



JULY 2013

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMANCE COUNTY BEEKEEPERS

## Remember...

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Check for mites and treat. Time to harvest honey. The club has an extractor that can be borrowed.

### What's Blooming?

Sumac, Alsike clover, Ladino, (white clover), Sweet Clover, Sourwood

Supper meeting at 6:00, but RSVP. Bring a contribution, also( chips, dessert, slaw, onions, etc.) Bring a chair for yourself and company.

*Alamance County Beekeepers*

## This month's meeting...

"Honey Harvesting and Extractions

Paul Jollay and Ira Poston will give the program on Thursday, July 18th. Plans are that they will serve hot dogs and hamburgers beginning at 6:00 P.M. To ensure they have an adequate amount of food, please indicate by email:

- 1) if you are coming,
- 2) how many are in your party AND
- 3) whether you are going to eat hot dogs, hamburgers or both by responding TO: Ira Poston <[Ira.Poston@duke-energy.com](mailto:Ira.Poston@duke-energy.com)>.

Since we have a bunch of gardeners, how about bringing some tomatoes, onions and any other condiments you would like to put on your dinner. It will be at Paul's house at 2435 Glencoe Street, Burlington, NC 27217."

*People not receiving email can call Ira at his cell phone: 336-314-0499*

The Great Sunflower Project is moving beyond the backyard this summer.



Professor of Biology Gretchen LeBuhn.

The popular project is encouraging its corps of more than 100,000 volunteers to observe bees and any other pollinators they see, on all kinds of plants and in all kinds of places. Participants can now report their bee counts from a walk on a nature trail, a thorough search of a local park or even a casual encounter with a bumblebee flying by.

"We've opened up the project to new ways of sampling pollination," said San Francisco State Professor of Biology Gretchen LeBuhn, who started the project six years ago. She said the new sampling methods were driven in part by the data already collected, and in part by requests from the citizen scientists.

The project's data are beginning to reveal how pollination happens in gardens, and people can check to see how well backyards in their state stack up against others, when it comes to bee visits per hour. "But one of the things we realized as we've been analyzing our data is that we can't speak to what's happening in natural areas," LeBuhn said. The new sampling can help fill in the blanks, she explained, in wild environments such as desert, chaparral and coastal

areas.

"If people can tell us where they were when they observed the bees, we can convert that into latitude and longitude information and start to build up some information about which natural habitats are doing well and poorly" in terms of pollination, LeBuhn said.

The new sampling also moves beyond sunflower observations to help the scientists determine how well certain plants do at supporting pollinators. LeBuhn says there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about this, but surprisingly little research.

"A lot of people came to us and said, 'now I know that I have three bees per hour in my garden, so what should I do next?'" LeBuhn said. To answer this question, her team began a habitat assessment project this year to discover what kinds of plants and other garden features—from water to mulching—could improve the habitat for pollinators. "Once we started doing this," she explained, "we realized how little data we have on what the key plants are."

LeBuhn hopes to have a set of habitat assessment tools online next year, but she suggests that people collect data on their backyard pollinators and plants now, so that they can be ready to make changes that bring in more bees.

The Great Sunflower Project will hold its annual Great Bee Count on August 17 to encourage users to upload their observations. The project's data has been requested by federal agencies, classrooms, and the Weather Underground forecast website. "My biggest dream is to have the data used as many times and in as many ways as possible," LeBuhn said.

Through the participation of over 100,000 citizen scientists the Great Sunflower Project aims to collect information about the whereabouts and activities of pollinating bees, and to provide those bees with more pollen resources. To join The Great Sunflower Project, visit the website at <http://www.greatsunflower.org> or follow the project on Twitter or Facebook.

**Real People: Jeff Lee's bees remain busy as ... well, you know**



Jeff Lee, owner of Lee's Bees, Inc. Honey and Pollination Services, opens a honeycomb from a hive in a field near his home in Mebane Wednesday.

Sam Roberts / Times-News

By [Steve Huffman / Times-News](#)

Published: Sunday, July 7, 2013 at 16:07 PM.

MEBANE — Jeff Lee lives far off the beaten path — in a house in the woods at the end of a long dirt drive.

"Nobody wants to be my neighbor," he chuckled.

Lee is the owner of Lee's Bees, one of the largest bee-raising operations in the state. Between his property outside Mebane and land in Jamesville in Martin County, Lee tends 1,500 hives. Each hive contains 50,000 bees.

You do the math.

"The reason I got into bees is because they're social creatures and they're just fascinating," Lee said. "Lots of psychology goes into raising them."

Lee, 45, is a native of Seattle. He earned his undergraduate degree at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., then came

## Blueberry Muffins with Salted Honey Crumble



For the salted honey crumble: In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the brown sugar, butter, clover honey and vanilla; beat on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the flour and salt. Mix on low speed just until the mixture comes together and develops a sandy texture. Refrigerate in an airtight container for at least 30 ... [read full recipe below]

**YIELD: 12 MUFFINS**

**PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES**

**TOTAL TIME: 90 MINUTES**

### Ingredients

- For Crumble:

½ cup - light brown sugar

10 tablespoons - unsalted butter, softened

4 tablespoons - clover honey

½ teaspoon - vanilla extract

1¼ cup - all-purpose flour

1½ teaspoons - kosher salt

- For Muffins:

2 cups - all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons - baking powder

½ teaspoon - kosher salt

1 cup - sugar (continued on back page)

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to Duke for a masters degree. He followed that doctorate in organic chemistry.

Once Lee came to North Carolina, he stayed.

“I just fell in love with the state,” he said.

After earning his doctorate, Lee worked several years as an organic chemist in the pharmaceutical industry. But he never shook his fascination with bees.

He’s been a fulltime beekeeper since 2003.

Family members weren’t surprised by his change of vocation. Lee got into bees at a young age — ordering his first starter kit when he was 12.

“I used to ask my parents stuff like, ‘Where do bees go at night?’” Lee said. “They couldn’t tell me and told me to go to the library to look it up. The more I learned about them, the more I wanted to learn.”

Lee makes a small portion of his income from the sale of honey. The lion’s share of his earnings come from renting his bees for pollination. The term “busy as a bee” applies to Lee’s bees. In the course of a year, his little winged friends will be transported thousands of miles to various job sites.

Beginning in February, Lee trucks two tractor-trailers loaded with about 900 hives to California, where they pollinate the state’s almond crop. Lee said 90 percent of the world’s almond supply comes from California, and said 100 percent of the pollination of the nuts is done by bees.

After their job in California is done, Lee’s bees are trucked back to North Carolina where they spend parts of March and early April pollinating the blueberry crop around White Lake. From there, the bees head to Maine to work their magic on wild blueberries, then to Wisconsin to do the same with cranberries.

Along the way, a portion of the little varmints will spend time in eastern North Carolina pollinating cucumbers that will eventually become pickles sold under the Mount Olive brand name.

Lee said the demand for his bees has increased in recent years as mites have cut mightily into the numbers of wild bees. The mites aren’t native to the United States and bees here have little resistance to their diseases.

With the number of wild bees on decline, the need for those raised by keepers increases.

Lee nurtures his hives like a proud mama. To offset the damage the mites inflict, Lee feeds his bees daily protein supplements.

On a recent rainy afternoon, he pulled back the top of one of his hives to display the occupants therein. He said the work of bees hinges greatly on the weather. When it’s rainy and cool, the creatures do little more than lounge.

“It’s such a bad day, they’re not working,” Lee said. “They’re welfare bees today.”

Lee suffers a bee sting an average of once a day.

“It’s job security,” he said. “No one wants to get stung.”

Lee said his business is doing well, but said that wasn’t always the case. When he tried to go fulltime into beekeeping, no bank would loan him money.

“I maxed out my credit cards,” Lee said. “I mortgaged the house.”

But the reward has been great. Lee enjoys his work.

“My hobby became a profession and now I need a hobby,” he said.

By Steve Huffman / Times News

**ALAMANCE COUNTY BEEKEEPERS  
2013 OFFICERS**

- IRA POSTON, PRESIDENT
- MIKE ROSS, VICE PRESIDENT
- JAN FOULKS, TREASURER
- PENNY BONDURANT, RECORDING SECRETARY
- CAMILLE THOMAS, PROGRAM CHAIR

- PAUL JOLLAY, 1-YEAR DIRECTOR
- DON MOORE, 2-YEAR DIRECTOR
- RANDY STINSON, 3-YEAR DIRECTOR



½ cup - unsalted butter, softened

- 3 tablespoons - honey (use a mild, light varietal)

- 1 teaspoon - vanilla extract

- 2 - large eggs

- ½ cup - milk

- 2 cups - fresh blueberries

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## Directions

**For the salted honey crumble:** In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the brown sugar, butter, clover honey and vanilla; beat on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the flour and salt. Mix on low speed just until the mixture comes together and develops a sandy texture. Refrigerate in an airtight container for at least 30 minutes.

**For the muffins:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter 12 muffin cups and dust with flour. In a small bowl combine the flour, baking powder and salt.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together sugar, butter, honey and vanilla. Add eggs one at a time and mix well; stir in milk. Add the dry ingredients and mix just until combined. Remove the bowl from the mixer and gently fold in blueberries using a rubber spatula. Scoop the mixture into the prepared muffin cups, filling them about three-fourths full. Sprinkle each top with 1 tablespoon of the salted honey crumble. Bake on the center rack of oven until golden, about 30 to 35 minutes.

*Recipe Courtesy of Chef David Guas, Owner of Bayou Bakery, Coffee Bar & Eatery in Arlington, VA.*