

Skagit Valley Beekeepers



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May 2014

The Experience of Life!

The next meeting will be **May 8th, 2014 at 7:00 PM** at the Skagit Farmers Supply CENEX Administration building, located at 1833 Park Avenue, Burlington WA. The speaker and topic to be announced.

Things To Do This Month

- It is swarm season. Watch for swarm cells!
- Check for mites now, treat before you put those honey supers on.
- Good to have an extra box on hand just in case you need to hive a swarm or make a split.
- Is there room for the bees to put nectar? Is there room for the queen to lay? Are they back-filling the brood's nest? Make sure there is room!

The Price of Honey

A story by Dr. Vanoy Smith

I worked in Hong Kong from 1971 to 1974 as a medical doctor, but needed bees. A patient of mine gave me a little swarm in a box and I carefully transferred them to a 10 frame hive and watched them multiply.

They got crowded so I added another super with foundation that I had brought from the States and had let those frames air out a couple days due to mothballs before adding. But that was not enough, because the hive was on the roof of our apartment building and the paradichlorobenzene that was thoroughly imbedded in that wax, it forced the bees out of the hive, and since it was by then night, the bees were attracted to open windows (all were open, with no screens), and at every landing along the stairwells.

There were 5 stories and 2 flights of stairs. I received an emergency call--a young nursing student, screaming that my bees were stinging her and her roommate and the other students above and below.

Now that's bad publicity. You should see the doghouses

in Hong Kong.

In fact, a neighbor would acquire a dog a week, beat it every evening with a banana leaf, and when tender enough, sacrifice it and sell it on the black market. But I digress--well, not entirely, as the ungrateful stingeers sure wanted my hide.

So being the responsible doctor I was, I ran up to the roof, plugged the hive, and took a couple cans of Raid and visited each student's room and all stair landings and massacred those bees. Next day, I removed the new super and the remaining bees didn't bother anyone else. But pressure was by some ungrateful officials at the hospital where I was employed, just 100 yards away from the apartment, all windows open and none screened, so I took the bees over the hill, and ensconced them at Kadoori farms where there was a rich guy with lots of land and flowers.

The Australian caretaker let me in. Later a typhoon was forecast, so I placed at least 50 lb of rocks on that hive, and after the big blow the road was closed for over a week. The hive was turned over, and full of sand, but had bees flying anyway, so they were righted, and the little critters excavated the sand.

Unfortunately not many were flying after that, and I observed why. A huge wasp awaited two feet out of the entrance and would catch that bee, take it to a limb, disembowel it and devour just part of the thorax, then go back for more. I asked a local beekeeper, a producer of royal jelly, how to get rid of the wasps. He said, "Simple, follow it to it's nest and destroy it, that's what I do."

Well, that 3 years with the bees was productive. I cut one nice one pound section of comb honey out and brought it back to my brother-in-law in Oregon, as he was a real granola guy, sugarless, etc. and he especially enjoyed this treat when I told him, "**That pound of honey cost about \$400!**" Ah, yes, but in perspective, the experience of life was worth it all!

Rearing High Quality Queens

Workshops offered by the WSU Honey Bee Program
WSU, Pullman - Saturday, August 2, 2014
Mt Vernon Agricultural Station - Friday, August 8,
2014

Two, one day workshops in different locations will present what it takes to rear high quality queens. Basic biology and various methods of queen rearing will be presented. The workshops emphasize hands on instruction in queen rearing methods, with lecture and demonstrations. Students will be involved in various steps including: setting up cell builders, grafting, and establishing mating nuclei. Both queen right and queen-less systems will be demonstrated. Bring a bee veil and whatever protective clothing you are comfortable in.

Instructors: Steve Sheppard, Susan Cobey & WSU
Bee Lab graduate students

Registration fees \$175 [Click here](#) for a Registration
Form

Mail to: Washington State University, Dept. of
Entomology, Honey Bee Program, 166 FSHN, P.O.
Box 646382. Pullman, WA 99164-6182

Population Of Bees From A New Install

A lot of us received and installed new packages or nucs this year. I was going through my old notes that mentioned how my hive was going to grow over the next several weeks and it gave me a few things to ponder.

Let's take one of my packages that I just installed into a hive as an example, in order to see what happens to the population of the bees inside the hive.

A package starts out with about 10,000 bees and a queen.

Two things are happening as far as my bee population goes.

First, I have a mixture of bees of all sort of different ages. The older bees are going to start dying off and the younger bees are going to start getting older, splitting their duties between nursing and foraging. Then they're going to die. As the bees age, they're slowly but continuously dying off.

The second thing that is happening (hopefully) is one to three days after introduction the queen will be released and start laying. Those eggs she deposits (let's call that day, day 1) will hatch on about day three, get capped on about day 9, and won't emerge until about day 21.

It isn't until that 21st day that our hive starts to grow again - but remember, the population has been dwindling all this time.

At about day 24, we'll have our first new nurse bees to replenish those older bees that were stuck with nursing duties. As my new bees grow older and more and more bees emerge, they'll take on new jobs, until around day 42 when those bees are the new foragers.

This is also the first time my hive's population will be close to the amount of bees I had when I installed the package. I should now be back up to about 10,000 bees but this time, my hive should have a good representation of eggs, larvae, brood and bees. It's also the first time my bees should have a good representation of worker bees covering all their tasks from nursing and making wax to foraging. A hive with a good laying queen will start to grow into a good colony that can at least have a good chance of producing themselves some honey for the winter.

A good *Nuc* will not have this delay before build up. When it arrives, a five frame Nuc should have about 4 pounds of bees and 4 frames of large brood patches with brood at all stages of growth. A hive started from a Nuc should start growing from day one with a better chance of producing honey that first year. **Seth Smith** reported that "All nucs started this year have grown into their second deep with in two weeks of install. Some have supers on now. They grow very fast ... sometimes too fast for beginners."

Understanding what your new hives are doing will help you understand what to expect from your hives and knowing how long each stage takes can help you plan. **Michael Bush's** online article about Bee Math is quite helpful and quite interesting.

<http://www.bushfarms.com/beesmath.htm>

A Package Of Bees Finds A New Home

After loosing both of their hives last spring, **Sarah Wagstaff and Keith Chaplin** installed a package of bees from Belleville Honey & Bee Supply this April. Sarah mentioned that "Hank is super helpful and reliable." and

was very happy with her bees. Hank is the owner of Belleville Honey & Bee Supply. Pictures taken by Erik Olson of Well Fed Farms.



Hiving A Six Pound Swarm

by Lisa Phillips

The best swarm I have is coming home from a double feature and my husband saying he thinks he saw a swarm in a tree by the road. We were up until 3am cutting brush to situate a ladder under the tree. Then up at 7am to get it out of the tree. It was a 6lb swarm. **The best part was that they weren't my bees.** I only had Italians at the time and these guys were dark. **Clyde Caldwell** helped me hive them. Photo by **Lisa Phillips**.

