

Sunday, May 25, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., (l) Alamogordo County Extension Office, Alamogordo

Dr. Wyatt Magnum, Professor of Mathematics, Univ of Mary Washington

Friday, June 6, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m., (l) Albuquerque Bio Park Education Center

Saturday, June 7, 10:00 - 12:00 p.m., (l) *Tapetes de Lana*, Mora

Saturday, June 7, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m. (p) Mora Valley Apiaries, Mora

See article (part 1) inside on page 6. (l) = lecture, (p) = field practicum

See [www.survivorqueenbees.org/2014-lectures/](http://www.survivorqueenbees.org/2014-lectures/) for details

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