

The Bee Line

Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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November–December 2012



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Image above (clockwise from left): George Hansen, Ramesh Sagili, Jan Lohman, Carolyn Breece, Dewey Caron, and Ellen Topitzhofer were among Oregonians attending WAS this October (see page 11). May the coming months bring more time for meeting, reading, and such activities as building equipment, along with the best of the season. And may all honey bees throughout the region—including the bees that made their way to Salem—winter well!

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HONEY BEES SETTLE IN AT THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Contact: *Fred VanNatta*

Governor Kitzhaber and First Lady Cylvia Hayes have dedicated space at Mahonia Hall, the state-owned Governor's residence, to a colony of honey bees. Fran Lushenko, a beekeeper with the Willamette Valley Beekeepers Association, proposed the idea. The hive was installed this spring by the Willamette Valley Beekeepers Association and is already producing honey.

Richard Farrier, president of the Willamette Valley Beekeepers Association, provided a recently captured swarm to inhabit a hive donated by the local chapter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association. The hive was placed in the backyard at Mahonia Hall in early June and is being cared for by President Farrier and Ms. Lushenko.

"This is a great educational tool for the Governor and me and for visitors to Mahonia," said First Lady Hayes. "The importance of pollinators to the Willamette Valley and to Oregon's agricultural sector is enormous, and we appreciate the work of local beekeepers to set up a colony at Mahonia."

President Farrier has removed approximately 35 pounds of honey from the hive and expects to be extracting soon. The Governor and First Lady Cylvia Hayes plan to share the honey with visitors as a tool to talk about urban beekeeping and Oregon's many agricultural products.

Any "First Bee" questions may be directed to longtime Oregon beekeeper Fred VanNatta at (503) 910-9664, or Mary Rowinski, First Lady Cylvia Hayes' assistant, at (503) 373-7489.

...AND HONEY BEES ABSCOND

Dewey M. Caron

This summer a hive of bees was established at the governor's official residence, Mahonia Hall in Salem, Oregon. However, they absconded in October, coincidentally while the governor was on an official trade mission to China. A number of circumstances seemed to come together, leading to failure of the governor's colony, perhaps like the "perfect storm" of a set of circumstances coming together to produce the terrible aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

The hive was arranged by Fran Lushenko, a beekeeper with the Willamette Valley Beekeepers Association, and the governor's assistant, after discussions with Governor Kitzhaber and First Lady Cylvia Hayes. Richard Farrier, president of the Willamette Valley Beekeepers Association, and longtime Oregon beekeeper Fred VanNatta found a convenient spot to site the first "official" hive of the State.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



All good things must come to an end eventually, and so it is with my incredible experience as president of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association. It has truly been a pleasure being able to work with such amazingly dedicated people who take their role as honey bee helpers so seriously.

In the three years in this position, I have been supported by a hardworking board of directors from all over the State of Oregon, some who travel many miles to stay informed and participate in our decisions. I have had great support from our Oregon commercial beekeepers, who have very generously given of their time and knowledge to help me make informed decisions, and I have had the constant encouragement from the other officers in this great organization and the incredible help of our newsletter editor, Rosanna Mattingly, and past President Chuck Sowers.

Paul Andersen is currently vice president, and he is always there to support and clarify my thoughts when necessary. Paul has done an unbelievable job of continuing with our Oregon record of producing one of the best beekeeping state conferences in the country. Carolyn Breece has been secretary for two years and, along with her OSU Honey Bee Lab duties, has taken on this job with enthusiasm and grace, and never misses a beat. Paul Kowash, with the help of his wife Kathy, took on the job of treasurer when Herb Brasington retired, and they are working very hard to keep our records straight, pay our bills, and manage our OSBA grant fund.

In my three years, we have been able to build a relationship with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, secured a grant to help our Oregon Master Beekeeper Program prosper, revised our constitution and bylaws, twice produced a directory that allows easy communication among members, and moved forward with a Master Beekeeper Program that Oregon can be proud of, where our priority is to educate beekeepers with the proper methods of caring for honey bees.

To all of you, thanks for giving me this opportunity.

Jan

Note: A thanks back at Jan for giving so much of her time & energy, diligence & follow-through, mind & heart in service of the bees and helping meet the needs of those who keep them throughout this fine region during her years as president.

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KNOW NUCS

Morris Ostrofsky

Why make nucs? When is the best time to make a nuc? What preparation is needed? How is a nuc made? What about care and feeding? Has the new queen been accepted? It would take me longer than the space here to cover all the aspects of making nucs. I strongly recommend that you look at the references, especially *Increase Essentials* by Larry Connor and *Beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey* by Brother Adam. They are both excellent references and they both include the many uses of nucs.

Bottom Line

Nucs are the beekeeper's way of making a new hive.

What Is a Nuc?

Nuc is short for nucleus. You may also hear it referred to as *making a division*, *divide* or *split*.

Why Make Nucs?

- ❖ Swarm control
- ❖ Increase hive numbers
- ❖ Raise queens
- ❖ Strength, weak colony
- ❖ Sure-fire queen introduction
- ❖ Save money
- ❖ Source of early season queens (raised in fall; used in spring)
- ❖ Helps control Varroa; sets back cycle

When Is the Best Time to Make a Nuc?

Queen availability dictates the calendar for making early season nucs. Make your divisions as soon as queens are available. You can purchase queens from a breeder in the southern part of the country, or you can raise your own in late fall and bank them in nucs over the winter. May and June, good time for present season increase, while July and August, good time for early queens for next season.

What Preparation Is Needed?

- ❖ Decide on a queen source
- ❖ Make a calendar
- ❖ Select a hive
- ❖ Gather your materials
- ❖ Decide to either leave nuc in same yard or move to another location >3 miles away

How Is a Nuc Made?

You do not want the old queen in your nuc box. Make sure you know where she is so she does not end up in the

nuc. The bees will NOT accept a new queen if the old queen is in the nuc.

- ❖ Select a strong, healthy hive with very low mite load
- ❖ Block entrance of empty five-frame nuc box with screen
- ❖ Place frames in nuc
 - 1 frame of honey and pollen
 - 3 frames of mostly capped brood in center of nuc
 - 1 empty drawn frame
- ❖ Add a caged queen in the center brood frame
- ❖ Add protein patty and a shim to provide space for patty
- ❖ Move or keep nuc in the same yard

If you decided leave your nuc in the same yard, half the bees will return to the donor hive. To compensate, you will need to add some extra bees to the nuc—roughly three frames worth of bees. Spray these frames of bees with a little sugar water and HBH, and brush the bees into the top of two nuc boxes separated by a queen excluder. Since you don't want to add the queen from the donor hive, by placing a queen excluder in between the boxes, she will be prevented from going into your nuc box. Before brushing the bees into the box, look for the queen; there is always a slight chance of damaging her if she got brushed into the box in the first place.

- ❖ Use ant control method of your choice
- ❖ Replace screen on nuc box with entrance reducer, preferably after sunset or at least after the bees have settled down

Care and Feeding of the Nuc

Make sure the bees have a protein patty and sugar syrup for at least the first two weeks.

Has the New Queen Been Accepted?

DAY 5: Your first inside look at how things are going. How you deal with what you see will ultimately influence your success.

What You Want to See Is:

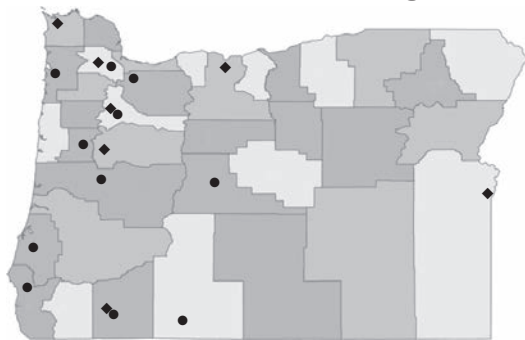
The bees are feeding the queen in the cage without balling it. If the bees are feeding the queen and there are no queen cells present, you can remove the candy plug protection. (Do NOT poke the candy; it is designed to be a timed release.)

What You Do NOT Want to See Is:

- ❖ Emergency queen cells: an indicator, the bees have not accepted the new queen and are trying to make their own queen
- ❖ Balling the cage: another indicator they have not accepted the new queen

Continued on page 10

Oregon State Beekeepers Association EXECUTIVE BOARD AND ASSOCIATIONS



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541.942.6479; beetanical@q.com

• OSBA REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Central Oregon Beekeepers
Meets 6:30 PM, third Tuesday
63211 Service Rd, Suite 130, Bend
President: Bindy Beck-Meyer
Treasurer: Allen Engle

Coos County Beekeepers
Meets 6:30 PM, third Saturday (except December)
Ohlsen Baxter Bldg, 631 Alder St, Myrtle Point
President: John Gardner—541.572.3847
Vice President: Shigeo Oku—541.396.4016
Secretary: Bobbi Gardner—541.572.3847
Treasurer: Jane Oku—541.396.4016;
janeoku1958@gmail.com

Klamath Basin Beekeepers
Meets 9:00 AM, last Saturday (except Nov/Dec)
OSU Extension, 3328 Vandenberg Rd, Klamath Falls
President: Jim Smith—541.892.5888;
tulebee@gmail.com
Vice President: Chris Kerns—541.884.8664;
ker664@charter.net
Secretary: Donna Schmerbach—541.891.3066
Treasurer: Kathy Nelson—541.882.3141
Website: www.klamathbeekeepers.org

Lane County Beekeepers
Meets 7:30 PM, third Tuesday, Trinity United
Methodist Church, 440 Maxwell Rd, Eugene
President: Judy Scher—541.344.2114;
judyscher@gmail.com
Vice President: Rita Ostrofsky—541.685.2875
Secretary: Barbara Bajec—541.767.9086
Treasurer: Nancy Ograin—541.935.7065;
woodrt@pacinfo.com
Website: www.lcbaor.org

Linn-Benton Beekeepers
Meets 6:30 PM, fourth Wednesday, South First
Alternative Co-op Meeting Room, 1007 SE 3rd, Corvallis
President: Linda Zielinski—541.929.4856;
llz50@peak.org

Vice President: Zach Welch—541.754.3069;
zw@superlucidity.net
Secretary: Marie Laper—541.760.9838; mlaper@peak.org
Treasurer: Suzi Maresh—541.967.9607;
sjomaresh@msn.com

Portland Metro Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, second Thursday, Clackamas Community College, Clairmont Hall, Room 118, Oregon City
President: Nancy McFarlane—503.260.3930;
mcfarlanebees@gmail.com
Vice President: Jim Barlean—503.659.9718;
jbarlean@msn.com
Secretary: Kat Yeager—503.452.5010;
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Treasurer: Rex McIntire—503.720.7958;
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Portland Urban Beekeepers

Meets 6:30 PM, first Wednesday, Calaroga Terrace Rtmt Comm, Terrace Auditorium, 1400 NE Second Ave, Portland
President: Tim Wessels—503.380.9381;
mrjwessels@gmail.com
Vice President: Melissa Kerry—785.331.8003;
mkerry@cu-portland.edu
Secretary: Mike Card—503.702.9250;
mikecard02@gmail.com
Treasurer: Frank Barley—fbarley@yahoo.com

Southern Oregon Beekeepers

Meets 7:30 PM, first Monday, Southern Oregon Res & Ext Ctr, 569 Hanley Rd, Central Point
President: John Jacob—541.582.BEES
john@oldsolenterprises.com
Vice President: Floyd Pawlowski—541.482.4797;
fmpawlowski@ashlandwireless.net
Secretary: Michele Bashaw—541.512.0155;
hapistitch@earthlink.net
Treasurer: Ron Willing—541.582.9694; rwilling@charter.net

Tillamook County Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, second Tuesday, Art Space Hwy 101 & 5th St, Bay City
President: Bob Allen—503.322.3819
Vice President: Terry Fullan—503.368.7160;
tfullan@nehalem.tel.net

Tualatin Valley Beekeepers

Meets 7:30 pm, last Tuesday
Cameron Public Svcs Bldg, 155 N First Ave, Hillsboro
President: Mike Van Dyke—503.642.5338;
mvand581@gmail.com
Vice President: Andrew Schwab—503.538.7545;
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Secretary: Paul Andersen—503.649.5089;
paulande@easystreet.net
Treasurer: Jerry Maasdam—503.648.7906;
jmaasdam@mac.com

Willamette Valley Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, fourth Monday, Chemeketa Community College, Building 34, Room A, Salem
President: Richard Farrier—541.327.2673 Vice President: Harry Vanderpool—503.399.3675;
shallotman@yahoo.com
Secretary: Mike Rodia—503.364.3275; drodia@yahoo.com
Treasurer: Patricia Swenson—pkswenson@gmail.com
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Fairs and Exhibits: Marjie Ehry—503.434.1894

Nominations: Chuck Sowers—503.266.1740

NW Apiculture Fund for Honey Bee Research, Extension, and Education: Kenny Williams—541.456.2631

Public Relations: Paul Andersen—503.332.5410

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Dr. Lynn Royce—541.929.5337; mitebee@peak.org

Dr. Ramesh Sagili—541.737.5460;
sagilir@hort.oregonstate.edu

REGIONAL NEWS

Regional Representatives

South Coast

The Coos County and South Coast (Curry County) Beekeepers Associations continue to share the promotion of beekeeping on the South Coast. Coos County beekeepers hosted their annual bar-b-que at the regular September meeting. Members brought side dishes and a scrumptious feast preceded the meeting.

The South Coast association continues to grow, with three new members joining in September. Letters and articles in local newspapers are attracting interested participants.

South Coast beekeepers discussed the increased robbing behavior of bees. The loss of weaker hives was reported by some members. Carla Fletcher brought specimens of wasps and hornets that had been marauding her hives. Presentations by President Del Barber and Vice President Carla Fletcher addressed “Winterizing for Bees.” They shared several handouts with various recipes and procedures for preparing sugar cake and fondant.

Coos County beekeepers will be hosting a Bee School on Saturday, November 17, from 10:30 AM until 3:30 PM at the OSU Extension Office, Myrtle Point. Coos County

and South Coast members will be free, with a \$10 fee for others. Several members from both of the organizations plan to attend the 2012 OSBA fall conference in Seaside this November.

—*Del Barber*

Regional Associations

Portland Metro Beekeepers

At today's meeting, a high school senior, Paul Leonchik, gave a summary of what to do with our bees this month. He has been apprenticing under Jim Barlean, and we look forward to more presentations by Paul in the future. Next, Harry Vanderpool explained HB 2336. This is the bill passed in January 2012 that allows farm direct sales of honey with almost no Oregon Department of Agriculture inspections or licenses required. The fewest rules apply to a beekeeper with less than 20 hives.

This bill is the same one that allows people to sell jams, pickles, and such at farmers markets and other venues with few restrictions—except often the common sense ones of cleanliness and good quality presentation. The whole bill can be accessed on the OSBA website.

Then Dr. Ramesh Sagili gave a "Health of the Honey Bee" talk. He presented preliminary results on the research that many local beekeepers have contributed to by sending in questionnaires and bee samples. In addition, he discussed his and his Oregon State University staff's research into the nutrition of bees and the effectiveness of several current mite treatments.

—*Paul Jarrett*

Tillamook County Beekeepers

Bob Allen opened the October meeting with a small group in attendance. Our group shared evaluations on our year in beekeeping on the Coast. Honey totals were smaller this year for most, yet the honey was very good in quality. Members plan on requeening more diligently and doing more mite counts.


Repeatedly I heard, "I learned so much this year." And, as beekeepers, we do learn from our mistakes. Club members feel very fortunate to have the fall conference held in Seaside.

—*Terry Fullan*

Willamette Valley Beekeepers

Some time ago, residents of Junction City inquired about information and/or assistance they might use to remove (ease) the city's restrictions on urban farming, including beekeeping. Both Dr. Dewey Caron and Harry Vanderpool responded, and things were "quiet" until a couple of weeks ago. Terri Andrews, a Junction City Council Administrative Assistant called Harry, and then Mike Rodia, to inquire about what has happened in other cities and relevant rules and/or guidelines for beekeeping. Both Harry and Mike advised they would provide assistance and that honey bees should be allowed with nuisance rules used for enforcement actions, if necessary. Mike followed up with an extensive packet of articles covering urban beekeeping.

Kenny Williams gave a presentation on queen quality at the October meeting. Although Carniolan and Italian bees differ somewhat in propolis production (Carniolan



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If you have any questions regarding details of the fund or how to donate, please contact Kenny Williams, Chair of the OSBA's Endowment Fund, at 541.456.2631.

IMPORTANT: Making your check out only as described above ensures that your donation is correctly applied to the appropriate Endowment and not to any other program.

more), honey stores usage (Carniolan less), and build-up (Italian) earlier, there has been extensive mixing of the two. Either can be very gentle or mean and vary from gold to black in color. A good queen should have an egg laying pattern which is complete with few skipped cells and covers much of a frame with a halo of pollen and honey. An egg will be in the center and bottom of the cell with no multiple eggs or eggs on side walls. The queen's prodigy will be good honey producers, of gentle temperament, overwinter well, be resistant to diseases and mites, and swarm little.

Queen Replacement:

- ❖ If the laying pattern is spotty; if there is a lot of drone brood, particularly if scattered about the frame; and/or if there is a lot of chalkbrood disease.
- ❖ If a lot (more than a few) of supersedure cells are found. They should be removed and a new queen introduced to ensure a quality queen will/has replace/d the old queen.
- ❖ For maximum honey yields. Queens should be replaced each year and/or in the fall to ensure colonies will be strong going into the winter.

Queen Introduction:

- ❖ Can be made by placing queen cages between frames, preferably those containing both capped and uncapped brood, for best acceptance.
- ❖ The candy end should be up if workers are in the cage and down if no workers and/or the candy is soft and may slump.
- ❖ Once introduced, the hive should be left alone, other than adding feed, for ten–twelve days. This allows the queen to emerge, eggs to be laid, and larva feeding to begin, and also minimizes the “offing” of the new queen.
- ❖ Nucs can also be used and have the advantage of adding an already laying queen with her brood. Nucs can raise their own queen if frames have eggs less than three days old and the weather cooperates.
- ❖ A queen bank also can be used to hold a queen a week or two. Harry has designed one that holds up to 50 queen cages and uses an easy wire-holding system for the cages.

Adapted from: October 2012 WVBA Newsletter

WELCOME, NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS!



Matt Allen	Tom Cinquini
Paul Andersen	Jordan Dimock
Glen Andresen	John Dufner
Jeanette Bailor	Bill Edwards
Del & Myrna Barber	Mary Edwards
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Ed Blatter	GloryBee Foods, Inc
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Heike Williams
Kenny Williams

KEEPING BEES IN November–December

Morris Ostrofsky



The most frequent question I get in fall is, “Should I put the collection board in place under my screened bottom board?” It seems reasonable to want to protect the bees from cold weather by covering the screened bottom board. Yet, the cold weather isn't the greatest threat.

What isn't as obvious is that moisture is a much greater problem than cold weather. The answer I give is, “Only leave the collection board in place when taking mite counts.” If you are using solid bottom boards, then you must provide an upper entrance.

What can be done to deal with moisture? First, if you are using a solid bottom board, tilt the hive slightly forward. I have found use of an insulation box that contains hay or other absorbent material to be very effective.

Insulation box containing absorbent material to help manage moisture inside the hive.



Use a box with the same footprint as a standard box; add some ½-inch ventilation holes to it, and cover the bottom with hardware cloth to keep the absorbent materials in place. Place the box just under the outer cover. Venting

moisture out of the hive can also be accomplished by adding an upper entrance.

❖ If you have not done so already, remove queen excluders and add mouse guards.

❖ Going into the coldest season of the year means monitoring the bees' honey supplies. This is easily done by lifting the back of your hive just a few inches. Ideally, the bees should have stored from 40 to 60 pounds of honey.

❖ If your colony is light, November is the time to start feeding fondant. Note that we switch from a liquid feed to a solid feed now because at the lower temperatures the bees have a harder time metabolizing the sugar and evaporating off excess moisture in the syrup. A frame of honey from a known, healthy hive is also an excellent source of food. Leftover candy canes make a sweet holiday gift for your bees. Continue to check stores periodically.

❖ Light colonies can be fed saturated syrup until daily temperatures drop into the 40s.

❖ Occasionally the temperature hits 50 degrees, and the bees should be out doing cleansing flights. With weeks between cleansing flights, it must be a great relief for them to get out. On these days, if you notice that a hive is inactive, it bears closer examination. If you find that the hive is a dead-out, examine the combs for scales of American foulbrood. If you have any doubt, send a

sample to the lab in Beltsville for confirmation.

❖ It is usually a waste of time and resources to try to keep weak colonies going through fall and winter. It is easier just to unite them.

❖ Entrances should be reduced to prevent robbing. They should also be checked periodically to make sure they are not plugged with dead bees.

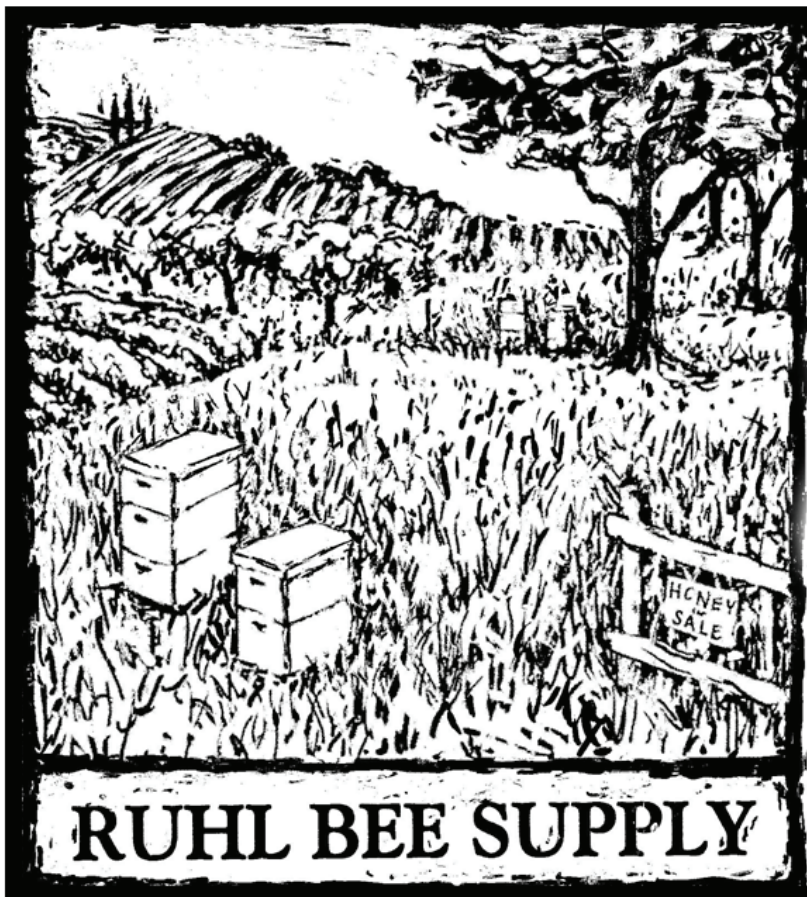
This is a good time to put down your hive tool, pick up a pen, and go to a conference, like the OSBA conference in Seaside. This time of year is also an opportunity to build bee equipment and gizmos and gadgets for next year. And on those cold winter days when your bees are clustered and content, it is your turn to take a well-earned break and read that latest bee book.

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Harry Vanderpool
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Andrew Watson
Judith Wible
Douglas Youngberg



T. Max Kuhn (left), mentor in the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program, and Stan Scotton (right), apprentice beekeeper, during a traditional exchange of honey as Stan completed his last requirement and would soon submit his apprentice-level paperwork for certification. He says that both of his colonies are alive, and one is thriving; his priorities now lie in getting them through winter on the Central Oregon Coast.

Information about the program is available at:
www.oregonmasterbeekeeper.org

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Know nucs—Continued from page 3

If you see eggs in the cells, there is a queen is in your nuc. How could this happen if you already found and removed the queen when setting up your nuc? The answer is that apparently there was a mother/daughter queen combination in the donor hive. This can happen in the spring.

What To Do?

If there are queen cells present, cut them out! This is CRITICAL.

- ❖ If eggs present, find and remove the old queen.
- ❖ If they are balling the cage, DO NOT remove the supplied candy plug protection.

DAY 8: If you had "problems" on DAY 5, then recheck on DAY 8. It is unlikely the problem will extend beyond this date.

DAY 24: Graduate to a standard box if the new queen has been accepted and is producing brood.

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 17, 2012: Coos County Beekeepers Association Bee School, from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM at the Ohlsen Baxter Building at 631 Alder St, Myrtle Point, Oregon. Dr. Ramesh Sagili will be the teacher. Members of our club along with the members of the Oregon South Coast Beekeepers Association can attend free. All others will be \$10. Provide your own lunch or buy it in town.

January 8–12, 2013: North American Beekeeping Conference & Tradeshow, Hershey Lodge®, Hershey, Pennsylvania. For information, visit: www.abfnet.org.

REMINDER

Event listings are free (up to 15 words; 45 words for nonprofit organizations). Take a moment to send listings along with your questions (the bees require us to have them), stories, photos, and recipes. Let us know how you and your bees are doing! Also, remember to place your name on the swarm call list (www.orsba.org) if you want to be listed in 2013.

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THE WAS THAT WAS...

Jan Lohman

It's the time of year to be thinking of closing up your hives for winter, doing some much needed research, and reading and attending some conferences to better understand our beloved honey bees to see what is happening in the industry. Well, my first meeting for the year was the Western Apiculture Society and Washington State Beekeepers Association joint meeting held in Seattle the beginning of October [see photo, page 1]. Several Oregon beekeepers were invited to be presenters at this conference, and hopefully there will be information from their talks included in future *Bee Lines*.

Ramesh did an outstanding job of describing what he believes is the first line of defense for raising honey bees, and actually our only line of defense—*nutrition*. He and his crew at Oregon State University have been working several years to understand the nutrition in honey bees, how pollens, whether monopollens or multipollens, differently affect the honey bee and how very important diversity in pollen is to the bee.

Morris Ostrofsky gave a presentation on “Know Nucs,” and he explained the way he builds his nucs and what to look for with size, feeding, and releasing the queen to build successful nucs.

Bob Arnold brought his expertise into his presentation about swarming and how to control swarming with our bees. He had a unique approach to requeening, leaving the old queen in the top box with very little brood or bees and placing his new queen in the bottom box to begin the new cycle (with a divided hive), and pinch the top queen when the bottom queen has been accepted.

Carolyn Breece and Louis Matej discussed the two different master beekeeper programs, one developed and managed by Washington State Beekeepers Association and the other by Oregon State Beekeepers Association and Oregon State University, including their requirements and where each program is currently. As an aside, Washington State Beekeepers Association has been quite willing to help Oregon in our development of the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program.

One of the most heart-wrenching presentations was Eric Olson's talk about the impacts of winter losses to the beekeepers. In 2011, he lost 9,000 colonies—unimaginable, I know, leaving 18,000 boxes to be dealt with. He discussed candidly the costs associated with that

loss, not only the reduced pollination income but also the cost of rebuilding his business. He also continued with the crushing emotional impact and just plain physical work to rebuild, and finished his talk with his decision for inside overwintering of bees. He is in his first year of inside wintering, so we will closely follow his results as will Washington State University.

I hope that I am tempting you to attend some conferences during your bee “down time.” The Oregon State Beekeepers Association fall conference may have already happened, but there is still the American Beekeeping Federation annual conference to attend in early January 2013 in Hershey, Pennsylvania, which is also a great opportunity to visit the East Coast for a week.

TO BUILD A BEE HOUSE

Joy Markgraf

When a fierce storm blanketed the landscape where I live near Husum, Washington, with over two feet of heavy snow and a thick covering of ice, it broke down countless trees and made life miserable for all outdoor creatures. Looking out at my Bee House, I felt immensely grateful that it protected my hives from the storm. For this reason, I decided to share with you my story of how we built it.

Building Our Bee House

In February of 2010 we began construction of our bee house. My research into ancient methods of beekeeping had inspired me, along with the fact that I made skeps out of grass and wanted them to last as long as possible under a roof. The investment in gathering materials and constructing these bee baskets was immense. Determining the site was easy, because I had been beekeeping one year and knew how much I enjoy watching the bees from my kitchen window! Also, my first hive was next to the dog kennel, which is effective at discouraging bears and skunks that also live in our “backyard.” Having bees so close to the house isn't an issue because I keep gentle Carniolans.

I drew a sketch of the imagined structure based on the criteria that were important for bees, such as light from the east and west, and wind breaks on the north and south sides in our



area. When I showed it to my husband, he liked the idea. His building expertise went right to work, and he designed the building. His design incorporated the use of heavy timbers that he had hand-hewn a few years before. Since then he had had a serious stroke and was worried that the timbers would deteriorate sitting out in the weather. Another thing that determined the design was the fact that I had inherited some old cobblestones from my father, who had rescued them when a street in Portland, Oregon, was being torn up. Long ago, they may have been ballast from an old sailing ship, and they were beautiful. The dimensions of the building were arrived at to be large enough to house about a dozen hives.

We staked out the dimensions and I dug down to make a level bottom. Then we placed cement blocks where each post would be, and filled them with cement to make them strong. Next, our Hispanic friend, an excellent rock worker, built a foot-wide rock wall around the perimeter incorporating the cement blocks. Now for the tricky part: sawing and erecting the upright posts. I say *tricky* because my husband did not have the strength he used to have before his stroke. He also had a pacemaker, so he could only use a chainsaw while wearing rubber gloves. Once the cuts were made, I rolled/walked the posts into place onto the cement blocks. They were not impossibly heavy since they were made from cottonwood trees. Once standing, we nailed cross braces to each one and spiked horizontal, two-by-six boards onto the upright timbers where the top of the walls would be on the short sides. The next step required the forklift of our tractor. My husband is excellent at operating it, but his coordination has changed and he had to concentrate intensely. Watching this part was not easy! (It's amazing what we will do for our bees.) He picked up the long timbers with the forklift and carefully took them up and over the upright posts, then gently set them into place without knocking over all the braced posts. The back timber was slid into place along two greased horizontal two-by-eights located on the short sides. Small stakes nailed to the top of each post stopped the timber from going too far. Nailing angle braces into place completed this part, and it was time to add rafters. First each two-by-six had to be carefully notched to fit the timbers (plate), placed on twenty-two-inch centers, then spiked into place. Decking was added, and sheet metal matching the roof of our house was added. It was actually leftover roofing and came out exactly.

Now it was time to complete the arduous job of making the stone floor. This took many pickup loads of gravel and sand for the cobble bed. It took me as long to complete this last phase as did all the work of building put together.

I settled on a circular pattern for the cobbles since I didn't know when I would run out. This worked out very nicely as I started in the center. When I ran out of cobbles, I added "flat" native stones to finish the floor.

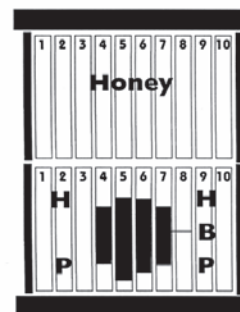
BEGINNING THE "NEW YEAR"

Dewey M. Caron

Fall is often considered the New Year with a bee colony. It begins the new reproductive cycle. It starts with worker bees living longer and the queen reducing her egg laying. Drones may or may not still be present in the colony.

I think of the seasonal cycle in terms of what bees are doing. As beekeepers, we seek to "guide" those that are not in sync with the season and are, for whatever reason, deficient in food, brood, or drawn comb/hive structure. If we look into our late fall colony, we should see something like the figure below, which I use in my textbook *Honey Bee Biology & Beekeeping*.

The figure shows a hive of two standard ten-frame boxes. In the fall, bees should consolidate their brood rearing in the center of the lowest box (the brood chamber) and store honey and bee bread stores around this core extending to the sides and filling or nearly filling the box above (the food chamber).



The "ideal" fall colony.

Your fall hive(s) might not include two standard boxes or might not be ten-frame. Top bar hives and eight-frame boxes, boxes that are not standard depth size, are common individual hive variations, but the bees should still have an organized brood core with food above and to the outside if they will start the new year successfully.

The colony entrance area is often reduced by the fall or the bees have used propolis to reduce it. The brood box should have the best drawn comb available, and honey stores should occur, most of the worker cells, especially in the area of the food chamber box immediately above the brood sphere. The colony needs top-quality drawn comb for spring expansion—let the queen search to the outer frames for drone cells. The bees will construct some drone comb between boxes, which will help expand the compact central brood sphere when most appropriate to do so.

If we are attentive bee stewards, we have also likely done two other things to help our bees celebrate their new year.

We have requeened so our bees enter the new year with a new queen, and we have monitored for Varroa mites and looked for other bee maladies to help ensure the healthiest bees possible. In nature the weakest—those with older queens or higher mite/disease levels—might not survive. Many beekeepers let nature prevail in their colony management. In our BeeInformed Partnership survey, over 60 percent of 3,500 survey respondents nationally said that they do not do treat colonies for mites or disease, but 100 percent of commercials reported doing at least some treatments.

This central brood sphere will contract on cold nights and the bees will cluster as temperatures dip. They will eat the honey stores immediately around the core and then move upward over the rainy season, staying in contact with their honey reserves. The bee bread will help them restart brood rearing once natural pollens start coming in and the brood begins to expand as new bees are needed to replace the aging overwintering population. The bees prepare for this season. I hope your bees are looking like the ideal colony and they get through to next season in good condition.

Abscinding bees—Continued from page 1

The colony was established from a swarm captured in Albany. It did well. President Farrier removed approximately 35 pounds of honey from the hive in August. First Lady Cylvia Hayes began to share the honey with visitors as a tool to talk about urban beekeeping and Oregon's many agricultural products.

A reporter with the *Statesman Journal* expressed interest in telling the “story” of the governor’s bees, so it was arranged to visit the colony to photograph Richard and Fred opening and examining the bees. On Friday, October 19, before fall rains started, the reporter and a photographer met them at the apiary. Imagine their surprise when they discovered an abandoned hive.

So what happened to the bees? We do not understand absconding in bees, which is not common in our bees. Richard had counted whole colony mite drops and found 100 mites per day, a high mite load. Two weeks before meeting the reporter, he and Fred had fed the colony sugar syrup, added a protein patty, and added mite treatment. Did the high mite number lead to absconding? The mid-October manipulation? The feeding manipulation? The mite treatment? Was our dry Oregon fall weather a factor? The governor’s trip to China? Perhaps, as was the apparent case with Hurricane Sandy, it was a set of circumstances that all came together, the “perfect hive storm.”

Richard Farrier with the hive and the honey bees that flew over the grounds of the governor’s mansion for a while this past summer. Though their departure was a surprise, the housing and beekeepers they left behind are ready to protect and care for new occupants come spring.



Fred VanNatta

The *Statesman Journal* reporter quoted Richard, “You can do everything humanely possible and still you can lose your bees...” Richard suspected that the bees left the hive to escape Varroa mites, adding, “Those things chewing on you would drive you crazy.”

Fred VanNatta said they would “consult with the university on why the bees abandoned the hive,” adding “... the hive at the governor’s mansion was a way to educate Oregonians about urban beekeeping... The fact that there’s a colony of bees behind the White House and behind the governor’s house helps educate people that they aren’t dangerous.”

Dr. Ramesh Sagili was interviewed by the reporter for the story. Ramesh pointed out that bees may “abandon their colonies with high mite levels” and speculated that perhaps they had higher Nosema levels. But, of course, they are gone, so we will never know for sure what caused them to leave.

Richard and Fred pledged to come back with a new colony next spring. Hopefully, it will be a swarm or package bees that stay to help pollinate the extensive gardens around the Governor’s home and supply he and First Lady Cylvia with enough honey to continue their education of First Office visitors to the wonders of bees and bee honey from their very own gardens.

A THANK YOU

Chuck and Jeanne Sowers would like to give a huge “Thank You” to all of the beekeepers who have helped Tom and/or offered their help during Chuck’s illness. Also, a “Thank You” for the many prayers, cards and letters sent, phone calls, and visits to Chuck. He is now recuperating at home in Canby.

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Thank you!

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