

Skagit Valley Beekeepers



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July 2014

A Golden Opportunity!

There is no regular meeting in July, instead we hold our annual **Potluck BBQ Picnic**. Sunday, July 20th, 2014 @ 12:00pm. The potluck will be at **5779 Brookings Road, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284**, the address of our host & barbecue chef, **Bill Markus**. Bring a food dish, eating utensils, beverage & family. Maybe folding chairs?

At the potluck **you need to talk with Diane Dong**, she's working to sign up the booth volunteers for the Skagit County Fair. You don't need to be an expert or anything. Just be willing to share what you know with those curious enough to have any questions. If you're keeping bees, you know enough to answer most their questions. *Psst: For you all seeking the journeyman level of the Master Beekeepers, this may add a few public service points.* The Skagit County Fair is August 6-9.

Things To Do This Month

- I wonder if the blackberries will be done and over by the time you read this. In any event, check your supers, make sure you have enough room
- Check to make sure the bees aren't back-filling, it's doubtful but possible.
- For those of you lucky enough, maybe think about how and when you're going to extract your honey. I only have a few hives, so I "crush and strain" ...you might want to use an extractor. The club has one available to borrow.
- After removing honey supers, for those of you that do, you might want to check and possibly treat for mites.
- After the honey, It might be a good idea to re-queen if her majesty is an old one. In our climate, I hear that it is better to re-queen in the summer/fall and let her overwinter than re-queen in the spring.

My First Cut Out

By Robert Niles

I was called to do a cut out, a process where you remove bees that have created a hive in a house or other structure. So I went to visit the house and noticed the bees coming and going at the V portion of (see green arrow on image) the front of the house that had these two ^ shaped covers to the house. The bees were flying at the V to the back to the wall of the house. I climbed up the ladder and noticed that the bees were entering the wall right behind some flashing. The question was if the hive - the comb, was in the wall or in the ^ overhang/covers (see photo).

The owner took a guess and then drilled a 3/8 inch hole and waited to see if bees came out. Nope. So we tried a different spot. Nope. Then a third hole. Bees started poking their heads out. Yup ...we found the bees.



So now the owner proceeded to remove trimming (yellow-orange highlighted area) and then the panel and viola! There was the bees and all their comb! Just huge! 13 combs, many of them about 5 feet long (later we found out that some were longer, hiding behind the panel above)It took about 2.5 hours just to get to this point.

Now to remove the bees. A few days before, I had built a "bee vac" using a "shop vac" that fits on top of a 5 gallon bucket. On the side of the 5 gallon bucket I had cut a hole and covered it with hardware cloth. This hole is used to control the amount of suction of the vacuum, allowing me to just barely pull the bees in - instead of slamming them into the bucket and making bee puree.

The owner held my smoker while I was using the bee vacuum to suck in bees one comb at a time working right to left. It was a difficult job. We were at the top of the ladder and the cut out was at an angle so that most of the cut out was actually above us. So anytime I was removing comb with honey, the honey would stream down on me, my head, the owner, the vacuum ...the honey would stream down over everything. It was a stretch calling it honey ...hardly any of it was capped (sad!), so it was mostly thin to thick nectar.

We took breaks every so often, when the smoker needed to be refilled. We continued this until I removed all comb that I could reach using the ladders we had. That took about 4 hours.

At the end of the first day, I had two full medium boxes of good comb full of brood or pollen plus more comb which I didn't use. The size of the comb was perfect as far as the height of the comb was concerned. It fit right in. I just had to cut the length of the comb to the size of the frame.



killed the queen. I hope not - but it's possible. If I did damage her, I'll have to re-queen.

That night I drove the bees a bit further than two miles and hived them.

They were dark bees and nicely gentle. Surprising since we popped open their home and started sucking them into a noisy vacuum.

The next day I was back and we had a longer ladder. Removed the panel above the one from the previous day, and then removed about 3-4 more pounds of bees and the rest of the comb. These bees I used to strengthen an existing hive with a newspaper combine.

It was a lot of hard work work and took a total of 7.5 to 8 hours from beginning to end. I haven't decided if I'll work another cut out ..but was very happy with the amount of bees - even if I didn't get any usable honey.



I also had two good sized buckets of bees. I'm not too good at judging weights but from the looks of it, I had at least 3 packages worth of bees - that comes out to about \$300.00 worth of bees at current package prices. The vacuum did a good job with not many bee deaths - most of the damage to the bees came from the nozzle end of the hose where I would crush a bee from time to time

with the nozzle. It was very difficult to be careful and delicate at the heights and angles I was working. That also meant that I wasn't able to find the queen and nicely put her somewhere safe. Often I was reaching far up above me with the hose and there's good chance I damaged or

My bee sting experience

By Anita Anderson-Johnson

One warm Spring morning I noticed my little Carniolan bees swarmed and settled in the crotch of the pear tree. I dutifully suited up and with hive box and hive brush in hand I proceeded capture the cluster. I did not smoke them as I was under the impression that swarms were not aggressive and it was not a big swarm. I set the hive box below and with the soft yellow brush started to gently brush the bees into the box. It was harder to get them moved, because they weren't hanging on a branch I could just shake. As I brushed bees surrounded my vale and thru a tiny hole where the zippers come together they found a way to enter. Not one, but at least 6 stung my face. Almost immediately I felt my lips and face begin to swell. I was home alone, what to do? I ran for the house, with bees in my bonnet madly trying to throw it off as I ran. I grabbed the Benadryl from the medicine cabinet took 2. I then ran to the refrigerator and grabbed 2 gel packs. I went back to the bathroom and looked in the mirror. OH MY GOSH! Who is that person? After about 15 minutes I took 2 more pills and kept the pack on my face. I called my husband and asked him if he could come home from the marina and just sit with me awhile?

I told him I had an encounter. He said he would be home soon. An hour later I called him again and said please, I just want you to be with me. When he walked in the door he didn't recognize me, my face was so grotesque! I said "I think I need to go to the hospital the swelling isn't going down." Well, to make a long story short the doctor gave me an IV and watched me for awhile then I was released. The situation freaked my husband so badly. He said "If that ever happens again, don't call me, I'm not going to be a part of running you to the emergency room caused by messing with those bees." Moral of my bee story...."Swarms can be aggressive so smoke um anyway and make sure all the possible entry ways in your suit are sealed!"

P.S. For Christmas I received a bee vac from my husband and from my daughter a double pack of Epipens.

Another Sting Story

By Mary Pat Larsen

I swear this really happened.

I approached my bees just as the sun was setting. Didn't know that beekeeping must follow the same rules as vacationers swimming in Hawaii: Stay out of the ocean at dawn or dusk: That is, if you don't want to be breakfast or dinner for a hungry shark.

Also I just put my bee suit on, but didn't check didn't check my bee suit for entrance holes. Added to that I was too lazy to prepare my smoker.

As I started working I realized the bees were more upset than usual and it didn't take long for one of the guard ladies to find the little hole in my suit between helmet and protecting canvas body suit. The first bee into my helmet must have signaled the rest of the troops with "Psssst! Girls, This Way!" Within half a second my bee helmet contained more bees than were left in the boxes!

They went right to work: some in my mouth, some in my ears, some massing down my neck into the suit body, stinging all the way. It suddenly occurred to me that I could die this way. So I part ran, part crawled, up to my house, where, luckily, my two room mates saw the fix I was in and came to help. Also, lucky I happened to have a garden hose with high pressure nozzle. So one (brave friend) sprayed me and the bees with the water jet as the other (brave friend) helped as I struggled to free myself from the bee infested garment. The bees in the garment weren't concerned about them, just me.

One friend demanded to know where my Epipen was, and, finding it in my medicine closet, handed it to me to use. I had absolutely no idea how to use it! So I ended up driving the business end of the Epipen into my thumb! My friends, giving up on my skills to self treat, called 911. One of my friends followed the ambulance All the way to the hospital I was shaking wildly, so the paramedics gave me something to cut down my shaking fit.

As I came into the Emergency Room the doctor on duty told me he was far more concerned about my thumb than the rest of me. I had, by the way, been previously treated by a local allergist to desensitize myself to bee and wasp stings.

I was kept in the emergency department a couple of hours for observation, then dismissed me when I was deemed stable. I was happy to have survived the fiasco with no evidence of permanent harm. However, as I got up off the gurney, I noticed the pillow where my head had been was black with a coating of broken off little stingers! When I got into my friend's car to go home, she swore that if I did such a stupid thing again, she wasn't going to rescue me.

For the next four days my face that looked like that of a King Salmon.



Dr. Vanoy Smith with his bees

