

New Hanover County Beekeepers and Hives Find a Home

by: Susan Warwick, NHCBA past president & Holly Cunningham, NHCBA Vice President

After many years of entertaining the idea of placing hives in a public venue, the New Hanover County Beekeepers Association (NHCBA) finally achieved this goal! In August 2022, two hives were relocated to their new home in the City of Wilmington North Carolina's Halyburton Park. This was a collaborative effort with the City of Wilmington, Halyburton Park, Boy Scouts, two local artists, the Tree Crew of City of Wilmington and the NHCBA.



Hives at Halyburton

Halyburton Park was a perfect fit for the NHCBA and our bees. Halyburton Park is a preserve of the natural habitat of southeastern NC. Live displays of turtles, snakes, and fish are in the event center. We worked together on the details of our relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The details included the location and description of the apiary and the responsibilities of the city, park and the NHCBA. Once the details were approved by all parties involved, we began work on the next steps. We acquired donated bee supplies from Dadant, Bailey Bee Supply and Rossman. We approached two local artists to paint the hives with native area plants. The City of Wilmington tree crew was also involved in this effort. They discovered a colony in a dead tree that was scheduled to be cut down. They contacted the NHCBA about the bees, and together we developed a plan to rescue the colony.



Holly Cunningham and Susan Warwick pulling frames for the first Honey Harvest

The tree crew assisted in the hive removal. The bees and comb were preserved and scheduled to be transferred to Halyburton Park. Two Boy Scouts seeking their Eagle Scout were also involved in this project. They worked on the fence enclosure and the hive stand. The Scouts built a queen castle for the apiary. These Scouts achieved their Eagle Scout designation through their work on this project!



The ribbon cutting ceremony was attended by the City of Wilmington Mayor and City Council members, Halyburton Park staff, Boy Scouts, and members of the NHCBA.

Members of the NHCBA helped with ground cover, gravel, and staining the wood on the hive stand. The NHCBA obtained an insurance policy before moving the hives to the park.



Rusty Holt demonstrating the extraction process

With everything in place, the day finally arrived, and the hives were transported to the park on August 9, 2022. A ribbon cutting ceremony was scheduled for August 16, but due to the weather was rescheduled for September 12, 2022.

The ribbon cutting ceremony was attended by the City of Wilmington Mayor and City Council members, Halyburton Park staff, Boy Scouts, artists, community members and members of the NHCBA. After the ceremony there was a reception in the event center.



NHCBA members Diana Morgan and Samantha Werner pouring free honey to guest,

Unfortunately, one special member was absent. NHCBA Past President Tom Rhyne had planned to attend the first scheduled ribbon cutting. Sadly, he lost his battle with cancer before the September event. The NHCBA dedicated the apiary to Tom Rhyne in honor of his service to our club and his commitment to this project. A plaque naming the apiary, The Tom Rhyne Apiary at Halyburton Park, was installed.



Volunteers from the NHCBA 1st Honey Harvest at Halyburton Park. Left to right: Johnny Dickerson, Al DeForest, Susan Warwick, Holly Cunningham, Andy Fairbanks. Halyburton Park staff: Sandie Cecelski, Diana Morgan, Michael Jones, and Rusty Holt

On June 3, 2023, the NHCBA and Halyburton Park hosted a community celebration of the 1st honey harvest. Members of the community were able to experience the honey extraction process complete with honey bee educational materials and viewing bees through an observation hive. Children could dress up in bee suits, play with hive tools and unlit smokers. This made for great photo opportunities. Hopefully, one or more participants will become beekeepers! The experience was made complete by each family being able to take home free honey.



The NHCBA will be hosting future events that will help educate our community on the honey bee's importance. The NHCBA meets on the third Tuesday of each month, 7pm at Halyburton Park. The Bees and our members have enjoyed our relationship with Halyburton Park and appreciate the "home" they have provided to the NHCBA.