

Lewis County Beekeepers' Association: *February 2009 Newsletter*

IN THIS EDITION:

- **LCBA News and Upcoming Events:**
 - ***Next LCBA Meeting: Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 7 p.m.*** at the WSU Extension classroom in Chehalis.
 - ***March Speaker: TBA***
 - ***February Is Dues Month for LCBA Members:*** In the bylaws, dues for individual and family memberships alike are \$24/year. This year's dues are pro-rated from October, so members are asked to pay \$16 in February. If you didn't pay in February, LCBA will still gladly take your \$\$ in March :)
 - ***LCBA Logo Contest!*** LCBA needs a logo to put on our brochure and website. Got ideas? Bring sketches to the next meeting. We'll vote, and the winner's prize will be a dues rebate for the first year of membership.
 - ***Want Bees?***
 - **John Edwards of Ruhl Bees, Portland will give discounts to LCBA members.**
 - **\$75 and deposit for 3 pounds of bees + a queen**
 - **Carnelian bees from northern California**
 - **Contact information:**
 - **Phone: 503 657 5399**
 - **Online: www.ruhlbeesupply.com** (focus on honeybees); and
 - **www.orchardbees.com** (focus on Mason bees).
 - **FYI: Hive costs in California and Florida are going up because of drought.**
- **Notes from our January speakers' talk: Paul Lundy, newsletter editor for the Washington State Beekeepers' Association**
- **Minutes of our 2/11/09 Business Meeting. Topics included:**
 - ***Minutes of 1-14-09 Business Meeting Approved***
 - ***Logo Contest Approved***
 - ***Discount Bees from Ruhl's***
 - ***LCBA Members can sell honey at Chehalis Farmers' Market***

February Speaker: Paul Lundy and Lewis Matej, Washington State Beekeepers' Association

website: www.wasba.org; Paul's email, editor@wasba.org; Lewis' email, tacomabeekeeper@wamail.ne; Lewis' phone, 253 921 5612)

Paul and his bees: Bob introduced Paul Lundy, the newsletter editor of the Washington State Beekeepers' Association, and Lewis Matej. Paul and his wife Lisa have ten hives: when he inspected them, he discovered that they lost three this year. One hive had Varroa mites; two dwindling colonies would have because they had enough honey stored, but their numbers dwindled to very few. 10% loss is average; 30% loss is not normal.

Washington State Beekeepers' Association: The mission of the WASBA is to serve Washington beekeepers, helping them maintain vibrant associations; to assist the agricultural community; to improve relations between beekeeping associations and the public, as well as between industry and the public at local, state, and national levels; and to enhance education in beekeeping in the state of Washington. The organization is staffed by volunteers. Jane Bedinger maintains the WASBA website for a base fee plus honey.

Outreach: The WASBA website (www.wasba.org) lists contact information for all local beekeeping associations in Washington. They publish a newsletter six times a year, and LCBA can get this if we join. The WASBA representative for southwest Washington is Bob Smith of Yelm (his contact information is on the website).

Lobbying the State Legislature on Behalf of Beekeepers: Bob asked if WASBA lobbies the state for better rules for beekeepers, and wondered why there is no state apiarist. Paul said that WASBA does work with the Legislature and it is hard to get a voice for agriculture. Sometimes they have success: in 2008, WASBA got an exception for the B & O tax for commercial beekeepers; this had not been available for beekeepers before, because the State Department of Revenue didn't see beekeeping as agriculture.

State support for agriculture has dropped over the years, and the apiary program is a classic case. It was a fee-based program that paid for itself for a long time. Then tree fruit farmers were charged \$1/set for pollination fees and didn't want to pay it. The remaining broker fee doesn't come close to paying for an apiarist's salary, and so Jim Bock, the last state apiarist, retired in the late 1990s. The state has funding for research on colony collapse syndrome, but not for a state apiarist.

WSU Lab to which beekeepers can send samples: Paul reported that WASBA got the state to re-create a volunteer committee: WASBA fees go into that fund, and the committee recommends how it should be spent. The top priority is the health of honeybees. The committee has spent \$25,000 to start a WSU honeybee lab to which beekeepers can send samples. This is a free service, and information on how to use it is on WASBA's website, along with a form telling where and how to send the sample. Typically, one sends half a cup of bees preserved in alcohol in a screw-cap container, like

those used for urine samples. Isopropyl alcohol, 7%, is ok. As long as the sample is below 60 milliliters, it can be sent through the U.S. Mail. Dr. Steve Shepherd, a honey bee entomologist, evaluates the samples: the fees help pay his salary, and they are working on grants.

Another WSU lab service: providing free, healthy queen bees: Representative queens from queen breeders all over the U.S. have been sent to Pullman and are culled into a/b/c groups based on their traits. The lab gives the best queens, for free, to beekeeping associations so that they can breed hardy queens for their own local areas. They made 20 queens in 2008. Pierce, Inland, Spokane, N.W. District, and West Sound are the counties/associations participating so far. Would LCBA be interested? WASBA gives scholarships to members. Bob polled LCBA members and none of us are rearing queens so far. The lab used to hold field days to teach beekeepers about raising queens and other practices, but interest waned; WASBA is going to explore starting this up again to help new beekeepers get a feel for beekeeping best practices.

Protecting bees from pesticides: WASBA works with the Washington State Department of Agriculture to protect bees from misused pesticides. There is a system in place to investigate pesticide kills. Information on this is on the WASBA website. Paul distributed copies of an Oregon State University brochure titled "Reduce Bee Poisoning."

Advice on medicating bees: Section 18 (on the website?) concerns medications for miticide: the association supported this. Paul himself is not an advocate of miticide, but said it does depend on how badly one's bees are afflicted. He also noted that there have been reports of hive beetles entering Washington, not surviving here yet, but reported as trying to move in. WASBA advocates minimizing use of pesticides on one's bees to keep them naturally healthy. If Varroa, the biggest killer, is a problem in one's hives, WASBA can advise on the least harsh way to medicate. Paul uses nothing stronger than formic acid because of local environmental impact. Tim Giese asked how alternatives work with larger scale beekeeping. Paul noted that formic acid treats multiple bee pests simultaneously and maybe the only way to avoid using petrochemicals. WASBA consults with Dr. Shepherd at WSU on updates about diseases of bees.

Roy asked Paul about Nozema: Paul said that all of his hives had tested positive for Nozema serrana, and yet his hives are doing well. He uses Fumadil-B to medicate for Nozema. In western Washington, it's necessary to treat because it is so damp. He treats them in the feeder. If the bees are not taking the Fumadil-B, that's a bad sign.

Paul recommended a Canadian publication, *Honeybee Diseases and Pests*, as a great source of information. It's available for \$4 from WASBA. Bob endorsed it as very helpful.

WASBA State Beekeeper Convention: WASBA sponsors an annual convention. In 2008, it was in Vancouver. The convention rotates between Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. It will be in Seaside, Oregon, in fall 2009. Dates and information are on the WASBA website. International researchers come to speak.

WASBA sponsored beekeeping courses: WASBA focuses on education. Paul himself is a member of the West Sound Beekeepers, a WASBA member group, and teaches beginner beekeeping classes. They are helping Jefferson City start a beekeeping class, which will be offered for the first time this year. The WASBA state education committee is a group of nine, including Paul and Lewis. WASBA provides educational standards for the state. The classes help members become effective beekeepers, teaching about how to over-winter colonies successfully. Package bee salesmen need jobs, but if you want to keep your own bees, Paul reports that to open a hive in February and see it warm, alive, and smelling good is a special thing.

Bob commented that LCBA wants to offer sound, science-based programs and outreach to our Lewis County communities and wanted to know how WASBA could help.

3 Levels of Beekeeping Courses: WASBA sponsors Apprentice, Journeyman, and Master Beekeeping classes. For each level, there is a test, and a certificate and patch for those who pass. Prior experience can count toward certification at each level.

The Apprentice course covers honeybees and products; beekeeping equipment; starting up with package bees; spring hive management; honey cultivation in summer; fall hive management; dealing with diseases and pests; handling honeybee stings; pollination; queens and mating; and more. The class starts in January, but one can study individually and still take the test. The test is open book, but to pass one needs to score 80% or higher. One can re-take the test multiple times. Once a beekeeper passes, he/she gets a certificate as a beekeeping apprentice. There is a \$10 fee for the booklet and application form. Bob is taking the course now and will teach it once he passes. For all three levels, there is a patch one can wear after certification.

The Journeyman program is more intense, going into more detail. There are no formal classes: journeymen in training work with a certified journeyman. Usually journeyman students band together in study groups. Becoming a journeyman involves earning service points during years of experience. Leadership in LCBA gives service points; volunteer hours at the Southwest Washington Fair, etc., would also count. We should all keep track: 30 service points (hours?) are needed. Another factor in becoming a Journeyman is having an apiary inspection of one's hives done by another journeyman beekeeper. Once a journeyman passes, he/she gets a certificate.

The Master Course: The master level covers ten different categories, and students write research papers, usually with another master beekeeper student. WASBA needs more master beekeepers. There are only four. Prior experience counts toward becoming a master beekeeper, as does community service in swarm removal. Professional beekeepers can get experience points as long as they can pass the test. LCBA needs to keep records for those doing service points in any of the course levels. WASBA sends a record keeping form.

Any national programs in beekeeping? So far, there are no nation-wide beekeeping associations—just state-based programs. Few states take an active interest in

educating beekeepers. Washington is an exception. Those who go through the course know more and can help themselves and others keep successful hives.

Puyallup State Fair: Vann, one of the test graders, does candles from beeswax, molds comb, etc., and exhibits at the State Fair, which beekeepers can enter. \$1 of a local association's fee for joining WASBA goes to the state and makes the local group an associate member of WASBA, with privileges to exhibit at the State Fair.

When a local association joins WASBA: If an organization like LCBA joins WASBA, then LCBA members can be members of the state group, too, and have a voice in state beekeeping. LCBA would pay \$1 per member per year, and send a note to the treasurer, Bob Hastica. Bob, as LCBA president, would be *ex officio* on the WASBA board. 10 years ago, WASBA was not doing much, but this has changed: LCBA member Roy Schaafsma attested to this. Paul said that he joined to help make the organization more proactive. For example, the newsletter didn't even get published in the past: now it comes out six times a year, both in print and posted on WASBA's website.

Individual WASBA memberships are based on the number of colonies you have. From 0 to 50 colonies, it costs \$15 to join; from 51 to 150 colonies, \$22.50; and so on. The fee schedule is posted on the WASBA website. Many commercial beekeepers join to help support state services and liaison with the Department of Agriculture.

Statewide meeting in Ellensburg, 2/20/09: Bob and Norm will attend to learn more about WASBA.

Insurance through WASBA? Bob asked if WASBA offers opportunities for groups like LCBA to get covered for statewide insurance. Paul said no and doesn't think we need it.

Subscriptions through WASBA: If LCBA joins WASBA, we can get a group discount on *American Bee Journal* and *Bee Culture*. It's simple: fill out the form, write the check, and get 25% off (this means \$6 less for *Bee Culture*, \$4 off for *American Bee Journal*). This would be for individual subscriptions through a bulk order handled by the LCBA secretary. Paul left subscription forms with Bob and Susanne.

Gloveless beekeeping: Paul recommends gloveless beekeeping as a way to be gentler with bees and make inspections faster. Bob endorsed this, saying he's been sting-free for three years with this technique. Paul noted that he had developed a honeybee sting allergy over time, but after two years of bee venom therapy, was fine.

LCBA joining WASBA? We will decide at our March meeting. We thanked Paul and Lewis for visiting and sharing their information with us.

Minutes of February 11, 2009 Business Meeting:

Bob Harris called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. and began the business meeting while we waited for our speaker, Paul Lundy of Washington State Beekeepers' Association, to arrive.

* **Minutes** of the 11/12/08 meeting were *approved*.

* **New Members Introduced:** New members Howard Skidmore, Scott Pollock, Mike Stedham, and Wade Henke were introduced. (Note from Susanne: I apologize if I missed anyone—please let me know your name and contact information at our next meeting!)

* **Gardening For Everyone:** LCBA will have a table at the Lewis County Master Gardeners' "Gardening for Everyone" event on February 14 at Centralia College. Bob, Norm, Sarah, Susanne, and Peter volunteered to staff.

* **LCBA Bank Account:** Bob, Sarah, and Norm Switzler (our vice president) have set up the LCBA account at Washington Mutual, using the \$200 seed money grant that Bob obtained from the Farm Bureau. Since LCBA did this before Chase completed its takeover of WAMU, LCBA has been "grandfathered" in with no monthly fees on the account.

* **LCBA Dues:** Dues are, well, due. Sarah collected dues from many of those present. In the bylaws, \$24/year (for individual and family memberships alike) is listed as our dues rate, with our year beginning in October. Dues will be pro-rated, so members are asked to pay \$16 in February.

* **LCBA Website:** Bob announced that LCBA can get LCBA.org as a domain name and that our website can be hosted at Rose of Sharon Farm's website at no cost to LCBA. Members approved Bob to file for the domain name and start the website.

* **Want Bees?**

- **John Edwards of Ruhl Bees, Portland will give discounts to LCBA members.**
 - **\$75 and deposit for 3 pounds of bees + a queen**
 - **Bees from northern California; Carnelian queen with Italian bees as "escorts"**
 - **Contact information:**
 - **Phone: 503 657 5399**
 - **Online: www.ruhlbeesupply.com** (focus on honeybees); and
 - **www.orchardbees.com** (focus on Mason bees).

*** Selling LCBA Members' Honey at Chehalis Farmers' Market:** LCBA can buy a group membership in the Chehalis Farmers' Market. This would allow all LCBA members to sell their individually produced and bottled honey at Bob Harris' booth. Bob can't sell for LCBA colleagues unless the group buys a membership. We have several months to decide. It was noted that there is a big desire for locally produced honey at the Market. Only the Oakville Blueberry folks have been selling honey, and they sell out each month. It's likely that those who sell at the market would recoup the cost of joining the market. **QUESTION—DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE INDIVIDUAL LCBA MEMBERS WOULD PUT THEIR PROFITS BACK INTO LCBA?**

We agreed to think about this and decide at our March meeting.

*** March speaker:** TBA. **QUESTION—WOULD IT MAKE SENSE TO HAVE A WORKSHOP INSTEAD OF A FORMAL MEETING – A WORKSHOP FOCUSED ON HELPING THOSE WHO HAVE JUST BOUGHT BEES WORK WITH THEIR BEES—DAILY CARE AND FEEDING ISSUES—ETC?**

OR—could we have Bob and Norm speak on what they learned at the Ellensberg WASBA meeting?

*** Possible April Speakers:** The Gieses are going to a March symposium on biodynamics and bees and possibly could speak in April about what they learn.

Respectfully submitted,
Susanne Weil
LCBA Recording Secretary
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