

Lewis County Beekeepers' Association:

July 2012 Newsletter

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Upcoming LCBA Events:

July 11: LCBA Monthly Meeting – Our Annual Summer Potluck, 6 p.m. at Rose of Sharon Farm. Thanks to Bob & Sharon Harris for opening their farm to us again ☺

Please note: We're starting at 6 p.m, not 7 p.m., but stop in when you can.

Where: Rose of Sharon Farm (if you are a nonmember not on our mailing list and are interested in attending LCBA events, please contact LCBA's secretary for information about directions: Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or call 360 880 8130).

Please bring:

- Food to share, a chair, plate, & cutlery. If you've got a card table to share, please bring it along. For food, please bring whatever you like. Of course, recipes involving honey are always welcome!
 - *If you're interested in finding some new honey recipes, check the National Honey Board, www.honey.com.*
- Bob will have a grill ready to go and will provide cold drinks.
- If you want to look inside some hives, bring your bee suit!
- Door Prize Raffle! Do you have some gently used (or even new) beekeeping gear or related items that you'd like to donate? If so, please bring them.
- If you want a refund on a package box from Ruhl's, please bring your box....
- July Meeting Agenda: This summer potluck will be mainly for socializing, with a short agenda:
 - Update: How Are Your Bees Doing?—Troubleshooting Q&A
 - Update on Southwest Washington Fair – LCBA booth
 - September Elections for LCBA Board of Directors. Our Bylaws provide for elections in September. This year, the Vice President & Secretary offices are up for election. If you are interested in serving, please contact President Norm Switzler at 330 1788.

July 14-15: Queen Rearing class, West Sound Beekeeping Association, Silverdale, WA; see announcements section of this newsletter for details.

August 8: LCBA Monthly Meeting at Centralia College, 701 W. Walnut Street. For this meeting only, we'll be in the College's New Science Center, Room 111, just across the street from our regular meeting room. Greeters will be there to steer folks in the right direction.

Speakers: Report from Queen Rearing Class. Norm Switzler, Ted Saari, Tim Geise, Jon Wade, and Dave Gaston will report on what they learned at the West Sound Beekeeping Association class in July, and we'll discuss the possibilities of starting our own LCBA queen rearing program.

Tracheal Mites: How to Find Out If Your Hives Are Affected – and What To Do If They Are. Renzy Davenport, Olympia Beekeepers' Association, will describe his experiences with tracheal mites and what he did about it. Since our bees are most vulnerable to these mites in fall and winter, this talk will be timely.

Business Meeting & Beekeeping Q&A

September 12: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College.

Speaker: Norm Switzler will lead discussion: Preparing to Over-Winter Your Bees

Business Meeting, including LCBA Board Elections, & Beekeeping Q&A

October 4-7: Joint WSBA and Western Apicultural Society Annual Conference, Embassy Suites at Tukwila, just north of the Seattle Airport, WA. For details, see the Announcements section, below.

October 10: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College

Topic: TBA

NOTES FROM OUR JUNE 13 MEETING:

**Movie Night! *Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us?*
(Produced by John Betz: ©Collective Eye, Inc., 2010)**

Released in 2011, *Queen of the Sun* gives an 80-minute overview of problems challenging honey bee survival today. It features spectacular photography (nicely showcased at our new meeting location) and interviews with beekeepers and scientists from many different countries. Below, I've summarized some of the film's key points. For more information, visit the film's website, www.queenofthesun.com, where you can also buy a copy (LCBA members are also welcome to borrow Peter's and my copy if you missed this meeting or want to see the film again: Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com.)

"Their crisis is our crisis." – Gunther Hauk, a biodynamic beekeeper from Germany who founded a bee sanctuary in Virginia, here voices the film's message: he argues that colony collapse disorder is "a bill we are getting for what we have done to the bees, taken from them. This crisis gives us a chance to learn."

The film gives a brief overview of beekeeping around the world and through history, showing tomb carvings from ancient Egypt, Hindu art from India, and assorted paintings and carvings that show the long-standing relationship people have had with bees: 2000 year old honey discovered in the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamen was still edible! As a beekeeper from

Great Britain notes, “We should be revering them because they’re keeping us alive – not the other way around.” (Fun fact not noted in the film: in Hindu mythology, Kama, god of love, strikes his victims using a bow and arrows made of bees: the film image of the multi-armed god with bees swarming around his smiling face was Kama.)

Eric Olsen speaks for migratory beekeepers, describing how $\frac{3}{4}$ of all bees in the U.S. are trucked to California annually to pollinate the almond crop. Olsen and journalist Michael Pollan (author of *The Botany of Desire*, which has a major section devoted to the honey bee) discuss damage done to bees in this process. First, Pollan notes that the bees are fed high fructose corn syrup – not only is this not good for bees, it’s a terrible irony to feed the creators of honey an artificial sweetener. Second, millions of bees die in the holding yards just waiting to pollinate. Third, the melting pot of the almond fields throws open a doorway to disease: the USDA permitted Australian bees to be brought in to help pollinate, and that was when mites got into the U.S. bee population. Pollan comments that southern California becomes a “bee bordello” every spring, and the bees take home all the maladies they pick up.

Raj Patel (author of *Stuffed and Starved*) calls the monocrop practice “the original sin of agriculture”: the film showed disturbing footage of vast fields in the Midwest where, as the narrator comments, honey bees can’t survive – there are no hedgerows with natural food, just corn and soybeans, which are largely wind pollinated. The film links the large losses of colony collapse disorder to monocrop processes. In 2002, 40% of the bee colonies in Germany died; in 2006, 60% of bees in the U.S. died. Gunther Hauk comments: “the bees are saying that if you continue your ways, we are withdrawing.” It’s doubtful that bees are consciously thinking such things, but this is the effect. Michael Thiele of the Melissa Garden notes that all the individuals in a bee colony dedicate their lives to the greater organism, something he sees as “a selflessness, letting go of ego” to become part of a “superorganism”; in colony collapse disorder, the bees are dying as a superorganism.

What can be done? In Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains, Gunther Hauk has created a 610-acre bee sanctuary, Spikenard Farm, with his wife Vivian and help from donors. It is an oasis for bees, ringed around with Monsanto-seeded crops. In a memorably poetic line, Hauk comments, “I see the flight of the bee like a golden thread in the landscape.” (You can visit the sanctuary online at <http://www.spikenardfarm.org/>). The Melissa Garden in Healdsburg, California, is another bee sanctuary (www.themelissagarden.com). Massimo Carpentieri, an Italian “slow food” beekeeper, also has a sanctuary. One hopeful motif in *Queen of the Sun* is its documentation that helping bees is a movement growing worldwide.

Vendana Shiva, Indian biologist, argued against pesticide use, noting early studies linking pesticides to honey bee navigation problems. Another biologist, May Berenbaum, noted that what makes bees particularly vulnerable to pesticide toxicity is that bees are designed electrostatically to gather pollen on their body hairs as well as their leg baskets (corbicula). The Bee Genome Project discovered that bees lack the capacity to break down toxins, and this makes them especially vulnerable to neonicotinoids and other chemicals in pesticides. Not only honey bees, but other pollinators are declining from pesticide poisoning, coupled with habitat loss from monocrop agriculture and urbanization. Scott Black of the Xerxes Society noted that not only

native bees, but flies, beetles, and other insects play important roles in pollination (Xerxes has a very informative webpage: <http://www.xerxes.org/>).

Genetically modified foods, too, are criticized in this film. A “gene gun” was shown injecting genetic material into plants. Vendana Shiva noted that genetic modifications require antibiotic regulation: crops are treated with antibiotics like oxytetracycline. Ingesting foods treated with antibiotics has been shown to lead to antibiotic resistance in people. Bees, too, may become resistant through contact with genetically modified crops and thus more susceptible to viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites. Jeffrey Smith (author of *Seeds of Deception*) argues that genes bees pick up from GM plants get into the bees’ gut bacteria, with bad results. “Nature is very patient for a long time – but there is a moment when things collapse,” Hauk commented.

The film displayed amazing footage of Varroa mites and interviewed a Welsh beekeeper who has stopped treating with Apistan. He argues that if we let bees adapt to mites, it may be better for them than treating them with chemicals: he believes that we are weakening bees with medications rather than letting the bees who are resistant to mites be the ones to reproduce. “Let the mite and the bee co-evolve,” he urged.

Queen rearing was presented as a conflict between inbreeding to fix traits and natural genetic diversity: the film argues that commercial queen rearing weakens bees, causing queens to live only 2 to 3 years as opposed to four to five years, and forcing beekeepers to re-queen colonies more and more often. Gunther Hauk commented that artificial insemination of queens is, in a way, like monocrop agriculture, trying to create a “standard brand” of bee.

Swarm behavior was exalted in the film as “joie de vivre” for bees, a natural process that may be essential to honey bee health. A Portland woman who does swarm removals and gives packages to new beekeepers argued that getting a swarm means getting a healthier colony than a “manufactured” package. (A less than elegant swarm removal pictured in this segment of the film got a big laugh from our audience....)

Urban beekeeping was featured as a growing movement around the world, helping people who want to grow small plots of vegetables and fruits in cities. The film showed a march in New York City, where it was illegal to keep rooftop bees, in support of a bill that was introduced to legalize the process (this bill did pass after the film was produced).

In a final section, the film explored the healing properties of honey and beekeeping. A New Zealand couple described how they treated a horse whose leg was badly burned in an electric fence with manuka honey: the before and after photos were a great advertisement! The film also showed a program in which people with disabilities were taught to work with bees. The manager of this program explained that just as bees are biologically dependent on community and cannot live alone, so too people. As the film closed, Gunther Hauk commented, “Bees are the most exquisite beings: they show us what service can be like.”

There are moments when *Queen of the Sun* veers into exaggeration: for example, one voice-over speaker comments that honey was considered to be so sacred that it was not sold until the 20th century (clearly not true if one studies records of U.S. colonial history or reads accounts

of honey used as an item of barter in 18th and 19th century British literature). And it's hard to imagine wanting to stroke bees with one's mustache, as one beekeeper in the film does: don't try this at home! However, it's hard to ignore the film's overarching argument: we have changed the bees' world, and we now owe it to them and to ourselves to fix what has been put awry.

LCBA Monthly Business Meeting - Notes:

Following the film, Tim Geise commented that he has Gunther's book: he has met him and, a couple of years ago, Tim spent a week at the Melissa Garden. (If you'd like to see the notes from Tim's 2009 talk about this, please contact Susanne, and she'll send them.) Norm noted that he'd like to know more about the biodynamic philosophy. This might be good topic for a future meeting.

WASBA Representative Visit: LCBA has joined WASBA, which makes all dues-paying LCBA members associate members of WASBA, and makes our organization one of WASBA's affiliates. If you're interested in becoming a full member of WASBA as an individual, check with Charles Bennett, our newly elected Area 2 representative for the Washington State Beekeepers' Association (WASBA), for details – his contact information is below. Charles traveled from Vancouver to visit our June 13 meeting and talk with us. Charles reviewed services that WASBA offers:

- Works to help local beekeeping associations, both through education about beekeeping practices, as in the WASBA apprentice beekeeping class materials, and by holding an annual conference (see announcements section of this newsletter) that brings together beekeeping experts to report on both recent research developments about bees and beekeeping practices;
- Offers grants to local beekeeping associations for community service and research projects;
- Networks and lobbies our state government, representing beekeepers in Washington. As Charles noted, if pending legislation has to do with bees and beekeeping, the government isn't likely to seek out individual beekeepers, but representatives will look to WASBA. Although most laws touching bees and beekeeping will be focused on commercial beekeeping, these can affect hobbyists.
- Raises funds to help Washington State U – Pullman's honey bee research programs. A portion of the money raised when beekeepers register hives with the state goes to this. Also, when individual beekeepers join WASBA as full members, a portion of their dues goes to WSU's research program.
- To contact Charles with any questions, call 360-200-3093 or email: cbennett3491@comcast.net.

Southwest Washington Fair: Brandy DeMelt asked for volunteers to staff a booth at the Fair. We can have a no-cost booth in the Agriculture Building near the gardening exhibits. Unlike when we were co-located with the Sherwoods in the commercial section, this time LCBA would need to commit to staff a booth all day for each day the fair is open – 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Brandy asked for volunteers willing to serve 2 (or more) hour stints. We have until the 15th of

July to commit to this, so we can raise the question again at our July potluck meeting. ***FYI post-meeting: the Fair has given us a dozen free admissions tickets and parking passes; the board voted to pay for a dozen more of each at the cut rate we have been offered as exhibitors, so volunteers should be able to attend and park for free.***

What can LCBA display at the Fair? Sharette Geise noted that she has display trifolds of the anatomy of the bee. Other members also have display items, and we could have fliers and our new business cards available for distribution. There is ambiguity about whether or not we could have our observation hive on display there, and Brandy thought that setting has restrictions against this. As long as the booth is staffed during open hours, security of items should not be a problem.

What would LCBA members staffing the booth do? This is a great opportunity for LCBA to do outreach to the public and answer questions people have about bees. If members run into questions that they can't answer, they can give fliers and point out the bee mentors' list. It's also a chance to publicize our free swarm / colony removal service. It would also be a chance to let people know about our group and what we offer.

Beekeeping Supply Options: Except for the online suppliers, all of these vendors have visited LCBA meetings and talked about their wares.

(Detailed information on all vendors below was included in past newsletters. If you'd like those details, please email Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com.)

- ***In Lewis County:***

- *Tim Weible, The Honey Hut at Centralia Deli Steak & BBQ, 708 Harrison, Exit # 82 off I-5, 2 1/2 blocks east on your left. Phone, 360-736-1015; email, centdelisteakbbq@aol.com; website, Centraliadelisteakandbbq.com.*

- ***Elsewhere in Washington:***

- ***ROCHESTER:*** John Martin, 19019 Moon Road SW, Rochester 98579; Phone, 360 280 5274; email, hjweaver@emypeople.net.
- ***LAKEWOOD:*** Harvard Robbins: Robbins Honey Farm, 7910 148th St. SW, Lakewood, WA 98439, (253) 588-7033; robbinslh@aol.com
- ***PORT ORCHARD:*** Darren Gordon, House of Bees, 360 710 1483, www.houseofbees.com

- ***In Oregon:***
 - ***Ruhl Bees, Portland: 17845 SE 82nd Drive, Gladstone, Oregon 97027; Phone, 503 657 5399; email, staff@ruhlbeesupply.com; website, <http://www.ruhlbeesupply.com/>.***
 - ***Priester Farm Bee Supply, 31890 Tide Creek Rd, Deer Island, Oregon 97054; Phone, 503.556.1060; email, beewhisperer@priesterbee.com; website, www.priesterbee.com.***
- ***In California: Country Rubes, 20693 Dog Bar Road, Grass Valley, CA 95949; phone, 530-913-2724; email, rubes@countryrubes.com; website, countryrubes.com. (Owner Janet Brisson has unique screened bottom boards, key to her “integrated pest management” approach to beekeeping.)***
- ***Online Suppliers: for details, check their websites:***
 - ***Dadant: <http://www.dadant.com> / 888 922 1293***
 - ***Mann Lake: <http://www.mannlakeltd.com/> 800 880 7694***
 - if you order \$100 or more, shipping is free
 - ***Glory Bee: <http://beekeeping.glorybee.com/> 800 456 7923***

LCBA / WSBA News and Announcements:

LCBA Members at the Chehalis Farmers' Market

Once again, Bob & Sharon Harris have the LCBA banner flying at their Rose of Sharon Farm booth at the Farmers' Market. They're selling eggs – and they have the Geises' Woogie Bee Honey (multiple flavors, including orange blossom & wildflower). The Farmers' Market is Tuesdays on Boistfort St. in Chehalis, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. through October 23. The market features many other local growers, so come on down and support Lewis County!

Need a Queen?

Steve Howard reports that Ruhl Bee orders new queens every week. If you place your order by a Thursday, the queen will come in by the following Tuesday. The cost for Italian queens is \$26.50. Shipping, (Priority Mail) is \$9.10 for up to a total of five queens. *(Note from Susanne: Peter & I ordered two Italian hygienic queens to re-queen two of our hives. We drove down to get them and the Ruhl's folks were very helpful answering our questions. Five days later, it looks like they've been accepted by their colonies. Fingers crossed!)*

South West Washington Fair

LCBA Booth Needs Volunteers – Can You Help? This year, LCBA has the option of a booth in the Education building near the gardening displays. If we have enough volunteers, we can do this. If you'd like to volunteer for a two hour shift (or more), please contact LCBA Membership Coordinator Brandy DeMelt at 360 880 8813. We have about two dozen free admissions and parking passes available for volunteers, so let Brandy know if you'd like these. If you have already signed up, you have already been assigned free tickets & parking passes – you can pick them up at our July 11 potluck. For more information, see our June business meeting notes, above.

Got Honey? Maybe Your Girls' Work Can Win a Prize at the Fair! If you have comb honey, raw honey, wax, or other “bee products,” you're eligible for the “Class 1 – Bee Products” competition under Department G, Agriculture. There's a children's competition, too. Details are below – if you have further questions, call the Fair's Agriculture Superintendent Sandy Grady, 360 748 3010.

- Entry Day: Monday, August 13, 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Floral Building
- Entry Fee: None (my favorite kind ;)
- Release Day & Time: Sunday, August 19, 7 to 8 p.m. OR Monday, Aug. 20, 10 a.m. till noon

- GENERAL RULES:
 - If you enter, you must fill out an entry form ahead of time & bring it with your entry – you can find forms & print them from the URL below, OR you can pick them up at the fair when you enter; they will have tags for each item, too:
 - <http://southwestwashingtonfair.net/info/entry-forms-times-and-locations>. *(Note from Secretary Susanne – if you don't have a printer, no worries – I'm bringing some hard copies of forms to our July 11 potluck.)*
 - All exhibits must be grown by the exhibitor [or, I guess, the exhibitors' bees!]
 - No one item can compete for more than one prize;

- Limit of one article per person per lot – the exception is the “other” category, where 5 different items are the maximum. Entries in these “other variety” lots must have “variety” written on the tag;
- Exhibits not properly entered may be disqualified. For Bee Products, here are the division, class and lot numbers:
 - Division G01 – Grain – Forage – Farm Products
 - Class 1 – Bee Products
 - Lot:
 - 1. Comb Honey
 - 2. Raw Honey
 - 3. Wax
 - 4. Other [for LCBA, this could be soap, candles, lotions, etc.]
- An exhibit that does not have the quantity specified may be disqualified (I checked with the fair officials, and they don’t specify quantities for honey. A pint jar would be fine, and they do ask that if anyone enters cut comb, please enter it in a jar);
- An exhibit may be given a blue, red, white, or no ribbon even if there is no competition. No ribbons will be given to entries that do not individually merit them;
- Exhibits may be removed on the release day/time noted above. Entries removed early will not be awarded premiums. Exhibits and ribbons not picked up will be forfeited;
- Prizes: 1st = 6 points; 2nd = 5 points; 3rd = 4 points;
- **YOUTH SECTION**: exhibits entered by those aged 12 and under will be judged and displayed separately. Entry forms and tags for exhibitors aged 12 and under should be marked as “Department GK.”

LCBA Bee Mentors: Call if you have questions about your bees!

- If you’d like to be connected with a honey bee mentor in your area, call Susanne at 360 880 8130 or email Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com.
- If you need help with Mason Bees, check with Kimo Thielges (kimosabe@compprime.com), or Ted Saari (KNT98632@q.com).

- **Would You Like to Volunteer as a Bee Mentor?** Bee mentors take calls, answer questions, and may visit members' bee yards. If you're interested in serving this way, please call Susanne at 360 880 8130 or email her at Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com.

Free Swarm & Colony Removals by our "Bee Team." This service is free, though we accept donations to support our educational programs. Need a swarm removed? Call a Bee Team member; want to ride along on a removal? Call Susanne (see contact info above).

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

* **Queen Rearing: July 14 & 15, 2012 9:00am-4:30 p.m.** at West Sound Beekeeping Association, located at Stedman Bee Supplies, Silverdale, WA. Cost: \$125 for individual, \$100 for 2nd individual from same family. By now this class may be full, but if you are interested, check with the registrar, David Mackovjak, trimack@prodigy.net or 360-340-0381.

* For details on these courses visit: <http://www.westsoundbees.org>. You can also contact T.J. at hansvillehoneyfarm@gmail.com.

* **Joint WSBA / Western Apicultural Society Annual Conference, Oct. 4 - 7, 2012.**

Embassy Suites at Tukwila, just north of the Seattle Airport, WA. For information, visit: http://groups.ucanr.org/WAS/Conference_Information

This year's conference will draw a much larger group of beekeepers, because it will be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Washington State Beekeepers' Association. Besides more attendees, there will be more vendors and more invited speakers than typical for a normal WAS Conference. There will be more presentations devoted to commercial beekeeping topics, but we will honor our roots and have concurrent sessions for the small scale interests.

Currently it is estimated that registration will be around \$155 per person and will include lunch on Friday and Saturday, as well as morning and afternoon beverage breaks. It appears that the banquet will cost \$42 per person and will be held between 6:30 and 9:30 on Saturday. Conference details will be available as they become firmed up.

- **American Apitherapy Society: 17th annual Charles Mraz Apitherapy Course & Conference, October 5-7, 2012, Portland, Oregon (Governor Hotel, 614 Southwest 11th Avenue, Portland, 97205).** Contact: American Apitherapy Society, 631-470-9446 aasoffice@apitherapy.org

This conference focuses on apitherapy, therapeutic use of products from the beehive: honey, pollen, royal jelly, propolis, and bee venom therapy. Attendees will receive basic training in the therapeutic properties of each of the hive products. Examples of material covered in these presentations are allergic reactions, techniques of BVT, informed consent and legal issues, propolis and cancer, veterinary apitherapy, wound healing, and more. The AAS is a nonprofit membership organization for the purpose of education in the advancement of apitherapy.

Respectfully reported—bee happy!

Susanne Weil, LCBA Secretary: Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com; 360 880 8130