

## Lewis County Beekeepers' Association: *October 2008 Newsletter*

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### LCBA NEWS, UPCOMING EVENTS, & BEE NOTES:

***Hive Building Workshop:*** Bob Harris has offered LCBA the use of his wood shop for a hive building workshop in November or December. Bob has a wide array of tools, and other experienced LCBA members are offering to help others build new hives. We'll plan date and details will at our next monthly meeting (Weds, 11/12/08, 7 p.m.)

***John Ruhl, of Ruhl Bees, Portland, will speak at LCBA's January 14, 2009 meeting.*** Mark your calendars! This should be a great opportunity to learn about bee-related products. John may be able to offer us discounts on his inventory.

***Got Honey? Want Recipes?*** Visit the National Honey board at [www.honey.com](http://www.honey.com), or call 800 553 7162. Thanks to Roy Schaafsma for this information!

***New Book for LCBA's Traveling Library:*** Roy also contributed *Bee Chats, Tips, and Gadgets*, by P.F. (Roy) Thurber. Gary Gorremans added this to LCBA's traveling library box.

***Next LCBA Meeting: Wednesday, November 12, 7 p.m. at the Courthouse Extension office.***

### **10/8/08 SPEAKER: NORM SWITZER: REMOVING BEES FROM STRUCTURES (and other adventures)**

***Time and Process:*** Norm explained that it typically takes two to five hours to extract a large swarm. He has to tear down walls and prefers to do that from the outside, but will work from the inside of a structure if necessary. He starts early with the smoker so that the bees glut up on honey and are easier to work with. He "suits up," including heavy duty rubber gloves: these are sting resistant, but not sting proof. Norm hasn't found anything that's truly sting-proof: "you will get stung." He also wears a hair cover. He gets out all of the comb to discourage the bees from returning. It's the owner's responsibility to caulk and do other repairs once the bees are out.

Norm extracts about fifteen to twenty colonies per year. He will sell a fully established hive to someone who asks: one he sold for \$250. However, he's also happy to oversee someone's bees and honey on their property. Also, he will give extra bees to anyone who helps him on a job. Norm takes bees to people who want pollination for their fruit and vegetable gardens.

**Legalities:** When asked about the legalities of extraction, Norm noted that he gets oral permission with a witness rather than ask for it in writing. He only takes responsibility for what he agrees to do: he won't reconstruct walls, and he won't use chemicals. He noted that many landlords are eager to get his service, because if a tenant gets stung and goes into anaphylactic shock, that landlord could be liable.

**Tools:** Norm showed some of his tools: pry bars, smokers, and a flexible carving knife for cutting combs. He likes to use inexpensive, throwaway knives because of the possibility of hitting nails in structures. He's never hit a wire . . . yet. He buys most of his equipment at Goodwill: for example, his "swarm bag" is a mesh laundry bag with a drawstring. He won't use plastic, because the bees would suffocate. He uses a Rubbermaid broom scoop that has a back hinge: he sweeps the bees gently into the scoop with a broom-brush, then opens the back hinge, and the bees fall into his laundry sack.

**Frames:** Norm uses frames with combs to lure bees he's trying to extract. He demonstrated some of his wooden frames: he cuts combs to fit the frame. Then he uses bamboo skewers, inserted into small drilled holes in the ends of the frame, and pushes the comb onto the skewers. The bees take care of the rest: they will clean up the combs and anchor them to the frames.

**Extracting honey:** Norm doesn't harvest a great deal of honey: he prefers to leave plenty for the bees to eat, to help them over-winter. To extract honey from captured combs, Norm puts them in a plastic bag and rolls a water bottle back and forth over them to "squeeze" honey out and into his drip pan. He can get five to ten gallons from a big extraction job. Often, he uses laundry buckets with bags to get the brood in, and then deals with the honey after the fact. Once the brood comb is in the bag or box, the bees will go in—and once they've gone in there, they'll move to the colony boxes once he gets them home.

Norm demonstrated his extractor, which basically works like a centrifuge: put the frames in vertically, and it'll spin the honey out. Then he opens the bottom valve and drains the honey into a five-gallon straining bucket with three straining screens. He has to keep scraping off the excess particulate matter off with a spatula so that the strainer screens work rather than plug up. After going through the three straining screens, the honey is ready to use. Norm got his extractor from Dadant, which sells them for a few hundred dollars.

As for bottling honey, Norm goes to Goodwill in May or June, before people start canning from their gardens, and looks for cheap bottles, making sure to clean them first.

Norm likes to eat raw, unpasteurized honey, both for taste and to combat allergies. He simply eats honey from the raw, capped comb. He gives a free jar of honey the first

time he does a job: then the clients are happy to pay for honey the next time (“the first batch is free. . .”).

***Selling honey at the farmer’s market:*** if you want to do this, Norm reports that you have to work with their rules. The State Department of Agriculture doesn’t really enforce its hive registration fee: they won’t inspect hives, or even talk to Norm about them, so Norm pays his fee for his hives, but does bee-keeping his way. The fee is \$10 for 26 colonies. But what is the money used for? The DOA doesn’t employ bee experts or offer help for beekeepers. However, Norm said that he was told that the fees are donated to universities for research on colony collapse syndrome.

Re: colony collapse syndrome: Dave Smith knows a Wisconsin beekeeper who lost thousands of bees. Norm has heard of this happening in Oregon, too. It may be related to hauling hives from one farm to another to pollinate.

Creamed honey: Dave’s wife enjoys this, and he bought starter mix from his Wisconsin contact. It takes 10% creamed honey to set up. There was discussion of different kinds of flavored honey, but most prefer what Norm calls “wildflower honey”: no one really knows where feral/wild bees go, and they get some of everything as they pollinate.

***Acquiring bees:*** Norm was asked if it’s better to order bees through the mail than try to capture them by extracting them from structures. Norm answered that he has ordered bees from northern California in the past, but they failed to over-winter, several times. He has, however, had successful over-wintering from a Longview source. This may be because the Longview bees were already adapted to Northwest conditions. As for feral bees, he’s only had two or three “bad bee” swarms. He noted that no two extraction jobs are ever the same: some are easy, some challenging. In general, he has found that the bees re-situate well: they will create a new queen if the queen dies.

***When to take the supers off?*** Norm waits till Labor Day, but there’s flexibility here: he does it then in part so that he can take advantage of hunting season. Once he takes the supers off, he uses a propane heater to keep the bees warm. He only feeds the bees if they are out of honey, and it’s important to check periodically to be sure that they have enough, so that your colony doesn’t die. He does sometime feed one group from another’s hive if he’s just gotten that group and it needs food. Some fear that this will cause disease transmission, but Norm hasn’t had that experience: he says that most bees are pretty hardy. He noted that this year, for the first time, he saw wax moths: possibly because there are unbagged combs around.

***Pesticides:*** If you use pesticides, Norm noted, the bees will bring that home to the hive. He offers his neighbors a jar of honey in return for their minimizing pesticide use.

***Water:*** Bees need a steady water source. A bird bath, chicken waterer, or the like will help.

**Bees and “landmarks”:** Newly hatched bees start foraging after a few weeks, and you can see them make short, then gradually longer forays, always retracing their path, till they get oriented. If you move their hive, they will go back to where it was.

**Watching Norm Extract:** Norm invited LCBA members to go with him on Saturday, 10/11, to watch him extract a swarm in Winlock, and at least one member is taking him up on it. Cooler weather is expected, and when it’s cool, bees are sluggish.

***Minutes of October 8, 2008 Business Meeting:***

Peter Glover ran the meeting since Bob Harris had a conflict (meeting with the Department of Agriculture, in part to update them on LCBA’s progress).

**Minutes** of the 9/12/08 meeting were approved.

**Bylaws:** Peter has a rough draft of the bylaws which he will share with Brandy and Sheila for input, then distribute to members via email before our 11/12 meeting. Bylaws are required for LCBA to establish itself as a nonprofit organization that can collect fees and receive donations.

**Gardening for Everyone:** LCBA had a table with an informational display and fliers. 26 attended Bob Harris’ talk, “Every Gardener a Beekeeper,” and Peter learned that the evaluation forms highly praised the presentation. When we have our “hive workshop,” we can invite people who signed in.

**Hive building workshop:** Bob has invited LCBA members to his farm shop for a hive building day anytime after 11/18. We will decide on the date at our 11/08 meeting. Members thought a weekend day would be best. Bob has equipment, as does Norm. Norm will order a “Bee-Max” hive, which is polyurethane, to demonstrate.

**Speaker for November:** Dwayne brought an Olympian article featuring an Olympia naturalist who studies northwest bee behavior, focusing particularly on what plants attract bees. Susanne will track her down and invite her to speak in November.

**Ruhl Bee Presentation:** John Ruhl of Ruhl Bees, Portland, can speak to LCBA in December or January. We agreed that January would be more timely.

**Recipes with Honey:** Roy Schaafsma brought in booklets from the National Honey Board with recipes, eagerly snapped up by the membership. Those interested can check [www.honey.com](http://www.honey.com) or call 800 553 7162. Roy also brought in two license plate holders from the National Honey Board which bear the legend, “Stay Healthy – Eat Honey.” These were given away as “door prizes.”

**New Book for our traveling library:** Roy contributed *Bee Chats, Tips, and Gadgets*, by P.F. (Roy) Thurber. Gary added this to the traveling library box.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 12, 7 p.m. at the Courthouse Extension office.**

Respectfully submitted,  
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