

Lewis County Beekeepers' Association:

March 2012 Newsletter

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Upcoming LCBA Events:

March 14: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 – 9 p.m. This meeting will be preceded by a 5 p.m. Board meeting, also at the Extension classroom. If anyone has concerns for the board, please email Susanne (susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com).

- *Speaker: Sharette Giese*
- *Topic: Now That You've Got Beeswax, What Can You Do With It?*
- *Business Meeting: Finalizing our Package Bee & Nuc Orders, plus Beekeeping Q&A and report from the Board Meeting about club issues & initiatives.*

April 11: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 – 9 p.m.: Dr. Dewey Caron will be back to survey us on bee losses & report back to us on research news about the state of honey bees in the Pacific Northwest.

April 25: Beekeeping at Centralia College Lyceum, 1 to 1:50 p.m., Washington Hall 103. Free & open to the public. Dr. Dewey Caron will describe his work in Bolivia, teaching indigenous peoples how to work with Africanized bees for home-grown

honey, an alternative to government-controlled sugar from sugar cane.

Notes from our February 8 Meeting:

President Norm Switzler was glad to be back after his back injury. He has already removed two colonies from downed trees. He's hopeful that our bees will do well this year: he's already seen robust colonies that overwintered well. He was looking at Tony and Janine's hives out at Deep Creek, and they were thriving well in that location. One of those colonies had been a removal, and they were doing very well.

(1) LCBA Package Bee Orders (all details, plus order forms, will be Distributed –FYI – SINCE OUR MEETING, UPDATES ABOUT THIS HAVE GONE OUT VIA EMAIL, SO PLEASE REFER TO THOSE EMAILS);

Susanne gave a handout on package prices, membership discount, deadline (if anyone missed this, please email Susanne [susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com] and she'll send it to you). Past President Bob Harris will be going to a conference in Portland 3 weeks after our likely 2nd week of April pickup of bee packages; he can take the packages (from this year or last year) and redeem the \$6.50 deposit for returning undamaged boxes. This means that if those ordering bees bring packages to the May meeting, Bob will take them down to Portland and get the deposits back. Ruhl Bee's does not need the queen cage or syrup can back. The question of gas reimbursement for Bob was raised; Bob said he is making the trip anyway.

The central pickup location will be the parking lot by the demonstration garden at Borst Park. Peter Glover, also a Master Gardener, has keys to the covered areas, so we will be covered in case of rain. Borst is relatively central, has parking, and is close to the freeway; it is open air and not bothering neighbors. The board will contact members via email about the pickup date; those not on email will get phone calls.

News about nucs: Sharette Giese contacted Bob to report that Tim has a Portland contact (serious hobbyist/semiprofessional) who makes nucs very well, in Tim's view, from his own bee yard. He can make up to 100 nucs: 4 frame, fully fleshed out with drawn comb and brood, active, laying queen in cardboard nuc box, and frames are included so that no frame swapping needed. This will cost about \$2 to \$3 less than package bees. These nucs should be ready as soon as we tell him we want them. He is already establishing nucs now. If we give him a month's notice, he will have them ready when we want them. They are relatively close to Ruhl Bees. This may be the guy who sells nucs to John Edwards at Ruhl's.

Advantages of nucs? Intuitively, in our short growing season, as Tim Giese explained at our January meeting, any leg up can be useful. A nuc will already be laying eggs, so your colony will be ahead of the game. Bob believes there is much to be learned with package bees, however: you watch your colony develop from the beginning. Bob does not have many details on this. Bob asked who would rather have a nuc than a package. About a dozen raised their

hands. Bob did not know whether these bees would be Italians or Carniolans. Tim and Bob will go down in Tim's truck when Tim goes to get the nucs for his business.

Also to be considered: with a package, there is a chance the queen may not thrive. If we get Portland area queens, they may be more adapted to our climate. Nucs only come with deep frames – not super frames.

The State of Our Bees: Bob reported that “things are ugly at Rose of Sharon's” bee yard. There were multiple swarmings last season, followed by unusually intense yellow jacket attacks. Bob is going to get both nucs and packages. All the weather prognosticators are saying that this is the third bad year in a row. Time to start feeding bees. Pat made a note on the brighter side: he vacuumed bees from a downed maple, put the bees into a hive that had some honey, and took them to Tom Wood's greenhouses: they immediately started flying to blooming cherries (under Tom's cover). “It was the neatest thing you ever saw,” Pat reported.

Procedure re: ordering nucs: Bob will call Tim's contact on Saturday and get details; then Susanne will email the club. We should be able to manage this such that people will know well before the 24th about what our options are.

Membership: October is when dues are due. We have 36 current dues-paid members (individuals & families). If you have not paid dues, then you still can order package bees, though you will have to pay an extra 5% (that is, you don't get Ruhl's discount).

Nametags: Bob has a bunch of nametags at the farm. Many nametags in the box are people that we do not see much anymore.

Dues issues: The nametag discussion led to a dues discussion. Norm and Bob appealed to the group to pay dues so that the activities of the organization – both educational and service-oriented - can be fully supported. If one gets the newsletter, attends meeting, etc., please support the organization. It is hard to know how to address people who may be in hardship paying dues. Many of us have gotten materials for free from other members, or help. For those in hardship, particularly families, beekeeping may be too expensive to begin with; however, as Norm pointed out, the bee team gives free hives when they capture swarms. It is possible to economize. Gary Stelzner pointed out that he'd be glad to pay someone's dues, or we could start a fund; those in hardship could simply contact a board member. But everyone should be a member to have the experience of belonging to us. People started a fund. Roger Shea donated \$25; Gary donated \$20; and on. A total of \$308 was donated by those present.

More uses for dues: Susanne noted that we may want to spend for a number of new ideas. We may need to rent space in a new venue as our numbers grow. We have been formally invited to join WSBA and may want to help support its research donations to WSU. Membership is about more than just the nametags. Susanne raised the question of whether the club should try to reimburse at least some gas money for the Bee Team doing swarm removals; Norm said he doesn't need reimbursement for gas money for swarm removals, since he has his own benefits from doing it.

Bee Team and Swarm Removals: Dave Smith rescued a swarm that had a tree down on the hive. Bob got 3 calls that he referred on to Pat Swinth; Norm got another. Ted got a call from a pastor south of here who had bees in the bell tower. If you drill a small hole at the bottom of the cupola, another at the top, and smoke them, bees will come down where you can vacuum them – though it does leave brood behind.

Reducing Bee Poisoning: Bob brought a brochure about how to reduce bee poisoning risks.

Gardening For Everyone: Kimo Thielges announced GFE, taking place on Saturday, February 11, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Centralia College, sponsored by the Lewis County Master Gardeners and the Extension office. Exhibits, including LCBA and Kimo's Mason Bee display, are in the lobby; there are 2 classes each hour – using drip irrigation, pruning fruit trees, and other topics. There will be a fall GFE, also. The Lewis County Mycological [Mushroom] society, newly formed, will have an exhibit at GFE as well.

Southwest Washington Fair: Brandy DeMelt has been leaving messages about the Southwest Washington Fair, but no one returns her calls. Norm noted that we can devote some club funds to pay our members' way to staff tables if we can get a reasonable rate to have a booth.

Next LCBA Board Meeting will be 5 p.m. on the date of our next meeting – if anyone has concerns they'd like to bring to the board, please email Susanne.

Story Time: Ted Saari brought in a jar of "bee soup." He had been taught to ventilate his upper cover, and he had top feeders on his hives. Bees have been flying the last week, and they found the chimney and got into his put-away feeders, where they drowned. They had nothing to hold onto, since the floaters were not inserted, and when he went to check how much sugar water he had in the feeders, he scooped out almost a quart's worth of dead bees. However, despite this, his hives seem to be very healthy. They made it through the winter. Pat suggested that he put a float in the feeder so that they have something to get onto; Ted said it was an accident, as he had not expected foragers to find these feeders. If you don't protect bees, they don't have sense, or capacity, to get out of the sugar water. It was a hard learning experience! There was discussion of Bruce Casaw's special feeder design that kept bees from drowning: we should ask him to bring it back to demonstrate again.

Feeding Bees This Early in the Season? Bob noted that if you have started feeding, you must keep doing so, as the queen will be laying and brood will be hatching. Should we feed sugar wafers? These are good for winter feeding: Norm says the wafers are like a candy board. The problem with hard candy is that we don't necessarily know what it is made of, and it could have high fructose corn syrup and other bad things for bees. Having said that, feeding dry material at this time of year is better. Bob would recommend a one to one sugar: water ratio until the weather warms up, and then gradually move mixture toward two parts water: one part sugar mixture. Once fed, though the queen will start laying earlier. In their hunger, bees may even start hitting chicken feeders – they can use protein chicken food to replace pollen, and

Norm has not heard of any ill effects, though he wouldn't recommend deliberately feeding this to them.

Nosema risks and winter feeding: Gary asked about winter feeding – he said that he wouldn't feed liquid in winter because it contributes to Nosema. Norm agrees that Nosema is a danger and that feeding sugar water helps microbials build up. With the weather being cold, the bees can't "go potty" as often as they want to, so dysentery is a danger. Gary has two hives that have "pretty good streaks" on the top and bottom – he thinks he may need to treat with Fumagillin-B. Gary noted controversy when Fumagillin-B bought out by a new company – concern that the new product is ineffective. He found this in the ABJ in one of the studies in the back within the last 6 months. Fumagillin is spendy unless purchased in Canada. It is better to be safe than sorry, though: use it if you think you need it. It is not likely to kill bees and can help them.

Show and Tell / Miscellany:

Pat Swinth found odd-looking beetles under the upper cover of a dead colony; he brought a jar for show and tell. They are called seed bugs, Kimberly Wieland reported – moisture attracts them. When Pat disturbed them, they ran down. They are symbiotic, Bob said; they are mainly seeking shelter rather than competing with the bees.

Mel Grigorich brought in a frame that had drone cells on one side. The drone cells are considerably larger than the worker bee cells.

Pat and Shirley Swinth reported that they planted white clover last year that should bloom this year. Anything that produces a nut will be blooming now – earliest source of pollen for bees. Other things blooming: heather. Forsythia should bloom soon.

Bee Supplies?

Judy Kalich noted that *Bee Culture* magazine advertised a new bee supply store in Rochester, WA. Brandy will check it out and report at our March meeting.

Honey Hut (inside the Centralia Deli on Harrison Avenue) carries Fumagillin-B and Honey B Healthy; Tim Weible, Honey Hut's proprietor, is a dealer for Mann Lake. Ted got pollen patties from Honey Hut and fed them to his bees last fall till about the start of November. Some have ordered direct from Mann Lake.

The person who bought the Sherwoods has decided not to open a bee business.

Don Hershey noted that around this time of year, we might consider a bulk order of items like pollen patties. Peter Glover is planning to get a 40 pound package of patties from Mann Lake in Chico CA. Mann Lake is free shipping over \$100. Priester's, in Rainier Oregon, has worked well for some members: their website is Priesterbee.com. Pat noted that some catalog prices look cheap, but they will hit you with high shipping charges. Susanne reminded us that Ruhl's will discount 5% to LCBA members on woodenware, etc. If you want to order from

California Dadant, it's necessary to phone in the order; otherwise it comes from their warehouse farther away.

Bob asked if anyone wanted solid bottom boards – he has six. Gary has been thinking of building more screened bottom boards and giving them to people for cost. A number of people raised their hands; so Gary will go ahead. People could have them for the fall. Screened bottom boards seem to correlate with fewer die-offs because of ventilation. They help keep moisture out of the hives.

Beginning Beekeeper class: Ideally, the new class will start 7 March; Sheila Gray is working on this. Bob did a Cowlitz County class last year and has grade sheets for them. He asked Roy Schaafsma if the Cowlitz group was still meeting, and Roy said that they were; about fourteen were at the last meeting. About 30 had taken the class in Cowlitz.

Membership Issues: Gary noted that some people have drifted away, and we don't know why. Could we get a committee of two or three people to reconnect with those who have left to find out what the issue is – were they discouraged from losing hives, was money an issue? This should be an issue at the board meeting. Rob Jenkins noted that for some, our meetings are over their heads; had we known that, we could have connected them with a mentor. Gary said the board should not have to do everything and would volunteer for a committee. Bob commented that all of us should welcome newcomers.

LCBA Business Cards as an outreach item? Should we have business cards or refrigerator magnets? This might be a good use of dues money and a way to do outreach. Possibly a member could make them for free. This is another agenda item for the board meeting. Steve Howard volunteered to work on this.

Publicity for LCBA Meetings? Kimo asked whether we have publicity for our monthly meetings. Possibly we could get into the *Chronicle's* calendar section.

Meeting Space: Bob says that at Jackson & Bishop in Chehalis, the Lutheran church has a large meeting room that we could use: another item for the board meeting.

Bees & Honey In the News:

In February, a beekeeping couple in Yakima made headlines with a discovery that they think may offer some answers to the problem of colony collapse disorder. In brief, after severe losses in 2010, this year, they over-wintered their bees indoors and monitored levels of carbon monoxide and dioxide. WSU scientist Steve Sheppard thinks that their findings are significant. For information about what they found out, visit: <http://www.king5.com/news/environment/Yakima-beekeepers-discovery-stirs-up-research-138585199.html>

LCBA / WSBA News and Announcements:

Need Help with Your Bees? Call LCBA bee mentors!

- 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: Can You Help In 2012? Swarm/colony removal is a free service that LCBA, as a nonprofit educational organization, offers the public. Swarm season is over (let's hope!!), but if you're interested in riding along when it all begins again next May, give LCBA Secretary Susanne a call (see # above): it's free, fun, educational, and it saves bees from the exterminator!

Need a Local Source for Beekeeping Supplies? Visit Honey Hut at Centralia Deli Steakhouse & BBQ, 708 Harrison Avenue in Centralia. Call Tim Weible, 736-1015, for more information about supplies and prices. Tim has pretty much everything you may need by way of supplies in stock: suits in small to XX, gloves, boxes assembled or unassembled, supers, wax and plastic foundation, frames, tops, bottoms, smokers, tools, and books. The Honey Hut also sells local honey, and even mead, in addition to serving generous & delicious BBQ.

Growing Places Farm needs beekeeping supplies: If you have gear, especially bee suits and visors, that you can spare, please email lford@gpfep.org.

Calling All Cooks! Do You Cook With Honey? *It was suggested at our open Board meeting that in 2012, we'd like to invite LCBA members to send their favorite recipes that involve honey. Would you like to share a recipe? Please send it to Susanne at susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com. Thanks!*

Respectfully reported—bee happy!

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