Treasurer's Report: Cheryl Housden reported that we are in budget

Let's Talk Bees
At 6:30 there was a hive inspection of the SOBA hives. A nuc installation was performed by Travis Owen. Queen status was determined on the existing hives, and an alcohol mite wash was demonstrated.

Risa Halpin and Noah Clipp discussed when and why to replace a queen. A queen may be replaced for many reasons, including poor performance, loss of vigor (aging), or any number of characteristics of relevance to the beekeeper or their management style. The queen, being the sole egg-layer in the colony, determines the behavior of all the workers (e.g. temperament, mite resistance, honey making, etc.) so a queen may be replaced to augment any one of these behaviors. A queen may also be replaced if she becomes injured or runs out of sperm (becomes a drone-layer queen). Aging queens may also be replaced by the beekeeper if they wish, a practice performed by many commercial beekeeping operations.

Signs that a queen may need to be replaced are a increasingly poor brood pattern, laying multiple eggs in each cell (this is usually a sign of laying workers, but some poorly produced queens do this, too), slow or stumbling movement on the comb (potential injury), laying only unfertilized eggs (mating failure, sperm depletion), or unwanted colony characteristics. Some beekeepers replace queens to augment behavior. For example a queen may be replaced if a hive is very aggressive/defensive or is prone to mite infestations.

Replacement of a queen by a beekeeper disrupts the brood cycle, and so is sometimes used as a chemical free form of mite control as it also disrupts the life cycle of varroa mites which reproduce in the capped cells of pupal honey bees.

Colonies may be allowed to rear their own queens, as they would do in the wild. This is best only when the previous queen was of excellent quality. A bad queen will not produce good daughter queens. The benefits of letting your bees produce their own queen is that they will do a better job of raising a queen than any queen breeder, assuming they are not under heavy mite pressure and are free of disease, and when resources (nectar, pollen) are in great abundance (mid spring in our region). The drawback of self-reared queens is that there is a greater gap between brood cycles. On average a new queen takes around 20-30 days from egg until she begins to lay her own eggs. Workers take about 21 days to emerge as adults from an egg. So from the loss of the old queen, it could be at least 40-50 days before new worker bees emerge from their cells. Virgin queens are also subject to risks during mating flights, and a number of them may not survive or may become lost and not find their way back to the hive. Honey bees have been doing this for hundreds of thousands of years, so keep that in mind.

Meeting adjourned at around 9:30 pm