

Photo by Lauren Kinney

BUSY BEEKEEPERS POLLINATE COLLEGE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JARED PREBLE

ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

Humans have been utilizing bees and their resources for thousands of years, with records going as far back as 15,000 years ago. They pollinate not only our flowers but our fruits and vegetables and they're responsible for pollinating one-sixth of our flowers worldwide. In a day and age where species are being wiped out left and right, over 200,000 individuals in America are striving to save the world's most valuable being.

The first installment of a two-day instructional Beekeeping course was held on February 1 in Clackamas, room 136. The workshop was held by John and Gina Rockrohr, a married pair of second-generation apiarists and beekeeping wizards. The course was co-sponsored by the Portland Metro Beekeepers Association and a fee of \$50 was required to attend. The Rockrohrs instructed to a packed room and a number of topics were covered including proper handling procedures and bee biology.

Several handouts were provided along with a long list of source material for the many facets of beekeeping. Fresh food was provided, which was all made with homegrown honey. Several examples of equipment and storage for bees were also present, including a single pane carrying roughly 2,000 live bees, where hundreds of bees could be observed moving around the honeycomb, busy at work.

It's no secret that bees have been on the decline for some time now, with man-made diseases and pesticides being the leading contributors to their decrease in population. In addition to producing beeswax and honey bees are also the world's most

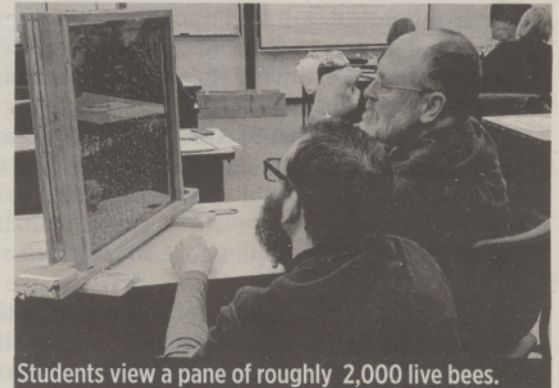
important pollinator of food crops. Not only is beekeeping a fun hobby, but it can help replenish the diminished species of honeybees and ensure they come back to thrive and pollinate our world.

It would be natural for one to view beekeeping as a dangerous and time-consuming activity. Fortunately, unless you're severely allergic to bees, the danger aspect is removed through the use of bee suits and after the initial set up, the bees do most of the work. Bee suits supply their wearer with more than sufficient protection; while various outside forces must be taken into consideration, once they're set up, the bees are more than capable of maintaining their own colony.

"Less time than a dog or a cat. Spend about an hour every two weeks," John said. "It doesn't take much time and you get a product that you can eat yourself, it's healthy for you, or you can sell — and it's helping the environment."

Pests are another consideration that beekeepers must be wary of — especially new beekeepers. "A lot of new beekeepers aren't going to a class like this. They get mites which create diseases and they don't know how to handle them," John said.

Doug Sieckmann, the current president of the Portland Metro Beekeepers Association, stopped by briefly to promote their upcoming meetings. "You don't have to be a member to attend. It's amazing, the wealth of knowledge that people have there," Sieckmann said. "It's a great club to belong to. We learn from each other, we put up different events and you don't have to be a member. Take the time to

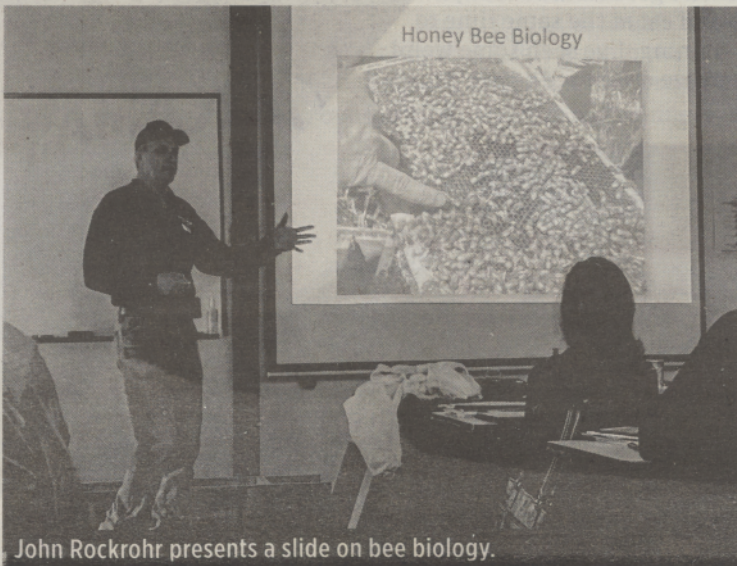


Students view a pane of roughly 2,000 live bees.

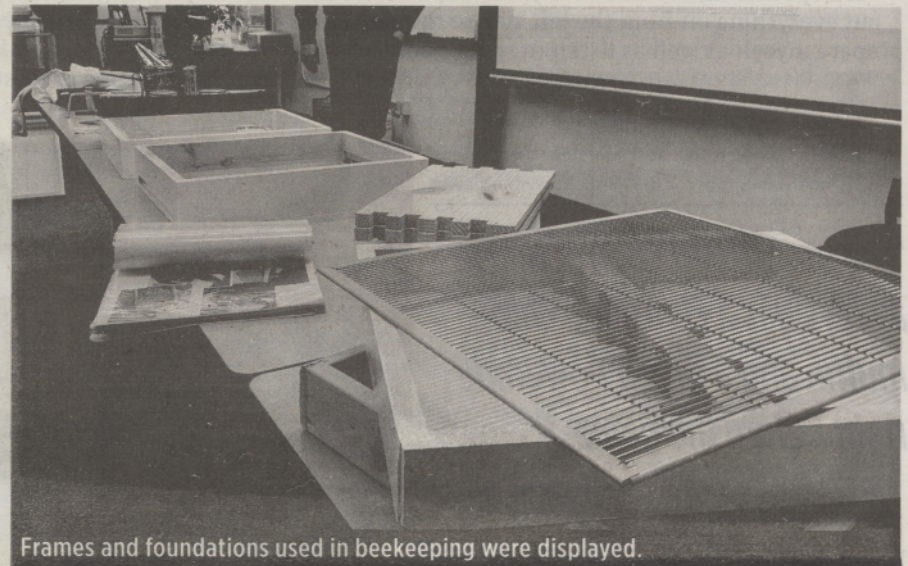
go to a club, either ours or another one, and it'll be a packed house."

It's clear throughout the workshop that John is a bee veteran, though a story from his past might bump him up a couple spots to legend. "A long time ago when I was a teenager I was helping my dad with bees and it was dark. My dad only had one bee suit so I had nothing on. We were carrying the hives across the yard and I tripped, fell down and the hive opened in my face. The hospital pulled out over 300 stingers and then my mom pulled out 100 more, but I survived that so I'm still doin' it."

A second class will be held this Saturday, from 9-3 p.m. in the same location. Admission will be \$50, so don't miss out on this unique opportunity.



John Rockrohr presents a slide on bee biology.



Frames and foundations used in beekeeping were displayed.