

January 2014

OLYMPIA BEEKEEPERS



Can you guess what this is?

REPORTS, NEWS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

President's Message

We are off to a running start in the new year at the Olympia Beekeepers Association. In this newsletter you will find order forms for package bees and a reservation form for nucs. Thanks to Renzy Davenport for researching all the options and helping to make the package ordering come together. The process is different this year. We will be taking orders at the February and March meetings. If you are not able to attend one of those meetings, and you cannot give your order to someone else to bring, please contact me directly at LMPCarl@gmail.com. We are taking orders for 3 pound packages of bees, Carniolan or Italian and queens, Carniolan or Italian. Bees will be delivered and ready for pickup approximately April 18th and we will keep you apprised as weather or other factors could alter the pick up date by a week or so. Please look at the order form carefully make our your checks appropriately. We will also accept cash. Remember, to participate in the club order you must be a current OBA club member. Dana is always happy to accept your membership dues! Our supplier has asked that checks be dated April 10th as he will not be cashing them until we've received the bees. We do have an opportunity for a \$5 per package refund for cage return AFTER THE NEW BEES ARRIVE. Please don't bring your old cages to order bees. This is dependent on the number of total packages sold and we will provide you with the information you need. We will start taking orders for bees ahead of the start of the meeting at a table outside the cafeteria at 5:30 on Feb. 9th and March 9th.

With respect to nucs, we are taking RESERVATIONS only with no prepayment. You will pay for your nuc when you pick it up. Harvard Robbins has generously reserved 200 nucs for our club members. You MUST fill out a reservation form and turn it in, but do NOT give us any money for a nuc. There is no preference on nucs for Carniolans or Italians. They will be available approximately the third weekend in April also, but, again, bees and wildlife don't respect our calendars. As long as you have completely filled out your contact information on

the order forms, we will be sure to keep you apprised.

On another note, Mark Emrich (WSBA president), Tim Hiatt (Commercial beekeeper), Jim Goche (Thurston County Conservation District) and myself testified in support of SB5017 on February 13th at the Capitol. The bill is up for public hearing on February 2nd in ways and means. We will keep you posted, but for the most current information you can go here: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5017&year=2015>

This bill is important to all of us because it recognizes beekeepers as farmers and provides the tax benefits as such. A critical activity for every beekeeper, that directly relates to this bill is registering your hives. The OBA will have hive registration forms at the upcoming meetings but you can also register your hives online here: <http://agr.wa.gov/PlantsInsects/Apiary/docs/ApiaryRegistrationForm.pdf>

On March 5th, to help raise awareness of the issues facing bees and beekeepers there will be a special Washington State Beekeepers Association Legislative Honeybee Awareness Day on the north steps outside the legislative building starting at 9:00. We would love to see you there! If you'd like to participate, please let me know. The flyer is included in this issue of the Beeline and we will talk about it more at the next meeting.

We've had some record-breaking warmth, so please make sure your girls don't starve.

See you February 9th,

Laurie

Secretary's Report

Olympia Beekeepers Association Meeting January 12, 2014

Call to order at 7:02 p.m.

Old Business

November minutes were approved as written.
November Treasurers report was also approved as reported.

New attendees were introduced as Virginia, Cal, Jim Melanie, Kelly, Whitney, Jodi, Nathan and Lauren, and finally Roger and Sarah. Big welcome to all!

New business

Laurie Pyne reported on progress at the Thurston County commissioner voted to pass a resolution amending the Thurston County Pest and Vegetation Management Policy to include prohibiting the use of neonicotinoid insecticides on County owned or managed property.

Also in State news the Honey Bee Work Group submitted their final report. The State Department of Agriculture reported on challenges regarding the honey bee. The complete report can be viewed on the Washington State Beekeepers Association website (click on News and Info at the right hand bottom of the page).

Senate Bill 5017 has been re-introduced by Senator Honeyford. If passed, beekeepers will be recognized as farmers/agriculture, providing beekeepers the same tax exemptions as farmers permanently. Mark Emrich and Laurie Pyne will be testifying in favor of the bill on January 15, 2015 at 8:00 a.m.

Laurie and Mark are continuing to meet with Thurston County on neonicotinoids and their negative impacts on pollinators. The Washington

Department of Transportation is working on new projects to decrease the impacts of mowing. They will be increasing the number of plants for pollinators and are discussing plans to convert some areas to meadows in the future.

The Olympia Beekeepers Association officers met on Monday January 5th. They engaged in conversation regarding bee packages for the upcoming year. No details available yet, will let you know when there is more information. If there is something new you want to see let an officer know! There will be new activities at the club apiary and other projects for the club for the year were discussed and we're moving to a membership card system for club members.

Chair reports

Jim Reik encouraged members to volunteer as mentors. A benefit of being a member is having access to a mentor! Now is a good time to sign up to get a mentor, too. You can find out what you will need to get started with your bees this spring. Be sure and see Jim during the break if you need a mentor or would like to be one!

Paul Longwell welcomed new members. There are now 80 books and videos in our library! He has gone to a card check out system. Please be sure and return books within 30 days.

Bob Smith granted Journeyman Certificates to:

Ernie Schmidt
Dana Smith
Kelly Schincke

In addition he granted Apprentice certificates to:

James Reick,
Becky Anderson
Wally **Scitheth**

Dana Smith reported that the some members' e-mails are still bouncing back to him. Please update with your email if you have not been getting newsletters or announcements.

Mark Emrich gave additional information on SB5017. He asked that as many of us that could take the time show up and sign in even if we can't stay for the hearing to consider attending. The number signed in will go on record. They will be meeting in the Cherberg Building room A.

The State Association will be implementing an insurance program for all county associations. Each will have an I.D. number associated with their club to provide liability coverage.

Mark encouraged everyone to visit the Washington Beekeepers Website.

Special Guests

Alison Halpern of the Thurston County Noxious Weed Board spoke to members about the conflict between beekeepers and noxious weed control programs. In 2008 the board wanted to list black berries as a class C noxious weed. There was fear that the plant would disappear. The board encourages people to control so it is not so widespread. Replanting with desirable vegetation when removing noxious weeds is helpful. The agency is trying to promote noxious weed control by treating in the fall or spring. Alison shared the brochure Finding Common Ground from the state weed board as well as seed packets (Bee-U-tify) a non-invasive flower mix for bees, butterflies and more. For further information go to www.nwcb.wa.gov

Jim Goche of Friendly Grove Farms and the Thurston County Conservation District spoke to members. He is in the raises tree and vine fruit on his farm and also designates part of his land to the Kiwanis garden for food bank production.

He would like to see more outreach and networking from the Conservation District and wants to know how the TCD and OBA can work together on issues important to conservation and pollinators. Please let them know how they can help you! They have a data base of heritage fruit and nut trees. They would like to help with the senate bill 5017 and Jim pledged to make calls to help spread awareness of this bill's importance .

He was impressed with the numbers in attendance at the meeting. With all of the members involved we can continue the good work that Mark and Laurie are engaging in on behalf of the club.

Program

Jason Long on Climate Controlled Beekeeping or Indoor Wintering

More Beekeepers Sour on Profession as Winter Die-Offs Continue



Orin Johnson checks a small portion of his 500 bee colonies in the foothills around Hughson, Calif., earlier this month. *Photo: Justin Kaneps for The Wall Street Journal by Tennille Tracy*

Orin Johnson, a second-generation beekeeper in California, has started to consider a life without his 500 colonies of honey bees.

At 67, he doesn't work as fast as he once did, and yet his bees require greater amounts of time and money to maintain. A near constant barrage of threats, from pesticides to parasites, wiped out more than half of Mr. Johnson's colonies last year.

"The costs are just getting out of hand," he said. "I'm getting tired of it."

Plenty of Mr. Johnson's colleagues are in the same boat. Increasing numbers of beekeepers, who are generally in their 50s and 60s, are considering early retirement or are being forced out of business as honey bees continue to die at alarming rates.

For nearly a decade, beekeepers have been losing roughly 30% of their bees each winter, above the 19% depletion rate they say is sustainable, according to the Bee Informed Partnership, a group funded by the Agriculture Department to study bee health. While beekeepers can replenish their colonies by splitting and repopulating healthy hives, it is hard for them to recoup the costs of doing so.

“We’re not worried about the bees going extinct,” said Dennis vanEngelsdorp, a bee researcher at the University of Maryland. “We’re worried about the beekeepers going extinct.”

The government doesn’t track employment statistics on commercial beekeepers, but the White House cited particular concern over the fate of professional beekeepers when it created a task force in June to address bee deaths.

Tim Tucker, president of the American Beekeeping Federation and a beekeeper in Kansas, said the number of professional beekeepers on its membership roster has fallen by at least half in the last two decades.

A dwindling supply of beekeepers is troubling for U.S. agriculture. Honey bees pollinate more than \$15 billion of crops each year, including almonds, apples and cherries, and are responsible for pollinating one-third of the American diet. Without enough beekeepers, U.S. crop production could slow, forcing consumers to pay more for their food or rely more heavily on imported items.

Almond growers, who rely almost exclusively on honey bees for pollination, have seen the price of bee rentals increase 30% since 2006. Paramount Farms in California, one of the country’s largest almond growers, has started to look for beekeeping operations it can own independently to ensure a steady supply of pollinators as times get tougher for beekeepers.

The honey bee crisis dates back to at least 2006, when beekeepers first reported a troubling phenomenon known as colony collapse disorder. Adult bees were simply vanishing from their hives, leaving behind the younger bees, the queen and the honey.



Orin Johnson assesses the strength of one of his bee colonies outside Hughson, Calif., this month. *Photo: Justin Kaneps for The Wall Street Journal*

There are now about 2.5 million honey-producing colonies, according to the Agriculture Department. That is about flat from 15 years ago, but masks the fact that the total number of large commercial beekeepers has fallen by at least several hundred, while the number of small hobbyists has grown, Mr. Tucker said. The colony total is down from 6 million in the 1940s.

There are signs this winter will bring more hefty losses, Mr. Tucker said. He lost nearly 40% of his colonies between September and November.

It is still unclear what is killing the bees. Scientists blame a combination of parasites, pesticides and poor nutrition, among other factors, but haven't determined a single cause.

The Varroa mite, a blood-sucking parasite that weakens bees and brings diseases into the hive, is a common culprit. At the Department of Agriculture's bee laboratory in Beltsville, Md., scientists routinely dissect and inspect dead bees, sent to them by beekeepers nationwide, looking for signs of the mite.

"If we could remove the Varroa mite from the equation, we'd be back at a sustainable level of loss," said Jay Evans, a research entomologist at the Agriculture Department.

With so many potential threats to their bees, veteran beekeepers say their job has gotten increasingly expensive and complex.

The annual cost of maintaining a hive has quadrupled in the last 15 years, Mr. Tucker said. It now costs about \$230,000 a year for a professional beekeeper running a modest 2,000 hives. Expensive items include mite treatments and protein supplements that support the bees' diet as natural forage options dwindle.

Jim Doan, a third-generation beekeeper in New York state, was forced to sell his 112-acre farm in 2013, after losing most of his bees several years in a row.

He tried to bounce back, buying new hives and diligently trying to ward off pests and disease, but nothing worked. Mr. Doan blames pesticides for the death of his bees. "I love the bee business, but I don't see a future in the bee business," he said.

For now, beekeepers say they are being kept afloat by high honey prices, which reached a record \$2.12 a pound in 2013, according to the most recent government data, and the lucrative pollination fees they receive from farmers.

Invitation: To All who attend the OBA meetings:

Please consider presenting a short (about 5 minute) show-and-tell topic at an OBA meeting. For example, you may:

- * review a piece of beekeeping equipment you either constructed or purchased
- * recommend a book or video from the club library, or elsewhere
- * describe a new twist on an old process for doing something related to bees
- * show something you, or someone else, made from a hive product (wax, honey, propolis, royal jelly)
- * introduce us to an educational web-resource related to beekeeping
- * talk about something else bee-related that our members would find interesting--Bee Creative! Share your Knowledge, Help make our meetings interesting and useful.

Please contact David to get on the agenda (Davidbruun98@hotmail.com)

Reminder:

Plants, books, seeds, and other artifacts are always appreciated for the meeting raffle.

And, if you have a tasty snack to share, everyone enjoys something sweet.

January: Jason Long, WSU, speaking on cold winter storage.

August: TBA

February: Megan Taylor, WSU speaking on Old World Bee Genetics

September: Time to renew membership.

March: Tim Lawrence, WSU

October: TBA

April: Package Introduction

November: TBA

May: Preventing Swarms and Splits

December: Christmas Party

June: Pests and Treatments

July: TBA

Monthly Meetings: held the second Monday of each month.

Place: Chinook Middle School, 4301 6th Ave NE, Lacey, WA

Time: 6:00 pm for Beginning Beekeeper's Certification Program, 7:00 pm for the association meeting. Meetings are held in the Cafeteria. Beekeeping class meets in the central hall Science Room.

Agenda: Each meeting is conducted with old and new business, and a program related to beekeeping. Attendees, if they choose, donate a gift for the raffle table. The Treasurer and Membership Chair sell tickets for \$1.00 and at the break there is refreshments available.