Southern Oregon Beekeepers Association  
January 4th, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Attendance

John Jacob  Eon Friesen  Debbie Gent  
Risa Halpin  Marci Schurman  Kelly Leatherwood  
Cheryl Housden  Michele Bashaw  Shari Shattuck  
Ellen Wright  Ken Muhlestein  Rick Hilton  
Kip Skelton  Chris Walker  Kenny Olmstead  
Bob Davis-Guy  Chuck Blanton  Jody Palzer  
De Davis-Guy  Andrew Watson  Joe Wismann  
Ben Moore  Dale Larson  Kate Womack  
Bret Moore  Dolly Warden  Della Matson  
Don Smith  Sharon Schmidt  Larry Edwards  
Marty Kaminker  Greg Fernandez  Russ Williamson  
Howell Estes  Tom Richardson  Daniel Yadon  
Aaron Friesen  Richard Dumanowski

Call to Order at 7:30 PM

President John Jacob presided over the meeting.

Treasurer's Report- Cheryl Housden
The 2015 Revenue/Expense figures have been prepared and are available on request. The bank balance is currently $7977.28.

Secretary's Report- Ellen Wright
A MOTION to accept the minutes from December was PASSED by majority vote. The minutes are posted on the website under Resources->Club Resources->Club Documents.

OSU Liaison's Report- Rick Hilton
The USDA reports that there were 71,000 hives producing honey in Oregon last year, up from last year. The amount has been increasing for the last 10 years; it was 39,000 in 2015. The average yield per hive is 40 lbs, which mean there were 2.18 million pounds produced in Oregon in 2015. This is lower than in most other states. In 2013 the average yield per hive was 35 lbs, and in 2012 it was 32. Years ago the average was 48 lbs per hive. The price of honey is $2.19 per pound (bulk) which is up from past years.

Old Business
We need to find someone who is willing to manage the club extractors. The person would need space for 3 extractors plus some parts, but does not have to be centrally located. The thought is that members checking out the extractors would be willing to drive to pick them up. However, the extractor manager would need to have the skills to do minor repairs, make sure the people picking the extractors up were members and that the extractors are returned promptly, and would need to be able to guide people in how to use and care for the extractors. If you are interested, please contact sobeekeepers@gmail.com.
New Business

Membership Dues: Raising the membership dues from $12 to $15 was proposed and approved. The change will take place on February 1. Anyone who joins or renews before that date will be charged the old amount ($12). There were several reasons for the increase. We would like to be able to get more paid speakers for our meetings. PayPal charges 2.9% of each transaction as a fee. While using PayPal has made membership and bee school signup much easier, the fee is not insignificant given our budget. We also discussed having a reduced membership rate for minors.

Bee School Fees: Charging a flat fee of $45 for out Bee Schools was proposed and approved. The change will take place on February 1. Anyone who signs up for the March Bee School before that date will be charged the old rate ($35 for members, and $45 for non-members).

We have lost several books from the SOBA library. If you have bee related books you would like to donate, please contact Ellen or email sobeekeepers@gmail.com. We have revamped the checkout system and are looking for a volunteer who can manage the books.

Rick suggested that we design some hats and vests with the SOBA logo to sell at our Bee Schools and Outreach tables since we have saturated the T-shirt market. We can also consider getting some updated T-Shirts and perhaps some stocking caps.

Let’s Talk Bees

John showed pictures of his hives being loaded for the move to CA to prepare for almond pollination. He’s had only a 2.5% loss this year, and attributes it to feeding lots of sugar and pollen patties, and being vigilant on doing mite counts and treating when necessary. He sampled for mites all season. He had 13-16% infestation after almonds, down to 4% by the end of July. He used Apivar to knock it down to 3% before winter. Always sample after treatments to make sure they worked, or the mites will get ahead of you. Never use the same treatment several times in a row – always rotate treatments to prevent the mites from developing resistance to the treatment. Use formic acid (MiteAway Quick Strips) in the spring, thymol (ApiGuard) in the summer.

It’s time to order your bees for the spring. Be careful of your sources – ask lots of questions about the bees. Some folks have bought nucs from beekeepers coming back from pollination who have Florida bees not suited for our climate. It is best to by local bees from local sources, and to buy nucs (4-5 frame hives with pollen and honey stores and brood). Packages are not really cheaper than nucs given the energy needed for the bees to try to build enough comb and build up resources when they start from scratch. In order to get a package to build up enough to overwinter, you really need to add frames of honey and pollen and these would be expensive to get if you do not have extra.

Using swarms can be a good way to get bees. You can treat the swarm with Oxalic acid to wipe out varroa mites before the queen lays brood. Our March meeting will be devoted to information on catching and hiving swarms. Be sure to attend if you would like to be on the Swarm Call list in 2016.

If you already have bees, you can increase your hives by making splits. There are many ways to make splits and many reasons for doing so. One method is to do a mock swarm split to prevent an actual swarm. Take 2 or 3 frames of brood and 2 frames of food from a booming hive. Find the old queen and move her to the new hive. This mimics a swarm. This method does not require you to move the split out of the original yard. It is especially useful if your hive has begun to make swarm cells (also check out a Taranov split for hives that have swarm cells already started). We plan to cover splits in one of
our spring meetings.

It is always best to help the bees to do what they want to do, instead of forcing the bees to do what you want them to do.

It’s time to decide on equipment and be prepared before you get bees. Bees need to be hived before June in this area – beekeepers will not usually sell nucs to beginners after May. The June nectar dearth makes it too hard for the backywarder to have a hive that can survive winter.

Do not open the hive (do not take the inner cover off of the hive) when it is below 50 degrees unless the bees will die without attention. You can remove the top cover to add sugar, but do not break the propolis seal between the inner cover (or Vivaldi cover) and the first box. If you do a winter Oxalic acid treatment, leave the cover on and hinge the hive. If you do open a hive, take the opportunity to move honey frames next to the cluster. Bees can starve with honey just a frame away if it is too cold to break cluster and get to it.

Hives should have weighed 60 – 80 lbs going into winter, and should now weigh 30-40 lbs.

The queen will start laying after the solstice, so brood is starting to be raised now in many hives. It is almost too late to do a winter oxalic acid dribble This is the last week that there may be little to no brood. You can do the treatment when the temperature is above 40 degrees. See Randy Oliver’s information on how at http://scientificbeekeeping.com/oxalic-dribble-tips/

Dr. Andrew Watson joined John Jacob in answering questions about winter beekeeping:

Sampling for mites before and after treatment is very important. He also has very little loss so far this year – under 1%. He also emphasized that sampling for mites is a critical factor.

Some people are seeing losses already – perhaps because the hive was full of geriatric bees going into winter. If you see that the cluster has reduced to greatly is size, try to remove extra space. Frequently the cluster will have moved up out of the bottom box and it can be removed. Too much space is too hard to heat for a small cluster. You can put two small colonies together and let the stronger queen take over.

Andrew tarps the sides of his pallets in black plastic. John does not wrap his hives, but he uses a piece of tech foil with two holes as his inner cover for insulation.

Sometimes just leaving the bees alone works the best. Andrew had a pallet of hives that were not doing well and he didn’t have time to deal with them. He sort of forgot about them 😊 until the landowner let him know they were still alive. All but one were thriving!

He also told a story of spilling a 5 gallon container of honey in his truck – HUGE mess! He left the truck open to the bees back at the apiary, and they cleaned every bit of the honey out in a few days – even climbing down into the carpet and stretching their tongues into the weave.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM