

Lewis County Beekeepers' Association: *June 2010 Newsletter*

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Upcoming Events:

Sat., May 29, 12:00 - 4:00 or later: “Introduction to the Hive” at the Sherwoods’. This is by reservation only and costs \$25 per person. (If they fill up, they’ll schedule another class.) Bring your bee suit - no hive tools, please. The Sherwoods plan on having an on-going course through the season on Hive Management. To register, please contact the Sherwoods [contact information removed from online edition].

Also: the Sherwoods would like to extend an offer to pick-up any large expensive to ship items, extractors, cappings tanks, bottling tanks, etc. from the California branch of Mann Lake when they go back to drop off the package bee cages. People can just place their order through the Sherwoods and save on the shipping.

Weds, June 9, Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., WSU Extension Classroom, Old Chehalis Courthouse

- *Speakers: Peter Glover & Susanne Weil: “Gardening With Bees In Mind”*

As our bees forage, they may encounter pesticides and other toxins. Though bees will always roam, we can set up our gardens to make them more bee-friendly and inviting. Peter is a Master Gardener, Susanne is an amateur photographer, and they will share ideas & illustrations about southwest-Washington-friendly plants to please your bees. Slideshow and helpful website links included!

- * *Beekeeping Q&A, discussion led by Norm Switzler*
- * *Brief Business Meeting; News & Announcements*

Weds., July 14, July LCBA Meeting: Summer Potluck!

- *Where: Bob Harris’ Rose of Sharon Farm [contact information removed from online edition]*
- *When: 6 p.m. – not 7 p.m.! Please note different time.*

- *Please bring:*
 - *A chair, plate, cutlery, and food to share (whatever you like, though it was suggested that recipes involving honey would be appropriate ☺)*
- *Bob will have a grill ready to go and will provide cold drinks.*
- *July Meeting Agenda: This summer potluck will be mainly for socializing, with a short agenda:*
 - *Update: Southwest Washington Fair. The Sherwoods have reserved a table; we need to discuss what to display, who'll help staff it, & when.*
 - *Update: LCBA bee installations—Troubleshooting Q&A*
 - *4H Program Update*
 - *Treasurer's Report*
 - *Review of the minutes of 6/9/10 Business Meeting*

Weds, August 11: Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m. WSU Extension Classroom, Old Chehalis Courthouse

- * *Speaker: Dr. Tim Lawrence, County Director, WSU Extension, Island Cty.*
- * *Topic: Human Dimensions of Colony Collapse Disorder & Their Impact On Honeybees.*

Dr. Tim Lawrence knows Dewey Caron's and Jim Bach's work, and he will add to our growing understanding as he brings his own research-based perspective to the issue. Prior to taking his position in Island County, Tim was a post-doctoral research associate leading the Honey Bee Health Program in the CAHNRS Department of Entomology in Pullman. Tim worked with beekeepers, growers, and others to identify issues related to the health and viability of honeybees and their pollination efficiency. In his new position, he will be working on honeybee-related topics regularly.

August 30 – September 2:

- * *Washington Apicultural Society of North America*
- * *Salem, Oregon: Annual Conference. Dewey Caron, President.*
- * *For Information, visit <http://groups.ucanr.org/WAS>*

Minutes from our May 2010 Meeting

43 Beekeepers were talking pollinators when VP Norm Switzler called us to attention. Norm reminded us that some books have not returned to our LCBA library in

the WSU Extension office, next door to the classroom where we meet (*Beekeeping for Dummies* and *ABC-XYZ Beekeeping*; if you have them, please return them. Thanks!).

Treasurer's Report: Sarah Roebas reported that our balance is \$1,433.90 in checking; a number of people have not paid dues, so please do. If you aren't sure of your status, check with Sarah. We need the funds to help with those few speakers who charge fees, joining WSBA, possibly helping the Bee Team with their expenses, etc.

When does our dues cycle start? It runs October through September. There is a \$10 joining fee and then \$24 per year (individual or family). You can join midway through starting with the month you are in and pay that portion of the year; check with Sarah if you have questions.

What's Up With Our Bees? Q&A and Beekeeping Discussion

Norm led an informal discussion of what's going on with our bees. The data Dewey Caron shared with us, posted in the May newsletter, showed no apparent correlation with either giving or not giving treatment. Norm had 17 colonies and ended the winter with 8; some small colonies did not make it.

Dealing with Swarms: This is the time to look closely in our boxes for queen cells. Norm has had a swarm re-colonize a box where some bees had died off or disappeared. Carniolans are chewing up old honey. Jason Sherwood noted that if you don't add boxes quickly enough, you may force them to swarm. Think of 7 of 10 frame full rule: that's when to add next box. Norm added that if anyone is not going to work colonies quickly and has an extra box with any frames with comb, it's good practice to keep that ready to hand as a home for bees that may swarm. A swarm may move right into that box because it's already got some comb. Also, if you know people with a structure with bees in them, bring a box and set it nearby, if the people give you permission: the bees may just go in there without having to be manipulated.

What signs of a coming swarm should we be looking for? Supersedure cells (queen cells) could be on the bottom or higher up. These are often on bottom of frame, with workers clustered all around them. But if you don't find the queen and the bees are coming & going with pollen, don't panic: there is just about certainly a queen in there.

Should you discard the queen cells? Yes, unless you want a new queen to fly off with your workers (a bunch of them). You can also scrape off the queen—gently—and re-hive her into a new hive with frames with some comb. If you find a queen cell empty and opened on the side, that means that it was destroyed by the bees; if it was opened from the bottom, that means that a new queen hatched out. That is nature's way of doing a split. You can do "splits" and put an excluder on, separate some workers, then hive them with new queen and some frames. If queen is dying or losing vitality, they will raise a new one. After doing this "split," look for new brood in a couple weeks.

Are swarms natural? Dewey Caron’s Power Point noted that hatching a new queen and part of the hive swarming away with the old queen is a natural cycle. Tim Giese noted that the old queen will leave while the new one is taking her mating flight. We can assist the natural cycle by doing splits; it also serves as a pre-emptive move so we don’t risk losing a colony. It’s helpful to move nurse bees to new hive bottom when you know there are queen cells. Doing this can save the expense of buying a new queen.

Incidence of Nosema: Tim asked whether, in the hives that Norm lost, there had been much nosema. Norm had not observed that and believed the cold weather we had this winter was the culprit.

Q: Does anyone know where to get a particular tree that is called *tetradium*? This tree gives much nectar in August and September, and is also known as a “beebee tree.” Norm suggested looking online to see if it would grow in this climate, and noted that anything that gives nectar in fall is a good thing, like Japanese knotweed, which is the only one Norm knows of that gives late nectar locally.

Announcement from the Sherwoods: Jason brought Russian/Carneolan crosses from Honeybee Genetics—queens—and if anyone is interested, he has them. Also, Jason and Heather ask that if you bought bees from them, would you bring cages back by June, OR hold onto them for next year? Jason’s taking cages back to California in June, so if you don’t return them by then, hold onto them please. Nukes will be ready by May 23 or anytime after that for people who’ve already ordered & deposited. The cost is \$90 for nuke; packages are \$73. Jason is giving them in cardboard nuke boxes, or if you want, bring box out, and let him know, and he’ll transfer them into your box. FYI: there won’t be any extras this year.

What are nukes? In answer to a member’s question, Jason noted that “nukes” are a small, 5-frame “jump start” colony that comes with an already-mated queen, brood, and worker bees. Nukes are great if you are starting late or had a colony die. Nukes offer a proven colony and functioning hive, just looking for a place to grow.

Marie and John Panesko, as brand new beekeepers who got their package bees from the Sherwoods, said that “there’s nothing quite like dumping your own bees into your own hive,” and they quipped that having your own vs. buying nukes is like “the difference between giving birth and adopting.” We could think of nukes as “pre-loved” ;)

Jason noted that their nukes are this year’s or last year’s comb that he [or Heather] re-hived. But many selling nukes are selling black, old comb, getting rid of old comb, so buyer beware: the darker the comb, the more the concentration of chemicals and other nasty things. Toxins accumulate in wax, which is like a sink for toxins. Norm asked what should people do with old wax; Jason thinks it’s best to melt it and do something with it, like make candles.

Allergic reactions: Jason had his first allergic reaction—systemic anaphylaxis—for the first time in his many years of beekeeping. What characterizes an allergic reaction is that, after being stung, you experience a secondary reaction: you get bumps on parts of your body where you were not stung: *i.e.*, if you were stung on wrist, then get bumps on

neck and head, that's a secondary reaction, and you would be wise to get medical help. Jason's going to get shots, but intends to continue working with bees. Norm noted that a reaction is not the end of one's time as a beekeeper. He asked whether anyone carried epi-pens (epinephrine pens): several members do.

How do we know that bees are getting upset enough to sting seriously? Sudden odor and noise signal us that bees are upset. When bees get agitated, they put out a different pheromonal smell. Norm has seen this when he had too many bees crowded in a box: their agitation may be a signal to us that they need their next deep body put on, or at least a super.

What is the best way to calm angry bees down?

***Smokers:** Some have hard time keeping smoker going. Burlap & twigs were suggested, lit by a small propane torch. Norm only uses smoke to drive bees from where they are to where he wants them. Tim doesn't use smoke that much, either. When Jason smokes bees, he uses sisal twine, rolled in a ball, about the length of the smoker container & the diameter of it; he then lights the bottom of the coil and puffs the smoker till the coil gets flaming well.

*** Sugar water spray:** others use sugar water spray (50/50 proportions, or A little thinner to make it easier to spray). Norm recommends sugar water spraying because their hygienic nature makes them want to groom each other clean, and that settles them down and occupies them.

*** Honey-B-Healthy:** this has both spearmint oil & lemon grass oil—calming agents—can be sprayed on the bees. However, a number of beekeepers noted: don't spray Honey-B-Healthy on colonies that are going to be harvested for honey, unless you don't mind the taste of those oils.

Working the frames & dealing with bee aggression: Norm asked: do others find that as you work down the frames of your colonies, they get more aggressive? Tim said that he's had this experience. It may be best to work one box a day and not let them get agitated. If you have a colony of bees whom you know to be aggressive, do them last, not first, so they don't upset the others. There was also a recommendation for tobacco leaf smoke (your scribe apologizes for missing all the details on the tobacco approach!).

What should new beekeepers be doing now, especially if you want to harvest honey this year? Medicating? Now is a good time to stop feeding sugar water; weather is nice enough and there is food available. Norm thinks that honey from flowers and other natural sources superior to honey made from sugar water. Jason says if you want to harvest honey in your first year, feed your bees until you have 2 deep boxes full; then, add a honey super. In fall, give some food. But it really depends on what you want from your bees. There's a potential paradox: if you keep feeding, you may be getting honey from that sugar water.

Tim noted there will be many opinions. Once the blooms start, he stops feeding, but does give sugar water to help them draw their comb; he would use sugar water in the fall, if there is not enough store for the bees to get through the winter. Jason likes Tim's thinking. What bees do: around the brood nest they store honey, and they store above that. As you add supers, they make honey up there. But what are they eating?-- honey from around brood nest and replacing it with nectar. The brood nest will grow over summer and then shrink down in the fall; so, fall is when to start feeding .

Jason noted that 2 deep boxes were not enough for about 6 of his hives. All of these were Italians. They overwintered with too many bees; then early spring weather this year got them breeding too early, and he was too late by just a few days getting food to them, and they died. If you start feeding in early spring, you need to keep feeding till there is a steady food supply that's natural. If you get a cold snap, they may not be able to break their ball and fly; or if they do, may freeze. Jason would rather feed in fall to avoid having to do it in winter and risk condensation problems within the hive bodies.

Norm reported that only those with double brood boxes made it. Those in honey supers died. Italians overwinter with a bigger ball, more bees; they are easier to keep than Carniolans.

When to treat for Nosema: Most treat in the fall. There's argument about whether fumagillin-b even helps with nosema. Tim recommends Randy Oliver's scientific beekeeping website; and see notes from Janet Brisson's talk in March minutes (see our April 2010 newsletter). Norm urges: get a magnifying glass so that you can see fresh eggs on the frames. Medication: Jason treats with Fumagillin for nosema, which is everywhere. He treats them before selling packages.

Announcements:

* BEANS: a member brought some runner beans which were available to plant as bee food.

SWARM/COLONY REMOVALS: Norm and Dave are looking for people in Morton, Mossyrock, Longview, Rochester etc. to take calls for swarms; some of the bee team members are getting calls that would be an hour's drive. Heather has a list of people from East Lewis County; call Heather [contact information removed from online edition], and she will pass it on. Norm has an ad in the *Nickel*.

Ride along to watch a swarm removal: On the weekend of 5/15, Norm and Dave will be doing a removal in Winlock soon to remove bees from a wall; Norm will look at it this Saturday, early, around 7 a.m. and probably extract them on Sunday, depending on weather, but details have to be arranged with owner of building about what's to be done with the bees; the owner wants to keep them. People interested could come along and see how it works. Contact Norm if interested; Norm passed a sign up sheet.

If you missed this chance to ride along on a swarm or hive removal but would like to go along on a future adventure, call Susanne at 360 880 8130.

JUNE MEETING: Susanne asked members for topics they'd be interested in hearing about, and there was a request for some information on what to plant in our gardens for our bees. See the calendar, above: this will be our June meeting topic! Things that grow well locally and are good for our bees. Peter Glover, a master gardener, notes that borage which self seeds is very popular with bees. When he had Napa Cabbage which it bolted and bloomed, the bees were on it right up till the frost killed it. Any of the brassicas – like broccoli after it's done—when left to seed will be loved by bees. Also, borage, with blue flowers, not so ornamental, but very nice for salad makings, attract bees. Peter was asked whether to buy plants or seeds? Borage is an annual that self seeds. Peter & Susanne will put together a pamphlet of bee friendly plants.

Norm noted that the Shelton Correctional Center had some inmates who made a balm out of bee wax that was good for wind burn and had a nice coconut & mango scent. Norm will get a name from them and see if we can't connect with the correctional kids.

SW WASHINGTON FAIR: The Sherwoods would like to co-locate with LCBA again, and they will need volunteers to handle questions. Last year, the Sherwood's/LCBA's exhibit won the prize for the best educational exhibit at the Fair! If you'd like to take part in the fun this summer, please call Susanne at 360 266 8130.

BEEKEEPING 101 with the Sherwoods: First class is May 29: the cost is \$25, and classes will run through this summer. There will be some informational materials. Among other things, this class will cover what you should be doing in your hives: year one. The first lesson will be in the Sherwood's well-equipped garage; students will then work the hives, and Jason will show what he did right/wrong when he started out. Figure 3 to 4 hours. For information, call [contact information removed from online edition].

WASBA 3 level beekeeper courses: Bob Harris, our president, is the contact person for this and all the WASBA classes: if you are interested, email Robert@Roseofsharonfarm.com. The apprentice class is not hard or long; the Journeyman and Master Beekeeper courses, however, are much more involved. WASBA hasn't given a master beekeeper certificate for years. 5 years experience and 30 service points required, and the prospective Master Beekeeper must write a paper; since WASBA added that requirement, no one has done it. Also, students need some lab experience.

WHO IS SELLING HONEY? The Gieses (Woogie Bee), the Sherwoods, Bob Harris (at the Chehalis Farmer's market).

Microscope? WSU Extension has one, but they were having problems with incident light; they need a light source for an incident light to be able to dissect a bee. Jason has one that could be used. If someone wants to check for tracheal mites.....pop their head off.

LCBA Website update: Coming this summer, hopefully in the 2nd half of June. Susanne is gathering materials (like Dewey Caron's and Janet Brisson's Power-Point presentations from our March and April meetings) to post on a webpage that Sheila Gray, Lewis County WSU Extension agent and our LCBA liaison to WSU Extension, is getting ready on 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, where LCBA will have more detailed information, including an archive of past newsletters, links to other sites with bee information, photo galleries, and more. Please email Susanne (Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com) with ideas about what you'd like to see on our website!

Request from Fords Prairie 4-H: Does anyone have older equipment that they would like to donate to the Fords Prairie 4-H Beekeeping project? If you'd like to help LCBA member Lynn Esposito help these kids get rolling on beekeeping, please email her at: Lynn.Esposito@lewiscountywa.gov.

German exchange student and beekeeper seeks housing for the 2010-11 school year: Susanne received an email from Jinjer Kunde, who is an international coordinator for high school foreign exchange students. A German girl named Annalena, who has give colonies of bees at home, would like to find a host family who keeps bees. If you are interested, please call Jinjer at 360 918 4098, or email him at jinjer.kunde@aspectfoundation.org.

General information items that we post in every newsletter ☺ :

- ***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.***
- ***Want Bees & Equipment?*** [see our website for beekeeping supply options]
- ***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 at (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 Member Wish List: What would you like to hear about at upcoming meetings? Email Susanne, LCBA secretary, Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com, or call 360 880 8130.***

- ***LCBA Swap Meet—real or virtual!*** Got bee equipment to sell, swap, or give away? Email or call Susanne—see above. 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