

## Lewis County Beekeepers' Association: *April 2010 Newsletter*

### *In this Edition:*

\* *Upcoming Events*

\* *News & Announcements*

\* *Minutes from our March 2010 Meeting*

\* *Summary of Janet Brisson's LCBA Talk*

\* *Business meeting & Bee Q&A*

\* *General LCBA Information Items*

### *Upcoming Events:*

**Weds, April 14, Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., WSU Extension Classroom, Old Chehalis Courthouse:**

**Speaker: Dr. Dewey Caron** will report on recent bee colony losses, both nationwide and in the Pacific Northwest, as well as the natural history of bee colonies. He asks, "do you consider your bee colony a large family where necessary colony tasks are accomplished by individuals that cooperate or do you see it as more of a superorganism, where individuals are comparable to cells of a social body that function as more than just a sum of individual parts? Does our viewpoint matter for our bee stewardship? How can we use such a distinction to help us accomplish the necessary management tasks more effectively? I will conclude with a discussion of the "crunch" points in a bee colonies seasonal life cycle and how we might profit and gain from a better understanding of bee biology to permit more artful application of what they do naturally. How does the way you understand your colonies affect how you work with them as a beekeeper?"

Dewey Caron retired from University of Delaware and now lives in Portland OR, where he is affiliated with Oregon State U. Dewey spent his winter in Bolivia (where he keeps Africanized honey bees) and recently gave a series of talks to OH and MI beekeeper groups. He is President of Western Apicultural Society WAS and will bring news of their annual meeting in Salem OR Aug 29th - Sept 2nd (see website for program and registration information [groups.ucanr.org/WAS/](http://groups.ucanr.org/WAS/)). He is also conducting a national survey of winter bee colony losses and a separate survey of PNW beekeepers and will provide some preliminary information on the continuing epidemic of bee losses (see the March ABJ for a report of PHW losses last year). He will pass a voluntary survey form around asking about losses in this region and what is being done to reduce mite populations.

Dewey will have a PowerPoint presentation that he will make available for us to post on our soon to be unveiled LCBA website (see below).

## **April 17 & 18: Hive-Your-Bees Workshops at the Sherwoods'**

- \* **Time: 10 a.m., 2 p.m., and 6 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday**
- \* **No reservations needed: you can just show up**
- \* **Address & Directions [removed from online edition]**

About to have your first bees, or just want to see how others do it? Jason & Heather will offer a workshop for those who want help hiving bees. Those of you who have ordered bees from Jason & Heather can pick up your bees and equipment at the workshop, then leave with bees & gear.

Bee aware: there is a shortage of bees this year, and Jason & Heather have learned that no second pickup will be possible from their Oliveras, CA source. As of Saturday, 4/3, only 19 packages were still available to order. For more information, see "Want Bees," below, for a breakdown of prices & available equipment.

**May 12 LCBA Monthly Meeting: Speaker & Topic TBA (watch for the next newsletter; we may have news at our April meeting)**

**May Lyceum Lectures at Centralia College:**

<http://www.centralia.edu/news/lyceum-schedule.html>

These are *not* LCBA events, but members might be interested. All Lyceums are Wednesdays from 1-1:50 p.m. and are free & open to the public.

**May 12: Mike Peroni, Boistfort Valley Farm, "Faith in the Soil": Mike will describe the challenges & opportunities of work as a certified organic farmer. Washington Hall 103, 1-1:50 p.m.**

**May 19: Lisa Weasel, Professor of Biology, Portland State University: "Food Fray": the pros and cons of genetically modified organisms in food, based on her research and recent book of the same title. 1-1:50 p.m. in Washington Hall 103.**

**May 26: Tom Mulder, Director, Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument: Tom will speak on the pros and cons of the proposal to make Mt. St. Helens a full-fledged national park.**

## **News and Announcements:**

*Coming soon: the LCBA Website!* Sheila Gray, Lewis County WSU Extension agent and our LCBA liaison to WSU Extension, is getting an LCBA page ready for the WSU Extension website. The page will include a brief description of our mission, when/where we meet, and contact information for our officers. The site will be linked to [www.sherwoodbees.com](http://www.sherwoodbees.com), where LCBA will have more detailed information, including

an archive of past newsletters, links to other sites with bee information, photo galleries, and more. Let us know what YOU'D like to see on the website at our April meeting!

***Want Bees & Equipment? LCBA members Jason & Heather Sherwood have hive building materials and pre-assembled hives, as well as smokers, wax and plastic foundation boards, and, of course, bees! To see their price list, visit: [2012 note: Sherwood Bees is no longer in business; see Beekeeping Supply Options on our website for information.]***

### ***\* Minutes from our March 2010 Meeting***

***Speaker: Janet Brisson of “CountryRubes.com” spoke on “Healthy Bees & Environmentally Friendly Varroa Control”:*** how to monitor and manage your hives, bees and varroa mites using screened bottom boards, powdered sugar, and drone brood manipulations.

Janet's contact information: email, [rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com); website, [www.CountryRubes.com](http://www.CountryRubes.com); phone, 530 913 2724; address, 20693 Dog Bar Road, Grass Valley, California, 95949.

*What follows are brief notes on Janet's talk; we will soon be able to post her PowerPoint on our new LCBA website.*

*Janet's background:* Janet and her husband started beekeeping in 1995 in Grass Valley, California. Their neighbors were commercial beekeepers who lost their colonies to Varroa mites, and so the spectre of mites and parasites has been on her mind since she began working with bees. Mites were becoming resistant to pesticides. Janet was inclined to organic beekeeping. She was told that she should give up using Apistan—when she used it, she found that colonies collapsed because infected bees climbed back up inside the hives. Using screened bottom boards seemed to resolve this problem.

*Janet's bottom board design:* Janet and her husband began to make their own bottom boards and encountered issues with sticky boards: rain rolled into the hives through the back entry. Further, she wanted to have a front and back entrance to her hives, yet avoid having places where ants and moths could gather underneath. This led to her new design, which she demonstrated for us, and which can be viewed at her website (see contact information, above). 60 members in her bee club wanted the new screened bottom boards, and she and her husband began to market them.

*Treating for mites with powdered sugar:* In Spring 2005, the Brissons' hives had a huge mite load. Fall applications of Apistan had failed. From Randy Oliver, they learned about treating mites with powdered sugar. They sifted powdered sugar into the frames in the bee boxes, and it dropped so many mites that the bottom boards turned black: they stopped counting at 1400 mites! They began to dust their frames once a

week with powdered sugar, and to use liquid Sucracide every 7 days to get mites that were in the capped brood. By September of 2005, their mite loads were way down. Data in her PowerPoint showed the impact of dusting to kill mites.

*What kind of sugar should be used?* Janet recommends using only cane sugar. It is true that some commercial brands contain corn starch, but cane sugar does not seem to harm bees: she has used it since 2005 with no problems. She does suggest avoiding genetically modified brands, because you can't know what is in them.

*How to dust?* Janet recommends using 2 heaping cups of powdered sugar per hive in a three week period to knock down as many mites as possible. Dust, brush, and be sure that the sugar falls through and goes down to the sticky boards. Bees are ok if they are covered in powdered sugar, though they will not be happy the first time you dust them, they get used to it. Do it quickly, so as not to leave your hives open. The bees will groom themselves for 3+ days after dusting.

*How does dusting affect the mites:* dusting will knock phoretic mites (hanging mites) off the bees. The mites have sticky pads on their feet: once they get on a bee, they can be almost impossible to detach. However, the sugar gets on the mites' pads, so they cannot cling on the bees. It is important to sift the sugar so that it will be fine enough to get onto the mites' feet. To detach a mite from a bee, sprinkle sugar on the bee, and then touch the mite with a file.

*When to start dusting?* The time to start is March, continuing to mid to late June. If your board is black with mites, dust again in 3 to 4 days; if there are few mites, dust again in 7 days. She suggests dusting every 7 days OR 3 times in 3 weeks as maintenance between honey flows. To deal with severe infestations, dust every 3 to 5 days over 3 weeks. Janet recommends dusting again in late summer – early September: after the thistle flow, pull the honey, and dust as suggested above.

*Observation and Integrated Pest Management (IPM):* Janet emphasized that beekeepers cannot know the state of their hives unless it is possible to observe mites. The screened, sticky bottom boards that can easily be inserted and slid out make “integrated pest management” (IPM) feasible. When pulling out the sticky board, look where the brood shadows are: that mirrors where the clusters of bees are in the hive. It is necessary to clean the board, once it has been covered.

*What should beekeepers use to treat the sticky boards?* Janet recommends canola oil, petroleum jelly, or PAM spray. Canola oil lasts well, but it will get rancid if left out in the sun: that is why Randy Oliver uses petroleum jelly. The boards also make it possible to determine whether hives are leaking, because you will see water on the board.

*Ventilation issues:* the bottom boards and hive entrance excluders enable beekeepers to control ventilation. For more on this, look for the reference to Jean Pierre Chapleau on her website (see above). If you make your own bottom boards, Janet emphasizes that it is important to make wide insert spaces with removable doors.

*Drone brood management:* 10-1, mites prefer drones to worker brood. To avoid breeding mites, remove drone brood at about 3 to 4 weeks: if you wait longer, you risk just breeding mites.

*For more information. . .* Visit Janet's website (above) for information on how to make your own wasp traps, how to deal with hive beetles, etc. Janet also recommends visiting Randy Oliver's website: <http://scientificbeekeeping.com>.

*Buying screened bottom board:* Janet sells her screened bottom boards through her website, and sells "seconds" for \$32; waxed entrance reducers sell for \$2 and fit all bottom boards.

*Raffle:* Janet raffled off one of her screened bottom boards, and Robert Tuininga was the lucky winner.

***Business meeting:*** Vice President Norm Switzler convened the meeting.

*Treasurer's Report:* Treasurer Sarah Roebas reported that our account balance is \$1,433.90. Sarah asked anyone who has not yet paid dues please to do so (\$24/year for individuals/families).

*WASBA corporate membership for LCBA?* At our February meeting, Norm asked LCBA members to consider whether we want to join WASBA and noted that we would vote on the question at this, our March meeting.

We discussed the pros and cons of joining WASBA. One chief benefit would be direct connection to state developments in beekeeping. It was noted that we can access their website and find out information from their newsletters already.

As WASBA members, LCBA could apply for grant funding up to \$3000 to fund local projects, provided that our organization would match whatever the grant amount approved by WASBA would be. We could investigate funding the "bee team" swarm removal project this way, as well as apply for funds to get an LCBA honey extractor.

Another benefit of joining WASBA is that LCBA would be listed on the WASBA website: free advertising (or paid for by our membership dues) that would help interested potential members in the area connect to us.

One member asked whether we would be paying for things that benefit others, not LCBA members, noting that if we want to donate funds for research, we can do that as individuals. Others supported the idea of helping fund research into apiary issues in Washington.

The question also arose whether we would be bound by WASBA rules. The answer was that, no, WASBA does not have power to regulate LCBA if we join. Further, if we join, we can always un-join.

**WSBA Dues:** WSBA charges \$1 for each dues-paying member in a local organization like ours. If LCBA paid that fee through our treasurer, we would all be members. Individuals also can become members based on the number of hives they have. Treasurer Sarah reported that we have 27 dues-paying families on the books, so our WASBA joining cost would be only \$27.

Norm called for a vote. 24 present voted yes; 2 voted no. LCBA members thus *approved* that LCBA will join WASBA for 2010.

#### *Beekeeping Q&A:*

**Feeding issues:** Now that the weather has warmed up, the question of when to start feeding bees was posed. Norm urged anyone who starts feeding to keep feeding; though bees can gather more food from one day of foraging than they can eat in a day, if there is a cold snap, they could run out, and the newly hatching eggs laid by the queen once feeding starts may strain the available food supply.

If feeding bees 50/50 sugar/water fluid, this should be done with care because of the fungus risk. Janet noted that putting “Honey B Healthy” in the food will help with the mold, though it will not cut down the moisture.

Dr. Dewey Caron, our April 14 speaker, will have plenty of knowledge to share on issues of feeding, medicating, CCD, and more. Bring your questions on April 14!

#### **General information items:**

- ***Need Help with Your Bees? Call LCBA Secretary Susanne at 360 880 8130 or email Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com, and she will put you in touch with a mentor in your area.***
- ***Join the LCBA Bee Team for Swarm / Colony Removals!*** Soon the LCBA “Bee Team” will start getting calls from Lewis County residents who’d like bees removed from structures on their properties. LCBA does this for free: Norm, Bob Harris, Dave Smith, Jason Sherwood, and others have been the team leaders. If you’d like to join, or simply ride along and see how it’s done, contact Susanne (360 880 8130). Norm is planning to do more documentation on how the removed swarms over-winter, hoping to figure out what the best dates are to remove swarms and hive them.
- ***LCBA Swap Meet—real or virtual!*** Got bee equipment to sell, swap, or give away? Email Susanne Weil, LCBA secretary, Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com, or call 880 8130. Have a “bee wish list”? Email that, too.

- ***LCBA T-shirts and caps:*** Queensboro has lowered their prices on LCBA T-shirts, long-sleeved shirts, caps, etc. They offer an unconditional 10 year guarantee and will replace items if they get torn or broken. To order online, visit <http://www.queensboro.com> and use our LCBA logo number: **11342127**.

Respectfully reported,  
Susanne Weil, LCBA Secretary