

The Beaver Valley Area Beekeeper's Association Yard



BEAVER VALLEY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Volume 1 Issue 5

November 2010

2011 Western Pennsylvania Beekeeping Seminar

The **Western Pennsylvania Beekeeper's Seminar** will be held on February 18 & 19, 2011, at the Pittsburgh Marriott North Hotel 100 Cranberry Woods Drive 1, Cranberry Township, PA, 16066 (724-779-4211). The hotel is a short drive from the PA Turnpike.

Featured speakers for the seminar are Dr. Rick Fell of Virginia Tech and Dr. Christine Grozinger of Penn State University. Dr. Fell will present some of his international experiences as well as a presentation on bee biology. Dr. Grozinger will share some research about queen breeding as well as offer a break-out session on the topic.

Other presenters will be Mel Disselkoe, Michigan; Robert Knoll, & Dr. James Amrine, creators of 'Honey Bee Healthy'; Craig Cella, SARE Grants and successful beekeeping; Judy Kennedy, cooking with honey demonstrations; and Rick Donovall, State Apiarist.

The seminar begins Friday evening, February 18, at 7 p.m. with registration or check-in and then a presentation by Dr. Fell. The main part of the conference begins Saturday morning, February 19th, at 8 a.m. with vendors, a main presentation in the ball room and break-out sessions throughout the day.

Vendors providing beekeeping supplies will be attending the seminar, so place your orders and **SAVE THE SHIPPING** by picking up your spring supplies at the seminar. Look for: Blue Sky, Bushy Mountain, Simpson Bee Supply and Bee Line to name a few.

Fees for the 2011 seminar are as follows:

- **Individual participant**—\$48
- **Spouse or family member**—\$25 each
- **Vendor tables** — \$40 per table

The Western Pennsylvania Beekeeper's Seminar is sponsored by the Penn State Cooperative Extension—Beaver; the Beaver Valley Area Beekeeper's Association and the Pennsylvania State Beekeeper's Association. The Western PA seminar is the largest beekeeper educational conference in Pennsylvania's western region.

Beekeeper's can register by going on-line to the Penn State Extension—Beaver site at <http://beaver.extension.psu.edu>, or can obtain a brochure by calling the Extension office at 724-774-3003; also e-mailing BeaverExt@psu.edu.

2010 Fall BVABA Banquet

The BVABA Fall Banquet was held on November 1, 2010 at the Sisters of St. Joseph dining room in Baden, PA. Close to fifty beekeeper's, spouses and family members attended the evening. Everyone enjoyed the meal which was a choice of honey-glazed chicken, stuffed pork chop or vegetable lasagna. A cake sporting a 'bee' was desert along with various refreshments.

A club meeting was held to elect officers for the 2010-11 season and the result of the election has the 2009-10 officers returning to their same positions for one final year of service to the club.

Honey and wax judging occurred through the generosity of Dave Harcum, club member.



2010-11 BVABA Club Officers

President: Robert Steffes
724-378-7204

robertsteffes@hotmail.com

Vice-President: Tom Johnson
724-728-6826

No e-mail

Treasurer: Dan Worst
412-331-8595

danandnancyw@comcast.net

Secretary: Lyn Szymkiewicz

724-869-2151 x.6285

lynzym3@verizon.net

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The Beaver Valley Area Beekeeper's Association Yard

From the President's Desk... Remembering Roy



President Rob Steffes with Secretary Lyn Szymkiewicz at 2009 Fall Banquet

It was especially important to inform the bees of the death of their owner; traditionally this was done by the eldest son or widow of the owner, who would strike each hive three times with the door key and say 'The master is dead!'.

Old Beekeeping Tradition

I've always been enchanted by this bit of beekeeping lore that the bees must be informed of the keeper's passing, even though about the last adjective I'd use to describe the honey bee is "sentimental". We humans certainly mourn the loss of long-time club member Roy Smith this November. My wife Jennifer and I were taken by Roy's outgoing personality when we first joined the BVABA. In particular, Roy had a dynamic way teaching people about bees. As Jennifer (a professor herself) best put it, "He was an absolutely consummate educator." Whenever I'm trying to explain the ways of the bees to a market customer or a new beekeeper, I'll often find myself using a phrase or approach that I heard from Roy. I can't think of a better tribute to a great beekeeper than that.

Robert Steffes

New State Apiarist Appointed

THE STATE'S
2,500
BEEKEEPERS
LOOK FORWARD
TO RICK
DONOVALL'S
INPUT AND
SUPPORT!

All registered beekeepers recently got a letter from the PA Agriculture Secretary Russ Redding announcing that Leo "Rick" Donovan is our new State Apiarist. I have been very impressed with the interest and support for our often "orphan" industry that Secretary Redding has shown during his brief tenure and I do hope the incoming administration will keep him on.

I took up the letter's invitation to contact Rick and found this young entomologist to be very personable and open. Rick explained that his position's duties will be split between bees and the Invasive Species Council which he will also coordinate. Despite the dual role, Rick says the promotion of a state employee like himself to the apiarist position, rather than a contractor as previously, will concentrate the department's attention on us beekeepers. In particular, Rick will focus on bringing the

latest research on keeping bees healthy to the backyard beekeepers as well as big commercial outfits, stating, "We want to help PA beekeepers to become the best in the country." As an entomologist, Rick has done research on native pollinators with Dennis VanEngelsdorp and has an interest in protecting all other pollinators as well.

Rick has some good news about the state inspection program. Five inspectors are again funded through June of next year. Karen Roccasecca, who has been administering the inspection program part time, will be offered a full time position. Karen also does the apiary lab diagnostics as well as inspecting, so it is great to hear the department will be rewarding her valuable services.

Rick is not presently keeping bees himself quite yet: "I just bought a new house and

started a family. I have a spot picked out for the hive, but I haven't had a chance to deal with the property owners association about beekeeping yet!" He did get mentored by prominent honey bee researcher and author Dewey Caron at the University of Delaware and is doing yard work with members of the Capital Area Beekeepers Association. In fact, Rick feels working with the state and local organizations to be a "top priority" of his job. He plans on attending the WPA seminar in February, so take the opportunity to talk to him then. You are welcome to contact him anytime as well at ldonovall@state.pa.us or phone 717 787 4843 ext, 278.



Burgh Bees - Volunteers Needed

Thank you to all who volunteered with Burgh Bees in the past, and continue to help us as an organization! Without your help, we could not have attended so many events and reached so many "bee curious" people.

If you would like to help at future festivals and events, please send the Volunteer Director, Lynnetta Miller, an email at nettajean1@yahoo.com so that you can be placed on our volunteers list.

We also need people interested in giving lectures, presentations, demonstrations to garden clubs, scout troops, school students, and various organizations. We have created lesson plans for the different age groups of our audience to help guide our educators.

2011 Pennsylvania State Farm Show — needs you!

The coordinators of both the Honey Booth and the Honey Stand need your help in staffing both stands for the January 8—15 show in Harrisburg. The Honey Booth, located in the food court, offers waffles and honey ice cream along with bottled honey. The Honey Stand, located in the marketplace, offers bottled honey and bee products that are donated BY YOU, the PA beekeeper. The proceeds from the sales go back into the PA Beekeepers Promotional Fund and is used for the PA Honey Queen program and the promotion of honey throughout the state.

If you are interested in donating bottled honey, bee products or your time, please contact Stu Mathias at 717-533-2231. If you can volunteer some of your time to staffing either of the booths, please contact Warren Miller at 824-383-4331 or e-mail at superbee22@hotmail.com.

Visit the Farm Show website at: www.farmshow.state.pa.us

CLASSIFIED

SPRING BEE PACKAGES

Tom Johnson will be travelling to Georgia for bee packages to be picked-up the first week of April, 2011.

3 lb. package with queen - \$80.50 3 lb. package with marked queen — \$83.50

Packages can be picked-up at 307 Valley Drive, Rochester, PA 15074

To order packages, please call Tom at: 724-312-7584 (cell) or 724-728-6826 (home).

NEED A HOLIDAY GIFT?

Gift items such as ceramic honey pots, candles, and beekeeping equipment and in-stock and available in Pittsburgh. Factory direct shipments to your location can be arranged any-time. Contact Joe Zgurzynski of Country Barn Farm for more information at 412-225-0930 or

Joe@CountryBarnFarm.com

SPRING BEE PACKAGES

Package bees available the first week of April. \$80 for 3 lb. package with marked queen. Lee Miller, 3180 Ridge Rd. Extension, Freedom, PA 15042 724-544-2900 jlmbeeglad@gmail.com



You know you're a beekeeper when--

'your friends and family members know exactly what to get you for Christmas!'

THE COLOR
AND FLAVOR
OF HONEY
DIFFERS
DEPENDING ON
THE NECTAR
SOURCE (THE
BLOSSOMS)
VISITED BY
THE HONEY
BEES. IN FACT,
THERE ARE
MORE THAN
300 UNIQUE
TYPES OF
HONEY
AVAILABLE IN
THE UNITED
STATES.
HONEY COLOR
RANGES FROM
NEARLY
COLORLESS
TO DARK
BROWN, AND
IT'S FLAVOR
VARIES FROM
DELECTABLY
MILD TO
DISTINCTIVELY
BOLD.

**NATIONAL
HONEY BOARD
FACT SHEET**

SURVIVAL TRAITS OF THE EUROPEAN HONEYBEE

Bee Culture – March, 2003

by Walt Wright

Every action and reaction of the honey bee colony is based on survival instincts. The species has had eons to perfect their survival instincts. Those instincts even govern lack of activity in some circumstances. Every aspect of the colony activities are oriented toward survival. That concept may sound like over statement to the beekeeper who has not considered the subject at all, but this series will attempt to substantiate that position.

Honey bees are wild creatures that man has elected to use for his own purposes. To effectively harness the energies of this wild creature, we need to be familiar with the survival characteristics that motivate them. The more you know about the survival traits of this species, the better beekeeper you will be. Instead of fighting the natural instincts of colonies in your care, you can work within their normal operations. You will find that working “with” the bees is less time consuming and improves your bottom line.

The reference literature, for reasons unknown, has very little definition of survival traits. Most management recommendations of the popular literature are oriented to imposing your will on the wild creatures. It’s also recognized in that same literature that the approach produces limited success. Some colonies will succeed in fulfilling their survival instincts in spite of your best efforts to undermine their progress.

This series will start so basic as to be boring to the reader. We feel we need to build from the ground up. The content of the first segments provide the background to be applied to detailed information coming later. The detailed information in later segments has met considerable resistance from “experts” and experienced beekeepers. Perhaps the proper foundation will help support the more controversial concepts.

The activities of the colony are tailored to two main levels of survival objectives. Short-term survival is top priority and involves survival of the existing colony. Perpetuation of the species by reproductive swarming is a long-term survival requirement that is a lower-level priority. However, reproductive swarming runs a close second priority. Those that can safely swarm, in any given season, do just that.

Rating of colony survival above species survival can be seen readily. A weaker colony or one in poor buildup forage areas does not entertain swarm ambition. They protect their own survival as best they can. Seasonal variations in forage availability cause “swarmy” or low-swarming years. Only the colony that can afford it, in any given year, produces a reproductive swarm. They do not jeopardize survival of the existing colony to reproduce.

It’s not generally recognized in the popular literature that the honey bee is a forest creature. Their survival format was developed for life in the primordial forest of Europe. Home was a hollow tree, and tailoring of their survival format for that circumstance can be seen in almost all of the seasonal activities of the colony. They can survive and reproduce in a forested area where there is a solid canopy of treetops within their flight range. Agricultural sources, such as clovers, are not needed in their survival strategy, but the colony takes advantage of the nectar bonanza and stores more than they need when provided extra space. When space is restricted in the tree hollow, they could ignore clovers. Survival requirements are typically satisfied prior to agricultural source appearance, but they might use some of the bonanza to maintain stores on hand.

The bees and trees derive mutual benefit from the relationship. The majority of trees bloom in the period of Spring leaf-out. Others lead and lag that period somewhat. Leaf-out is the period that the honey bee has built strength for division by the reproductive swarm. From the tree’s perspective, the honey bee has peak strength when they need pollination most. From the bees’ perspective, the trees provide forage sources when the offspring swarm needs them for establishment in a new location. The honey bee’s survival format is tailored to life in a hollow tree that is located in unbroken miles of forest. All tree hollows are not the same size. Their format is flexible enough to be applied to cavities of different volumes. Once the cavity is filled with functional comb, they must regulate stores and population to conform to that fixed volume. Other species, such as wasps or bumblebees, have no limit on colony strength. They get as strong as conditions will support each season. Their seasonal objective is to rear as many mated queens in the Fall as possible. Those mated queens will hibernate over the Winter and start from scratch in the Spring.

The wasp bumble bee season objective can be broken down into several phases. Initially, the overwintered queen does all the work herself. She gathers nest material, building the beginning nest, and gathers feed for the first group of helpers that she rears single-handedly. With emergence of the first group of workers, the queen can retire from field work (risky business). The workers will continue to build colony strength in population and nest size. At some point in late Summer, the emphasis shifts to rearing queens for next Spring and the drones for Fall mating.

The simplistic lifestyle of those species have at least three seasonal periods when colony activities are different. All three periods reflect a change in activities that are oriented to colony survival and reproduction. We are inclined to call those activities “internal operations.” Internal operations, or differences in population objectives and activities, are much more complex for the social insect lifestyle of the honey bee.

In contrast, the honey bee must regulate strength to a fixed volume, reproduce by population division, and Winter as a colony. The internal operations of the honey bee colony change more often as a result of their more complicated survival format. We will treat those changes in a separate article. But before we get to a description of changes in internal operations of the honey bee colony, we need to discuss special skills to accomplish the survival format they have chosen. The reference literature provides very little insight on those special skills.

The honey bee’s adaptation to inhabiting tree hollows has endowed them with many special skills. If a wasp or a squirrel chooses the tree hollow for a nest site, it imposes no special problems for either. The social insect lifestyle of the honey bee, however, is tailored to use *all* of the cavity available space. The swarm moving into a cavity will clean up punky wood or debris left by former residents down to the live wood. Concurrently with clean up, they will start comb construction at the top. Comb construction is top priority for the swarm in a new location. They must have comb for stores and brood to become established. The establishment goal is to fill the whole cavity with functional comb. A large cavity may take longer to fill than the first season.

The description of establishment above is included to make the point that the new (first year) colony is not fully established until their quarters are furnished with functional comb. The special skills described below are pertinent to the established colony. When the cavity is filled with functional comb, limits are set for colony strength.

The colony must regulate population in balance with food supplies. Its easy to understand that balance is a firm requirement. Serious out-of-balance conditions are a formula for colony disaster. The colony must maintain adequate food stores reserve for periods when forage sources are not available. The need for adequate reserve is particularly acute in the fall when the colony must feed itself over the Winter. Not only must adult bees be fed, but they are going to start brood rearing in the dead of winter. But, of course, that is not news.

What you may not have considered is that regulation of population in balance with stores and overall space is an ongoing, *every-day* effort. Cell use in the fixed cavity is apportioned to brood or stores on a proportional basis. Brood volume controls population, and is adjusted up or down to accomplish Season objectives. In the Spring build up, brood volume is increased to support division by the reproductive swarm. During the main flow, brood volume is reduced to a level that just generates replacement bees. In the early Fall, if there is an increase in forage, brood volume is increased to generate young bees for wintering. In late Fall, the brood nest is shut down completely to conserve resources in early Winter. Through all these seasonal variations, the population is maintained in proportion to stores and overall cavity space. The special skill of the honey bee in making this come out right is awesome. For those of you who have a difference of opinion about the swarming season, be patient. We’ll get to that in due time.

Another colony skill is conservation of stores. On the main flow, Winter rations are stored. Their heritage as forest creatures dictates storage of supplies while field forage is available. In the extended forest, Fall forage is minimal – not many trees bloom in the Fall. This can be seen by the extra pollen stored for Winter on the main flow. The current feed pollen will be dry and bright colored. Winter pollen will be glazed with honey to preserve it until needed.

After storing winter rations on the main flow, the colony becomes very miserly on consumption of those stores. Most of the adult bees are quiescent during any period of low field forage. Inactive bees use less food. Minor forage sources are exploited to the extent that Winter stores are supplemented, and active brood rearing is using some of the stores. But they do not send the whole forager force for maintaining Winter rations.

However, when field forage is showing a sustained increase that simulates the Spring season, some colonies will entertain swarm ambition. It is not obvious to the colony that the Fall flow will end abruptly with freezing weather, and an offspring swarm doesn’t have a prayer of establishment. But, as mentioned earlier, a strong Fall flow would be uncommon in the established forest.

The Fall brood nest closeout serves several purposes, and one of those advantages is conservation of stores. By stopping brood rearing while forage is still available, those cells can be filled with nectar. In this way, the whole cavity is filled with stores in early Winter. Elimination of the need to maintain brood nest temperatures is the conservation advantage. Not only is less honey consumed as thermal fuel, but the cooler cluster temperature causes some bees to go into a state near suspended animation. Like other wintering insects, they use very little food in that state. In my area, the first Winter brood volume is often quite small.

Consumption of feed in the center of the cluster makes empty cells for the first brood cycle in mid-Winter. When the first brood volume is only softball sized, it shows how little was consumed in two months by a cluster starting with more than a deep super full of bees.

Another special skill is synchronizing the colony activities to the vegetative growing season. They are quite proficient at doing the right things at the right time to insure both colony survival *and* reproduction. Without going into great detail, we can offer a couple of examples. About midway of the build up, without a hint of green anywhere, the colony starts rearing large numbers of drones. To get mature drones on the wing takes longer than queens, so they start earlier. In anticipation of the mating season, drone rearing leads the swarm preparation season by about a month.

The target reproductive swarm issue period was discussed in an earlier article. The peak forage availability in the forest is green-up or leaf-out in the Spring. They want the offspring swarm to have the advantage of that peak forage availability. Perhaps I give them *too much* credit, but it seems to me that the colony has the ability to speed up or slow development to hit that window of opportunity. In late Winter, the well-provisioned colony forages primarily for pollen and water. They need to consume honey to add space for brood volume. Later, they approach the swarm preparation season, and maximum safe brood nest expansion, the colony is feeding on incoming nectar only. It seems to me (and I can't defend this with supporting data) that the colony has the ability to adjust percentages of honey or nectar consumption to arrive at the swarm preparation season with the right brood/ stores ratio. What I *have* seen is that some colonies consume large amounts of capped honey, and some consume almost none in the week ahead of the swarm preparation season. Although most of the information in this series is based on solid observation, this entry is more in the realm of the "gut feel."

Most of the special skills discussed above imply yet another special skill. Controlling the activities of the colony in consonance with the growing season and their fixed volume implies some judgment on the part of the colony. We will treat judgment and decision making as separate entities.

Look for other articles at beesource.com

Burgh Bees Fall Honey!

Burgh Bees [November News Blast & Supplement](#)

This fall, Burgh Bees harvested about 100 pounds of honey from our hives at the community apiary in Homewood and the Pittsburgh Zoo! Our Fall honey is a very dark red due to the primary nectar source, knotweed, known locally as red bamboo. Honey from red bamboo has a very mild flavor for a dark honey and is naturally high in antioxidants. This honey is bottled and ready for sale. We are requesting a donation of \$12 per 12 oz jar, proceeds which will be used to fund the community apiary. Burgh Bees members receive a \$1 per jar discount! To reserve your honey please mail our Community Apiary Director, Steve Repasky, at srepasky@gmail.com and arrange for pick up at either the general membership meeting on the 9th or at the Allegheny County Penn State Extension Office at 400 Lexington Street in Homewood.

Pittsburgh Urban Agriculture Ordinance Update from Joe Zgurzynski

The proposed Urban Agriculture ordinance is now under review by city council. The proposed ordinance will require beekeepers to pay a \$250 fee and attend a public hearing to obtain a permit to keep bees on their property, in addition to meeting setback and density requirements. This is a onetime fee and once a permit is issued for beekeeping at a site it will never expire, even if the proposed ordinance is repealed. The fee and public hearing requirements will be a deterrent to some potential beekeepers. The upside to having a hearing is that it gives the beekeeper a forum for presenting site-specific reasons why beekeeping will be successful at their site.

By state law every beehive in the state of Pennsylvania is already required to be registered with the department of agriculture and made available for periodic inspection. I believe that the current level of regulation is sufficient to protect the public. However, the reality is that many people fear honey bees. We are fortunate that public sentiment currently favors beekeeping. This has not always been the case. The proposed ordinance will provide protection for beekeeping by identifying beekeeping as a permitted land use. I believe that approving the proposed ordinance may be the best chance we will have to protect beekeeping in the city, and prove to the public that urban beekeeping makes sense for our community.

If you live in Pittsburgh please write your council representative and request that the proposed ordinance be approved with language that is as favorable to beekeeping as possible.

ANYONE WITH BVABA LIBRARY MATERIALS OUT FROM THE 'WETLANDS' PLEASE RETURN THEM AT NEXT MTG!!!!

From Brushy Mountain Bee Farm, November e-flier

www.brushymountainbeefarm.com

One of the interesting pieces of information that I picked up at the Alabama meeting was presented by Dr. Keith Delaplane. The actual study was done by Dr. Marion Ellis in Nebraska. They had two groups of colonies, one did not have Nosema, the other was inoculated with Nosema. They then gave half of each group a [protein patty](#) and the other half were not fed. OK so it is getting more complicated. We now have Nosema with a patty, Nosema without a patty, No Nosema with a patty, lastly No Nosema without a patty. Here is the interesting part, both the No Nosema and Nosema without patty groups showed a similar winter survivorship curve...dramatic morality. While the No Nosema and Nosema with patty groups had better wintering success then the groups without patty. In fact, the "with patty" groups had virtually the same survivorship curve. This certainly illustrates the value of feeding protein supplements.

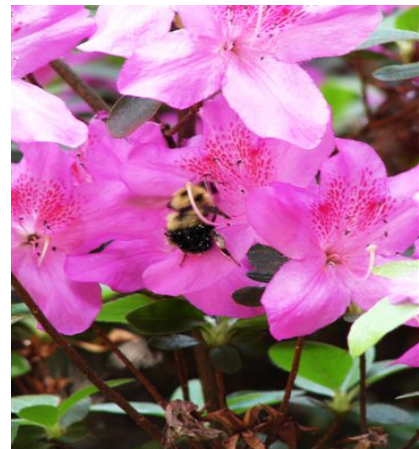


You know you're a beekeeper when...

'There is propolis on your steering wheel and on the bottom of your boots.'

Spring Blooming Plants & Trees for bee forage

Bloom season	Common name	Type
March—April	Red Maple	tree
March—April	Redbud	tree
"	Silver Maple	tree
April -	Serviceberry	"
	Red Oak	"
	Pin Oak	"
	Sugar Maple	"
April -	Wild Columbine	Herbaceous Plant
	Dutchman's Breeches	"
	Jack-in-the-Pulpit	"
March—May	Spicebush	Shrub
April -	Trumpet Honeysuckle	Vine



BEAVER VALLEY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Membership applications are taken between November and January 1st of each year

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail address _____@_____

PLEASE INDICATE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY TO YOUR SITUATION:

New Beekeeper _____ Hobbyist _____

Professional beekeeper _____

I presently have _____ Bee hives

Interested in attending a beginning beekeeper workshop _____

Interested in attending Western Pa. Beekeeping Seminar _____

Membership in BVABA \$5.00; Membership in PA State Beekeepers Assn. \$20.00 (Both memberships are encouraged.)

Please make check payable to [BVABA](#) and mail completed application and check to **Dan Worst, 124 Grant Street, Coraopolis, PA 15108**

Beaver Valley Area Beekeepers Association

Dan Worst, Treasurer
124 Grant Street
Coraopolis, PA 15108



We're on the web at: www.beavervalleybees.com

Deep South Sweet Potato Pie



1 pie crust
4 eggs
6 Tbs. honey
1/3 c. freshly squeezed orange juice
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Freshly grated nutmeg
1 c. heavy whipping cream
Pinch of salt
1 1/2 c. mashed cooked yams

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In a medium bowl, beat eggs thoroughly. Stir in honey, 2/3 c. of the cream, the orange juice, salt and vanilla. Put the yams in a bowl and stir in the egg mixture until well mixed. Pour the filling into the crust and bake for 10 minutes. Decrease the heat to 350 degrees and bake 30 minutes more, or until only the center jiggles when the pan is gently shaken. Let cool. Whip the remaining cream and flavor with freshly grated nutmeg. Spread on top the pie and serve.

Yield: 6 servings Recipe from: *Honey, the Connoisseur's Guide with Recipes*, Gene Opton.

Try this with fresh sweet potatoes harvested from your garden or the local farmer's market!!

NEXT MEETING

Executive Committee Meeting: Monday, January 31, 2011—place to be announced.

Regular club meeting—Monday, February 7, 2011, 7 p.m. @ the Wetlands, 156 Cowpath Rd, Aliquippa, PA 15001 724-378-1701 www.beavercountyconservationdistrict.org