

ROBSON VALLEY BEEKEEPERS JUNIOR MENTORING PROGRAM 2021

Our inaugural year of the Junior mentoring Program was a great success! We had some coordination craziness, some significant set backs, and some steep learning curves for all, but we had a lot of fun too. We were very fortunate to have been successful in acquiring grant support from BC Bee, Regional District Fraser-Fort George, Valemount Community Forest, and the Dunster Community Forest. This enabled us to enroll six (6) students in the program, and with the assistance of five (5) mentors they completed the spring, summer, and fall components. Our bees have been tucked in for the winter and we await spring with great anticipation.

SPRING

To begin our program in the spring of 2021, we purchased all of the woodenware and foundation for the students to construct their hives. With the assistance of parents and mentors they completed their two deep brood boxes and frames, as well as a western honey super with frames. The students painted their hives and then delivered them to their mentors' apiary.

We had originally ordered packages of bees from a commercial supplier in Alberta, but due to Covid-19 and great disruption in importation of goods and livestock, our order was first changed and then cancelled. We were well into late spring and we scrambled to acquire nucs, first hoping to find some in British Columbia. As it was so late in the season, we had difficulty in locating nucs. We finally found another supplier through the Alberta Honey Producers list of suppliers and were very thankful to order and be able to start the program. As it turned out, obtaining the nucs was much more difficult than we had anticipated it would be. The supplier was extremely difficult to contact and coordinate with, and we were fearful that we would have no bees for our students. Finally, in the middle of the night on June 6th we received a phone-call that

the supplier would meet us in Valemount in 4 hours and we could pick up our nucs. Two mentors scrambled to drive from Dome Creek and McBride to Valemount and finally, at 4am, our nucs arrived. We completed our transaction, headed home, contacted the teams early in the morning, and got the “girls” settled into their hives.

SUMMER

For the following summer months, each student connected with their mentor(s) and visited their hive on a regular basis. The club continued their monthly ZOOM meetings, which some students and parents participated in as well. As the summer progressed, mentors noted that a number of the new nucs had a heavy disease (chalkbrood) load and did not seem to be developing as hoped for. Some dwindled drastically. At the same time, we had an extremely dry summer and blossom production was short-lived. By mid August, a number of hives seemed in jeopardy, so the Prince George Bee Inspector was called and inspections were arranged for all student colonies along with some others. We ended up losing three colonies to disease by August, two of them student colonies. Retrospectively, we determined that our nucs had arrived very stressed, some with significant disease, and they had likely been pollinating blueberries prior to our receiving them. A plan was developed to replace the lost colonies in the spring. We reached out to a number of breeders in BC and were surprised and pleased when they offered to donate replacement nucs in support of our students.

In late August, we had a half day BBQ / Field Day /Presentations gathering. We shared a little information on bee diseases, our trials and tribulations, completed some honeybee quiz sheets, and had our first and only opportunity to meet and share stories with each other in person. Each student received a Bee Cozie insulator and suggestions on overwintering options.

A LOVELY SUMMER DAY FOR A “FIELD DAY” AND A VISIT (unfortunately not all could attend)



FALL/WINTER

We had a little early snow scare in mid October which jump started overwintering conversations and ideas. By the end of October, everyone had their colonies tucked in for winter (except Morgan and Pierce, whose colonies died due to disease in August). Instructions on special supports such as sugar/candy boards and attic boxes were provided. Each mentor has a slightly different approach to supporting their colonies through winter, so we will have much to discuss when the warm weather returns, and hopefully the colonies come out for flights.

THE HONEYBEE (APIS MELLIFERA)

DEVELOPMENT OF BROOD FROM EGG TO ADULT

On the right, the worker, drone, and queen develop from the same egg. The queen is the only one that can lay eggs. The worker and drone are sterile. The queen is larger than the worker and drone. The worker and drone are smaller than the queen.

Stage	Worker (21 days)	Drone (24 days)	Queen (15-16 days)
1	Egg	Egg	Egg
2	1st instar	1st instar	1st instar
3	2nd instar	2nd instar	2nd instar
4	3rd instar	3rd instar	3rd instar
5	4th instar	4th instar	4th instar
6	5th instar	5th instar	5th instar
7	6th instar	6th instar	6th instar
8	7th instar	7th instar	7th instar
9	8th instar	8th instar	8th instar
10	9th instar	9th instar	9th instar
11	10th instar	10th instar	10th instar
12	11th instar	11th instar	11th instar
13	12th instar	12th instar	12th instar
14	13th instar	13th instar	13th instar
15	14th instar	14th instar	14th instar
16	15th instar	15th instar	15th instar
17	16th instar	16th instar	16th instar
18	17th instar	17th instar	17th instar
19	18th instar	18th instar	18th instar
20	19th instar	19th instar	19th instar
21	20th instar	20th instar	20th instar
22	21st instar	21st instar	21st instar
23	22nd instar	22nd instar	22nd instar
24	23rd instar	23rd instar	23rd instar

QUEEN

WORKER

DRONE

HEAD

THORAX

ABDOMEN

ANTENNA

COMPOUND EYE

SIMPLE EYE (CELLULE)

HEAD

FORELEGS

THORAX

MIDDLE LEG

HINDLEG

FOREWING

HINDWING

POLLEN CORBE (BASKET)

ABDOMEN

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Partners in a Hive – Katie and Lee



Mentor Love



Johnson Family Hive



Anik and her "Girls"



Keller Constructing



Morgan Presents:



Morgan's Bees (before they died)

