

# SO\*BA Bee Buzz

Southern Oregon Beekeepers Association Newsletter

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Archived copies of the newsletter can be found on the website [here](#).

## Spring Bee School March 19



**Spring Bee School** will be held on **Saturday March 19** from 9 AM to 4:30 PM. Register [here!](#)

**LAST CHANCE TO GET A MEMBER DISCOUNT.** The member discount on Bee School ends on January 31.

Spring Bee School focuses on information for new beekeepers, but there is always great information for more experienced folks too.

## March Meeting - How to Catch and Hive a Swarm

Would you like to add 'free' bees to your apiary? Be sure to attend the March 7 SOBA meeting and hear **Ron Padgett** talk about catching and hiving swarms.

We are building our Swarm Call list for 2016. Email [sobeekeepers@gmail.com](mailto:sobeekeepers@gmail.com) if you would like to be added, but be sure you've renewed your membership for 2016 first.

We strongly encourage all people on the swarm list to attend the March meeting, share experiences, and review the SOBA protocol for handling swarms that are reported to the club.

## Yellow Jackets—First Line of Defense



Only the yellow jacket queen and a few workers overwinter—the rest of the colony dies off. The queen emerges in early spring to look for forage so that she can begin laying eggs. This is the time to **TRAP THE QUEEN!** Each queen trapped is one less yellow jacket colony that attacks your bees.

(Photo courtesy Peter Bray)

In our area—if you see dandelions blooming it's time to get the yellow jacket traps up. I've found that the pheromone trap works best in my yard, but a meat trap works sometimes too. I plan to get my traps up early—I had SO MANY yellow jackets attacking my bees last year and I want to remove as many nests in my yard as possible.

## Beekeepers Sue EPA over Neonicotinoid Coated Seeds

Randy Oliver posted news of an effort to force the EPA to regulate neonicotinoid-coated seeds on [Scientific Beekeeping](#):

*A recently-filed lawsuit by beekeeper Jeff Anderson deserves our support, in order to close a huge loophole in pesticide regulation. Currently, the EPA does not classify pesticides applied on treated seed as pesticide "applications," and are thus exempt from the restrictions and liability due to drift or misuse as are other pesticide applications. The registration of seed treatments as pesticide applications will allow better monitoring of the overall environmental impact and fate of seed-applied pesticides (not only the neonics). For more information, see [Pollinator Stewardship News](#).*

*"My honey farm business is not capable of surviving another three to five years if EPA chooses to 'drag out' the treated article exemption in the courts at the request of the pesticide industry instead of properly regulating these pesticides. People need pollinated food; somebody must stand up and say no to unregulated killing of pollinators," said Jeff Anderson, beekeeper and the lead plaintiff in the case.*

## Let's Talk Bees

At our **February** meeting, 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.

John highly recommends sampling after treatments to make sure the treatment 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 buy 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 at our April meeting.

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 backyarder 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 [scientificbeekeeping.com/varroa-management/treatments-for-varroa/](http://scientificbeekeeping.com/varroa-management/treatments-for-varroa/)

Dr. Andrew Watson joined John Jacob in answering questions about winter beekeeping. He reiterated the importance of sampling for mites before and after treatment is very important. He also has very little loss so far this year – under 1%.

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 J 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.

Andrew will be teaching techniques for finding your queen and strategies for handling queenless hives at our May SOBA meeting.

## Breeding Bees that Bite Mites

A co-op of about 100 beekeepers stretching from Michigan to Tennessee in cooperation with Penn State's Center for Pollinator Research is developing a breed of honey bee that bites the legs of mites and chews on the mite body. If they bite a leg off of the mite, the mite will bleed to death.

Read the complete article:

**[A Hardier Honey Bee that Fights Back By Biting Back](#)**

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## 2016 Membership

SOBA membership runs from January 1st through December 31 each year, so it's time to RENEW!

On February 1, the membership fee increases to \$15, so this is your **LAST CHANCE to renew or join at the old rate!**

You can get more information, and renew online, here:

**[www.southernoregonbeekeepers.org/join-soba](http://www.southernoregonbeekeepers.org/join-soba)**. Membership provides

- use of club honey extractors
  - optional inclusion on our swarm call list
  - access to our lending library
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## SOBA Bee Forum on Facebook

SOBA maintains a page on Facebook where folks can ask questions, discuss bee-keeping, and post information on bee-related topics. Check out **[www.facebook.com/groups/1418688815101076/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1418688815101076/)** and request to join. All are welcome.

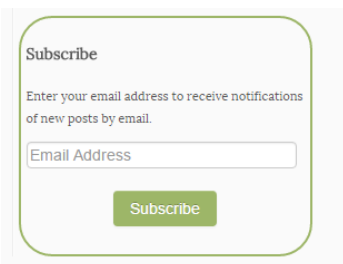
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## Books Needed for the Club Library

If you have books about bees, and beekeeping that you no longer need, consider donating them to the SOBA library! We are trying to build up a bigger collection of resources for our members. Contact [sobeekeepers@gmail.com](mailto:sobeekeepers@gmail.com) for pickup, or bring them along to the meeting. Old copies of bee journals to share would also be appreciated.

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Did you know that you can subscribe to posts on the **[SOBA website](#)** and receive an email notification when new information is posted? On the right hand side close to the bottom of all posts is a panel labelled 'Subscribe'. Enter your email address and hit Subscribe. You can un-subscribe at any time.

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## Events

**Ashland** beekeepers will get together at the Public House (formerly the Playwright's) in Ashland at 7 PM on **February 11**.

If you are aware of any events in southern Oregon that are bee or beekeeping related, please send an email to **[sobeekeepers@gmail.com](mailto:sobeekeepers@gmail.com)** and we will add it to the event calendar online and the newsletter.

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The **Southern Oregon Beekeeper Association** meets at 7:30 pm on the first Monday of each month at the Southern Oregon Research & Extension Center in Central Point. Come early to the meeting (6:30) and watch a hive inspection demonstration (March—September).

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