



ONTARIO BEEKEEPERS'
ASSOCIATION
Since 1881

2020 Annual General Meeting – Speaker Bios

Ian Stepler, Stepler Honey:

Ian Stepler, married to Sandy, father of 5, farms with his family near Miami, Manitoba. His family farm is a third generation farm started by Ian's grandfather and carried forward by his parents. Nearly 10 years ago, Ian's 3 brothers, parents and himself have restructured the farm into a company and have since expanded into a large grain, cattle and beekeeping business. They crop 3500 acres of land, calve 5-600 head of pure bred Charolais cattle and manage a 1200-1500 hive operation. Since Ian bought his first 4 hives 19 years ago he has dedicated his life's passion towards beekeeping. Ian credits the current standing of his apiary to others on whom he has leaned on over the years to help guide him through many management, logistical and husbandry issues. Ian is a big believer in paying it forward which motivates him to share his successes and failures with others.

Follow Ian's YouTube channel to submerge yourself into the world of a Canadian commercial beekeeper life!

www.youtube.com/c/aCanadianBeekeeper'sBlog



Dr. Geoff Williams, Auburn University:



If you don't know Geoff – he's a Canadian transplant living and working in Alabama. Geoff actually grew up in Alberta, went to grad school in Nova Scotia, and has worked with honey bees throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. Before joining Auburn University, he worked for the Swiss government. Now at Auburn University, Geoff is building a program that seeks to better understand and promote bee health. To achieve these massive goals (as you can imagine), the AU-BEES lab is working on various topics – from studying the effects of neonicotinoids on queens, to working on the latest Integrated Pest Management tool against varroa, to performing the Bee Informed Partnership's National Colony Loss and Management Survey, to investigating bee attractiveness to native wildflowers.

Apart from assisting students with their studies, one aspect of his work that he really enjoy is discussing with beekeepers – hearing why they keep bees and love beekeeping, and what are some of the major challenges. Despite geographic and cultural differences, bees bring many different people together!



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Dan Borges, Specialist, OBA TTP:

Dan Borges received a bachelor's degree in Biology from McMaster University and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto. His passion for insects and entomology led him to the University of Guelph, where he completed a master's degree under the supervision of Dr. Ernesto Guzman. His master's work focused on the treatment of *Nosema ceranae* using natural compounds and probiotics. Dan also teaches at Niagara College, disseminating knowledge about bee biology and entomology. Dan is from the Tri-Cities area and currently lives in Kitchener. He runs a small bee operation, selling honey and nucs.



Prof. Stephen Martin, University of Salford, UK:



Stephen has studied social insects (bees, wasps, termites and ants) for most of his career. His areas of specialisation are the 'hornet ecology', 'pest and diseases of honeybees' and 'chemical ecology of ants'. He holds a Chair in Social Entomology in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences at Salford University, Manchester. Prior to that he spent 12 years working at Sheffield University, 7 years with the National Bee Unit and 7 years in Japan conducting research into hornets.

Stephen is best known for his work on the Varroa mite and its association with viruses, especially the Deformed Wing Virus, but more recently his expertise in hornet biology is in demand, both nationally and internationally. His team of researchers at Salford, funded in part by beekeepers, are using the very latest molecular methods to read the genetic code of the DWV virus. The aim is to understand why some honey bee colonies have become naturally tolerant to Varroa and see if this information can provide beekeepers with a long-term solution to the problem.

Dr. Frank Rinkevich, USDA:

Dr. Frank D. Rinkevich is a Research Entomologist with extensive training in insect toxicology, biochemistry, molecular biology, and genetics. The goal of Dr. Frank's research is to provide a basic understanding of insecticide toxicology that is relevant to field conditions in the commercial beekeeping industry. Current research interests in Dr. Rinkevich's lab include evaluating the effects of pesticide exposure on colony survivorship in commercial beekeeping operations, assessing the capacity and dynamics of metabolic detoxification of insecticides, understanding the genetic, behavioral and social factors that affect insecticide sensitivity, determining the breadth, depth, and mechanisms of amitraz resistance in Varroa, establishing the effects of fungicides on colony health, and evaluating control materials and practices for small hive beetle.





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Dr. Peter Awram, Authentic Food Solutions:



Peter Awram is a second-generation beekeeper that started in Alberta. In 1983, the company started focusing on pollination of cranberries and then blueberries when Peter started attending the University of BC. After receiving his PhD he did postdoctoral research in NZ at the time Varroa arrived and manuka honey was starting to become an industry in itself. In 2016, Peter attended a talk where Norberto Garcia laid out just how much fraud is actually occurring in the honey industry. Peter then started looking at using Magnetic Resonance to eliminate fraud in honey. After a year of investigating, he made the decision to buy a machine and get the ball rolling. He now splits his time between running a migratory 5000 hive operation that does blueberry pollination, Canadian prairie honey production and the budding food fraud business.

Paul Kozak, Provincial Apiarist, OMAFRA:

Paul Kozak is the Provincial Apiarist for Ontario, based in Guelph, Ontario with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs since 2010. This role includes regulation of the beekeeping industry in Ontario, working closely with provincial Apiary Inspectors, reporting on the status of the industry, providing technical and strategic advisory to government and industry regarding apiculture and collaborating with other specialists in apiculture on programs. Paul holds a BSc in Zoology and an MSc in Entomology, both the University of Manitoba. For graduate work, Paul worked under the guidance of Dr. Rob Currie researching the winter biology of honey bees and varroa mites and various management strategies for varroa. Before moving to Ontario, Paul worked as the Associate Extension Apiculturist through the Dyce Lab for honey bee studies, Cornell University and New York State Integrated Pest Management.



Sarah D'Andrea, Berta Bees, AB:



Sarah got into bees by taking the introductory apiculture course at the University of Guelph. She landed a job as one of OBA TTP's summer students, and fell in love with beekeeping. Sarah continued working for TTP for the remainder of her time at UoG. She moved west and completed the Commercial Beekeeping Program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. For five years, Sarah worked for Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia-based beekeeping operations and is now the proud owner of a growing 200+ colony migratory operation, pollinating fruit crops in B.C. and then moving to Alberta for the honey flow.



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Alvaro De la Mora Pena, University of Guelph:

Alvaro is a PhD student with a Master of Science in Animal Production and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Mexico. He has 13 years of international experience in honey bee management and research, particularly in teaching, group management, statistical analysis of data, and interpretation of results. He shares knowledge and practical experience in laboratory techniques, management of bee hives, queen breeding, diagnosis of bee diseases, and production of honey, pollen and royal jelly. Alvaro has taught courses and trained producers and students.

