



CENTRAL COAST BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

April 2019

ISSUE NUMBER 38

NEXT MEETING APRIL 24TH, 2019

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jon Sumpter

Hello, this month we get a visit and lecture from Judy Scher. She has been an urban beekeeper in Eugene for 17 years. She is a Master Beekeeper and has served as past president of Lane County Beekeepers Association and an instructor for the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program.

She has been making lotions and soap since the mid 1990's and has developed or streamlined the use of other products of the beehive. Besides honey and wax there is pollen, something called propolis and... I'll let her teach us another world of the beehive.

We're getting a soggy start for our spring. Have you checked the moisture in your hives? Whatever system you use, now's time to check.

One of my hives is running low on honey so I'm feeding it. How's yours doing? Good I'll bet. We'd like to hear about your success.

Swarm cells are appearing in our hives. If the rain ever lets up, making splits or chasing swarms is coming up too.

I'm exhausted already just thinking about spring beekeeping :o)

If you have a few minutes, check out <https://honeybeesuite.com>

Our April meeting is Wednesday, April 24th at 6 pm at the **Newport Library**. Judy Scher, long time beekeeper from Eugene and a Master Beekeeper, will be speaking about the products of the hive and will be demonstrating how to make a variety of wax and propolis products.

Last Call to Participate in The Pacific NW Loss Survey

Dr. Dewey Caron is once again asking for our assistance in the collection of data on last bee years losses. This is an important tool to help us know what is happening with the bees in the Pacific Northwest. Please participate in the survey, either on line or by paper. Click on link below to take the survey on line or print out the attached paper survey form and mail to Dewey.

<http://www.pnwhoneybeesurvey.com/survey>

KEEPING BEES IN APRIL

Max Kuhn

April in Oregon, here west of the Cascades at least, usually means the beginning of SWARM season. Swarm season for many of us is the most exciting time of the beekeeping year.

But swarming is not the only reason to be excited. It is also the time of year when beekeepers are receiving their newly purchased bees. These bees usually arrive in the form of 3-pound packages or nucs. The bees have been ordered a few months before from a variety of suppliers located all over the US. Receiving these new packages or nucs can be as exciting as catching a swarm-especially for those unfortunate folks who are still waiting to catch that first one. To those folks I say, "Don't give up." As long as we have honey bees, we will have swarms. And each year that you continue to keep bees, your chances of catching that swarm improve. So, hang in there, your turn is coming.

Now back to the Packages and Nucs. A few years back, one of my beekeeper friends received one of those Packages of bees and installed them as per directions into a ten-frame Langstroth style box. He placed the caged queen between two frames in this box, shook the remaining bees from the package into the same box, and closed it up for the night. He then added a feeder filled with sugar syrup. The next day he meandered out to the bee yard to have a look at the new hive. After watching the hive entrance for a few minutes and not seeing the expected bees coming and going, he sensed something was wrong and opened the hive for a closer look. Whoa! Every single bee was gone...vanished! No trace. Except one. There in her tiny little cage was the queen. The only bee left in the box!

How could this Happen?! What would cause a package of bees to leave a perfectly good hive box, stocked with sugar syrup, and furnished with the latest in hive hardware!!? --not to mention leaving their newly introduced queen still stuck in her cage? What kind of bees would do this? One possible answer to this mystery lies in the process of the building of the Packages themselves.

If you have never had the opportunity to watch or participate in the package-building process, you are missing a real treat. If you ever have the chance to go and witness this event, grab it; it is worth the effort. For those folks actually working on the process, it is pure work. For the bees, it is pandemonium, but the end result of this event is the nice tidy little packages of bees that you bring home to install in their new home.

The package-making process involves a large box, of sorts, made from wire mesh to contain a large amount of honey bees. Into this box is inserted a size large funnel made of metal, or similar material, which provides a slick surface for the bees to slide through on their way into that box. The box and funnel are moved from bee hive to bee hive in the commercial beekeeper's apiary. At each hive, workers choose a few frames of bees and, after checking to make sure the frames do not contain the queen, they then shake the frames over the funnel mouth. This causes the bees to slide through the slick funnel and into the mesh box.

The process is repeated until the box, which may contain a hundred pounds of bees, is full. The full box is then moved to another area where the bees are scooped out with a scoop that holds about 3 pounds of bees. The scoop is emptied into the funnel again, though this time the bees are sent sliding into the wire-and-wood travel box which you eventually receive and take home to your apiary. (I apologize at this point to the commercial beekeeping profession for my over simplified description of their package-making process, a process they take very seriously and carry out with the utmost care and consideration of the honey bees.)

The above process is coupled with the little-known fact that as many as 20 percent of all bee hives might, in April and May, contain multiple queens. Yes, it is true. During these spring months, when a colony is preparing to swarm, it may contain more than one queen. Usually they are mother- daughter queens and it is a temporary situation due to bad weather that forces the swarming colony to wait for clearing before completing the swarm process. The daughter queens are much smaller and less distinctive than the larger mother queens, which makes these virgin queens more difficult to see. I believe they can easily slip past the beekeepers preparing the packages for shipment.

Herein lies one possible reason for the absence of the bees in my friend's hive. When he installed his package of bees, it contained an extra queen! A battle might normally ensue between two queens in this scenario, except for the fact that the one queen was contained in the small cage. So, the bees in this case, not being able to attack the caged queen, may have opted for another alternative, which was to abscond or swarm.

What if this situation were to happen to you? What would you do? I have given it some thought and decided I probably would not complain to the company selling me the package. What could I say? "Hey, you guys sold me two queens for the price of one, so I want my money back." Naw...that might not work.

I must point out that a nuc does not have the problem described above. The nuc is normally made with a laying queen which is not caged and has already been accepted by her hive mates. The nucs are more expensive, however.

Happy Swarm hunting and may your packages have only one queen!

Oregon Dept. of Agriculture Apiary Registration

Every person who owns, or is in charge of, five or more colonies of bees located within the state or Oregon, must register their hives with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. If you currently own fewer than five hives, you are not required to register your bees at this time.

The current cost of apiary registration is \$10 with an additional charge of \$0.50 per colony for five or more hives. After July 1, the registration fee will increase to \$20. The fee per hive remains at \$0.50 per colony for five or more hives.

Click below to view Oregon's apiary registration rules and regulations and registration form.
<https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/IPPM/InsectsSpiders/Pages/BeesApiaries.aspx>

Tool Use

by Dr. Dewey M. Caron

As beekeepers we employ a variety of tools such as smoker, hive tool, frame holders, etc. When I prepared the Honey Bee Health Coalition guide on managing varroa, we called the publication a tool – an educational aid to combat our most serious bee pest. We utilize many tools, some essential, others less so, to keep bees. Just a few decades ago, tool use was among the traits we believed “made us human”, different from other organisms. It turns out tool use isn't so unique. Tools are sometimes used by other animals, not just by our closest relatives. Consider this: On a cold night a year ago in February, a striped skunk wandered into a suburban Colorado Springs

backyard carrying a stone in one paw. The skunk climbed onto a water bowl and using the stone like a hammer, banged a hole in its frozen surface. Suzanne Dickerson (twitter @CameraTrapSue) thusly captured the first documented occurrence of a skunk using a tool. "Observation of tool use in striped skunks: how community science and social media help document rare natural phenomena." Ecosphere, 2018. Beekeepers may be familiar with descriptions of the chimpanzees of Jane Goodell at Gombe or those of Gabon using sticks on underground bee nests to secure honey and bee brood to eat; [hps://theconversaon.com/chimpanzeeshung-for-honey-are-cleverer-than-we-thought-74379](https://theconversaon.com/chimpanzeeshung-for-honey-are-cleverer-than-we-thought-74379). Bonobos, gorillas, baboons and even orangutans also have behaviors that include tool use. All use a stick similar to chimpanzees, to obtain honey and brood from bee nests. Tool use has previously been described in several birds (crows, ravens, woodpeckers), fish that use shellfish to help with nest construction and octopi who construct coconut shell hideouts. And at least one skunk. The tool (rock) using skunk was not the discovery of a scientist, but by a citizen using a tool (moon activated camera) in her backyard. This activity is open labelled citizen science. Beekeepers have been invited to participate in data coalition using their own bees in their backyard as natural scientists at work. In our managing of hives and harvesting of honey, tool use abounds. Three essential tools are veil, smoker and hive tool. We light the smoker to change bee behavior as we manipulate the hive tool to crack open the supers to "steal" their stores. Correct and efficient use of both smoker and hive tool take practice to perfect – how many smokers did you have to start before learning the "secret"? You start the fire with plenty of oxygen using highly combustible fuel source from below before adding a less combustible fuel above to produce the cool, good volume smoke. Hive tools are basic to opening the hive and getting the heavy honey-filled super frames out. Newbees use them as primitive pry bars but they work better when the physics of the tool are utilized. The curve (traditional design) and J-hook are there for a purpose. Let the tool do the work, not you with heavy pushing and pulling. A chisel or screwdriver is not the right tool. And the tools we use to extract? They can be expensive because we like to have our very own over sharing. If you do prefer your own extractor it is an investment. Treat the extractor kindly and you will find they retain their value if you decide to get out of bees and need to sell them to another beekeeper. Most of the year they will be in storage. When needed they are ready in a jiffy and adding knife, filters and buckets you will be all set to extract and clarify that delicious honey. Kim Flotum in December 2018 Bee Culture discussed tools (mostly gardening tools). He concluded his editorial The Right Tool (page 18 -19) "For whatever reason, using the wrong tool costs you more than replacing it with the right tool. Smokers too small so you have to stop and refill, dull hive tool.... Bee suit with hole in it, extractor too small so you have to stop too many times to load and unload When you don't have the right tool, everything that can go wrong will go wrong, sooner or later. Sound familiar. Tools -- they come in handy in beekeeping.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 26th-27th - 45th Annual Bee Weekend- Location: Glory Bee, 29548 B Airport Rd, Eugene -Friday 9:30 am-4:30 pm; Saturday 9:00AM-4:00pm Food Carts / Kids Crafts /Honey Tasting/ Presentations & Live Installation Demos

May 18-19th – Oregon Honey Festival, Ashland, OR

<http://www.oregonhoneyfestival.com>

July 12-14th – The Western Apicultural Society Annual Conference, Ashland, OR,

<https://westernapiculturalsociety.org>

October 25-27th – Oregon State Beekeepers Association Fall Conference, Florence Events Center, Florence, OR

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