
THE BEE LINE

The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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‘Thar She Blows—Beekeeping in Eastern Oregon!

By Mary Moss

The year is marching right along, and we are pleased to continue our series about beekeeping in the various geographic regions of Oregon. For this issue, we’ll take a look at the special aspects of keeping bees in the Eastern part of our state. For firsthand information, we turned to Jan Lohman and her partner in beekeeping Vince Vazza of Vazza Farms, headquartered in Hermiston, Oregon. Vazza Farms has been operating in Eastern Oregon since 1979, and Vince kept bees for several years before that, in Idaho as well as in Madras, Oregon.

Jan begins by explaining that Eastern Oregon beekeepers have a unique climatic situation, in some ways. They have the luxury (or curse!) of being able to work outside almost every day of the year. The annual precipitation in the Hermiston area amounts to about seven inches per year, which includes rain and snow. Jan jokes that there’ll be an occasional sprinkle of rain, but, “wait 30 minutes, and usually you can get back to work.”

Jan goes on to explain that wind is their major weather “condition.” And, Jan emphasizes, “I *do* mean WIND!!” They try to place their spring bee yards in assorted locations, so that some are protected from the wind, while others are open yards for the hot, still days. If beekeepers in Eastern Oregon have an advantage over the Valley beekeepers, she continues, “It’s with our bee

equipment. Maintenance is so much easier because we have so little moisture.”

While Valley and Coastal beekeeper readers are squirming with envy at this prospect of drier conditions, they should know that it does snow in Eastern Oregon. Jan says, “Most years, it snows only a small amount. However, once in a while, we will get a large snowfall and very cold temperatures (sub-zero).”

Summer in Eastern Oregon can bring its own set of problems, occasionally. “Usually,” Jan says, “in summer, we have a very moderate climate. However, it can get extreme and hit as high as 115 degrees (F.)” Such unseemly high temperatures can put off even the hardiest sort, Jan laughs. “We once had a group of Egyptian beekeepers visit us in the summer. They said it was too hot to work!”

Honey flows in the Hermiston area come in the spring from the Russian Olive and Black Locust trees, followed by alfalfa, clover, and mint. Finally, in the fall, Jan says, they look for buckwheat fields to give the bees a final flush of nectar and pollen to help them get through the winter.

“Actually,” Jan admits, “We probably aren’t a fair representation of Eastern Oregon honey production, because we concentrate mostly on pollination, with honey as a byproduct.”

However, she continues, “We take 1,600 colonies to California in February for the almonds. We do pollination in April and May for cherries, apples and pears. Then, in June, we begin watermelon pollination.” Finally, Jan wraps up,

“We complete our cycle by doing Central Oregon seed crops in Madras during June and July.”

To say that they are busy right now would be a gross understatement. Presently, the folks at Vazza Farms are working steadily to get all of their hives requeened. They expect to finish that daunting task by the end of June.

After requeening,” Jan says, they will add supers where needed, build and maintain equipment—do all the stuff that has to get done in a sizable apiary. Then, she finishes, wryly, “We can otherwise try to fit some fun into our busy schedules.”

We all understand how elusive that prospect is, especially during the summer months! Meanwhile, our thanks to Jan and Vince for their interesting comments and particulars on beekeeping in their region.



Our final article in this series will focus on Willamette and Tualatin Valley beekeepers. It will take an unusual twist, as will a subsequent story, so be expecting some fun “summer reading” when these tales of beekeeping show up in the *Bee Line*!

Mary Moss is a beekeeper and freelance writer who lives in Forest Grove. She is a past officer with TVBA and a member of the OSBA.



President’s Message

By Kenny Williams

On Wednesday, May 21st OSBA Executive Committee members and other OSBA members met at the State Capitol Building in Salem in order to build support among legislators for HB 2805. This is the bill introduced by member Fred Van Natta on behalf of the OSBA which would fund a honeybee entomologist’s position at Oregon State University. Members working the halls were Jan Lohman, Joann Olstrom, Marge Ehry, Harry Vanderpool, Chuck Sowers, Ray Varner, George Hansen, Fred Van Natta and myself.

The day began with a briefing by Fred Van Natta on what to expect in our encounters with legislators and staff. Fred is a professional lobbyist, and the OSBA is fortunate to count among its members someone like Fred who is familiar with the workings of the legislature. Some of us had appointments with specific legislators while others worked a given floor of senators and representatives. We all had at best only several minutes in which to present the case for supporting the position of a honeybee entomologist and to leave some printed material for the legislator to ponder. I don’t know how he did it, but past president Ray Varner somehow got himself introduced on the floor of the House of Representatives (could it have anything to do with the honey stix he was passing out?) We will take that as a good omen.

I would like to say that I was positively impressed with the level of attention and courtesy that we received from legislators and staff alike. The halls of the Capitol were filled, it seemed, with people like ourselves there to promote a cause and to gain the ear of any legislator that could help. This goes on every day the legislature is in session. And yet each person we spoke to gave us their fullest attention, taking notes, asking questions and offering advice. I felt that this too was another good sign.

In the afternoon we all met with Fred to share our experiences of the day. While many encounters were encouraging, it was clear that Bee Day at the Capital was but an early step in the

process that typically could take several sessions of the Legislature to bear fruit. It would seem that the next step for us to work towards would be the scheduling of a hearing before a sub-committee with some influence over OSU's funding, possibly the sub-committee on Higher Education, headed by Rep. Susan Morgan. This would keep our issue alive as far as the Ways and Means Committee is concerned, and the OSBA would gain another step in the process. While May 21 was a good sunny day for working bees, being at Salem instead was hardly time wasted.

Ruhl Bee Supply is Moving

We have finally found a location and we will be moving and opening up on August 4th in the Clackamas area. We don't have a new phone number yet, but the new address will be 17845 SE 82nd Drive, Gladstone, OR 97027.

Directions: I-205 exit 11, go east ½ mile on left (near Cal Spas). Much more information will be available in the next newsletter or you can check out current information at ruhlbeesupply.com. We can also be contacted via email at ruhlbeesupply@yahoo.com.

Our hours will stay the same: Monday through Thursday 8am-5 pm and Friday 8am-7pm. We will continue to supply the industry with the same quality merchandise and supplies, so come with us to our new location.

Address Change? Officers Elected? Who Do I Tell???

A reminder from your editor that when you or your association experience changes due to moving, elections, change of meeting time and/or place, you need to notify the OSBA in **two** different ways to effectively get your message across. Send it to the BeeLine editor at the address above, **and** send it to the WebMaster for inclusion on the current OSBA web page (see page 10 in each

month's issue for the WebMaster's contact information).

Beekeeping in Western Oregon

By Harry Vanderpool, WVBA

July - Crops in bloom producing nectar and/or pollen: alfalfa, lima beans, various herbs, carrot, clover, corn, fireweed, melon, mustard, radish, spearmint. Others: holly hock, snowberry, teasel.

- Provide water continuously.
 - Examine supers frequently but don't leave much empty comb on colonies that are light in stores in the brood nest. Add supers only to the top of the filled ones, not below them, unless hives are near a commercial crop (add supers below filled ones).
 - Check colonies for queen and requeen if necessary. Requeen any colony with undesirable characteristics such as poor production, mean temper, European Foulbrood, poor brood pattern, bad attitude, etc.
 - If you find a colony hopelessly queenless, or with a laying worker, move the hive several yards and place a nucleus in a brood box in its place. Shake all of the bees from the original colony on the ground. Sort through the combs and reassemble the hive. Fortify the nuc with a frame of emerging brood if available. Repeat with 2 frames in a week. Watch their feed as fall approaches!
 - Make preparations to extract. Remove supers containing well-ripened honey to extract, and then get it done before things cool down.
 - Set plans in place for your fall treatment and medications. Put your plan in writing and follow it to the letter. This document will help you assess the efficacy of your pest control strategy.
 - Test random colonies for Varroa load. Follow up after your fall treatment is concluded with another test. If you are unsure or do not feel confident in your testing procedures, ask a senior beekeeper for help.
 - Continue to be on the lookout for American Foulbrood.
 - Don't turn your best workers into robber bees by exposing honey or cappings.
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- Place any extracted honey frames to be stored in a dry, cool area, with moth crystals.

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- Depending on your apiary location and on the weather, a critical nectar dearth exists between July 10 and Sept. 1 in this area. Leave 40-50 lbs. of honey in each colony for fall buildup or feed equivalent amount of sugar syrup (2:1). Feed supplementary pollen patties if stored pollen is inadequate and pollen dearth exists.
- Set an hour or two aside each week to work on entries for the state fair.
- Plan to attend your next association's monthly meeting. There will be newer beekeepers attending that will appreciate your thoughts.

This spring ten beekeepers chose not to medicate their colonies.

Teramycin in sugar: August –five, September-four, October-one, January-one, February-four, March-four, April-two.

Teramycin in grease: two beekeepers used them in March.

Apistan: four beekeepers used them in August, one each in September, January, March and April.

Checkmite: August-one, September-three, October-12 and February – four.

Fumidil B: August-four, September-three, October-two, March-three, April-one.

Other means used: the Mit-e-victor-two, Ultrasept vapor-two, Apicure-one, Magic Water-one, and one used Apple Cider Vinegar in feed.

Grease Patties-four for tracheal mites, shop towels and canola oil-eight, menthol-three, no one reported using any essential oils.

Of the 1791 hives, 1749 were ventilated. 1686 with a hole in the hive body, 115 top vented, 18 used a screened bottom board.

Eight beekeepers never do fall feedings, six never do a spring feeding. As for supplements one feeds pollen substitute in the fall. One feeds brewers yeast. One fed pollen patties in the spring and has vowed never to do that again. The build-up was way too strong, way too early.

Want Swarm Calls?

Webmaster Thom Trusewicz is starting a new page on the web site called a Swarm Call page. If you would like to be on the page contact Thom at ccbee@intergate.com or by phone at 503-325-7966. Your name, phone number and the area you serve would be listed at your request.

Survey Results

By Thom Trusewicz

Following are results of a survey I conducted this spring. Only 22 people responded, so it is just a small snapshot of what's going on out there.

There were 1793 colonies listed. 135 died this winter (7.52%). Causes of death: 18 starvation, 24 varroa mites, two fowl brood, 12 unknown, two missing bee disease, two poor ventilation, three queenless, one nosema, 70 (in one commercial operation) were listed as a victim of winter.

All but two beekeepers medicated their colonies in the fall and one more could not get to some of their colonies due to driving restrictions in a fire hazard area.

HB 2805 – Protecting Oregon's Agriculture-The Honey bee's Role in Oregon's Economy

Nearly \$500 million dollars of annual farm income in Oregon (15% of gross crop sales) is dependent on non-indigenous pollination. This pollination is nearly 100% provided by honey bees.

Oregon crops with critical insect pollination requirements include: apples, pears, sweet cherries, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cranberries, peaches, raspberries, strawberries, watermelons, squash and pumpkins, cucumbers, cantaloupes and muskmelons, seeds for canola oil, most vegetable and flower sees, and most clover and alfalfa seeds.

These crops depend on pollination by the honey bee. The honey bee is not native to North America and although it has generally thrived here, neither the native bees nor the honey bee “in the wild” are present in sufficient numbers to provide the high level of pollination required by the many thousands of acres of these crops.

Oregon farmers must either employ the services of a beekeeper or learn to keep bees themselves. Beekeepers must learn every aspect of honey bee health management. They cannot call a veterinarian several times daily for the many issues they regularly face. Instead, they face a lifetime of continued education and practical application.

The survival of the beekeeper in Oregon is greatly enhanced by the role of the beekeeping specialist at Oregon State University (OSU) who does research and extension service outreach to crop producers and to beekeepers. Dr. Michael Burgett had worked with the growers and beekeepers in Oregon since 1974. His position was created by a legislative budget line item in 1973.

Dr. Burgett retired in early 2003. Financial pressures faced by Higher Education made it an easy decision to let the 80-year history of bee research, extension service to growers and beekeepers and teaching lapse at OSU.

HB 2805 has been introduced and referred to the Ways and Means Committee. Amendments have been prepared which earmark \$200,000 of money appropriated to Higher Education to continue the research and extension service that aids our rural economy.

Yes, a single position can change the course of an industry. The absence of an applied pollination biologist/apicultural extension specialist will hurt Oregon’s economy.

PLEASE SUPPORT HB 2805.

If you have any questions or want more information please contact us.

Note: This was the information handed out by OSBA members mentioned in the President’s Message (page 2) during the Bee Day at the Legislature event on May 21. If you wish to

contact them, most are listed on page 10 in each issue of The BeeLine.

Please use this information when you contact your local Senator and Representative to urge support of HB 2805. The names and addresses of your local representatives are in local telephone directories.

Free Admission to the Oregon State Fair – Interested?

The Oregon State Fair has something for everyone, and you can get free admission and free parking, courtesy of the Willamette Valley Beekeepers Association. Come see the shows, the animals, the rides and the exhibits; taste that yummy fair food – curly fries, cotton candy, elephant ears....Come early and stay late, and plan on having lots of fun.

The WVBA hosts the Bee Booth at the Fair, and they are looking for volunteers to spend a few hours at the booth answering questions and promoting honey bees and beekeeping. It’s lots of fun and you’ll get to meet folks of all ages fascinated by honey bees. In exchange for volunteering at the Booth you get free fair admission! The Booth is indoors, in an air-conditioned building with modern convenient restrooms.

To get your free tickets, call WVBA President Grace Ann Kite at 503-769-2941. See you at the Fair!

Honey Bee Pests and Diseases Update Workshop – Why Should You Attend?

Two workshops have already been held (Colton and Southern Oregon) and two more are scheduled (Astoria and Hermiston). Funded by a grant from the ODA to the Oregon State Beekeepers Association, the workshops are designed to provide beekeepers with up-to-date information on pest and disease management.

Participants will also receive updated materials in the future and ongoing information about the best ways to control honey bee pests and diseases.

Workshop costs are primarily funded by the grant, with only a \$15 charge per participant. This includes lunch and all handouts.

Handouts include a 57 page booklet from the USDA entitled “Diagnosis of Honey Bee Diseases” (2000) by Dr. Hachori Shimanuki and Dr. David Knox. There are chapters on Bacterial Diseases (American Foulbrood, European Foulbrood, Powdery Scale, etc.), Fungal Diseases (Chalkbrood, Scalebrood), Protozoan Diseases (Nosema, etc.), Viral Diseases and Disease Interactions. It also covers Parasitic Honey Bee Mites (Varroa, Tracheal, etc) and Pests (Wax Moths, etc.), as well as Noninfectious Disorders such as Neglected Brood, Overheating, Plant Poisoning, Pesticide Poisoning, etc. There are many diagrams, tables and photos.

The booklet is pretty interesting reading and will undoubtedly answer questions that come up in the course of a beekeeper’s year.

The OSBA has, in addition, put together a 17 page handout that provides summary information for several major pests and diseases of honey bees in the Pacific Northwest, as well as means of detection and management and treatment recommendations. This information is primarily based on research presentations delivered during the 2002 Oregon State Beekeepers’ Association Conference in Salem, Oregon. The document covers five specific areas, including The Varroa Mite, The Tracheal Mite, American and European Foulbrood, Nosema Disease, and Management and Treatment Guildings for Pacific Northwest Beekeepers.

Also included with this handout are copies of documents that are referenced. These materials, as well as references to additional resources, as provided as a base for updating hobbyist and commercial beekeepers in managing honey bee colonies. Because recommendations have changed over time and are likely to continue to change, beekeepers are encouraged to seek additional resources in ongoing efforts to remain updated in

appropriate management practices and treatment options.

A registration form for the upcoming Astoria and Hermiston events is on page 9. Don’t miss these outstanding events.

Book Reviews:

“Honey from Flower to Table” by Stephanie Rosenbaum (2002)

“Beeing” by Roseanne Faryl Thomas (2002)

Both these books are beautiful to look at and informative as well. They definitely rate a spot on your library shelf.

“Honey from Flower to Table” is 120 pages with beautiful color illustrations. From the front jacket: “it dips into myth, religion, science and literature to tell the story of this heavenly food. Explaining the complex societies of the queen, drones and worker bees and the architecture of honeycombs, the author takes you through the near-magical method that turns flower nectar into honey. Look to the chapter on backyard beekeeping for straightforward counsel on tending your own bees and harvesting honey. And a selection of more than 25 honey recipes includes ideas for baking honey delicacies, preparing honey beverages, making honeycomb candles, lip balms and facial masks. A comprehensive suppliers list completes this charming compendium.”

“Beeing” is the story of a woman who became a keeper of bees, even though she didn’t quite set out to do so. To quote one paragraph: “Not long ago I would have said there was as much chance of my keeping bees as of my climbing Everest. And now with a minimum amount of gear and no qualifications, I had undertaken it. Like Sir Edmund Hillary, I had humbled myself before the greatness of nature. I had become a beekeeper.”

