

People & Places

Bee researcher touts flower power

Tim Lawrence's prescription for helping pollinators is more blooming plants

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

COUPEVILLE, Wash. — Researcher Tim Lawrence has been all around Washington state testing bee hives for neonicotinoids, a class of pesticides banned by the European Commission for their purported harm to honeybees.

Neonicotinoids in pollen and beeswax were almost non-existent in urban areas. More were detected in agricultural areas, but not enough to justify a ban, Lawrence said.

The Washington State University researchers expect to publish their findings soon in the *Journal of Economic Entomology*, adding to the body of knowledge on an emotional debate. So emotional, it's hindering an effective response to honeybee losses, Lawrence said. "I think the whole neonicotinoid issue is a huge, unnecessary distraction when looking at what's necessary for bees."

Neonicotinoids were introduced in the 1990s as alternatives to pesticides that were more harmful to birds and mammals. Critics say that because plants absorb neonicotinoids, bees in turn pick up the pesticide. The United Kingdom recently relaxed Europe's ban on neonicotinoids, sparking an angry backlash.

Lawrence says the anger is misplaced. To help bees, he stresses flower power.

"We need to plant lots of flowers. I mean acres and acres of flowers," he said.

Lawrence, 64, has been thinking about what bees



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington State University research scientist Tim Lawrence shows a bee hive July 30 in Coupeville on Whidbey Island. Lawrence, who heads the WSU Island County Extension Service, says bee lovers should embrace flower power, not bans on neonicotinoids.

need since he was 12 years old. He saw bees swarming a tree limb, cut it down and carried it home to show his mother and announce his career plans.

As a young man, he wrangled bees in California and hammed it up by encouraging thousands of swarming bees to form a "beard" around his face. He also met his future wife, Susan Cobey, another young bee wrangler, who is now a WSU researcher and an authority on honeybee breeding.

Lawrence was a commercial beekeeper who later moved into academia, earning a Ph.D. in environmental science in his 50s at Ohio State University.

He took a post-doctorate job in Pullman as a bee researcher and seven months later, in 2010, was named director of the WSU Island County Extension Office, where he has continued his bee research.

Last year, he served on a honeybee task force convened by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. The task force concluded that parasitic varroa mites and lack of forage are bigger threats to honeybees than neonicotinoids.

The conclusion put the task force in step with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but out of step with European regulators and some local governments, such as Olympia, which have banned neonicotinoids on public property.

Lawrence readily agrees that spraying neonicotinoids in the presence of bees is bad and that there can be an over-reliance on chemicals to control pests. He doesn't rule out the possibility that evidence supporting bans will come out and said that researchers should continue looking for new classes of pesticides easy on bees.

But he's persuaded that banning neonicotinoids is the

answer for what ails honeybees, a position reinforced by his recent research.

Mark Emrich, president of the Washington State Beekeepers Association, read a draft of the soon-to-be-published paper. His hives in Thurston County were tested, and neonicotinoids were not found. Nevertheless, he remains concerned that widely used neonicotinoids are damaging bees' ability to function and maintain healthy hives.

"I'm more concerned about sub-lethal degradation of the bees as opposed to the bees actually dying," he said.

Emrich notes that other research has concluded neonicotinoids are harming bees. "Nobody has really given me a good synopsis on why all the stuff done before was wrong," he said.

Lawrence recalls shoveling piles of dead bees in the 1980s killed by ill-timed pesticide applications before neonicotinoids were intro-



Western Innovator

Tim Lawrence

Age: 64

Position: Director of the Washington State University Island County Extension Office

Education: Ph.D. in environmental science and master's degree in agricultural economics and rural sociology at the Ohio State University; bachelor's degree in agriculture and pomology from the University of California-Davis

Family: Married to Washington State University researcher Susan Cobey, an authority on honeybee breeding.

Message: Honeybees need more forage and an effective defense against varroa mites. The anti-neonicotinoid campaign is a distraction.

duced. The mass die-offs of bees have stopped, he said. "If they ban neonicotinoids, what are they going to replace them with? What are the consequences of that?"

To those who want to become beekeepers to save bees, he says: Don't do it! Neophyte beekeepers can cause more harm than good by unwittingly allowing diseases to spread.

If you want to please bees, plant flowers, Lawrence says. Pollen- and nectar-rich plants stimulate bees. Stimulated bees are healthy and good pollinators. For Lawrence, the central question is, "How do you get these guys jazzed up about getting nectar and pollen?"

Camping trip provides sweet times for all

By RYAN M. TAYLOR
For the Capital Press

Cowboy Logic
Ryan Taylor



TOWNER, N.D. — I baled hay well into the night when the conditions were finally right and I still had windrows of hay needing to be wrapped up for next winter. I got home and my oldest son met me with a downright sad look and said, "so I guess we won't be camping tonight..."

Call it a case of father/son miscommunication. I don't remember talking to him about camping that night, but when he asked his mom about doing that and she said, "Maybe, you can ask your dad if he can," I think he might have skipped over the asking me part and started packing up the tent and sleeping bags and sat there waiting for me to come home from the field.

I told him I was sorry, but I

didn't really know he had his heart set on it. I said, "tomorrow night," and I promised him I'd get back from the field early enough to go find a prime tent spot and build a campfire out in one of our pastures.

Heading out

And I did. He had the sleeping bags, the tent, a brother, a cousin and a dog packed up and ready to go when I got home. I added a few provisions — a big can of beans, hot dogs, marshmallows, fudge stripe cookies and, selfishly, a coffee pot and some coffee grounds for my morning joy and addiction.

We drove off toward the

setting sun in our trusty side-by-side UTV and found a spot about a mile from home with plenty of firewood and a stock tank with a water valve to fill the all-important coffee pot.

Old-time fire-starter

After we pitched the tent, I dug a little fire pit and used the old-time cowboy fire-starting method — I rubbed two sticks together, then I piled a bunch of newspaper under those sticks and flicked my handy butane lighter. I watched it come to life with the same satisfaction that the caveman who invented the controlled warmth of flickering flames must have felt.

We cooked up some meat and marshmallows, and, knowing that a third basic food group of camping existed, I peeled open the can of beans with my Swiss army pocket knife and put it on some coals

of the fire to heat up. I pulled it out with my pliers and the four of us stuck our spoons in.

'Blue moon' rises

There, as the sun set in the west and the fire flickered in front of us, we watched the biggest, brightest moon you ever saw come up in the east. It was a "blue moon," the second full moon in a single month, a phenomena not seen since 2012, and it was spectacular. We spotted the dippers, big and little, and tried our best to find Orion's belt in the starlit sky.

Three sleepy young boys and one rather stiff, sore, uncomfortable old Dad fell asleep in their sleeping bags on the not-so-soft ground in a big, roomy tent. Coyotes howled and kids snoozed.

Best coffee around

In the morning, I made the

best dang coffee I'd ever had. Well, it was the best coffee for at least a mile around, and it tasted pretty good sitting on a hillside while the sunlight woke my campmates.

When the boys peeled out of their sleeping bags and came to the fire, we threaded some bacon onto our marshmallow roasting sticks, ate the rest of our beans and broke camp.

Their smiles were as wide as the space between the blue moon rising and the west sun setting of the night before when I asked them how they liked their camping trip.

Simple satisfaction from a campfire instead of a microchip. We need to do it more often and we won't be waiting for the next blue moon. Camping with kids is as special and beautiful as a blue moon, but it shouldn't be as rare.

One man's weeds are another man's lunch

By PETER ROSEN
KSL-TV

EAGLE MOUNTAIN, Utah (AP) — There are weeds in Mike Wood's small backyard garden that he planted on purpose.

"A friend of mine across the golf course here called me one day and asked if I'd help out with (a presentation on wild edibles)," he said. "I didn't know about that stuff at that time and I said, sure, I'd love to and so I started researching.

I was stunned. I was astounded at what was here in the desert that was edible."

Now, what other people call weeds, Wood calls lunch.

A brief stroll through an empty lot in his Eagle Mountain subdivision yields a spice called "poor man's pepper," edible flower salsify and a crunchy snack of wild grass seeds.

Wood spies dried sego lily flowers and starts digging for something that helped sustain the Utah pioneers.

"In 1848, 1849, they came here and it was winter and they were starving and some of the Native Americans took pity on them and showed them how to find these sego lily bulbs," he said.

Wood, who at his day job helps people set up websites, created wildutahedibles.com to catalog the local wild edible and medicinal plants.

"I really got hooked," he said.

He warns anyone interesting in wild edibles to be absolutely

sure what they've got before snacking on it.

Now, so he doesn't have to forage far from home, he grows weeds in his garden. Beside tomatoes and herbs, he grows yellow dock, mallow and broad-leaf plantain. On route from church one Sunday, he spotted a small wild spinach plant and transplanted it in his backyard. It's now a thriving wall of wild spinach and a source of greens for salads, sandwiches and egg dishes.

Wood points out a small

succulent, purslane, growing in a planter box. Here in Utah, it invades lawns and sprouts along sidewalk cracks and is often the target of herbicide. In Mexico, it's served with pork. In Turkey, it's sprinkled in salads.

"This one almost has a fruity taste to it," Wood said munching on a sprig.

Wood, weeding his weeds, pulled small volunteer tomato and carrot plants. The irony — extracting vegetable plants to save the weeds — is not lost on Wood and he laughs.

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If you see a misstatement, omission or factual error in a headline, story or photo caption, please call the Capital Press news department at 503-364-4431, or send email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.

Calendar

Saturday-Sunday Aug. 15-16

Harvest Fest, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Yamhill Valley Heritage Center Museum, McMinnville, Ore. Cost: Adults \$5, kids under 12 free. Tractor parade, threshing, binding and baling oats using antique farming equipment and horses.

Saturday-Sunday Aug. 15-16

Pioneer Power Show & Swap Meet, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Fullbright Park, Union Gap, Wash. Cost: Adults \$5, kids under 12 free. Highlights this year include farm equipment displays, vintage trucks and engines, farm tractor pulls, lawn tractor pulls and an equipment parade.

Wednesday-Sunday Aug. 19-23

Clackamas County Fair & Rodeo, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. (midnight Friday and Saturday), Clackamas County Event Center, Canby, Ore. Cost: Adults \$9, discounts for senior citizens and youths.

Saturday, Aug. 22

Rural Living Field Day, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.,

Howell Territorial Park, Sauvie Island, Ore. Cost: \$15/person; \$20/family

Thursday-Saturday Aug. 27-29

Farwest Nursery Show, 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m., Oregon Convention Center, Portland

Thursday, Sept. 10

Oregon State University Dairy Open House, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., OSU

Dairy, Corvallis. The OSU Dairy has been converting to a grazing-based operation.

Thursday-Friday Sept. 17-18

California Poultry Federation Annual Meeting and Conference, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monterey Plaza Hotel, Monterey, Calif. Cost: \$250