

2022 Stahlman Beekeeping E-mail Notes Issue #37a

I am following up on National Honey Month. I visited with Duplin County Beekeepers this week. Duplin County is the largest county in land mass. It is located in the coastal plain regions in Eastern North Carolina. I always learn more from beekeepers when it comes to the types and available honey crops in a region.

I have been watching bee foraging areas disappear and I ask those I talk with questions about what kinds of honey they get. I had the opportunity to talk to Wade Penny who raises queens, sells bees, does pollination work and gets honey crops. He points out that it is getting harder and harder to survive and indicated he wasn't sure if he could survive too many more years making a living from keeping honey bees.

One special thing I learned is that large companies are moving into Duplin County with the resulting loss of bee forage land -- in his case the loss of many acres of gallberry (*Ilex Glabra*). This was a crop he depended heavy on. The honey has a light amber color sometimes a bit dark with a mild taste. It begins to bloom around the first of May and continues for a month or more. Most of the old literature indicates that good gallberry locations are nearly numberless and large quantities are wasted every year. It grows mostly in the south along sea shores, swamps, and the low pine barrens. I saw it in Southern Georgia in the 1990's and now am aware that it has a range along the coast well into North Carolina.

By the way, Duplin County's chief agriculture is hogs, chickens, and turkeys with large plantings of soybeans, cotton, and sweet potatoes. Wade pointed out that he gets honey from those three as well as blueberry, gallberry, and mellons. Not so much from soybeans as in the past.

I see Wake County growing by leaps and bounds and I have been here for only 7 years. I am wondering how wide can we make our highways to carry all the traffic.