

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Clatsop County Beekeepers Association

By Thom Trusewicz

If you missed our September meeting you really missed a great program. Don Leach had a wonderful presentation on mason bees. He brought some tools, photos, books, nest tubes and boxes and a display of mounted mason bees and a variety of bumble bees.

Also Bob Allen and Terry Fullan from the Tillamook Beekeepers Assn. came to our meeting. They were impressed by the Extension Service building, and when you think about it, it's a very nice place to meet.

If anyone ever wants to attend a meeting with the Tillamook Branch they meet at 7 pm on the first Thursday of the month at the Forestry Building, 4909 Third Street, Tillamook. Also if you ever want to visit with another club in the state, you can find the meeting days, times and places listed at the OSBA web site. Unfortunately we are not listed on the web site yet, but that is something I will be addressing at the fall conference.

Michael and I were invited to speak at a weekly meeting of Kiwanis International Club in Clatskanie. There were about 40 members present for our talk. It was a fun evening, and it gave us the opportunity field questions and dispel misinformation about bees. I spoke about the bad image bees have gotten over the years due to the AHB invasion. Michael spoke about the beekeepers of ancient times as shown in cave paintings and in pictographs in Egyptian tombs.

One thing we realized was that no matter what we are prepared to talk about, things change. I was prepared to rattle off a whole bunch of bee facts, but after speaking to some of the members at our dinner table I could hear that they were more interested in pollination, and mason bees and bumble bees and stings and honey and AHB. We touched on it all. There is never enough time.

Michael, Zan and I attended the OSBA Conference in Salem. Terry and Ed were there representing Tillamook.

There were a lot of good speakers, and a lot of good topics. I learned a lot, and I also saw a lot of areas where information was contradictory and counter to what has been written by EAS master beekeepers.

One thing that was really cool was the Mighty Victor. This is a machine that Harry Vanderpool invented. With this machine one brushes bees from a frame into a hopper and the bees fall into a chamber where they are dusted and shaken with powdered sugar. This process knocks the Varroa mites off them, and gently deposits the bees out on the ground where they clean themselves off and fly back to their hive.

Harry said that he wants to come down some time to meet our group.

There are a lot of beekeepers in Oregon. I met retired beekeepers who still run 40+ hives. Oddly I calculated that if we put all of our hives together in Clatsop County we may have about 40 between us. We'll catch up one day.

Hive Location

OK, you've had bees on the brain for a while now. Soon the days will start growing longer, but package bees will not be available until April or maybe late March if you are foolish enough to get them that early.

I'm sure you've given thought to where you are going to put your bees when you get them, but lets review this topic anyway, just in case you missed something.

The ideal place to put your bees would have their entrance pointing to the Southeast. There should be a trickling stream with lots of rocks to the side of the hive and a thousand acre field straight ahead of the hive that is planted with sunflowers, pumpkins, cucumbers, buckwheat and butterfly bush. There should be a nice stand of willows, alders and tupelo behind the hives.

OK, lets get back to reality. Having your hives pointing to the Southeast is good, but if you can't face them that way it's OK. Just try to shelter their entrance from the wind. That's important. If you still can not shelter your bees adequately make sure you use a telescopic hive cover and an entrance reducer during the rainy/windy months of our Clatsop County winter.

Bees do better if they get some morning sun. It gets them out of the hive earlier and then can get some early nectar. Flowers have more nectar in the morning. However if morning sun isn't an option, that's the way it is. Your bees will live.

Next, have a good water source for your bees near their hive. Trickling water is best with wood or rocks for the bees to rest on while the drink. They will use birdbaths as well. Remember, bees are really attracted neighbors water features and hot tubs, so if you keep

your bees well watered they should not seek a far away source.

Make sure the hive entrance does not collide with a natural path of humans or pets. Bees don't like anything getting within 15 feet of their hive entrance. So keep delivery, utility, meter reading and disposal people in mind when you locate your hive.

It is also a good idea to discuss your intentions with any neighbors. Let's say you plan to have the hive entrance facing a neighbor's fence. Will your neighbor be able to maintain the fence without upsetting your bees? Fences are generally good because they force the bees to fly upward. If you can foresee a problem with a neighbor being able to maintain their fence, maybe you could erect a fence between your bees and that fence, leaving enough room for maintenance. A fence six feet high and 10 to 16 feet wide should do.

The next thing is overlooked by many beekeepers and that is how high off the ground should the hives be kept. Commercial beekeepers keep their hives on pallets, around 4 inches, and I've seen many hives on top of 8-inch cinder blocks. Now remember that bees don't do well where there is a lot of moisture. Also remember that heat rises and cold settles. Now look at your landscape and visualize that there is a river of water one foot deep flowing over your property. This river is the cold moist air that runs through your yard every night.

Don't put them any higher than 16 inches off the ground or you may have trouble lifting full supers off the top. If you do need to get them higher off the ground due to the possibility of flooding, you should build yourself some sort of platform behind the hives to enable you to work the hive. Getting off the ground will lessen problems with skunks as well.

World's Famous Beekeepers and Wanna Bees?

Thanks to

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Beekeeping/fame.htm>

Alexander the Great - Conquered the world, then died thousands of miles from home - his men carried his preserved body home for burial in a golden coffin filled with honey.

Aristotle - This Greek beekeeper and scientist used simple hives with wooden strip top-bars. Some of his observations about bees were pretty clever, others were dead wrong.

Bill Dennison - This former Mayor of Toronto and beekeeper had bees before his election- keeping them in the heart of the city. Whenever there was an angry swarm, the police would call His Majesty the Mayor. He would get his smoker and go fetch the bees - not every city of 3 million can claim such hands-on care from an elected official!

Democritus - This famous ancient (*lived to be 109*) Greek apicultural researcher, beekeeper and philosopher taught that new bees could be made from rotting oxen - the King Bee, he figured out, came from decaying bull brains.

Henry Fonda - The star of 96 films, this hobby beekeeper gave away honey in jars that he labeled *Henry's Honey*.

When he was a youngster, he'd earned the Eagle Scout badge for beekeeping.

Hippocrates - The *father of medicine* frequently recommended honey as a remedy for whatever ails you. He wrote, *'Honey and pollen cause warmth, clean sores and ulcers, soften hard ulcers of lips, heal carbuncles and running sores.*

Icarus - This ancient Greek astronaut flew too close to the sun and the beeswax holding the feathers to his arms melted - the feathers came loose and he is still falling.

Krishna - The Hindu deity, has often been depicted as a bee. Four thousand years ago, Hindu ancestors taught that eating honey and pollen would lead to a long life

Martha Stewart - The harbinger of *American Style* has been a model, a stockbroker, and a beekeeper for over twenty-five years! The avid gardener realized a long time ago that keeping bees is a good thing.

Mohammed - The founder of Islam said, *"Honey is the remedy for every illness."*

Mohammed Ali - Former heavy-weight champ ate lots of pollen and honey and attributed this as part of the reason he could *sting like a bee*.

Peter Fonda - actor, activist, was named Beekeeper of the Year by the Florida State Beekeeping Association for deftly portraying Ulee in *Ulee's Gold*, and for his contributions to beekeeping.

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson Presidents of the United States

Pythagoras - Ancient Greek mathematician, cult founder, and beekeeper - the strictest of his followers ate only bread and honey.

Ramses III - This ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, King, Deity, and Ruler of Heaven and Earth (but only from 1198-1167 BC), offered a lesser river god a 30,000 pound honey sacrifice by dumping beekeepers' honey into the Nile.

Sherlock Holmes - This great detective retired to a simple life of puttering around with bees. As a beekeeper, he continued to demonstrate his problem-solving expertise.

Sir Edmund Hillary - A commercial beekeeper (he and his brother owned 1200 hives) from New Zealand, along with Tenzing Norgay, first scaled Mount Everest, in May, 1953.

Swarm Management

There are few experiences in life like the rush of adrenaline you get when you go out to your bee yard and find a massive swarm in a tree. Your mind races with questions like: I wonder if they will stay around long enough for me to get a box together and put them in it? Or worse yet: I wonder if I have a box for them?

Why did they have to go and swarm anyway? This question has two good answers. First, swarming is the natural way for bees to make more colonies. And the second answer is, you were asleep at the switch. You let the hive get crowded for a long enough period of time that bees produced another queen. Then your old queen picked up one day and took half of your honey production with her.

At that point the best thing to do is let the bees have their way. If you can catch them, put them into a new hive. The other option is to try finding one of the queens and eliminating her and rejoining the hives with more space for doing their jobs.

Bees always need something to do. When they run out of room to do their job they will swarm and find work elsewhere.

So how can swarming be prevented? It's simple and you have to start in late winter or early spring.

Keep in mind that the queen always likes to go up into the hive. If you have two brood boxes you can bet the queen is in the top box. She will never go back down on her own.

Now we will talk about reversing the brood boxes. This is not something that should be done on a whim. First, if it is late winter, you may want to check on the five day forecast or better yet a ten day forecast. If extreme cold is predicted, do nothing. But wait for the cold spell to pass.

When the time is right, go to your bee yard lift the top brood box off the bottom box. Note how heavy it is and estimate your honey reserves. Next, quickly lift the bottom box to see how heavy it is, and then quickly inspect the center four or six frames to see if there are many empty cells for brood. If there is a sufficient amount of open comb place the top box on the bottom and place the bottom on the top.

This should only be done with strong hives during the winter because half of the bees will tend the brood in the new bottom box, and half of the bees will join the queen who will move to the upper box to lay more eggs.

This procedure should be done every three weeks. If you want to stop when the weather gets better before the nectar flow you can, but you have to give the bees something to do. Put on a deep box of foundation if there is a minor nectar flow or if you are feeding them. You can always use more drawn comb.

However keep in mind bees can swarm when they run out of room even in September.

Look in the hive every two weeks and assess the condition. Look for queen cells, look for open brood areas, look at the brood, have a young queen. Most swarms can be prevented.

It is a good idea to put a nuc box with some foundation in it on a ladder in your bee yard. When a swarm emits scout bees look for a proper place to set up shop, and since the bees are already used to living in a dark box with wax frames, they will feel right at home.

Some beekeepers do this to catch swarms from other beekeepers who make no attempts at swarm management.

Queens

Why replace them?

A young queen can and should be laying two to three thousand eggs for you every day. This is necessary to keep a hive healthy. If your queen is not laying a lot of eggs your hive will start dwindling and probably will not make it through the next winter.

Why not let the hive make its own new queen?

When you allow your hive to supercede, you are producing a queen whose best trait is swarming. When you allow a hive to supercede your hives vitality is cut in half. If there is more than one surviving queen your hive population may be cut in half again, and again.

It is important to buy a queen from a quality breeder. You will want your new queen to be bred from stock with a good gentle nature that are good producers. Hygienic behavior is another good trait to look for.

How do I know when I need a new Queen?

You should replace your queen every year. Some people like doing it in the fall and some like the spring. There are advantages and disadvantages to each school if thought. Either way it should be done.

Also, if your bees start getting aggressive it could be because of bad queen stock or because you do not have a queen in the hive. See what's going on in there. Are there new eggs? Is the brood all drone brood? Did you find the queen?

How do I get a queen and what do I do next? Queens are available through mail order or if you are in a hurry you

can call a bee supplier and ask them to get you one that you can pick up. When you order her ask that she be marked. That means that they place a spot of paint on her back to make her easier to find.

The queen will arrive in a cage or in a small dugout wooden box with a screen over the top. The queen will have five to ten worker bees in the cage with her. It's a good idea to put a couple of drops of sugar water on the screen for them to eat as soon as you get them.

DO NOT REMOVE THE WORKERS!!! Some companies instruct people to go into a confined indoor area, open the container and let the workers out. **DON'T DO IT!!!**

The workers are there for a reason. They feed the queen and they help the queen escape. They also cluster to keep the queen warm. These attendants are doomed anyway, so let them work while they can.

Before putting the new queen in the hive find and capture the old queen. Place her in a vented jar with some workers. Hide her away from the hive. She is your insurance in the event the new queen doesn't work out.

On one end of the cage you will see a white substance. This is bee candy. Place this end up when you put it into the hive. There may be a cork in one end of the cage and another cork on the candy side. Remove the cork from the candy side and pierce the candy with a very thin nail or a large pin. The hole should not be large enough to let the bees out, but just enough to let them see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. You want them to stay in the cage for now. The reason is that if you just drop a new queen in the hive your bees will **Queens continued next page...**

Queens continued...

kill her because she smells different than the hive. The candy lets her servants chew their way out, and hive bees chew their way in. It should take two to four days, and this is enough time for the hive to accept the smell and recognize her as their new leader.

Place the cage candy end up between two frames. Check on the hive in a couple of hours, then check it every day until she is released.

Sometimes the hive bees will form a big cluster around the queen cage. This is called "balling" and it is bad. To stop this you can add some vanilla extract to some water and lightly spray the ball of bees. This will get their minds off of the scent of the new bee in the hive, and it will make all the bees smell different.

If your queen hasn't been released after four days and if there isn't an angry mob of bees trying to kill her through the screen, it is safe to release her into the hive. Then give it a week before you check on her progress. Check to see if she is laying eggs. Try to find her. Hopefully she is marked and that makes her easier to find.

So when is it best to requeen , spring or fall?

OK, I'll stick my neck out on this one and say spring. Yes, fall is good because it is nice to be able to go through the winter with a young queen who will be ready to work when the spring hits. However, the truth is that many fall queens were spring queens that did not sell so you will be replacing your tried and true queen with a queen possibly of the same age. Yes, queen breeding goes on all summer, but the prices of queens go down drastically in the summer so I'm suspicious of summer stock.

Now here's why I like the spring. In the spring there are less bees to deal

with. Hives seem more accepting of newer queens when they are too cold to get snooty about it. You can use your old queens when you split your hives or make nucs, or when you start an observation hive. That works well with an old queen who doesn't lay too many eggs.

Another reason is that you fuss more with your bees in the spring and would notice a problem with the queen faster than you would in the fall and winter.

What else can I do with the old queen?

Most old queens are killed after the new queen is accepted. It's not a fun thing to do. George Hansen mentioned at his farm in Colton, that he has workers on his farm that seem to have trouble when it comes to pinching the queen. In a commercial operation it is a must, and a way of life. But as hobbyist we can take this opportunity to make the queen's death a meaningful one. You can place her in a jar with a cotton ball of alcohol. Once she is dead you can mount her on a pin. Then you can show her off to school children or people who are interested in seeing what a queen bee look like.

Respect Royalty

Remember, it is the queen who is in command of the hive. She is the one keeping everything going. Once you understand her importance you will also understand how the hive really works.



Things to do in the bee yard.

January

If you find a warm sunny day make a quick (and I mean quick) inspection of the hive. Don't pull out any frames unless you see a potential problem while looking between the frames. Inspections when it is under 55 degrees must always be quick. It takes a lot of energy for a bee to maintain the 96 degree brood temperature necessary for brood survival. Lift the hive bodies to see how much they weigh. Heavy means they still have honey to eat, light means they don't. If light feed them.

Reverse the brood boxes, queens will always work upward and the bees will follow her. The bees have spent most of their time in the top box all winter, and there is honey and brood space in the bottom box that isn't being used.

Use caution in reversing boxes this early in the year. Do not attempt if a weather forecast predicts very cold temperatures within a week of the switch.

This is a good time to start feeding a very light nectar to stimulate the hive towards brood rearing. The mixture should be 1 part sugar to 2 parts water. Consider a pollen substitute. This will stimulate reproduction as well. Bees get their protein from pollen. There is a good chance that their pollen supply is getting low.

February

Follow the instructions as written for January. Be very mindful of starvation. Lift the hive boxes and see how heavy the stores are. If the boxes feel light, start feeding 1 part water to 1 part sugar solution. Assess your colony. Can you see any bees that look like they are stuck head first in the comb? This is a sign of starvation. Place solution in a Boardman feeder, (that looks like a jar

with a holes in the lid and that is placed upside down in a plastic device with an open bottom), and place the feeder over the hole in the inner cover. Then place a empty super and the hive cover to enclose the feeder. Check the solution at least once a week. If the solution is empty within one week, check it and feed them more often. Starvation is a horrible death, and bees can not forage on their own when it is to cold or wet.

All this feeding may lead you to think that bees are very needy, and wonder how they ever survived in the wild. The reason beekeepers fuss over their bees in the winter is that they want to start the spring with a stronger colony than nature would allow naturally. Thus we get more surplus honey from more working bees.

Begin your medication cycle. Remember all medications must be removed and be absent from the hive at least 15 days before adding honey supers. This means that when you introduce a miticide into your hive, it will be at least 60 days before you can add your honey supers. Never short cycle the medicine, and never short cycle the time between medicine and supering.

March

Follow the same box rotation and feeding methods as you did in January and February. All feeding should be 1 part water to 1 part sugar. You will see signs of life outside the hive. Bees will collect pollen from willows, skunk cabbage and other early pollen plants. Though bees are bringing things back to the hive it is being consumed as quickly as it comes in. There are a lot of hungry young bees hatching. Continue feeding. Hives can starve until May

And Senator Joan Duker 92587 Maki Rd
Astoria, Or 97103

Bad News At OSU

Recently the OSU Dean of Agricultural Sciences announced that the Department of Entomology is being disbanded. This means that all insect research specific to our region will soon come to an end.

This was a budgetary decisions, and one that may never be turned back. However there is a hope for one area within the Entomology Department to survive if there is enough support.

Dr. Michael Burgett is retiring in January. His honey bee position was the top choice of the Department of Entomology for a “new hire” in 2003, but since the entire Entomology Department is shutting down, the honey bee department will be closing as well. There are other departments where this position can function, but there are no advocates on campus for the position.

Nearly 500 million dollars of annual farm income in Oregon is dependent on pollination by honey bees. Unattended honey bee colonies in Oregon have been killed in the last few years by an invasion of Asian mites. Beekeepers are struggling to keep their colonies alive. Research, information and outreach to the industry is very necessary. Oregon’s key fruit crops include apples, pears, sweet cherries, most berries and melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, most clover and alfalfa seeds and dozens of specialty vegetable and flower seed crops require honey bee pollination.

If you have any interest in keeping the Honey Bee Research Department alive, please write your local representatives and tell them how important Honey Bee research is in Oregon. In Clatsop County write: Representative Elaine Hopson, PO Box 656, Tillamook Or 97141

It’s almost time for Bee School

BEEKEEPING FOR BEGINNERS CLASS

Learn all about the practical art and science of beekeeping. Novice beekeepers and those interested in becoming beekeepers will learn how to be successful with a venture of keeping honey bees. This class will cover topics including bee behaviors, equipment, care of hives, diseases and medications, safety, honey production, marketing, year around maintenance and how to obtain honey bees locally.

This class will be held from 6:30-8:30pm on Mondays, February 3, 10, 24 and March 3. The classroom is located in the Clatsop Community College Art Building, Room 101.

This class is free to Clatsop County Beekeeping Association members. You may join the association and register for class during the first session. Annual dues are \$10 for individuals, or \$15 for family membership, or \$5 for an individual under 18 years of age.

For more information call Thom at 503-325-7966



Well Blow Me Down!

This is Popeye buzzword, (pardon the pun), that can mean disaster in your bee yard. Sure our hives are heavy with honey and it would take a massive gust of wind to blow over a hive. But what about your hive covers?

There you are in your home on an evening during a typical Oregon winter windstorm. Your lights flicker, and you worry about how long the power will be out this time. Are you going to have to drag the camp stove out of the garage to make your morning coffee, and do the lanterns need new mantles? Do you have fresh batteries in the flashlights, and where did you put the battery-powered radio after the last time you lost power?

Here on the Coast, especially in rural areas like where I live, we are used to being without power for days at a time.

If you have pets and livestock you should be prepared for the storms effect on them as well. Don't forget your bees.

Maybe your hives can withstand some wind punches, but what happens if the cover blows off your hive. Within minutes your bees will be drenched and cold, and shortly after that they will die. By the time morning comes around it will be too late.

This is a preventable disaster. First you should check to make sure your hives are high enough off the ground so they will not be flooded.

Next you should strap your hives down. If you don't have hive straps use rope to tie the top to the hive body. Tie the hive body to what ever it is resting on, hopefully your hives are on a pallet or a stand.

If you don't have rope or straps, try hive staples, or duct tape. It is so much easier and less expensive to take a few minutes to prevent disaster than it is to clean up after one.

Coming Soon, The New and Improved OSBA Webpage

Have you ever visited the OSBA webpage? www.orsba.org

I bet you were disappointed. Sure there is some good content there, but much of it is old and out dated.

While at my first OSBA Board meeting I was given the task of bringing the OSBA website back to an up-to-date, useable tool for the OSBA and for the public to use.

Much has happened toward this goal. I've searched for suitable servers, gathered the opinions of other beekeepers that want to use the site, and opinions of beekeepers that still do not use computers. I've drawn up a plan and with final approval we will begin the reconstruction.

Soon the website will be able to feature a page for each OSBA Branch across the state. Branches will be able to list events, meeting dates, and have their newsletters online for download or reading.

The OSBA Board was firm in their desire of not having an OSBA member do all the work. They don't want their members to get burned out on any project.

So with the help of Wes Bruning, Cheryl Willemes and Christy Wheeler at Clackamas Community College I have been introduced to Hunter Breedlove. Hunter is working towards a Micro Computer Systems Administration certificate and he applied to take on our project. Since the OSBA is a non-profit we qualify to hire him as a work study student. His financial aid will pay his expenses.

I expect the website will up-to-date by February, with ongoing additions and maintenance after that.

**Clatsop County Beekeepers
Association
OSU Extension Service
2001 Marine Drive
Astoria Or 97103**

Yes I know I promised to have an article about **Bumble bees**, their life cycle, how to build nest boxes for this edition of the news letter, but we are going to have a bumble bee expert speak at our January 15th meeting. **Dr. Kim Patten**, Extension Agent for Washington State University Research and Extension Unit in Long Beach, WA.

Also, **Don Leach** has agreed to come back and give his presentation on **Mason Bees** at our February 19th meeting.

Please let me know if you would like to make a presentation at one of our beekeepers meetings, or if you know of an interesting speaker who could present to us. I want to get Harry Vanderpool to come over from Salem this Spring to give his presentation on the Mighty Victor. I'll keep you posted.

Other things in the works...

Michael Bunch has talked about building Mason Bee Blocks and Bumble Bee nest boxes as a fund raiser. We will pay some more attention to these projects. We need to find out if we can sell them at Sunday Market and at the Fair.

Also we will try to organize a movable feast for July. Master Gardeners used to do this every year. This is where we gather at the home and/or apiary one beekeeper for hors d'oeuvres, then we move to another beekeeper's home for dinner, and finally another for desert. We visit three local bee yards and eat at each location.

It's a pot-luck, and we will plan it for sometime in July.