

# Buzzword



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Next Meeting

Tuesday,  
January 20, 2003  
7:00 p.m.

At Stedman's in  
Silverdale

**OFFICERS & COMMITTEES**

- President:  
Bob Martello 360-830-5456
- Vice President:  
Stephen Augustine 360-779-1210
- Secretary:  
Tricia Sullivan 360-779-1210
- Treasurer:  
Joe Grubbs 360-871-5308
- Educational Materials:  
Barbara Stedman 360-692-9453
- Librarian:  
Roy & Vickie Barton 360-613-0175
- Newsletter Editor:  
Stephen Augustine 360-779-1210

## The Secret Lives of Bees

By Stephen Augustine

**D**uring the winter I have this habit of bringing chilled bees indoors to thaw out. It's remarkable really - a few minutes of exposure to the warmth, a little honey to eat and seemingly lifeless bees come back to life and within no time they're all abuzz to go back out. Of course some people may think I'm crazy to go looking in the grass for chilled bees in the first place. Well, some of you may keep bees for honey but I keep bees because I *like* bees.

brought in several bees and as usual I set them on my bee board underneath my special bee cage colander. I usually drip a little bit of honey on the sides of the colander which they usually polish off within minutes. This time only two of the bees actually turned out to be alive - a very dark bee, probably

not go crawling around. The light-colored bee eventually started moving around and found the honey and started lapping it up. A little later as I passed by I noticed that the light-colored bee was feeding the weaker, dark bee by trophallaxis. Within a short time both of them were buzzing



inside the cage and fifteen minutes later I took them both out to fly back to their hives.

"So what?" you say. "So here's a lesson", I say! Two bees from different hives, find themselves in a strange place and the only companionship they have

About a week ago I

from our Carniolan hive, and a light-colored bee, almost certainly from a different hive. The dark bee was so weak that she stayed in one place and did

*(Continued on page 2)*

## In Gratitude

Farewell and best wishes to founding members Paul & Susan Hosticka as they depart Kitsap County for a quieter and slower life in Dayton, Columbia County. Paul has contributed enormously to WSBA both in leadership as the President for three years and in education with numerous presentations, the Beginner's Beekeeping class, and liberal advice. We will undoubtedly miss Paul's wealth of knowledge and his quick wit. As our Treasurer this past year Susan has done an exemplary job. We wish them both the best and happy beekeeping in Columbia County.

## Membership Dues are Due

A new year is upon us and it's time to send in those membership dues. Dues are \$24 per year.

Please use the enclosed return envelope to send in your dues to Treasurer Joe Grubbs.

"Bees work for man, and yet they never bruise Their Master's flower, but leave it having done, As fair as ever and as fit to use; So both the flower doth stay and honey run."

- George Herbert  
(The Church, Providence)

## BASICS IN NORTHWEST BEEKEEPING

Adapted from Ron Bennett (<http://members.aol.com/beetools/>)

In January and February, you should disturb the bees as little as possible. They will be in a tight cluster and you should not break their cluster.

Lift the hives to find any light ones and give those hives emergency feed of sugar candy or dry sugar. Dry sugar or sugar candy is best because the bees can access it with the minimum of time away from the cluster and consume it directly. With syrup feed, they must go to the feeder (breaking cluster and risking chilling themselves) and syrup has to be further evaporated for consumption by the bees. Continue to check for moisture on the inside of the outer covers. If you notice any condensation make sure you increase hive ventilation by placing some pebbles or twigs between the outer and inner covers.

Watch the flight intensity on warm days to spot weak colonies. Also pay regular attention to the front of each

hive looking for signs of disease. Deformed bees are a pointer to infestation by varroa mites. Bees crawling on the ground without any deformations may be an indication of tracheal mite infestation.

At the end of February, if you have determined that treatment for mites with miticide strips is warranted then treat for mites with Apistan® strips (one strip per five frames of bees). You should start your treatment for Varroa mites by mid-February so that you have completed treatment BEFORE you put on your first honey super in March. Early supering will help to gather the first honey flow of Maple, and give your bees the space they need to help minimize swarming.

Store your unused brood comb in a cool dry place and protect your bees and stored comb against mice. Drawn comb is one of your most important assets. It takes your

bees a lot of honey and pollen to generate a frame of wax. Plan and prepare equipment for the coming season. Now is the time to build frames and hive bodies. Remember you need to cross-wire wax foundation to keep it straight in the frames.

Pay your dues to your local bee association. (Hear that - send \$24 payable to WSBA to the Treasurer, Joe Grubbs.) The association needs your support and you will benefit greatly from the combined wisdom of association members.

Buy your new colonies or order package bees. Packages are usually available only in the first and second week of April, so you need to have your equipment ready and your packages ordered in time. In the case of failing or poor queens one of the best management tools we beekeepers have is re-queening, so, if deemed necessary, plan and order queens for April 1st delivery.



### ...THE SECRET LIVES OF BEES (CONTD. FROM PAGE 1)

is each other. In this situation I think it's amazing that two bees from different hives, mortal enemies on home territory, turn to each other and succor each other. Maybe you and I will remember that the next time we see someone in need.

This past year I have been reflecting on the fact that bees are among the few creatures on Earth who do not take life of any sort in order to live - pollen and nectar are gifts from the flower. Not only that - they give life exceedingly - by pollinating plants and trees which in turn prosper and give life to countless other creatures. Bees seem to live the prime dictum of "do no harm" far better than we can ever hope to. Our footsteps on the planet are so heavy and almost everything we do takes life away from other living things. If only humans were more like bees in giving life rather than taking life I know the world would be a far better place. Alas, we have eaten of the tree of knowledge and have made of ourselves gods on Earth while the lowly bee in her secret life reminds us of the original directives when we lived in a Garden called Eden.



### Editor's Note:

Articles of interest to beekeepers and announcements of interest to Association members are welcomed and encouraged.

Submit articles and announcements to Stephen Augustine:

Email: [stephen@lalgudi.net](mailto:stephen@lalgudi.net)  
Mail: 401 B Liberty St NW  
Poulsbo, WA 98370

## SAVING RUNTY COLONIES BY JAMES E. TEW

All bee stories don't have happy endings. In an ideal bee world, all hives would be strong and all nectar flows would be long, but even new beekeepers know this is not the case. Pesticide kills, defective queens, late season swarms, bee diseases or beekeeper mismanagements are some common reasons that runt colonies occur. Now that it's late summer, what should - or could - be done with these disappointing colonies?

Your options, and that of your beekeeper friends, are all over the spectrum. Select from the following common scenarios that best describe your situation.

*I have other colonies that are doing well. This weak colony is not particularly important to me. I live in an area that has cold Winters.*

**Suggested solution:** After being certain that American foulbrood (AFB) is not the problem, combine the colony with another. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, kill the runt hive queen. Build up your remaining healthy colonies and plan to make a split during the Spring of 2004 if you want to recover colony numbers.

*I have other colonies that are doing well. Even so, I would like to try to save this colony. I live in an area that has very mild Winters.*

**Suggested solution:** Again, after checking for AFB, add bees and brood from another colony to the weakened hive. Keep your expectations in check. Feed the colony as much as it will take and be sure that other problems, such as predaceous mites, are under control. Re-evaluate during late September or early November. If the treated colony looks as though it will make it through the Winter, let it try. If the recovery was not particularly impressive, combine the colony with another hive and make a split during the upcoming Spring.

*I'm somewhat new to beekeeping. I don't have a lot of other hive resources and I don't have a lot of experience.*

**Suggested solution:** Honestly, this small colony does not have a bright future. Probably the colony will die even during a mild Winter. That means that there is no harm in trying to save the unit, but you don't have much to work with. All you can do is feed the colony both supplemental carbohydrates and pollen substitutes and hope that the colony has enough time and strength to utilize the extra resources. Obviously, it would have been helpful to be able to add both bees and brood to this weakened unit, but sometimes that is just not an option. I hope that such a new beekeeper can

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### Refreshment Schedule

- Jan:** -open-
- Feb:** -open-
- Mar:** -open-
- Apr:** -open-

If you are unable to fulfill your commitment to provide refreshments for a meeting please notify Bob Martello by giving him a call at 360-830-5456 before the meeting date.

### Buzzwords

Joe Grubbs has volunteered to take over Treasurer duties from Susan Hosticka. Thank you Joe!

25 members attended the Holiday dinner at Mitzel's. The priciest item at the auction was a packet of Manuka seeds going for \$60!

Check out the latest addition to our library - Charles Michener's "The Bees of the World" - the definitive work on more than 16,000 bee species.

**Yes! I want to be a member of West Sound Beekeepers' Association during 2004. I have enclosed \$24 to cover my annual dues.**

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:** Joe Grubbs, WSBA Treasurer, 6021 Peterson Rd SE, Port Orchard, WA 98367

## ...SAVING RUNTY COLONIES (CONTD. FROM PAGE 3)

maintain his or her new energy through the upcoming Winter and be prepared to start again. Even before there were predaceous mites in our beehives, beekeepers could not keep all colonies alive all the time. Sometimes, some colonies just don't thrive.

*I'm somewhat new to beekeeping, but I have some other hives from which I could take brood and bees. I don't have a lot of experience doing this type of management.*

**Suggested solution:** Ironically, I am not sure I would bother the healthy hives with efforts to save one that is not happy. Being new to beekeeping, you were probably lucky to have some hives that are doing well and I would be fearful that tinkering with the weak one might do too much harm to the good ones. I suppose that I am suggesting that until you have more experience, accept your losses. But a lot of you are not going to want to do that. If that describes your feelings, go up to some of my other previous suggestions and

select ones that offer ways to help ailing colonies. There is no real right or wrong. Do the best you can. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose - experienced beekeeper or not.

*ALL of my colonies are remarkably weak. How can I pump them up during late Summer?*

**Suggested solution:** Be sure American foulbrood is not your problem. Pesticides, skunks, storm damage, poor queens, beekeeper mismanagement, and bad weather are all common reasons that bee hives decline. If your climate is temperate and you have the time, equipment, and experience, try feeding them. Then hope for the best during the upcoming Winter. Another variation would be feed the strongest of the lot and combine the weakest of your operation with others. You would then hope to get this strengthened, albeit reduced, number through the Winter. How many you combine and how many you try to feed will have to be your decision. An



important consideration is that hive numbers are not wildly important. You are much better off to Winter four strong colonies than to Winter 10 weak ones - even if you are keeping bees in a warm climate.

**Editor's Note:** *This beekeeper took the drastic step of moving the bees from a dying hive into a nuc, bringing the nuc indoors and creating an ad-hoc observation hive complete with a section of hose leading outside through the window. All in the second week of January. More on that later.*



**West Sound Beekeepers Association**  
 2233 Cantu Lane NW  
 Seabeck, WA 98380  
<http://www.WestSoundBees.org>

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