

Skagit Valley Beekeepers



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February 2014

Put Your Heart Into It

The next meeting will be **February 13th, 2014 at 7:00 PM** at the Skagit Farmers Supply CENEX Administration building, located at 1833 Park Avenue, Burlington WA. The speaker to be announced.

Things To Do This Month

- Check bees and check if they are alive. Clean entrances, scrape bottoms out and make sure bees are dry. Gently lift or weigh hives to get a feel for how they are doing.
- You might choose to feed pollen patties and feed honey or fondant/candy or dried sugar if needed. Be prepared to feed as needed until forage is available.
- If you need queens, make plans for ordering. Order packages too if you need to do so.
- Register hives with state, visit <http://goo.gl/IIzXBT> for the form.
- If you're interested in a specific activity like spring splits or queen rearing, etc., read and study those topics now in order to be ready when the need/task arises.

Tax Exemptions for Honey Beekeepers

Effective July 1, 2013 there are exemptions for eligible apiarists from Business and occupation (B&O) tax - these exemptions have been extended to July 1st, 2017.

Only apiarists qualify if they meet the following:

- Owns or keeps one or more bee colonies
- Grows, raises, or produces honey bee products for sale at wholesale
- Registers their hive/colonies with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (see "Things To Do This Month").

Exemption activities from B&O tax are:

- Queen Honey Bees

- Packaged/Nuc honey bees sales
- Honey
- Pollen
- Bees Wax
- Propolis
- Other substances obtained from honey bees.

The exemption does not apply to retail sales of honey or retail sales of any of the products stated above. See the following link for more information: <http://goo.gl/QjJ4qI>

Renew Your Membership

Remember to renew your membership with the Skagit Valley Beekeeper's Association! For new members, please complete and turn in with your membership payment. For renewing members, **only fill out any information that has changed.**

<http://skagitvalleybeekeepers.org/SVBAMembership.htm>

It's also time to renew your membership with the **Washington State Beekeeper's Association**. Visit: <http://wasba.org/about-wsba/membership/>

If You Want To Help The Bees, Plant Flowers

"We live in a toxic world that will have a negative impact on honey bees and will for a long time. It's the new normal.", stated **Dr. Tim Lawrence** in front of cherry growers at the Northwest Cherry Grower's Institute in Yakima, WA. Dr. Tim Lawrence is Island County's WSU Extension Director. He has expertise with honeybees based on his work as a commercial beekeeper for 20 years and has served as a research associate in WSU's Honey Bee Health Program.

There are all sorts of pressures that bees now have to face. The varroa mite, viruses, neonicotinoid insecticides, lack of honey bee forage, and lack of genetic diversity in the honey bee population are all contributing to problems in

our hives.

Growers who want to fight against Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) should plant flowers. "Bees need more than one crop. Plant flowers," he said.

Diverse forage reduces the need for pollen substitutes and healthy bees can withstand more pressures.

To read Dan Wheat's January 16, 2014 article in the Capitol Press, see: <http://goo.gl/61Qn9j>

Flower Seeds for Bees & Pollinators

To help our honey bees & native pollinators, **Brad Raspet** of Bingalingbees.com now offering for sale. One "Seeds For Bees" packet (net 7 grams each) \$3.50 each or Two for \$6.00 (sales tax is included). Contact Brad for details.

Preparing Bees For the Almond Pollination

Each year 1.6 to 2.4 million hives are placed in and around 810,000 acres to pollinate almonds in California in February. The hives come from Florida, Wisconsin, North Dakota. The hives come from *all* over the United States, even coming from the Skagit valley in Washington state.

I had the honor to work with **Seth Smith**, **Joe McConaughy**, **Pat Ray** with his dog Dalilah, **Marc (Marco) Caputo**, and **Bruce Bowen** to help Bruce get 408 of his hives ready and loaded onto a semi trailer. Four hundred and eight hives seems like a strange amount to send but the semi trailer carries 2 rows of 17 pallets of hives stacked 3 pallets high with 4 hives on each pallet. This is just the first semi load and Seth Smith and Joe McConaughy will also send some of their hives down to California on subsequent trips.

Almond growers pay around \$180.00 for each strong hive. There are transportation fees, broker fees, and other fees, so the beekeeper makes around \$100 - \$150 per hive. Seth Smith tells me that he estimates to get around \$100.00 per hive when figuring his income. He also tells me that the bees come back nice and strong with each hive loaded with bees. It's these bees that he makes his nucs with.

We started roughly at 11:00 AM with the first task of assessing each colony to see how strong they were. We wanted each hive to be strong, meaning the bees in a cluster should be about the size of a volley ball. I worked

with Joe, where we used a unique coding system to rate each hive. A strong hive was marked on top with leaves, a weak hive was marked with blue paper, and a dink - being very small hive or a dead-out was marked with a clump of grass. This allowed us to look through a large amount of hives in a relatively short period of time and remember what we found. Seth Smith and Pat Ray were also assessing hives.

After their examination, the group then combined good but weak hives

together to make good strong hives. We also took unused combs of honey and added those to good hives and removed empty boxes to be taken back and cleaned to be reused. Next, each hive was checked to see if it had a division board feeder installed - if a hive needed one, the cover was moved to the side slightly with just enough room open to insert the feeder and then close it back up. Then to each pallet of hives, we added a spacer which helps keep the hives in position while on the truck during transit.



Seth and Marco: Time out for an energy snack

Photo by Robert Niles

install. Well the bees at this point were pretty tired of us, and they weren't pleased with me moving the boxes and covers around to get that spacer in. The bees came out like a fist, in mass, straight for my veil. That got my heart going a bit faster and was quite an experience! Surprisingly, no stings.

So far the day had been foggy and cool and the bees weren't inclined to be out foraging. That made it easy on us but there was a bit of concern that the fog would burn



Joe assessing each hive

Photo by Robert Niles

off and that the sun would come out. So instead of putting in good spirits.

the hives directly on the semi trailer, Seth and Bruce started stacking the hives with Joe and I cleaning the pallets, removing grass and mud while Pat and Marco smoked the hives in order to keep the bees in place.

The sun did come out but by that time, it was much later in the day, so by 3:30 PM, Seth and Bruce were loading the hives on the semi trailer. As the forklifts came by, Pat and I cleaned the bottoms of

the pallets, again removing mud and grass. Joe was on the trailer bed helping to ensure good placement of the pallets and Marco was about smoking hives and doing any errand that needed to be done.

We almost lost one fork lift which was making some odd noises near the steering belt. Seth came through with Pepsi, doing some sort of magic to keep the fork lift going. Would have hated to lose a fork lift!



Seth, Pat and Marco loading, smoking, and cleaning the pallet

Photo by Robert Niles

We were all working as dusk became night and the lights from the fork lift and headlamps were all we had to see with. The work kept going but we were able to nab bites of our burgers and munched on the most delicious fries whenever we had a chance. We weren't forced to work without breaks - nothing so cruel - we could stop when we needed but everyone was on a roll and we all were just doing what we could to keep things going with everyone



Joe and Seth guiding the pallet onto the trailer

Photo by Robert Niles

and I can say that knowing that I probably worked the least out of all of them there that day. They knew what they were doing and I did not. It was an amazing sight.

It was amazing the pace in which the work flowed. Nothing like how I do things with my hives at home as a hobby, with my casual and slow and careful placement and movement of boxes to ensure I won't harm a single bee. This work was fast paced and purposeful. I worked more bees in this one day than I had the whole previous year -



Bruce Bowen loading bees

Photo by Robert Niles

We finished loading the trailer at about 6:43 with 408 hives on the trailer, all strapped down and a net covering all of it. It was a good long day and quite interesting. I hope the bees do their job well and come back nice, healthy and strong!

Do you have any suggestions?

Ideas? Please submit them to robert@yakima.net. We'd love to hear from you! **For the March 2014 issue, Please have any articles to me by February 28th, 2014.**

