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Vol. 4 No. 3  
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# The Bee Line

## Oregon State Beekeepers Association

AFFILIATED WITH AMERICAN BEEKEEPING FEDERATION



## SPRING MEETING NOTES

Over 60 persons attended the OSBA Spring meeting in Eugene on March 15. The schedule was unhurried and there was plenty of time to visit.

Orvel Bassett of Eugene spoke first about the advantages of a one story brood chamber and brought several pieces of equipment that helped to illustrate the points of his lecture, especially for the beginning beekeepers.

The possibilities of the Orchard Mason bee becoming a new pollinator for tree fruits was discussed by Ron Bekey, an OSU graduate student. He had a set of interesting slides of the life cycle of the solitary bee.

Dr. Michael Burgett gave a demonstration of the art of hand dipping beeswax candles, complete with one lit on the table in front of him, while he spoke of the smokeless and dripless candles beeswax produces. It will remain the secret of those who attended how the candle really did burn. (Mike blamed it on the wick.) His lecture is going to be typed and will appear in the next newsletter.

Ancel Goolsbey talked in the afternoon about the economics of beekeeping and mentioned the free publicity that beekeepers are getting in many magazines and newspapers which talk about the use of honey instead of sugar, and about the use of pollen in the diet. He talked about the advantages of selling bees for packages and how to follow the nectar flows around the state for a honey crop.

Following Ancel was a business meeting and committee reports. We adjourned in the late afternoon, by which time the snow that had fallen in the morning was melted and a nice Spring day followed.



OSBA President Gene Garner and his wife Sally at a recent board meeting.

## Thanks From

## The President

I would like to thank all of you who attended the Spring meeting in Eugene. The speakers did an excellent job and we appreciate their effort in preparing their topics, also Ancel Goolsbey for traveling from Washington to address the meeting.

A special thanks goes to Cyril Crabtree and the Lane County Beekeeping Association for all their help in setting up the meeting.

We would like to give a note of support to Jack Piper of the Coos County local for recruiting so many local memberships for the state association. His work is appreciated.

# South Coast Ramblings

by Dick Lemery

Spring has brought out waves of golden pussy willows seemingly everywhere you look. Walk over under the blooming osier (willow), and you can see numerous honeybees collecting the bright yellow pollen. Over at the hive entrance, bees practically fall over one another in their haste to enter the hive and have their burdens lightened by the hive bees. One of the joys of beekeeping is the pleasure of watching the industrious bees at work. Certainly their intense industry and cheerful morale are an equal uplift to a winter-weary human spirit. The bee perpetually tries to carry on and insure the survival of its own kind even though enduring similar tribulations as mankind. Fire, flood, sickness, earthquakes, and thievery are common scourges battled in kind by both man and the bee kingdom. Tirelessly, the bee keeps up his eternal struggle against all odds. Armed with speed of flight, powerful stings, scent communication, social organization, varied food supply, and even absconding the hive; the bee has many weapons in his arsenal. Further, he does not fear to use them when the need arises. So must it be for mankind.

When assembling that last bit to wood-ware for the approaching season; get some long, skinny, box nails. I like to use a nail about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches long for the frames and one about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inch long for the supers. Don't be afraid to use some resin glue at the joints. Stretch some good, tinned bee wire tightly into the frames. If you have trouble with wire cutting into the end bars and becoming loose, you can use brass eyelets. A faster way is to staple right next to the small hole in the end bar with an ordinary hand staple gun.

When embedding the wire into the wax foundation, use a car battery or some sort of resistor for household current. My car battery charger works fine, but most bee supply houses have the resistors listed. Paint the outsides of the hives with a couple of coats of paint, and don't forget to brand your number into each piece of equipment. Applications for brands can be requested from the Dept. of Agriculture in Salem. Paint the bottom boards with wood preservative if you like. I paint the underside of bottom boards with old

crankcase oil mixed with a small amount of pentachlorophenol. Best to let this cure for a couple of months before using it because of the strong smell. If you do a good job of assembly, you have something you can take pride in and that the bees will enjoy using.

## FIELD TRIP MAY 24th

A pollination field day to be held on two experimental research farms at Oregon State University is being sponsored by the OSBA. The intent of this program is to familiarize Oregon beekeepers with new crop development programs that are currently ongoing at OSU.

The day will start at the Hyslop Experimental Farm, located off Rt. 99W, six miles north of Corvallis (4 miles south of Albany). Here we will look at Meadowfoam, an experimental seed oil crop, varieties of rape being developed for western Oregon, crimson clover breeding trials, and poppies.

The afternoon program will be held on the Lewis-Brown Farm located one mile south on the Peoria Road which intersects with Rt. 34 one half mile east of Corvallis. The Lewis-Brown Farm is part of the Horticulture Department and is the site of the brand new USDA tree fruits genetic stock center. We will review new planting arrangements for apples and pears in hedgerow and high density plantings, along with small fruits research in strawberries, blueberries and raspberries.

The program will begin at 10 in the morning on the Hyslop Farm. A 'bring-your-own lunch will take place at the Lewis Brown Farm and the tour of those facilities will begin at 1:30 in the afternoon. There is no charge or registration fee for this program and I would encourage all beekeepers interested to attend.

A repeat of this article and a map will follow in the next newsletter.

## Membership List

Next month we will be running a list of the 1980 paid membership. We do this to make sure our bookkeeping is in order and that all who have paid get credit.

If you have not joined as yet please fill out the membership form that is in this newsletter, or join through your local chapter.

# BEE HUNTING

by Wayne Marshall

(Editor's note: This paper was done by one of Dr. Burgett's students at OSU.)

The honey enthusiast may obtain his honey in many ways. He can go to the local grocery store and simply buy it from the shelf. He can become a beekeeper and extract it from his own hives. Or he can pursue honeybees to their nests in the wild and then rob them. Where the first option is the choice of most honey consumers, and the second is the path taken by fewer honey hobbyists and commercial beekeepers, the third technique is used only by a rare minority of honey seekers, and is the domain of the true honey sportsman. In this paper we will be exploring some of the various and colorful methods used to hunt and exploit the honey resources of wild bees.

In his pamphlet of 1908, Bee Hunting, John Lockard describes the two means most often employed by the bee hunters of his youth. The first of these required a buckwheat field in bloom on a clear, sunny day, and the hunter's ability to distinguish a bee with a load of nectar from an unloaded one. The hunter would then simply sight the course of loaded bees against the sun, and sight them to their hive. While it is not mentioned how the hunter tells the loaded bees from unloaded ones, a caution is made about the hazards of looking into the sun. The author warns, "This method must undoubtedly be injurious to the eyes and I do not follow this plan or advise others to do so."

The second procedure followed during his early years was a little more complicated. One first built a fire in the vicinity of some possible bee trees. On the fire were placed large, flat stones, left to bake until quite hot. One of these hot stones would then be taken to a nearby clearing, carried by means of twisted sticks, and set on the ground in the open. A piece of honeycomb moistened with water was set upon this hot stone, and the fumes from the melting beeswax would rise into the air, serving to attract foraging honeybees. Once attracted by the heated comb, the bees were established on their course by sprinkling bait and sugar water on the nearby bushes. By attracting a large number of bees in this manner, their course could be then followed to the hive.

This method, too, proved to have some drawbacks. If the hive was at a distance, two or more fires might be required to keep the course established. "This would require much time and often the hunter, not being careful in extinguishing the fire, the surrounding leaves would catch fire and a destructive forest fire would result." Lockard also relates another problem:

Carrying the hot stones from place to place was the work generally assigned to me. Sometimes stones of a slaty nature would be heated and when becoming quite hot would burst with a loud report and fly about in all directions. At that time I would just about as soon approach a loaded cannon.

Then one day he met an old bee hunter in the woods who taught him some new techniques. Together they sought after a "yaller" honeybee, a hive of Italians which had thus far eluded the efforts of previous outings. When they reached an area where the bees had been known to forage, the old man took a handkerchief and moistened it with a bait made of a few drops of anise-seed oil and water. The handkerchief was then placed on the end of an eight to ten foot pole and waved in the air. Soon hundreds of bees were circling the area. The pole was lowered to the ground where the bushes had been doused with a solution of one part sugar to three parts water. The bees began foraging in numbers on the syrup-treated leaves, and the hunters soon tracked the Italians to their hive, which turned out to be under a large rock. The old hunter was careful to stake his claim. To the rock he attached a note which read: "This bee was found by Ike Ward and pard; if any person find it please don't mislead it."

Lockard goes on to give some further variations, all of which involve the baiting of large numbers of bees and then following them to their hive. He suggests several types of bait, using oils of anise, bergamont, horsemint, and goldenrod, and he found the oil of sweet clover to be especially successful. He even found a commercial toilet preparation "essence of sweet clover," to be effective. But for best results a bait made out of the

Bee Hunting continued from page 3

flowers the bees are foraging is advised. This may be obtained by packing a quart jar half full of the flowers, and just covering them with a diluted solution of alcohol. After a few days the alcohol may be drained and bottled, ready for use in the field.

Hives found by Lockard in this manner are marked and allowed to overwinter before they are taken the following spring, usually in May. This permits the colony to regain its strength in size and brood before it is rehived in a domestic apiary. Lockard was something of a conservationist and believed, "If we hunt bees merely for what honey may be in the tree and leave the bees to perish from starvation and cold, it would be far better from a moral and financial point of view, to let the tree stand."

Another conservationist and occasional bee hunter was Euell Gibbons, who describes a much different style of bee hunting in his book Stalking the Wild Asparagus, (1962.) Gibbons was inspired to bee hunting at an early age by forays with his grandfather, though he admits that most of these hives were found by accident. He also describes the fickle luck of honey hunting; two of his largest finds were in old buildings, while two days in cutting down a eucalyptus tree in Hawaii yielded only a pound.

His technique involves the use of some old honeycomb; a square piece of masonite painted red; an aluminum cake pan cover; some blue carpenter's chalk; a small bottle of anise oil; and some syrup made of one part sugar to two parts water.

The hunter first finds an area where bees are foraging, hopefully near a trout pond or well-stocked stream. He then baits his old honeycomb by rubbing it with the anise oil and filling it with the sugar syrup. This is placed on the red masonite which, in turn, is set upon a flat stump or stone. The bee hunter can now go and fish for a while.

When returning in about half an hour, the hunter should find a number of bees foraging syrup from the baited comb. Gibbons would then carefully watch for the sun on the wings of the departing bees, noting the direction of the bee line. Then he would determine the distance. By mixing a pinch of the carpenter's chalk with a drop of water on the tip of a paint brush, he would dab the tail end of a bee with its head in the comb, thus marking it with a blue posterior. Gibbons remarks about the bee's reaction, "He (sic) didn't like it much, but, after doing an angry dance across the honeycomb, he took on a load of syrup and flew away." Six minutes later the blue-bottomed bee returned and the hive was estimated at less than one mile.

Gibbons would then trap the bees on the comb under the aluminum cake pan lid, and move down the bee line to a new location. Here the trapped bees are released, and the hunter waits for them to return and become accustomed to foraging from the new site. After he determines he is still on the course, the hunter repeats the process of trapping the bees and moving them along the beeline. Finally he will reach a spot where the bees are returning to the hive in the opposite direction, indicating that the hive has been passed. The hunter then backtracks the beeline, carefully observing the trees along its path, until hopefully the hive is found.

This is rather a hit-and-miss method of bee hunting, and Gibbons admits it is not consistently effective. The biggest problem is that often the bees do not return to the baited comb after it has been moved. Curiously Gibbons feels that this problem is partially remedied by the red masonite:

I have a theory that the bright red color of the masonite base, which I have continued to use, helps the bees to relocate the bait after the move, although my uneven successes and failures prove nothing of the sort.

It is an interesting theory since the honeybee does not actually perceive the color red. Perhaps the hunter would be more successful if the board were painted blue, (According to experiments by Morse (1975), blue is the honeybee's favorite color.) At any rate, Gibbons gives us the best advice when he warns, "The quality most valuable to the bee hunter is infinite patience."

One of the most eloquent descriptions of honeybee hunting comes from James Fennimore Cooper's novel of 1843, Oak Openings. The story takes place during the summer of 1812 in the pristine forest of Michigan. Here the main character, known alternately as Benjamin Boden, Ben Buzz, Buzzing Ben, or Le Bourdon (the drone), barter wild honey from his canoe to settlers along the banks of the Detroit River. He was dealing, even then, in a popular commodity:

Bee Hunting continued from page 4

Honey was eaten with all; and wild honey had a reputation, rightfully or not obtained, that even rendered it more welcome than that which was formed by the labor and art of the domesticated bee.

Le Bourdon set out bee hunting with a minimum of equipment. He had a small tin of honey; a piece of honeycomb about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter; a wooden platter; and a "common tumbler of a very inferior, greenish glass," as clear glass was not manufactured in the America of 1812. He would begin by finding a fire-burned clearing in the woods in bloom with white clover. Of course the spot would be visited by foraging bees where, "These little creatures were hard at work, loading themselves with sweets, little foreseeing the robbery contemplated by the craft of man."

After filling each of the cells half full of honey from the tin cup, Le Bourdon would place the comb on the wooden platter and set it on a tree stump. Then he would go into the clover and capture a bee in his glass tumbler, bring it back and set it over the honey-filled comb upside down.

At this point Le Bourdon would take off his hat and put it over the tumbler, cutting off the light to the trapped bee.

...it was seen that the bee, the moment darkness like that of its hive came over it, had lighted on the comb, and commenced filling itself with the honey.

Once the bee began gorging itself on the honey, Le Bourdon would remove the tumbler and catch another bee, repeating the process so that he would have two bees filling up with honey. As each bee filled herself and then took off, the hunter would note the direction of her flight. When he had two bees whose directions coincided, Le Bourdon would be on the trail.

Le Bourdon's next move would not be along the bee line itself, but in a direction away from it. His strategy and special prowess was triangulation in that, "Many a man who can 'line' a bee can do nothing at an 'angle.'" Cooper explains:

The reader will understand that creatures which obey an instinct, or such a reason as bees possess, would never make a curvature in their flights without some strong motive for it.

Thus an intersection of two beelines will indicate the hive's location. Le Bourdon would duplicate his procedure at the new site, estimate the point of intersection, and survey the area with a spy glass. Being knowledgeable of his backwoods environment and "...well skilled in all the signs that betoken the abodes of bees," the bee hunter would look for certain tree species, outward signs of hollowness, and trees not apt to fall over. Then upon closer inspection, it would generally be a short matter of time before his quarry was found, and subsequently forced to submit its treasure.

Surely there are as many methods of bee hunting as there are bee hunters. Some of them require remarkable acumen and superior perception, some of them require trial and error, all of them require a certain amount of persistence, patience and luck. Though most of us will continue to buy our honey from the store or raise bees in our yards, a few of us will continue the tradition of our forebears, and follow the call of the wild honey for pleasure and for sport.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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- Gibbons, Euell. 1962. Stalking the Wild Asparagus. David McKay Co. Inc. NY. pp.235-241
- Lockard, John R. 1908 Bee Hunting. A.R. Harding Pub. Co. Columbus, Ohio
- Morse, Roger A. 1975. Bees and Beekeeping. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY pp. 89-91

## Bee Photos Wanted

In a future issue of the newsletter we would like to have a page of beekeeping photos from our membership. It will be a collage affair, so if you have some black and white prints of beekeeping, even just part of a photo a couple of inches square, send it along and we will assemble some type of collective picture. Since the photos might get cut up, please send some that are extras. I know that we have some photographers out there, and certainly some black and white photos.

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If you change your address, PLEASE notify the newsletter. Each Beeline that is returned costs the OSBA money that could be put to a better use. Each returned newsletter also delays your receiving it on time.

## CLASSIFIEDS:

FOR SALE: 3-Frame nucs available April 10 on--\$28 frame exchange, \$32 no exchange. Nucs started in California--the BEST you can buy in Oregon! Start ahead this Spring--order now--supply limited. Dark Carnolian Queens. Michael Meyer, 203 N. 6th. Jefferson, OR 97352, 327-3501

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FOR SALE: Excellent quality used bee hardware, all standard 10 fram equipment. Tom Adams, 903 Cascade, Hood River, OR 97301, phone 386-5302

FOR SALE: New beehive and super, call 876-5172 evenings

FOR SALE: 60 shallow supers with drawn foundation. \$8.00 for 1-10, \$7.00 for 10 and up. Ken O'Bryan, 4140 NE Willamette St. Corvallis, OR phone 745-7298

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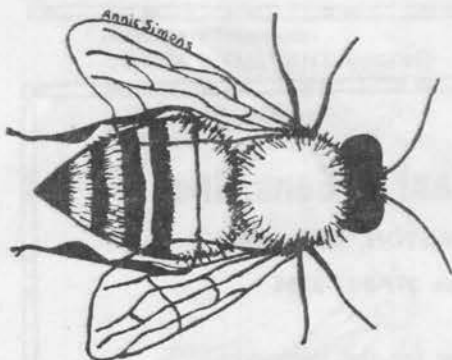
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162, Jefferson, OR 97352. The price is \$1 for members; \$1.50 for nonmembers. Please be concise.

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