

Project Apis m.



PAm monthly news & updates

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Danielle's Discourse

Christening Christi's Retirement

What a successful North American Beekeeping Conference! Congratulations to the American Beekeeping Federation, American Honey Producers Association and Canadian Honey Council on a great joint event. It was such a pleasure to have everyone at one venue for the annual meetings! One highlight of the very successful NABC meetings in Galveston last week was having Christi Heintz attend to receive honors for her 10 years of service to the beekeeping industry. It could be said that her service to beekeepers began before that time, while she worked at the Almond Board of California (ABC) on nutrition, and created the ABC Honey Bee Task Force, which funds pollination research. Dan Cummings recruited her after her time with ABC to help build Project Apis m. (PAm). PAm began as a boot-strappy fund for beekeepers and growers to fund their own chosen research projects and is now the largest non-profit organization funding honey bee projects in the USA and Canada. To date, PAm has invested over \$6.2 million into honey bee health research and programs! For her visionary work, Christi received recognition from the Project Apis m. Board and also from the American Honey Producers Association, which awarded her the 'Friend to the Industry Award'.

[Read more here...](#)



Christi Heintz received recognition from the PAm Board and Honey Producers Association at the North American Beekeeping Conference.

Christi retired in 2016, passing the baton to Danielle Downey who is now the Executive Director of Project Apis m. Christi is enjoying being a skiing, backpacking grandma...but she has been seen working on some new industry initiatives (Is tackling honey diversion next? We shall see...) Kudos and thanks to Christi for all her service, especially for developing Project Apis m.!

Danielle Downey
Executive Director

The BIP Box

The new year...

We are excited to announce the hiring of Phoebe Koenig to our Midwest tech team and John Klepps to our Florida/Georgia team! Please see their photos and profiles on our tech team website [here](#).

As a bittersweet start to the year, we are saying good bye to Katie Lee, our very first technical transfer team member who intrepidly began the California team before BIP was BIP and then moved to start the Midwest team. Katie will be spending this year completing her PhD so we are very excited for her. We also wish Megan Mahoney, who initiated and built a fantastic Texas team, all the best as she begins a new career in Hawaii following her desire to work in queen breeding.



[Read more BIP Box here...](#)

And the old...

Bees are rapidly moving into almond orchards for pollination and that is a good time to reflect on the previous year to see how successful we were at keeping mite loads at a manageable level. View graphs that show the average mite loads month by month in 2016 and then also from 2015 [here](#). Unequivocally, it appears that beekeepers did a much better job of staying on top of mite levels in 2016.

We thank our recent supporters!

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A photo of Sammy Ramsey posing while holding a frame of bees. (Photo courtesy of Sammy Ramsey)

Project Apis m. funds and supports research addressing issues across a wide range of topics. Our efforts have answered questions regarding contaminants in syrup, effect of colony size on pollination, pathogens, Colony Collapse Disorder, pesticides, genetic diversity, and, of course, Varroa control. All this research helps increase our knowledge of bee biology and their related health issues. However, after attending the American Bee Research Conference last week I feel compelled to write about a study conducted by Samuel Ramsey (photo included) at the University of Maryland. He presented his paper “Varroa destructor feed primarily on honey bee fat body not hemolymph” and immediately our knowledge of the biological interaction between honey bees and Varroa changed dramatically. As far back as I can remember I was told Varroa, the deadly virus vectoring parasitic mite, feeds on bee blood (hemolymph).

[Read more here...](#)

Samuel finished his presentation, I turned to a colleague and said the one thing on my mind: “A lot of textbooks will need to be rewritten!”

Samuel’s work, which was funded by Project Apis m., involved feeding adult bees a fluorescent biostain that glows differently when present in either bee hemolymph or bees fat body. The adult bees then fed this stain tainted syrup to the brood. Varroa was then collected from the brood. After the Varroa was crushed, its contents could be analyzed for how much bee hemolymph stain vs. bee fat stain it had. This data allowed Samuel to determine what parts of the honey bee the Varroa mite is feeding on. It turns out Varroa eats two to three times more bee fat body than hemolymph.

Honey bee research proposals often ask for significant amounts of money. It is not uncommon to see scientists ask for more than \$ 100,000 to conduct their experiments. While I’m sure these amounts are justified and necessary, it is important to note Project Apis m. strives to find the most applicable, cost-effective research possible. Mr. Ramsey’s work will have significant impacts on how the industry will study future Varroa control products, and it cost less than \$20k to conduct! This work goes beyond being an effective use of funds; it’s also award winning. Congratulations to Samuel for his study winning the American Bee Research Conference Student Paper Competition. Please keep reading our Newsletter every month for more updates on exciting research from Samuel Ramsey and the rest of the students in Dr. Dennis vanEngelsdorp’s lab.

Billy Synk
Pollination Programs

Director of

Word From Wardell

Almond Pollination: The Big Dance

Almond pollination is a big investment for the grower and the beekeeper alike. The growers want the best bees possible for their pollination dollars, and the beekeepers want to supply the best bees possible to secure the top pollination fees. Good summer forage makes a huge difference for bees to replenish, but beekeeper inputs including feeding, medicating and population management, begin preparing the colonies for almonds in August. It’s a long, costly road to get bees ready for almond pollination, and I don’t mean just money. See our photo series of the Herculean efforts beekeepers are in the middle of right now on our Facebook Page [here](#). It’s not easy to build colonies to pollination strength in the middle of the winter, but that is what beekeepers have to do; they must have the strongest colonies possible in early February because that is when almonds bloom.



After all the feeding, medicating and colony management, out-of-state beekeepers have the added effort of loading their colonies on semi-trucks to transport the bees to California and that means preparing the colonies to go through the border inspection stations. Prior to shipping, one of the last big efforts the beekeeper makes is to clean and sanitize the colonies to remove weeds, mud, ants and any other hitchhiking insects. Annually, about 4,000 truck loads of honey bees come to California to support the almond pollination effort. This volume of trucks coming through the California Border Inspection Stations can severely tax the system and result in log jams of trucks at the border awaiting clearance to enter California.



Pallets are washed carefully to prevent delays of loads crossing into California.

Once a driver gets to the border inspection station, it's important to have all the paper work in order. Project Apis m. publishes a helpful brochure with important details and contacts [here](#), and this [video](#) is also full of good information about preparing bees for almonds.

[Read more here...](#)

Gordon Wardell
Chairman, Project Apis m.

Project Apis m. is a 501 (c) (5) non-profit organization.

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