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May 2014 LCBA Newsletter

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Questions? Suggestions? Resources you'd like to share, stories you'd like to tell?
Please contact LCBA Secretary Susanne Weil: susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or call 360 880 8130.

UPCOMING LCBA EVENTS:

May 10: Hive Inspection Workshop – *Canceled b/c of Rain – Rescheduled to Sunday, May 18, 1 to 3 p.m. – please see below for details.*

May 14: LCBA Monthly Meeting

When: 7 – 9 p.m.; Social Time 6:30 to 7

Where: 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College 701 W Walnut St, Centralia 98531

Topics: Bees in the Garden & On the Farm: Protecting Pollinators from Pesticides & Plantings Beneficial for Bees

Speaker: Bill Wamsley, Lewis County Noxious Weed Control Board Coordinator
Bill will discuss how to protect pollinators when applying pesticides, herbicides, & fungicides, as well as issues related to invasive / noxious plants and weeds. Bill will also discuss native cover crops & shrubs beneficial to bees. His talk will be followed by our business meeting – monthly drawing, Spring Youth Fair slideshow, Beekeeping Q&A…

Left, bee in flower (photo, Old Moss Woman's Garden); right, yellow-faced bumblebees on thistle (Susanne Weil)

Saturday, May 17: Mentor Workshop: Assembling & Managing Top Bar Hives

When: 1 to 3 p.m.

Where: Littlerock (directions: email susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com)

Topics: LCBA Vice President Dave Gaston will show how to assemble a top bar hive, discuss his design, & demonstrate management methods.

Sunday, May 18: Hive Inspection Workshop (rescheduled from 5/10). *Weather Dependent!*

When: 1 to 3 p.m.

Where: 2 Chehalis apiaries - please RSVP to Susanne for addresses and directions.

Topics: This inspection workshop will focus on checking development of package bees, assessing brood pattern, hive inspection techniques, and more. *Those who RSVP will get a "weather update" email the night before if the forecast is iffy.*

June 11: LCBA Monthly Meeting

When: 7 – 9 p.m.; Social Time 6 to 7 p.m.

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

Topic: Queen-Rearing in the Pacific Northwest: Breeding Bees Adapted to Our Climate

Speaker: Charles Bennett, President, Pacific Northwest Queen Rearing Club & Vice President, Washington State Beekeepers' Association.

Charles is back – many remember his great talk on planting a bee-friendly garden in fall 2012. For a preview of this meeting's talk visit PNQRC's website: http://www.pacificnorthwestqueenrearingclub.org/ Charles's talk will be followed by Q&A, our business meeting, monthly drawing, & more.

Nurse bees feed royal jelly to larva (photo, Pacific Northwest Queen Rearing Club)

Saturday, July 12: LCBA's Summer Potluck *(in lieu of regular 2nd Wednesday meeting)*

Location: Alexander Park; Time TBA in June Newsletter.

Come enjoy good food, good fellowship, & talk bees. Honey recipes always welcome!

Aug 2-3: Treatment Free Beekeeping Conference II: Medford, OR. Enrollment is limited to 75 people to allow for hands-on workshops and in depth discussions: this is only half of last year's available spaces, so those eager to attend should register soon. To learn more, visit: www.blisshoneybees.org/2014conference.html. For information about what last year's conference was like, visit our website and go to Newsletters, 2013; there's a summary of Vice President Dave Gaston's description of the experience in the September 2013 newsletter.

August 12-17: LCBA at the Southwest Washington Fair

We'll have an exhibit in the Floral Building again, with the observation hive, the People's Choice Honey Judging, & plenty of materials to help our Lewis County neighbors get to know bees better. Special events will be posted in early August. LCBA's official Fair honey judging will be August 11: details for entry & criteria coming soon. Want to volunteer? Please contact Susanne: we'll need you!

August 13: LCBA Monthly Meeting: Topic TBA

Sept 10: LCBA Monthly Meeting. Social Hour 6 to 7 p.m.; Speaker, 7-8 p.m., Business 8-9

Speaker: Dr. Dewey Caron: "Improving Fall/Winter Survivorship"

Bee losses in the Pacific Northwest were fearsome this past winter: Dr. Dewey Caron, affiliate faculty in Entomology at Oregon State University and one of the driving forces behind BeeInformed's bee loss survey, will update us on losses, broken out by Langstroth v. Top Bar .v Warre hives, but his main focus will be take-home messages from BeeInformed's research on "what we as beekeepers can do – before fall weather closes us down – to raise the bees that are going to raise the bees to pass the winter: fall management with emphasis on helping improve survivorship."

Coming Saturdays this October/November: LCBA's BEGINNING BEEKEEPING CLASS

When: October 4, 11, 25, November 1, 8; 9 a.m. to noon

Where: Centralia College Student Center, 212 S. Rock, Centralia WA 98531

Registration Brochures are available on our website under Upcoming Events.

LCBA offers the Washington State Beekeepers' Association's apprentice beekeeping curriculum, supplemented by LCBA's mentor & workshop program. Fall 2014 instructors: Bob Harris, Tomme Trikosko, Jon Wade.

LCBA MONTHLY MEETING NOTES: APRIL 9TH

V.P. Dave Gaston: Supering & Splits to Avoid Swarms & Develop Strong Colonies

President Norm Switzler introduced our speakers. Vice President Dave Gaston credited West Sound Beekeepers for giving us permission to use their PowerPoint, which will be posted on our website (monthly meetings link as well as mentors/classes). Dave took their queen rearing class in July of 2012 and thought it was so helpful that he took it again in 2013. (For info re: South Sound's 2014 queen rearing classes, visit their association calendar: http://www.westsoundbees.org/wsba_calendar_2014.pdf)

Why do splits? One reason is swarm prevention: Beekeepers want to avoid swarms if they live in a city: you want good relations with neighbors. As beekeepers know, when swarming, bees are at their most gentle since they do not have a home to defend - but people who don't know bees are scared by swirling clouds of bees. Dave likes to let them swarm: he figures that they know what they need better than he knows, and when they swarm, then he can collect them naturally. When cutting out queen cells, you run a risk because the bees themselves then cannot assess a developing queen's condition. They have their own logic when superseding. Dave noted that his "why mess with them" approach is a hobbyist philosophy: the more commercial approach emphasizes control because the commercial beekeeper doesn't want swarms interfering with colony buildup and honey production.

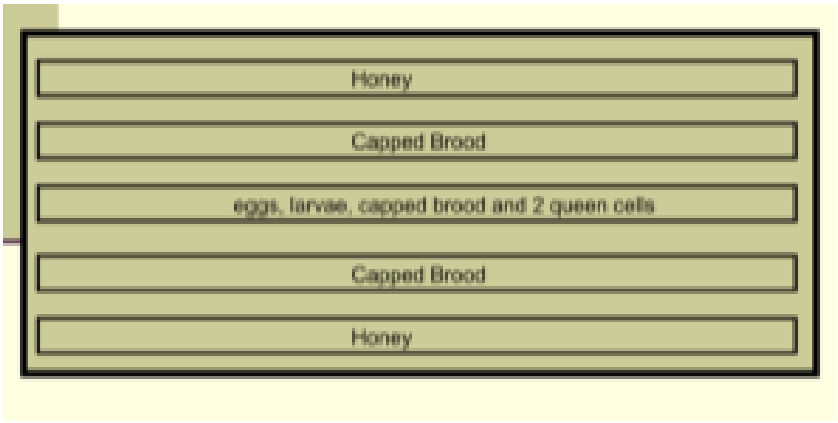
Supersedure v. swarming: Dave noted the difference between supersedure (when the bees raise a new queen because the old queen is failing, laying less, and giving off less queen substance pheromone) and swarming (when the bees are running out of space where they are and seek to start a second colony, led by the old queen, with new queen cells left behind in the old, established colony, from which they will do their mating flights, then return to lay). Supersedure cells typically are embedded in the center of a frame,

whereas swarm cells appear at the bottom of a frame: both look like peanuts in shape and texture (see photos below).

Left, a supersedure cell embedded in the middle of a brood frame (photo,BeeSource.com); right, swarm cells across the bottom of a frame (photo,Skagit Valley Beekeepers)

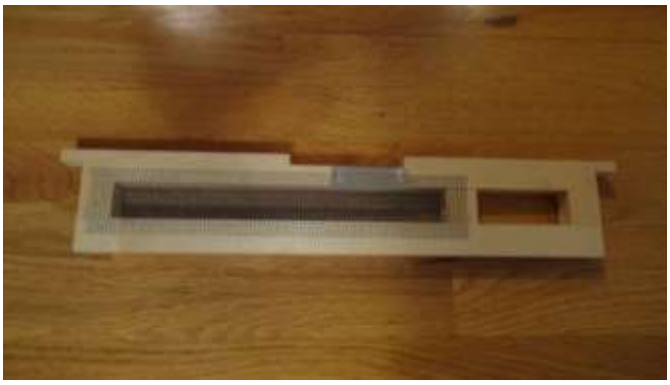
Another reason to split colonies – greater production if splits are well timed: By doing an <u>early</u> split, you can get two well-developed colonies and thus more honey production; splits are also useful for raising queens. Timing of splits can be tricky and is weather dependent – warm, non-rainy days are necessary. Late April / early May may be optimal. The earliest in our climate would be April: some drones will be out and the weather will have some warm days. Dave actually has already done a split this season with one of his top bar hives: normally, he would not advise doing so this early, but the timing was right. Pat Swinth noted that "an old timer" said the best time to do it was Mother's Day. . . .

Concepts Underlying Splits – When doing splits, beekeepers must ensure that both colonies end up with either a queen or the resources to raise one: they need an adequate supply of bees, adequate food supplies, including honey and pollen. If you are raising unmated queens, you need a supply of drones. Doing splits, one must respect the natural structure of the brood nest. Brood comb frames should go together in the center of the split, with drone brood on the outer brood frames, and honey/pollen frames on the outside frames (see illustration below). Rearing a queen to laying status will take an average of 24 to 40 days, though if you introduce a mated queen, it should only take, on average, 4 days.



Frame structure in a nuc (West Sound Beekeepers)

Using splits for re-queening: Dave noted that it is fun to experiment with different ways to introduce the new queen. It's easier to introduce the queen into a nuc rather than into a large hive box: they accept her more easily that way than they will if bees are spread out across many frames (perhaps her pheromones are more concentrated). Dave showed a neat board, long and thin, screened, with a slot on the side for inserting the queen cage (see photo):



Dave's specially made queen introduction board

Laying worker situations: Dave noted that if you have a laying worker in the colony, it may be wise to keep a new queen in her cage longer. Sometimes, when a hive is queenless, one of the workers will begin to lay: since she has never been mated, though, she can lay only drones. If you see a spotty brood pattern with a great deal of drone comb, and when viewing through a magnifying glass, can see 2 eggs in a cell, a worker may have taken over laying. Without workers, the engine of the hive, this colony will eventually die out unless re-queened.

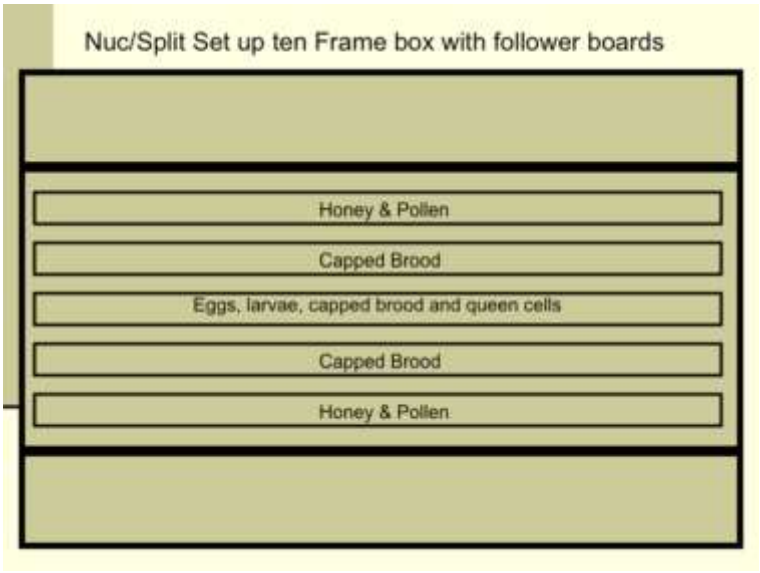
Above left, spotty brood pattern with many raised drone cells, typical of laying worker (BeeInformed.org); right, multiple eggs laid in cells are the hallmark of a laying worker (BeeSource.com)

Norm added that a colony with a laying worker will sometimes kill a newly introduced queen because they have gotten used to the imitation queen's pheromone: this requires you to introduce a new queen carefully, with protection. Dave noted another way to address the laying worker problem: the "walk away and shake the frames" approach. If you take each frame, walk a distance from the hive, and shake, the nurse bees, who haven't foraged and won't know the way back to the hive, will not make it back to protect that laying worker; the laying worker, too, may not make it back. You will lose some bees, but will have a greater chance that the new queen you introduce will survive.

Time of day to do a split? Splits should be done in the evening, with bees locked down for 24 hours if you plan to keep them in same yard: this helps minimize drift, since an adequate supply of bees is necessary for a successful split. Provide a dark cool room for this lockdown, with plenty of ventilation.

How to take a split off an existing hive: This can be done to prevent a swarm or to split a strong existing colony. If you see swarm cells, take the old queen out, put her into a nuc with frames of food, brood, and a good supply of existing bees; but leave the swarm cells in the old box. That simulates what bees would naturally do in that situation. To split a strong existing colony, move 5 frames into a nuc, set up as follows: First frame should be a honey frame; second frame, capped brood eggs and larvae; third frame, capped brood with queen cells if you have them – otherwise, you want just-hatched larvae so that workers can feed royal jelly and raise a queen; fourth frame, like the 2nd; fifth frame, honey. One disadvantage is that using this approach, it will take a month to get a laying queen.

Follower boards: Another way is to do the above type of split by placing a nuc in a full size deep hive body, using follower boards (see West Sound Beekeepers' slide, below). Once the bees start drawing comb, move the follower boards outward as they expand and you add frames. May/June is best for this approach: if you do this in the later part of July, you may have to start supplementing with bees and food so the colony will be ready for fall and winter.



(West Sound Beekeepers)

Kinds of splits: As Norm commented later in the presentation, all the splits methods Dave showed us have different purposes. Some will be a much slower process, and with eggs and larvae, you may be looking at 35 to 40 days before you actually have a mated queen ready to start laying. Dave noted an advantage of that delay: it can break the brood cycle for Varroa mites, leaving, potentially, a stronger hive. Norm also noted that in doing splits, you want to find larvae young - just after the egg has hatched – the younger the better, so the larvae can get maximum benefit of royal jelly. Jon noted if you have a split you don't think is progressing fast enough, you could steal brood frames from a stronger colony, or you could recombine it with that stronger colony.

Even split: Dave recommends the even split if you want to try splits for the first time because of its relative simplicity. Take half of everything, all frame types, and divvy them up in an even split. Remember to respect the brood nest structure, though (see above). Also, face both new hives at sides of the old hive so that returning bees are not sure which one to return to. This will ensure a relatively even

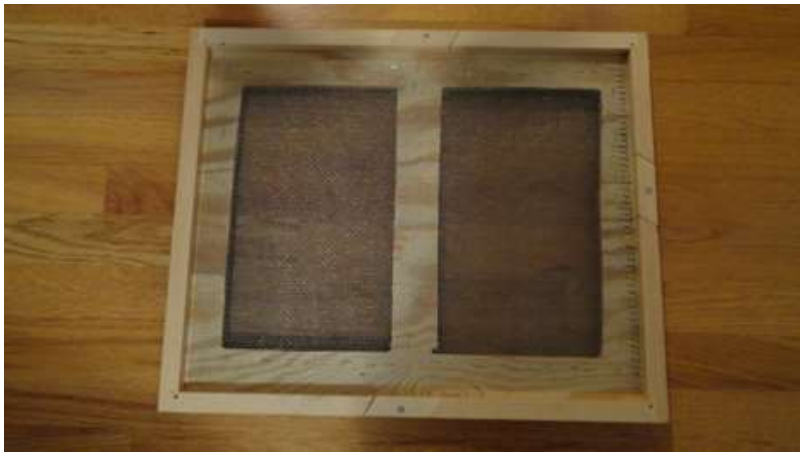
division of foragers in each half of the split. In about a week, you can swap the positions of each hive to "equalize the drift."

Walk away split: This, too, can be relatively simple. Take a frame of eggs, 2 frames of emerging brood, 2 frames of pollen and honey, and put them into a 5 frame nuc box. Shake in some extra nurse bees, making sure you don't take the queen. Put on the lid – and walk away! Dave was asked how you can distinguish nurse bees from foragers: when you shake a frame, the foragers will fly away, but the nurse bees still want to stick close. With walk-away splits, in 4 weeks, you can check to see if the queen is laying.

Typical split: the same as a walk away, except that in a typical split, you introduce a mated queen that you bought. This will speed up progress to a laying queen by about three weeks over splits in which a colony raises a new queen who must then get mated.

Simplified walk away split: In this method, you simply take the top box off a two box hive – or the middle box from a three box hive. Be sure that both boxes have bees and brood, put the colony you are taking off onto its own hive stand, and walk away. Four weeks later, you can check for a laying queen.

Demaree Method: The Demaree is harder to pull off. In Demaree, you have 2 queens in a hive that is split in the middle – that is, between two brood boxes - with a queen excluder, or with a double screen, between the boxes, and with multiple entrance options to control where bees come and go. You come back in 4 weeks to look for a queen in both boxes. One advantage of "demaree-ing" in a colder climate is that boxes give each other greater warmth. For more details on the Demaree method, see the South Sound powerpoint on our website under the April 2014 monthly meeting.



Above, Dave's Demaree board.

Membership Coordinator Tomme Trikosko: Bait Hives

What's optimal to use for a bait box? Tomme noted that first year beekeepers will quickly learn that bees do not read the same books we do: bees will do what they want. This includes swarming *(Tomme's words here foresaw future events: be sure to read about the swarm capture at Toledo High School by one of the Youth Scholarship program students, below!*). To catch a swarm, you need a dry space with a defensible entrance that has no predators in it already and smells like bees: bees may well move in. First, you must learn what bees like, then come up with a swarm-catching technique that fits what they like. Then, if it works, stick with it. You will see references to a 35 liter space as optimal for swarm capture – to put that in perspective, a deep hive body is 42.7 liters, whereas a medium is 29.3 liters. Do the bees

really care? The most important thing, in Tomme's experience, is that the space already smells like bees, so one of most powerful bait hives you can make is an old box you are about to dump, with lots of propolis: bees will go into it.

Bait hive placement: you can put a bait hive 15 feet high, as technical write-ups urge, but bees will go into much lower spaces, and for practicality, you need to think about how high up a ladder you are willing to climb while messing with bees. . . . Because frames inside the bait hive will shift in the box as you come down a ladder, Tomme put in nails to help stop frames from shifting. Think about understanding what bees need and figure out your own little twists: this is what beekeeping is all about.

Bait hive construction issues: Tomme showed a bait hive that she made (see photos, below). She attached a board to the back with a hole for easy nailing to a tree or a building. The opening of the box is two inches in diameter so that a swarm can move in quickly: bees in a swarm are like sheep and will want to move into the structure all at once. The plate is to hold 1/2 hardware cloth across the opening to keep birds out.

Keeping moisture out: It's vital to keep the bait hive tight and dry. For ventilation, Tomme drilled 3/16 inch holes at an angle through the box wall, slanting toward these toward the outside, so that no moisture would come in. Bees can seal holes like this with propolis and then open them up again when they choose. On the floor, she drilled holes next to the door to let any rain water that might blow in drip down. She affixed the bait hive to the wall with screws to be sure it would stay put, but Tomme noted that you can also use bungee cords to strap a bait hive to a tree. Finally, it's a good idea to label your bait hive with your name!

Above, Tomme's hive boxes (photos by Tomme)

Scents that attract bees: If you are a first year beekeeper, you may not have anything that smells like bees, such as frames with drawn comb. To simulate the scent of bees, you can rub lemon grass inside your bait hive: lemon grass is supposed to be similar to the scent that bees convey via their Nasonov gland. However, lemon grass smells strong and can drive bees away. If you can smell it, it would be too strong for bees, so be sparing when using it. You can also buy Nasonov scent. Less expensive: you can take beeswax and rub it inside the box.

How often should the bait hive be checked? At Toledo H.S., the bait hives are high profile, and since some are anxious about bees, Tomme will be checking daily. However, Tomme cautioned that you do not want to re-home bees the first day they go into a bait hive. If you move them the same day they may

move on---they are still in swarm mode. If they have invested in the foundation in the bait hive (food, eggs) they will be more likely to stay with that foundation when you move it to a new box.

Norm noted that cardboard nuc boxes make wonderful bait hives. If you don't want to keep your nuc box after nuc delivery, Norm asks that you please consider donating it to the association so that we have them to give to people who want to make bait hives (they are also great for removals: see below).

Spring Management of Top Bar Hives

VP Dave asked for a show of hands of those who'd like to attend a workshop on how to assemble, maintain, and inspect top bar hives. There was significant interest, so we are holding a workshop at Dave's apiary in Littlerock on Saturday, May 17 (please email Susanne for times & directions). This will not be like our Langstroth hive assembly workshops, to which people bring kits and put together hive boxes and frames: top bar hive building is more involved, so Dave will demonstrate assembly of one type of top bar, with information on how to do lumber cuts. He'll also open up his top bar hives and demonstrate inspection techniques for top bar hives.

Herb Keeling noted that the candy board he used a on a top bar hive this past winter worked really well.

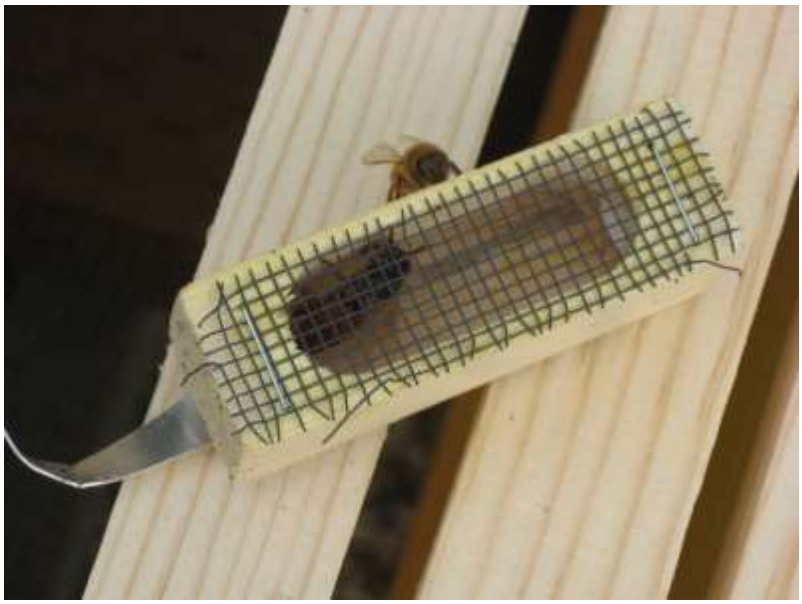
Above left, one of Dave's top bar frames exhibits classic brood & honey pattern; right, rubbing beeswax on top bar to encourage bees to build comb (photos, Dave and Kaye Gaston)

How to Hive Package Bees: Quick Review & Tips

(For a handout of bullet-point hiving tips, check LCBA's website, Mentors & Classes link)

For those getting ready to hive package bees for the first time (and those wanting a review), Norm gave a "dry demo." Norm noted that he seldom suits up to hive package bees: the bees do not yet have a home to defend and tend to be docile, though first timers may feel more secure wearing protective gear. Spraying the package with 1:1 sugar:water solution, or water if it's a warm day, helps to calm bees: however, if it is a cold day, do not spray the bees with anything so as not chill them.

When you have your hive ready to receive bees, take the syrup can out of the package, then slide the queen cage out. Usually the bees will stay inside the package; cover the hole so that they don't fly – they don't know where they are yet since they haven't had a chance to orient. However, it's likely that many bees will be glommed onto the queen cage: this is a good sign that they like her, and they'll go into the hive clinging to her cage as you insert it.



Above, worker attracted to queen in her cage (photo, Susanne Weil)

To prepare the queen cage to insert into the hive, remove the cork and plug the hole with a marshmallow. To be sure that you don't lose her, do this when you see the queen walking away from the hole inside the box. Next, staple or hook the queen cage between two frames, being sure that the mesh through which she is getting air isn't flush against a frame. Place the cage between two central frames.

Next, many books and websites say to shake the bees out of the package and into the hive. Norm doesn't recommend this, since the bees will be clinging to the wire mesh walls of the package, and shaking can damage the hooks on their feet, not to mention that the shaking is traumatic for them. Also, slow, calm motions help the bees get used to you. The kinder, gentler hiving technique works like this: first, take out 4 frames from one side of the hive to make space for the package. Then put the package gently into the hive box. Usually, by the next day, the bees will have recruited to the queen. (If you are hiving your bees in a medium super, you can lay the package down sideways, though you will have to remove an additional frame; this will mean that when you replace the frames, you will have to move the frames on which the queen was released toward the middle.) Within a day, maybe two, check to see if the bees have eaten through that marshmallow and released the queen. When they've done so, remove the queen cage.

There are many choices about how to feed package bees: it's recommended to feed them 1:1 sugar: water solution to encourage them to secrete wax and draw comb. Norm's cheap way to feed is to take a gallon Ziploc bag, fill it ¾ full, and just cut a couple of little slits on top - not on the sides or below, since that would leak and be messy. Bees will climb on top of this "poor man's feeder" and eat.

Norm recommends getting rid of the syrup can: it's filled with a sugar/water mix that probably contains GMO-corn syrup. Norm's goes in the trash, and he makes a 1:1 mix from pure cane sugar ahead of time.

Once you've hived your bees and the queen has been released, wait about 10 days to inspect them, looking then to see brood. If there's no brood, you may have a poorly mated queen and may need to consider re-queening the colony. In doing these early inspections, it's important to be calm, Norm added, so that they get used to you. He conditions his bees to gentle handling and trains them to work with him, including doing things like standing in front of hive, as the books tell you not to do. Norm noted that the first time he worked his hives, he killed his queen, and it took five weeks for that hive to recoup: protect your queen and manipulate hives gently! He noted not to hit the ends of frames against the walls.

Many like to keep their first queen cage as a trophy, for show and tell, but if you don't want to keep, Tomme asked, please it bring it for the Bee Team to use: they're great for transporting queens or queen cells. Norm noted that one can install a clip-like barette on back of a queen cage to have it in a shirt pocket for easy transport.

"Bee Team" 2013 Swarm & Colony Removal Adventures

President Norm gave an overview of swarm and colony removals done in 2013 by LCBA's "Bee Team." We have records of at least 41 removals - 16 swarms / 25 colonies – but we know that there were quite a few more that didn't get written up. Our records show 12 in Centralia, 5 in Chehalis, 7 in Onalaska, 7 in East County, 6 in Winlock / Toledo, and 4 others. "Hot Spots" included Salzer Valley in Centralia & Leonard Road in Onalaska. The slideshow, attached to the emailed version of this newsletter and linked on both the swarm & colony removal and the monthly meeting pages of our website, has vivid photos of 2013 removal highlights.

Above left, Matt Taylor & Norm Switzler removing panels to access bees at a removal on Highway 12, June 2013; right, Jennifer Taylor & Maggie Keeling skewering comb into frames (photos, Susanne Weil)

Bees that swarm into a tree in someone's front yard or are discovered during home renovations may end up sprayed – even though killing honey bees is illegal – so the Bee Team's free service to residents saves many bees, then provides them with good homes. Major thanks are owed to our team leaders – not only Norm, but Rob Jenkins (often assisted by Jen & Matt Taylor) and Kevin Reichert & Grant Inmon – as well as to many members did solo removals or swarm captures: Bruce Casaw, Dave Gaston, Peter Glover, Mel Grigorich, Rich Harned, Courtney Miller, Gary Stelzner, Matt & Jennifer Taylor, Kent Yates, and anyone else who led a removal and didn't tell us!

Thanks also go out to those who came along and offered help on removals, from skewering comb into frames to making sandwiches and taking pictures: among these, in addition to those named above, are Gordon Bellevue, Paul Frizzell & sons, Mike Helms, Herb & Maggie Keeling, Linda Newton, Terrie & Michaela Phillips, Jeanne Reichert, Tomme Trikosko, and Jon Wade – and probably quite a few more that your scribe knows not of. . . .

Norm covered how the "Bee Team" works: people call Norm or Susanne, or are referred to us by Extension, the Fire Department, and others. Some of our beekeepers get calls directly from word of mouth, too. Usually a team leader goes out to assess the situation: are these really honey bees and not wasps, yellow jackets, or hornets? Where in the structure are they? Is the removal

feasible or is it (like a colony high up in a chimney) beyond our capabilities? The job then gets scheduled: if the homeowners are amenable and parking is plentiful, we put out an email to the Bee Team mailing list with dates, times, and directions. Coming along on an extraction is a great learning experience, and LCBA members were warmly invited to participate. Many signed up at this meeting: the list has doubled in size. If you missed the meeting but would like to be on the list, please email Susanne.

For the unfolding exploits of the 2014 Bee Team, see update below. . . .

Monthly Business Meeting Notes:

We had a packed program, so our business meeting was brief. LCBA President Norm Switzler called our business meeting to order. First was LCBA's monthly drawing, which benefits the youth scholarship program. Norm noted that he had been razzed a few times about same people winning. Among winners this month were some of our usual suspects – like Maggie Keeling, Terrie Phillips, Gary Stelzner, & Kent Yates – but some of the prizes went to new (or nearly-new) members Tom Mayberry, Sara Opsitnick, Rick Battin, Linda Lemco, and Tom Hillis. Among prizes were eggs, a bottom board, books, foundation, and gift baskets. One surprise gift was a picture made by Dahlia, won by Terrie.

Package / Nuc Bee Delivery & Pickup Update: Package bees were scheduled for distribution on Saturday, April 19, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Master Gardeners' demonstration garden at Fort Borst Park. New beekeepers were encouraged to contact bee mentors if they have questions about the hiving process or its aftermath. Information on nuc delivery was not available as of this meeting: Susanne noted that we would get short notice about their delivery and that members who bought nucs would have to be flexible. *(Post meeting update: well, this had its challenges! The hot weather delayed loading the bees for moving down south from Lakewood on pickup day, so Norm got them down to Mentorship Coordinator Gary Stelzner's around 9:30 that night. Thanks to those of you who picked up nucs for your flexibility, and thanks to Norm for trucking the bees and Gary for fostering them till pickup. The good news, though, is that the nuc boxes were heavy and so far reports are that the colonies seem strong and healthy.)*

Upcoming Events: Susanne gave an overview of coming attractions, along with a call for volunteers to help staff LCBA's booth at Centralia College's Earth Day festival, 4/26, and the Lewis County Spring Youth Fair at the Southwest Washington Fairgrounds 5/3-4. The BeeInformed Bee Loss Survey (see details below) was announced.

YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE: MASON REMOVES SWARM AT TOLEDO H.S.; JOEVANIE HIVES HIS BEES

One week after Membership Coordinator Tomme Trikosko shared her plans for swarm domination through bait boxes at our April 9 meeting, a swarm of bees arrived at Toledo High School . . . where they promptly ignored every bait box that Tomme and her students had put up and instead swirled through a hole in an outbuilding wall. As the photos show, bees had occupied this wall before and had left comb behind: that proved a more potent attractor than anything they'd put in the bait hives noted above. Tomme called Bee Team Leader Rob Jenkins:

the next day, LCBA Youth Scholarship student Mason Gaul was participating in his first removal. See photos, below:

Above left, bees had swarmed into a space that had been occupied by bees before; above right, Mason cuts comb as Rob coaches; below left, Rob & friends; below right, Mason beams after his first removal! (Photos, Tomme Trikosko)

Tomme commented: "There were a lot of bees in that wall. The amount of nectar they had collected since Monday was unbelievable. [After the removal] we left the box of bees (which I had baited with a small bit of honey in the comb and a feeder of sucrose solution) sitting on the ground next to the open wall, many bees still in the open wall, and scattered clumps of bees here and there. There were no eggs to start a queen, and we could not find a queen." On Saturday, April 19 - package bee pickup day – it turned out that one member who had ordered an extra queen didn't need her, and Tomme snapped her up for this queenless colony.

In other Youth Scholarship news: LCBA's other Youth Scholarship student, Joevanie Montalvo, has hived his first bees! (Mason & mentor Kent are waiting for their nuc to arrive.) Joevanie's color of choice for his hive boxes, robin's egg blue, was unanimously approved by Tomme's animal husbandry/bee class. Below, see photos of Joevanie looking pretty pleased with his new colony. Joevanie came to our April 26 hive inspection workshop to see a hands-on inspection before inspecting his new colony for the first time. On May 1, Joevanie told Tomme that each

day (except one quite rainy day), he has suited up, gone to open the cover to peek in the hive and watch his bees, as well as to top off their sugar syrup jar: Tomme said that "he noticed the holes had blocked with sugar crystals so he unplugged them and increased the amount of H2O in his mix, too." Sounds like a natural! Mason and mentor Kent Yates hived his nuc on May 1: as of the Youth Fair, Mason reported that his bees, too, were doing well.

Above, LCBA Youth Scholarship student Joevanie Montalvo hiving his package bees. Below left, Joevanie inserted the package sideways in a medium super: right, after hiving his first colony! (Photos, Tomme Trikosko)

FYI: Thanks to Linda Newton for pointing out that Toledo's *Town Crier* gave great coverage to Tomme Trikosko's animal husbandry class at Toledo H.S., featuring the beekeeping program with WSBA's curriculum. To read it, visit: *http://hometowndebate.com/toledo-raising-beekeepers-in-new-animal-husbandry-program-cms-3089*

April 29, 2014: The Day Lewis County Swarmed!

This swarm was one of two in Winlock, same day, captured by Rob Jenkins (photo, Jen Taylor); the other was hived by Gary Stelzner.

As soon as the weather warmed up, LCBA got swarmed by swarm calls. On April 29, your scribe fielded calls for 9 removals in Centralia; on that day, there were a total of 11! Among those answering swarm calls were Kevin & Jeanne Reichert & Grant Inmon, who fielded 7 that day, including one at Centralia College and another at the Bank of America on Pearl: one they passed on to Norm, who got home from work just in time to get in on some of the fun (and has also hived swarms for Steve Howard). Gary Stelzner got one swarm in Winlock; another Winlock swarm was captured by Rob Jenkins & Jennifer Taylor, who have gotten several since.

In call after call, just about all of us have heard the same message: people understand that bees are threatened, and they want them saved, not sprayed. Let's keep getting the message out! Have you done a swarm or colony removal? Please let Susanne know! We'd like to build up a database of where swarms seem most prevalent, as well as where we get repeat colony removals.

Above left, Kevin & Grant removing a swarm outside Centralia College cafeteria; right, using the vacuum and observation nuc at another removal on April 29 (photos, Diane Fairley Inmon)

Below left, Jen Taylor & Rob Jenkins removed this nice swarm of bees in Winlock, April 29; right, a different kind of tailgate party (photos, Jen Taylor):

Homemade Honey-B-Healthy Recipe

From Kevin & Jeanne Reichert

We have used this for some time now: it works great and costs pennies to make.

Ingredients:

5 cups water
2.5 lbs. sugar
1/8 teaspoon lecithin granules [this is a emulsifier]
15 drops spearmint oil
15 drops lemongrass oil

How to Prepare It:

Pre-soak the lecithin granules overnight in a small amount of water.
Dissolve sugar and water as you would for syrup
Remove from heat and add ingredients; stir and let cool
Place in blender and whip for 3 to 4 mins.
We place and keep this in the refrigerator. I'm a splash and dash kind of guy, but the recipe calls for 2 teaspoons per quart added to your syrup.
The Bees love it, we love it, it is easy on the pocket book, and we hope you like it also.
Kevin and Jeanne

New Bee Technologies to Help Count Your Foragers & Tell If Your Bees Are About to Swarm

Shared by member Rick Battin

These toys for beekeepers may be more spendy than you want to invest in, but it's fun to visit the websites and see what inventors are doing for bees. The first link shows a device that counts bees, and has two sensors that measure the bee trips so you can tell if they are coming or going. Rick met the inventor in Portland and reports that he had his data in much better curve graphs that showed their daily activity much better than this video: http://youtu.be/LRsdcSe9cuM. Still, the video gives the idea. You can check the plans on the how-to website, Instructables.com: http://www.instructables.com/howto/bee+counter/

Another innovation: "Swarmy" is an app that can tell beekeepers when a colony is about to swarm. Check the sound recording at the end of this link: http://jmoore.me/projects/swarmy/

Ideas to Ponder: Top Bar Hives

by Mel Crist

Above, Mel's apiary.

I joined the Lewis County Beekeepers Association this February, just in time to get in on the beginning of the Washington State Certified apprenticeship beekeeping classes. I'm not a newcomer to beekeeping, though: I owned hives several years ago. I had worked my way up from a starter hive to caring for five colonies. Then, maneuvering a heavy piece of equipment at work, I ruptured two disks in my back. Laid up for months without knowing anyone that could care for my bees, I lost them all. Complications brought on by my injuries left me medically retired, but I was not down for the count.

I started gardening on five acres near Yelm, Washington, but I had to learn new ways of doing things. I don't bend and stoop very well and I can't lift anything that isn't already two feet off the ground. I always missed my bees, but I couldn't figure a way to safely move boxes of bees without destroying hundreds of dollars' worth of equipment, harming hundreds of bees, or worse yet, causing a major accident and getting badly stung. I learned from past experience that there was a real shortage of help when the task involved bees. So, sadly, I stayed away from them.

Then, while studying new gardening techniques and plants two years ago, I came across a YouTube video about how the top bar hive method is being used in Africa. I found other videos and got books on bees, and that was it: I was back in love with bees. What I learned from my study was that if you drizzle some wax on any old stick and drape it across a box full of bees, they will call it home. There were some ragged-looking top bar hives in some of those videos. I'm not saying this is a great practice, but still, they had comb to show the camera.

I knew I needed a plan, so I Googled "top bar hives" and found "Backyardhives.com," which recommended building top bar hives built using the "golden mean" ratio. Being a spiritual, Earth loving, outdoorsman type guy, this was perfect for me; being on a fixed income, however, was a problem. Buying hives was not an option, but the website did sell plans to build my own top bar hive.

Here in the Northwest, it's not hard to find a privately owned band saw mill. The first cut from a log is partially rounded on one side and flat on the other side. Called slab wood, this is normally a waste product given away for firewood or sold for a nominal fee. If you can get pieces before they are cut into firewood, you have a nice long chunk to work with, free or low cost.
Using the plans from Backyardhives.com, I made two hives that look like logs with the golden mean's dimensions on the inside. I cut a 6 to 8" slot on one end for an entrance with my chainsaw. In fact, you can make most of the hive with a chainsaw. It's not necessary to get the slot even with the floor of the hive or to have a landing. Bees live vertically, so landing on the rough outside wall is fine with them.

The two end pieces are the most important part of the hive: they control all the other dimensions. You can control the size of the hive by changing the size of these end pieces. I used my chain saw to carve the hives with white discarded tarp shed legs from the slab, and I learned that a chain saw is not necessarily a precision tool. I got smarter this year. . . .

Above, Mel's home-made top bar hive.

Besides a chain saw, I used a table saw and a 10"slider cut off saw. All the tools can be inexpensive Harbor Freight tools. I joined their tool club and use their 20% off holiday coupons to get even better savings. I added a 12" planer this year. You can easily recoup the what the tools cost with what you save on the hives' cost. Each new hive cost $30.00 this year. They would have cost only $15.00 if I hadn't had to buy the pipe for legs and end piece 1x12's (I ran out of the discarded tarp shed posts). I can now plane and make my own end boards. The idea of using discarded plastic poster boards for under the top slab is a great idea. I just didn't have any and no time to look for them. I was finishing the hives as I was putting in bees this year.

My bees are doing great in the hives, except for dumb mistakes on my part. While researching bees and surfing the Web, I came across a site that encouraged people to become bee guardians: To provide safe havens for bees and teach others to do it too. Getting honey is actually a side benefit for a bee guardian. To help bees and to help people help bees, I needed to learn more. I joined Lewis County Beekeepers Association to be among bee people.

Just sayin' . . . remember every day is a good bee day, just some are better than others.

NEWS FLASH: COMPLAINT AGAINST BEEKEEPER IN CHEHALIS CITY LIMITS

One of our members has had the misfortune of a neighbor complaining to Animal Control about her bees – and since she lives within Chehalis City limits, she is being forced to give her bees away. The bees have a home lined up, but LCBA members will want to read about this little-known ordinance. By the way, there is no similar ordinance on the books in Centralia. Readers can find the legal language online at: http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/Chehalis/\. Section I, bolded below, is the relevant section:

6.04.290 Minimum space requirements – Exotic animals.

A. Snake/reptile, arachnid, other nonaquatic exotic animal not otherwise listed – Within a terrarium or other similar containment vessel at least as long as the animal and not less than one-quarter the length in height and width.
B. Primate/prosimian – Same as the Uniform Housing Code space requirements for housing a human.
C. Bear – Two square feet of accessible cage area for each pound of animal weight.
D. Nondomestic canine – Same as CMC 6.04.270(A), Dogs, provided a fenced outdoor area shall be consistent with the containment requirements for a potentially dangerous animal.
E. Nondomestic feline – Same as subsection (D) of this section, Nondomestic canine.
F. Wolf hybrid – Same as subsection (D) of this section, Nondomestic canine.
G. Crocodilia/alligator/caiman/gavial – Same as subsection (D) of this section, Nondomestic canine, provided a pond or other aquatic environment large enough to completely submerge the specific animal shall be provided within the caged area.
H. Listed fish – Same as subsection (A) of this section.

I. Honeybee hives shall not be located closer than 300 feet to any habitable building; other bee hives and all other insect hives shall not be located closer than 1,000 feet to any habitable building.
J. All exotic animals not otherwise listed – As determined by a licensed veterinarian, qualified study or published industry standards, and approved by the director, for the specific type and number of animals, and the specific circumstances.
K. Containment of all exotic animals shall be subject to approval of the director. [Ord. 895B § 2, 2012.]

BeeInformed Partnership: National Loss Survey Underway!

Beekeepers, our help is needed: we can help researchers better understand the causes of bee losses by taking 2 surveys - results confidential - will take about 30 minutes of your time. The researchers are looking at relationships between colony losses and colony management (including disease treatment strategies, supplemental feeding), & other factors like colony location, honey production, forage types.

To take the BeeInformed survey, visit:
http://10.selectsurvey.net/beeinformed/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=BIP2014

ANNOUNCEMENTS & HELP WANTED

Frames to sell or trade: LCBA Member Brett Barnts has 7 ¼ frames to trade for 6 ¼ frames – or sell – please email bbarnts@gmail.com, or call 360 245 3988.

NEWS FLASH ~ LCBA IS ON FACEBOOK! Yes, it's true….thanks to Membership Coordinator Tomme Trikosko, we have another web presence. Take a look, post information, links, photos, or simply "Like" us on Facebook! This is a great opportunity to post questions and get (relatively) quick answers.

https://www.facebook.com/LewisCountyBeekeepersAssociation?ref=hl

May Western Apicultural Society Newsletter: Visit http://groups.ucanr.org/WAS/WAS_Journal and click on the line in the paragraph on the right as directed. If you're still getting the old issue, click on "empty cache" in your browser or "refresh" or "reload" under VIEW in your menu bar.

May WSBA Newsletter: Pick up your copy from www.wasba.org: click on "Newsletters" under OUR SPONSORS on the lower right of the page. Then click "Current issue.

That's all for this month - take care, & bee happy!

~~ Susanne Weil, LCBA Secretary (Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com; 360 880 8130)