



The Bee Line

Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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OREGON MASTER BEEKEEPER PROGRAM
A Joint Venture of OSBA and the Oregon State University Extension Service
info@oregonmasterbeekeeper.org

Image above: Portland Metro Beekeepers prepare nucs for drive-thru distribution.

Stay safe, everyone. Stay well.

The Walk Away Split⁺ Calendar (right) is your guideline for the queen-rearing process. It is included here, but may also be obtained by emailing me at ostrofsky@pacinfo.com. The plus sign indicates a pearl of wisdom acquired during a half century of working with splits/nucs. As Sue Cobey said, "Overcrowding is the secret to your success." You want two brood cycles before the bees start feeding the queen. You will feed protein and carbohydrates to build up your colony to the verge of swarming, overcrowded with lots of nurse bees. Continue feeding until the queen starts laying. The next plus focuses on actions taken during and after the split.

WALK AWAY SPLITS: Steps for Stress-Free Queen Rearing

Morris Ostrofsky

A walk away split is an ideal way to raise a few local queens. The basic walk away split involves taking a few frames of bees and brood and putting them in an empty brood box and walking away. You come back a month later to see how successful you were. We are going to tweak the basic walk away split and make it better. We call this the walk away split⁺. This method will help you end up with superior queens.

There are two ways to raise queens: with grafting or without. The focus here is on one graft-free method of raising queens. This means you do not have to stress about identifying the right-aged larvae, finding the queen, and damaging the larvae while grafting.

Raising your own queens brings multiple benefits. Among them: better queen acceptance, a locally adapted queen, no special equipment, cost effective—not to mention just being rewarding. There are also multiple benefits that result from a split, including slowing the swarm tendency, building up weak colonies, increasing colony numbers, being a source of early season queens, and saving money.

You can't just decide one day to make a split/nuc and do it the next. There is some preparation and decisions you will want to make before starting. The first is to make a calendar based on the target queen mating date along with (1) Dealing with Varroa, (2) Selecting a breeder colony, (3) Gathering materials, and (4) Deciding on a location for the split.

Starting with day 1:
1. Separate boxes #1 and #2.

Continued on page 15

Walk Away Split⁺ Calendar

Advance Preparation			
Late fall/early winter		1. Deal with varroa population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Varroa numbers • Treat with Oxalic 2. Select breeder colony 3. Gather materials	
Target mating day: May 22, 2019			
Early-April		Start feeding breeder colony protein/carbohydrates	
May - June		Continue feeding	
Day	Date	Breeder colony	Split
1	5/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove uncapped brood, honey and pollen frames from upper(#2) and lower(#1) boxes • Consolidate remaining frames from box#2 into box #1 and brush all bees into box #1 • Set aside empty box #2 • Place queen excluder between box #1 and #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place frames from boxes #1 and #2 into empty box #3 (split)
2	5/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove queen excluder • Take box #1 with old queen and place on its own stand in a new location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove box #3 and set up on the original stand (our split) • Continue feeding
5	5/9		Check for early capped queen cells (Plan on being available on this day)
18	5/18		Queen(s) emerges and exoskeleton hardens over next 5/6 days
22-23	5/22-5/23		Queen takes mating flight(s) and her body prepares for egg laying
27-28	5/27-5/28		Queen starts laying eggs
29-36	6/3-6/4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to deal with phoretic Varroa mites before cells capped
42-43	>6/6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check brood pattern • Mark queens
Yeah, you did it and the queen too!			

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What is luck? *Luck* can be defined as success or failure brought by chance rather than one's own actions. Chance is just the statistical probability that some event will occur or not occur. Entities that succeed with a high degree of regularity are often said to be lucky, especially if they are consistently beating the odds. Luck has an element of equal parts chance and fortune. Fortune is completely out of our control; we are born into the circumstances that we are, and from there we are welcome to make the best or worst of it. At least with chance, the other key element of luck, we can have some influence on and increase our odds of successes. Success can mean different things to different beekeepers; however, I think we can all agree that success is not guaranteed and sometimes it feels like our odds are very long. This has me pondering how we can become more lucky in our beekeeping.

One step in that direction is to understand the statistical probabilities involved in the biological processes we are managing in and around our beehives. For example, let's consider that we absolutely need to successfully raise 10 mated queens. The last thing one would want to do to start the process would be to graft 10 queen cells because sometimes when we graft we get 100 percent, sometimes we don't. Let's assume a reasonable take rate of 75 percent on 10 grafted cells; we would already be down to a maximum of 7.5 queens on the project, and last time I checked a half a queen isn't worth diddly, so now we are down to a potential of only 7 queens, of which statistically on average only 75 percent will successfully mate, thus yielding 5.25 mated queens. Clearly the only way to increase our chances and become lucky at the task of raising 10 queens would be to start by grafting 20 cells. By taking the chance on 20 cells, we increase the odds of being fortunate and possibly getting up to 20 queens, and at least are very likely to reach our necessary goal of 10 queens. So much of beekeeping is a numbers game.

There is definitely a 100 percent chance that all beekeepers will eventually encounter Varroa mites, and the management tools we use to deal with them will have varying degrees of efficacy ranging from 0 percent to never 100 percent. This in turn drives colony viral loads and winter mortality rates, which can set up a beekeeper to become "lucky" or "unlucky." As with raising queens, successfully overwintering colonies is also a numbers and odds game. We can keep the odds in our favor for successful outcomes in many ways. Obviously, we won't win every bet on every colony, so, if we need x number of colonies to survive winter for a pollination project, we will have to grow more colonies than we actually need to accommodate a given loss rate. This is very time

consuming and expensive. More affordable and practical strategies can include things like choosing locations with great forage, taking positive steps to create healthy pollinator habitat in your areas, not relying on only one method of mite control, and tending to the weakest colonies in an apiary in an appropriate manner. One collapsing colony in an apiary can put every colony in the apiary at risk. Unfortunately, as we all know too well at this point, one of the best strategies is to quarantine these colonies to their own yard until they are restored to health. Above all else, don't just keep doing the same thing over and over again if it has not been working. Sometimes we have to take some chances on new things to improve our luck. When we take chances, there will often be failures. Interestingly, people who consider themselves lucky tend to look for the up side in a failure, and thus luck can often be considered a state of mind. For an interesting treatment of the subject, check out this *Popular Science* article: www.popsci.com/luck-real and this *Nautilus* article: nautil.us/issue/44/luck/how-to-be-lucky. The take home message: Don't be afraid to make mistakes, learn from those mistakes, be observant, and odds are that your luck will improve over time.

As it turns out, lucky or unlucky individuals or entities tend to have several common characteristics that have been well studied. One frequently cited, decade-long study by experimental psychologist Richard Wiseman, from the University of Hertfordshire, shows that, "Lucky people generate their own good fortune via four basic principles. They are skilled at creating and noticing chance opportunities, make lucky decisions by listening to their intuition, create self-fulfilling prophecies via positive expectations, and adopt a resilient attitude that transforms bad luck into good" (richardwiseman.com/resources/The_Luck_Factor.pdf).

It may be a little crazy to write about luck in the middle of a global pandemic. Hopefully, by the time this is published next month, our situation will have improved substantially. With so many suffering and so much misery abounding, it is very easy to feel unlucky and become stuck in that mindset. We should never lose sight of the simple fact that the only true constant we can rely on is change. I can only hope that as a culture we can learn from this experience and become luckier the next time we face a global threat. One thing for sure, just like a beekeeper has to afford special care to sick or failing hives to keep them from contaminating the entire apiary, we as a culture have to do better at looking out for the least among us. A virus does not respect borders or economic status, so it makes sense to keep the entire human herd healthy in order to help protect us all.

I hope this message finds you all well and encouraged to try and create a little luck from this shared crisis. Good luck and best wishes.

John Jacob

2019 POLLINATION SURVEY REPORT

Dewey M. Caron and Ramesh Sagili

Oregon State University has conducted Pollination Economics surveys of large scale commercial and semi-commercial beekeepers since 1986. A total of 17 survey responses were analyzed for 2019 pollination season (14 responses from Oregon and 3 from Washington beekeepers). There was slight increase in number of responses from Oregon (2 more than last year), but responses from Washington beekeepers were down.

Total colony ownership of Oregon respondents was just over 49,600 colonies (represents 50 percent of the USDA NASS estimated colony numbers). These numbers are higher than previous two years (44 percent and 41 percent, respectively). Oregon and Washington commercial beekeepers averaged 5,356 colonies/individual (range, from 900 to 14,000), and semi-commercial beekeepers averaged 222 colonies/individual (range, from 95 to 354). Overall, the 17 Oregon/Washington beekeepers included in this study reported over 78,057 colony rentals on 20 different crops.

The sum of the total value of pollination fee reported by the 17 Oregon and Washington respondents was about \$11 million dollars. The weighted pollination rental fee averages since 2001 for almonds (\$191 weighted average), tree fruits (\$48.20), blueberry (\$55.20), vegetable seed production (\$40.50 west of the Cascades, \$110 for east), and squash/pumpkin (\$46.70) are shown in the graph below (Figure. 1).

The latest pollination survey continues to illustrate the

importance of pollination rentals for beekeepers in Oregon and Washington. The 9 commercial Oregon beekeepers reported renting colonies to one or as many as 14 different crops, averaging 9 crop rentals/beekeeper. The semi-commercial beekeeper average was 4.5 colony rentals/beekeeper. The largest fee generator for Oregon and Pacific Northwest beekeepers was California almond rental, as has been the case for the last dozen years. Rental fee received for almonds ranged from \$160 to \$200 per colony, with a weighted average of \$191, which is \$2 above the previous year gross rental average. For Pacific Northwest beekeepers, almonds represent 70 percent of the total crop rental fee gross income.

Closer to home, Oregon beekeeper rental of colonies for fruit (pears, sweet cherries, and apples) remained the top “local” income opportunity. In 2019, over 21,500 colonies (39.5 percent of total yearly “local” pollination rentals) were employed for pollination of fruit orchards with income of slightly over \$1 million. Blueberry accounted for 29 percent of the “local” pollination rentals and 34 percent of gross pollination fee, meadowfoam accounted for 8 percent, and vegetable seed pollination accounted for an additional 7.5 percent.

The range of rental prices reported by respondents was extensive. For example, pear and apple rental fee ranged from a low of \$35 to a high of \$65; for blueberry, the range was from \$40 to \$90; and for meadowfoam, it was from \$30 to \$65. Red, white, and crimson clovers rental fees were the lowest, with a \$40 average and a range of from \$20 to \$65 (data exclude colonies that were provided without cost).

Our survey asked the respondents if they used a pollination contract. A single respondent out of 16 said *yes*, and 8 respondents said *sometimes*. Average cost to maintain a colony for the year was estimated as \$268 (10 commercial beekeeper respondents). This figure is up by about \$27 from previous year’s survey. Six semi-commercial beekeepers estimated colony maintenance costs as \$122, which is about half the cost reported by commercial beekeepers (not all respondents estimated annual costs).

We thank all the beekeepers who responded to our survey and appreciate your time and effort. A more complete and detailed report is being prepared for the *American Bee Journal* and for a scientific, peer-reviewed journal.

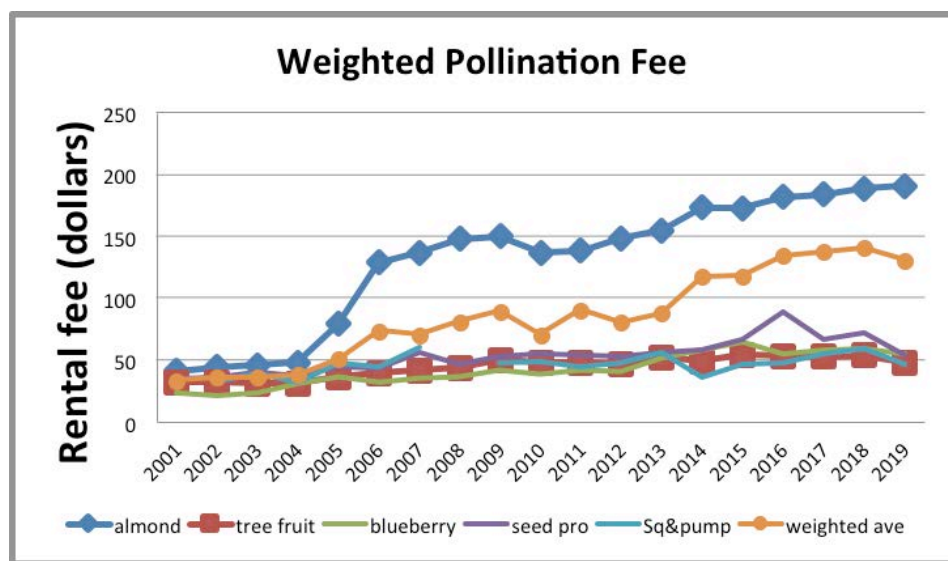


Figure 1. Weighted colony rental fee for Washington and Oregon beekeeper colony rentals (middle bolded line with circles), almond (top line with diamonds), tree fruits (lower bold with squares—includes pears, sweet cherries, and apples), blueberry, vegetable seed crops (primarily carrot, radish, and onion), and squash & pumpkin crops (2001–2019).

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Information & Updates: Honey Bee Summit at westernapiculturalsociety.org



westernapiculturalsociety.org



colonymonitoring.com

KEEPING BEES in MAY

Lynn Royce

What you do in May will always depend on what April was like if you are working with overwintered colonies. If the weather is warm and there are no hard frosts, spring flowers can be plentiful and honey bee colonies will take advantage of that and grow rapidly. Keep weather forecasts handy as the weather can change. A strong colony that is growing rapidly needs to have good steady food supply that will provide stores to get them through several days of rain that can happen in spring. It is heartbreaking to visit your best colony after several days of rain and find that stores are gone and all the bees are dead.

Lots of bee activity at the entrance can indicate a healthy colony. It may also mean robbing is occurring. The bees of the colony being invaded by robbers from another colony will defend their entrance. Workers will fight the invaders at the entrance of the hive, and there will be dead bees near the entrance, either on the bottom board or on the ground near the entrance. Look for dead bees and also watch the behavior of bees at or near the entrance. Do they appear to be fighting? A weak colony can be easily overtaken by a stronger colony. If you have bees robbing another colony, you can try reducing the entrance of the colony under attack, but the better solution is to move one of the colonies. A successful move must be at least 3 miles from the original location.

Lots of entrance activity, that is, workers coming in with pollen and going out to forage, is a sign of a strong colony. Colonies that are at least a year old or older and doing well in May will want to swarm. Check inside the colony. Are bees crowded on the frames? Are most cells of the frames empty, or do most cells contain something: pollen, nectar, eggs, larvae, pupae? Are there lots of drones in the colony? Look for queen cells; these are often found on the bottom bars of the frames. Because they are larger than either drone or worker cells, they are found where there is more space. Sometimes, if there is a hole in regular comb, a queen cell might be placed there.



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Queen cells are capped 8 days after an egg is laid in them, and the virgin queen will emerge in another 8 days. Strong colonies will produce multiple queen cells. The first virgin to emerge will attempt to kill the other queens still in their cells. The old queen leaves with about half the workers to find a new home before the first virgin emerges. Swarms are the reproductive unit of the colony. If you want to suppress swarming, find and remove queen cells before they are ready to emerge, or give the colony more space by adding a super before they start to make queen cells. Sometimes splitting the colony is an option if you want more colonies instead of more honey. If splitting is the option, one colony must be moved so that the workers cannot return to the mother colony, and a queen or queen cell needs to be provided for the split without the old queen.

Few bees coming and going on a warm day can indicate problems. Check the colony for food and being queenright. Sugar syrup may be needed if honey stores are low or gone. If there is no pollen in the hive, you may want to offer substitute pollen patties. Adjust the amount of substitute so that it is taken quickly. Continue to monitor the hive and feed as needed until the spring weather gets beyond the bad stretch.

May is often a time to get packages of honey bees to start a new colony or replace a lost colony. A 3-pound package is probably the most common. Have your equipment ready to receive your bees in advance of receiving them. It is not a bad idea to have some sugar syrup to feed the bees after installing them, especially if they are being put on combs with foundation to draw. There are many different feeders on the market; talk to others to help you decide what will work for you.

When selecting a location, keep in mind the sun as it changes position with the season. It is also good to consider the vegetation, fences (especially tall board fences and big trees), neighbors and their pets and children, and traffic and parked cars. People do not like bees leaving yellow spots as they fly over vehicles. Talk to your neighbors and let them know you have or will have bees, even if you are locating bees out of town. Ask for notification if any type of pesticide will be used. It also never hurts to give away some honey; often people love honey even if they are afraid of bees.

You may want to find an experienced beekeeper willing to talk to you if bees will be a new experience for you—for example, someone in the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program, someone you know who already keeps bees, or a retired beekeeper.



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BEE CLASSES, BEE DAYS, AND OTHER BEE EVENTS

2020

Bee Informed Partnership Loss and Management Survey. *Information:* beeinformed.org/citizen-science/loss-and-management-survey.

May 2–17: Mite-A-Thon. Sign up and participate: www.pollinator.org/miteathon.

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

June 22–28: National Pollinator Week. *Information:* www.pollinator.org/pollinator-week.

June 28 (9 AM–5 PM): Oregon Coast Honey Lovers Festival. Yachats. Save the date!

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

August 15–30: Mite-A-Thon. Sign up and participate: www.pollinator.org/miteathon.

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

October 23–25: Oregon State Beekeepers Association 2020 Conference. Florence, Oregon.

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

2021

July 8–10: Annual Western Apicultural Society Conference. Missoula, Montana. *Information and updates:* westernapiculturalsociety.org.

July 11 & 12–13: Technology Demonstration Field Camp & 4th International Conference on Bee and Hive Monitoring. Missoula. *Information:* westernapiculturalsociety.org.

Note: New beekeeper association formed in Grants Pass. *Information:* Mike Miller at 503.660.7321.

OSBA 2020 Fall Conference

Spring is here, and we are all busy with our lives. Bees don't stop for coronavirus. We have had to get creative and change some of the ways we do things, from passing out nucs at a safe distance to associations having meetings on Zoom. Then there is planning for the OSBA Fall Conference with the times as they are now. All I can say is that we are still planning on the conference being held in Florence October 23, 24 & 25. I have spoken with the Florence Events Center director, and we still have the site reserved.

There are a few things that we will have to consider: (1) Will the governor allow meetings of the size of our conference and (2) Does the OSBA membership want to go ahead with the Fall Conference with safety concerns? We cannot do anything about what governor allows, but we can commit to concern for the safety of our membership.

I have received some thoughts from OSBA members that we should think about canceling this year's conference and plan on 2021, our centennial, and make it a real big deal. We have the Florence Events Center reserved for October 2021.

The OSBA Board will make a decision on whether or not to proceed with the 2020 Fall Conference by the end of July.

Joe Maresch, OSBA Vice President

REGIONAL NEWS

Note: All affiliated associations invite and welcome visitors to join them at meetings. See page 17, their websites, or 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.

Regional Representatives

North Coast

The Central Coast has been experiencing some pretty nice weather lately, and I'm sure most of our beekeepers are finding that they have plenty of time on their hands to get out and watch their bees these days. But, of course, they've had more to do than just watch them. With new bees coming soon, I'm sure most folks have found a lot of little last-minute chores that needed to be done to get ready for the new arrivals.

For myself, my closest connection to beekeeping has been with a scammer who has, on three occasions, contacted me via email, looking like the president of our club and asking for money. The first time, I was taken in at first. It definitely looked like the email was from Becca, and the sender was requesting that I pay a bill for her, which, in my role as treasurer, would be understandable. However, the story kept getting more and more complicated without ever actually giving me any real data. When it finally got to the point where “she” was telling me the best way to pay this bill would be by buying several gift cards, I finally caught on. Looking back over the conversation, I am embarrassed at how gullible I was for so long. When you think you know the person you’re talking to, it’s easy to put up with a little strangeness . . . up to a point. Anyway, I didn’t write this so that everybody could roll their eyes and have a little laugh at my expense, but rather to warn you that there are folks out there that do this sort of thing and do it very well.

Kathy Cope

Regional Associations

Central Oregon Beekeepers

Wow, how times change over a month. For March and April in Central Oregon, we had several excellent speakers and events organized for our members. Now with social distancing, we’ve canceled all face-to-face meetings, including the wonderful speakers. In April (and for May), however, we’ve been doing our meetings and presentations using the Zoom app. It isn’t the same as a face-to-face meeting, although presentations work well as well as Q and As, and it does allow us to stay in touch with our membership.

Similar issues with our Oregon Master Beekeeper Program mentors/mentees. Face-to-face meetings and activities are strongly discouraged, so our OMB mentors are finding creative ways to work with their mentees. Phone calls, face time, sitting

in the car describing what to do and what to see. It creates some interesting questions, such as whether the brood pattern is spotty with the answer being that it’s about the size of a grapefruit.

We are greatly appreciating that beekeeping is, primarily, an individual activity with the public not particularly interested in getting close, so social distancing is actually part of the activity. In Central Oregon, we had a warm period in February, followed by an extended, 3-week cold snap (low 20s and snow) in March. In April, we had quite a few reports of starvation due to hives starting a dramatic brood rearing activity in February, then eating all their stores while the beekeeper didn’t want to open the hive for emergency feeding when it was so cold. Very frustrating.

Now, the spring is going pretty much as expected. In town, the various blooming plants are putting out lots of forage, and, in the native areas, the bitterbrush has just finished and the sagebrush is blooming.

In April, we had a Zoom meeting to talk about splits, swarms and queens, as well as another Zoom seminar about equipment construction. In May, we’re planning on another Zoom meeting with a panel of experienced beekeepers answering questions by our membership on all aspects of beekeeping. Looking forward to actually meeting face to face again. Once things get back to normal, you are invited to attend any of our meetings. If you’d like to attend any of our online meetings, see the announcement, including how to join the online meeting, on our website at: www.cobeekeeping.org.

We hope you and your bees stay healthy and productive.

Allen Engle

Columbia Gorge Beekeepers

The year 2020 has opened its door with gusto! Last year, the entire month of February blanketed the Columbia Gorge with snow, lots of snow. February and March 2020 found springlike weather. But, as if to teach humans who is in charge, the weather turned back to a bit of snow, hail, rain, and, of course, cold. The poor bees must be as confused as we are. The COVID-19 sequestration has us all in a tizzy, especially our pets (not bees) who wonder why we are still at home. A time to reenergize our spirits by delving into books, podcasts (PolliNation), Trivia Night at the OSU Honey Bee Lab (virtually, of course), and the Auburn University’s Bee Lab’s



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series. It is also a time for our communities and nation to shift our thoughts toward each other. Amazing how many have individually and as companies jumped in to offer their support. Hope prevails. Faced with our meeting area closing (Hood River Extension), CGBA found a solution—one that many others have lobbied onto—Zoom meetings. Last March we were inspired with Ellen Topitzhofer's presentation on Honey Bee Diseases. Amazing to find all the attendees jubilantly joining in with questions. April, Dr. Dewey Caron regaled the association with his wealth of tidbits delving into beekeeping issues in April and May.



Our association is blessed to have three Langstroth hives at the Extension Service. Jacquie Baron, one of our members, blessed us with new boxes to dress up the apiary. Two of the three hives housed at the Hood River Extension Service survived the winter. These hives are accessed repeatedly each month by several groups. Learning to install queens, add supers, inspect brood, test for mites, and more is afforded to students and association members alike. The original hives were purchased and supported the Hood River County Master Gardeners. *Jerry Frazier*

Lane County Beekeepers

Like other bee associations all across the US, Lane County Beekeepers did not have a meeting in March and will not be meeting until we get the all-clear sign from our state leaders. It feels strange to not get together as a group, but the bees do not know we are sidelined for getting together.

Our association did cancel our Bee School that was scheduled for March 14. We were well prepared for this year's school, and Pam Leavitt had the program all ready to go until the day before, when the decision was made to cancel for the safety of all who would have attended. Thanks to all members for getting this event prepared.

It seems the bees that overwintered in Lane County are healthy and building up early this year. There have also been reports of early swarms this year in our area. Beekeeping must go on during this time of social distancing. Reports from California honey bee package suppliers indicate a very healthy and strong bee population this year. This is good news for anyone ordering a package from suppliers in California.

We are working to add content online since we cannot meet in person. If you go to our website, you will find package installation and nuc introduction videos as well as some new content about splits, swarms, and spring hive management. It is our goal to continue to bring new and relevant information about beekeeping practices.

Michael France

Portland Metro Beekeeping Association Bee Day



Saturday May 16th from 9am – 3pm

Check in 8:30 – 9am

Attendance limited to 175 people

Registration Online

<https://portlandmetrobeekeepers.org/>

See Flier of Events

Mail in Registration – See Website Download Form

PO Box 158

Gladstone, OR 97027

Pre-registration by April 30th deadline

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Linn Benton Beekeepers

Hope everyone is staying in their safe zone and everyone is well. We have had to cancel our March meeting and will not be having a meeting in April or May. Our Field Day for the month of June is up in the air at this time. We should know more next month. Our mentors are working with their students from afar and providing advice the best we can under the circumstances.

Ray Juhasz

Oregon Central Coast Beekeepers

The association has done a bee order for members for the past 3 years, and we are anxiously awaiting the delivery of nucs and packages this month and hoping that a shelter in place order does not come down from Salem that would keep us from traveling to pick the bees up and deliver them.

The weather has been less than cooperative recently with lots of rain, sleet, and hail, with brief sun breaks in between. The weatherperson has predicted some good weather on the horizon, which has us all excited about getting out and really assessing our hives. Losses have been a mixed bag on the Central Coast, with some folks overwintering all their hives and others losing them all. We will be having our first virtual association meeting this month through Zoom to see how this goes and hope this allows us to maintain contact and continue to supply important information to members. We are hoping for a successful honey flow and the conquering of the coronavirus this spring and summer.

Becca Fain

Portland Metro Beekeepers

The nucs are coming!! The nucs are coming!! That was the chorus heard throughout the PMBA community in March. And they came—395 of them, to be exact. Nuc distribution occurred at Foothills Honey Company in Colton on the morning of April 4. A handful of PMBA volunteers spent a little over an hour Friday night, April 3, plugging the nucs to keep the bees from flying the following morning. Luckily, the weather was cool the morning of distribution, keeping the bees in the nucs quiet and hunkered down. Speak-



ing of hunkered down, in keeping with the state and federal urgings for “social distancing” necessary during the coronavirus pandemic, a process was set up to allow for safe distances between association members and volunteer distributors. In addition, gloves and masks were worn to enhance protection. The weather cooperated with a dry, sunny morning and, in 3 hours, 395 nucs were distributed to 123 PMBA members. A special thanks to Foothills Honey Company for their strong nucs and help with the forklift Saturday morning easing the workload for the six volunteers hustling to keep the flow of vehicles moving.

Speaking of nucs, the entire March PMBA meeting focused on nucs. President Doug Seikmann presented an overview and process for installing a nuc into a 8- or 10-frame box, member David Hainley presented ideas he and his dad use for nucs in their apiary utilizing ideas and techniques from Michael Palmer of French Hills Apiary in Vermont, and PMBA Vice President Paul Stromberg presented ideas and tips for using nucs to overwinter hives for improved survivability and success.

March and April weather in the Portland area is typically cool and wet, but warmer, dryer days are increasing. Several of us started feeding 1:1 sugar syrup when we saw brood building up. Because of the apparent lack of pollen sources, we continued to feed pollen substitute patties. As the weather warms, we are watching for signs of swarming and taking the appropriate action for preventing swarms or doing spring splits. We have installed new nucs and are feeding sugar syrup and pollen substitute patties, as needed. Several of us have installed bait hives and/or are getting our swarm traps

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and gear ready to go. Here is to a rapid resolution to the coronavirus situation so we can get back to doing what we enjoy doing best—hanging out with fellow beekeepers and learning best practices from each other.

David Schwartz

Portland Urban Beekeepers

Like most beekeeping groups, Portland Urban Beekeepers is adapting to becoming a virtual organization! We're navigating our way through online meetings with dogs, kids, *hot microphones*, and funny video backdrops intersecting with our talk of serious bee business. Dr. Dewey Caron was scheduled to be our April featured speaker, which we unfortunately had to cancel. However, he recently spoke to the Tualatin Valley Beekeepers via Zoom, and they were kind enough to record it and share it with our PUB members. He covered a variety of spring management topics and issues, including swarms and best practices. We anticipate having a May meeting via Zoom, which will feature Laura Bee, author of *History, Mystery, and Trajectory of Bee-Centered Apiculture*.

As we watch spring unfold in the Portland area, April highlights a wonderful assortment of flowering plants. Cherry, apple, pear, and plum trees have exploded in color. Our association plant expert, Glen Andresen, noted the American Elm blooms about now and is one of our earliest sources of abundant pollen.

The dearth of association activity has given us some time to continue maintenance work at our apiary. We've had to cancel work parties for April, but continue to hold out hope to be back out there in May, particularly for our bee school attendees. The association also recently decided to formally provide support for OR House Bill 4109, which prohibits use and future sale of pesticide products containing chlorpyrifos, a known bee toxin. So, for the time being, we're sharing educational blogs, vlogs, courses, podcasts, and books with each other. New (and old) beekeepers are anxiously awaiting their nucs and for the beekeeping season to really get underway!

Jessica Anderson

Tillamook Beekeepers

What more can we do to disrupt our lives? With all the social distancing, masking, and sheltering in place, the beekeepers of Tillamook are doing everything possible to keep our bees happy and alive.

The annual Home and Garden Show, which is one of our main fundraising events and getting-out-the-message opportunity of the year, of course, was canceled. Our meeting in March was held just before all this lockdown, so that went well and we learned a great deal from Christine Buhl from the Oregon Department of Forestry. Our April meeting will be an online Zoom meeting. We will be showing a few videos teaching new beekeepers and reminding older beekeepers how to install packages and nucs.

Our association created a magnificent display at our

public library for the community to see. It was amazingly informative about things the public could do to help save the bees in Tillamook. Unfortunately, the library closed down, and not too many people had the opportunity to view it.

Our annual Raffle Hive, which was to have happened at the Home and Garden Show, will be held at our virtual meeting on the 14th. From a fundraising perspective, last year the hive raised us \$1,500. This year, only \$700, but hey, hundreds of folks have lost their paychecks. We will survive as a bee association. Our annual bee order is coming in next week to the tune of 56 nucs and 55 4-pound packages. We are all looking forward to getting these new bees comfortable and productive.

The weather here in Tillamook has just this week gotten warm enough for our bees to enjoy life. Every day for the past 7 days, the bees have been buzzing about and gathering pollen by the "leg" full. Here's to a better year for the bees than we humans are experiencing.

Brad York

Tualatin Valley Beekeepers

In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the seasonal cycle is guiding TVBA beekeepers to do our regular activities. We have switched to Zoom platform member meetings for the time being, to keep everyone safe. Nuc delivery took place on April 18, with everyone in masks and gloves. It was a happy occasion. We had big plans for newbie mentorship this year, and will do our best to follow through by communicating via technology in spite of social distancing. Members are making good use of the new Forum feature on our tvbabees.org website. Springtime blossoms in April and May are hosting many pollinators, and it is a joy to be in our apiaries. We send best wishes that all of our fellow beekeepers and their bees will stay healthy!

Debby Garman

WSU Scientists Enlist Citizens in Hunt for Giant, Bee-Killing Hornet

Seth Truscott

PULLMAN, Wash. – More than two inches long, the world's largest hornet carries a painful, sometimes lethal sting and an appetite for honey bees. It is also the newest insect invader of Washington state. The Asian giant hornet, *Vespa mandarinia*, is unmistakable, said Susan Cobey, bee breeder with Washington State University's Department of Entomology. "They're like something out of a monster cartoon with this huge yellow-orange face," she said. "It's a shockingly large hornet," added Todd Murray, WSU Extension entomologist and invasive species specialist. "It's a health hazard, and more importantly, a significant predator of honey bees."



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Cobey, Murray and other WSU scientists are bracing for the giant hornet's emergence this spring. Sighted for the first time in Washington last December, the hornet will start to become active in April. WSU researchers are working with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), beekeepers and citizens to find it, study it and help roll back its spread.

Voracious Predator

In the first-ever sightings in the U.S., WSDA verified two reports of the Asian giant hornet late last year near Blaine, Washington, and received two probable, but unconfirmed reports, from sites in Custer, Wash. It is not known how or where the hornet first arrived in North America. Insects are frequently transported in international cargo and are sometimes transported deliberately. At home in the forests and low mountains of eastern and southeast Asia, the hornet feeds on large insects, including native wasps and bees. In Japan, it devastates the European honey bee, which has no effective defense.

The Asian giant hornet's life cycle begins in April, when queens emerge from hibernation, feed on plant sap and fruit, and look for an underground dens to build their nests. Once established, colonies grow and send out workers to find food and prey. Hornets are most destructive in the late summer and early fall, when they are on the hunt for sources of protein to raise next year's queens. *V. mandarinia* attack honey bee hives, killing adult bees and devouring bee larvae and pupae, while aggressively defending the occupied colony. Their stings are big and painful, with a potent neurotoxin. Multiple stings can kill humans, even if they are not allergic.

Forever Changes

Growers depend on honey bees to pollinate many important northwest crops like apples, blueberries and cherries. With the threat from hornets, "beekeepers may be reluctant to bring their hives here," said Island County Extension scientist Tim Lawrence.

"As a new species entering our state, this is the first drop in the bucket," said Murray. Once established, invasive species like the spotted wing drosophila fruit fly or the zebra mussel make "forever changes" to local crops and ecologies. "Just like that, it's forever different," Murray said. "We need to teach people how to recognize and identify this hornet while populations are small, so that we can eradicate it while we still have a chance."

Beekeepers, WSU Master Gardener volunteers and other Extension clients are often the first detectors of invasive species. WSU scientists are now spreading awareness of the hornet to citizens and developing a fact sheet to help people identify and safely encounter the insects. As partners with the Washington Invasive Species Council, they also urge citizens to download the WA Invasives smartphone app for quick reporting of sightings. "We need to get the word out," said Lawrence. "We need to get a clear image of what's happening out there, and have people report it as soon as possible."


Early Detection, Faster Eradication

Scientists with the WSDA Pest Program are taking the lead on finding, trapping and eradicating the pest. WSDA will begin trapping for queens this spring, with a focus on Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, and Island counties. "Our focus is on


A GIANT

→ problem for bees ←


Washington State University scientists are helping spread the word about the impact of the Asian giant hornet. Citizens can help by downloading the Washington Invasives App and reporting sightings. Suspected sightings of this invasive species should be reported to the WSDA Pest Program Hotline at 1-800-443-6684, or online at agr.wa.gov/hornets




Attacking hives, a single hornet can kill dozens of honey bees in minutes. A group of 30 hornets can destroy an entire hive of 30,000 bees in less than four hours.



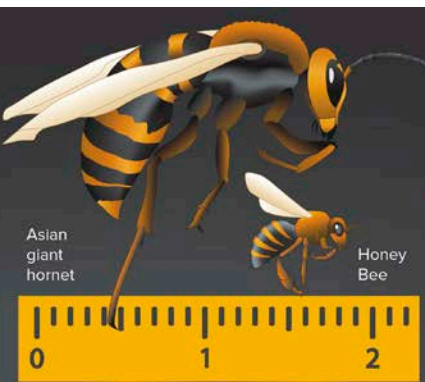
There have been two confirmed specimens in fall 2019, and four unconfirmed reports in Washington since the initial detection.



Hornets attack bee hives in the late summer and early fall to feed their young queens. They defend occupied hives and can sting through beekeeper suits.



Giant hornets have nearly seven times the amount of venom as a honey bee. Multiple stings can kill.



The Asian giant hornet is Washington's newest insect invader. Sighted in the Pacific Northwest last year, the hornet is a voracious predator of honey bees and other insects, and threatens valuable pollinators.

Adults are 1.5–2 inches long, with a large yellow or orange head and a black-and yellow-striped abdomen.

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detection and eradication,” said WSDA entomologist Chris Looney. The agency plans to collaborate with local beekeepers and WSU Extension scientists and entomologists with WSU focusing its efforts on management advice for beekeepers.

Regular beekeeping suits are poor protection against this hornet’s sting, said Looney. WSDA ordered special reinforced suits from China. “Don’t try to take them out yourself if you see them,” he said. “If you get into them, run away, then call us! It is really important for us to know of every sighting, if we’re going to have any hope of eradication.”

To report an Asian giant hornet sighting, contact the Washington State Department of Agriculture Pest Program at (1-800) 443-6684, pestprogram@agr.wa.gov, or online at agr.wa.gov/hornets.

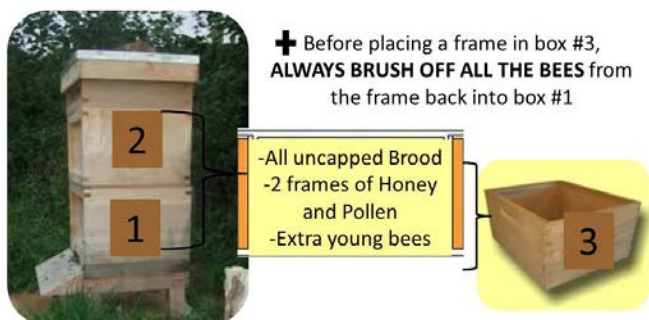
For questions about protecting honey bees from hornets, contact WSU Extension scientist Tim Lawrence at (360) 639-6061 or timothy.lawrence@wsu.edu.

Note: Article and infographic reprinted, courtesy of Washington State University.

Walk Away Splits—Continued from page 1

2. Transfer ALL frames with uncapped brood from boxes #1 and #2 to box #3.
3. Transfer at least 2 frames of honey/pollen from boxes #1 and #2 to box #3.

Breeder colony Day 1:



Note the plus. ALWAYS make sure to brush all the bees off the frame back into box #1 before placing the frame in box #3. By taking these steps, you ensure that any queen will now be in box #1. No stress in having to look for the queen. The queen excluder that you place after doing this keeps the queen where you want her in box #1. You may ask, “Why set up box #3 this way?”

- Nurse bees are highly attracted to uncapped brood (*Very Important Principle*).
- The vast majority of nurse bees will congregate in the upper brood box.
- Separating queen and field bees from uncapped brood and nurse bees using a queen excluder is called the *Demaree Method*.

Day 1: continued

4. Set aside empty box #2



5. Place a queen excluder on top of box #1 (Demaree method)

6. Set box #3 on top of the queen excluder

You will notice another plus for day 2 by “continue feeding.” It is important to continue feeding because the bees in box #3 have lost their field force. The box is composed primarily with nurse bees, not field bees. Nurse bees don’t go out and collect food.

While there is not a plus by “check for early capped queen cells” on day 5, this is an important step in your ability to raise quality queens. Why do this? You want to eliminate any queen cells that were started with larvae that were older than 24 hours. If larvae older than 24 hours were selected, it means the resulting queen will have had less opportunity to be well fed.

The final plus occurs once the new queen starts laying. This is your opportunity to remove phoretic mites from the colony. The phoretic mites enter open brood cells about a day before they are capped over. The math on this is that the queen should have started laying 8 days earlier. Since worker brood is capped between 8 and 9 days, you want to remove the Varroa mites while they are still exposed and vulnerable. Give yourself some safety margin. Start early.

When all is said and done, you should have a healthy viable queen. But what if you did not get the results you wanted, such as broodlessness, shotgun laying pattern, or a drone layer? Take the equipment and redistribute to other hives. You may even have time to try again.

In summary, the best queens are those you raise yourself. One way to do this is using the walk away split method with some enhancements.

- Feed early and continuously until queen’s pupal stage.
- Overcrowding with nurse bees is a key to your success.
- When sorting frames, brush ALL bees into box #1.
- Eliminate early capped queen cells/use 24-hour-old larvae.
- Set the Varroa mite population back.



Oregon State Beekeepers Association Membership Application

The **Oregon State Beekeepers Association** is a nonprofit organization representing and supporting all who have an interest in honey bees and beekeeping. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in bees and beekeeping. You do not need to own bees or reside in Oregon to join. Membership includes the ongoing work of the organization on behalf of the honey bee and beekeeping, a vote in OSBA elections, swarm call listing, four free online classified ads per year, discounts on publications, and an annual directory and subscription to *The Bee Line*.

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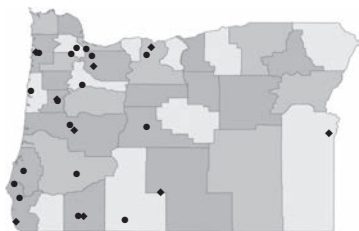
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Thank you!

Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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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—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: tvbabees.org

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Meets 7:00 PM, fourth Monday, Salem
 President: Richard Farrier—rfarrierfarms@gmail.com
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—Australia beekeeper, *Adrian the Bee Man*

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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. It's *your* newsletter—we want to hear from you!

The next issue to be printed will be the **June** issue, 2020. The deadline for submitting copy is **May 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!

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