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January 2013 LCBA Newsletter

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Questions? Suggestions? Resources you'd like to share?

Please contact LCBA Secretary Susanne Weil: susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or call 360 880 8130.

UPCOMING LCBA EVENTS:

February 13: LCBA Monthly Meeting

When: 7 – 9 p.m.

Where: 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College, 701 W. Walnut St, Centralia

Topics: Traditional Beekeeping in Kenya ~ Wilma Sofranko

Getting Started with Mason Bees ~ Kimo Thielges ~

~ Kimo will have mason bee blocks to give away.

Business meeting: package bee/nuc orders update; beekeeping Q&A.

February 23: Hive Building Workshop

When: Noon to 4 p.m.

Where: Chehalis: please email Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or call 360 880 8130 for directions.

What to bring: woodenware, frames, foundation – and questions! LCBA will provide tools, glue, & screws. If you need woodenware, check the “Beekeeping Supplies” link under “Resources & Links” on our website, or call Susanne (see contact info above). We’ll build hive bodies, supers, telescoping covers, and put together frames; we’re not making screened bottom boards, as those are complex. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate & snacks will be provided. Attending this workshop is free.

March 9, 16, 23, & 30: WSBA Apprentice Beekeeping class in East Lewis County.

When: 1 to 4 p.m.

Where: Please note change of venue! Centralia College East, Room 101, 701 Airport Way, Morton, WA 98356

Cost: \$30 individual; \$45 couple or family

LCBA President Norm Switzler will teach this introductory class, assisted by Peter Glover, Sheila Gray, and Susanne Weil. The course is sponsored by Lewis County Extension. To download the registration brochure, visit our website, http://lewiscountybeekeepers.org/upcoming_events, or contact LCBA Secretary Susanne: susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or 360 880 8130.

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March 12: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 -9 p.m., 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College.

Topic: Swarm & Colony Removals ~ Adventure, Learning, Saving Bees!

LCBA President Norm Switzler will narrate a slideshow of swarm and colony removals. Discussion: what's involved & how interested LCBA members can participate. It's a great way to learn more about bees – as well as help them find a good home.

Business Meeting: Updates on arrival of package bees & nucs; upcoming workshops & mentor program; tips on hiving your bees; beekeeping Q&A.

April 27: LCBA Mentor Workshop: How to Inspect Your Hives

Where: Winlock: Please email Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or call 360 880 8130 for directions.

Time: 1 to 3 p.m.

Topics: Learn how to check on your bees' condition without harming them. Mentors will give demonstrations on how to find the queen, confirm that she's laying, identify a good brood pattern, spot signs of bee diseases, and more, including hiving bees, depending on when packages and nucs arrive.

Late June 2013: WSU – WSBA Bee Field Days. WSU-Pullman's APIS Lab will host WSBA & members of bee groups again this June. All Washington State beekeeping societies / members are invited. More details – date, workshops, cost – will be posted on our LCBA website & announced in the newsletter when available. Road trip to Pullman, anyone?

July 26-28: Pacific Northwest Treatment-Free Beekeeping Conference. Pacific University, about half an hour south of Portland. Tuition of \$268 includes room and board. For more information, visit blisshoneybees.org.

Late summer/early fall 2013: 2013 WAS conference, Santa Fe, New Mexico. More details as they become available.

October 31 – November 2, 2013: WSBA/ORSBA Conference, Seaside, Oregon. WSBA will co-host its annual conference with the Oregon State Beekeepers' Association. More details as they become available!

NOTES FROM OUR JANUARY 9th MEETING

Topic: “An Adventure into Top Bar Hive Beekeeping”: LCBA Vice President Dave Gaston

Dave asked whether people knew what top bar hives were: most present did. While looking online for information about ways to “house the girls,” Dave had read about top bar hives and was intrigued by its simplicity, ease of management, the view window, and it just looked cool. Kaye then got him one for Father’s Day. All he needed was bees – a need quickly met by a call from Shelton to remove a swarm from a cedar tree. Dave brought in the top bar hive that a friend had built after he saw the one Kaye bought.

Top Bar Construction: (Dear readers, to help visualize this top bar hive, please see attached photos at the end of the newsletter; more are available on our website’s Photo Gallery.) In a top bar hive, the long, rectangular hive body rests on a pair of legs at either end, rather like an elongated sawhorse (for dimensions, see below). The hive body stands about three feet off the ground, which makes for easier management by beekeepers mindful of their backs. The box contains holes for entrance and; the holes can be plugged with corks as needed. The larger the hive becomes, the more corks are pulled out to allow ventilation.

Inside the hive, the beekeeper places two “follower boards” – one on either side of the top bars – and these allow for expansion as the colony grows. The top bars that give the hive its name are, literally, bars that lie across the top of the hive above the space – the bees build down from that, shaping vertically hanging comb, which is what comes naturally to them. The beekeeper can rub wax on the bars to encourage the bees to build comb from them. A photo showed this rubbing to provide scent attractant. Although some say that the bars are not a solid foundation, Dave has not had that experience. Dave’s entire hive is built from cedar wood, in part because he got his initial bees from a cedar tree; some people prefer pine. Asked if cedar wood may be better to deter Varroa, Dave was not sure, but reported that the health of this hive is “fantastic.”

Building a Top Bar Hive – the Dimensions:

28 bars - 17.5 x 1 & 3/8 inches.

Inside measurements: across top, 16 inches; across bottom, 6.5 inches

Depth from bottom to bottom of bars: 11 inches

Inside length: 42 inches

2 follower boards must fit snugly, inside with less than 3 / 8 of an inch gap to prevent bees from entering the empty chamber.

Minimum size is 4 feet long.

Norm Switzler asked if you could make the bars thicker to have thicker comb, easier to extract from – Dave said the problem is that the added weight could tear the comb off the bar. Tim Geise noted limitations – you can potentially get 4 boxes on a Langstroth and overwinter with 2. Dave said that you need to manage carefully and take out bars filled with honey so the hive doesn’t become congested.

Conceivably you could make the box itself longer and control with follower boards. The top bar hive is horizontal so the bees stay warmer where the Langstroth hive loses its warmth due to the vertical chimney. During the winter you reduce the size of the chamber with the follower boards.

The Plexiglass observation window: Not all top bar hives have these, but the hive which Dave demonstrated has a view window that enables less invasive management – there is less need to pull out frames since he can see what is going on. Dave added that the observation window is great for educating others: children, especially, are fascinated. The window goes on the opposite long side from the corks.

How Dave's Hive Grew: Dave started his hive in late June, right after Father's Day. He gave his bees 8 bars, fanning from the left side: after one week, his girls had already started building from bar #7, and there was brood, pollen, and capped honey. As the bees expanded, Dave put in two bars at a time. He caught three swarms from the same cedar tree throughout the summer. The first went into the top bar hive and the other two went into Langstroth's. Dave numbers his bars for efficient management. After one month, his bees had built out to bar #14. This colony had thus doubled in size in one mere month! Bars 11 – 14 had stored honey already – previous bars were packed with brood. He left bar #1 in place and let them build in just one direction. The bees had begun cleanout of cells from which brood had hatched, and the queen was laying again. Dave noted that she's a fantastic queen: in photos, she looked large, surrounded by her retinue. By week six, the bees were working on bar #19, and Dave added bars 22 and 23. For winter, he cut back to 21 bars since bars 22 and 23 had some honey but weren't completely filled out and he wanted to condense the hive into a smaller space for winter.

Benefits of Top Bar Hives: Dave notes that top bar hives are “great for beginners.” This is partly because they are relatively easy to work, they require less exposure and disruption of the colony, and the observation window lets newbees literally see their hive grow. Top bar hives are less expensive than a Langstroth (see below for costs). Unlike a Langstroth, there are no heavy boxes to lift, so your back will thank you. Finally, there is no need for a honey extractor, since comb can be cut out (for comb honey) or easily crushed (to withdraw honey).

Extracting Honey From Top Bar Frames: When there are only a couple of bars left for bees to expand on – e.g., when they have built to bar #26 of 30 – you can harvest some honey; however, it is best to leave the honey over the winter and then harvest what they haven't used the next spring. Dave was asked how he gets honey out: he takes stainless steel bowl, inserts the comb filled with honey, and then, using a masher (like a potato masher), breaks down the comb and lets the honey drip through. This does destroy that comb, but then it can be put it out for bees to clean up. It would also work to carefully uncap the comb and put it into an extractor. Either way, the bees will readily make more comb. Because the comb was so pristine, Dave was urged by Tim Geise to sell it or use it as comb honey. Tim noted that the Farmers' Market doesn't have that kind of product, so it could be very popular.

Do Top Bar Frames Yield Less Honey? This is debatable. Dave's honey turned out very light colored. He could not figure out why, but then realized they'd left Asian pears on the ground since their bees were feeding on them. Dave's theory: this is Asian pear honey.

Are Queen Excluders Used With Top Bar Hives? Dave noted that queen excluders are not necessary in top bar hives. The bees will naturally have a brood chamber which is the first ten bars. They build the rest for honey storage. The queen stays in the brood chamber and doesn't mix with the field bees

honey chamber. Dave only harvested three frames out of 24, but this was his first year. How much remained to serve as the nest area for winter? Dave reported that bees went to the center in the fall. They then filled out the end frames with honey for food stores. There were eleven bars / frames on the right side and three on the left. The rest of the bars were filled with both pollen and honey for the winter.

Performing Hive Inspections on Top Bar Hives: Asked about performing inspections on the frames, Dave noted that it's critical not to tilt the frames when you handle them, as one can with a Langstroth arrangement. Rather, the beekeeper must hold the frames with the top bar facing up and the comb hanging straight down: if held at an angle, the delicate comb attachment can tear off. How can a top bar beekeeper keep the comb from curving? Dave suggested that one separate the comb and, very carefully, bend it back and reattach it (the wax will be soft and easy to manipulate). If the comb direction "starts to go crazy, you have to fix it right away or wait till the following year to cut the comb out and fix it and start again," Dave noted.

Colony Management: Though top bar hives require more visits, to prevent crosscombing, overall, the beekeepers' net time investment is less because manipulating top bar frames is so easy. You need to check for room to grow and to ensure that the bees are not either building cross or curved comb. This usually occurs when they are first installed or when they are in their honey storage bars. With the view window he does not have to go in as often. With 8 to 12 frames, his inspection takes just minutes - the time it would take to pry open the lid and inner cover on a Langstroth, Norm commented. Bruce asked whether, during inspection, Dave takes out each frame: Dave said that sometimes he does, but sometimes he leaves the brood chamber alone and only checks it every two weeks for queen cells, and just looks at honey frames in between.

Hive Placement: As with Langstroths, the hive should be oriented east / southeast, and it must be level. Though it is difficult to move the top bar box, this can be solved with the proper stand; Dave notes that two people would still be needed to move the hive. Top bar hives are not ideal for commercial beekeepers because these mobility issues would mean difficulty in transporting them long distances.

Hiving Bees in a Top Bar Hive: Dave noted that you can hive package bees, but you need to be very careful not to encourage building of cross comb due to the queen cage. You can directly release the queen, or pin her cage to a bar: if you tack or pin the cage to a bar, you should go back the next day and remove the empty cage. To insert a queen into a top bar hive, some lay the queen cage in the bottom rather than hang or tack it to the delicate top bar frame/comb arrangement; by the time the candy plug is eaten through, the workers will have had plenty of time to be used to her pheromones and will not kill her. Asked if he could he make queens from a top bar arrangement, Dave said that he easily could.

Cell Size of Foundation Bees Build in Top Bar Hives? Natural cell size – which bees build in top bar hives, since they are not given wax foundation - is about 4.4 mm to 5.1 mm. The standard cell size in foundation that one purchases is 5.4 mm. The smaller cell size of the bees' natural construction inhibits Varroa's ability to reproduce. You are able to 'manage bees' instead of 'manage Varroa,' according to Michael Bush in *The Practical Beekeeper*, Vol. 1, X-Star Publishing Co., 2011.

Feeding Bees in a Top Bar Hive? Dave did feed his top bar girls, though he realized that he really did not need to. After first two weeks, they were building so fast that he stopped feeding. Feeding can be done two ways. One is to use a glass jar, poke holes in the lid, put in syrup, invert the jar, and

place it in the empty side of the hive on a few sticks to hold it off the bottom. If you open up the corks, the bees will find it –they’ll fly out one hole and in the other. If you put a pollen patty in, just put it on the bottom.

Corks and Ventilation: Dave was asked how many corks he pulls in the summertime: this depends on conditions and the size. In his hive, he has six corks on the bottom and three on top for ventilation that are equally spaced across the length of the hive box.

Catching Swarms For A Top Bar Hive: Dave suggests installing the bees and leaving 8 to 12 bars, depending on the size of the swarm. To attract swarms, you can leave one frame of honey as bait in a bait box. Putting lemon grass oil will attract scouts looking for a new home. Another way is to build a box with 8 frames, add the attractant lemon grass oil, hang it up in a tree, and wait for a swarm to find it.

Managing To Prevent Swarms: Dave noted that as with Langstroth hives, beekeepers should look for queen cells, whether swarm or supersedure, and decide whether to cut them out or keep them. Norm asked if you could lengthen the observation window to observe for swarm cells; Dave said that was possible, but then you’d have to be sure to insulate that window in winter.

Late Summer Robbing? Dave did not face this problem – his bees were able to protect their cork holes. If robbing occurs it is easy to cork up the holes so they only have one to protect. Or close all of the entrance holes since the ventilation holes have a screen cover them.

Preparing To Over-Winter Your Top Bar Colony: As winter approaches, reduce the openings back down to one. You should secure it to the ground so it isn’t toppled by high winds. You can also add insulation – Dave used tar paper – over the top of the bars and wrap with felt paper. Finally, Dave roped down the entire hive box for security

Screened Bottom Boards: Yes or No With Top Bar Hives? You can build a bottom of the top bar hive with a screen, but it needs to have a solid bottom for the winter or it will be too much ventilation. In November, Dave moved his Langstroth hive bees inside, into horse stalls in a barn for winter. He then put them on solid bottom boards to try to avoid moisture and mold problems. Also, he used a moisture board from Mann Lake: he stuck these on his hives underneath the top cover, and the ventilation absorbed the moisture.

Spring Management For Top Bar Hives: Dave recommends inserting two bars into frames 1 & 2 (the brood chamber) bar spaces, preferably 2 bars that already have empty drawn comb, and shift all the bars down to accommodate these two bars. Dave expressed the hope that this technique will prevent swarming...but noted that bees don’t read the books.

Changing Out Comb: just as recommended with Langstroth frames, it is a good idea to change comb every two years, so that pollution and environmental effects can’t harm the hive. This is done naturally when you harvest honey. Dave found that his bees were “wax-producing fools.”

What Do Top Bar Hives Cost? If you make it yourself, assembling the kit will cost under \$100. We found the luxury top bar hive at Beethinking.com in Portland. His hive came mostly assembled; he had only to attach the legs. Ted said you can type in top bar hive on youtube and find top bar hives that way. There are good websites that give dimensions on how to build your own, listed below:

\$130.00- <http://www.blisshoneybees.org/Products.html>

\$299.00- <http://www.beethinking.com/store/top-bar-hives/top-bar-hive?gclid=CMfb0ZSNrLACFYQGRQodYiF7Wg>

Dave's 2013 management plan is to make room in the brood chamber so the bees are not congested. He's also planning to take honey that is left over and make room for them to expand.

How A Bear Inspired Dave's Top Bar Hive Adventure: "I shot a bear in our orchard and it happened to be large enough to go into the state record book. I had a full mount made at a taxidermist in Oregon City. When we went down to pick it up we stopped at Bee Thinking and was impressed with their top bar hives. That's when Kaye ordered one." Bees, bars, bears . . . they all begin with B!

Colony Management Record Form:

At last summer's Queen Rearing class in Silverdale, Dave picked up a very useful form to help guide our hive inspections, remind us of things we might forget to note, and help us keep useful records on our bees through the year. As Jim Bach noted in his "Sustainable Beekeeping" keynote talk at the WSBA/WAS conference last October, when we lose bees and don't know why, it's hard to plan ahead for better outcomes – so this record-keeping form could help. The form is attached to this newsletter and posted on our website under Resources & Links. Dave walked the group through the sheet.

Members had some questions about just what "grading the queen" involved. Dave explained that "A" is the classic "football pattern" of brood covered by arches of pollen and honey, and "B" is a moderate version of that pattern, but "C" is mottled, like what Dewey Caron calls "snot brood": a poor laying pattern that suggests it's time to re-queen. Susanne asked why that's a "C" and not a "F." Norm commented that "bees' grades should be only B or better." Dave let these comments buzz past.

LCBA Monthly Business Meeting

Membership Dues: Treasurer Jon Wade reminded us that January is dues month (\$24 for individuals or families; there is a \$10 join-up fee, but this is waived if the new member has taken LCBA's WSBA Apprentice course). Jon noted that dues are especially important since they are the only income source that LCBA has at this time, though the board is considering fundraising initiatives, permissible under our state nonprofit status. Dues pay for website registration fees with Yahoo, printing/mailing of newsletters for those who don't have email access, Grange hall rental for our holiday potluck, nametags, all outreach materials at the Southwest Washington Fair and other events, our Washington State nonprofit annual registration, and our WSBA dues, which help fund honey bee research at WSU.

President Norm called for a show of hands of new members and asked them to introduce themselves. Kevin and Jean Reichert have been involved with bees for about six years. Trent Matthew started beekeeping last spring, has two hives, a small sawmill, and wants to build his own equipment. One of Tim Weible's Apprentice class students, Gordon Bellevue, bought equipment in anticipation of starting beekeeping in 2013, but got a swarm, so now has a hive: Norm commented that perhaps this was meant to be. Herb and Maggie Keeling have just signed up and plan to take LCBA's Apprentice Beekeeping course in Morton this March. Steve and Barbara Grega took LCBA's class from Norm and Bob Harris last fall: they don't have bees yet, but will starting this spring with Bob's help.

Membership directory: Membership Coordinator Steve Howard passed around a sign-in sheet and name tags. He noted that, like the Master Gardeners, LCBA is developing a printed membership directory through which members can find others with related bee interests and beekeepers in their immediate area, as well as contact information for everyone in the group who fills out a form. Steve had membership directory forms to fill out, and noted that if you have a photo you'd like used, you can send him a JPEG file (sfhoward45@msn.com) or have him take a picture at one of our meetings.

Package Bee Orders: Norm reported that in response to requests from members, the Board is looking for options in addition to or in place of Ruhl Bee Supply, from whom we've usually ordered package bees in the past. Norm has spoken with officers at Olympia Beekeepers' about piggybacking our order onto theirs to save some money. If we can work it out, we might get bee packages for mid-\$60 dollar range because Olympia has a member who volunteers to drive his own truck down to California and buys bees directly from the supplier. However, they may not have room in the truck for additional orders. Norm will follow up and report at our February 13 meeting about how LCBA's package order, plus options for those who want to order individual packages later in the season.

Nuc Orders: Members Tim and Sharette Geise from Woogie Bee, are working with Mark Johnson in Oregon, who provided nucs for LCBA last year. For newbees, Tim noted that a nuc comes in a four-frame box with an established, laying queen and brood chamber. The bees are split off from a thriving hive. The benefit of nucs, in contrast with a package, is starting with an already established colony, which gives a jump start in our climate. On the other hand, the packages let beekeepers observe the complete growth process of a colony. Some beekeepers like to try both. Norm commented that last year, he installed three boxes of nucs and said these were among the most mellow bees he had worked.

Nuc order details: This year, nucs will cost \$90. If Tim can supply boxes and feeders, as last year, it might be \$85: Tim will know later, and those who order at the \$90 price would get a rebate. The bees will be Italians. To order nucs through Tim and Mark, members need to bring a check made out to LCBA, or cash, to our February 13 meeting. Tim would bring the nucs to a central location for distribution when they are available, probably in late April, and would need his boxes back after we hive our bees. Questions about nuc orders? Contact Susanne (see page 1 of newsletter for email/phone).

LCBA Library: Dave Gaston noted that he and Susanne got together to inventory our library, which had been housed at the Lewis County Extension office. It fits in a cardboard box (about the size of a deep body...). Much of what we have is dated: the list of materials is attached to this newsletter and posted on our website under Resources and Links (books and films link). Dave will bring the library box to our meetings with a sign up sheet for anyone who wants to check out resources. Dave thinks that the club ought to have a library for members' reference. Susanne asked folks to email if there are materials they would like to see in the library or would like to loan. Norm noted two texts our library does have that are particularly useful: first, *Beekeeping for Dummies* is very useful for beginners, and the *ABC to XYZ of Beekeeping* is more historical oriented and goes into greater depth.

Gardening for Everyone is coming up on February 16. LCBA usually has a table with materials for demonstration, handouts, a newsletter sign-up sheet, and trifolds with photos of bees and LCBA workshops. Norm, Brandy DeMelt, and Mentorship Coordinator Gary Stelzner volunteered to staff the table. Peter Glover will bring his and Susanne's "dog and pony show."

WSBA Journeyman Class: Susanne reported that the Journeyman class, in the process of getting organized, has the option of using the Extension classroom on first Wednesdays of each month. If anyone is interested in studying more advanced beekeeping at the journeyman level, please contact Susanne (see page 1 of newsletter). To enroll in the Journeyman class costs \$10 for the book, and enrollees must have passed the WSBA Apprentice course and have been beekeepers for three years.

Upcoming Events (see above): Susanne also showed members the list of upcoming events on the website, including WSU bee genetics expert Sue Cobey's talk on Friday, January 25, and our hive building workshop on Saturday, February 23. All of these events are free. The board is developing a set of spring and summer workshops: more information will be available at our February 13 monthly meeting.

Honey Bee Humor (now, bee forgiving): Q: What did the honey bee say after she saw the doctor? A: "I've got hives!" (Courtesy of Pat Swinth)

BEES IN THE NEWS

Resolving CCD Seen as Key to National & Market Security: Yahoo! News reports that "[t]he Department of Defense has committed itself both to increase the CCD research budget and to offer sophisticated military technologies used to measure air, tissue and other pathogens in search of a potential cause of CCD. Those same instruments are normally used to detect deadly agents that might be used in chemical or biological warfare against U.S. troops in a war. . . . With the USDA estimating that Americans next year will import a full 40% of their vegetables from China, the problem takes on a true security dimension, as the U.S. already faces the prospect of being overly dependent upon foreign nations for its food supply." Yahoo also reports that several new treatments purporting to "cure" CCD are en route to market: Monsanto's subsidiary, Beeologics, has a product called "Remebee . . . now on a fast track for final FDA approval." The other, an Italian product from BeesFree (BEES), "decided to skip the U.S. market and sell its BeesVita Plus remedy first in locales with less strict regulatory regimens. And so far, the strategy appears to be working. BeesFree quickly signed several large deals in Argentina and South Africa directly after the product launch." To learn more, visit: <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/marketexclusive-com-saving-bees-commercial-201201087.html>

"Honey bees are more effective at pollinating almonds when other species of bees are present": On 11 Jan 2013, *Phys.org* reported that new research from central California shows that honey bees do a better job pollinating the almonds if they have help from native bees like blue orchard bees, bumblebees, carpenter bees, and sweat bees. Entomologists from UC Davis report that "[i]n orchards with non-*Apis* (non-honey bees), the foraging behavior of honey bees changed and the pollination effectiveness of a single honey bee visit was greater than in orchards where non-*Apis* bees were absent," suggesting that more pollinators make better pollinators, thus highlighting how important preserving diversity among pollinator species is.

Next steps: "Now that we know about bee behavior—that they move more between orchard rows when non-*Apis* bees are around—we need to study the reason why they move . . . One route we will be exploring is the chemical footprints that the bees are leaving on the flowers." To read the full study, "Synergistic Effects of Non-*Apis* Bees and Honey Bees for

Pollination Services," visit: <http://phys.org/news/2013-01-honey-bees-effective-pollinating-almonds.html#jCp>. To see their video - "Can Wild Pollinators Contribute, Augment and Complement Almond Pollination in California" - visit: admin.na4.acrobat.com/_a841422360/p37649788/

"The Story of Honey" – a new video from the National Honey Board - aims to debunk stories that excessive filtration makes honey less authentic and to argue against the idea that pollen should be part of honey. Commercial beekeepers explain how they filter honey to remove all foreign particles, including pollen. To view the 6 minute video, visit: <http://www.storyofhoney.com/>. To read the full press release, visit: http://storyofhoney.com/pdfs/NHB_NationalHoneyBoardPressRelease.pdf. Responses from readers would be welcome for our March newsletter!

"Newfoundland Blizzard Buries Honey Bees – News at 11!" *Mudsongs.org*, 11 Jan 2013. Read the story of how an intrepid Canadian beekeeper dug his girls out from under a snowdrift: the 3 minutes video tells the tale of how "St. John's, Newfoundland, got hit with about 50 cm of heavy, wet snow along with 110 km/h winds that made for some seriously high snowdrifts. One such snowdrift buried one of my beehives. Here it is shortly after I frantically dug it out with my bare hands": <http://mudsongs.org/newfoundland-blizzard-buries-honey-bees-news-at-11/>

Comments on our January 2013 Newsletter

What WSBA/WAS Conference Registrations Do & Don't Fund! Former Washington State Apiarist Jim Bach wrote with an important correction: "Page 7, paragraph 1: "funds from the WSBA/WAS conference registrations are also going toward the [WSU indoor over-wintering] research." NOT. Registration fees fund the conference. The WSDA Apiary Advisory Committee made recommendations to the Director of Agriculture that \$30,000 from the Department's Apiary Fund (WA beekeepers' annual hive registration fees [see Announcements, below, for this year's hive registration information] be used to fund the WSU bee research."

Comments on Over-Wintering Issues and Equipment: Jim also noted, re: Page 7, Paragraph 2: "Indoor wintering also allows the bees to enter into nature's programmed winter diapause, giving the queen a rest for a month or two." Jim commented re: Page 7, Paragraph 3: "Over the years I've seen beekeepers who kept their hives in abandoned buildings as you describe Bruce Casaw doing. If you have the building, it is a good idea. It also protects the hives from the weather. Here in Yakima, I put 1.5" insulation on the hive cover and wrap two hives together with 15 lb. black tar paper to protect them from our cold winds. Oh, it's 21 F outside as I write this. The sun hits the black paper and UV heat waves goes through the tar paper and the bees absorb it through their hive walls and heat their cluster. I've repeatedly taken the temperature in hives over the winter and found that the temp at the bottom of the colony cluster and to each side was outdoor temperature. The temp immediately above the cluster was only 10 F above outdoor temperature. Thus showing the bees are very good at holding heat into their winter cluster. The black paper also heats up the colony in the center as measured with a long stem thermometer. Brood rearing also starts earlier with the spring sun - by about 2 to 3 weeks in large colonies."

Jim suggests that “as long as your hives have top ventilation and the tar paper is wrapped tightly the rain won't blow inside the paper. I used the tar paper every winter when I lived in western WA and kept bees - 1969 to 1977. The bees do fine. I usually winter three deeps or four westerns so I can make splits in the spring. The wrapping doesn't “promote moisture leaching.” Where hive bodies meet should be seamless so no moisture will go there unless the equipment has been damaged. Repair the equipment. Hive entrances should be 5/16" to 3/8" high and 1.5' to 2" wide. The top vent should be 5/16" by 1" to 1.5" wide.

“I always use what are called Slatted Racks on my bottom boards. They are sold at supply houses - Glory Bee Foods in Oregon (www.glorybeefoods.com) sells them as (J #14987 on pg. 19), and so does Betterbee, Inc., in New York (www.betterbee.com) item #SR1 or #SR9. I couldn't find them in the Dadant or Mann Lake catalogs. In western Washington, I always left the bottom entrance wide open, but here in Yakima I reduce it to 5/16" by 1.5" to 2" wide because of the wind. The advantage of the slatted rack is that fall colony clusters are usually larger, and in the fall and winter bees cluster between the wood slats and control the air flow through the hive, at least until the colony shrinks. I've even seen swarm cells along the bottom frame bottom bars! The hives are warmer than those without these slatted racks. Colonies expand more quickly in the spring because of the increased warmth in the hive and larger colonies, usually.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Honey Labeling Regulations: A number of LCBA members have asked about honey labeling regulations, honey testing, and related issues. The National Honey Board has several very informative pages on their website that cover the following issues:

- Honey Labeling Regulations: visit: <http://www.honey.com/honey-industry/honey-testing-and-regulations/honey-labeling>.
- Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP): “a preventative food safety system in which every step in the manufacture, storage and distribution of a food product is scientifically analyzed for microbiological, physical and chemical hazards. Potential hazards are, therefore, identified and appropriate control measures are taken before the problem can occur.” To learn more, visit: <http://www.honey.com/honey-industry/honey-testing-and-regulations/haccp-definition-and-procedures>.
- Find a Honey Testing Lab: <http://www.honey.com/honey-industry/honey-testing-and-regulations/find-a-honey-testing-lab>.

National Honey Board: “A Feast With Honey”: The National Honey Board’s latest newsletter features a new group of recipes for those of us who might like to shed a few pounds in 2013 without sacrificing taste. These new recipes – Honey-Lime Chicken Skewers, Sunrise Smoothie (with honey, banana, & OJ), and more, are posted on our website (www.lewiscountybeekeepers.org) under Resources

and Links: Cooking with Honey. To view the NHB's newsletter, visit: <http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=1919ce59c4b8f2ab2df86c158&id=8a0452079d&e=25eb76216e>

2013 Washington Apiary Registration: It's that time again! Jim Bach notes that the Washington State Department of Agriculture's Apiary Advisory Committee annually recommends funding specific research into honey bee health from hive registration fees. Jim notes that "[t]his is one way that beekeepers across the state can voluntarily contribute to bee research and can feel they are getting something for their fees. Bee registration is required by state statute but is not enforced, giving beekeepers the choice to support their interests and industry by paying the fees." If you'd like to register your hives, visit our website and click on "Resources and Links" for a PDF file of this year's Apiary Registration Form. You can also find it online at: <http://agr.wa.gov/PlantsInsects/Apiary/docs/ApiaryRegistrationForm.pdf>.

2013 Women in Agriculture Conference Saturday, February 23, Old Historic Courthouse, Meeting Room 003 (west entrance), Chehalis, WA. If you're not going to LCBA's Hive Building Workshop on the 23rd, and you're a woman who keeps bees, this may interest you! Extension reports that "'Growing Your Successful Farm Business' is this year's theme. Last year nearly 500 women heard practical advice on how to meet the challenges of everyday farming and manage the risks of their operation. Many attendees reported it was one of the best conferences for women farmers because it was practical information they could use right away: how to improve farm management skills, use financial records to improve the bottom line, and connect with other women producers. The conference registration fee includes the workshop, light breakfast, lunch, handouts and a copy of the book titled "Farmer Jane - Women Changing the Way We Eat" written by Temra Costa. Late registration fees will apply after February 18. Scholarship opportunities are available. To request a scholarship application send an e-mail to viebrock@wsu.edu. If you prefer to register with a check, contact Margaret Viebrock at viebrock@wsu.edu or call 509-745-8531. Coordinators will send a paper registration form to you. Additional conference information can be found at www.womeninag.wsu.edu."

WSBA's January Newsletter summarizes recent research that will interest beekeepers; to read it, visit www.wasba.org and click on the link, top right corner. Find out what WSU is doing to cryopreserve bee semen imported into the U.S. and strengthen genetic diversity among our bees . . . learn about the trials and tribulations of the Skagit Valley Queen Rearing Project . . . read Dr. Ramesh Sagili's (Dewey Caron's colleague at OSU) discussion of bee nutrition as a first line of defense against disease . . . and visit the homepage of the National Pollinator Defense Fund, newly organized to push for better enforcement of pesticide regulations (www.pollinatordefense.org).

Respectfully reported – enjoy, and Bee Happy! (And scroll on down for some top bar photos; more on our website's photo gallery, www.lewiscountybeekeepers.org.)

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Above: Dave Gaston's top bar hive.



Dave displays a follower board from his top bar hive.

Below, see the pattern on one of Dave's frames after their first month:

