



CENTRAL COAST BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

March 2021

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NEXT MEETING MARCH 24TH 2021

The next club meeting will be **on March 24th at 6:30pm via Zoom**. We will mail out a link to this one-hour zoom meeting about 3 days prior. Topic for the meeting: “ALL ABOUT QUEENS” will be presented by Rick Olson.

For those of you who attend the Zoom meeting, we will be doing a Bee Friendly Plant Seed Giveaway DRAWING (*borage, milkweed, clover, nasturtiums*). We will pick TWO WINNERS from those in attendance and will mail out a packet of various seeds to you after the meeting.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

By Stu Willason

We’ve had a bit of a break from the rain and there is a hint of spring in the air. Trees are just starting to bloom and we’ve noticed that skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*) is coming up in the wetter areas on our property. Our bees are bringing in various shades of yellow pollen so maybe they found the stinky plant. Apparently, skunk cabbage doesn’t produce nectar but the pollen should help with the early spring brood. They might also have found the yellow blooming

Acacia trees (an invasive species) a few miles away. Hopefully, the first nectar flow is right around the corner.

We've been getting boxes, frames and all our summer beehive equipment ready for spring. Even though my wife and I have been beekeepers for almost 10 years, we have never done a split. However, this year we are making a commitment and will split one or two of our hives in late spring.

Speaking of splits, here is a link to a recent lecture by Morris Ostrofsky, a retired biology instructor and Master Beekeeper - *Walk Away Splits - Steps you can take for Stress-Free Queen Rearing*. [Walk Away Splits Presentation Feb 2021](#). This was the presentation he did for the Lane County Beekeepers a few weeks ago and they were kind enough to share the link with us.

The Western Apicultural Society's (WAS) February Mini-Conference is now on line for everyone to view on their own time. You can access both of the February talks (*The Bee Gut Microbiome*) at [Western Apicultural Society - YouTube](#). Their March Mini-Conference (*Alternatives for Varroa Control and Determinants of European Foul Brood*) is the same time as our meeting but we will post links to the talks in the next newsletter.

We had good attendance at our February zoom meeting (Thanks to all who attended!) and the March meeting will be just as much fun with an always informative and entertaining presentation from Rick Olson, Master Beekeeper and Queen Whisperer. His topic will be about Queens – how to find the queen, install a new one, marking a queen and an overview of the queen rearing process.

If you have any suggestions for topics for future zoom meetings, please let us know. We want to make the meetings as relevant as possible for everyone in the club so please share your thoughts and ideas, they are important!

If you haven't already done so, you can renew or start a new membership for only \$15 per person or \$25 per family. Your membership allows the club to continue our support for the Oregon State University Bee Lab research and programs. Your checks along with the included membership/renewal form should be sent to the address on the form. [CCBA Membership Form .pdf](#) If you are renewing, you can also use PayPal by sending it to the club's email: centralcoastbeekeepers@gmail.com.

See you on Wednesday March 24th at 6:30 PM!



Meet a CCBA Member

Each month we'll be featuring one of the club's members to find out a little about their beekeeping passion. This month we are featuring Britte Kirsch who lives in Florence. Thanks for sharing, Britte!

My name is Britte and I have been a bee guardian for 10 years. I started learning about bees and loving bees in Park City Utah with a Top Bar Hive as my first hive. To me, foundationless hives allow the bees to do what they want, so honey extraction and intense management of bees have not been important to me. But over the past decade, the concerns with colony collapse, pesticide overuse and Varroa infestations have changed the way I need to treat bees. I can no longer just be a guardian, I have to manage them with the help of my husband, Stu. The best part about beekeeping is the continual sense of amazement and inspiration when I spend time watching them and working with them. We have 3 very active Langstroth hives now and one wonderful Warre, but we love to catch swarms so we may have more this year (we have lots of bees in our hives!). And, we will try to do a split for the first time, so I am always learning something from the bees. That is why I love being a part of the Central Coast Beekeepers Association - there is so much to learn and lots of great people to learn from.



Beekeeping will change you for the worse

By Rusty Burlew

[Honey Bee Suite](#)



Many of my web visitors are soon-to-be beekeepers preparing for their first delivery of honey bees. They have read, attended classes, and talked to other beekeepers. Some write to me with a few last-minute questions. But what they envision and what I foresee are completely different.

I was reminded of this beekeeping reality while watching a beginner video on YouTube. While sappy music played in the background, a lilting voice explained that once you become a beekeeper you will embrace nature for the first time! You will become attuned to weather and blooms! You will blossom as a person!

Wow. I imagine a barefoot flower child romping through a verdant meadow, a ring of daisies in her hair and a bouquet of dandelions clutched in her fist. Beekeeping is your entry into a world of peace and love and grass stains. Kumbaya in a box.

Selling an image

Beekeepers who are frantically pushing their books or e-courses spout all this nonsense with a straight face. Ah! The wonders of becoming one with the insects. None of them explain that beekeeping degrades your personal standards. Your table manners erode. Your language goes to hell. Your housekeeping falters. And your tolerance for sticky and gooey takes a turn for the worse. You become unforgivably messy, and your definition of what is “gross” defies social norms.

Family values take on new meaning

Once you get your bees, that pulsating mound of venom becomes the most important member of your family. The side yard where the kids used to play is off limits. The cat can no longer lounge in her favorite sun spot. The dog’s water bowl is full of insects. Blooming weeds are sacrosanct, and your partner can no longer mow in the middle of the day. Life as your family used to know it evaporates because, as everyone knows, you mustn’t bother the bees.

Stickiness reigns

It doesn’t take long before everything in your home is gooey. Before you began your beekeeping adventure, you believed that honey was sticky. But honey, easily neutralized with water, doesn’t hold a candle to propolis, beeswax, and pollen. You have no idea. I gleefully await your first encounter with a glistening wad of propolis on a hot day. Tee hee.

One day last year, while carrying a sack of groceries and finding himself unable to release his hand from the front door, my husband reached his limit. After giving me the look, he drenched a rag in alcohol and said, “This morning I got stuck on the barn door. And if you haven’t noticed, your tailgate is attracting flies.” Oops.

Within a few days, he replaced every door knob on the property with a lever handle. The new rule: When coming inside, I am never to touch the levers. Instead, I must open them with my elbows which, for the most part, are free from bee “stuff.”

Your language will deteriorate

I’ve heard it called “bee language.” Bee language is an apt description because it is universally understood by all beekeepers. It consists of short, staccato words, strung together randomly, using only one punctuation mark! Delivered in loud outbursts or softly under one’s breath, these words are concise evaluations of your

present circumstance. In English, they usually run four-letters in length, and often begin with consonants such as f, s, or d.

Your personal appearance will regress

Once upon a time, I was vainly particular about my appearance. A spot on my outfit was humiliating beyond words. Imagine wearing your food on your shirt! But recently, before a quick trip to Home Depot, I examined my clothes in a mirror. Well, the propolis stain across my stomach wasn't **that** bad. In fact, it was barely noticeable if I held my arm in front of it. For a brief moment, I considered tying my left arm in a sling.

As a teenager, a zit on my face would have sent me into hiding. But now I examine the red welt on my chin and decide it looks like a mosquito bite. No big deal. After closer inspection, I scrape the stinger from the center. There! Good as new. Nowadays, as long as my eyes aren't swollen shut, I'm good to go.

Messiness knows no bounds

If you plan to lead a neat and orderly life, you have no business being a beekeeper. Personally, I no longer have the space to be neat.

Today, as I glance around my once pristine kitchen, I see piles of honeycombs, some in frames and some not. There are honeycombs stacked on my dining room table, and piled in, on, and beneath the cupboards. They take up the space next to the refrigerator and the mixer. They completely cover the cutting board and fill the broiler pan. Others are stacked in my office and garage.

My shed, once neat and organized, is filled with bags of beeswax, buckets of old candy board, canisters of propolis, and stacks of end bars, nails, and assorted hive tools. The floor and windowsills are littered with dead bees and frame scrapings. Each time I decide to clean it up, I can't figure out where to start, so I don't. This is not the me I grew up with.

A purpose for pockets

Worse, I have things in my pockets, things no normal woman carries in pockets. A queen cell. A dead bumble bee. A crushed flower to identify. Some kind of thing that was crawling on my top bars. A screw driver. A test tube. A few seeds.

Even when I try to do things right, I often fail. One day, I swept through the garage with my bee suit and said, "Hey Rich, I'm going to wash this. Do you have anything

else for the load?” He looked as if I lost my mind. “With [that](#)? Are you kidding?” This hurt my feelings. Apparently, he believes his filthy, oily car rags are no match for my bee suit.

About the freezer

The freezer, which used to hold food, has also become a point of contention. My freezer now contains honey, swarm lures, mite meds of various styles, pollen pellets, queen pheromones, and pollen patties. It also contains test tubes full of native bees and wasps, vials (viles) of parasites, and samples of frass. But the real backlash occurred when I began freezing frames of drone larvae. Apparently, when someone is looking for dinner, rafts of frozen, mite-infested drone larvae don't spark the appetite. Who knew?

Your purchasing habits change

As a beekeeper, you buy strange things. A truckload of sugar is questionable. A case of isopropyl alcohol is odd. A case of EverClear is downright weird. I used to feel compelled to explain my purchases to people who stared. Now I want to say, “If you don't like it, don't look!” No wonder Amazon is my friend. I now buy everything in plain brown boxes.

Neighbor troubles

Lastly, you have neighbors. They used to be your friends, but now you hide when you see them. You live in fear they will complain about your bees stinging, chasing their grandchildren, pooping on their laundry, or drinking from their pool. If cornered, you pretend you haven't a clue what they're talking about.

But rather than being cornered, you cross the street to avoid passing, change grocery stores, and move your bank account. You put in automatic sprinklers so you don't have to stand outside with a hose in hand, you walk your dog at night, and you park your car in the garage. You wonder what happened to you, why you've become so antisocial, but the answer is simple. You became a beekeeper.

Should you skip it?

Am I trying to convince you to avoid beekeeping? Not a chance. I'm just saying that beekeeping isn't all sweetness and light. It's so much more fun than that! And it may be the most remarkable life-changing experience in your entire existence—whether for better or for worse.

It's Survey Time Again

by Dr. Dewey M. Caron

In the 2018-2019 beekeeping season, 302 Oregon and 133 Washington backyarder beekeepers participated in the PNW Survey. The survey tool, now in its 12th year, measures honey bee survival/losses with diverse management variables such as feeding, winterizing, sanitation and varroa sampling/control of individual beekeepers. The online survey instrument www.pnwhoneybeesurvey.com/survey

will be opened March 15 and will extend through the month of April. It should only take a few minutes to complete. Information requested this year is similar to previous years. You can download and print a paper copy from the survey site for those who prefer this form over the electronic survey.

Colony loss levels from the Oregon respondents last season were 38% down from the elevated 48% overall loss the previous year. Statewide, respondents had 1,353 fall colonies of which 845 colonies survived to spring; 92% were nucs or eight and ten frame Langstroth hives. Trend line of losses is toward higher losses. The survey asks how many colonies you had last fall compared to this spring in three ways, through hive location, hive types and origination. There are also questions on basic wintering options, varroa control and feeding. In my last annual report I showed things that worked for some individuals. Those feeding dry sugar or pollen patties or pollen dry had greater survival. Individuals that didn't do any wintering options had the highest losses, while those who performed four or more of the options had only a 23% overwinter loss. Avoiding moving frames and reducing driving were the two sanitation choices that demonstrated better than average survival statewide for the past three years.

Individuals that monitored for mites had a 27% loss while those who did no monitoring had double that loss. Individuals doing no chemical control measure had nearly double the loss rate of those doing something. Oxalic acid dribble, Apilife Var and Apiguard treatment showed the best survival rates for chemical treatments. Among the non-chemical treatments, drone brood removal, brood cycle interruption painting hive to reduce dripping were the three options showing best survival rates. The question is what will this spring bring? Take the survey. Your results do count!



Maternal instincts lead to social life of bees

The maternal care of offspring is one of the behavioral drivers that has led some bee species to have an ever-expanding social life over the history of evolution, new research out of York University has found.

By virtue of being in a social group, the genome itself may respond by selecting more social rather than non-social genes. The behavior and social environment come first, setting the stage for future molecular evolution.

In addition, the researchers have found that a similar genetic evolution happened independently in different species at different times, suggesting there is a unifying principle leading to the same social trait.

"There seems to be something about sociality specifically that is driving the genome to evolve in this way. It's a very interesting finding previously reported only in ants and honeybees," says lead researcher Associate Professor Sandra Rehan of the Faculty of Science.

Rehan and her team looked at 16 different bee species across three different independent origins of eusociality -- the transition from solitary to social life where bees or other species live in a multigenerational group cooperatively caring for offspring in which there is a reproductive division of labor.

They also sequenced the genome of six of the carpenter bee species -- one from North America, three from Australia, one from Japan and another from Kenya -- to find out how sociability effects genome evolution. They found that caring for the species' young in a group has in many cases led to the selection of social rather than non-social gene regulation.

"When we see the rise of queens and workers in complex sociality, we tend to see a rise of more complex genomic signatures, rates of evolution in the genome, but also the complexity of the structure of the genomes," says Rehan. "We know so little about how sociality evolves." Most bees are solitary, but some, like honeybees and carpenter bees, have transitioned to being social. Overall, though, sociality is relatively rare in the animal kingdom, and in bees.

"We are trying to understand how life evolved from simple to complex. We're mostly interested in how they got there. By studying these kinds of intermediary groups and simple societies, we really can ask that question empirically," says Rehan.

"It gives us a window into the evolution of complexity and behavior broadly. We can study it very practically in insects and bees because they show remarkable diversity in behavior, but it gives us insights into all animals, including ourselves."

Story Source:

[Materials](#) provided by **York University**. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.



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