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Skagit Valley Beekeepers Association

Newsletter for February 2024

February Meeting

Join us on Thursday, February 13th
Sedro-Woolley Library

Our next monthly meeting will be on **Thursday, February 13th at 7:00 PM**. We will be gathering in the meeting room at the **Central Skagit Valley Library in Sedro-Woolley**.

Here's what's up this month:

- **A "bee chat" beginning at 6:15 PM** - We enjoy a pre-meeting time to share tips and tales with a few refreshments to which everyone is invited.
- **Bee talk** - Our speaker will be Randy Oliver who is going to talk about what he sees with his expert eyes when he opens up a hive during his presentation, "Reading the Comb".
- **Zoom option** - If you can't come, but want to participate, you can join us by Zoom. An e-mail with the link will be sent to members before the meeting.

Upcoming Events and Programs

February Meeting Presentation

Randy Oliver: Reading the Comb
Thursday, February 13th at the SVBA meeting

Randy Oliver has become a central figure in the world of innovative beekeeping, pioneering new approaches to mite control and using an evidence-based approach to effective beekeeping. We are pleased that we can grab some of his scarce time to talk to us this month.



He will show us what he sees when he inspects the comb in a colony from his perspective as both a research biologist and as a commercial beekeeper with about 1,000 colonies. Randy's apiary, Golden West Bees, is located in Nevada County, California where the almond orchards aren't far away and raiding bears are a big problem.

Whenever you are tracking down information on a beekeeping issue, the amount of online advice can be overwhelming. Randy's website, ScientificBeekeeping.com, is an important exception. Randy brings a unique focus to emerging topics and challenges, and lines up the research and links that open up new doorways to understanding what these honey bees are all about.

Beginning Beekeeping Course

Updated Schedule
March 1st and 2nd, 8 AM to Noon
or
April 5th and 6th, 8 AM to Noon



Dawn Beck, SVBA Vice President and a Cornell University Master Beekeeper, will conduct the sessions, and will cover everything folks need to get started as a hobby beekeeper. More experienced beekeepers can also benefit from this "gateway" course, which is part of a sequence and is that can lead to becoming an Apprentice, Journeyman, or even a Master Beekeeper. This course uses a curriculum developed by the Washington State Beekeepers Association which offers the follow up exams and certification. The tuition is very reasonable, and the course is convenient - it's live online, with the chance to ask questions and join in discussions.

Register online through the SVBA website at skagitvalleybeekeepers.org. Registration is open until the day before the course, and the online link will be provided when you register.

Tell your friends who have shown interest in learning to be a beekeeper.

SVBA Annual Potluck and Auction Event

March 13th 6-8 PM, setup at 5 PM
Sedro-Woolley Senior Center

Our March meeting is replaced by our annual potluck dinner and silent auction event, so y'all come. It's good fun, and we are looking to you to come up with some auction items that are both eye catching and dollar fetching. This event is an important part of our annual budget, so contribute and spend freely.



The event is from 6 PM to 8PM. But we will be setting up the display tables beginning at 5 PM, so come early to bring the items that you will offer for the silent auction.

And don't forget the food. The SVBA provides a main dish, but please bring something to add to the potluck. We have a special request from **Brett DeLawter** for more desserts this year to help satisfy his sweet tooth, but salads and sides are needed, too.

Recappings

Bri Price and SHB

At our January meeting, Bri Price sounded the early alarms about the arrival of small hive beetles (SHB) in our region. They are small and can proliferate rapidly, consuming pollen, brood, honey and combs - and ruining the remaining honey in the process as it ferments. Strong colonies normally can resist major incursions, but massive infestations can take hold, particularly in weaker colonies.



She has been leading a research project to track SHB as they have started to make inroads into our region, and shared some case studies of what can happen. Here are a few takeaways:

- The beetles are black and small, and often gather in the corners of frames and supers.
- The adult female lays eggs in these corners, or in empty brood comb; they look like wax moth larvae, only smaller.
- The hatched larvae drop out of the hive and burrow in the ground underneath - or crawl to a spot where they can find some loose soil.
- When they hatch, they use their sense of smell to locate bee colonies, and the cycle starts again.
- They can be difficult to control; keep your colonies strong, remove deadouts, and don't toss burr comb on the ground. It is very important to keep your bottom boards clean, because the larvae are quite comfortable burrowing into a mess. Don't keep pollen patties in the hives except when they are needed. Covering the ground near colony with weed fabric or ground cloths can also be tried.

Bri Price is an entomologist and is the Honey Bee Program Extension Coordinator at Washington State's Puyallup Research and Extension Center. Here is the brochure that WSU has prepared with SHB information and tips: [SHB Guide](#).

SVBA News

Annual Dues are...Due

SVBA: Help us keep rolling

Our Treasurer **Domie Bourgeois** happily reports that the list of paid memberships is growing fast. But as more beekeepers sign up, she will become even happier. Domie is available to sign you up at our monthly meetings, or you can use the other options listed below.

Annual membership dues are for a calendar year. Annual dues are only \$20 for an individual or \$30 for a household. What a deal for:

- Monthly meetings, speaker programs and special events
- Bee chats and mentoring sessions
- Website, Facebook page, and this SVBA monthly newsletter
- SVBA demonstration hives at our Apiary in Bow
- Annual beekeeping course
- SVBA booth at the Skagit County Fair

The membership form and payment instructions are found on our website or by clicking [HERE](#).

The online payment option can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).

SVBA Picture Library

Help us build a collection

It can be difficult to find good photos of bees and beekeeping in the public realm that can be used for lectures, classes and publications. For example the SVBA Secretary Brenda Crossley has been invited to do a bee talk at an area school in March - but bee pictures are scarce that don't have copyrights attached. Pictures are available through image libraries, but they come at a not-small cost.

So we had an idea - why don't we build our own picture library available to SVBA members for educational use, and for use in our newsletter and website? We are always looking for good content.



Here's what we are asking:

Pick no more than 5 photos that show interesting stages of beekeeping, and send them (with your name) to your newsletter editor at cecilbees121@gmail.com. We will then assemble them as a library of images that we can all use when we need some, with credits to the photographer.

Here are some ideas for picture topics:

- Picking up a nuc or installing a package of bees
- Setting up the hives for winter
- Inspecting the queen
- Decapping the frames
- Extracting the honey and bottling it
- Looking at a full brood frame
- Feeding the bees
- Looking at a swarm, or gathering it.
- Or...???

Monthly Tips

February To Do's

The snow has arrived, but it has been a relatively mild winter so far and hopefully the bees are warm enough. Here is this month's activity checklist drawn from Brad Raspet's schedule of beekeeping tasks.

- **Register** your apiary and hives with the state
- **Check** the hives for damage
- **Weight and record** colony weight in pounds (that bathroom scale should help)
- **Feed** honey, bee candy, or raw sugar
- **Check** the bottom board, to make sure the entrance is not blocked
- **Order** bee packages or nucs if you know you will need them
- **Purchase** pollen patties for spring supplemental feeding

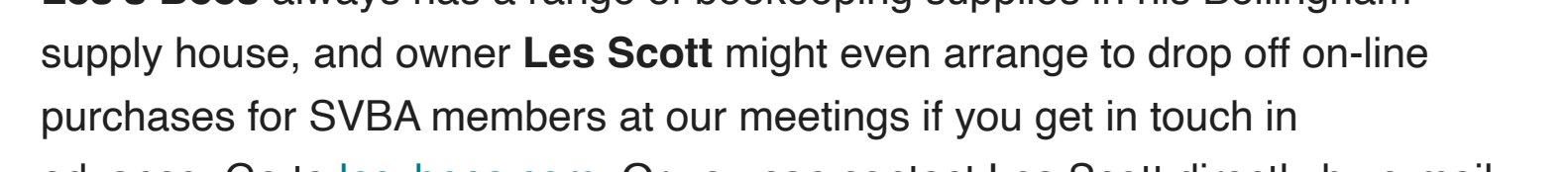
Trading Post

8-Frame hive and beekeeping equipment - Chris Apple is offering his collection of 8-frame hives and beekeeping gear for sale. Prices are negotiable. You can contact Chris Apple, phone: (919) 610-1749 or e-mail: chrisapple1231@gmail.com. His collection includes:

- 4 deep boxes
- 1 quilt box
- 2 screened bottom boards
- 2 hive stands
- 2 inner covers
- 2 telescoping lids
- Many frames
- Much wax
- Smoker
- Varroa check
- Hive tool
- Frame perch
- Frame holder

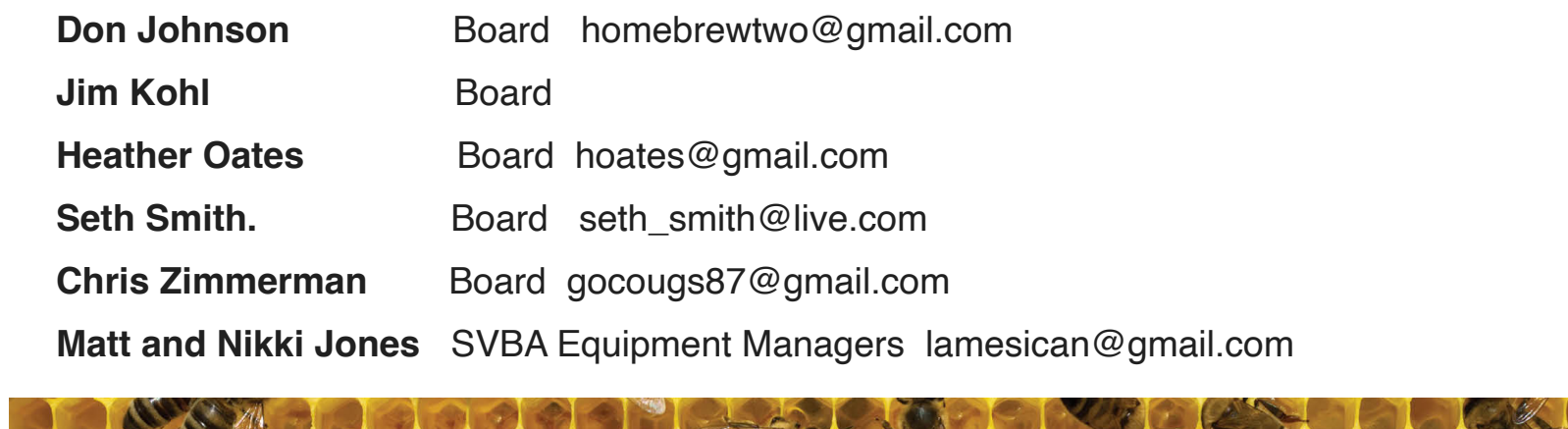
Les's Bees always has a range of beekeeping supplies in his Bellingham supply house, and owner **Les Scott** might even arrange to drop off on-line purchases for SVBA members at our meetings if you get in touch in advance. Go to leszbees.com. Or you can contact Les Scott directly by e-mail, call, or text: 360-303-0396.

If you have supplies and equipment that you may be interested in swapping, or just plain giving to other interested members of the SVBA, send a brief description, price, and contact information to your editor, cecilbees121@gmail.com.



Skagit Valley Beekeepers Association

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