

NOPBA Waggle Dance Communications

June 2017



June Greetings!

Pullman, WA. - Sunday, June 11, 2017

My thoughts are with Walt this morning along with wishes for his speedy recovery. In lieu of this month's entire newsletter, I am sending out the article I prepared for the newsletter in hopes our members receive it prior to today's meeting.

The entomologists here at WSU are emphasizing what Mark has been telling us...to get our wasp traps out early!! Like the bumblebees, almost every wasp (yellow jacket) we see in the early spring is an over-wintered queen that is fattening up to establish a new colony. Once her nest is established, she is capable of producing an almost infinite number of foragers that become impossible to control later in the season. So the battle begins early when we want to try and avoid the onslaught that happens later. They are also reminding us that wasps basically prey on the weaker colonies that have a hard time defending themselves, so it is very important to keep our colonies healthy and populous... how to do this is a whole 'nother story... which is why I am here.

Another item of interest comes from the WSU Honey Bee Diagnostic Lab. As we know, the lab has a free diagnostic analysis service that provides information and data for samples we send in. There is a new project they are going to participate with involving the USDA's interest in determining the amount of asian honey bee DNA there is in the the US. (*Apis mellifera cerana* - the subspecies that has co-evolved to live with the varroa mite). They believe there isn't too much of it here, but they want to "take a reading".

The WSU lab is looking for Washington State apiaries with at least 8 hives. The lab will travel to our locations and perform the sampling. A side benefit is the data will also be analyzed for mite count, nosema, and tracheal mites. I told the lab about our club and that we might have members who would be interested. The Lab manager also said she would happily give our club a presentation about the WSU diagnostic lab if we could coordinate the meeting with the weekend she would be here to do the sampling. Hopefully, there is some interest with the folks who have at least 8 hives. Maybe our club hives would qualify.

If you might be interested, please contact me fairly soon as this project is slated for July and August.

NOPBA Club News

At last month's meeting we heard from Cathy Lucero, Director of the Clallam County Weed Control Board. She presented some great information about the advantages of native plants along our roadsides. In the past, the County has primarily preferred mowing the roadsides as a method of "weed" control but this is giving way to newer more managed methodologies involving integrating native species into the right-of-ways. She explained the criteria for picking the plants and had several examples of places where native species have been brought in to replace thick overgrown and short lived monocultures of invasive vegetation. The County is currently evaluating a native species "portfolio" which can be applied in various habitats suitable for our region.

A future project is being developed which will utilize the aid of volunteers. She was able to clarify a few points of concern for the beekeepers (most notably, that spraying herbicides is not, nor has ever been an option) and stressed that an educated public is paramount to the program success. We encourage participation to this end how ever our pollinators are involved.

In other news, there has been some recent interest in possibly expanding the manner and method of communication among our membership. We have the newsletter and we have a member's only Facebook page. I believe our newsletter is absolutely essential and definitely needs to continue.

The newsletter is limited however because it only comes out once a month. The Facebook page provides a great user friendly option for folks who choose that option too. There are multiple advantages and disadvantages of any option and I believe this is merely a matter of choice.

For individuals not wishing to use Facebook (or even those who do), there is now another option for local beekeepers to share information and resources. Jonathan Sawyer volunteered and set up a Google Plus Communities page for folks to use for this purpose. To participate, you make a request to join after which you will receive an “invitation” via an email address you provide. At this point, you become a “member” of the community and may post content and comment. Content is moderated and publicly “visible”. Ask a question, buy, sell, trade, give-away. A separate interest announcement with more information about joining this community will be coming soon.

NOPBA does not and will not share your membership email information. This community is not formally affiliated with NOPBA, but if you’d like to try it out, please contact Jon or myself. Our foremost concern is respect for your privacy and letting you make your own decisions. There is no charge and a gmail address is required.

Jonathan is also reports having great success with his queen rearing program. Maybe he would be willing to give us a presentation? Hint...hint... ;-)

Mark’s Basic Beekeeping class this month on June 11 will cover honey flow, hive management, and preparation for supers. Basic Beekeeping starts at noon, with the general meeting at 1:00pm.

Bees in Other News

I’m hoping everyone’s patience this year with our cool and soggy springtime weather is finally being rewarded with healthy and well populated colonies. That said, swarm season is upon us. Speaking of swarms, an interesting research note from [Environmental Entomology](#) did catch my eye this month regarding the topic of swarming relative to Varroa control. Here, the researchers are hypothesizing that we beekeepers might want to re-examine our playbook for controlling Varroa mites.

Investigators compared the survival and dispersal behavior of Varroa mites in a presumably “natural” setting with colonies managed by beekeepers in apiaries. We’ve heard for some time that swarming is not necessarily such a bad thing (unless you’re interested in maximizing honey production), and here are some preliminary measured results showing that might just be the case.

They make their case by observing colonies that swarm can lose an estimated 35% of the phoretic mite population. There also is a break in the brood cycle when colonies swarm. While colonies prepare to swarm, workers stop feeding the queen and she does not lay eggs. When the colony’s queen leaves with the swarm, the nest is left with a virgin queen, so there is no new brood until the virgin queen mates and starts laying eggs (about 10 d after emergence). The combination of the break in brood cycle that creates

a break in mite reproduction, and loss of mites with the swarm “might” keep mite levels low enough to enable colonies to coexist with varroa indefinitely.

Interesting hypothesis, but it’s hard to say... I’m sure at some point it comes down to a bottom line somewhere which is that “our” bees have not yet genetically adapted to Varroa plus the fact that the genetic diversity of the various sub-species of *Apis mellifera* have been severely narrowed over numerous decades of commercial breeding programs. A swarming colony has a very low probability of surviving, so personally, I have mixed feelings about whether or not this is any sort of viable strategy for beekeepers.

I also wanted to share a very nice video produced by WSU CAHNRS (College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences). The film features an overview of pollination basics where they highlight various regional experts primarily involved with honey bees. Overall, a nice bee video (about an hour of view time):

Pollination and Protecting Pollinators

<https://vimeo.com/146957716>



The Surprising Nation That Loves Bees More Than Anywhere in the World.

It is the birthplace and center of the universe for Carniolan honey bees. In a country of just over two million people there are around 90,000 beekeepers. This fascination may sound remarkable, but it is not unusual in Slovenia, where hives and honey are practically a religion – Indeed, beekeeping is a prime part of their identity.

For these beekeepers who live in a climate similar to Pacific Northwest to keep their bees inside “bee-houses” is not surprising at all. After all, who would know better what

it takes in this climate than the people who basically wrote the book? For some time now, I have been interested in Slovenian AZ hives and a “bee-house” for this very reason. I think it would work very well here. Enjoy a fun and interesting article about what they have been doing recently with their bees at [this link](#).

What Should I Plant For the Bees?

While we’re thinking about pollination, here is a very simple, very short list of a few plants that honey bees like:

Borage (*Borago officinalis*), Blueberries and other Vacciniums (*Vaccium* spp.), Bone-set (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), Dandelions, Echium (*Echium vulgare*), Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*), Phacelia (*Phacelia tanacetifloia*), All Asters, All mints (*Mentha* spp.), Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*), Barberry/Oregon grape (*Berberis* spp.), All clovers, Bachelors Button (*Centaurea cyanus*), Echinacea (*echinacea* spp.) Elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.), Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*), Hawthorne (*Crataegus* spp.), Hazelnut (*Corylus* spp.), Heather (*Erica* spp.), All lavenders (*Lavandula* spp.), Linden (*Tillia* spp.), Maple tree (*Acer* spp), Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.), Motherwort, *Leonurus cardiaca*), Opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*), Wild Roses (*Rosa* spp.), Sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.), Thyme (*Thymus* spp.), Valerian (*Valeriana* spp.), Veronica (*Veronica officinalis* (Willow *Salix* spp.)

While botany is far from my field of expertise, I do seem to get the biggest bang for my buck with the herbs.

Fun Facts to Know and Tell

The amount of honey an average bee produces in her lifetime is about the same quantity as you might leave on the spoon in the sink... 1/12 teaspoon.

(But seriously, who doesn’t lick that spoon??...)

Thanks everyone,

Greg Butler - NOPBA Secretary
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