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March 2013 LCBA Newsletter

In This Edition:

- **Upcoming LCBA Events**
- **Notes from LCBA's February 13th Monthly Meeting**
 - **Traditional Beekeeping in Kenya ~ Wilma Sofranko**
 - **Getting Started with Mason Bees ~ Kimo Thielges**
 - **Business Meeting ~ Package Bee & Nuc Order News**
 - **Beekeeping Q&A**
- **Top Bar Hive Debate – Follow-up comments on our February newsletter**
- **Bees in the News**
 - **Beekeeping Bills Under Consideration by WA Legislature**
 - **Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Major New Report**
 - **New Research: How Electric Charges Attract Bees to Flowers**
 - **Honey Bee Shortage for California Almond Pollination**
- **Announcements**

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:

March 9, 16, 23, & 30: WSBA Apprentice Beekeeping class in Morton, 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.

March 13: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 -9 p.m., 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College. Social Hour at 6:30 – come early and talk bees!

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: PACKAGE BEE ORDERS! LCBA is ordering bees through the Olympia Beekeepers this year. Packages cost \$69 for Italians or Carniolans. This business meeting is the deadline for orders and payment in full; to order, you must be a dues-paying member of LCBA. A bee order form and membership form are attached to this newsletter. Bees will be available in late April; on March 13 we should have more information about pickup details.

Also: Updates on arrival of nucs; upcoming workshops & mentor program; beekeeping Q&A.

April 6: LCBA Mentor Orientation: Want to help mentor new beekeepers? Come join us at the Lewis County Extension classroom, 351 NW North Street, Chehalis WA, 10 a.m. to noon, for a workshop led by Mentorship Coordinator Gary Stelzner.

April 10: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 – 9 p.m., 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College.
Topic: Getting Ready for Your New Bees and Other Spring Management Issues

April 27: LCBA Mentor Workshop: How to Inspect Your Hives. 1 – 3 p.m. Winlock – for directions, email secretary Susanne at Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or call 360 880 8130.

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.

May 8: LCBA Monthly Meeting, 7 – 9 p.m., 103 Washington Hall, Centralia College.
Speaker: Dr. Dewey Caron will share the latest research on colony losses, nationally

and in the Pacific Northwest, as well as survey us on our bee losses. A great chance to contribute to ongoing efforts to help our bees!

June 12-13: "The Art of Queen Rearing," WSU-Pullman. This workshop will be led by Sue Cobey and WSU's APIS team. For registration information, visit <http://entomology.wsu.edu/apis/> For the Queen Rearing course registration form, visit: <http://entomology.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/QueenRearingWkshp2013.pdf?9d7bd4>.

June 14-15: WSU-WSBA Bee Field Days, WSU-Pullman. WSU's honey bee research team partners with WSBA to sponsor "Bee Field Days" every other year; beekeepers from all over Washington are invited to WSU's Pullman campus for workshops on hive inspection, identifying bee diseases, learning how testing is done in APIS's laboratory, and more. Schedule & registration information about Bee Field Days will be posted on our LCBA website and announced in our newsletter when available.

July 19: "The Art of Queen Rearing" - Mt. Vernon Agricultural Station. Sue Cobey & the WSU APIS team will offer "The Art of Queen Rearing" a second time – see above for registration information, or visit <http://entomology.wsu.edu/apis/>.

July 26-28: Pacific Northwest Treatment-Free Beekeeping Conference. Tom Seeley (*Honeybee Democracy*), Dana Delaney (who researched the impact of Varroa d. on feral bees), among other leading entomologists, will lead workshops at Pacific University, about half an hour south of Portland. Tuition of \$268 includes room and board; those staying elsewhere can pay \$190 tuition, which includes meals. Discount for early registration by April 1. For more information, visit blisshoneybees.org.

October 24, 31, November 7, 14: LCBA/WSBA Apprentice Beekeeping Class, Lewis County Extension classroom, Chehalis, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. This class follows the WSBA curriculum and will be taught by Bob Harris and Norm Switzler, LCBA past and current presidents; graduates get the WSBA Apprentice Beekeeper certificate. Cost will be \$30 per individual, \$45 per couple, and cover WSBA course book, copying expenses, and support LCBA programs; students who join LCBA at the end of the course will get the \$10 LCBA initiation fee waived.

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 FEBRUARY 13th MEETING

Topic 1: "Traditional Beekeeping in Kenya": Wilma Sofranko

LCBA President Norm Switzler introduced Wilma Sofranko, who joined LCBA in 2011, then went to Kenya to start a non-governmental organization focused on organic farming. Her NGO is called Kisii Rural Education and Empowerment Coalition (KiReeCo); she can be contacted at kireeco@wordpress.com. KiReeCo is working on an heirloom seed bank: cataloging indigenous vegetables has not been done in this region, so Wilma's doing it, as well as looking into honey and hive production sustainability. KiReeCo is working with the Kenyan beekeepers to build Langstroth hives so that they can replace traditional top bar hives, which they find inefficient. Traditionally, the Kenyans used top bar hives at the local tea plantation, where KiReeCo now teaches beekeeping lessons to the

school children – the school had had the top bar hives before, but bees left; the local beekeepers had not been familiar with good animal husbandry for bees, and so when they harvested honey, they ripped out all the comb and destroyed it. Wilma had kids clean the boxes up, then set up a container, and a swarm would move right in. They went off on an adventure to harvest honey from a hive in a mason-ware jar that someone had camouflaged in a tree – bees were thriving, very healthy, without our U.S. bees disease issues. Wilma reported that the children were thrilled to get their suits on and work with the bees.

Kisii, Kenya is high elevation, 6000 to 8000 feet (see the spectacular images on Wilma's PowerPoint!): it features steep grades with waterways at bottom of hills. Hives tend to be kept down by rivers, and bees forage from blooms on trees. The bees don't seem to target anything particular: corn is a staple, and there are lots of flowers, flowering trees, such as mangoes, and also acacia, which gives a dark honey. Harvesting honey will be a higher priority when she goes back: first, KiReeCo has focused on growth, acquiring seeds, etc.

Hives in Kisii can grow to enormous sizes. Wilma recounted how her group was summoned to attempt removing a colony from an attic (see her PowerPoint). What they found was a hive approximately 6 feet long by 4 feet deep: she decided not to remove these bees, as this was a job for many people!

Wilma was asked whether the bees she works with in Kisii are the notorious Africanized "killer bees." Wilma said that in her experience, bees are bees, and much about their behavior depends on the climate – these bees were not aggressive whatsoever, and she relates this to the effects of high elevation. It's her observation that at lower elevations, where weather is hotter and more humid, bees tend to be more aggressive, whereas Wilma didn't find her bees to be aggressive. She has not yet been stung in Kisii. The bees she works with are small, like Italians, but with darker bands: behaviorally, "they are pretty mellow."

Wilma and KiReeCo work with the Nyakoranda Disabled Group, who came to her for help managing their top bar hives (KiReeCo registers local organizations and gives community based education). The Nyakoranda group has 24 beehives for their 22 members; each was supposed to get access to one hive via a government grant, but as in many places, there is corruption, so KiReeCo has intervened. The disabled Nyakoranda members could not get down to hives by the river, hives being overseen by the secretary of another group. These groups are supposed to be self-help groups who collaborate, but the Nyakoranda group was being told there was no honey. So Wilma and her volunteers went down the steep slopes, where they found hives that were vibrant and healthy: they then advised the disabled group to take action against the group that was obviously taking advantage of them. With the help of the Boy Scouts of Kenya, they are going to move these hives and give one each to each of the members as soon as she gets back to Kenya. Then, they will teach each of the disabled people how to keep bees.

Norm asked whether the hives would still be in close proximity so that people can share the work experience; Wilma said they'll work that out – she will not tell them what to do, but help them help each other. Her approach is to ask what they want to do and then facilitate finding ways to reach those goals. With 42 distinct tribes in Kenya, each having its own distinct culture and even language, facilitation on a broad scale is challenging, so KiReeCo is focusing on its own region.

Sustainability plan: KiReeCo will start a beekeeping association for Kisii Beekeepers; they are planning a training program for 100 members with a test and certificate. They also plan to start a hive box purchase program: the NGO will build the first 100 Langstroth hives, and the Kisii beekeepers will buy them, then pay back those who built the hives with the honey they harvest. There will be a portable

extraction unit designed and built by their mechanical engineers. Wholesale sales will help fund local children to attend school, which is not public or free in this region of Kenya.

To carry out their plans, KiReeCo is raising funds to buy honey production tools, shipping, timber purchase and labor, and a locally manufactured extractor. They need \$4389 and have \$2660 in donations so far. Wilma noted that she was not soliciting but wished us to know what their goals are.

Wilma was asked what predators or pests beekeepers in Kenya must deal with. Wilma does not anticipate that predators will threaten hives, though ants are an issue. She's worked with a carpenter to make a few hives and made a metal stand with cans with metal edges to keep ants at bay, as well as placing cinnamon in hive entryways. She also noted that there are no issues with mites of any type. Asked about foundation, Wilma noted that wax foundation is not available, so bees are building on wires.

Honey: in Kisii, they harvest three times a year. It is an equatorial region, so the forage is constant, everywhere, and of wide variety. Wilma noted that it is 80 degrees (F.) and sunny every day. They'd take volunteers ☺ There is a huge demand for honey, yet figuring out how to get it is a challenge. The region practices subsistence agriculture, so if people have an opportunity to make a dollar a day, they would go for it. With honey, a community group might bring in \$400 a year, so if they have a productive hive can help their children go to high school, which, as noted above, is neither public nor free in Kenya. Further, beekeeping would increase food capacity because there would be more pollination. Norm asked whether all the honey would be bought by the same group, or can they branch out? Wilma says they are going to start their own brand, Kisii Organics, and honey will be one of their brands. The Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture has an interest in having KiReeCo succeed and is one of their customers, as well as letting them use a local center to help market products. If the project works, farmers and beekeepers will have control and earn more money.

Norm asked how the honey tastes: Wilma reported, "really good," noting that acacia honey is like buckwheat honey, dark, but local Kisii honey is light in color and great tasting. They get about a thousand shillings for 2 liters of honey at a rate of 8 shillings to a dollar, so honey is a true money maker for them.

Wilma would like LCBA to consider a sister association relationship with KiReeCo. We could discuss what is possible – perhaps an interchange of ideas, pictures, etc. She'll be back once a year, and from now on this will be in summers, so we will hear from her again. Wilma left us her PowerPoint presentation, attached to this email as a PDF file and posted on our website. (The slideshow includes images of Wilma's dog, Lydia, whom some LCBA members will remember used to accompany Wilma to our meetings.) Members expressed their appreciation for Wilma's interesting talk.

Topic 2: "Getting Started with Mason Bees": Kimo Thielges

Kimo has been working with mason bees since his son chose them as his Eagle Scout project. He gives away about 100 mason bee starter blocks at the Master Gardeners' Gardening For Everyone event each spring. He also works with Bob Taylor of Master Gardeners to donate mason bee starter blocks for a grade school program. Despite his years working with these bees, Kimo notes that there's always more to learn: Tim Weible (of our Centralia Honey Hut) showed him how to use sand to clean these bees' cocoons, a new one for Kimo! Tim will be selling mason bee blocks at the honey hut – blue orchard (earlier) and californica (later)

Rather than a PowerPoint presentation, Kimo brought a wide array of show and tell items. He passed around mason bee blocks, including some rather adorable "mason bee condos" of various shapes

and designs, as well as handouts on nesting methods and more: Kimo even brought a mason bee observation hive. For sources, Kimo recommends Brian Griffin's *Orchard Mason Bee* as a good first book for the mason bee lay-person. Margriet Dogterom, who maintains Beediverse.com, is also a good source. Kimo has archived many mason bee resources on LCBA's website: visit www.lewiscountybeekeepers.org, click on "Resources and Links," then "Mason Bees."

"Super Pollinators": Mason bees are often called "super pollinators" because they visit myriad fruit trees and flowers. They can be raised individually or with honey bees. The mason bee is a cool weather bee – mid- to late March typically is when they first naturally emerge, earlier in the season than honey bees typically start regular flights, so beekeepers can benefit from having both. Mason bees go from flower to flower on a single tree, very methodically, not like the more random path of honey bees. Mason bees collect nectar only for their small food nest, so their prime purpose is to pollinate. Tim W. noted that one factor making mason bees such efficient pollinators is that whereas honey bees land on the petals of flowers, mason bees land on stigmas, so they pick up more pollen.

Mason bee life cycle: Mason bee males hatch out first; three weeks later, females follow and are impregnated by the males. Like honey bees, male mason bees are "one timers": they will die within three days of impregnating a female. The life span of the female is six to eight weeks: she will lay an egg and a half a day, on average. Mason bees don't have a queen: rather, each female is like a queen unto herself, independent, without workers to serve her. When the female pollinates trees, she comes back to her shelter and lays a food mass combination of nectar and pollen. The female has an ovipositor, a stringer, as a guide for the egg to go down and be laid in the food mass. Female eggs will be laid in back of a mason bee "hive tube," with males laid in front. Often there will be a 2:2 ratio of males: females per tube. In each year, there is only one generation of mason bees. Beekeepers have a 30 to 45 day frame to work with them as pollinators: eggs laid the previous year hatch out the next spring. The hatching period will be staggered, depending on where the bees are.

Telling mason bees from flies: Many people have a hard time telling mason bees from house flies. Kimo noted that one easy way to distinguish between the two is that as mason bees are bees, they make a buzzing sound, not a humming sound: "if it hums, it's a house fly." So – listen before you swat!

Mason bee range and territory: Mason bees in nature do not expand their territory very much: they have a range of one hundred yards, the size of a football field. This is where we humans come in: we can help the mason bees increase their range. A mason beekeeper should place the bees as close to an orchard as possible. Ideally, they should be situated on the east side of structures, so that the morning sun will warm their homes, encouraging the bees to emerge around 10 to 11 a.m.; as the sun gets higher in elevation, the mason bees' larvae won't cook in their cocoons.

Mason bee homes: Unlike honey bees, mason bees do not make their own homes: rather, they rely on what they find to live in. If they have no box, mason bees will find a hole in a tree and go in. They are solitary bees. Straws are useful as mason bee shelters. Commercially, many things are now available, like unwaxed straws with paper liners, in which to harvest cocoons. Kimo prefers waxed straws because they last longer. Liners are good for one year. If you want, you can make your own paper straws by taking 8 and a half by 11 paper and folding: those who would like to try are welcome to email Kimo (kimosabe@compprime.com). Kimo also demonstrated a binder board, an interesting design that resembles a clamshell which opens to reveals grooves in which the mason beekeeper can lay straws down. Kimo has many straws with larvae that he doesn't want to destroy, but he does not have them in individual boxes – they can be put in a large box with an entrance hole. If they emerge from old blocks, they will go back to that old block again because the female bee will have marked it with her pheromone.

Cleaning mason bee blocks: Kimo reports that the blocks are very easy to clean. Beediverse.com has a video online that shows ways to clean the cocoons. Each spring take rubber mallet, tap box, take drill bit [he said size] and clean it out. If you want to sterilize box can use one to two percent bleach solution, short soak, dry in sun, do it again.

Shelter from the elements: One critical factor in keeping mason bees is that the beekeeper must protect them from wind, rain, and snow. Originally it was suggested that mason bees ought not be placed outdoors, but Karen Strickland, who runs an Idaho mason bee group, says that as long as the beekeeper can offer a protective environment, it's feasible to keep them outside. In this connection, Kimo showed a hanging metal roof which provides rain shelter for the straws attached underneath. One other tip: sometimes we have a false spring, with the weather warming up beautifully, the bees come out, and then we have a cold snap. If you keep mason bee straws in a cool place, such as a garage, you can put some out every two weeks to coincide with trees and bushes in bloom.

Predators: Kimo was asked what natural predators mason bees must contend with. Kimo noted blue jays, though Ted Saari, who has both mason bees and bird feeders on his deck, has not seen his hundreds of avian visitors bothering his bees.

Members appreciated Kimo's talk – as well as the free bees!

LCBA Monthly Business Meeting

Membership Dues reminder: Members were reminded that January is dues month and that members can join (or re-join) at any time during the year; dues are pro-rated. The membership form is on the website under the "Join Us" link, and Steve Howard, our membership coordinator, has forms at our meetings.

Membership directory: Steve Howard has been gathering membership directory forms; if you'd like to be in our 2013 directory, please let Steve or Susanne know!

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. The price will be finalized and announced as soon as we have it but will likely be about \$70. To join in the group package order, one must be a dues-paying member of LCBA. ***[See upcoming events, above, for details on package bee orders, which will be taken at our March 13 business meeting.]***

Nuc Orders: Members Tim and Sharette Geise from The Woogie Bee have been working with Mark Johnson in Oregon, who provided nucs for LCBA last year. As announced at our January meeting and February newsletter, nuc orders and payment are due at this meeting (\$90 checks to LCBA or cash). The bees will be Italians. Nucs will arrive in late April: Susanne will send out an email to, or call, all who order nucs, depending on the preference outlined on their order forms.

Upcoming Events (see above): Susanne also showed members the list of upcoming events on the website, including 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 March 13 monthly meeting. Those who would like be mentors, helping "newbees" get started, please mark your calendars for Saturday, April 6, 10 a.m. to noon at the Lewis County Extension classroom in

the Old Chehalis Courthouse building: our Mentorship Coordinator, Gary Stelzner, will lead an orientation for mentors. Newbees, please mark your calendars for Saturday, April 27, 1 to 3 p.m., for the first of our series of hive inspection workshops. Topics will include learning how to check on 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. The workshop will be in Winlock: for directions, please email Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com or call 360 880 8130.

Beekeeping Q&A: Norm opened up the meeting for beekeeping questions.

Time to start feeding your bees? One member asked whether, as spring seems to be coming, it's time to start feeding our bees. This is a tough one: winter really isn't over yet, and we could have a cold snap. If we start feeding bees, the queen will start laying, and there will be a larger population to maintain. If you do feed, use the 2:1 water:sugar mixture, and if you start, you must keep feeding so that your bees don't starve if there's insufficient bloom about to support them. Pollen patties are good to feed bees now, giving protein and avoiding potential moisture/fungus issues. Renzy Davenport noted that he puts sugar water in baby food jars with holes in the lids to avoid giving too much feed at once and putting more moisture and possibly mildew in the hives. If, like Norm, you favor the "hard love"/no sugar water-feeding regimen, let your bees feed on catkins from alders and other early-blooming trees.

Refurbishing Workshop? Norm suggested that among our 2013 workshops, we have a workshop on rehabilitating old equipment, cleaning up old hive bodies, and so on. If any members would be interested in donating old equipment that a new beekeeper could benefit from fixing up and using, please let a board member know. Norm asked members to "tell us what workshops you want – unless we hear from you, we're going to make stuff up!"

LCBA Social Hour! Norm announced that we can use Washington Hall 103 from 6:30 p.m. onward on our meeting notes and invited members to arrive early, if convenient, for social time. This may put less stress on our break time and enable us to include more time for beekeeping Q&A in our business meetings.

BEES IN THE NEWS

Washington State Legislature Now Debating 3 Bills Affecting Beekeepers

Franclyn Heineke, our Area 2 WSBA representative, has sent the following information about 3 bills affecting beekeepers that will be voted on during the current state legislative session. Franclyn reports that "WSBA Board members have been working with legislators and giving testimony on these bills. We need your help to get action on these bills." Summaries of the bills follow, as well as directions for how to contact your legislators about them, should you feel so moved. *Thanks to Franclyn for the concise wording below:*

SSB 5696 limits civil liability for registered beekeepers. Current language of this bill protects people with bee allergies who live within 1/4 mile of a hive. They are able to put demands on the beekeeper. Current language is not workable for beekeepers or people with allergies. Language may be changed. Check the text of the bill before commenting and voting.* [LCBA members: below, I've pasted the latest wording of this bill on the assumption that it may be of most interest to hobbyists:]

Here is the latest version of SENATE BILL 5696:

State of Washington 63rd Legislature 2013 Regular Session
Senate Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development
(originally sponsored by Senators Litzow and Mullet)

READ FIRST TIME 02/20/13.

AN ACT Relating to apiarists; and adding a new section to chapter 15.60 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. A new section is added to chapter 15.60 RCW to read as follows:

(1) An apiarist or broker who is registered under RCW 15.60.021, and who operates his or her apiary or apiaries in a reasonable manner and in conformance with the department's apiary best management practices rules, is immune from civil liability for any personal injury or property damage that occurs in connection with the keeping and maintaining of bees, bee equipment, queen breeding equipment, apiaries, and appliances. The limitation on civil liability under this section does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct.

(2) The director, after consulting with the apiary advisory committee, shall propose for adoption and maintain rules that establish best management practices for apiarists and brokers in the operation of apiaries. The rules shall provide for specific setbacks that must be made upon the written demand of any person having an allergy to bee stings who owns property within one-quarter mile of the location of the hive or hives.

(3) The limitation on civil liability contained in subsection (1) of this section shall not take effect until rules are adopted under subsection (2) of this section.

SB 5453 extends to 2016 the B&O tax exemption for registered beekeepers that has been in place 2008 - 2013.

HB 1558 extends the B&O tax exemption for registered beekeepers with no cut off date, exempts beekeepers from paying sales tax on feed for bees, and establishes a short-term honeybee working group with the Dept. of Agriculture to consider a variety issues, including the need for more bee forage and the importance of funding additional WSU research on honeybees.

To read the complete language of these bills: Click on "Bill Information" at the left side of the legislature homepage (www.wa.leg.gov). To search for a bill by number, type in only the 4 digits (not the "HB" or "SB" part). You will go to a page that lists the history of the bill, original text, fiscal impacts, etc.

Once you've read the language of the bill, here's how to contact legislators if you feel so moved: Go to www.wa.leg.gov, and, on the left side of the legislature homepage, click on "Find Your Legislator": a state map will pop up. Click where you live: names of your 2 representatives and 1 senator will show up. Click on one of those names: it will take you to that person's page. Click on the Email link under the person's name. You will need to verify your address to make sure it is in that district. You will then get a form where you can contact your legislator. In the 2nd dialog box, there is a place where you can check if you want your message to go to all three of your legislators. You also can check if you want a response. Include in your message all 3 bill numbers, and your comments about them. Be clear in stating your

position -- using FOR or PRO if you want the bill to pass; CON or AGAINST if you do not want it to pass.

Jim Bach adds this note: “Beekeeping is usually thought of as an agricultural activity but it isn't officially recognized as that in legislative policy or law. So the commercial beekeepers would like the legislature to recognize beekeeping as an ag-industry and permanently exempt them from paying the state B&O tax. Thanks much for your timely efforts on the behalf of our industry.”

New study by the European Food Safety Authority finds high clothianidin risk for honey bees:

A risk assessment of neonicotinoid pesticides conducted by the EFSA has shown that the active substance clothianidin poses a substantial threat to honey bees. The study evaluated how clothianidin was used in treating seeds or granules on a range of European crops. Bees get exposed to clothianidin through dust, as well as by ingesting nectar and pollen that have been contaminated by the pesticide. Though the study could not draw conclusions about long term effects, short term effects were profound. Crops in which clothianidin seed treatment poses “a high acute risk to honey bees . . . from exposure via dust drift” include “maize, oilseed rape and cereals.” Those interested can read the complete study by visiting <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/doc/3066.pdf>. The PDF is also linked on our website (see “Bees in the News” under “Resources and Links”).

“Honey, It's Electric: Bees Sense Charge On Flowers” (NPR.org, 22 Feb 2013):

As Michael Pollan noted in *The Botany of Desire*, vibrant floral colors and scents that delight our senses do a more important job: attracting pollinators. A new study has discovered another way that flowers flag down bees: their electric field. Working with bumblebees, scientists discovered that “flowers have a slight negative charge relative to the air around them,” and that “when bees are flying through the air, just the friction of the air and the friction of the body parts on one another cause the bee to become positively charged. . . . When a positively charged bee lands on a flower, the negatively charged pollen grains naturally stick to it.”

Researchers tested this by designing a field of fake steel flowers – some filled with sugar water, some with quinine, then tested how bees responded to a charge placed on the sweet ones. The bumblebees adapted, preferring the charged flowers. But why? The study showed that the “plant's electric field is changed by the proximity of that positively charged bee. And once the bee leaves, the field stays changed for 100 seconds or so. That's long enough for the altered field to serve as a warning for the next bee that buzzes by. She won't stop to investigate a flower that's already been visited.” This marvelous efficiency serves both flowers and bees brilliantly.

To read more details, visit:
http://www.kqed.org/news/story/2013/02/22/116796/honey_its_electric_bees_sense_charge_on_flowers?source=npr&category=science. To read the complete study in *Science* – which notes that an older study shows honey bees, too, carrying a charge, and that follow-up research focused on honey bees is starting - visit Bees in the News on our website (www.lewiscountybeekeepers.org; click on Resources & Links).

“Winter honey bee losses and the resulting fewer bees per hive could spell trouble for almond growers in California” (12 Feb 2013)

Dr. Eric Mussen, Extension apiculturist and faculty member in U.C. Davis's Entomology department, notes that California's 800,000 acres of almonds may not be fully pollinated this year – because of a honey bee shortage. “We need 1.6 million colonies, or two colonies per acre, and California has only about 500,000 colonies that can be used for that purpose,” he said. “We need to bring in a million more colonies but due to the winter losses, we may not have enough bees.” This follows 2012's weak honey production, which, Mussen says, “could be one of the worst honey production years” since records have been kept. Not only that, “when we're short of nectar, we're short on pollen, and honey bees need both. So, 2012 was a bad year for bee nutrition.” Poor nutrition is one smoking gun in the ongoing colony collapse disorder mystery, along with *Varroa destructor*, *Nosema*, viruses, habitat loss, and pesticides.

Kathy Keatley Garvey, better known to some of us for her extraordinary photographs of bees, interviewed Dr. Mussen. To read more, visit:

<http://www.losangelescountybeekeepers.com/home/2013/2/15/honey-bee-shortage-alarms-california-almond-industry.html>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WSBA: Guidelines for the Master Beekeeper Program - Apprentice, Journeyman, and Master Beekeeping courses - have been updated and sent to beekeeping associations by Louis Matej; Louis's guidelines are attached to this newsletter. If you are interested in pursuing the Apprentice class, see “Upcoming Events,” above, for LCBA classes; if you'd like to expand your knowledge of bees through the Journeyman class, call or email Susanne (see contact information, below) to join other LCBA members who will work through the curriculum together in regular meetings on the first Wednesdays of each month, starting April 3.

Western Apicultural Society: February WAS Journal available online: Fran Bach, journal editor for the Western Apicultural Society, reports that “the *WAS Journal* for February has been posted. Please go to http://groups.ucanr.org/WAS/WAS_Journal and click on the line in the paragraph on the right as directed. If you are still getting the old issue, click on “empty cache” in your browser and/or “refresh” or “reload” under VIEW in your menu bar.”

WSBA and WAS: Individuals can join, not only associations! Jim Bach writes to invite LCBA members to become “a member of either or both organizations. Besides, I'm the Secretary of WSBA and Treasurer of WAS. So what other behavior would you expect? We'd like to have you as a member. If you decide to join WELCOME. If not then I hope you and your bees are doing well in 2013. Have a wonderful year.” You can find more information about both WSBA and WAS on our website, www.lewiscountybeekeepers.org: click on “Resources and Links,” then “Helpful Beekeeping Organizations & Magazines” – you'll find PDF files of membership forms for both organizations.

That's all for this month, folks – hope to see you at our monthly meeting on March 13 for President Norm's talk on swarm and colony removals, as well as for our package bee orders. Meanwhile, take care, and Bee Happy!

Susanne Weil, Secretary, Lewis County Beekeepers' Association
Susanne.beekeeper@gmail.com; 360 880 8130