

## The Buzz about Bees

Before we continue our talk on honey bee communication, I want to tell you about two upcoming events. The first is the County Fair, August 10<sup>th</sup> – 13th! Do stop by our booth. It's very educational and fun. Folks of all ages enjoy the observation hive. There will be local honey to taste and purchase. We are also raffling off a horizontal bee hive. Honey bees love the horizontal hive with its extra-long frames. Beekeepers love it because there's no heavy lifting. It's great for everyone but especially those who are elderly, weaker (like me), or even handicapped. Even if you don't want to be a beekeeper, buy tickets anyway. You will have no trouble selling this hive to one of our beekeepers who had hoped they would have won it! Look it up on the website. It's on display at the TCCA Farm store. Buying tickets is another way you can help support honey bees. Proceeds go to planting bee friendly trees throughout the county.

The second event is an Intro to Honey Bees and Beekeeping class that I am teaching, Saturday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 to 3:30 at the Port of Tillamook Bay Conference room. It's free but please register either on the website or at the fair. You don't have to want to become a beekeeper to enjoy the class. We only teach two classes a year and this will be the last for this year.

In the last article we started a discussion of how bees communicate. I've received lots of comments about elephants being afraid of honey bees. If you didn't read that article, it's on the website: [www.tillamookbeekeepers.org](http://www.tillamookbeekeepers.org), About Bees, The Buzz, Communication part 1.

We talked about how bees communicate with the use of pheromones (i.e., scents). Today we'll talk about the dances the foragers do. What makes this even more amazing is that they do them on vertical comb in the dark of the hive and they have different dances based on how far the food is from the hive! These dances communicate the distance and direction to food.

For great patches of food within 80 yards, they do what's called a round dance. It's done with quick short steps running in narrow circles, changing direction and then repeating the dance. The higher the sugar content in the nectar the more vigorous the dance. Powerful odors cling to the bee and are passed on to the lookers-on. The dancing bee even stops and shares sips of nectar from her honey stomach.

For distances greater than 80 yards and up to miles, they do their most famous dance, the waggle dance. She does a half circle to one side, makes a sharp turn and runs in a straight line while vigorously wagging her tail. She translates the angle of the sun and the amount of energy it took to get to the flowers into the dance. It's so precise, some people can watch the dance and actually find the patch of flowers the bee was referring to.

It's very complicated and not easily explained in a few sentences, at least by me! Google it and be amazed by seeing it in action.

When bees swarm, scout bees go looking for a new home. There's a dance the scout bees do on the ball of a swarm hanging in a tree. It communicates with the other scout bees about the desirability of one bee's find. The more vigorous the dance the better the find. She has to get the other scouts to come give their opinion. When they all agree, off the whole swarm goes to move into its new home. (See the article on swarming on the website for more info.)

I have to end with a story. I once accidentally brought a honey bee into the kitchen. To catch the bee, I put a dish with a drop of honey in front of a window. Sure enough, the bee went after the honey, and I gave her back to the colony. The next day, I had a dozen honey bees outside the screened window in the kitchen. Evidently, she was a very good dancer. The kitchen was on the second floor of the opposite side of the building from the colony! Amazing!

See you at the Fair!