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March 2022 NEWSLETTER

President's Message by Brian McGinley

Big news for this month is the board's decision to postpone in-person meetings for another month. The positive sign of this decision is the reason had to do with logistics, rather than COVID. The board felt it didn't have enough time to pull everything together for a successful meeting in March, so decided to wait until April. I'm surely looking forward to getting back together to visit and talk bees. We are coming out of our caves! **We'll see you in April for our first in-person meeting in two years!**

We are also looking at options for those of you who are unable to attend our in-person meetings. As always, our newsletter provides meeting highlights and information on the "Talks" tab on our website. Also, our YouTube presentations links from last year's meetings are still available. Contact Nancy Ograin for links.

As for the bee yards, it certainly seems like spring has sprung in earnest this week. Yesterday was a delightful 62 degrees and bees were happily bringing in pollen and I saw my first bumblebee this week. I ventured out yesterday to feed my bees and treat for mites. I did resist the urge to fully open my hives to see what was happening, relying instead on the busy flow of bees with pollen to gauge my colonies. How quickly they devour the food I'm offering also was a good sign.

Only one colony has ignored my food offerings this, which is a mixture of granular sugar and old dark honey I pulled from a tree two years ago. This colony was the miracle I extracted from a rhododendron in mid-October. It was small and I had low hopes for its survival over the winter. It proved me wrong and while still a small cluster of bees, it is pulling in pollen. Hopefully it will eventually take advantage of the food I am providing. Time will tell. I have been goofing with bees for eighteen years, and they still surprise me now and then. In closing, I want to remind folks to put out yellow jacket traps if queens are present.

GENERAL MEETING
Via ZOOM
March 15, 2022

Early Educational Class
Topic: Yellow Jackets
Speaker: Ken Ograin
Program begins at 6:15pm

General Meeting
Topic: Installing Package Bees & Nucs
Speaker: Mike France & Lynn Helwege
Announcements & Program begin at 7:00 pm

Inside this Issue:

Upcoming Events

April 22nd-23rd - Glory Bee Drive-Through Pick Up for Package Bees & Nucs

June 4th - 2022 Oregon Honey Festival
Location: Medford, OR 10:00am-5:00pm

June 18th - LCBA Field Day
Location: Wild Everlasting Farm, Dorena, OR
Save the Date!

June 20th -26th - Pollinator Week
LCBA is planning on having an informational booth at the Eugene Library.

July 20th-24th - Lane County Fair
LCBA will have a display booth.

Upcoming Webinar

March 29 – At Home Beekeeping Series
Time: 4:30pm-5:30pm
Topic: Methods for Controlling Varroa That Work, Jennifer Berry, University of Georgia

Join via Zoom at: https://auburn.zoom.us/j/904522838
Join via Facebook Live at: https://www.facebook.com/LawrenceCountyextension/
(If you use facebook, after logging in, click on more, then events.)

The presentation will be recorded and posted on their Facebook page for 2 weeks after presentation.

Honey Drawing
Congratulations Jeff Warren!

Jeff was our lucky recipient at our February meeting for a $25 gift certificate to Down to Earth! All proceeds from our honey sales go to the OSU Bee Lab for research

Those that donated a quart or more of honey went into the drawing. This is just our way to thank you for supporting our bee lab. We are happy to accept any amount of honey! If you would like to contribute contact Katharine Hunt, 541-607-0106, keehhunt@gmail.com.

LCBA March Virtual Meeting

Our March meeting will feature an early presentation on "Yellow Jackets" by Ken Ograin and our general meeting will be "Installing Package Bees & Nucs" by Mike France and Lynn Helwege.

Log in for both presentations using the same link. You may attend one or both. Just stay logged in after early class for next presentation.

The meeting will be recorded for those who are unable to attend and will be posted on YouTube.

Date: Tuesday, March 15, 2022

Early Presentation: 6:15 pm
You may begin logging in at 6:00 pm.

Announcements & General Meeting: Begin at 7:00 pm

Join Zoom Meeting by clicking on link below:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88502799981?pwd=c0hpd2dwdTJudmpnemtsS1dYSy9pdz09

Meeting ID: 885 0279 9981
Passcode: 219972
One tap mobile
+12532158782,,88502799981#,,,,*219972# US (Tacoma)

Dial by your location
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
Meeting ID: 885 0279 9981
Passcode: 219972

Find your local number:
https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kjY7x1p40

Download the ZOOM program at https://zoom.us/.
Click "Sign up it's Free".

If you have any questions contact Nancy at:

Welcome New Members

Susan & Wis Macomson	Eugene
Craig DeGarlais	Cottage Grove
Allison Hall	Cheshire
Brandon Kauten	Eugene
Debra Falkenberg	Springfield
Barbara Watson	Glendale

Springtime Mistakes

Not Feeding Enough in Early Spring:

One of the first spring mistakes is starvation, caused by not feeding enough early in the season. Bees are bringing in pollen and nectar now and should be OK. Don't stop hefting your hive, as weak hives with low population may need feeding stimulation.

Not Testing for Varroa Mites:

The second mistake that comes to mind is not testing or treating early enough in the season for varroa mites. In the past, trying to catch the first honey flow while properly timing mite treatments can be difficult.

Not Treating European Foulbrood Early Enough

Another early spring mistake is not reacting quickly enough when a brood disease breaks out. You can treat with antibiotics when tests show positive for European Foulbrood. American Foulbrood, however, is another story. Burn that hive as quick as you can if it tests positive for American Foulbrood. If you suspect either form of the disease, contact the USDA Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland right away.
https://www.ars.usda.gov/northeast-area/beltsville-md-barc/beltsville-agricultural-research-center/bee-research-laboratory/docs/how-to-submit-samples/

Not Having Extra Hives Ready for Swarms, Nucs, Splits or Package Bees

Be prepared by having additional complete hives so they're ready to go for those unexpected swarms. Make sure you have your boxes ready ahead of time so you can quickly transfer them into their new home. Same goes for package bees, nucs, or splits. Take the time to prepare extra hive equipment now before you need it - you'll be happy you did.

Not Rotating Boxes in Spring:

Last, but certainly not least, is the rotation of your boxes. You need to reverse your brood boxes in the spring if the cluster has moved up and the bottom box is empty. This helps provide additional room for the queen to lay, thereby increasing the colony's population for the first nectar flow.

LCBA Swarm List

Reminder to let us know if would like to remain on the swarm list or for those new members who would like to be listed. You **must** have experience in removing swarms.

Membership dues must be current.

Contact Nancy or Judy:
Nancy nancy.ograin@gmail.com 541-935-7065
Judy judyscher@gmail.com 541-344-2114.

Spring Equinox, Excerpt from Honey Bee Suites, Rusty Burlew

As the spring equinox approaches, I like to remind beekeepers that spring can be tricky. If you're not paying attention, it's easy to lose a colony to starvation. In spring, several different things happen all at once to overwintered colonies. Most experienced beekeepers know what to look for, but it can be a little overwhelming if this is your first spring as a beekeeper.

Your colony is growing: As we approach spring, the food stores are at their lowest level just as the number of bees increases dramatically. In the past, many colonies have fought their way through winter winds, freezing temperatures, increasing pathogens, and long hours of darkness only to die of starvation just days before the first nectar flow. Don't make this mistake! If you have any doubts about their food supply, check on your bees soon.

Feeding frequency: If your bees didn't have sufficient honey for the entire winter, you may have already begun feeding them on a regular schedule. If you have been feeding once every two weeks, for example, you may need to increase that to once a week or even more. I can't emphasize enough that if the colony is healthy, its food requirement will explode. **Check your colony for food.**

Don't confuse pollen with nectar: That sounds silly, right? But just because you see early spring bees bringing in loads of pollen, you shouldn't assume they are also collecting nectar. Lots of plants, especially trees, shed gallons of spring pollen without producing a drop of nectar. It's easy, especially as a beginner, to see load after yellow load of pollen coming in and assume all is well. **Check your colony for food.**

Warmth is deceiving: It's easy to be lulled into complacency by warm breezes. On warm spring days when the sun is out, so are the bees. They zip around the bee yard, looking robust, but it may be an illusion. They can't eat warmth and sunshine. So even though it makes them playful, don't assume they have enough. **Check your colony for food**

Starvation is on us: So many bee ailments are hard to control; mites, viruses, brood diseases, temperature extremes, predators, and pesticides are difficult-to-control moving targets. Even experienced beekeepers can fail to manage all the assaults on their bees, but starvation is different. Starvation is different and is easy to avoid. Food management falls squarely on the shoulders of the beekeepers. So by now, you know: **Check your colony for food.**

The year, the vernal or spring equinox occurs on March 20th. The worst aspect of the spring equinox is its proximity to the summer solstice. In other words, the spring equinox is the halfway point of the lengthening-day cycle. Only three months later, on June 21, the days will begin to get shorter and your bees will start preparing for winter. In just ninety days, the hours of daylight will begin to diminish and we beekeepers will begin thinking about overwintering our colonies. Again. It seems like that's all we do: prepare for winter, overwinter, and recover from winter.

So there's the second tricky thing about the spring equinox. It lulls us into thinking our bees will be fine now that spring is here. But as I like to remind you northerners, the six weeks from mid-March until the end of April can be a bee killer. Temperatures are erratic, rain squalls are common, and nectar may be scarce even though pollen is plentiful and all this happens just as your populations are exploding. If you don't pay attention now, you can lose them. It has happened to me and it's happened to others, over and over again. **So go check your bees.**

Lots of early trees produce pollen with no nectar. Image by atrix9 from Pixabay

***Note: Feed dry sugar, sugar cakes or fondant until the weather is consistently above 50 degrees. Bees cannot take up liquid sugar during cold weather.**

Honey Bee Suites website:
https://www.honeybeesuite.com/

New Beekeepers - Informational Page

Things to do to start preparing for your bees:

1. Order your bees.
2. Get your apiary site ready.
3. Assemble your boxes and other equipment.
4. Tools - gather all your tools and have them in a container. A five gallon bucket works really well.
5. Practice lighting your smoker. Even experienced beekeepers can find it difficult sometimes.

Helpful video for installing Package Bees & Nucs: Installing Packages and Nucs (lcbaor.org)

Honey Bee Suite A good website for all kinds of information. Want to know how to do something or what something means visit their website. My advice for new beekeepers - Honey Bee Suite

Find other useful information: Kamon Reynolds from Tennessee. He has a practical, down to earth style, and in addition to having a ton of good info, he speaks regularly at state beekeeping conferences.
Kamon Reynolds - Tennessee's Bees - YouTube

Educational Videos for New Beekeepers

OSU Honey Bee Lab Videos

Lighting a Smoker	Finding the Queen
American Foulbrood	Chalkbrood
Swarms	Package Installation
Sugar Candy	Oxalic Acid Vaporizer
Early Spring Inspection	How to Mark a Queen

View videos here: In the Bees with the OSU Honey Bee Lab

Video on: Helping the Honey Bee at the Honey Bee Lab

Wooden Ware Assembly

How to Assemble a Frame

Assembling a Standard Bee Box

How to Install a Wax Foundation

Beginning Beekeeping Videos

Shonnard's Nursery in Corvallis has a series of beginning beekeeper videos available on YouTube.

Shonnard's Nursery, Florist, and Landscape - YouTube

Other Informative Links

Life Cyce of the Honeybee

First 21 Days of a Bee's Life

How Varroa Destructor Devastates Honey Bee Colonies

Ask A Beekeeper

LCBA Members will be available beginning on April 22nd for a week to answer questions from new beekeepers who are picking up their bee packages and nucs.

Need help or have a question? Visit our website at www.lcbaor.org and click on "Installing Package Bees and Introducing Nucs" on the "Talks" tab. There will be a list of members with their contact information on "Ask a Beekeeper" along with other helpful information.

We'll be there to help you out!

"Ask a Beekeeper" will be posted on our website April 1st.

Keeping a Bloom Log and Planting for Pollinators

by Janine Piercey, LCBA Member
& Oregon Master Beekeeper Journey Student

As winter begins to dissipate and spring bulbs start to poke up through the ground, we beekeepers start to dream of having booming colonies with happy healthy bees collecting pollen and nectar throughout the foraging season. Nectar and pollen contain almost all the nutrient requirements for our honey bees. We are fortunate that the Willamette Valley is the most agriculturally diverse region in the state with bee forage crops of fruit, berries and clover. Also, blackberries and native wildflowers and shrubs are major nectar producers in the Willamette Valley with the primary honey flow period beginning when the blackberries start blooming. Unfortunately, due to the changing plantings and farming methods, urbanization and pesticide practices, finding a succession of blooming plants that provide sufficient nectar and pollen for the honey bee has become more difficult.

Honey bees visit between 50 and 100 flowers during one collection flight. Two million flowers must be visited to produce one pound of honey. The bees must travel 55,000 miles to collect enough nectar for their needs. Bees have been observed to carry a third to a fifth of their body weight in pollen and almost their own body weight in nectar! A honey plants' contribution to a bee colony is classified as major (seed clovers, vetch and berries), secondary (maples) or minor (important for colony buildup and maintenance but not for surplus honey – such as dandelion, heather, weeds and wild- flowers). Not all plants are accessible or of value as nectar and pollen sources to honey bees.

So, any help we can give our bees, to ensure there are ample nectar and pollen sources February through November to keep our bees strong and healthy, will help prevent dearth periods. It will also encourage nice fat winter bees. With this goal in mind, the first thing we can do is to keep a monthly bloom log to record what's blooming around your hive, average daily temperature and what the bees seem to be attracted to. Keeping in mind that bees can forage out two or three miles from their hives so getting an estimate of what is growing in neighboring fields is also important. List the plants you currently have in your landscape per month and look at variances. Weather permitting, are the bees visiting the flowers you have? Don't forget any herbs, trees or vegetables you may have growing. Are the plants you have available high in nectar and pollen? Are there observed times of dearth? Are there flowers that the bees do not go to or are really attracted to? Are the flowers you have providing good nectar and pollen sources? How long are these plants blooming? Is there a correlation between what is blooming and what the bees are foraging?

If you find times of dearth, poor availability in certain months or when sources are available, but are poor sources for honey bees, you can look at planting good nectar and pollen plants for your hives that will better meet their needs. There are a great variety of online sources and books available that list the plants and flowers available in our area. LCBA has handouts available at most meetings and online sources of pollinator planting information. I like the book 'Nectar and Pollen Plants of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest' by Burgett, Stringer and Johnston. It provides a detailed illustrated dictionary that provides growth types, bloom period, color and whether the flower is a good source of nectar and pollen. Also a good reference is 'Plants and Honey Bees – Their Relationship' by D. Ashton and S. Bucknall. Bees have a strong tendency to forage on only a single flower species (known as flower consistency) so planting large areas of a high pollen/ nectar flower is also beneficial.

There are several other factors affecting pollen and nectar availability that are beyond our control such as weather (rain when pollen is available or drought), late frosts, the strength of overwintering flowers, humidity and even time of day. Keeping an eye on hive stores and supplementing as required is also beneficial. Even though we can't control all these variables, keeping a bloom log and taking action to help support our bees in observed times of dearth during their foraging period can only help to contribute to year-round healthy happy bees.

Two Bees in a Podcast

Two Bees in a Podcast is hosted by members of University of Florida's Honey Bee Research and Extension Laboratory.

Learn about honey bees, beekeepers, researchers, and specialists from around the world in educational, fun, yet practical episodes!

Hosted by: Dr. Jamie Ellis, Professor of Entomology, Department of Entomology & Nematology, University of Florida

Podcast - Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences - UF/IFAS (ufl.edu)

Upcoming Tentative Meeting Topics

	General Meeting	Early Educational Meeting
Apr 19	Swarms & Hive Management	Reading Sticky Boards
May 17	Understanding the Brood Nest	
Jul 21	Diseases	Honey Extracting
Jul 19	Fall & Winter Management	Oxalic Acid Demo
Aug 16	Evaluating Your Queens	

Future Topics: Members - What would you like to see in the way of presentations or classes?

If you have any requests or ideas please contact Fonta at wildeverlastingfarm@gmail.com.

February Meeting Highlights, by Paula Sablosky, LCBA Secretary

Walk Away Splits, by Morris Ostrofsky

Morris Ostrofsky

LCBA February meeting had an early presentation by Morris Ostrofsky, "Walk Away Splits". The objectives of the talk were: What is a split? Why raise local queens? Why the walk away split? How do you prepare? How is it done?

A split is basically a small hive, a division of a bee colony. A nuc is the result of a split/division. Splits have a long history and were done by the Egyptians. Morris recommended the book "THE TEARS OF RE" by Gene Kritsky . It is a history of the Egyptian beekeeping practices.

Morris talked about how to do splits without stress. You do not have to find the right aged larvae or worry about damaging the larvae with grafting or even find the queen! He also talked about why we should raise your own queens. The best queens are queens that you raise yourself because there is better acceptance thus better chance of winter survival. The queens are adapted to your climate and you can choose desirable traits you are looking for. It is cost effective and needs no special equipment. You can also establish a queen bank with the same system and there is a sense of victory when you build your new hive.

Why split your colony? One of the biggies is to stop swarming. It's not 100%, but it's the closest you can get. It saves you from buying packages, is an easy way to add bees to a weak colony and there is no problem introducing queens to a small colony. You can also add colonies to your apiary.

A walk away split does require advance preparation before making your division. You need to make a calendar based on your target queen mating date. It will vary upon where you live. You need to deal with the varroa population, select your breeder colony, gather your materials and decide on a location for the split.

In early March you will start feeding the breeder colony protein/carbohydrates. There are several considerations in determining your target date; queen biology, local temperature and your personal calendar. In our area, we should in May see rising temperatures. The queen needs 69 degrees F minimum temperature before her mating flight. She needs five days for her body to be able to fly after she emerges. If you see emerging drones or drones on the landing board it's time to start. Usually in late May/early June is about the time the queens go out and mate. Use Morris' calendar as a guide. You can adjust it for your use. Day four is the only day that is not flexible.

Morris' calendar takes you step by step through the process. His slide show and calendar are posted on our website on the "Talks" tab. YouTube presentation link is available. Contact Nancy at nancy.ograin@gmail.com for link. Posted also is Morris' paper on Graft Free Queen Rearing.pdf.

Morris would like to know your experience with splits and how it worked for you. You can contact him at: ostrofsky@pacinfo.com.

Morris' book recommendations to help you out.

"Better Bee Keeping", by Kim Flottum

"Queen Rearing and Bee Breeding", by Harry Laidlow Jr & Robert Page Jr.

"Queen Rearing Essentials 2nd Edition", by Lawrence Connor

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General Meeting: Spring Management by Judy Scher

Judy Scher

Our general meeting presentation was "Spring Management" by Judy Scher. Her presentations is broken down into three divisions; February 14 to mid March, Mid to Late March, Late March to Mid April. **Spring management starts now even though it's still winter!**

Winter Review: Bees are keeping their cluster warm by vibrating their wing muscles and cluster in a large ball around the queen when the temperatures are less than 45 degrees F. They need their honey stores touching the cluster. The cluster moves up during the winter. Winter bees are fat bees and they store nutrients in their fat bodies starting in the fall. These bees stay alive for up to six months to rear their new brood till spring.

FEBRUARY to MID MARCH:
What are the bees doing now? They are continuing to cluster during cold and rain. They are also doing cleansing flights, they are starting to build up. The queen is increasing her laying. They are still consuming honey and pollen and bring in pollen when they can fly.

What is the beekeeper doing? The beekeeper is hefting the hive from the bottom to check if there are enough honey stores. If light open the hive very briefly for emergency feeding. You can use sugar patties, dry sugar, candy board or fondant at this time. You cannot feed liquid syrup until the weather is consistently about 50 degrees. The beekeeper can also be checking the sticky boards to count varroa mite, checking to see if the cluster is centered and looking at the debris on the sticky board. Mite count should not be more than five mites per day. Reading a sticky board at this time is tricky due to lots of debris on the board; dead bees, old capping's, and wax moth feces.

You can treat now if your mite count is high by using oxalic acid, if you did not already use it in the winter, or you can use formic acid when daytime temperatures are above 50F. Use "Tools for Varroa Management" and "Decision Making Tools" with videos for treatment options, Honey Bee Health Coalition Tools for Varroa Management.

The number one enemy of the beehive is **starvation.** If you left your queen excluder in place - the bees will stay with the queen and they will not move up to the honey stores. If the cluster is not centered and it is cold, they will not move to the side to find honey stores. You can center the cluster when air temperature is above 50 degrees and the bees are flying. Continue to use your top insulation boxes and mouse guards or entrance reducers.

Another tool for the beekeeper is watching the blooms and noting the microclimates in Lane County. Keep notes of bee activity and what is blooming in a bloom log.

MID MARCH to LATE MARCH:
What are the bees doing? The bees are continuing to build up population and bringing in nectar and pollen. You will be seeing drone brood and maybe see mature drones flying.

What is the beekeeper doing? The beekeeper on a dry day, over 55 degrees, can do the first full inspection of the year. Is the hive dead or alive? If your hive has died try and determine why. Was there a large mite load last fall or did you go into fall with a weak hive? Cold and moisture will kill a small cluster that can not move to the honey stores and thus will starve. Or they may have died of starvation or have a drone laying queen. Must re-queen if you have a drone layer.

If your hive is alive check for presence of eggs and young brood which means you have a laying queen. The bees should be bringing in lots of pollen. Brood pattern should be tight. Five frames of bees indicate a strong hive. Check your honey and pollen stores. Look for signs of disease; Chalkbrood, Sacbrood, or Nosema. Monitor for varroa mites and treat if necessary.

You can now remove the top insulation box, clean or swap out the bottom board for a clean one and reverse boxes if brood is near the top of the hive. Then the bees can move up. If brood is in the middle divide between two boxes,

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highlights continued

Do not reverse it. You can stimulate any weak colonies with a protein patties and by feeding 1:1 sugar water if above 50 degrees F.

LATE MARCH to MID APRIL

What are the blooms doing? Nectar flow differs in the each microclimate. Big leaf maple is one of the first minor nectar flows. It will help get your bees through the May dearth, so do not harvest it.

What are the bees doing? The bees are rearing brood and ramping up population. They are also working to coincide with nectar flows. The bees are also preparing for reproduction (swarming). Drone brood production is increasing as the hive naturally wants many adult drones by the time virgin queens emerge. You may see queen cups on the edge of a frame.

What is the beekeeper doing? On of the things beekeepers can do is to equalize their hives by combining frames from strong hives with weak hives. Frames should contain lots of bees and bees of all ages and not contain the queen - check three times to make sure the queen was not taken! You can combine hives using newspaper method. Continue to check the hive for stores to make sure your bees don't starve. Feed with 1:1 syrup if necessary. If there is constant rain during this time the bees will consume capped honey even during nectar flow. If there is endless rain you may see bees ejecting drone brood and adult drones. This is normal as the bees need to conserve honey and pollen for the worker brood. Keep monitoring for varroa mites. You can also replace frames older than 4 years.

Later in the month or depending on weather, it is time for swarm control. In the spring queen cells will appear, this is a definite sign of irreversible swarm decision. Watch the frame space for brood expansion and super if necessary. If seven out of ten frames are full add a honey super.

Yellow jackets can also be a big problem. Once the temperatures hit 60 degrees or if you see yellow jacket queens hovering, looking for a nest, put up your yellow jackets traps using the 10 week queen pheromone.

Judy's slide show is posted on our website under the "LCBA Talks" tab and yu can also review her presentation on YouTube. Contact Nancy for link at nancy.ograin@gmail.com.

March Beekeeping Tips

by Chuck Hunt, LCBA Member

1. March is the month to treat your bees if you haven't already. Be sure and check for mites. Count your mites and see if you need to do a treatment. Grease patties and miticide strips should be in the hive, in March. Pick a time that is relatively warm (about 55 degrees) and quickly apply your medications. It looks like it may be an early spring this year.
2. Bees will be increasing their buildup during this month. Make sure that adequate stores are in place. Don't count on any early spring honey flow since the bees often cannot fly due to poor weather. A hive should never have less than 15 pounds of honey or stores. This is about five western frames or three deep frames of solid honey.
3. You can feed your bees at this time since it is beginning to warm enough that they can handle nectar or syrup. A mixture of one part sugar to one part water. If you want to stimulate increased brood rearing feed one part water to two parts sugar, but remember when doing this you will need additional food stores and it can also cause swarming. .
4. Entrance reducers can probably be removed at this time. You might want to clean the bottom board of any debris or dead bees and make sure that it is dry.
5. If weather permits, it is advisable to even up or balance your hives. This means that those hives that are overflowing with bees and brood should have some brood removed. These removed bees and brood should be given to hives that are weak to boast their strength. MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO NOT TAKE THE QUEEN FROM THE STRONG HIVE ALONG WITH THE TRANSFERRED FRAMES. Don't take more than 20 % of the bees and brood from the strong hive.
6. Also, if your hives are bursting at the seams, you can reverse your brood boxes. Usually, the lower box will be empty of brood. Take this empty box and place it on top of the second box. The second box, with all its brood, bees and queen will become the bottom or first box as a result. The queen will then move up into the new, and now empty, second box.
7. Watch out for swarm cells as the month progresses and moves into early April. Swarm cells look like peanuts that have not been shelled and are placed at the edges of the frames (usually). Various swarm control techniques can be used including splitting your hives. Splitting simply involves dividing the brood and boxes in the strong hive and starting a new hive. In the queenless half of these two hives, you may let the bees raise a new queen. Make sure that queenless half has eggs from which to raise this queen. This process will take about four weeks. You can also order a queen for the queenless half from a queen breeder.
8. If a hive is very weak, queenless and not worth saving, unite it with another hive that needs a boast. Place a newspaper between the two hives and let the bees chew the obstruction away. They will unite peacefully.
9. Think about re-queening any hives that are chronically weak or unproductive. A new and healthy queen will help the buildup and now is the time to order that queen. Look for disease resistance and hygienic queens.
10. Watch out for yellow jacket queens and use pheromone traps for them. Any queens you capture in the spring will greatly reduce the problems with yellow jackets in the late summer and fall.
11. March is the month that many think is the most critical month for beekeeping of the entire year. Do your job right in this month and you go a long way towards having a successful year of beekeeping.

Ode to a Spring Yellow, by Dr. Dewey M. Caron

Can you name a common yellow flower that grows prolifically just about everywhere both spring and fall and once the flower is pollinated, it develops a fluffy seed head that as a youngster you likely picked to blow the feathery remains into the breeze, after making a wish? Yes I am describing the lowly dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*).

A dandelion plant produces on average 15,000 seeds. By blowing on the seed flower head, we are enablers, helping disperse the 150-200 seeds per flower. Even without our help, dandelion seeds can be dispersed long distances by wind updrafts. Once flowering is completed dandelion seeds are short lived so they must germinate quickly. They do not need a dormant period.

Maybe you have seen the bumper sticker "Don't pick dandelions - Save the Honey Bee." Dandelions are an instantly recognizable plant that almost everyone is familiar with. Some consider them the first wildflower of spring. Beginner beekeepers are often surprised to learn dandelions lack vital amino acids and nutrients that bees need. Of the dozen amino acids that bees need in pollen (which they cannot synthetize in their bodies), dandelion pollen falls short in four of them: arginine, isoleucine, leucine, and valine. My PhD student, Elton Herbert, found that honey bees fed dandelion pollen alone have little success at raising brood back in the 1970s.

So unfortunately, dandelions, those familiar spring weeds, are simply not a quality food source for bees – they are mediocre at best and they are not the first. Thankfully for our bees there are many other plants that bloom before or around the same time as dandelions, that in combination, help the bees fulfill their amino acid requirements. Even before they swarm, bees are "in the trees" to collect pollen from maples, elms, poplars and willow.

Dandelions do still play a useful role to honey bees. With windy spring conditions, bees need to locate forage closer to the ground; lawns or parks blanketed with dandelions are accessible on such days. Peak nectar and pollen availability occurs in the morning hours from dandelions. The flowers close up in early afternoon and foragers then switch to other flower sources, insuring a bee smorgasbord. A lawn full of dandelions is better for bees than a weed free lawn, but not nearly as good as a garden with a variety of plants.

In contrast, if you're into health foods and an all-natural lifestyle, you likely love every part of the dandelion plant. A popular website grow, forage, ferment, and cook https://www.growforagecookferment.com/ says it is not necessary to save dandelions for honey bees since they are plentiful. Although often treated as a weed, it's actually a perennial herb with a long list of culinary and medicinal uses.

Dandelions are one of the best beginner plants for those who are new to food foraging. All parts of dandelion are edible and medicinal, from the flower, to the leaves, to the root. Many have heard of substituting the early leaves of the dandelion as a spring salad. The leaves might be bitter due to **sesquiterpenes**, the milky sap common in the hollow stem. (Hint: if dandelion greens are "too bitter" for your taste, consult Dr John Kallas's website of Portland's Wild Food Adventures https://www.backwoodshome.com/making-dandelions-palatable/ for some ways to dilute/camouflage/neutralize the sesquiterpenes).

The boiled leaves make a tea that my French grandmother insisted we drink each spring to "purge" our system (and there is evidence it might help kidney and liver function). They have a delicate and sweet flavor. They are a good source of vitamins A, C, and K and are also a source of vitamin E, folate, iron, and calcium. They can be used to make dandelion jelly, soup, tea, and even dandelion mead. The dried flower heads can be turned into a salve for dry, cracked or sore, itchy skin. Like propolis, it can be diluted into a tincture for topical or interior use.

Note: False dandelion **Hypochaeris radicata**, aka (hairy) cat's ear, closely resembles the true dandelion. They do not have hollow stems like dandelion, the stems branch and their hairy leaves have deeper notches. Sometimes, another look-alike, **Sow Thistle** (*Sonchus spp.*) is confused for dandelion. It too lacks a hollow stem, has flowers growing at multiple sites from the stem and as a true thistle has leaves with prickly spines. Both "imposters" are also edible. Both, like dandelion, are mediocre pollen sources for bees.

The lowly dandelion weed ? Hardly. Good for our bees and to share in our own diet.

Bee Appearance and Behavior May Be Related

by Tory Moore, University of Florida Jan 19, 2022

Apis mellifera scutellate

Recently discovered genetic knowledge of two nuisance western honey bee subspecies will help commercial and hobby beekeepers. A new UF/IFAS study identified genetic characteristics relevant to the production and behavioral attributes of these two key bee subspecies. For example, researchers found Cape bees to be significantly darker than Africanized bees. This dark coloring could be genetically correlated to their undesired behavior.

Both subspecies are undesired in the United States. The first, the "killer bee" or "Africanized honey bee," known scientifically as A.m. scutellata, is a light-colored bee known for its territorial and defensive nature. This subspecies was taken from its native habitat in South Africa to Brazil in the 1950's. There, it hybridized with the European bee subspecies kept by Brazilian beekeepers, and then moved into the U.S. A.m. scutellata are considered invasive bees and can take over colonies of managed honey bees, which can lower profits for beekeepers. They also are known for their heightened defensive behavior.

The second subspecies studied, the "cape honey bee," known scientifically as A.m. capensis, presents a slew of problems to beekeepers. These bees are more docile but are more likely than African honey bees to take over hives. Cape bees are considered social parasites. Unlike other honey bee subspecies, cape worker bees can clone themselves, producing female eggs without first mating. These clones can take over a hive. These workers cannot reproduce at the same rate as a traditional queen and the colony will eventually dwindle and collapse, a phenomenon coined "capensis calamity."

"More amazing than the cape bee worker's ability to clone itself is the rate at which it can take over other colonies," said Jamie Ellis, UF/IFAS professor. "We are working to ensure these bees do not make their way to the United States because in most cases, when these bees take over a colony, the colony is doomed."

Genetic studies can be used to understand "why the way things are" for an organism. In this case, researchers sought to understand what genetic traits contribute to the appearance of these bees and their behavior. Using data collected from South African bees from a previous USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service funded study in 2013 and 2014, scientists sought to understand what genes are responsible for the physical characteristics of these subspecies.

"We found really interesting variations in the genes of these bees that can help explain why they look and behave differently," said Laura Patterson Rosa, UF/IFAS graduate student and co-lead author of the study. "There are a lot of implications to what we found. We have not yet been able to verify these new discoveries in additional populations, but if our findings stand the test of time, it could partially explain why we see behavioral changes, why they do not acknowledge the existence of queens of other subspecies and why they can clone themselves when other bees cannot."

"Color phenotype is an important aspect to beekeeping management," said Ellis. "It can help beekeepers know what type of honey bee they have." Cape bees are significantly darker than the Africanized bees. This dark coloring could be genetically correlated to their cloning and colony takeover behavior. "There are potentially over 30 subspecies of honey bees. We investigated only two in the published study," said Ellis. "Does this finding hold true for the other dark colored honey bee subspecies? It would be interesting to look for these mutations across all western honey bee subspecies to determine if this is the case."

Curiosity about traits, characteristics and color and how they impact behavior persists as researchers hope to use these findings for future research.

Classified Ads

Bee-related classified ads cost $5.00/month for non-members and are free to members. Classified ads run for three issues and may be renewed by contacting the editor. Bee-related business ads start at $35. To place an ad, contact Nancy Ograin by the 1st of the month. 541-935-7065 or via e-mail nancy.ograin@gmail.com.

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It's a good idea to slit the straws with a razor blade letter opener before putting them into the cardboard tubes - makes it easier to remove the cocoons in October.

Contact to order: Polly or Doug Habliston
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See Polly's article on Mason Bees in LCBA March 2021 Newsletter.

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Membership forms for new members and renewals are available on the LCBA website. Click here to access.

For discounts on American Bee Journal subscriptions contact Nancy Ograin for discount form.

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Editor: Nancy Ograin
541-935-7065 nancy.ograin@gmail.com

Support Dr. Sagili's OSU Bee Lab

Oregon State Beekeepers Association has set up a fundraiser to help raise monies for Dr. Sagili's research and students. You can make a difference by donating today and help in raising research funds. Every little bit helps!

Thank You!

Donate Here

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