



West Sound Beekeepers Association
www.westsoundbees.org

Volume 9, Issue 3



BUZZWORD

March 2006

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday - March 21, 2006
7:00 P.M.

Stedman's Bee Supplies
Silverdale

Refreshment Schedule

March-Paul Lundy, Joe Higdon, Dave Bates
April-Kimberly Brokamp, Jerry A. Hominda
May – Joe Higdon, ??

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Program Committee

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?????Need Volunteer?????

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

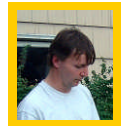
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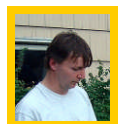
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EDITOR'S CORNER:

By Jerry Hominda

I am open for any topics, information, and idea sharing from any members. If you have a thought you would like to include in the newsletter you can e-mail me or send it by postal mail. I would be more than happy to include it.

I look forward to hearing from anyone in the future.

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A mere copier of nature can never
produce anything great.

Joshua Reynolds 1723-92: *Discourses on Art*; 14 December 1770

Message From the President:

Hello Everybody!

"March, what can one say about March? It is not Winter and it is not Spring. It is not horrible nor is it wonderful. It is somewhat like November, a month we just need to get through." Former President Paul Hostika wrote those memorable words in March 2003 and despite global warming, they still ring true. If ever there was a month for ambiguity, March is that month. March is a month where the art of being a beekeeper truly expresses itself. The issues of colony care are straightforward. The subtleties are in how you address them.

Certainly you should have performed a colony inspection by now and have a fair idea of what's going on in each of your colonies. A sunny and warm, windless day, over 55 degrees F is best. In worse conditions you'll have to be quicker and less thorough. During the inspection you can determine the amounts and locations of pollen and honey stores. You'll see eggs and brood so you'll know the size and location of the brood nest and learn a little about the queen even if you don't see her. You should check for evidence of diseases like nosema and American foulbrood. You should also look for moisture

or condensation and try to correct that condition, if present, by improving ventilation, tilting the hive forward, or perhaps swapping out the bottom board for a dry one at the same time. In any case, it is a good time to perform the late winter ritual of scraping the bottom board to remove any undesirable, leftover winter debris. Deadouts should be removed when noticed, of course, and at least examined and dried out. If it's not too cold, it's a perfect opportunity to remove burr comb, if you have any. Particularly any between the top and bottom frames as this condition often leads to accidental and unnecessary bee crushing and colony stress. Just tilt the top box forward, give a puff of smoke, and scrape away. Sometimes there's so much burr comb in there you can't separate the boxes without risk to the integrity of the frames, so you have to work from above, one frame at a time. Not much fun. A frame rest helps a lot.

I'll mention Varroa mites in case you'd thought I'd forgotten the little buggers. Everyone should make a point of knowing the Varroa's life cycle, how they affect honeybee colonies, the methods to combat them, and the techniques to monitor their populations. Varroa and their associated viruses are a constant pain, but with effort we can thrive in spite of them!

Although our neighborhoods currently abound with the supposedly nectar-rich pink and white blossoms of the cherries and plums, we're not out of the woods yet. The increased demands for warmth and nourishment for the expanding brood nest, combined with the locally variable, weather dependent floral resources can still spell starvation for bees, even in March. A general rule is three deep frames of honey per colony as a minimum reserve. If the colony is light, you might wish to feed 1:1 syrup or swap an empty comb for one full of honey from a colony that has excessive stores. The well supplied colony might appreciate an empty comb placed beside the brood nest. Colonies should also have some frames full of pollen near the brood . The average colony goes through 50 pounds of pollen a year! Plenty of pollen should be rolling in now, but a few consecutive days of inclement weather can really cramp the girl's style. Pollen patties, purchased or homemade, made from pollen you collected, dried, froze, and stored last summer, or mail-order pollen substitute, can help tide the girls over any rough spots.

Different beekeepers will do different things at different times in March. That is our nature and it can't be helped. I think most beekeepers with typical Langstroth hives reverse the hive bodies early in March (switching the upper box with the lower box). Of course the early birds did it in February, some will wait until April, and some won't do it at all, whether by design or by neglect. There are several reasons to reverse. Most common is the brood nest and stores are in the upper box and although there's plenty of room below (and not much else), the queen doesn't seem to want to lay there. Probably because the food's all topsides. For whatever reason, reversing seems to stimulate the bee's ambitions to rise in the world. Many beekeepers also begin feeding with 1:1 syrup at this time to augment or simulate the honey flow and stimulate egg laying and food storage in the "new" upper story. Many beekeepers also slip a pollen patty between the boxes at this time for extra encouragement. Just don't split the brood nest!

Many beekeepers will be adding supers of drawn comb to larger colonies to relieve congestion and allow the bees a chance to perceive space for storing honey and perhaps cash in on the Maple flow in April! Both reversing boxes and adding supers gives the bees a sense of having more room and hopefully will keep them from developing the swarming impulse.

We hope.

We had a good turnout for both the February meeting and the first beginning beekeeping class. Our Education Committee (Paul, Roy, and Rusty) have really come through with a sophisticated three tier grant/scholarship/award program and George's dream of an association apiary is now financed and only weeks away from being up and buzzing. There was a bit more than the usual amount of business, so we had a major swarm during the break as the beginners fled for safety! In an effort to avoid 'finishing the job' and scaring the 'newbie's' off permanently, and for the enjoyment and edification of the rest of us, the March meeting will focus on bees and keep the business to a minimum. There will be two short programs with appeal to the raw novice and seasoned veteran alike!

In the meanwhile I urge everyone to think about the upcoming season and prepare what you can, in advance, so the busy-ness to come will be more enjoyable and not quite so hectic. Pay your association dues, register your hives (forms available at the meeting),

and order drone foundation, equipment, queens, and packages. It's good to have your plan solid now so when it all starts to unravel in the months ahead you can really appreciate your own fluidness as you master the art of beekeeping and appreciate your bees fluidity in managing to surprise and delight us!

See you at the meeting-Basil

Minutes

February 21, 2006 7-9 PM at Stedman's Bee Supply

Submitted By:

Secretary Chanetta Ludwig; chanettal@yahoo.com

Basil Gunther, President, presided at the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

- None

Old Business

1. Discussion on Club Apiary
2. George Purkett, suggested having 3 normal hives and 1 top bar hive
3. Plan for first year: using different bottom board and top boards

New Business

1. Package bees will arrive in April at Stedman's
2. Cash is needed for association apiary, it was motioned that \$500 be given to start the association apiary
3. The Education Committee; Paul Lundy, Roy Barton, and Rusty, have set up the scholarships(teenagers ages 13-18) and beekeeping grants (one person each year to be nominated any

- age), Adopt-a-Hive Program, (novice beekeeper with association mentor), to encourage beekeeping.
4. Paul Lundy will let us know the dollar amount needed for these programs.
 5. Discussion on the auditing of books-audits are required each year. This year Basil appointed Dennis Heaney and Roy Barton as the Auditing Committee. Notify Joe Grubbs so that it can be done by April.

Door Prize Winner:

Debbie Ward, Congratulations!! She won a subscription to the American Bee Journal!!!

Program:

Talked about bees

We are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary and at leisure.

Samuel Johnson 1709-84: *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81) 'Milton'

Bee Manager's Note: Jerry Hominda

In the February newsletter I began my piece by saying that this time of year can be deceiving to a beekeeper--even the ones with years of experience-I am not sure that is true in the beekeeping industry today. Since the article I wrote I have read several recently published articles and spoke to many experienced bee managers. Ten years ago that was true, but today I believe the real deception takes place in late fall. After the colonies are moved back to their apiaries (out of the mountains). They have plenty of honey to get them through the winter, a new queen, large population, and are medicated (for all the

challenges they are faced with that we have knowledge about) this seems to be when beekeepers are deceived.

Before ten years ago when a beekeeper placed his bees in an apiary (fall season) and they possessed all the elements listed above-no one thought their bees would not make it through the winter. It was not rocket science-just repeated tradition. Of course the only real killer was American Foulbrood, but it was standard practice to treat for the fungus whether you had it or not (preventive maintenance). Occasionally, a beekeeper would make a mistake and miss a light colony-that might starve before noticed or one who's queen had died. Typically queen less hives would make it through the winter-in spring you just combined it with another hive.

Beekeeping used to be quite simple and certainly less labor intensive not nearly as dynamic, challenging, or frustrating. In the past when a beekeeper lost colonies he could often determine why and typically it was do to an oversight of the bee manger-his fault. Presently that is not the case, after going to my apiaries in the last couple of weeks I have experienced approximately 80% of my 200 hives dead with no clear evidence of why they failed. In 25 years this is the worst I have experienced-very discouraging. In the past I heard testimony from others describing similar losses. After removing my last load of empty hives from the apiaries I spent several hours calling and talking to beekeepers around the United States. The comforting part for me was to hear other beekeepers share their disappointment from major losses they were experiencing. The comfort did not come from them describing their colony failures, but learning their colony losses were not from poor bee managing habits. Each bee manager claimed their hives were very strong last fall (2005) ten plus frames, had plenty of honey, were medicated, and all queen right. Most of the beekeepers I spoke with had 20 plus years experience, are pollinators, had 100-1500 colonies, and are distributed around the United States.

Not only is beekeeping very dynamic, but it is becoming a scientific mystery. Even scientists working in laboratories throughout the world are perplexed and mystified by the continuous changes taking place in the not so conventional honey bee colony. Unfortunately, each time science discovers away to control a negative interaction in the colony some other unpredictable side effect takes place only

compounding the bee managers problems. The positive side is that bee keeping has brought a new energized field of theory making. Thank goodness the Varroa came along and receives most of the blame for colony failure.

Announcements

- Al Stedman gave permission for people to watch hive building at his house.
- Al expects package bees ready for pickup April 8.
- Basic Beekeeping Classes are from 6-6:45, before the meeting. There is no fee, but a book is recommended. This class is put on by Professors Roy Barton, Mike Johnson, and Paul Lundy. All are welcome to attend the class.

February newsletter correction

I included in the presidents message a suggestion that if anyone suspected **FOULBROOD** to bring a frame for analysis-to a bee meeting. **Please** disregard that suggestion, but if you suspect **FOUL BROOD** contamination call one of the bee association's mentors. If you require information for mentor assistance, contact the president. Thank you, news letter editor Jerry A. Hominda



Professor Paul



Professor Roy



Basil's Bees