The Taranov Swarm

Satisfying instinct while controlling propagation

Natrona County Beekeepers

ncbees.org

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Swarming

- Reproductive process of the super organism
- Your response will depend on your style, goals
- Is Normal – good sign!
- Can NOT be stopped!
- Should be managed – be responsible
- Can be re-directed and utilized

Signs of Impending Cast

- Abundance of drones
- Queen cells (not cups!)
- High population
- Plenty of brood
- Adequate resources (honey flow on)
- Right time of year

Splits!

- Traditional method of managing swarm drive
- Increasing colonies – grow your yard!
- Find the queen?
- “Blind Split” may just delay the impulse
- Does lend itself to fast application
- Part of how larger outfits operate
- May not result in proper mix of roles or ages

Concepts

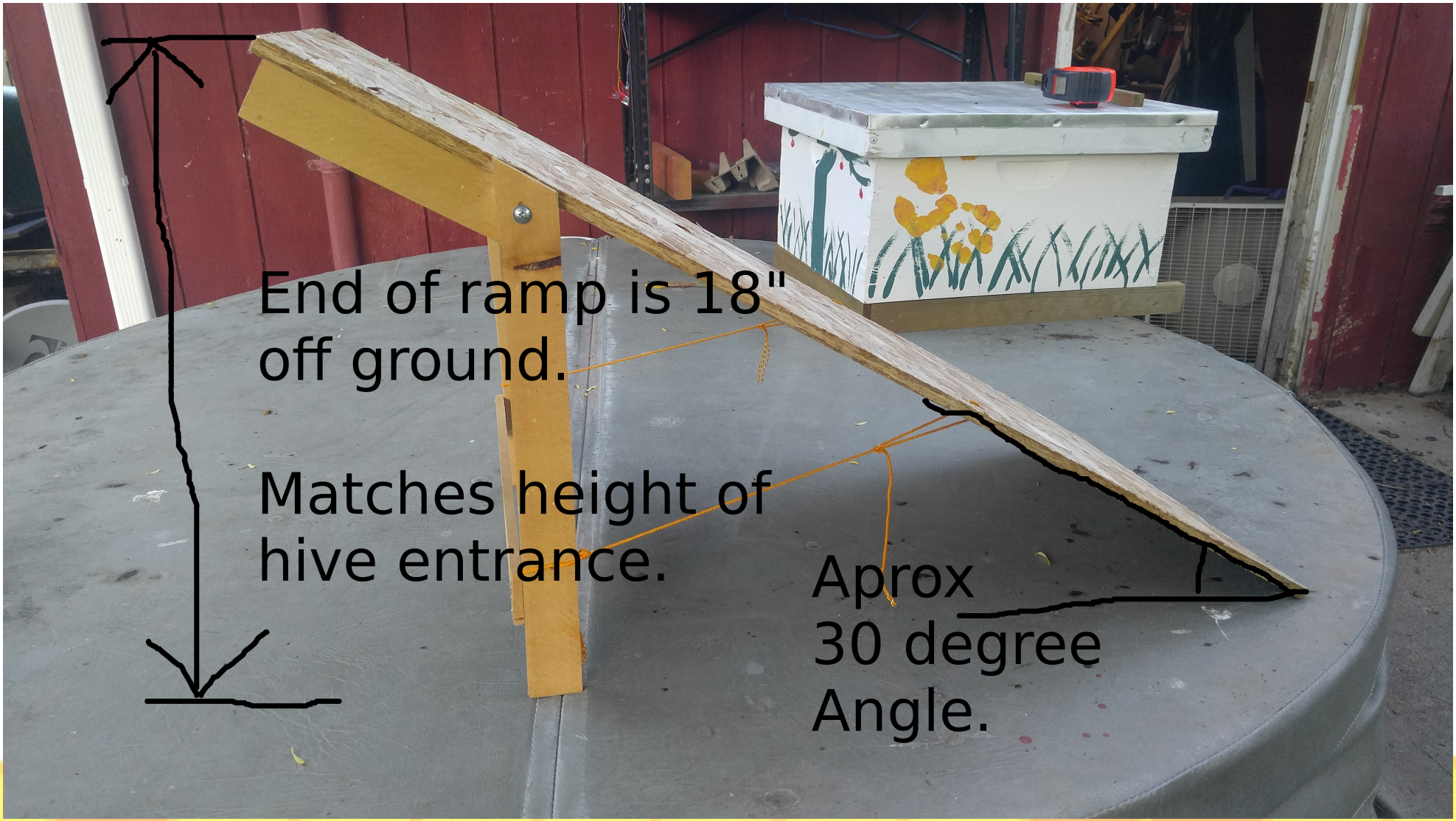
- Worker roles are age dependent
- Younger bees haven’t yet learned to fly
- Older bees have oriented and fly
- Laying queens avoid flying
- Swarms are made up of a mix, leaning towards more younger bees
- Need younger bees to make wax

Enter the Taranov Board

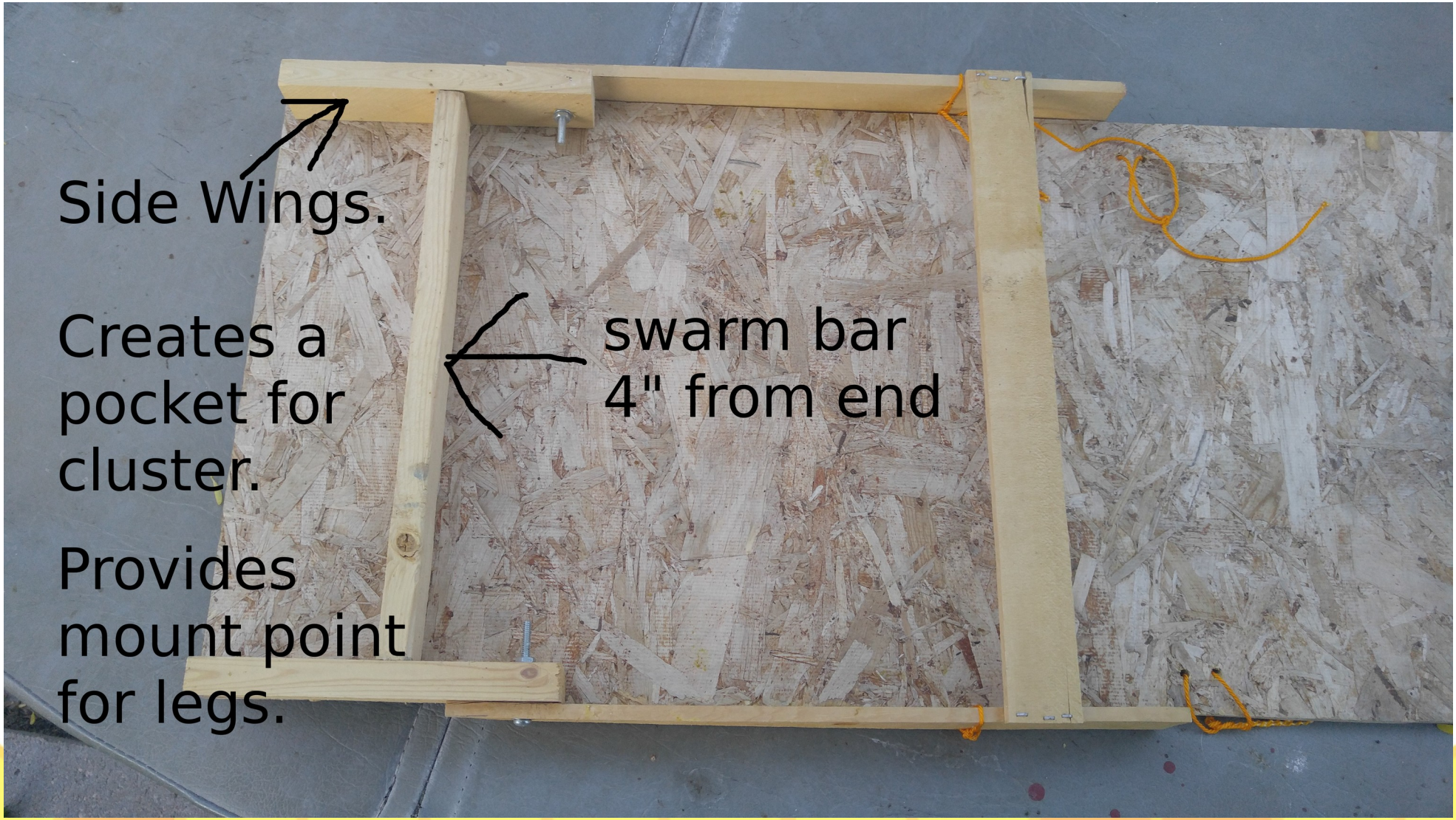
- Another tool in the chest
- Mimics a normal swarming process
- Maintains control of the parent and split
- Takes a little time
- Easy to do – simple requirements
- Does get you intimate with your colony
- Satisfies swarm urge without losing control

The Board itself – this is mine

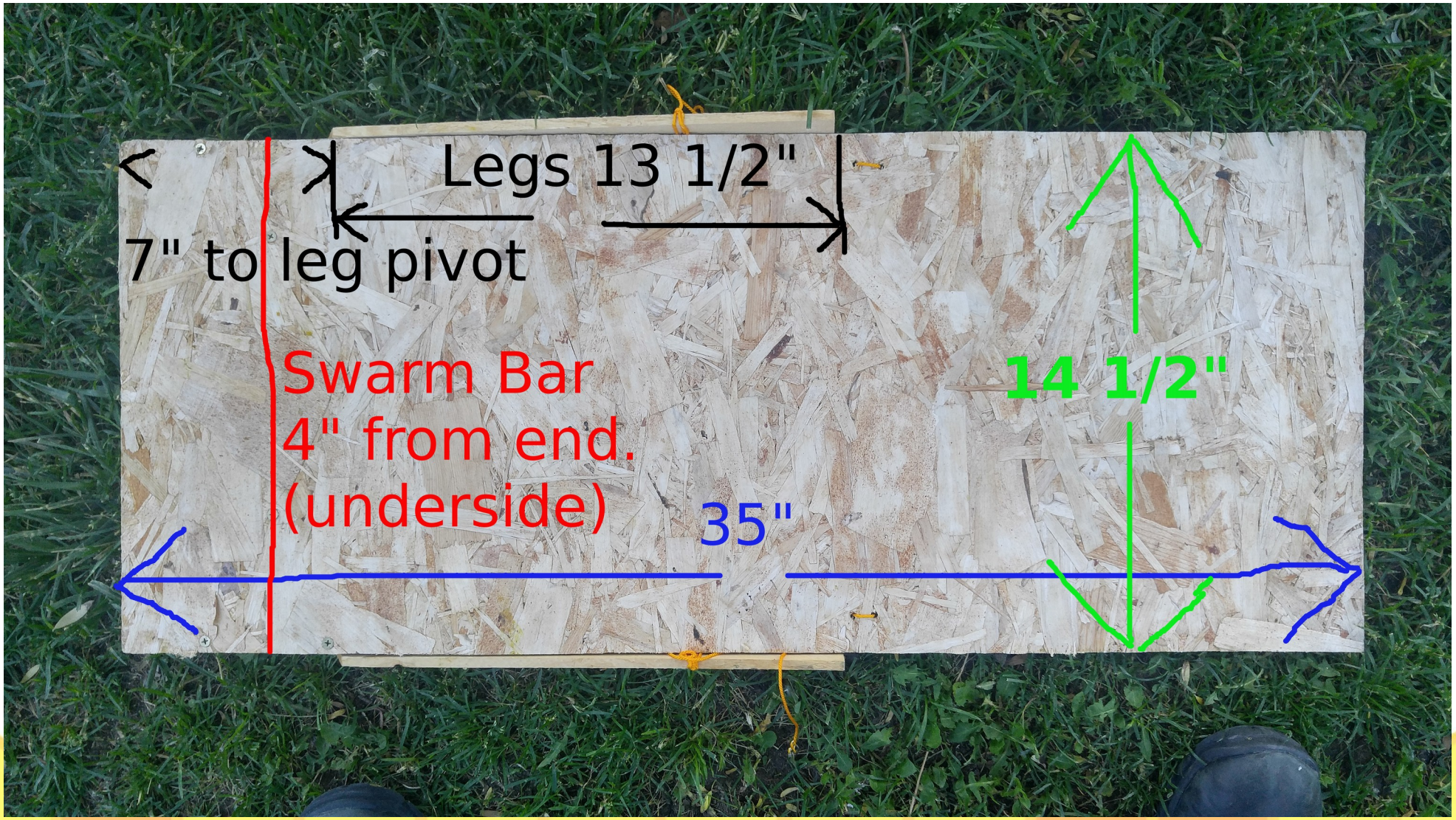
Side Dimensions – not critical



The underside – more important



Top view – yours will be different!



Basic traditional Setup – parent hive

The important bits

- Gap to the parent hive
  - At least 4” between board and parent hive
- Angle
  - Steeper is better than shallower
- Space for cluster at end of board
- Mechanics – details of gear aren’t critical
  - Make it fit your own setup
  - Use bees own behavior to your advantage

Process

- Setup board and sheet
- Pull ALL frames from parent hive
- Shake or brush ALL bees onto sheet
  - Don’ t shake queen cells!!
- Allow bees to walk up or fly as they choose
- Flyers return to parent hive
- Walkers form cluster, in pocket
- Move cluster (artificial swarm) to new hive
- Clean up and enjoy!

Setup - variation

Setup – drawn frames

Shake ‘em ALL out

Let ‘em walk or fly – their choice!

A bit of drift isn’t unusual

Be patient

Give ‘em time

Don’t get in a hurry

Progress!

Get’n closer to done

Almost done – sheet removed

DONE! (Parent hive)

DONE! - New split – same yard

Typical - A nice problem

- 2 hours after that last picture
  - Removed the reducer
  - Added a 2nd box
    - Very high population! Strong split
- Month later – they’re going gang busters!

What happens now?

- Parent hive
  - Existing brood emerges - Replenish young workers
- Eggs
  - They make a new queen
- Foraging continues – maybe not quite as many
- Just don’t inspect too soon!
- Brood break as new queen is made

New split

- Queen is ready to lay - now
- Older ‘young’ bees begin orientation flights
- Foraging resumes within days
- Feed if they’re drawing wax
- Natural brood break (at least 7 to 9 days)
- Manage split same as a captured swarm

Advantages

- Lets the bees do what comes natural
- Divides the parent colony along worker roles
- Not a perfect separation – results in a mix
- Satisfies the swarm urge
- You don’t have to find the queen!
- Both hives have an appropriate mix of workers
- Parent colony naturally requeens itself
- You don’t lose control of your colonies

A variation

- Put new hive under end of board
  - Cluster moves into new hive, directly
- Saves a wee bit of time
  - Maybe better bee/queen health on hotter days?

- Easier to move
- Drop remaining bees off board into new hive
- Feed (if they’re drawing wax)

Conclusion

- Method of dividing strong colonies
- Satisfies swarming urge (reproductive drive)
- Lets the bees sort themselves – they know best
- Stronger splits - IMHO
- Minimal production loss in parent hive
- You maintain control of the bees at each step
  - Well, as best we can doing anything with bees!

Questions?

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