



# The Bee Line

Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 45  
Number 2  
March 2020

## Ten Years at the Oregon State University Honey Bee Lab

Carolyn Breece

Did you know the OSU Honey Bee Lab has been around since 1919?! You may remember the lab when it was led by Dr. Michael Burgett from 1970 to 2001, or perhaps you were even a student in one of his classes! The long, colorful history of the Honey Bee Lab is a story for another time. Today, we are going to review recent times as we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the lab under the leadership of Dr. Ramesh Sagili.

When Dr. Burgett retired in 2001, the Honey Bee Lab remained vacant for several years. The economy was down, funding was tight, and honey bees were pushed to the wayside. However, crops still needed pollination, and beekeepers still needed support! The Oregon State Beekeepers Association (OSBA) rallied to reinstate the position. Their efforts and the unfortunate reports of Colony Collapse Disorder in 2006 finally caused administrative officials to pay attention. At last, the OSU Honey Bee Lab was resurrected 2009 under the leadership of Dr. Ramesh Sagili, a young honey bee pheromone specialist from Texas A&M University.

Ramesh's mission for the OSU Honey Bee Lab was to develop a research and extension program with the number one purpose of serving the needs of Oregon beekeepers. His first days on the job were spent meeting with beekeepers all over the state. He learned the crops their bees pollinated, he learned about beekeepers' challenges, and he asked them how he could help through research and extension.

Two weeks after Ramesh started, he hired an assistant (me!) with a background in forestry, beetles, and birds. Not a likely combination with bees, but boy, do I know how to buy a truck off Craigslist! Ramesh and I drove all over the place in the lab's "new" 2001 Ford Ranger, which we purchased for \$2,500. That truck almost made it to our 10-year anniversary, but, alas, it crashed into a fence at year 9.

With the little money remaining after our big truck purchase, Ramesh was able to hire some undergrads to help analyze samples of bees that were sent to us from all over the state. The lab was growing!

Our favorite projects were those involving Oregon beekeepers. We often coerced commercial beekeepers into letting us sample their bees, trap pollen, and cover their colonies in bright orange tape. They helped us take pains-taking measurements of bees. They offered their advice and friendship all along the way. And we are certainly grateful for that! In 2011, Ramesh had to interview again for the honey bee research position, and this



Clearly not a priority on Ramesh's extensive to-do list, word is that it took the full 10 years to reach bee beard status!

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**Image above:** It was a very fine day when past OSBA President and Honorary Life Member Chuck Sowers first met with Ramesh Sagili. The front story reminds us how much has been accomplished in the intervening 10 years with a bee lab at OSU once again up and humming. Here's to another 10!

A sure sign of spring: Bee schools and bee days abound! See page 7 for opportunities to participate.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Robo bees, self-driving trucks, synthetic honey, unsustainably low honey prices, the vilification of almonds and honey, the loss of pollinator habitat—we are under assault on all sides. How long before our industry becomes unsustainable and obsolete?

Self-driving trucks are already here. How long before they show up at the almond orchards with loads of autonomous robotic pollination drones like these? [www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/03/03/517785082/rise-of-the-robot-bees-tiny-drones-turned-into-artificial-pollinators](http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/03/03/517785082/rise-of-the-robot-bees-tiny-drones-turned-into-artificial-pollinators). The push in this technology is global and is being worked on in the US, Japan, Russia, Israel, and other countries. In fact, Walmart has already filed a patent for robotic pollination drones. Of all the crops we pollinate, almonds are the most economically essential to a viable commercial beekeeping operation. Without this crucially timed income, most commercial beekeeping operations would go under. To make matters worse, we cannot fall back on honey production to make ends meet with honey prices being so low. Our industry is more dependent than ever on pollination services to be financially viable.

To add insult to injury, this article got a lot of attention recently: [www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/07/honeybees-deaths-almonds-hives-aoe](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/07/honeybees-deaths-almonds-hives-aoe). The author essentially makes the case that almond pollination is at the root of all our problems. This messaging is dangerous and untrue. Every good commercial beekeeper I know comes home from almonds with fatter bees and bank accounts. We need to make a concerted effort as a group to counter this messaging. Keep in mind that commercial migratory beekeepers consistently have the lowest loss rates of ALL beekeepers, period, full stop. (See BIP data: [beeinformed.org/category/winter-loss-survey](http://beeinformed.org/category/winter-loss-survey)).

Speaking of messaging, here is another terrible article attacking our trade: [www.fastcompany.com/90457908/eating-honey-is-more-complicated-than-you-might-think](http://www.fastcompany.com/90457908/eating-honey-is-more-complicated-than-you-might-think). The Fast Company article actually states, “The industrial honey industry, far from being mutually beneficial, is immensely harmful to bees and humans alike.” and “. . . bees can suffer during all stages of industrialized honey production.” This notion is almost farcical on its face and is a dangerous misconception that we should not let propagate uncountered. Our honey bees are precious and very valuable. Every beekeeper I know loves their bees, and as such, does their very best to nurture them and maintain optimal colony health. The truth of the matter is that, if colony health is not our fundamental modus operandi, we commercial beekeepers would be out of business in the blink

of an eye. The honey front will remain a serious issue for us as long as all the fake and cheap imported honey continue to fool and flood the market. Without serious intervention, honey prices will remain unsustainably low. Compounding the matter, “synthetic honey” is now a thing.

Please check this article out: [leapsmag.com/a-team-of-israeli-students-just-created-honey-without-bees](http://leapsmag.com/a-team-of-israeli-students-just-created-honey-without-bees). These scientists have created “honey” without bees using enzymes and bacteria. As if robo pollinating bees are not enough of a threat, now we may soon have robo GMO honey.

The aforementioned issues added on top of mites, viruses, habitat loss, and pesticide residues paint a very dark and challenging picture for modern beekeeping. Well meaning, but misguided articles only add fuel to the fire. If we as a culture completely stopped eating almonds and honey forever, it would do nothing to solve the overall problems of pollinator loss and destroy the beekeeping industry as we know it. Pollinators are a key species in the food web that supports all life, including humans. Our insect pollinators are essentially the “canary in the coal mine.” We do not want to live in a world that cannot support pollinators. Such a world would be a threat to the overall existence of humankind.

Despair will get us nowhere, so what can we do? The list of possible solutions is long and includes many simple things like making smart consumer choices that support sustainable farming practices. What we choose to put on our plates can really help support farms that are conscientious about pollinators, pollinator habitat, and nontoxic biological pest controls. We will be well served to spend our dollars wisely and get the message out. One of the most important things we can do is continue to support honey bee research. To that end, we may have a tremendous opportunity coming up.

The year 2021 will be the OSBA’s Centennial Celebration. This is a very momentous occasion in and of itself, and with the right messaging will draw a lot of attention to our efforts. As a group, we have done a great job thus far supporting honey bee research and the OSU Honey Bee Lab, and yet I feel we can do much more as an organization. Currently, most of our funds come from in-state beekeepers and stakeholders like GloryBee and Central Oregon Seed, to name just a few. I think we should be casting a much broader net, either nationally or internationally. As scary as some of the technology coming at us is, we can also utilize technology to meet our needs. One of the best tools would be crowdfunding campaigns. There are a plethora of options here, and these tools could really help us extend our fundraising reach. It takes \$500,000 a year to keep the doors open at the bee lab, and Ramesh is already spending 75 percent of

his time writing grants to make this happen.

Wouldn't it be great to leverage our social capital as a group and more fully fund the lab? There are potentially thousands of donors out there, and we just need a means to reach them. After all, all beekeepers benefit from the research we support, and anybody who eats food is technically a stakeholder. We just need the right vehicle and plan to reach them all. Crowdfunding has raised many millions for many causes. I can't think of a good reason why we can't do the same. We should definitely exhaust every tool at our disposal to support the cause, after all, our lives and livelihoods may depend on it. If you have ideas or input, feel free to contact me. We hope to further discuss this at the next board meeting.

*John Jacob*

## **OSBA Executive Committee Meeting Minutes** **January 4, 2020 | Alpine, Oregon**

The OSBA's Executive Committee met on January 4, 2020, in Alpine, Oregon. Eighteen people were present and chimed in the new year with pizza and beverages: Charlie Vanden Heuvel, Doug Sieckmann, Joe Maresh, Mike Rodia, Richard Temple, Rebecca Fain, Kathy Cope, Pam Leavitt, Polly Habliston, Maarty Van Otterlou, Eric McEwen, John Jacob, Karen Finley, Marjie Ehry, Rick Olson, Everett Kaser, Harry Vanderpool, and Joe Hansen.

The minutes from October's meeting at Florence were approved.

Joe Hansen, our treasurer, reported the organization's steady financial health, and Jan Lohman (by email) filled us in on the status of several honey bee research funds supporting research on honey bees in Oregon.

We reviewed the progress of OSBA housekeeping changes approved at October's general session: i.e., dues going over to an annual cycle, proxy voters at executive board. Most affiliated bee associations have submitted the required paperwork due January 15, and the rest have been reminded enough to expect that we will meet that goal. A few phone calls may be necessary.

Representatives of affiliated groups who were able to attend the executive committee meeting exchanged news of recent activities, programs, and bee schools planned, tips on serving both new and experienced members, public outreach and education activities, and the use of teaching apiaries. There is a lot of talent and experience among beekeepers and within the OSBA: artists, fundraisers, educators, writers, tech-whizzes, inventors,

carpenters, and contractors all sideline at beekeeping. A poll of the membership about their interests, needs, and ideas for the future may occur this summer. Affiliated groups were encouraged to send (digital) copies of their newsletters to one another and take advantage of each others' experience.

The new OSBA website continues to receive positive feedback; all agreed it is easier to navigate and update, and seems to have a lot of good links and resources. Curated by Rosanna Mattingly, it is a useful and reasonable beginning entry into the world wide web of honey bee information. Rosanna is working on getting the swarm list up and ready for 2020 sign-ups by early February. She requests photos from the membership of conference and other events.

The 2020 conference will be held in Florence, Oregon, on October 23–25.

2019 conference registrations were up and the cost of the site was lower than prior years at Salem and The Oregon Garden. Both the program and venue of the 2019 gathering were well received, and Joe Maresh and his conference planning helpers are already working out the program and lining up speakers for 2020. The board discussed some ideas for improvement:

1. Honey competition/judging/auction of winning honey better promoted and presented at a different time.
2. Add something to program about hive products—pollen and propolis.
3. Add a raffle and make some other auction tweaks.
4. Provide association presidents some networking time together to share ideas and explore successes.
5. New OSBA t-shirts and good embroidered hats are being investigated by John, Jan, and Jason.

OSBA Agriculture Liaison Mike Rodia reported to the group about his ongoing efforts to address residential beekeeping practices in Marion County and give support to beekeepers and rule-makers in the cities of Salem, Springfield, and St. Helens.

The board voted to allocate an additional \$1,300 to funds towards the re-printing of the residential beekeeping best practices guide to allow a larger print run. Mike still has some copies on hand and hopes to get a new run available for spring bee-schoolers. Marjie asked for some copies for the Oregon State Fair and Ag Fest.

2021 is the centennial of the OSBA, and the group discussed



ideas and goals for celebrating that anniversary in fine style. Part of this requires attention to telling the story of honey bees in Oregon to a wider audience. We are seeking help from the membership for designing, collecting, and curating records, photos, stories, and historical context of the OSBA and honey bees in Oregon. Folks who want to contribute to the effort in some way can start by providing their names to [osba.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:osba.secretary@gmail.com) or to Rosanna. We have at least one member who has been involved in OSBA for nearly 50 years, and several second-generation OSBA members.

The executive board wants to explore some new approaches to fundraising for the NEXT 100 years of beekeeping in Oregon, led by president John. The OSBA raises research funds that it contributes to honey bee health and nutrition research at Oregon State University, Washington State

University, and Project Apis m.

The OSBA has been involved as well in advocating for/ commenting on legislation surrounding toxic chemicals, land use, right to farm, the establishment of bee labs at OSU and UC-Davis, lobbying Congress for research funds, etc. Ideas for a fundraising project and for widening the audience were bandied around and generally supported by all; more to come. Contact John at [oldsolbees@gmail.com](mailto:oldsolbees@gmail.com) on this one.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Karen Finley*

**Addendum:** In a formal by-email vote after the meeting, board also agreed on a raise in the stipend we pay to Rosanna Mattingly for her services to OSBA on newsletter, membership, and website.

## NEWS FROM THE OSU HONEY BEE LAB

*Ramesh Sagili*

### Asian Giant Hornet Alert

Some of you might have already heard about the detection of Asian Giant Hornet (*Vespa mandarina*) near the Washington State border with Canada during early December 2019. Last fall this hornet was also reported in British Columbia, Canada ([www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/asian-giant-hornet-next-destroyed-nanaimo-1.5290691](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/asian-giant-hornet-next-destroyed-nanaimo-1.5290691)). I just wanted to provide you a quick update on this potential new threat to our bees. Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) appears to have begun an ambitious effort to eradicate this hornet in Washington State since it was detected in December. They are planning on detecting and eradicating the hornet nests. They are seeking public assistance in reporting sightings of these hornets. Here is the link to the pest alert from WSDA: [wastatedeptag.blogspot.com/2019/12/pest-alert-asian-giant-hornet.html](http://wastatedeptag.blogspot.com/2019/12/pest-alert-asian-giant-hornet.html).

Asian Giant Hornet is considered the world's largest hornet, measuring about 1.5 inches with a large yellow head. This invasive hornet apparently was introduced from Asia and nests in the ground. There are reports that this hornet can decimate 40 honey bees in a minute, and hence can be quite devastating to honey bees. Here is a link to the WSDA blogspot to identify an Asian Giant Hornet: [wastatedeptag.blogspot.com/2020/01/hornets.html](http://wastatedeptag.blogspot.com/2020/01/hornets.html).

Currently, there have been no reports or detections

of this giant hornet in Oregon, but we all need to be vigilant. Please keep an eye out for these nasty hornets and report detection of any suspicious hornets to the Oregon Department of Agriculture or to us (OSU Honey Bee Lab). With our collective efforts, let us make sure that this hornet is not able to establish in Oregon.

### Honey Bee Brood Disease Identification Training for Veterinarians

We understand that beekeepers are having trouble finding veterinarians who can provide prescription for antibiotics to treat honey bee brood diseases. Veterinarians are reluctant to provide a prescription, as a majority of them do not have knowledge of honey bee diseases. To address this problem, OSU Honey Bee Lab is collaborating with veterinary faculty member Dr. Michelle Kutzler at OSU to train veterinarians on honey bee disease diagnosis so that veterinarians in the state are willing to provide prescriptions for antibiotics when needed by beekeepers. Dr. Kutzler plans to travel around the state and conduct trainings at several veterinary clinics to train interested veterinarians. Please feel free to nominate a veterinary clinic / veterinarian in your area for the free training program. Free food will also be served at these trainings. Please send your nominations directly to either Dr. Kutzler at [Michelle.Kutzler@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Michelle.Kutzler@oregonstate.edu) or to me ([ramesh.sagili@oregonstate.edu](mailto:ramesh.sagili@oregonstate.edu)) or Carolyn Breece ([carolyn.breece@oregonstate.edu](mailto:carolyn.breece@oregonstate.edu)).

## KEEPING BEES in MARCH

*Jason Rowan*

Welcome back, a new bee season is upon us. March usually marks the start of the beekeeping season for some of us. However, this winter may have seemed cold to you, but from what I have seen in the bees they think otherwise. One of the best and worst things about being a commercial beekeeper is that the break in the season of beekeeping is relatively short. Only a few months go by until we re-enter the hives to start checking them for the almond pollination. This allows us a opportunity to address the needs of the hive that may otherwise end up unchecked for many months and would lead to most certain death. What I have seen in the bees this winter has made me very pleased and very troubled at the same time. Many of our hives even without stimulation began raising brood at a rate seen by myself only once some years ago. Every year is different, but the end result of the aforementioned year was a swarming season followed by massive mite loads. So, be on the lookout. If til now, a cursory glance at the entrance or taking a look under the cover is all we have done, it may be time to take a deeper look into the hives.

The beginning of spring gives us the opportunity to wipe the slate clean and get a fresh piece of chalk to start the new season. Mistakes may or may not have been made. Regardless, make note of what worked and didn't, and these can be tools to use in the season to come. Studying bee culture through books, meetings, or YouTube is a great way to prepare. Do your homework. Learning about what you are doing is the only way to be successful. During the month of March, I like to think of the hive as a garden and the work that I do now is the seed that I will watch grow for the rest of the summer. Take great care to stay ahead of your bees. It is the only way to help these creatures grow to their full potential.

First, let's unwrap the hive for the warm season to come. Take off all covering and insulation, including moisture traps, if you desire. Hopefully, your hives are waterproof enough to make it through the spring rains. If not, leave the moisture traps on, but that does not excuse you from looking into the hives.

Pop open the lid and take a look. I would assume that you would wear all the necessary gear, plus smoker. Do things gently, move smoothly. There is no rush. Jarring and making bees fly when the temps are not optimal can cause their death or unneeded stress. Working bees when the days are dry and around 50°F is great, but you can check for weight even when the temps are much lower. You may be able to

see the honey and determine that there is plenty or not. You may be able to take a stored frame and pop it in. If you have none, then a winter patty or some fondant may be used as an emergency feed. *Starvation* is one of the *only* things that you can control, so be responsible. You may want to try feeding a heavy syrup or a light syrup to simulate a flow. Putting pollen supplement on is a great way to get a jump start on the season, but know the costs. Every action causes a response in the bees, so think ahead.

If March marks the first time you have looked into your hive, you may have found it to be "deed." Fear not, you have just joined the rest of us who have found that to be the case as well. Bee keeping is a labor of love and cannot be marked by successes and failures. Just as your hives may have made it through the winter perfect for the second year, do not begin to believe that you have it all figured out. Being a beekeeper is a entomological journey into the world of the wild. Our poor human brains can hardly begin to understand the complexities of the natural world, so don't beat yourself up. Learn from what has happened and move on with open eyes and mind.

Having said that, why has your hive died? Much can be learned and you can make the appropriate management changes because something clearly did not work. Get a good book or talk with other beekeepers about what you have seen, and you will find that the knowledge gained from those interactions can make a world of difference in the path of a new year. Clean that puppy out. Get rid of old drone combs and junky boxes. Start the year off right. Leaving your dead, AFB hive out to rot because you think you might catch that 100 percent disease-resistant free swarm is not a service to anyone, most of all the bees. Packages and nucs are getting built this month. Get ready. They are coming, so let's make it work.

If you are one of the lucky ones and your hives came through great, take a look inside. Make sure that hive has a queen. If not, add it to another hive if possible. If one of your hives is weak and one strong, move a frame or two over with brood and bees (no queen) and give the weak one a boost, but mark her for re-queening.

Get those queens and supplies ordered and on their way. Don't be left out when things need to be done.

The last thing I would suggest for starting your garden off right is year is to be diligent about your pests and diseases. This may be a great time to treat for mites and brood diseases. Nontemperature-dependent mite control measures would be best. Please do not think that this is the last of your spring treatments. I have found more and more that the efficacy of most miticides has been greatly exaggerated. Bee aware and keep bees with care. Happy Keeping.



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## BEE CLASSES, BEE DAYS, AND OTHER BEE EVENTS

**March 7** (9 AM–2:30 PM): Linn Benton Beekeepers Bee School, geared toward beginning beekeepers. Waldorf School, Corvallis. Free for LBBA members; \$25 for nonmembers. Information: [www.lbba.us](http://www.lbba.us).

**March 14:** Lane County Beekeepers Bee School. Trinity United Methodist Church, 440 Maxwell Rd. Information: [lcbao.org/beeschool.htm?r](http://lcbao.org/beeschool.htm?r) and Pam Leavitt at 541.344.4228; [pamseaver2000@yahoo.com](mailto:pamseaver2000@yahoo.com).

**March 14:** Tualatin Valley Beekeepers Bee School. Hillsboro. See: [tvba.wildapricot.org/event-3607243](http://tvba.wildapricot.org/event-3607243).

**March 14** (10 AM–4 PM): Flying Bee Ranch Annual Open House. Discounts on honey & beekeeping supplies. Hive painting, refreshments, raffles. 5180 Lardon Rd NE, Salem.

**March 20–21:** HONEY Convention. See: [honeyconvention.com](http://honeyconvention.com).

**March 21:** Klamath Basin Beginning Beekeeping Class. KBREC, 6923 Washburn Way.

**March 28:** Columbia Gorge Beginning Beekeeping Class.

**April 4:** Hobby Day. Information: [ohbees.com](http://ohbees.com).

**April 9–10** (1–4 PM): Tillamook Beekeepers Introduction to Beekeeping. Tillamook Bay Community College, on 3rd Street west of Tillamook County Fairgrounds.

**April 13–May 18** (Mondays, 5:30–6:30 PM): Plight of the Honey Bee. Tillamook Bay Community College.

**April 18** (9 AM–4 PM): Southern Oregon Beekeepers Beginning Bee School. Fee is \$45. Topics and other information: [www.southernoregonbeekeepers.org/news-](http://www.southernoregonbeekeepers.org/news-)

[and-events/soba-beginning-beekeeper-class](#).

**May 10:** Oregon Coast Honey Lovers Festival. Yachats.

**May 16** (9 AM–3 PM): Portland Metro Bee Day. Foothills Honey Farm, 30576 S Oswalt Rd, Colton. Information: [portlandmetrobeekeepers.org](http://portlandmetrobeekeepers.org) and ad, page 11.

**July 6–8:** Heartland Apicultural Society Conference. University Southern Indiana, Evansville. Information: [heartlandbees.org](http://heartlandbees.org).

**July 9–11:** 43rd Western Apicultural Society Conference, Missoula, Montana. Information: [westernapiculturalsociety.org](http://westernapiculturalsociety.org).

**July 12 & 13–14:** Technology Demonstration Field Camp & 4th International Conference on Bee and Hive Monitoring. Missoula. Information: [westernapiculturalsociety.org](http://westernapiculturalsociety.org).

**August 3–7:** Eastern Apicultural Society 65th Short Course and Conference. University of Maine, Orono. Information: [www.easternapiculture.org](http://www.easternapiculture.org).

**August 8:** Klamath Basin Intermediate Beekeeping Class. KBREC, 6923 Washburn Way.

**September 12:** Game Changer Conference. Hood River. Registration: [bg-bees.com](http://bg-bees.com). See ad, page 11.

**October 3–4:** Washington State Beekeepers Association 2020 Conference. Central Washington University. Ellensburg.

**October 23–25:** Oregon State Beekeepers Association 2020 Conference. Florence, Oregon. Save the date!

**November 17–19:** California State Beekeepers Association Convention. Information: [www.californiastatebeekeepers.com/annual-convention](http://www.californiastatebeekeepers.com/annual-convention).

## REGIONAL NEWS

**Note:** All affiliated associations invite and welcome visitors to join them at meetings. See page 17, their websites, or [orsba.org](http://orsba.org) for meeting time, website, and/or contact information.

Many regional associations also offer additional opportunities for learning, including classes and bee days listed above; take care also to check their websites as well as postings under *Events* at [orsba.org](http://orsba.org).

### Regional Representatives

#### North Coast

It's overcast and pretty breezy outside right now but, thankfully, no rain. We've been hit by rain pretty hard in the last few weeks resulting in soggy, muddy ground, raging rivers in place of mellow streams, and some flooding in lower areas. We have had a few isolated days that have been nice enough for the bees to be able to get out and relieve themselves, but not much chance of doing any foraging yet. There have been losses, but I don't know yet how they compare with last year.

In mid-February I will be giving a To Bee or Not to Bee class for potential beekeepers. The classes are usually quite small with lots of time for questions and discussions. My primary piece of advice to any new beekeeper is to join a bee association. Not only will they be able to hear informative presentations but also they will also be able to meet beekeepers, talk to them, listen to them, visit their apiaries, ask questions. One thing that has impressed me over the years has been the willingness on the part of beekeepers to help one another and take inexperienced ones under their wing. I appreciate the help I have received and hope to be able to pass that forward. *Kathy Cope*

### Regional Associations

#### Central Oregon Beekeepers

We made it through the deep snows of December, the long cold nights (and short cold days) of January, and the tempting warmer days of February. We know now about how many hives we've lost through the winter and are figuring out how to replace them. We have been emergency



feeding the light ones, hopefully to nurse them through until the natural forage starts up. Although Central Oregon is just over the mountains from the Willamette Valley and just up the river from the Columbia, the primary issue we have isn't only the harshness of the winter, but even more the length. Many of our members insulate their hives, protect them from the prevailing winds, and clear the entrances during heavy snows. Even so, we still lose an unacceptable number to starvation and winter mite issues.

The last native blooms are the late rabbitbrush in September (in towns, there are still some flowering ornamental plants) and an occasional weed. The first native blooms are a light flow from the willows in late February and early March, with the first domesticated blooms, crocuses and other bulbs, also in early March. After that, it's not until mid-April when we get the fruit trees, followed in mid-May by the bitterbrush. Because of the length of winter, there is quite a bit of emergency, or at least supplemental feeding that needs to be done from February through April.

After taking a couple of months with no meetings (we have quite a few members who live in remote areas from which it is difficult to commute when there is a major snow storm), in January we had a representative from the Oregon Master Gardener Program talk to us about planting for pollinators in Central Oregon, both for honey bees and for local native pollinators; in February, a talk about products of the hive. *Allen Engle*

### Columbia Gorge Beekeepers

Weather! Last year, the weather in the Columbia Gorge found nature had delivered from two to three feet of snow to last the entire month of February. In 2020, we appear to have returned to our normal pattern, which provides a one-week respite accompanied by sunny days and temperatures above 50°F—a time all beekeepers meet with joy or sadness depending on the

condition of their bee hives. February also brings renewed energy to our association as the first board meeting of the year transpires. Our general meeting began with a premeeting presentation on the Asian Giant Hornet. It seems, after thirty-plus years struggling to arrive at consistent Varroa Destructor Mite management, our hives will soon be at war with this new pest having arrived on the West Coast. It seemed prudent to begin education to our members on this new critter. The general meeting comprised a potluck along with a survey on the members goals and aspirations each member wished to include for the 2020 year. Our focus has been and continues to be toward education of beekeepers throughout the Columbia Gorge. *Jerry Frazier*

### Klamath Basin Beekeepers

As the Klamath Basin slowly loses its grip on winter, our local beekeepers are looking forward to getting into their hives to see how many survived the winter. There have been a few sunny days over 50°F this past month allowing members to get a quick peek into the hives while adding bee candy or drivert sugar as supplemental feeding. Of course, nothing is blooming yet, so this is a vital time to take steps to ensure survivors make it til spring. Our association has started to take orders for packages and nucs for those beekeepers who need to either replace their bees or expand their apiaries. Due to the delay in the weather, bees won't be delivered until mid-to-late April.

Speaking of our meetings, we just started to livestream them on our association's Facebook page. It is a free service (when you have the gear), and Facebook will retain the video recording online for later viewing. This is a boon to those members who can't make the meeting. The video recording is in addition to pdf files of the meeting and presentation slides, which are on the association's Google Drive for download.



We were at the 2020 Outdoor Play Event at the Klamath Falls Fairgrounds in January and will also have a booth at the Winter Wings Festival at Oregon Tech on February 15. These sorts of events are key in educating the public and recruiting new members. *Paul Davitt*

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**Lane County Beekeepers**

Our Lane County Beekeepers have been active through the winter. We had a great opportunity to interact with our community at the recently held Good Earth Home, Garden & Living Show at the Lane County Fairgrounds. Our group had a booth at this annual event in January, and we love to engage with the community and talk about bees. Our booth is always very popular with kids and adults alike to stop and share information about bees. For our association members, this event is a great opportunity to share our knowledge and enthusiasm about bees with the community.

We were fortunate to have Dr. Ramesh Sagili come and talk to our association in January. We had a full house for the first meeting of 2020 and heard some interesting updates on honey bee research from Dr. Sagili. A big thank you to Ramesh and his team at the Honey Bee Lab at OSU for your great work on behalf of honey bees. *Michael France*

**Linn Benton Beekeepers**

The year 2020 has arrived. Those of us who have bees make it through winter are counting our blessings. We have observed an increase in bees flying out on warm days, which means the queens are starting to lay eggs. However, old man winter is not done with us yet and we may still see losses. If the weather continues with this warm streak, we may be in store for an early bee season in the valley—a welcome sight to many beekeepers.

It sounds like some beekeepers are looking at using oxalic acid on their hives this spring. The awareness of treating for mites is encouraging; however, we need to keep in mind that 70 percent of the mites are in the brood under caps. Treating with oxalic acid during the spring when the queen is starting to ramp up brood rearing can have negative effects. Oxalic acid has been shown to kill brood. Please read all labels before administering. A great website to checkout is the Honey Bee

Coalition: [honeybeehealthcoalition.org](http://honeybeehealthcoalition.org). This website can walk you through different types of treatments that may or may not be right for you. Our association is here to help provide you with resources to make informed educational choices for our bees and beekeepers. *Ray Juhasz*

**Oregon Central Coast Beekeepers**

As I look out the window at the blue sky this morning, I am hopeful that we will get our usual two beautiful weeks on the central coast in February. Unfortunately, I can also see good-sized piles of hail that fell in the early hours and the thermometer is reading 37°F. The bees are not amused!

We have been doing mite checks, and even those hives with very high counts a month ago are now down to only 1 to 2 mites on the sticky boards 24 hours after treatment with oxalic acid vapor. Hope this bodes well for winter survival, though we have had two dead outs thus far. With less than pleasant weather so far, we have been putting on sugar patties every three weeks or so and are about to put on another round, this one with some pollen substitute mixed in for a bit of a boost. On the few days we have had lately when the rain has stopped and the weather has warmed up over 50°F, we have seen lots of bees out and about collecting pollen from our rosemary bushes. A good portender of spring to come!

The association had a very successful January meeting on Varroa with a visit from Dr. Ramesh Sagili, and we are looking forward to Carolyn Breece coming out from OSU this month to discuss diseases of the hive. For our newer beekeepers, we will start the meeting with a session on hive inspections—when, how, and why to do them. *Becca Fain*

**Portland Metro Beekeepers**

We held our annual holiday potluck in mid-December. A good crowd turned out, bringing an array of sumptuous main dishes, desserts, and bee-related goodies. A “White Elephant” gift exchange concluded the festivities with some


good-natured exchanging of gifts for some sought-after items.

One of our presentations at the January meeting included a demonstration of a queen confinement cage that can be used to isolate your queen during treatments or to break

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a brood cycle. There was also an educational presentation of moisture-control methodologies to prevent excess moisture in colonies during the cold winter months.

The new board met in December and January wrapping up 2019 business and preparing for a full calendar of activities and educational events in 2020. So many ideas, so little time . . . Membership renewals and nuc orders are in full swing, and plans for PMBA Bee Day in May are taking shape. Ah, January . . . What can be said about January in the Willamette Valley besides, “It can be *wet* and *cold*.” And it was!! Members were busy checking on their hives for food stores and feeding as needed. It’s a good practice to tip your boxes to check for weight and an approximation of stored honey. Light boxes mean your bees are low on food stores and need a periodic boost of sugar or fondant.

Several members were readying their hives in preparation for transporting to California for almond pollination. Whether you are a commercial beekeeper or a hobbyist, this is also as great time to make your plans for the upcoming bee year: How many hives do you plan to have? Are you raising queens, buying them, or making splits this year? Do you have enough woodenware? Any boxes or frames need repair or maintenance? This is the ideal time to get your plans nailed down and your gear all set for the upcoming season.

*David Schwartz*

### **Portland Urban Beekeepers**

We started out with a wet winter—in Portland, we had rain in 30 of the first 31 days of 2020. Stretches of nice weather have begun to greet us in February, so we have forgiven all. The January meeting was well attended with about 50 members and aspirational beekeepers. Cheryl Wright officially took the helm and will no doubt steer us well through 2020. One of our significant changes this year is the moving of our association apiary. With our time at Zenger Farms coming to an end, we found a new home at Green Anchors in North Portland. Tim Wessels graciously offered the space; he serves as the manager for the apiary there and having someone on site full time will be a wonderful aspect of this relationship.

Our speaker was Thad Starr of Starr Farm Queens. Thad caught the beekeeping bug in 1991 and quickly moved from one to twenty hives. Back then, queens sold for \$3–4 apiece, which was too expensive, so he began rearing queens, which he could sell for \$6! Queen rearing has been a fundamental part of his business since then, and he strongly believes that poor queens are a significant factor in hive failure. He is also convinced that the bees themselves are the future source of mite eradication, and his goal is to raise bees which fight mites on their own. To that end,

Thad works with the VSH mite biter queens bred out of the University of Indiana Purdue Bee Lab. These queens raise bees whose workers smell the mite pheromones; the tell-tale shotgun pattern of the brood indicates the bees have removed larvae from cells with mites. Colonies will express a high level of mite resistance with as little as 50 percent VSH stock. Thad’s lowest acceptable level is 85 percent mite resistance and, after that, he evaluates them for gentleness. He recommends requeening in the fall (in August) every two years, which provides a brood break to slow down mite reproduction and the young, vigorous queen lays a substantially larger winter brood cluster. Additionally, the hive is less likely to swarm come spring. Thad offered a new trick for determining if a hive is queenless: Place a caged queen on the top of the hive and observe. If the bees love on her, there is no queen. If they appear to be digging at her, with their abdomens tucked up, it means the hive still has a queen and the bees are protecting her.

Our February meeting was equally well attended with a number of new folks who have already purchased their first nucs and are excited to get started. Mandy Shaw recently returned from the 2020 Natural Beekeeping Conference in LA which featured inspiring keynote speakers who are leaders in the field of natural beekeeping, local experts, authors, scientists, inventors, and educators. One of the biggest frustrations to a beekeeper is when a hive dies. Mandy noted that with so many reasons why this occurs one helpful approach is to take thorough notes during the season so one can review and help figure out why the hive death occurred. The PUB website maintains a document on dead colony forensics, which Dewey Caron prepared.

Mandy reported that the annual honey bee survey will open up in April. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the US Department of Agriculture conducts a national honey bee survey in which she participated. The University of Maryland processes samples taken by regional representatives. Mandy’s apiary was chosen to participate, and eight of her colonies were sampled. These included overwintered, splits, and swarm hives. APHIS identifies mite levels and is also looking to identify trends in other pests, such as the *Tropilaelaps* mite and *Apis cerana*. Samples of beeswax are also taken and tested for pesticides. Data are pooled from all over the US, and individual apiary results are compared to all test sites. APHIS will only consider testing apiaries with a minimum of ten hives. The process has reinforced the concept that if beekeepers maintain low mite levels, most bee viruses will not be a problem. Mandy’s focus for 2020 will be nutritional support, rigorous mite sampling, and to continue with the APHIS program.

*Jessica Anderson*

### Tillamook Beekeepers

Claire Moody and Brad York are now teaching bee-related classes at Tillamook Bay Community College. Brad is also speaking at the local Kiwanis Club on the subject of Saving the Tillamook Honey Bee. Our February meeting featured Andony Melathopoulos of OSU who spoke to us about Honey Bee Forage in Oregon. It was an excellent presentation and provided very good information to all.

Our bees are struggling as much as ever. It looks like approximately 50 percent of our colonies have died off as of this writing. No specific cause or any one thing that we can point to. We are just struggling. We hope the rest of Oregon is faring better than us. None of us is giving up, and we are in the midst of preparing for our spring order of nucs and packages.

*Brad York*

### Tualatin Valley Beekeepers

Tualatin Valley members and the public enjoyed a free showing of “The Pollinators” at their January meeting; the film was beautiful and made many excellent educational points, and people commented that they enjoyed it. Dr. Ramesh Sagili will update us on OSU Honey Bee Lab research at our late February meeting, and we plan hands-on small group presentations for the March member meeting.

The TVBA board is pleased with initial results from recently converting our operational membership systems to “Wild

Apricot” software. It looks as if the system will be a good time-saving data-and-member management tool for the all-volunteer board leaders! Check out our nice new website at: [www.tvbabees.org](http://www.tvbabees.org). The TVBA board is pleased to welcome two Master-level Oregon Master Beekeeper students to board service this year. Many thanks to the program for educating growing numbers of honey bee and pollinator experts with community service intentions—it looks like Oregon Master Beekeeper Program goals are coming to fruition!

We are excited that, thanks to Hillsboro’s recent accomplishment of Bee City USA status, the city is preparing a new program for interested volunteers. The “Hillsboro Pollinator Ambassador” program will offer opportunities for public education and outreach for anyone who is keen to share the word on cool pollinators in schools and public events. If you’d be interested to participate, let us know at: [tualatinvalleybeekeepers@gmail.com](mailto:tualatinvalleybeekeepers@gmail.com).

Spring so far seems to be coming on early, daffodils and forsythia are coming into bloom, and the Oregon grape buds are swelling locally in early February. Some members are reporting significant fall-winter colony losses once again, so we are looking forward to seeing Dr. Dewey and his winter loss survey to get the full details. The TVBA intends to work harder this year to support our members in doing timely mite counts and treatments in hopes to improve all our overall colony survival rates.

*Debby Garman*

## Portland Metro Beekeeping Association Bee Day



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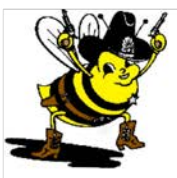
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**Honey Bee Lab**—*continued from page 1*

time it was for good (tenure-track assistant professor!). The OSBA rallied again and for the final time, Ramesh was hired to lead the Honey Bee Lab.

The lab carried on and acquired graduate students, Ellen Topitzhofer, Cameron Jack, and Stephanie Parreira, along with dozens of dedicated, hard-working undergraduate students. By this time, the lab had studied the nutritional quality of major Oregon crops pollinated by honey bees, the importance of protein supplements in colonies suffering from Nosema, and the effects of commonly used pesticides on honey bee health.



Left to right, Alexis Rist, Ramesh Sagili, Carolyn Breece acknowledge OSU during a research venture in Madras.

We had also teamed up with our best friends (the OSBA) and developed an educational program for new beekeepers: The Oregon Master Beekeeper Program. The Bee Informed Partnership established a tech team at OSU. Ben Sallmann and Ellen Topitzhofer traveled all across the Pacific Northwest sampling honey bees for pests and diseases.

And then came Hannah. Hannah Lucas took the reins as lab manager in 2015, and the lab has never been the same. Chemicals are organized, lab benches are tidy, data are entered and verified, freezer contents are cataloged, safety training is regularly scheduled. Hannah is a powerhouse and it is hard to remember how we got anything done before her arrival.

None of us can forget the images in the news of the Wilsonville bee kill. Dead bumble bees littering the parking lot, trees wrapped up in shade cloth, bee researchers (Ramesh!) on site taking samples. This was a most unfortunate event of misapplied pesticides. However, the silver lining of the story: the Honey Bee Lab got a little extra funding and OSU hired a pollinator health specialist, Andony Melathopoulos! Andony immediately made a huge impact on the awareness and protection of Oregon's native pollinators. He implemented the wildly successful Oregon Bee Project and the Oregon Bee Atlas. A recent news article stated that Andony's program leads the nation in bee-saving efforts with citizen science and education.

To help Andony in his efforts, he teamed up with Ramesh and together they hired Jen Holt in 2017. Jen coordinates the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program, the Oregon Bee Project, and the Oregon Bee Atlas. Jen, with her incredible organizational skills, has been instrumental in the efficiency, in the effectiveness, and in the gleaming polish of these three bee programs.

On the research front, we welcomed Priya Chakrabarti Basu in 2016, and the lab is now at its zenith. Priya works around the clock investigating different aspects of honey bee physiology, determining crucial components of the honey bee diet, evaluating the quality of forage planted for pollinators, and much more.



The Honey Bee Lab builds Priya's Metropolis on International Women's Day.

In 2019, two new graduate students arrived: Emily Carlson and Ellie Chapkin. We are looking forward to some exciting research from them. It won't be long before we'll be seeing them on stage at a future OSBA conference.

Reflecting on the past is great fun, but what stands out the most over the last decade is the development of a long-lasting friendship with the OSBA. Together, the OSBA and the OSU Honey Bee Lab have collaborated in research projects, developed educational programs, and created an army of outreach warriors. Together, we have celebrated births, mourned deaths, welcomed new pets, shared the joy of good honey years, and lamented over bee losses and Varroa levels. Members have donated funds, equipment, and time. The OSBA has supported Ramesh and the OSU Honey Bee Lab in every step of the way. In return, we hope our work has helped you keep your bees healthy, your businesses thriving, and the honey flowing. We thank the OSBA for a decade of friendship and partnership, and we look forward to another 10!

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The current cost of apiary registration is \$10 with an additional charge of \$0.50 per colony for five or more hives. After July 1, the registration fee will increase to \$20. The fee per hive remains at \$0.50 per colony for five or more hives. The number of colonies that must be registered is equal to the highest number of full strength colonies managed within the state at any point during the previous year, prior to the registration deadline of June 1.

All money collected from apiary registration shall be spent on research at the OSU Honey Bee Lab predominantly focused on honey bees ([honeybeelab.oregonstate.edu](http://honeybeelab.oregonstate.edu)).

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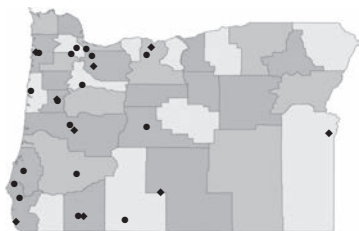
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## Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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##### Secretary

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##### Treasurer

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##### Past President

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##### North Willamette Valley

Steven Coffman—503.838.2981

##### South Willamette Valley

Tim Wydronek—541.740.4127; tim@aldercreekhoney.com

#### • AFFILIATED REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

##### Central Coast Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, fourth Wednesday, Newport  
 President: Becca Fain—rfain18@gmail.com  
 Website: www.ccbaor.org

##### Central Oregon Beekeepers

Meets 6:00–7:30 PM, fourth Tuesday, Bend  
 President: Allen Engle—aengle@bendbroadband.com  
 Website: www.cobeekeeping.org

##### Columbia County Oregon Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, first Thursday, Deer Island  
 President: Linda Zahl—503.799.7073  
 Facebook Page: ColumbiaCountyOregonBeekeepers

##### Columbia Gorge Beekeepers

Meets 6:15–8:15 PM, third Wednesday, Hood River  
 President: Jerry Frazier—jerry1.frazier@gmail.com  
 Website: gorgebeekeepers.org

##### Coos County Beekeepers

Meets 6:30 PM, third Saturday, Myrtle Point  
 President: Randy Sturgill—541.430.4095; randys@rfpco.com

##### Douglas County Bees

Meets 7:00–8:30 PM, first Wednesday, Roseburg  
 President: Jack Reilly—douglascountybees@gmail.com  
 Website: www.douglascountybees.org

##### Klamath Basin Beekeepers

Meets 9:00 AM, third/fourth Saturday, Klamath Falls  
 President: Paul Davitt—president@klamathbeekeepers.org  
 Website: www.klamathbeekeepers.org

##### Lane County Beekeepers

Meets 7:30 PM, third Tuesday, Eugene  
 President: Mike France—michaelj62@gmail.com  
 Website: www.lcbaor.org

##### Linn Benton Beekeepers

Meets 6:30 PM, third Wednesday, Corvallis  
 President: Everett Kaser—everett@lbba.us  
 Website: www.lbba.us

##### Oregon Prison Beekeepers

Program Manager: Chad.E.Naugle@doc.state.or.us

##### Oregon South Coast Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, third Tuesday, Gold Beach  
 President: Jesse Fletcher—jesse.l.fletcher@gmail.com

##### Portland Metro Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, second Thursday, Gladstone  
 President: Doug Sieckmann—503.804.5417  
 Website: portlandmetrobeekeepers.org

##### Portland Urban Beekeepers

Meets 7:00–9:00 PM, first Wednesday, Portland  
 President: Cheryl Wright—cwright80@hotmail.com  
 Website: portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

##### Southern Oregon Beekeepers

Meets 6:30–9:00 PM, first Monday, Central Point  
 President: Risa Halpin—303.807.1830; rhalpin906@gmail.com  
 Website: southernoregonbeekeepers.org

##### Tillamook Beekeepers

Meets 6:30–8:00 PM, second Tuesday, Tillamook  
 President: Brad York—dbradleyork@gmail.com  
 Website: www.tillamookbeekeepers.org

##### Tualatin Valley Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, last Tuesday, North Plains  
 President: Debby Garman—debbygarman@gmail.com  
 Website: tvba.weebly.com

##### Willamette Valley Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, fourth Monday, Salem  
 President: Richard Farrier—rfarrierfarms@gmail.com  
 Website: wvbahive.org





Oregon State Beekeepers Association  
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For bees, the flower is the fountain of life. | For flowers, the bee is the messenger of love.

—Kahlil Gibran

— If your mailing label includes a **MONTH** with the year, this is your friendly renewal notice! —

### **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.

Please send news about your bees and your experiences in keeping them, as well as events, corrections, comments, questions, photographs and stories, interviews, recipes, points of view—and ads/ advertising—to: Rosanna Mattingly, *The Bee Line*, 4207 SE Woodstock Blvd Ste 517, Portland OR 97206; e-mail: [osba.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:osba.newsletter@gmail.com). It's *your* newsletter—we want to hear from you!

The next issue to be printed will be the **April** issue, 2020. The deadline for submitting copy is **March 10, 2020**. Please let me know if you find difficulties with the deadline so we can work out the space and timing for the material.

*May all be well!*

### **Advertising**

#### **Per Issue**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Listing</b>
All events, space permitting (15 words)	<b>Free</b>
<b>For a nonprofit group event</b> , an additional 30 words (total of 45) in the listing or an article	<b>Free</b>
<b>Advertising</b>	
Business card	\$10.00
Quarter page	\$25.00
Half page	\$50.00
Full page	\$100.00
<b>Classified Ad</b> (30 words)	
Members	\$3.00
Nonmembers	\$5.00