



The Bee Line

Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 38

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May 2013

HONEY BEE LOSSES & OSU HONEY BEE RESEARCH UPDATE

Ramesh Sagili

Honey Bee Colony Losses

Many of you might have already heard the news that 2012–2013 has not been encouraging for the bees and the beekeeping industry. Speculations are that national winter colony losses for 2012–2013 may range anywhere from 35 to 40 percent or even higher, which would be significantly higher than what has been reported in the past few years (2007–2008: 36 percent, 2008–2009: 29 percent, 2009–2010: 34 percent, 2010–2011: 30 percent, and 2011–2012: 22 percent). There was also an unofficial estimate about shortfall of about 100,000 hives for almond pollination this year. Almonds need approximately 1.6 million honey bee hives each year for pollination. Honey production was also down to 147 million pounds for 2012, a drop of 1 percent from 2011.

I hope all of you were able to complete the national survey (Bee Informed Partnership). You might have received our state survey pertaining to colony losses that Dr. Caron and I have been sending you for the past three years. Please take couple of minutes off from your busy schedule to complete and return these important and useful surveys. Oregon colony losses have been lower than the national average for the past four years. Pacific Northwest colony losses for the past four years are as follows:

Commercial beekeepers: 21 percent, 25 percent, 21 percent, and 19 percent, respectively, for the years 2008–2009, 2009–2010, 2010–2011, and 2011–2012.

Backyard beekeepers: 26 percent, 45 percent, 32 percent, and 30 percent, respectively, for the above-mentioned years.

I am often asked what might be the reason for lower colony losses in Oregon or the Pacific Northwest. This is a complex question. It is hard to pinpoint a few factors that might be responsible for lower losses. I would speculate that the following factors might be playing a role in our relatively better colony survival: (1) better foraging environment (abundance and diversity of pollen and nectar) in our region, (2) relatively lower pesticide exposure, and (3) relatively mild winters.

Update on the OSU Honey Bee Research Program

Two new graduate students will be joining the lab this summer to start their MS programs. Current graduate student Ellen Topitzhofer has completed her intense field experiments pertaining to honey bee nutrition and is currently focused on finishing the lab analysis part with assistance from Ashrafun, Carolyn, and undergraduates in the lab. Ellen's project is primarily focused on evaluating the effects of nutrition (pollen diversity) on honey bee health, physiology, and immunocompetence. She will be presenting her study results at the 2013 OSBA annual conference at Seaside.

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Jan Lohman

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Image above: Ramesh Sagili "looks for" nectar in The Dalles, where:

*Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough...*

Ramesh provides an update from the OSU Honey Bee Lab in the front story. What plants are in bloom in your area? Do you keep a bloom log? As the bees now collect resources that will see their colonies on through the winter to come, may we all find joy in the special beauty of the land this time of year.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



April is starting out cool and wet so far, right after a spring break week that was much warmer and dryer than normal. I just hope the weather isn't a roller coaster this spring. It's hard on the bees, and this has been a rough year already. All my hives were looking good in September. By October, about 25 percent were weak, and in January the weak ones were dead, despite efforts to help keep them going. The rest are ramping up well and going into spring strong. Losses were higher than last year, but still recoverable with nucs and splits.

Recently, the news has been flush with stories of honey bee losses and shortages. The reports out of the almonds claim there weren't enough bees this year. Some of the large beekeepers back East reported losses extraordinarily high, with some outfits losing up to 65 percent! By mid- to late May, the statistics regarding the losses in Oregon and Washington should be compiled and we will see how we fared here in the Northwest.

The awareness of the plight of the honey bee is increasing even more with another year of high losses. Newspapers, talk radio, network news, everybody in the mainstream media wants to talk about bees, bee losses, and the importance of pollination to the food supply. I have noticed that neonicotinoids are mentioned in the media discussions as the most likely cause of the bee losses, noting the European Union has banned them and the United Kingdom is considering it. One person being interviewed on a radio program accused the EPA of not just dragging its feet but ignoring them altogether. When someone finds out that I am a beekeeper, one of the first questions is about those "neo" things, so the general public is starting to become aware of the neonicotinoid pesticides and potential hazards as well. Perhaps with the increase of public awareness, there may be some pressure for the EPA to review its position on neonicotinoids.

Meanwhile, I will work at recovering by making splits, acquiring nucs, and keeping a close eye on my hives. As the year progresses, I will reevaluate my practices to determine if there are adjustments needed to my hive management. I try to plan ahead; however, as everyone knows, the best laid plans often go astray. One thing about bees is you have to remain flexible, be willing to change and make adjustments. In spite of all my efforts, concerns, and worry, I only have so much control; the rest is up to the bees and a little luck!

Paul



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2012 PACIFIC NORTHWEST POLLINATION SURVEY: A SUMMARY

Dewey M. Caron, Ramesh Sagili, and Michael Cooper

Beginning in 1986, Dr. Mike Burgett of the Honey Bee Lab at Oregon State University began an annual survey of pollination economics in the Pacific Northwest states (Oregon, Washington, and Idaho). With Mike's concurrence, we (Dewey Caron and Ramesh Sagili, at Oregon State University, and Mike Cooper, of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture) have continued and expanded this annual pollinator survey. Our 2012 report will be published in the *American Bee Journal*. This is a condensed summary of that report.

To obtain pollination information, we sent electronic and snail-mail requests to approximately 150 commercial and semi-commercial Oregon and Washington beekeepers, and a similar survey to 144 Idaho beekeepers. We were able to utilize 44 returns from 27 commercial beekeepers (9 commercial Oregon beekeepers) and 17 semi-commercial beekeepers (9 from Oregon). Oregon respondents managed an average of 3,002 colonies/individual; Oregon semi-commercial = 290 colonies/individual. The 18 survey responses from Oregon beekeepers was the same number as for our previous year's survey (summary published in the 2012 April and May issues of *The Bee Line*). With more Oregon semi-commercials (i.e., 500 colonies or

fewer) returning a 2012 survey, the number of colonies represented dropped to owners of an estimated 50 percent of Oregon bee colonies (based on the NASS estimate of honey producers with more than 5 colonies), down from 60 percent a year ago. Overall, for the three states, our survey responses likewise included owners of about 50 percent of estimated colony numbers, compared to nearly 70 percent for last year, with fewer returns from all three states to the 2012 survey request.

The 2012 pollination survey continues to illustrate the importance of pollination rental for Pacific Northwest beekeepers. Overall, the nine commercial Oregon beekeepers reported an average 8.9 crop rentals (range 3–14) and semi-commercials had an average of 4 crop rentals (range 1–9), both above the three-state region average of 5.8 for commercial and 3.2 for semi-commercial rentals/individual. The 44 Pacific Northwest beekeepers reported 152 crop rental opportunities of 30 crops for a total of just under 204,000 colony rentals.

By far the largest rental fee generator for Oregon and Pacific Northwest beekeepers is California almond rental, which has been the case for the last several survey years. Almond rentals were reported by all but three Oregon semi-commercial beekeepers (15 total). Respondents reported renting from 164 to over 6,000 colonies to almond growers, for a total of 21,797 colonies. The rental fee received ranged from \$130 to \$172, with a weighted average of \$148.75, an increase of \$9.55 over the 2011 rental average for Pacific

Table 1. Pollination rentals and income by crop type as reported by 44 Pacific Northwest (18 Northwest beekeepers renting to almond growers, 2012.

Crop	PNW&OR (number)	Rental Colonies (number)	Rental Colonies (%)	Rental Income	Rental Income (%)
Almond	PNW/22	81,262	40	\$11,888,245	72.5
Tree Fruit	PNW/22	64,852	31.5	\$11,990,945	12.2
Berry	PNW/14	27,487	13.5	\$1,113,037	6.8
Legume	PNW/5	6,472	3	\$180,574	1
Vegetable	PNW/17	18,410	9	\$983,689	6
Cucurbit	PNW/5	2,812	3	\$140,050	1
Oil Crop ¹	PNW/6	2,072	2	\$97,174	1
Total	PNW/91	203,295		\$16,397,787	
Almond	OR/15	21,797	34.6	\$3,242,322	63.5
Tree Fruit	OR/21	12,150	19.3	\$575,558	11.3
Berry	OR/18	9,166	14.5	\$409,014	8
Legume	Seedprod OR/9	6,444	10.2	\$179,314	3.5
Vegetable	Seedprod OR/15	8,988	14.3	\$487,941	9.6
Cucurbit	OR/7	2,482	4	\$115,490	2.3
Oil Crop ¹	Meadowfoam OR/5	2,000	3.2	\$97,174	2
Total	OR/90	63,027		\$5,106,813	

¹Canola & meadowfoam

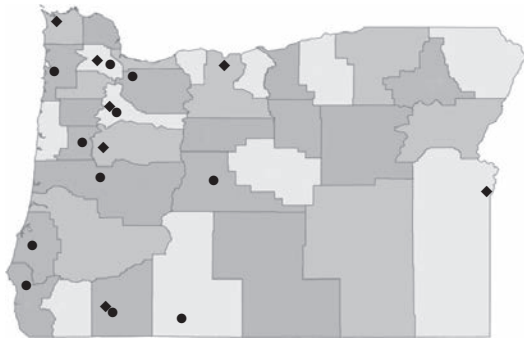
Northwest beekeepers renting to almond growers.

For Oregon beekeepers, almond represents slightly over one-third (34.6 percent) of total Oregon beekeeper rentals of survey respondents, but 63.5 percent of total gross income. This relationship has been essentially the same for the last two years. In 2011, colonies rented for almond pollination represented 35 percent of total Oregon colony rentals and 60 percent of total rental fee income for comparison.

Closer to home, Oregon beekeeper rentals for pear, sweet cherry, and some apple remain the top pollination opportunity. In 2012, 19.3 percent of total yearly rentals

Continued on page 10

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Meets quarterly. Next meeting is March 16. Contact group secretary for time and place.

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Secretary: Alvalea Fong
503.742.0910; mamagoose@mac.com

Treasurer: Rex McIntire
503.720.7958; remcintire_5@msn.com

Central Oregon Beekeepers
Meets second Thursday, 63211 Service Rd, Bend
Visit www.orsba.org, Message Board, Central Oregon Branch. For information and meeting details, email: contact@cobeekeeping.org

Ring Leader: Bindy Beck-Meyer

Bookkeeper: Allen Engle

Website: www.cobeekeeping.org

Coos County Beekeepers
Meets 6:30 PM, third Saturday (except December)
Ohlsen Baxter Bldg, 631 Alder St, Myrtle Point

President: Hal Strain

Vice President: Shigeo Oku—541.396.4016

Secretary: Maureen Goettlich

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: Cathy Vick

541.894.8274; elliott772@aol.com

Treasurer: David Ramirez

541.892.3726; ramirez.d.m@gmail.com

Website: www.klamathbeekeepers.org

Lane County Beekeepers

Meets 7:30 PM, third Tuesday, Trinity United Methodist Church, 440 Maxwell Rd, Eugene

President: Katharine Hunt

541.607.0106; keehunt@gmail.com

Vice President: Pam Leavitt—541.344.4228

Secretary: Rita Ostrofsky

541.685.2875; ostrofsky@pacinfo.com

Treasurer: Nancy Ograin

541.935.7065; nancy.ograin@gmail.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

Oregon South Coast Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, third Thursday, OSU Extension Office located at the Fairgrounds in Gold Beach.

President: Del Barber

541.249.0160; goldcoastapiary@gmail.com

Vice President: Carla Fletcher

Secretary/Treasurer: Myrna Barber

goldcoastapiary@gmail.com

Portland Metro Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, second Thursday, Clackamas Community College, Clairmont Hall, Room 118, Oregon City

President: Chris Heath

503.734.7662; tafdad@ccwebster.net

Vice President: Jim Mellis

503.890.2465; craneguy97222@yahoo.com

Secretary: Alvalea Fong

503.742.0910; mamagoose@mac.com

Treasurer: Rex McIntire

503.720.7958; remcintire_5@msn.com

Portland Urban Beekeepers

Meets 6:30 PM, first Wednesday, Calaroga Terrace Rtmt Comm, Terrace Auditorium, 1400 NE Second Ave, Portland. For information, email: officers@portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

President: Tim Wessels—503.380.9381

president@portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

Vice President: Melissa Kerry—785.331.8003

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Secretary: Mike Card—971.207.9726

secretary@portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

Treasurer: Frank Barley

treasurer@portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

Website: http://portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

Southern Oregon Beekeepers

Meets 7:30 PM, first Monday, Southern Oregon Res & Ext Ctr, 569 Hanley Rd, Central Point

President: Ron Padgett

541.592.4678; padgett25@frontiernet.net

Vice President: Glenn Intermill—541.840.1213

Secretary: Dana Rose—puckamok@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Eric McEwen—541.592.5483

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; beesbuzzin@gmail.com

Secretary: Paul Andersen

503.332.5410; 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: Bunny Carter

503.703.8546; dbcramer@hotmail.com

Secretary: Mike Rodia

503.364.3275; drodia@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Patricia Swenson—pkswenson@gmail.com

Website: www.wvbatoday.com

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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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REGIONAL NEWS

Regional Representatives

South Coast

Coos County and Oregon South Coast beekeepers' activities span topics such as increasing forage, winter losses, new bee orders in process, bee school, and upcoming education. With a strong interest in tracking available forage for honey bees, plants in bloom reported were mustard, elderberry, salmonberry, bigleaf maple, pussy willow, gorse, scotch broom, periwinkle, rosemary, Oregon grape, and many fruit trees. As is always true, the farther south and inland, the sooner forage blossoms with the cool coastal areas lagging behind from two weeks to a month. Beekeepers have been encouraged to report losses to both the state and federal databases. With increasingly warm weather, beekeepers are inspecting their hives and finding from 10 to 90 percent losses. *Nosema* seems to lead the list of possible causes, with starvation following closely. Is disease causing the losses, or are starving bees susceptible to disease? Curry County beekeepers came together to place orders for 24 boxes of bees and a number of extra queens. Working together with club members, the bees will be transported to Curry County and distributed to beekeepers. There is a good balance of experienced beekeepers and new beekeepers who are excited to get started and appreciative of the mentors willing to help. In preparation for the new season, participants from both clubs attended the Southern Oregon Beekeepers bee school. Speakers Ron Padgett (SOBA president), Sarah Red-Laird (The Bee Girl), and Ramesh Sagili (Oregon State University) expertly blended their presentations with essential basics and new insights

holding the interest of about 100 attendees. Practical use of standard equipment, bee biology, and emerging pollination research fascinated the audience. Attendees will return to their organizations to share. Looking towards upcoming events, Oregon South Coast beekeepers will host Shiego Oku at the April meeting. As a Master Gardener, he will address gardening on the Oregon Coast to provide plentiful forage throughout the season. —Del Barber

Regional Associations

Cascadia Queen Breeders

Cascadia Queen Breeders met March 16 in Kerry Haskins' Honey House in Mulino. During the business portion of the meeting, the members present re-ratified the CQB bylaws that had been previously approved by an online vote of the CQB membership. Our winter workshop, Queen Rearing in the Willamette Valley, was conducted by Dr. Lynn Royce. It was a good comprehensive course covering: understanding the queen cycle, stock selection, queen rearing techniques, cell builders, queen cells, mating nucs, mating queen cycle, queen rearing techniques, and mating queens. We learned that the Oregon native trailing blackberry and hawthorn blooms have been pretty good bloom cues for opportune queen breeding times in the Willamette Valley.


The spring CQB meeting and workshop will be held at the OSU Honey Bee Lab in Corvallis to be more accessible to our Southern Oregon members. The meeting will begin at 10:00 AM. One of the topics under discussion at the meeting will be the development of our training syllabus. CQB has a committee that is working on developing a

Update from OSU—continued from page 1

Research planned for 2013 includes:

- (1) The *Nosema* project, which has two main objectives: (a) to determine colony level, prevalence, and intensity of *Nosema ceranae*, and (b) to investigate if optimal nutrition can inhibit the prevalence of *Nosema ceranae* and reduce the intensity of infection.
- (2) Evaluating the efficacy of the new *Varroa* mite treatment, amitraz (Apivar®).
- (3) Testing some essential oils that have been claimed to have potential in promoting honey bee health (by controlling *Varroa*, *Nosema*, and viruses), including products on the market such as Honey-B-Healthy and Nozevit. As you are aware, there is a lot of talk about benefits of essential oils in mitigating problems like *Varroa*, *Nosema*, and viruses, but unfortunately there is no scientific evidence. Hence, we plan to evaluate the efficacy of these products via controlled experiments.
- (4) Long-term monitoring (longitudinal study) of select commercial beekeeper colonies for health and nutrition (samples will be obtained at approximately two-month intervals for an entire year).
- (5) Evaluating potential late-season flowering plants in Oregon for optimal bee nutrition.

I will provide a detailed update on the progress of these studies in the near future.



Honey and
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syllabus and bibliography for members. Lunch will be provided at NOON. The training workshops will run from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Heike Williams with Wild Harvest Honey will talk about small-scale queen rearing suitable for backyard beekeepers. John Jacob from Old Sol Enterprises will cover selection criteria, record-keeping, and grafting.

For registration information and costs, please contact CQB Treasurer Rex McIntire at remicintire_5@msn.com, or by snail mail at 15133 S Curtis Ct, Oregon City OR 97045. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Since drones are an important component of developing a strain of bees adapted to the climatic and botanical cycles of Oregon and Washington, CQB is looking forward to a networking session on mating yards between Pacific Northwest queen breeders. Our summer/fall workshops will be in conjunction with the OSBA annual conference in Seaside this fall.

CQB wishes to thank Kerry Haskins, Dr. Lynn Royce, OSU Honey Bee Lab, Heike Williams, and John Jacob in helping us to further our goal of developing a strain of bees adapted to the Pacific Northwest. —*Paul Maresh*

Klamath Basin Beekeepers

Spring comes slowly to the Klamath Basin, and with each sunny day, Klamath Basin beekeepers look for the early pollen and nectar sources. The dandelions, the early maple and willow, and the tiny flowers of early “weeds” are all sources for our bees in spring.

Approximately thirty interested and enthusiastic people attended our beginning beekeeping class. Sessions, presented by experienced members, included installing packages, lighting a smoker, maladies that beekeepers face, guidelines for beekeeping in Oregon and California, and urban beekeeping. Lively discussion and questions enhanced the class. One more mini-session will be held when the packages arrive and will allow beginners to see and experience installing a package of bees.

Representatives of Shastina Millworks of White City attended our March 30 meeting and shared information about the production of their woodenware, the products they offer, and their new paint product. Their generous donation of several pieces of woodenware allowed us to conduct a lively auction for a small addition to the coffers.

Alistar Mowat, mentor and professional beekeeper, will be delivering packages to many of our members in mid- to late April. Klamath Basin beekeepers are looking forward to arrival of the packages and beginning a new season.

—*Cathy Vick*

Lane County Beekeepers

Members of LCBA have been busy in the community. Vice President Pam Leavitt spoke at the Greater Lane Gardening Club in Junction City in late March. She spoke about both native bees and honey bees, and how they help in the garden. Friday and Saturday, April 12 and 13, saw members hosting a club table at GloryBee’s Annual Bee Weekend.

Jonathan Loftin gave a very informative talk about spring management, and Ken Ograin discussed yellow jackets and



Jonathan Loftin discusses colony spring management during the Lane County association’s meeting this past March.

how to control them at the club’s March meeting. Chuck Hunt discussed hive evaluation and swarming at our April meeting. In May, we look forward to a presentation by Dewey Caron about Africanized bees.

The annual Lane County Beekeepers Association Field Day will take place on Saturday, June 29, at the OSU Honey Bee Lab where it was hosted last year. Members of Linn-Benton Beekeepers Association will also be taking part in the day. It should prove to be an interesting event, covering such topics as how to light a smoker, tools for the beekeeper, and hive demonstrations and discussions—including alternative types of hives. The plan is to start at 10:00 AM and end about 1:30 PM.

—*Katharine Hunt*

Portland Metro Beekeepers

Paul Hardzinski announced that the club will have a booth at the Spring Garden Fair at the county fairgrounds in Canby, May 4 and 5. We will have a live-demonstration hive. Club volunteers will answer questions about the value of bees to gardens as well as all the usual bee-related questions.

Jim Barlean gave his monthly presentation about “what to do this month.” Number one was, “Don’t procrastinate!” Look in the hive, look for signs of a laying queen, look for diseases, look for queen cells, and remove any queen cells to prevent swarming. Swarm control is very important, and he mentioned again the technique called the *Demaree* system which he is using himself. He has honey supers on for the maple flow right now.

The main presentation tonight was about organic beekeeping. Roberta Cranswick, Glen Andresen, and Mary

Ann Aschenbrenner shared their experiences. Roberta mentioned, for example, using UV light for *Nosema* spores. She is committed, as are the other panel members, to avoiding any pesticides or antibiotics. Mary Ann has used requeening with hygienic queens to good effect. This, along with other IPM methods, helps prevent damage from the use and overuse of chemicals, and hopefully leads to stronger queens and hives.

Glen (with Tim Wessels) has formed a company, Bridgetown Bees, with the initial goal of developing a strong overwintering queen line. He has used organic methods for many years.

Next month our topic will be Swarm Catching: Tools to Use and Things to Know. —Paul Jarrett

Portland Urban Beekeepers

A committee of members from PUB and Zenger Farm was successful in transitioning the Zenger bee group and apiary to the PUB group. The newly formed committee will handle hive and apiary management, effective immediately.

At our April meeting, an informal survey was conducted by a show of hands, “How many members lost 50 percent or more, winter dead-outs this year?” The response had at least a third of the room of 25+ members raising their hands. We have encouraged members to also participate in the Bee

Informed Partnership to provide better information and data as to the cause and type of losses experienced in the Portland urban apiaries.

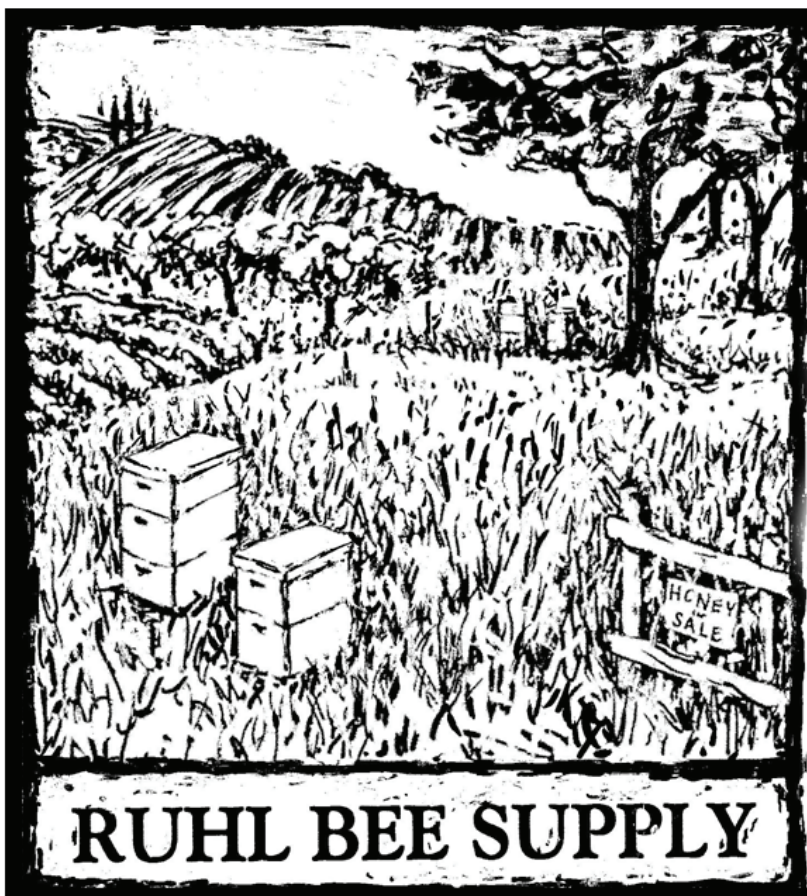
In the PUB tech corner, Librarian James Moore is working with other PUB members and a few beekeepers from around the US to develop beehive sound analysis software to better predict swarms. Our next meeting is scheduled for May 1. We are happy to have Dr. Dewey Caron back to lead our monthly Q&A sessions, and Dr. Ramesh Sagili will be presenting information on the current state of honey bee health and research being done at OSU.

Find us at our new web page <http://portlandurbanbeekeepers.org>, or come join the discussion at our Facebook group Portland Urban Beekeepers. —Tim Wessels

Tillamook County Beekeepers

Earl and Sheila Reeves arrived at our April meeting with plates of *Pizzelles*—traditional Italian waffle cookies. It buoyed up everyone’s spirits as we listened to Jim Fanjoy tell us about how the Oregon Master Beekeeper apprenticeship program works. He benefited from the one-on-one and the four meetings of work sessions with a mentor. He encouraged more members to take advantage of this learning opportunity in Oregon.

Dewey Caron has graciously offered to share his expertise



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with us for a day-long workshop on May 18 at the OSU Extension Office, 2204 4th Street, in Tillamook. This will help our membership get even more exposure to current methods of keeping bees healthy. Dewey's workshop is \$10 per person (includes lunch) and is open to all beekeepers. For more information or to sign up, call the OSU Extension Office at 503.842.3433. —Terry Fullan

Willamette Valley Beekeepers

Our annual bee day was April 6 at Steve Coffman's apiary in Dallas. About forty members, some with family, had an opportunity to observe and ask questions about commercial (Coffman's) and hobbyist (Rodia's) hives. The weather was mixed with some showers, some sun, and lots of clouds. Unfortunately for students, but good for Coffman and Rodia, little or no evidence of mites or disease was found—that is, if you don't count the one drone in Rodia's hive that had its wings in tatters. The winner of a package or nuc of bees (winner's choice) to be installed in their woodenware by Andy Angstrom was Linda Lowell, a new WVBA member. We hope she will keep us updated as to their progress. Andy Angstrom reports his packages and nucs will be late, likely April 20 or so. Queens have been difficult to get due to weather issues in California and production problems in Maui. The Portland Metro Bee Day at George Hansen's, April 20, is highly recommended, both for newbees and for those second-year beekeepers. —Mike Rodia

Adapted from: WVBA Secretary's Minutes, April 2013.

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KEEPING BEES IN MAY

Todd Balsiger

The summer's main nectar flow begins this month and lasts into early July. This roughly eight-week period is of critical importance for colonies to gather surplus honey and winter stores. The rest of the year, colonies mostly lose weight.

As beekeepers, we try to protect and maintain a strong field force during this time. This is a dynamic period in bee management with many overlapping tasks. Consider the following:

- ❖ We need to ensure colonies continue to build up for the main nectar flow. After the maple and fruit trees bloom, there is actually a decrease in available nectar, and with poor weather colonies can still starve. Although very infrequent, in past years it has been necessary to feed well into summer to prevent starvation. Discontinue feeding prior to supering!

- ❖ It is still possible to treat for *Varroa* mite if your infestation rates are too high. It should be with a "soft treatment"—really the only kind I recommend—if you plan to super any time soon. I have no specific recommendations on what soft treatment to use at this time. It is a dangerous to offer advice on what mite treatment to use. They all seem to have caveats, and what works in one location, say California, may cause havoc in our hives here.

- ❖ May is an ideal month to purchase queens, requeen hives, and make divisions. It is a more-forgiving and easier time to work bees than April, with increased daily high temperatures and less rain. I personally purchase my queens in May when the demand has lessened and the quality of queens has improved. Divisions may not make a honey crop and may require extra feeding to ensure adequate winter stores, but I don't like replacing queens that are not well mated.

- ❖ I was once told that a good starting time to raise queens here in the Northwest is when the trailing blackberry (our native blackberry) blooms. This usually corresponds to about mid-May.

- ❖ Swarm season is at its zenith now. I share a variant of a beekeepers' proverb, mid-17th century origin: A swarm in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; and a swarm in July is not worth a fly.

- ❖ Continue swarm-control practices. Decreasing queen pheromone production and its distribution within the hive

triggers the swarm impulse. The two best ways to reduce swarming are to regularly requeen (young queens produce more pheromone) and to reduce congestion (reversing, equalizing, making divisions, checkerboarding, supering).

❖ Nuc boxes containing a frame or two that has had brood, another frame with a mixture of honey and pollen, and the balance in foundation are ideal for catching swarms. Swarms quickly convert foundation into beautiful drawn comb, so you may want to capitalize on this behavior. Remember, frames need to be tight together when drawing foundation—too much space and the likely result will be burr or misshapen comb. You can feed sugar water to accelerate and sustain growth, just like that for divisions.

❖ Consider setting up bait hives (like the nuc box above) to catch swarms. Make sure the mice can't get in!

❖ Visually look at colonies for health and investigate why any colony is not keeping up with its peers. Does it have an underperforming queen? Has it become queenless and developed laying workers? Does it have a disease? Has it swarmed or is it on the verge of swarming with numerous ripe swarm cells (don't destroy all the swarm cells!)? Are the bees raising a supersedure queen? Take appropriate action (which may be doing nothing). If you don't know what to do, go to your next beekeepers' association meeting and ask.

❖ Look for signs that it is time to super—for example, the bees lose interest in syrup, the bees have zero robbing tendencies, or you see a new film of white wax, especially on the top bars.

❖ Provide abundant room for storing honey early in the season. I consider two supers as abundant. If paradichlorobenzene crystals are used for wax moth control, then air out the supers on a warm day to vaporize its residues.

❖ Bees generally work from the center up, so foundation centered in the hive will be drawn the fastest. I recommend ten frames when drawing foundation to prevent burr and misshapen comb. After the frames are drawn, at least for supers, I recommend nine frames to make uncapping easier.

❖ I recommend queen excluders (there are exceptions). I consider brood in supers as a big problem and hassle. Frames that have had brood are dramatically more vulnerable to the larvae of wax moth and require extra protection.

❖ Bees collect water in the summer as avidly as nectar and pollen. If appropriate water resources are absent, provide water early and let the bees train themselves to use it. This

is especially important in urban settings—where your bees may end up in your neighbor's swimming pool or pet bowl instead.

From: *The Bee Line*, May 2012.

Pollination Summary—continued from page 3

of the eighteen beekeepers returning a survey were for tree fruit. Once again, the gross income was less, just 11.3 percent of total rental income. In 2012, almond plus tree fruit was 54 percent of all rentals, down from 64 percent of all rentals from the 2011 survey and just under 75 percent of total rental income, similar to the 78 percent total income of the previous year. For comparison, in 2010, respondents reported almond and tree fruit combined accounted for 67 percent of all rentals and 79 percent of pollination income.

Berry rental (blackberry, raspberry, marionberry, blueberry, and cranberry) represented an increasingly important rental opportunity for Oregon and Pacific Northwest beekeepers, primarily with blueberry. For Oregon beekeepers, it was 14.5 percent of rental colony total. As with tree fruit, due to widely varying rental prices reported by survey respondents (the range was over double from the lowest to the highest fee reported—i.e., for blueberry, for example, the fee ranged from \$28 to \$60, median \$44), lower total income than colony numbers at 8 percent with 8.3 percent of rental colonies. For Oregon beekeepers in 2011, blueberry was 12.7 percent of total rentals and 8 percent of total reported income.

Legume seed rentals accounted for just over 10 percent of total colony rentals, but with a low fee—in some cases \$0—represent just 3.5 percent of income. For vegetable seed, 8 percent of total rental colonies and 6.6 percent of income production for irrigated seed and 6.3 percent and 2.9 percent of total income for Willamette Valley rentals. Rentals to three cucurbits (watermelon, pumpkin, and squash/pumpkin) and canola and meadowfoam (oil seed crops) were the other major crop groups bringing in rental income. There were no canola rentals reported by Oregon beekeepers, while all but one meadowfoam rental was provided by Oregon beekeepers. For Oregon beekeepers, meadowfoam was 3 percent of reported rentals while cucurbits were at 4 percent of rental crops (same as the previous year) and meadowfoam, at 3.2 percent of total rentals; both were slightly over 2 percent in income-generation percentage.

As Mike has pointed out from his earlier surveys, tree fruit rental income is not consistent with the demand for colonies. Although, tree fruit colony rentals were nearly

20 percent of total Oregon colony rentals (down from 29 percent last year) with income slightly over half that level (11.3 percent). For Pacific Northwest beekeepers participating in the survey, nearly one-third of the rental colonies (31.9 percent) comprised only 12 percent of gross income. For many Oregon beekeepers, these rentals are to neighboring farmers and have been long-standing services provided by beekeepers in many instances and, with bees not as critical in their pollination services (compared to almonds), rental fees have lagged behind. If almond is eliminated, tree fruit is 30 percent of the total of in-state rentals and fee represents 31 percent of total (i.e., in-state tree fruit fee is comparable to rental demand).

Apple pollination (fourteen Pacific Northwest individuals provided almost 25,000 colonies), sweet cherry (ten beekeepers rented over 14,000 colonies), and pear (twelve Pacific Northwest individuals reported rental of 9000+ colonies) were, in that order, the best fee generators among tree fruit rentals for Pacific Northwest beekeepers. (Oregon beekeepers had nearly equal numbers of colonies in pear and sweet cherry rental situations, but only three supplied bees to apple.) As with other crop rentals assessed in this survey, the range in rental price was considerable, but narrower than last year's survey for sweet cherry and pear (sweet cherry: \$35–50/colony, median \$47; pear: \$35–50/colony, median \$42; and apple: \$32–\$60/colony, median \$45). Only almond (\$130–\$172/colony) and meadowfoam (\$40–\$48/colony) exhibited narrow rental price ranges.

For a variety of vegetables and vegetable seed crops, most Pacific Northwest beekeepers reported rentals (range of from 20 to 5,000 colonies) for a total of over 25,000 colony rentals. Pollination fees ranged widely, including \$0 for some legume and canola rentals. Weighted average rental fee

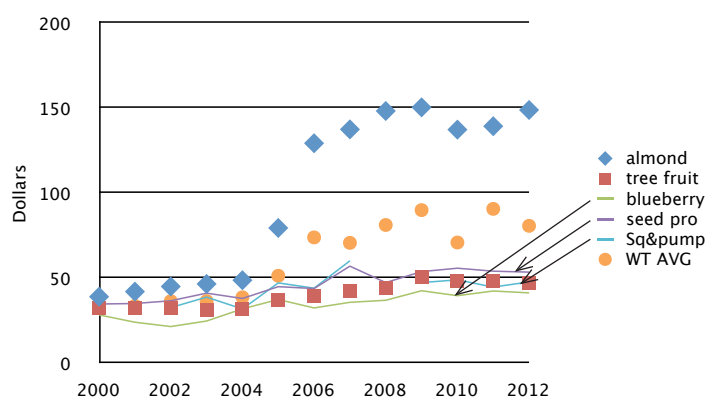


Figure 1. Weighted colony rental fee for all Pacific Northwest rentals (middle line, circles), almond (top line, diamonds), tree fruit, including pear, sweet cherry, and apple combined (lower line, squares), blueberry, vegetable seed crops (principally carrot, radish, and onion), squash & pumpkin and meadowfoam, over 13 years, from 2000 to 2012.

was highest for irrigated vegetable seed production sites and lowest for legume seed. In clover, as with last year, the ten individuals reporting rental income (four others “rented” without a fee) rented just over 6,600 colonies to clover/vetch growers, range of from 8 to 4,000 colonies, at a fee range of from \$0 to \$48/colony, the widest price range of any of the crops in the Pacific Northwest, perhaps reflecting the importance of clover for honey production. Weighted average for clover seed was \$31, for a total value (excluding the fee of \$0) of slightly over \$200,000; two-thirds of the beekeepers renting were Oregon beekeepers. Clover seed and blackberry, raspberry, and marionberry rentals were the only 2 of the 14 crops with a weighted average rental price below \$40 according to Pacific Northwest beekeeper respondents, similar to last year.

Nine Oregon commercial beekeepers estimated their approximate income source as 28 percent honey sales, 69 percent pollination, and 4 percent other. For the nine Oregon semi-commercial beekeeper respondents, it was more nearly a 50/50 split, slightly in favor of honey sales (51 percent) to pollination rental (49 percent).

Our survey asked if a pollination contract was used. Equal numbers of Pacific Northwest commercial beekeepers, eight indicated “yes,” six said “no,” and eleven said “sometimes.” For semi-commercial beekeepers, three said “yes,” 97 said that they did not, and four indicated that they used one sometimes. For Oregon commercial and semi-commercial, it was two “yes,” seven “no,” and eight “sometimes.” Respondents also were asked for the number of employees. Responses included from one to nine employees, with 55 percent saying “none,” “one,” or “two.”

When asked to estimate the cost of maintaining a colony, responses varied widely, with a range of from under \$100 to \$275+; for the nine commercial and four semi-commercial supplying estimates, the average was over \$200.

A full report of the 2012 survey will be presented in the *American Bee Journal*. Although the survey populations have varied over the 27 years of the survey, we believe the returns of beekeepers of our 2012 survey as managers of about 50 percent of the estimated colony numbers maintained in the Pacific Northwest region (including Oregon) points to the rigor of the survey and validity of our sampling method. We believe we present a realistic snapshot of the pollination industry by Pacific Northwest beekeepers.

While not valid to directly compare one year with another, we feel, with the large participation of beekeepers, that these data are robust and representative of the larger-scale beekeeping activities of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest

region. Information is only as accurate as provided by individual respondents. The individuals who contribute, in fact, any individual renting bee colonies, should use the information to compare to their own individual operation.

We wish to thank the beekeepers who took the time to participate in the survey. The 27-year record represents the most extensive and accurate assessment of commercial pollination in the US and points to evolution of our bee industry over this quarter-century time frame. We trust you find this report of interest and the information of value. We welcome your feedback. This survey demonstrates that, in the words of Dr. Burgett in his 25th annual report:

The vast and diverse agriculture of the Pacific Northwest relies on a healthy and strong beekeeping industry to maintain optimum production. An enlightened knowledge of pollination economics is crucial to every beekeeper that enters the world of commercial crop production.

We couldn't agree more.

UPCOMING EVENTS



June 17–23: Oregon Pollinator Week. By proclamation of Oregon Governor Kitzhaber, we join with many other states throughout the US in celebrating pollinators. As events are planned, please send them for posting, both on the OSBA website (www.orsba.org) and on the Pollinator Partnership

website (www.pollinator.org). *Information and resources:* www.pollinator.org

July 13: Bee Fest (component of Beaver Creek Kraft Fair). The Portland Urban association will set up a table and possibly an observation hive, and welcomes participation of other area clubs and vendors of bee-related products. Cost is very minimal. *Information:* Frank at officers@portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

July 26–28: Pacific Northwest Treatment-Free Beekeeping Conference. Science meets earth-friendly beekeeping. *Information and registration:* www.blissoneybees.org/events.html

August 5–9: Eastern Apicultural Society. West Chester, Pennsylvania. *Information:* www.easternapiculture.org

September 29–October 4: XXXXIII International

Apimondia Congress. Kyiv, Ukraine. *Information:* apimondia2013.org.ua/en

October 3–6: 2013 Washington State Beekeepers Association Annual Conference. Best Western Evergreen Inn and Suites, Federal Way, Washington. *Information:* <http://wasba.org/events>

October 16–19: Western Apicultural Society. La Fonda Hotel on the Plaza, Santa Fe, New Mexico. *Information:* ucanr.edu/sites/was2

October 31–November 2: OSBA Fall Conference. Seaside, Oregon. *Information,* as it becomes available: www.orsba.org

November 18–22: California State Beekeepers Association Annual Convention. Harrah's, South Lake Tahoe, California. *Information:* <http://www.californiastatebeekeepers.com/events.html>

Note: Do you have an event to share? Classes, conferences, and other events are listed free. Please send them, along with questions, recipes, stories, and reports!

IN THE NEWS...

SURE 2011 Disaster Program Sign-Up Ends June 7

April 15, 2013 – Farm Service Agency State Executive Director Lynn Voigt announced the sign-up period for the 2011 crop year Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments program ends on June 7, 2013. This disaster assistance program opened on Oct. 22, 2012, and authorizes assistance to farmers and ranchers who suffered crop losses caused by natural disasters occurring through Sept. 30, 2011. “Producers who suffered losses during the 2011 crop year are encouraged to visit the FSA office to learn more about the SURE program and how to apply,” said Voigt. Production losses due to disasters occurring after Sept. 30, 2011, are not eligible for disaster program coverage. For more information on the 2011 SURE program, visit any FSA county office or the FSA SURE webpage.

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A New Trend?

A curious finding suggests that Oregon bees may be starting a new trend. Tim Wessels and Glen Andresen recently captured this loyal swarm, which suggests the Oregon Ducks may have more fans than they know! Tim writes that, as he held the flag, Glen spotted the queen and made sure she landed safely in their box. Tim adds that they hope to locate the OSU Beavers swarm soon. Though it's not clear how common this phenomenon may be, beekeepers around the state might be on the lookout....



Tim Wessels

Miscellaneous

Acaricide, Fungicide and Drug Interactions in Honey Bees (*Apis mellifera*): www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0054092

Are Neonicotinoids Killing Bees? A Review of Research...: www.xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees

Bees Buzzing on Caffeine, National Geographic Daily News: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/03/130308-bees-caffeine-animal-behavior-science>

What Happened to the Bees this Spring?: www.scientificbeekeeping.com

"What Plants Talk About," Nature: <http://video.pbs.org/video/2338524490>

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National Honey Board Members Sworn In

Firestone, Colo., April 17, 2013 – Several new Board members, including George Hansen, producer member, along with alternates appointed by US Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack last December, attended the National Honey Board's first meeting of the year on April 9–10 in San Diego, California. Each Board member serves a three-year term or until the Secretary of Agriculture selects his or her successor.

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Paul Kowash, 5959 SW Taylors Ferry Rd, Portland OR 97219

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The Bee Line

The Bee Line is the official publication of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association. Annual subscriptions to the newsletter are included with membership in OSBA.

Please send news about your bees and your experiences in keeping them, as well as events, corrections, comments, questions, photographs and stories (both from “old” times and “new”), interviews, recipes, and points of view to: Rosanna Mattingly, *The Bee Line*, 4207 SE Woodstock Blvd Ste 517, Portland OR 97206; email: osba.newsletter@gmail.com.

The next issue to be printed will be the June 2013 issue. The deadline for submitting copy is May 10, 2013.

Thank you!

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