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# THE BEE LINE



## Oregon State Beekeepers Association

June 1979

AFFILIATED WITH AMERICAN BEEKEEPING FEDERATION

Vol. 3 No. 5

## SWARMS: BONUS OR BURDEN?

By Michael Burgett

It hangs on a branch about four feet above the ground. To the person unfamiliar with bees it must represent at least 100,000 stings. To many novice beekeepers it represents a great find - a "free" hive!

The capture and hiving of a swarm is always mentioned as a way to increase the number of hives in one's apiary. For many beekeepers, newly introduced to the art, it is often the single, most appealing method of getting started. Relying on swarms however, has several drawbacks which should be considered.

One cannot order swarms. The physical constraints of the hives, both those of the beekeepers and "wild" hives, dictate when and how many swarms will emerge in a given year. The weather also strongly influences swarming, and the hobby beekeeper needs to be on-call, ready to stop all other activity, in order to collect the bees. No one can predict how many swarms will be available. Studies in several areas of the United States have been able to describe the swarming season, but this type of research only "roughs in" the period.

Accessibility is another variable with swarms. I've seen swarms on sidewalks, slowly flowing along with amoeba-like grace, that would practically walk into a hive body set in front of them. Other swarms have been clustered so high in trees that it took a shotgun blast (with disastrous results), to bring them to the ground. Yes, quite often they will ever so conveniently hang on a small diameter branch in a tight cluster, simply begging to be dropped into a catcher hive or a burlap bag, but don't count on it.

Swarms vary tremendously in size. From my own research, swarms have been

measured with as few as 1,000 bees to as many as 33,000. The average size from a three year study conducted in New York State was around four pounds, or about 12,000 individuals. The obvious point is you will not know how large or small it is until you see it. In conducting research on swarming I normally use a five frame nucleus box in which the swarm is placed.

With one swarm in excess of six pounds, the nucleus box was simply too small and the bees suffocated overnight before I had a chance to rehive them in a standard hive body.

Another potential problem with swarms is their queens. In the majority of swarms it is the old, mother queen of the hive that leaves. She is at least one year old, and does not have the same egg laying potential of a newly mated queen. Occasionally a severely crowded colony will cast more than one swarm on a year. The secondary or after swarm(s) will contain virgin queens, often several queens per swarm. If an after swarm is hived the additional problem of successful mating of the new queen must be overcome.

One often mentioned problem with swarms is their potential for carrying disease especially American Foulbrood. In the collection and hiving of scores of swarms, I have never encountered a swarm that has evidence of initially being infected with American Foulbrood.

All of these "negative" comments on swarm collection are not meant to discourage the practice. Don't however, rely on swarming as a primary method of colony increase. Swarms can be viewed as wild packages. Conversely, package are really commercial swarms with a high degree of quality control that is not seen in natural swarms.

# Skunk Control

## Discussed

From Bees & Honey  
Published by Elbert Jaycox  
Urbana, Illinois

Skunks are a serious pest of honey bee colonies when they raid an apiary nightly to dine on the bees. You may not be aware of such visits until you find that previously gentle colonies are suddenly difficult to handle and very nervous on the combs. End colonies in a row are the ones visited most often by the skunks. The tell-tale signs of skunk activity include areas where the soil has been dug away at the front of the hive and droppings containing pieces of bee skeletons.

Because skunks are furbearing animals, they are protected by law in many states. Before taking action against them, check with the local fish and game or conservation agency about the pertinent regulations. Permits are usually available when the animals are causing damage.

Catching the skunk alive in a large, box-type trap is the best method of control. The trap should be about 10 by 10 by 30 inches, or slightly larger. Place it where the animal has been active, such as near the hives or places where it makes its headquarters. Bait the trap with canned or fresh fish, fish-flavored cat food, raw or cooked bacon, or chicken parts. It is easier to take action after a skunk is caught if you place a piece of tarp or burlap over a wire-mesh trap when setting it. Some skunks release their scent when moved gently in a covered or wooden trap, but most will not. The odds are about 8 to 1 in your favor, according to the experts.

The trapped skunk may be killed with chloroform, ether, automobile exhaust or by submerging the trap in water. Experts on pest control advise against releasing animals elsewhere because of the potential for spreading rabies.

I do not know whether mothballs (naphthalene) or paradichlorobenzene crystals (PDB) will repel skunks from bee hives, but the materials are reported to be effective in driving skunks from beneath buildings. According to Don Peer, a Canadian beekeeper, no bears have gone through his bear fences since he began putting moth balls beneath them. The method may be worth trying on skunks.

In case you have an accident with a skunk and you or your dog need to be decontaminated, there is a material that can do the job. The compound is called neutroleum-alpha. A tablespoon in a water bath works for dogs and humans and can also be used for cleaning floors, walls, and furniture contaminated by skunk spray. At higher concentrations, neutroleum-alpha can be sprayed on the soil to deodorize the area. I tried without success to find a source for small quantities of this material. You can purchase a 25-pound can for \$6 a pound from a firm in Chicago.

## OREGON A.B.F.

### MEMBERSHIP UP

This past year, Oregon had an all time high in members. We had 47 with a dollar amount of \$1,090.00. That was a gain of \$350.00 over 1978. We had 35 members in 1978. We were 2nd in total dollars increase only, and 4th in new member increase. We hope you will all join and help to make the bee industry a stronger organization.

### CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Standard frames 10¢ each; four frame extractor \$75; miscellaneous bee equipment. Call Tom Saunders: 231-1978 in Portland or 386-4815 in Hood River.

FOR SALE: 40 Strong two story hives -- some with supers -- \$70 each. Call 646-2955.

Italian Queens after May 2nd. \$5.50. David Kerr, 535 W. 10th., McMinnville, OR 97128. 472-5497.

# OSBA PAID MEMBERS

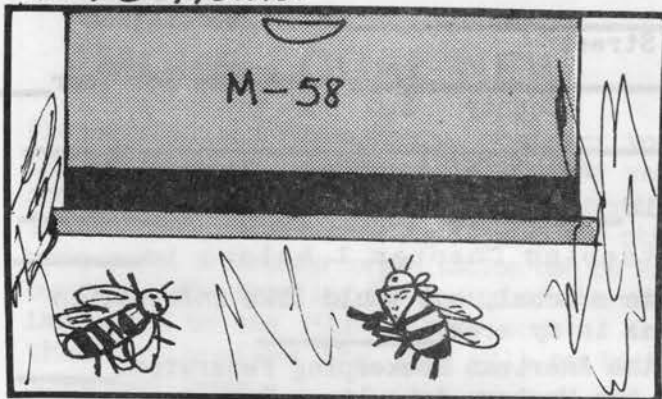
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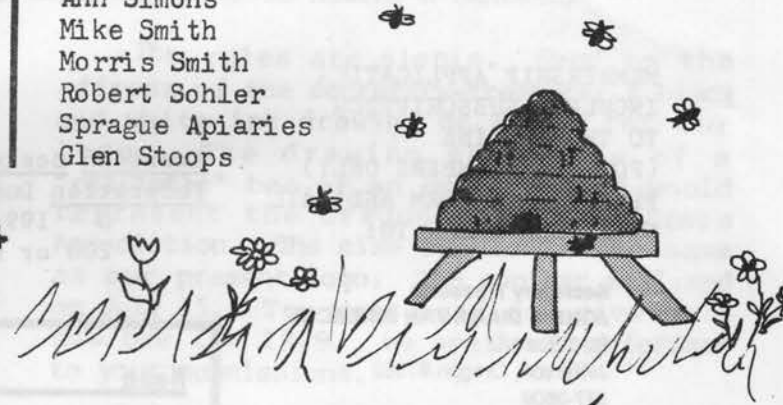
## Live Humor



"No, Shirley, I don't think that's how it's done!"

## Membership

The above names are paid 1979 members of the OSBA. If your name is not on the list and you have paid, please notify us of the date and amount so we can give you credit. If your name is NOT on this list, your dues are delinquent. In order that your membership be current, a membership form and dues chart is included in this newsletter. Please send it to us soon, so that your association may be strengthened by your support.





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## MEMBERSHIP

Whether you keep one hive for pleasure or are a commercial beekeeper, the best way of keeping up with technological advances and of enjoying the fellowship of other beekeepers is to join the Oregon State Beekeepers Association. At state conventions, seminars, and social occasions members exchange ideas and share experience. You can learn the latest in both research and practical application within the OSBA. The more you participate as a member, the more knowledge you will gain. And that single new idea can both earn you money and enhance your enjoyment in keeping bees. Your membership will also strengthen the Association's ability to work for you. An application blank is attached for your convenience.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES:

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION  
 INCULDES SUBSCRIPTION  
 TO THE BEELINE  
 (FOR OSBA MEMBERS ONLY)  
 PLEASE CLIP FORM AND MAIL  
 WITH YOUR CHECK TO:

**Secretary Treasurer**  
**JOHN & DIANA VAN DRIESCHE**  
 Rt. 1 Box 162  
 Jefferson, Oregon 97352  
 327-3609

American Beekeeping Federation Dues:  
 0 - 199 \$10  
 200 or more 5cents per colony

Western Apicultural Society:  
Individual Member:  
 Regular \$10  
 Junior \$3  
 Senior \$5  
 Couple: \$15

Oregon State Regular Membership

Dues: 0 -5 colonies, \$5  
 6 -24, \$10  
 25 -99, \$15  
 100 -299, \$20  
 300-499, \$25  
 500or more \$30

Affiliate membership:

Commercial \$25  
 Individual \$5  
 Youth \$3

<u>Name</u> _____				Oregon State Beekeepers Association
<u>Address</u> _____				
Street _____				
<u>City</u> _____	<u>State</u> _____	<u>County</u> _____	<u>Zip</u> _____	Dues For Year _____
<u>Telephone</u> _____	<u>Number of colonies</u> _____	<u>Occupation</u> _____		
<u>Amount I Have Paid</u> _____		<u>Date I Paid On</u> _____		
The Local Beekeeping Chapter I belong to _____				
I do not Belong to a Local, but would like information on the nearest one in my area: _____				
I am a member of the American Beekeeping Federation _____				
I am a member of the Western Apiculture Society _____				
<u>Card sent</u> _____		<u>Information Sent</u> _____		<u>Sec Initials</u> _____

## Mailing List

### Changes Given

It is time to revise The Beeline mailing list so we can be sure we are mailing to those persons who want to receive it. If you are a paid member, or a local or state bee association officer, you will continue to receive The Beeline. If you are not a member or an officer, and if you wish to receive any future issues of our newsletter, YOU MUST FILL IN THE FOLLOWING FORM and mail it to us by July 20. We want to make sure we are mailing only to those who are interested in receiving it. We request your cooperation and support.

Yes, I wish to receive The Beeline,

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: John & Diana Van Driesche  
OSBA Rt 1 Box 162  
Jefferson, OR 97352



**THE BEE LINE WANTS**

### MORE LOCAL NEWS

Please send announcements of whatever your local chapter is doing. What are your problems, accomplishments, goals? By sending in information and sharing it with the other beekeepers, a stronger organization can be knit together. The deadline for an end of the month issue will be the 15th of that month. Copy that is received the 15th will go in the subsequent issue.

## W. A. S. Meeting Set For August

The Western Apiculture Society (W.A.S.) will hold its second annual meeting from August 20-24 at OSU in Corvallis. Dr. Eva Crane, the Director of the International Bee Research Association, will be one of many speakers. Lucien Alexander, Glenn Fisher, John Corner, and W. P. Stephen will be some of the other speakers on topics ranging from nectar plants to the alfalfa leafcutting bee. As Mike Burgett says, this is going to be "a beekeeping holiday" so put it on your calendar. For further information and registration forms write: Michael Burgett, Department of Entomology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, 97331.

## BEE - LINE

### LOGO CONTEST

The Bee Line is having a contest:

The rules are simple. Send to the address of the secretary-treasurer a black and white ink drawing of a bee for our logo. The drawing should be of a "realistic" bee or an emblem which would represent the Oregon State Beekeepers Association. The size should be the same as our present logo. The contest will end on July 15. Try your hand and give us a new bee for 1979. We are looking forward to your submissions.

## MAGAZINES

Members of Oregon State Beekeepers Association can subscribe to the American Bee Journal and Gleanings in Bee Culture for reduced rates. Gleanings has only a one year subscription rate of \$6.00 per year. The American Bee Journal has two rates; one year \$6.00 and two years \$11.63. These are members only rates and your checks should be sent to OSBA, Rt. 1, Box 162, Jefferson, OR 97352.



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**CLASSIFIEDS:**

Do you have beekeeping equipment or supplies that you wish to sell, swap, or give away? If you do, send an ad to The Bee Line, Rt. 1, Box

162, Jefferson, OR 97352. The price is \$1 for members; \$1.50 for nonmembers. Please be concise.

**OREGON STATE BEEKEEPERS ASSN.**

Secretary Treasurer  
**JOHN & DIANA VAN DRIESCHE**  
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