



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2022

## To Our Membership:

Wow! I don't know about everyone else, but it seems to me that once this year got started, it made a beeline for the exit! Now here we are in the holiday season with 2023 right in front of us. I hope you and yours made the best of 2022, and your bees provided you lots of honey!

As you read this, your first thought may be "Who is this guy?". My name is Noel Williams, and I was elected the 2023 President of NIBA at the general meeting in November. My wife, April, and I have been members of the club for about 9 years, and we have been keeping bees for the last seven of them. We currently have four colonies that we have hopefully prepared to survive over the winter (we'll see).

April is an amateur naturalist, and when she got the bug to keep bees (pun intended) she coaxed me into beekeeping by linking it with my other hobby, ham radio. She said "Noel, radios have antennas. Bees do too!". That was it, I took the bait!

We were members of NIBA for about two years before we finally ordered our first packages of bees. We attended the meetings and lectures, trying to absorb as much as we could about beekeeping in order to minimize our chances of doing something dumb. Of course, we did dumb things anyway (and still do). But it is our feeling that we were much better prepared for the responsibility of caring for our charges by being involved with the club long before we set up our colonies. The members of NIBA, and the speakers the club engages, are a wealth of knowledge in the art and science of beekeeping. April & I and especially our bees, are very fortunate to be members of this club. We are better beekeepers because of it.

I would like to thank the outgoing Executive Board for their leadership and service to the club in 2022. Many thanks to Tom Allen (President), Marcin Matelski (Vice President), Cristy Binz (Secretary), Ralph Brindise (Treasurer), John Leibinger (Director), Stephanie Slater (Director), David Murillo (Director) and Al Fullerton (Director) for their dedication to the advancement of NIBA's goals in the past year.

There are many other important members of NIBA who volunteer their valuable time and knowledge to benefit the club. A very special thanks to all of you for your many contributions to the success of NIBA!

I am pleased to introduce you to the rest of the incoming NIBA Executive board for 2023:

Tom Allen, Vice President  
Cristy Binz, Secretary  
Ralph Brindise, Treasurer  
John Leibinger, Director  
Al Fullerton, Director  
Bob Hillman, Director  
Ron Willer, Director

Profound thanks to all of those on the new Executive Board and our many other NIBA volunteers for committing yourselves to help move the club forward in the coming year.

In parting, April and I wish you all a very happy holiday season and a prosperous New Year, with a bumper crop of honey!

Sincerely,

Noel Williams  
Incoming NIBA President

P.S. I still haven't managed to teach our bees morse code, but you never know...

## MEET THE BOARD



**Tom Allen**, Vice President. I'm married to my wife Jen for 27 years. We have two daughters—Lindsey 27, and Mackenzie 25, and we live in Lakewood. I have kids from a previous marriage—Craig 45, and Lisa 44, and four grandsons ages 5 to 16. I'm a retired firefighter paramedic with the Wheeling Fire Department, and I volunteered with the Fox River Grove Fire Department as well. I taught Fire Science courses at McHenry County College for about 23 years, and I'm currently on the Board of Trustees for the College. I volunteer with the Emergency Disaster Services canteen, which is part of the Salvation Army. I try to continue giving back to the community like I did as a firefighter. I'm in my 8<sup>th</sup> year of beekeeping and kind of became a beekeeper by accident. I wanted to take a class at MCC,

my wife told me about Larry's beekeeping 101 course. I had just watched a video on the Flow Hive, and thought that's what Larry's class would be about. I found out more about bees than I ever thought possible, but I wasn't sure I wanted bees until the 3rd class. I joined NIBA shortly after the class and found the members very welcoming and willing to share their experiences with new beekeepers. I'm extremely honored to be the Vice President of NIBA and rely on the Board members and Directors for guidance.



**John Leibinger, an inquisitive beekeeper, always the student, sometimes the teacher.** Yep, that's me. I am currently a member of both Lake County and Walworth County beekeepers associations in addition to being Director of NIBA. Each group has its own personality and provides diverse learning opportunities. I am a fervent believer that learning is a lifelong pursuit. I grew up in Western Massachusetts and as a result of my 38-year career with Sears, migrated to Illinois via Maryland, Virginia, and Michigan. In retrospect, I wish I had been a young beekeeper in each of those states, but I didn't start beekeeping

until 2011. Now retired, I live on 3 acres in Huntley with Donna, three Great Pyrenees, two cats, eight chickens, two pigeons, a variety of visiting wildlife and several hundred thousand honey bees. I label our honey as 1/12th Farm Honey. Why? In its short life, the individual honey bee contributes only 1/12th of a tsp of honey to the colony, but collectively, the colony produces hundreds of pounds of honey annually. The sum of the individuals creates the whole. Each 1/12th, though only a speck, does matter. Rescuing animals and rarely using chemicals on our property is our speck, our 1/12th effort, in making a positive difference. When you think that you alone cannot make a difference in life or in the world (such as your vote, or \$1 contribution to a cause, or whatever...) – think again. All those 1/12th efforts collectively can really produce something special. In this beekeeping season, I am looking forward to helping the bees and contributing my 1/12th by learning from and helping out other beekeepers.

***Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.***



Hello everyone, I'm **Ralph Brindise** and I have been the treasurer of NIBA for 6 years. I had a mobile tool dealership for 34 years, and I retired in 2011. I became interested in beekeeping after I took a class at Gardenfest, and I started with one hive in 2012. Last year I tended to over 20 hives and made some very nice honey! I have found beekeeping leads one to many other interests and introduces you to a whole group of nice people, other beekeepers!



My name is **Al Fullerton**. My wife and I live in Cary. We have two grown sons. Since retiring from aviation, 20 plus years ago as an Aircraft Mechanic, I have spent my time building, rehabbing, and managing residential rental properties, as well as doing a little farming which is how the bees became a part of my life. My wife, Linda, and I have been beekeepers for about 10 years. Every year it seems to get harder to keep the bees alive, it's as if the new generations of bees haven't read the same beekeeping books I have. Possibly, I am just lagging in my continuing beekeeping education. I keep trying and keep learning, which is what this club is about. 2023 will be my 4th year as a Director for NIBA. I hope I can be of service to all the members, from the newbie to the seasoned beekeeper, and to further the survival of our honeybee friends. I am

also the person to contact if you would like to utilize the clubs new 9 frame electric extractor.



**Ron Willer**, I was introduced to beekeeping through the Rolling Meadows Garden Club in 2016. One of the members was an alderman, Rob, who had raised bees on his Iowa farm. He moved eight of them to Rolling Meadows, and although it took him two years to convince our city to allow this, I agreed to "host" a hive in my backyard. The first year was impressive, as I had two mentors, Rob, and his son Jackson. They did all the inspections throughout the summer. I bought a suit and had my own hive tool and bee brush and assisted them every time they came by. We harvested the honey late September, but, by October, there was an absence of activity in the hive. The hive had collapsed, due to Varroa mite infestation. I purchased the hive from

Rob and tried again the following year, armed with the skills I had learned through Rob and Jackson. After losing my hive for four consecutive years, I realized I needed additional help. My wife, Sal, and I joined NIBA in January of 2020 to educate ourselves before we returned to beekeeping. To date, we have learned so much from NIBA and numerous forums. We purchased all new equipment and renovated our backyard to accommodate two hives and returned to beekeeping in 2022 for the joy of the hobby.



Hello – I am **Bob Hillman**. My wife and I (and our spoiled rotten pets) have 6+ acres of perpetual work up in Harvard. I am a lifelong gardener, basically trying to learn as much as I can about anything that grows. Logically, the interest in nature led me to beekeeping. The Bees have allowed me to serve them for four years now. I learn more every year and am grateful to NIBA people for their intellect and willingness to help permanent “newbees” like myself. I have just retired from a 40+ year career in Accounting. I am now ready to work full-time on my various interests (Beekeeping, Gardening, Fruit-growing, Railroad history, Mead/Wine/Hard cider-making, etc...)

WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Community Education—Spring 2023



# BEEKEEPING

## Beekeeping 101

The demand for bees for pollination is up, so there's no better time to learn about bees and beekeeping. We'll cover bee biology, modern beekeeping techniques, construction of hives, and how to acquire bees. Keep bees for the fun of it, as a sideline job, or to help your garden and orchard.

Fee: \$59				Larry Krengel
In person				
# <a href="#">4478</a>	W	2/1–2/22	7–9:30 p.m.	A, MCC
Remote				
# <a href="#">4479</a>	W	2/1–2/22	7–9:30 p.m.	Remote

## Beekeeping Field Study

This short course will provide practical, hands-on instruction for installing, manipulating, and inspecting colonies of bees. If possible, the class will meet in a bee yard, so appropriate clothing and bee equipment will be necessary. If it is not possible to meet in the bee yard, class will be delivered via Zoom. Spring is the time to start with bees, and this course will walk you through it step by step. Learn what you need to know to start out right with your bees.

Fee: \$59				Larry Krengel
# <a href="#">4542</a>	Sa	4/8, 4/15	10 a.m.–Noon	TBA

## 7 Ways To Raise A Queen

The number of small-scale beekeepers is increasing and the demand for locally raised queen bees is growing. Purchased queens are often raised in areas of Africanized Honeybees or come from migratory bee operations where dangerous viruses are exchanged.

Fee: \$25				Larry Krengel
In person				
# <a href="#">4480</a>	W	3/1	7–9:30 p.m.	A, MCC
Remote				
# <a href="#">4481</a>	W	3/1	7–9:30 p.m.	Remote

## Comb Honey

Comb honey is old-fashioned honey harvested in the bees own wax case. A hundred years ago, honey was removed from the hive and eaten in the comb. Today, extracted honey- honey in the jar- is the norm. This course is an opportunity to return to the old (and some contend the healthiest) way of harvesting honey. Producing honey in the comb is a beekeeping challenge; an old-fashioned challenge explored in this class.

Fee: \$25				Larry Krengel
In person				
# <a href="#">4482</a>	W	3/8	7–9:30 p.m.	A, MCC
Remote				
# <a href="#">4483</a>	W	3/8	7–9:30 p.m.	Remote



To register for a class, scan the QR code, visit [www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment](http://www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment), or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, please contact [personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu](mailto:personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu)

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) – On-demand beekeeping classes  
<https://www.abfnet.org/page/education>

Michigan State University Webinars  
<https://pollinators.msu.edu/resources/beekeepers/webinars/past-webinars/>

University of Minnesota Bee Lab Classes and Mentoring Apiary  
<https://beelab.umn.edu/beekeeping-classes>

Western Apicultural Society (WAS) – Monthly mini conference recordings  
<https://www.westernapiculturalsociety.org/events-1>

Kansas Honey Producers Association – Extracting More \$\$\$ From Your Hives speaker series recordings  
<http://www.kansashoneyproducers.org/archives.html>

University of Guelph Honey Bee Research Centre - <https://honeybee.uoguelph.ca/videos/video-list/>



**At Home Beekeeping Webinar**  
Distance Learning for Beekeepers

*We're offering beekeepers the chance to attend virtual meetings from the comfort of one's own home using a computer or mobile device. Speakers include university researchers and extension specialists from across the SE US as well as USDA ARS researchers. Each event will bring participants up to date on timely beekeeping topics with time for Q & A included.*

**All are welcome!! Join us for this free event!!**

- Oct. 25: Breeding and performance of bees with Varroa Sensitive Hygiene, with F. Rinkevich (USDA-ARS)
- Nov. 23: Liquid gold: A crash course on the types and properties of honey, with P. Lou (USDA-ARS)
- Jan. 31: Seasonal efficacy of Varroa treatments, with C. Jack (UFL)

Last Tuesday of the month  
6:30 – 7:30 pm  
Central Time

Watch via Zoom Webinar  
<https://auburn.zoom.us/j/904522838>

or Facebook Live: <https://www.facebook.com/LawrenceCountyextension/>

Questions? Email Allyson Shabel [ams0137@aces.edu](mailto:ams0137@aces.edu)

Our institutions are equal opportunity educators and employers. Everyone is welcome! Please let us know if you have accessibility needs.



## CHORES OF THE MONTH - DECEMBER

John Leibinger

*Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.*

### ***What's happening in the hive?***

**Not much that can be visually observed unless we have some additional warm days.** Winter is here. Not officially until later in the month, but for the skeptics, put on your shorts and sandals and take a walk outside. For all intents and purposes and certainly from the bees' standpoint, winter is here. The colony will now be broodless and the queen will be reproductively inactive for the next couple of months.

The bees will be clustering to maintain colony warmth for the next several months. They will be consuming the food that they have stored away specifically for this purpose. The heater bees at the inside of the cluster will be producing heat and the bulk of the rest of the workers will be surrounding them, maintaining layers of insulation to minimize loss of that precious heat. Some of those outer bees will perish and fall to the bottom board. Undertaker bees will periodically push the bodies to the front of the hive (possibly blocking off hive egress at the bottom entrance). The bees will slowly rotate from the colder outside layers of the cluster to inner layers to warm up. This will continue throughout the winter. The cluster itself will also very slowly migrate around the hive in an effort to stay near stored food. They are in survival mode.

### ***For All Beekeepers:***

***This is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.***

**If there should be a short warm spell in the 40's, you could consider an Oxalic Acid (OA) sublimation treatment** to eliminate any remaining varroa mites that may have been in the colony or brought in by a late season robbing episode.. One advantage of an OA sublimation this time of year (besides the obvious effectiveness it has when treating a broodless colony) is that you will not need to crack open the hive bodies and ruin the hive's propolis seal that was created to keep out the imminent winter winds. If you have been on top of your mite treatment program this should not be needed now. (You can sublimate OA at lower temperatures, but the lower the temperature the tighter the bees cluster. A tight cluster prevents the OA from getting much past the outer layer of bees and thus becomes less effective).

**Periodically walk out to your hives and take an external look at them.** Remove snow (assuming it snows this month) from around the entrance and look to see that there haven't been any pests causing a problem (as best you can without opening the hive).

**Make sure that if you incorporate an upper entrance/exit, that it is clear of snow and debris.** It helps with ventilation and it is an easy egress point for bees to take cleansing flights in the winter. Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees. (Note: Do this if you keep ventilation hives. If you follow the condensing hive management philosophy, see links and info in October and November 'Chores').

**Consider strapping down your hive(s)** for the winter to prevent winter winds from toppling a hive. I have had a heavily weighted nuc blow over during high winds in the past 😬.

**If you have been a conscientious beekeeper** throughout the 2022 season and have monitored and controlled varroa mites, left the bees with sufficient stores, ended the year with healthy bees and a young queen (less than a year old), you have provided your bees with the chance of thriving in Spring 2023. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

### **Start preparing for the 2023 season:**

Renew your annual Apiary Registration with Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Clean up any dead outs that you have experienced this season.

Continue to increase your knowledge of bees and beekeeping:

- Read and study about bees and beekeeping
- Listen to some podcasts or watch youtube videos. Some personal favorites are The Beekeepers Corner Podcast hosted by Kevin Inglin, Two Bees in a Podcast with Jamie Ellis, and youtube videos by Ian Stepler (The Canadian Beekeepers Blog), Kaman Reynolds, Bob Binnie, Gary Reuter at The University of Minnesota, and Paul Kelly at The University of Guelph.
- Attend beekeeping meetings

- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees and the timing of their blooms.... **Very Important and often neglected** (or just not top of mind). This is a great way to spend some of your off season time if you are looking to improve your beekeeping skills. Encourage your club to get a speaker from one of the Chicago area botanical gardens.

- Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.

Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.

Start repairing/refurbishing equipment

Set aside some money - for replacement or expansion bees, new/replacement equipment and supplies, and association dues.

Review your 2022 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.

Think about new goals for 2023.

### **General Info**

**Download the forms to register your bees with the Illinois Department of Agriculture.**

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Insects/Bees/Documents/beekeep.pdf> (Ctrl+Click link)

### **And Finally,**

**Get a plate of your favorite snacks. Pour yourself a cup of tea...or whatever your preferred means of hydration... add honey of course... and**

***Kick back and enjoy the Holidays with your family and friends.  
There is a new beekeeping season on the way!***

## CONTROLLING VARROA

### THINKING ABOUT A SCREENED BOTTOM BOARD

Larry Kregel

The number one enemy of our honeybee colonies is the varroa mite. We have many members in our association who started their first colonies of bee from packages in 2022 and are overwintering them. That first year the varroa are not as likely to be a fatal problem, but this will change in the second year. The danger increases.

The largest increase in the varroa population occurs during the most active brood rearing time and for the new package that period is put off while they construct the brood comb. Because varroa increases occur later in the year, the lethal infestation will less likely likely to be reached in the first season for a colony hived on foundation.

But for the second year colony (and thereafter) the story is different. Now the brood rearing begins earlier and the queen has empty cells at her disposal. More brood = more varroa. Because the varroa population growth starts early it has the potential to reach a deadly magnitude during that season. Second year beekeepers, watch out!

Time to start considering how to control the mite population. One of the moves that has had some traction in this battle is the implementing screened bottom boards. When these became popular a couple of decades ago (shortly after the varroa alarm went off) it was hoped this would eliminate the threat of these head-of-a-pin sized creatures. Not so. Research tell us it helps, but only slightly. Even though it is not the perfect solution, it can

be a good part of an IPM – an integrated pest management - program. Some of those mites that are groomed off as sister bees tend each other fall through the screen to the ground. They die shortly when not on a bee.

If screened bottom boards are intriguing to a beekeeper, spring is a good time to add them to hives not so equipped. The hives are light and easy to handle. And... every mite that dies early in the season cuts the late season population significantly.

Here is a pretty good YouTube discussion about bottom boards in general.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWyNxuAdldU>

Where do you get screened bottom boards? Some of the beginner's kits that are sold have screened bottom boards. They are readily available from bees supply sources. Perhaps one could scratch that winter honeybee itch by heading to the workshop and making one. Here are plans for one style. There are many on the web.

<https://cityboyhens.com/2015/03/06/how-to-make-a-screened-bottom-board-for-your-beehive/>

Want to see a screened bottom board built on YouTube? There are a number of them. Here's one.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfhIFBekA3M>

For centuries success in beekeeping has been defined as having the overwintered hive alive in April. In today's beekeeping environment that overwintered colony has the added challenge of dealing with the varroa mites as the spring arrives.

Sharpen that hive tool. Spring is in the offing.





**NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

**2023 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Affiliated with the Illinois State Beekeepers Association (ISBA)

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE CHANGES BELOW\*\*:**

- Check one:  Renewal Individual Membership - \$20       Renewal Family Membership - \$30
- Check one:  NEW Individual Membership - \$25       NEW Family Membership - \$35
- (Includes Single Membership in the Illinois State Beekeepers Association, additional ISBA memberships, \$10 each)
- If applying after February 28, 2023 and you are a renewing member, please add \$5.00.**



<b>Name(s):</b>		
<b>Address:</b>		
<b>City:</b>	<b>State:</b>	<b>Zip:</b>
<b>Phone:</b>		
<b>Email address (if family membership, include all emails. Newsletter will be sent to all emails):</b>		



Yes, I would like to order a NIBA name tag(s), add \$10 per name tag.

Name tag(s) should read (please print):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us more about yourself:

I have been a NIBA Member since \_\_\_\_\_ (year)      I plan to have \_\_\_\_\_ colonies/hives this season

I have been a beekeeper for about \_\_\_\_\_ years      I am a Master Gardener/Beekeeper \_\_\_\_\_

Check all that applies:

I sell honey \_\_\_ willing to Coach/Mentor \_\_\_ Swarm Catcher \_\_\_ willing to remove Bees from buildings \_\_\_

Personal skills I would be willing to donate to NIBA (i.e. Beekeeping experience, accounting, webmaster, event planning, community education, carpentry, legal, business management, retail knowledge, other)

\_\_\_\_\_

Complete this form and mail with **check payable to: NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (NIBA)**  
 TO: NIBA Membership, c/o Ralph Brindise, 517 Northlake Road, Lakemoor, IL 60051

## 2022 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen  
tallen122@yahoo.com  
Vice President – Marcin Matelski  
marcin@chicagobees.com  
Treasurer – Ralph Brindise  
rbrindise@att.net  
Secretary – Cristy Binz  
cwebb429@gmail.com  
Director – Al Fullerton  
adfhoney@gmail.com  
Director – John Leibinger  
jleibinger@aol.com  
Director – Stephanie Slater  
stephanie.d.slater@gmail.com  
Director – David Murillo  
dmurillo3@aol.com

Program Chair – Larry Krengel  
Webmaster – Terri Reeves  
Newsletter Editor – Marianne Hill  
Club Extractor Coordinator – Randy Mead  
Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger  
Snack Coordinators – Cristy & Dave Binz

## Website and Newsletter Submissions

[www.nibainfo.org](http://www.nibainfo.org) – The Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association website. A wealth of information is available. Contact board members via email, download the membership form, access copies of the newsletter. Terri is asking for your pictures, stories, etc. to have them highlighted on the web page!  
[reevestherese@att.net](mailto:reevestherese@att.net)

This is YOUR newsletter. Please feel free to contribute. Or let us know if you have any topics you'd like to see covered. [newsletter@nibainfo.org](mailto:newsletter@nibainfo.org)

## Membership Has Its Benefits!

- By Randy Mead

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent a club manual honey extractor? We have two to choose from. Rental is \$10 for a 3-day rental. \$20 (\$10 for rental and \$10 deposit) is due when you pick up the extractor.

Schedule a pick-up time, extract your honey and return the equipment in 3 days. The \$10 deposit will be returned if the extractor is clean and returned on time.

To reserve a date, contact Randy by text or email at 847-571-1899 or [rmeadtoys@gmail.com](mailto:rmeadtoys@gmail.com).

## NIBA Now has an Electric Extractor

It will handle both sides of 9 frames at the same time.

Club members may borrow it for 2 days for \$25.00 plus a security deposit of \$75.00. The deposit will be returned if the extractor and uncapping equipment are returned on time, clean, and undamaged.

The Extractor comes with everything you need to make the uncapping and extraction experience go smoothly, except of course, the honey frames and buckets.

Pick it up in Cary. To reserve, **contact Al Fullerton by phone or text at 815-382-7139 or email [adfhoney@gmail.com](mailto:adfhoney@gmail.com)**, Note: Al's phone doesn't always give a notification ring (He blames it on the phone or the tunnel he lives in), so if you don't get a timely response, just phone rather than text.

**The queen marking color for  
2022 is YELLOW.**