



Tales from a
Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

A newcomer in my midst

Last week, while up to my armpits writing up this season's golden eagle survey, the phone rang with my dear pal, church member and fellow beekeeper, Eric Liddell on the other end.

"If you're not too busy," he said, "I just got a call about a bee swarm, but I can't take care of it. Can you go get 'em?"

That presented a slight problem. First, I'm no longer a "beekeeper," and, second, I didn't have my swarm collecting equipment laid out and ready to go. Usually, about March 1, I'd get my tree-limb-cutting tools, a sturdy cardboard box, ladder and an empty Langstroth hive needed to collect a honeybee swarm.

But so as not to compete with our native bees, I've set my beekeeping equipment aside. Eric's a good pal, however, and a swarm of bees always needs a good friend — right then and there. So I told him I'd go get the bees, which he reported were at the City of

Sisters campground.

Oh boy! A swarm of bees in a campground could become big trouble looking for a place to happen. But, as it turned out, someone in city hall was one jump ahead of me and ran out to the campground and sprayed the so-called, "swarm" with a can of Raid.

(One of these days either Eric or I have to go down to city hall and share the facts of life about a domestic bee swarm with the powers-that-be. The very last thing anyone should do is spray a swarm of honeybees with Raid!)

Anyway, I went to the campground and talked to Jerry Pierce, one of the campground hosts, who hauled me to the swarm site. Now this tale gets interesting:

The so-called swarm was gone when I got there, and from what I was told, it did not behave at all like a honeybee swarm. Turns out, the so-called "bees" were actually small wasps, and they were hovering in the still air near a large chunk of lava rock that was dumped there when the last Ice Age was melting all the glacial ice that occupied the city of Sisters long ago.

That's when the host told me about the Raid attack on the "swarm." We looked for casualties and found one among the crushed rock on the edge of the roadway. And that's when I discovered the swarm wasn't a swarm, but a bunch of tiny paper wasps doing something I have



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Another pollinator, and a newcomer to our midst, the sand wasp.

never heard of or seen in my 90 years of living on Mother Earth.

When I come upon an insect mystery the first person I contact is my wonderful pal from the long-ago OMSI Days, Eric. I met this young man when he was 12 years old in the early '60s, and he was already hooked on insects, and he's the same today.

Here's what I got back: "Polistes major does not occur in Oregon as far as I know. (I'd misidentified the dead wasp, which is nothing new for me.) The species there are Polistes aurifer, Mischoctytarus flavitarsis... and Polisted dominula, the European paper wasp.

"Without seeing an image, I cannot rule out that it was some other kind of wasp, though. Steniolia spp. sand wasps form sleeping clusters to spend the night, so it might have been those.

They are normally solitary so pose ZERO THREAT whatsoever. Spraying a sleeping cluster can substantially impact local populations of those wasps. Other solitary wasps and bees congregate in a similar fashion at dusk, and they are usually only non-stinging males."

Please don't grab up a can of insecticide and start killing — before you know who you're killing and why. Nine times out of 10, it'll turn out to be a friendly species and a pollinator vitally important to the world around you and me.

Now let me tell you about sand wasps. They are predators, and as such they kill insects that we really don't want to put up with, like aphids and other pestiferous

six-legged critters. Not only will they not sting you, they can't! And the males are important pollinators.

But for me this was a whole new world. I've never seen a mass of sleeping sand wasps, which I have a hunch is what was in the campground. With that said, if you or someone you know see and/or calls you about a mass of small wasps hovering near the ground, especially in the cool, quiet morning air, please let me know!

So, I learned not all wasps will sting you to distraction, and even after living in this beautiful Sisters Country for all these many years, I have a lot to learn about what's going on around me in the world of insects.

NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF A BALLOT TITLE

Notice is hereby given that a ballot title for a City-referred measure for inclusion in the November 6, 2018 general election has been filed with the City Recorder of the City of Sisters on Friday, July 27, 2018. The ballot title is as follows:

CAPTION: Allows recreational and medical marijuana establishments in Sisters.

QUESTION: Shall Sisters allow medical marijuana establishments and recreational marijuana establishments in areas subject to the City's jurisdiction?

SUMMARY: State law allows operation of licensed recreational marijuana producers, processors, wholesalers, and retailers, and registered medical marijuana processors and dispensaries. State law provides that a city council may adopt an ordinance to be referred to the voters of the city to allow (permit) the establishment and operation of recreational marijuana producers, processors, wholesalers, and/or retailers, medical marijuana processors and/or dispensaries, and/or any combination thereof. The Sisters City Council has referred this measure to the voters as provided under state law.

Approval of this measure will allow the establishment and operation of medical marijuana processing sites and dispensaries, and recreational marijuana producers, processors, wholesalers, and retailers within any area subject to the city's jurisdiction.

If this measure is approved, the city will be eligible to receive distributions of state marijuana tax revenues and may, subject to voter approval, impose a local tax or fee on the recreational sale of marijuana items.

ANY ELECTOR WHO IS DISSATISFIED WITH THE BALLOT TITLE MAY PETITION THE CIRCUIT COURT OF DESCHUTES COUNTY TO REVIEW THE BALLOT TITLE NO LATER THAN 5 PM ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2018.



LET'S DANCE, SISTERS!

Join us for:

Footloose at the Fire Hall

Wed., August 15

Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire Hall

5:30 p.m. - FREE Community Meal

6-8 p.m. - Dance & Demonstrations

Bring family and friends for a FREE community meal and a fun evening of discovering—and rediscovering—popular dances, including line and circle dances from yesterday and today. Also, bring your dance-move ideas to help create an original Sisters Country dance. A variety of instructors will lead attendees.

All are welcome!

A Citizens4Community event in partnership with SPRD, Sisters Athletic Club, Melvin's and Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District.

See: Citizens4Community.com