



The Bee Line

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March 2022

Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association



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Image above: Almonds in bloom in sunny Orland signal the 2022 bee season has begun! Jan Lohman writes that it “seems like plenty of bees available for almonds this year in the northern California area. Unsure about south.”

May all be well with the bees and beekeepers everywhere throughout this welcome season.

Your Bees Don't Have To Die (continued): How Can We Become Treatment Free Without Killing Our Colonies?

Meghan Milbrath, Michigan State University Extension

Note: *Continued from the November–December 2021 issue of The Bee Line.* After learning how complicated the selection process can be with the bees, we find Meghan feeling bad for letting her bees die and putting other bees at risk. Further, she's broke and still doesn't have the bees that she is after. Yet, she still wants good bees—without putting chemicals in her colonies all the time. At this point, she asks:

What is a beekeeper to do?

I re-evaluated my goals as a beekeeper. I still didn't want to be on a cycle of treating all the time, and I still wanted to be working towards better bees. However, I also needed a way that my bees stayed healthy. I thought about why we navigate towards having unmanaged colonies in the first place—because it allows us to find out which bees can handle Varroa (and other diseases) without treatment. What if we had a way of finding those bees without letting the rest of them die?

Well, we do have that way. I've been using it the last few years, and I've been able to find colonies that don't need treatment, keep my losses down, and work towards having better bees (all while taking good care of my girls). Here is my new system for identifying treatment-free colonies while keeping healthy bees. You will need the following:

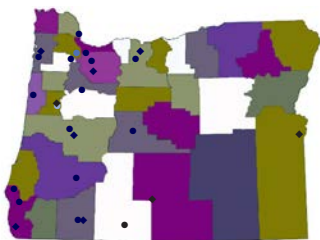
- ❖ Some honey bee colonies
- ❖ A good system for taking notes
- ❖ A method for monitoring for mites
- ❖ A source for good queens

Briefly, you will identify those colonies that aren't doing a good job of managing Varroa mites and other diseases, you will first get them back to health, and then you will requeen from a better colony. The big thing to remember is that the properties of the colony are a product of the genetics, and the genetics of the colony are dependent on the queen. If you don't like a colony, you don't have to kill a bunch of innocent workers; you need to switch the genetics—i.e., just replace the queen. There is never a need to let a colony crash and die.

1. Start with some honey bees.
2. Start monitoring for Varroa using a sugar roll or alcohol wash. For instructions on how to use a sugar roll for monitoring, visit: pollinators.msu.edu/resources/beekeepers/Varroa-mite-monitoring (*American Bee Journal*, October 2016). Monitor each colony at least once a month—it doesn't take long after you get the hang of it. You will soon find what colonies are keeping the Varroa population stable, and what colonies can't control Varroa on their own.
3. Take good notes. Make sure you record swarms, supercedes, and any activities that

Continued on page 15

OREGON STATE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



OSBA OFFICERS

President

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Harry Vanderpool—503.399.3675; shallotman@yahoo.com

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Jeremy Mitchell—503.580.1464; info@flyingbeeranch.net

South Willamette Valley

Tim Wydronek—541.740.4127; timwydronek@comcast.net

• AFFILIATED REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Central Oregon Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, third Tuesday, The Environmental Center
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 PM, third Wednesday, Hood River
President: Jerry Frazier—jerry1.frazier@gmail.com
Website: gorgebeekeepers.org

Douglas County Bees

Meets 6:00 PM, first Wednesday, Roseburg
President: Robert Baune—541.863.9414
Website: www.douglascountybees.org

Klamath Basin Beekeepers

Meets 9:00 AM, fourth Saturday, Klamath Falls
President: Lorena Corzatt—541.892.8402
Website: www.klamathbeekeepers.org

Lane County Beekeepers

Meets 7:30 PM, third Tuesday, Eugene
President: Brian McGinley—56magoo@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 Central Coast Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, fourth Wednesday, Newport
President: Pat Wackford—pwacky@charter.net
Website: www.ccbaor.org

Oregon Prison Beekeepers

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

Portland Metro Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, second Thursday, Gladstone
Pres: Paul Stromberg—president@portlandmetrobeekeepers.org
Website: portlandmetrobeekeepers.org

Portland Urban Beekeepers

Meets 7:00 PM, first Wednesday, via Zoom
President: Ian Horvath—ianhorvath@gmail.com
Website: portlandurbanbeekeepers.org

Southern Oregon Beekeepers

Meets 6:30 PM, first Monday, Central Point
President: Noah Clipp—541.254.4052; noahtitus@gmail.com
Website: southernoregonbeekeepers.org

Tillamook Beekeepers

Meets 1:00 PM, second Saturday, Tillamook
President: Brad York—dbradleyork@gmail.com
Website: www.tillamookbeekeepers.org

Tualatin Valley Beekeepers

Meets 6:00 PM, last Tuesday, virtually
President: Debby Garman—tualatinvalleybeekeepers@gmail.com
Website: tvbabees.org

Willamette Valley Beekeepers

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

Message from the President

Greetings, fellow beekeepers.

This will be a brief message. At the time of this writing, the almond bloom is really starting to pop and the weather is taking a turn towards the very warm and dry side. In fact, it hasn't rained hardly a drop in over a month and the orchards we normally worry about getting stuck in are extremely dusty. We have about 24 hours to place our remaining 500 colonies before the growers start getting antsy, so please pardon my brevity.

Speaking of growers, we have gotten lots of face time with our biggest growers this year, and they are uniformly stressed about the water situation and the blunt economics of their enterprises. I have probably written enough about this in previous messages, but it takes on a new sense of urgency when you see the look in growers' eyes. Tariffs and pandemic supply chain issues have resulted in a 20 percent crop carryover from last year. This, coupled with serious overplanting, nut prices are hovering around \$1.60 per pound as of February 10. This is way down from the \$4.50 to \$4.75 high point of the 2014/2015 crop. Hearing about low prices on anything right now seems ironic in the face of inflated prices of everything else, including the \$5.00 per gallon we are currently paying to bring the bees in. Growers' and beekeepers' margins, if they even exist, are getting tighter and tighter. Nearly all the orchards have their bees placed, and there are still thousands of colonies for rent. Sending bees to California without a contract in advance is a fool's errand, especially with the current water and market dynamics. Suffice to say, some rather substantial changes are coming. Those who have chosen to ignore the warning signs are facing some serious economic pain.

Well, that is enough "doom and gloom" for now. I'd like to talk about something positive before I need to get elbow deep in bees for the next 24 hours. That would be our Centennial Fundraiser. We have an amazing opportunity here from GloryBee's Save the Bee Foundation to match the first \$100,000 that we raise.

Opportunities like this do not come along very often. At our last executive committee meeting, Becca pointed out that there have not been a lot of shares of our GoFundMe link yet. I know not all of us are social media aficionados; however, it can be a great tool to spread awareness. The link: www.gofundme.com/f/100year-anniversary-help-us-save-the-bees-event?qid=469cc1013dedf10c5232667ec12cb8f4.

This fundraiser is to support the OSU Honey Bee Lab. As beekeepers, we can easily see why it is important to support research the way we do. One of the keys to success in this campaign will be to get nonbeekeepers to participate with us in this effort. Like I always say, anybody who likes food, eats food, cooks food, or makes a living growing food has a vested interest in pollinator health and research. It is incumbent upon us to share the message and give these folks a way to help out. This is a link you can feel proud to share. Our cause is great and our GoFundMe homepage video that Ramesh and crew put together is top shelf and very approachable by the layperson. I understand that times are tight and it can be uncomfortable asking for donation; however, if you don't ask, the answer is always no. Bees play a crucial role in our food supply and that is a cause that benefits everybody. There are environmental challenges, economic risks, and diseases at play that can have a severe negative impacts on the bees that we love so much. Our ability to meet these challenges will be much greater when we pool our resources together, much like individual bees work together in the colony for the greater good of the whole. Many hands make light work as they say. So please share this link in person, on Facebook, TicToc, Instagram, email lists, or any other way that you like to interact with your fellow humans. Let's all be a part of the solution and help others to be a part, too.

With that, I must get moving bees into the trees. Blossoms are opening by the minute, and the bees are very excited for an abundance of fresh nectar and pollen. Until next time,

John Jacob

OSBA Executive Committee Meeting

January 15, 2022, at 4 PM ❖ via Zoom

Present: John Jacob, Joe Maresh, Becca Fain, Joe Hansen, Harry Vanderpool, Barbara Derkacht, Brad York, Christy VanRooyen, Debby Garman, Jeremy Mitchell, Linda Zahl, Lorena Corzatt, Marjie Ehry, Mike Rodia, Paul Stromberg, Rosanna Mattingly

Meeting was called to order at 4:07 PM by President John Jacob.

Reports

Secretary: It was moved by Lorena Corzatt and seconded by Joe Maresh that the minutes of the last meeting as printed in *The Bee Line* be accepted and approved. Motion passed.

Treasurer: Joe Hansen reported, as he and Becca Fain have not yet had an opportunity to pass the books over. It was moved and seconded (by Linda Zahl) to accept the report on conference finances. In short, OSBA is in good shape after the conference even though some expenses have not yet been turned in or paid. There were approximately 200 attendees, including speakers. All agreed the Florence Events Center is a good place for this event.

Conference – Joe Maresh

Joe reported that there are outstanding payments which need to be made. In addition, he suggested that OSBA donate \$750

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to support Samuel Ramsey’s research. Becca Fain moved and Debby Garman seconded that OSBA make these payments. Motion passed.

The next conference will again be at the Florence Events Center, and we are confirmed there for the last weekend in October 2022. Joe already has several speaker commitments: Russell Heitkam and another person, who will talk on habitat and environment. Joe asked for presenter suggestions, especially hands-on type speakers, which has been a request from attendees. Suggestions: Samuel Ramsey, Andony Melathopoulos on pollinator habitat, Ian Stepler, Sue Cobey. This will again be a hybrid conference. (Bad news: Joe Maresh is retiring his position, effective at the end of the year.)

There was a discussion about what to charge attendees at the next conference. One suggestion was to charge less for online attendees. This has positive and negative possible effects. Discussion was tabled until the next meeting. A planning group (Becca Fain, Joe Hansen, John Jacob, and Brad York) was formed to contact other states to see what they do about this issue and what effect it has had on profits and attendee numbers. Report to be presented to the full group at the next meeting.

OSU Foundation – Jan Lohman

Northwest Apiculture Fund for Honey Bee Research, Extension, and Education

Current use \$ 5,247.34 as of 12.31.2021
 Endowment \$112,502.85 market value as of 11.30.2021

OSU Apiculture Endowment

Current Use \$33,575.17 as of 12.31.2021
 Endowment \$83,950.31 market value as of 11.30.2021

Herman A Scullen Memorial Fellowship Fund

Current use \$ 7,042.18 as of 12.31.2021
 Endowment \$82,057.23 market value as of 11.30.2021

Regional Representatives and Presidents

Brad York – Tillamook – Reported that low temperatures seem to have killed lots of bees. Membership in his association is down by about 25 percent, which could be linked to the fact that this hobby is hard and, with losses, disappointing.

Jeremy Mitchell – North Willamette Valley – Introduced himself.

Linda Zahl – Columbia County – Reported that the city is looking at rules and regulations for beekeepers. Losses in her area seem to be less this year. Steve Gomes helped their group a lot with an outdoor summer camp/school. They have Carolyn Breece coming in March for an outdoor presentation during which the group will be joined by beekeepers from Cowlitz County in Washington.

Debby Garman – Tualatin Valley – Has lined up some potential speakers: Ian Stepler and Samuel Ramsey. Monthly meeting

planning for their group has good energy. However, Paul Andersen has moved and left a big hole as he was in charge of ordering nucs for the association. She suggested that since Paul Andersen has been in OSBA, perhaps some form of recognition from OSBA would be nice. Debby also asked for bee school ideas. John Rockrohr was one suggestion. And they need to start looking for new board members.

Christy VanRooyen – South Central Oregon/Klamath Basin – Reported that bees are flying at unusual times. There have been leadership changes, but there’s a good team in place and good planning going on. They’re working on a new website.

Paul Stromberg – Portland Metro – Although there has been some turnover in leadership and membership, the association is strong and can offer hybrid meetings from its new location. There is much excitement about being able to offer Bee Day this year after several years off due to Covid. The association switched to Wild Apricot for data management and website building. They’re very pleased with this application.

John Jacob – Southern Oregon – Reported that there is a new bee predator that’s eating bees right through the feeder holes on hives: Ravens! However, things are looking pretty good with the bees.

Agriculture Liaison – Harry Vanderpool

There are changes in the Oregon Department of Agriculture which have led to programs more related to bees; pesticide events and honey house inspections continue. Much of the department turnover seems to be horizontal movement, so people who’ve been in the department are still an asset to us. Isaac Stapleton is now the director of Natural Resources Program Area.

Oregon Bee Project – please see their website. There are habitat enhancement resources available, but it’s hard to know to whom to reach out; landowners and growers need a cheat sheet for help and need to share information with beekeepers, particularly around pesticide applicators and fertilizers. The Project will look at pesticide labels and test residuals as stated on those labels to be sure they’re correct, especially for products commonly used around bee colonies. Presentations to beekeepers regarding this are needed so a uniform message goes out to all involved: Growers, landowners, and beekeepers. The Project may want a slot of the conference. Talk with Andony and contact Joe Maresh with time needed. It was suggested that pesticide sellers might also benefit from some education. This has been discussed, and they will try to get in deeper with vendors.

Residential Beekeeping – Mike Rodia

Mike will get rules and regulation ideas for smaller areas which focus on number of hives, residential zoning, etc. He has hard copies of the residential beekeeping guide that he’s happy to share for free to anyone wishing them.

There are more bee equipment suppliers than we think. Flying

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Bee Ranch, Hive and Garden in Lake Oswego, Shonnard's in Philomath, GloryBee (email or online), Wilco in Salem, Coastal in Oregon City.

Issue of concern: Areas where housing developments are being put on land previously used for farm, pasture, or potential parkland. Linda Zahl offered help with pollinator issues in parks and nuisance-free beekeeping. She has a talk and would be pleased to share it.

Website, Newsletter, Membership – Rosanna

Website – Added new officers, photos, events; updated monthly items and associations, will add additional updates, photos, and events as they come in; please share.

Photos from this or previous conferences and from the state fair are wanted.

Swarm call list is emptied, and she will send out notification when it's open again.

Reminder that members have four free ads a year on the website. GoFundMe – She needs information.

Newsletter – Thank you for sending in those reports! With printer issues, the January–February issue is late. She has named contributors to the conference in the past, but was unable to get information for the silent auction donations this year so no individual acknowledgments were provided. Advertisers have been contacted and invoiced. February 10 is the deadline for the March issue.

Membership – There are about 150 members who haven't renewed. Reminders have been sent online and postcards have been mailed to all who have not renewed. There's considerable turnover every year, made additional suggestion for retention. We can no longer use the nonprofit rate for mailings as membership is down; newsletters must now be sent first class. Problem: Some regional reps and presidents aren't members! Becca and John will contact them.

Association Affiliation – Each association must have at least five OSBA members to be affiliated. Rosanna set up a spreadsheet and sent affiliation forms to presidents in November. Has sent reminders asking that forms be returned early in case of issues. There are issues, mainly with groups identifying five of their members who are also OSBA members. The deadline for getting this information to Rosanna was January 15, with a postmark of that date accepted. Becca Fain moved and Debby Garman seconded a motion to suspend the constitution as it relates specifically to this aspect of membership and association affiliation with OSBA for 2022 to allow/encourage affiliation. There will be a one-time 15-day extension to get information in and issues resolved. Motion passed. Important note: Until papers are in, the group is not legally affiliated with OSBA and is not covered by OSBA insurance. Noted: Some associations pay for five board members' OSBA membership so they don't have

to worry about getting their five identified.

Directory – Will send current OSBA policies and committees/chairs for review/update by officers.

A regional association is staffing a table at an event for World Bee Day in May and invites OSBA materials and would happily have an OSBA person at their table if we'd like. Rosanna will get estimates for printing for okay by the executive committee before preparing any materials.

Fairs and Exhibits – Marjie Ehry (for Bonnie King)

Bonnie is working on Ag Fest. She was pleased with the turnout of people staffing our booth at the Oregon State Fair.

Marjie was displeased with the way bidding was done at the silent auction at the conference. She didn't submit auction items and won't again if this problem isn't rectified. She felt it was a process issue.

Old Business

Online Fundraising – Becca stressed that the success of online fundraising depends on people sharing the fundraising platform on their social media connections. If people don't know about the opportunity, they can't donate. We need to go beyond our membership. Perhaps offering share-able pieces would help.

Tiered Membership – A written proposal will be offered at a later date.

New Business

Picnic – There's potential for this event to be more well attended. It needs a planning committee for time, location, etc. August was suggested as a time. Contact Joe Maresh or John Jacob to offer your help. Bonnie King and Christy VanRooyen offered their help. It was suggested that perhaps a picnic/campout would be fun.

Donation Matching by GloryBee of funds donated at conference – Linn Benton group wondered if it was too late for their donation to be matched. GloryBee has promised to match donations up to \$100,000, even if those donations come in after the conference closes. However, it must be guaranteed that the money goes to the OSU Honey Bee Lab. OSBA also matches up to \$500.

Several \$1 checks have come from an organization that is a mystery to all. Becca will investigate.

Thanks go out to all outgoing and incoming board members!

Important note: If an OSBA member other than the president of an association is to attend the executive committee meeting to represent that association, written notice of this substitution must be made 24 hours ahead of the meeting for the substituting person's vote to be part of an official vote count.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Derkacht

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Keeping Bees in March

Jason Rowan

Welcome back, a new bee season is upon us. March usually marks the start of the beekeeping season. While this winter may have seemed cold to you, 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 is relatively short. Only a few months go by before we re-enter the hives to start checking them for the almond pollination. This allows us an 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.

Every year is different. Last season we saw record temps that haven't been seen in our area for 100 years. The result of this, in my opinion, is that we encountered a prolonged period with low nectar, and very low pollen. Some hives held their size over winter, while others suffered from rapid spring dwindle. This can occur because the warm weather causes the old winter bees to die off faster than the new spring bees can hatch—causing the hive to shrink and oftentimes fail. So be on the lookout. If a cursory glance at the entrance or a quick look under the cover is all you have done until now, 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 what didn't, and these can be tools to use in the season to come. Studying bee culture through books, meetings, or YouTube videos is a great way to prepare. Do your homework. Learning about what you are doing will increase your chances for success. During the month of March, I like to think of the hive as a garden and the work that I do now as 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. 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.

Next, pop open the lid and take a look. Wear all the necessary gear and use your smoker. Do things gently, move smoothly. There is no rush. Jarring the boxes and making the 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.

Due to such a dry year, you may find your hives are light or simply out of feed. Or you may be able to see the honey and determine that there is still plenty. Or perhaps you may need to take a stored frame and pop it in to boost their food supply. Remember to have four frames of capped honey minimum this time of year, and check often if temps are warm. If you have none to borrow from other hives, 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 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. One potential consequence to jump starting the brood production is that you may also jump start the mite cycle as well.

If March marks the first time you look into your hive, you may find it dead. Fear not. You have just joined the rest of us who have found that to be the case at times as well. Beekeeping is a labor of love and cannot be marked by successes and failures. If your hives may have made it through the winter perfectly for the second year, do not assume that you have it all figured out. Being a beekeeper is also an 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 when things go badly. Learn from what has happened and move on with open eyes and an open 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, so get ready and be prepared.

If you are one of the lucky ones and your hives came through great, take a closer look inside. Make sure the hive has a queen. If not, add those frames 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) to give the weak one a boost, but do mark her for re-queening.

Get those queens and supplies ordered and on their way. If you wait too long, you may not get what you need when you need it. Queens and supplies do run out!

Continued on page 10

The last thing I would suggest for starting your garden off right this year is to be diligent about your pests and diseases. Be proactive in treating for mites and brood diseases. Non-temperature-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. So be diligent and attentive in your observations. Bee aware and keep bees with care.

Happy Keeping!

Beekeeping Education . . . ¿en español? ¡Sí!

This year, 2022, the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program will celebrate its 10-year anniversary. Over the past 10 years, we

have provided science-based beekeeping education to over 2,219 beekeepers in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. We have also developed a strong volunteer base of 212 volunteer instructors, mentors, and event educators. What better way to celebrate this milestone anniversary than to offer the program to Spanish speakers?

Currently, there is no Master Beekeeper Program in the US in Spanish. The OSBA is proud to announce that we have received a Specialty Crop Block Grant through the Oregon Department of Agriculture to fund the development of the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program in Spanish.

The grant will fund the translation of documents, Spanish-speaking instructors, class materials, and field-day expenses.

Beginning this spring, we will invite Spanish speakers to the OSU educational apiary for classes and hive demonstrations. Participants will keep track of their class hours, in-hive hours; they will keep a record book of hive activities and observations; and they will need to pass an exam at the end of the year.

The grant will also fund training for Spanish-speaking commercial beekeepers. Our initial workshop in February 2020 on the identification, prevention, and treatment of honey bee diseases (in Spanish) was a great success. The 2020 workshop was well received, and participants requested additional workshops in Spanish.

The OSBA is committed to the inclusion of all existing and potential beekeepers and look forward to creating programs for diverse audiences. Do you know anyone who may be interested participating in educational events in Spanish? Please contact Carolyn Breece at: carolyn.breece@oregonstate.edu.

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BEEKEEPER EVENTS

— 2022 —

August 1–5: EAS 2022 Beeing Social, Agincourt, Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York. *Information:* easternapiculture.org/conference.

August 26–September 5: Oregon State Fair, Salem. *Information:* oregonstatefair.org.

June 20–26: National Pollinator Week. *Information:* www.pollinator.org/pollinator-week.

June 28–July 1: HAS 2022, Evansville, Indiana. *Information:* heartlandbees.org.

October 1–2: Washington State Beekeepers Association JamborBEE Conference, Othello, Washington.

October 28–30: OSBA 2022 Fall Conference, Florence Events Center, Florence.

REGIONAL NEWS

Regional Representative

North Willamette Valley

The Willamette Valley has seen a springlike end to winter. With quite a few days above 60 degrees Fahrenheit and many more above-50 degrees, you might think spring was already here. Spring officially starts March 20, which means bee season is here for backyard beekeepers. The break in the rainy weather has allowed the bees to take needed cleansing flights and do a little foraging. Last month I saw quite a bit of light gray and pale-yellow pollen coming in from hazelnut and alder trees. March brings the welcomed blooms of many nectar-producing plants, including bulbs and fruiting trees.

While most of our commercial beekeepers are in California for the almond pollination, some backyard and sideliner beekeepers will be renting bees this month for peach and cherry pollination. With the spring buildup of brood happening now, our bees are consuming nectar as fast as they bring back to the colony. Every year around this time, one of my favorite things to do is to open my hives on a nice day when the peach trees are in bloom. I swipe my finger through some honeycomb full of that peach nectar and taste the peach. There is rarely a surplus of honey to harvest this early in the season, but that doesn't mean you can't get a taste of it!

With spring on our minds and the 2022 beekeeping season ahead, don't forget to order your spring nucs and packages if you plan to replace winter losses. There are several nuc and package retailers in the North Willamette Valley, including Flying Bee Ranch and Shonnard's.

Lastly, after more than a year of outdoor meetings, the Willamette Valley Beekeepers Association has resumed indoor meetings. Meetings are still held every fourth Monday of the month from 7 to 9 PM. The location is TBD at this time. To find out where the meeting will be held, visit wvbahive.org/events. *Jeremy Mitchell*

Regional Associations

Central Oregon

We don't know what happened with winter this year. So far, the extreme cold has been missing as well as the heavy snows. We're very worried about the water situation for the irrigators next summer. Some are worried about various insect pests having a population boom because of the warm winter. On a lighter note, the bees have been active since middle of February, with pollen. The maples were blooming then, although we didn't have any reports of the colorful snowdrop and crocus pollen this year.

In February we had a successful beginner bee school, online, for more than 70 students. We changed up the curriculum to make

it more efficient and less of a *firehose*. Also a great talk about pollen, its uses and collection, by an association member.

We're hoping to have good participation in the winter loss study and are looking forward to hearing the results. In March, a representative from the Bend Pollinator Pathway will be talking to us about the plants that will attract pollinators in central Oregon. We meet the third Tuesday of each month starting at 6 PM. *Allen Engle*

Klamath Basin Beekeepers

We are back to meeting in person the last Saturday of every month, 9 AM, at the Klamath County Extension Office. We welcome members, visitors, and the bee curious. In February our meeting will focus on backyard queen rearing at a small scale. Paul Stromberg will be presenting via Zoom with refreshments and discussion to follow. In March we have two big events. Bee School on March 18 and 19, with the classroom portion on Friday evening and, weather permitting, field work on Saturday. \$35 covers the class, the book, a light supper, and a lot of fun. Bee orders through the association are due March 26. We have great deals for members!

In the Klamath Basin, we have had oddly warm and dry weather in January and February. Most everyone is feeding bees already. Early reports suggest that overwintering survival rates are better this year than last, but it's still early in the spring season.

We are excited to be rolling out our new website to better communicate with our members and the public, courtesy of August Creative. They are a women-owned business that specializes in helping nonprofits. On our website you will find our annual calendar and links to become a KBBA member, register for bee school, or place a bee order. Check it out at: www.klamathbeekeepers.org. *Christy VanRooyen*

Lane County Beekeepers

As I write this, the Willamette Valley is enjoying afternoon temperatures in the low 50s and colonies are seeking out hazelnut trees for early pollen. Soon in Eugene, the silver maples and a few exotics will be flowering to offer more rewards for searching bees. Beyond these rewards, bees will have to rely on beekeepers to augment their dwindling winter stores till March rolls around.

Our association board recently met and decided to stay with virtual meetings for at least another month or two. We also spent time reviewing out membership levels and budget status. Preliminary numbers look good on both fronts. Membership renewals continue to come in, and new memberships seem to be balancing out attrition. The lack of typical operating expenses (i.e., rent, event fees) due to Covid also helps explain our budget health. One negative report is the dearth of donated honey from members for public sale is low right now.

We have two Beekeeping 101 classes scheduled for February and March. These classes will be virtual and open to anyone.

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Interest so far in these classes is strong. Check out our website for details. Finally, our association is invested in two rural school beekeeping programs. Thanks to ample equipment donations from association members and GloryBee, as well as the time invested in members offering instruction to the students, we are hopeful these programs will be sustaining. Happy Spring to all.

Brian McGinley

Oregon Central Coast Beekeepers

We held an in-person meeting last month. The Newport Library began reserving their meeting room for the first time since the beginning of Covid. It was obvious that many of our association members were ready to get back together. There were 24 in attendance, with masks required. There was discussion regarding the need for a volunteer to be our OSBA coastal representative, and Max Kuhn stepped up to take that position. Thank you Max. The association also asked for volunteers to assist in teaching a Bee-ginners Beekeeping class that will be held at the Oregon Coast Community College on March 9. We are told that there are already 21 people from the community signed up. We also had an open discussion about "Are we ready for spring?" Topics included having mite treatments on hand, checking your equipment, replacing old frames, and painting supers. Also, if planning to do splits or catch swarms, be sure to have equipment ready to go. We also talked about "Why did my bees die?" and members shared stories of the colonies lost. The warmer weather is not that far away. We all look forward to our next meeting in March. *Pat Wackford*

Portland Metro Beekeepers

Our members have been hard at work preparing themselves and their bees for the upcoming season. We were excited to launch our new website at the start of 2022, complete with online membership registrations, an online store, and plans to build out

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a virtual library and swarm list (just in time for a busy swarm season)! Our hybrid online/in-person association meetings have been working nicely, and we are looking forward to a great line-up of speakers this year.

We are thrilled to have preparations underway for our annual

Bee Day on April 30 at the Hansens' Foothills Honey Company. We are excited to hold this event in person for the first time in over two years, and have a great lineup of activities, speakers, and raffle prizes. In addition to being an important fundraiser, it is also a wonderful opportunity for new beekeepers to get hands-on experience with seasoned experts and network with other local enthusiasts.

The warming sunshine and unseasonably warm winter has been bringing on a flurry of activity and excitement to hives and their keepers. Several association members have colonies busily buzzing about in the California almond orchards, with new queens emerging soon and starting their nuptial flights in preparation for the April and May nucs. The early pollinating filbert trees in the northern Willamette Valley have no doubt been stimulating colonies to prepare for a busy spring, and have a lot of us thinking about spring feeding and splits. Warmer days are a great time to offer supplemental sugar for any hives that are feeling light, but remember that feeding pollen too early can stimulate a colony to swarm early, too. None of us wants to watch our bees fly off right at the start of a good nectar flow! Cheers.

Jamie Caldwell

Portland Urban Beekeepers

At this writing, the Portland metro area has seen some beautiful clear days, a marked contrast to our December and January weather. Bees are flying and mahonia, crocuses, and of course dandelions are just a few of the plants attracting our surviving bees. Our February meeting featured Dr. Leo Sharashkin of horizontalhives.com who presented a wonderfully thorough talk on his successes in using horizontal hives.

We were able to pull some interesting data from our swarm report software. We had approximately 175 swarm calls last year with the peak number of swarms occurring May 5 and June 16. Geographically, they stretched from Sandy to Vancouver, Oregon City, and Forest Grove. We're moving to new swarm software this year, with an easier to use interface so any glitches or improvements will be easier to address.

Our apiary work parties at Green Anchors should start back up in March, and we're looking to make those events the social hub of our association. Zoom meetings have proven to be too useful and practical to move away from, so one focus this year will be figuring out how to create in-person engagement. In addition to hive maintenance, Green Anchors is a wonderful pollination habitat, and we're looking to bring out people interested in maintaining the flowers and plants which support our apiary efforts.

Bee season is right around the corner, so enjoy the last few days of winter. Of course, our bees have been tracking this for several months now, and we're all ready to soak up and enjoy the warmer days.

Jessica Anderson

Tillamook Beekeepers

The Tillamook beekeeping crowd is looking forward to an impressive 2022. It looks like life will be better for the beekeeper, hopefully maskless and Covid free, and we have great hopes for our bees as well. No less than an estimated 40 percent of our colonies died this winter. The losses might be due to an extremely cold late December with 5 inches of snow, insufficient treatment of *Varroa destructor*, or just fate, but it is always discouraging to open a hive and find all the bees dead in a pile on the bottom of the hive, or just not there at all. We are learning every year how to be better beekeepers, and we hope that this year will be a good one.

It's hard to pin down membership loss data. We have lost about 25 percent of last year's members. It may be due to COVID-19, but the fact that beekeeping is a tough task may be a large cause as well. The good news is that we have also gained a large number of new beekeepers since the first of the year, too. Looking back over the statistical numbers, I think we lose 25 percent every year and, for us at least, we have also gained more than we have lost over the past four years. We have steadily grown from approximately 70 members four years ago to roughly 140 today. Onward and upward!



We have begun our 5th Annual Hive Raffle, and this year's hive is a real beauty. It was designed and built by new beekeepers Patsy and Chris Weber and replicates one of our Tillamook landmarks, Cape Meares Lighthouse. Tickets are on sale for \$5 each or a bundle of 5 for \$20 at www.tillamookbeekeepers.org. A 2nd place prize of a \$100 gift certificate for the TCCA Farm Store is part of this raffle. Must be 18 years of age to participate (proof must be shown at drawing). Must be a resident of Oregon to participate (proof must be shown at drawing). The drawing will take

place at the 2022 Headlight Herald Home and Garden Show on Sunday May 1 at the Tillamook County Fairgrounds. You need not be present to win. The proceeds from our raffle will go toward our ongoing tree planting efforts. Last year we planted \$2,500 worth of bee friendly flowering trees in Manzanita and Tillamook. This year we hope to plant even more.

Our 2022 Bee Days will be held during the Home and Garden Show on April 30 and May 1. This, too, will be a great boon to the efforts of beekeeping and educating the public on this exciting hobby. The last couple of years have been rudely interfered with by the pesty Covid. The community is anxious to get back to *normalcy*, and we hope to please as we share all things honey bees with them for this 2-day event.

We are also venturing into queen rearing as an association.

We all know that queens from the immediate community are a better fit for requeening our hives or starting new hives, and in the past we have always struggled with the queens that we get from locations east of the Cascades. Our February monthly meeting is dedicated to learning the intricacies of queen rearing, and we will be instructed by Rick Olsen of the Oregon Central Coast association. He will mentor us as we take on this exciting project. *Brad York*

Tualatin Valley Beekeepers

We are excited for a new year of beekeeping in our part of the world. As of this mid-February submission, our last Tuesday monthly meetings will remain on Zoom for the immediate future. Our members are re-enrolling for 2022 membership, things are beginning to bloom in our part of the world, and bees are beginning to fly.

We are off to a great start with our annual Bee School scheduled online via Zoom for the evenings of March 7, 9 and 14, along with additional hands-on in-person field days for newbies around our mid-April planned nuc delivery. We strive to deliver the best education and support for our members, and our board works to keep a listening ear open so we can work ongoing to improve. Our March 29 member meeting presenter will be Dr. Dewey Caron.

Our website is tvbabees.org, and all are welcome to join as members and sign up for bee school there. *Debby Garman*

Executive Committee Change

A sincere thank you both to Kathy Cope for all the time, effort, and energy contributed as North Coast Regional Representative these past many years, and to Max Kuhn, who has agreed to step into the position. A bit of arm twisting was apparently involved in making this happen; Max says his arm is healing nicely.

Max has over 15 years experience as a hobbyist beekeeper, and is certified as Journeyman Beekeeper in Washington and Journey in Oregon. He is currently enrolled in the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program at the Master level, manages 15-20 hives, and mentors beginning beekeepers in the Florence area.



Max Kuhn

Note: In the last issue, I managed to identify Steve Coffman and Jeremy Mitchell as outgoing/incoming **South** Willamette Valley Regional Representative, respectively. Please note that it is **North** Willamette Valley. My apologies for the oversight!

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Toward Treatment Free—Continued from page 1

you do (like splits or drone brood removal). This will give you more information on why mite counts are low. Think about what characteristics are important to you—for example, Varroa control, gentleness, honey production—and find a way to record that for each colony. For example, use a 1–5 gentleness scale, and record what the bees act like each time you enter the colony. Write down how much honey you take off from each colony, how the bees act on the frames, or if you just don't like the cut of their jib. If you care only about survival, then just keep a column for Varroa counts.

4. Once you find a colony that has a disease, including high mites, treat that colony, and then requeen with a good queen. For a summary of naturally derived treatment options for Varroa, see: pollinators.msu.edu/resources/beekeepers/managing-the-varroa-mite.

5. Keep watching your colonies to make sure that Varroa stays low and you don't see disease. Make sure you have notes that indicate which colonies never needed treatment and stayed healthy. Those are the ones you want to make queens from.

Monitor, treat bees if there is a problem—requeen the colony with queens from your best hives that don't need treatment. All your bees stay healthy, and you don't lose colonies to preventable illness.

Let's look at some examples of what this looks like in practice.

A. Beekeeper Bill has 5 colonies in spring.

Bill inspects each colony every 2–3 weeks to make sure they are queenright, have enough space, food, and are free from disease. Most times that he inspects, he does a sugar roll for mites (less in the spring, more in the late summer when the risk is higher).

In May, colonies 1–4 look great, but colony 5 has chalkbrood.

- ❖ Bill removes the queen from colony 5, and puts her in a nuc as a spare/emergency.
- ❖ He orders a hygienic queen from a local breeder to put in colony 5.
- ❖ The chalkbrood clears up.
- ❖ Throughout the spring, he continues to monitor, but sees hardly any mites in his sugar rolls.
- ❖ In June he sees a few mites in some samples, but colony 1 never has any. He records all these counts in his notes.
- ❖ By July, Bill is starting to see more mites while monitoring, but always below the threshold of 3 mites/100 bees.

In late July colonies 2–4 are above the treatment threshold.

- ❖ He treats colonies 2–4.
- ❖ Once the treatment is finished, Bill orders three queens for fall requeening of colonies 2–4.

The rest of the season he keeps monitoring. He doesn't get above threshold again, and doesn't see any other signs of disease.

Bill ensures that everyone has enough food and bees, and buttons them up for winter.

In spring, five out of five colonies live. Bill wants to start to raise his own queens. Looking through his notes, he sees that colony 1 didn't need any treatment and stayed healthy. He'll see how they do this year, and raise queens off of them to replace any queens from colonies that need them.

Bill buys some queens from the same local breeder in the spring, using them to sell nucs from his colonies because he doesn't want to expand the apiary. He uses the money to take his favorite daughter fishing.

B. Beekeeper Joe has 5 colonies in spring.

Joe inspects them occasionally, but mostly just leaves them alone.

Colony 5 has chalkbrood, but doesn't do anything about it.

He doesn't monitor, but notes that colonies 1–4 are booming, and colony 5 seems slower.

He closes them up for winter at the end of the season.

His bees in colonies 2–4 succumb to Varroa-associated viruses, and colony 5 had too small of a cluster to survive.

In spring, Joe has one colony left, and he buys more packages to replace his losses.

He does this a few more years, and then quits beekeeping because it is too expensive and he would rather spend the money on more fishing gear.

We all want to move to a place where we don't have to treat our bees, but we want to make sure it is because our bees don't need treatment, not because we are withholding care. Because we have the tools of Varroa monitoring and requeening, we don't have a reason to let a colony die while we work towards better stock. Do right by your bees this year by responsibly moving toward treatment free.

To happy beekeepers and healthier bees!

Apiary Registration Reminder: Every person who owns, or is in charge of, five or more colonies of bees located within the state or Oregon, must register each year with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The form needed to register colonies is located at: apps.oregon.gov/SOS/LicenseDirectory/LicenseDetail/606 or can be obtained in person by visiting: 635 Capitol Street NE, Salem OR 97301.



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For new memberships and renewals, please see past issues or visit: orsba.org/membership.

Some people feel the rain. Others just get wet.

— Bob Dylan

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

The next issue to be printed will be the **April** issue, **2022**. The deadline for submitting copy is **March 10, 2022**. 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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