



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Noel Williams

Here we are at the start of 2023. It's almost time for April, and I to take a quick peek at our bees on the next 'warmish' day to see how they're doing and refill their larder. The results of our examination will probably be the cause of at least one new year's resolution declaring a more scientific and disciplined approach to caring for our livestock.

We have had mixed results overwintering bees in the seven or so years we've been keeping the little buggers. By 'mixed', I mean we've had more total losses than we'd like to admit. Interestingly enough, the first year we overwintered our bees, both colonies made it. We said to ourselves, "Well, that wasn't too difficult!". Then for several subsequent years, and despite our best efforts, every colony was dead by January. So much for 'easy'.

Two years ago we split a colony into three using a couple of nifty new Russian hybrid queens we got from Marcin Matelski. Even though it was June when we did the split (using a strong Italian colony as the base), all three colonies thrived and got through the winter with no problem. Interestingly, we only used single-deep configurations (as suggested by others) for those colonies and the bees didn't seem to mind.

A big advantage to the single-deep configuration is that it is a lot easier to perform maintenance on the colony due to the simplicity of the setup. When it comes to the brood area, it's easier to reach, there's less to inspect, and it's easier to find the queen. There's a lot less heavy lifting since we rarely need to lift the deep box, just pull the frames for inspection, treatment, etc. One caveat is that we need to make sure there's plenty of room in the supers above the queen excluder

General Meeting Agenda

6:30pm Pre Meeting Newbie Q&A

7:00pm Meeting Opening, Pledge of Allegiance

"Let's Talk About Varroa Mites" Presentation by Dr. Humberto Boncristiani

Introduction of 2023 NIBA Executive Board

Old Business

New Business

Tales from the Hive – Bob Hillman

Raffle

for honey storage so the brood area doesn't get too cramped and the bees swarm.

Last season we committed to the single-deep configuration for all four of our colonies. The bees did well over the warmer months and produced a pretty good honey yield. We treated for mites early in the fall, fed and got them ready for winter in the single-deep configuration. Soon we will see how we did.

So far, using a single-deep configuration has made it a lot easier for us to fulfill our commitment to do everything we can to keep our bees healthy and happy. Sometimes, less is more.

Happy New Year!

Noel

MEET THE BOARD



Noel Williams, President

I have been married to April M. Williams for the past 42 years. We live in Algonquin, IL and together we have raised three children: Alexis (39), Carson (36), and Kyle (34). Alexis also lives in Algonquin, and is an executive with a major healthcare insurance provider. Carson, an Elgin IL resident, has a business in residential construction and has a mild interest in beekeeping himself. Kyle lives in Denver, CO and is an operations manager for an industrial container supplier.

I am still working, operating a small graphic arts software company that my business partner and I started in 1991. My wife, April, is a former project manager for several large corporations in the Chicago area. She is retired from the business world and is now an amateur naturalist.

April and I have a small apiary in our backyard. We have been members of NIBA since 2014 and have been keeping bees most of that time. We typically have three to four active colonies at any given moment.

In addition to beekeeping, I have several other hobbies. Among my favorites are ham radio and playing guitar. My two sons and I are musicians and there is nothing more fun than getting together with them for a little jam session.



Cristy Binz - Secretary

My husband David and I have 20 acres in Harvard where we tend to as many as 12 hives (that is our limit - ha!). We have been beekeeping for 6 years and have enjoyed being NIBA club members, learning along the way.

I work as the Secretary for the Special Education Department for Harvard CUSD 50 school district. David and I have 8 kids between the two of us and are expecting grandchild number 13 and 1st great grandchild - both due in March.

When we are not playing with our bees, we enjoy camping, kayaking, gardening, showing honey and wax, traveling and spending time with family and friends. I also volunteer at BraveHearts Therapeutic Riding and Educational Center in Harvard and Poplar Grove working with Veterans, special needs kids and the equine IL Special Olympics.

Our motto for working with our bees in 2023 is to "work smarter - not harder".

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)	Last Tuesday of the month 6:30 – 7:30 pm Central Time
• Nov. 29: Liquid gold: A crash course on the types and properties of honey, with F. Lou (USDA-ARS)	
• Jan. 31: Seasonal efficacy of Varroa treatments, with C. Jack (URL)	

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

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

CHORES OF THE MONTH - JANUARY

John Leibinger

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

What's happening in the hive?

Wow! What a difference a year makes. If you recall, last year on Christmas Eve we experienced temperatures into the mid 50s and no snow. This year, many areas experienced single digit day time and subzero night time temperatures.....and a bit of the white stuff too. Yikes! No bees flying for Santa this year. A week later, the temperatures are in the 50s, and the bees are flying! Cold again for a few days and then another day in the upper 50s followed by another stretch of cold. Yikes!! Cold is OK, warm is OK, but the rapid fluctuations between the two is not OK. Rapid temperature changes for warm to cold can mitigate the bees ability to re-cluster efficiently and lead to multiple small clusters that, by themselves, will struggle to maintain viable temperatures. Let's hope that the weather normalizes/stabilizes for the remainder of the winter.

As normalcy returns, the bees will be clustering to maintain colony warmth for the next several months. Slowly working their way up the hive, they will be consuming the food that they have stored away specifically for this time. At colder temperatures, bee activity slows and leads to a tighter cluster. On the plus side, they may consume fewer stores during this time, but they also have less ability to move around within the hive to access stored honey. If they are not in direct contact with frames of honey, they are at risk of starvation.

A mild winter generally allows the bees to be a little more active in the hive. The result is they consume more of their stores. **Stay conscious of the weather.** Be aware, especially this year, that they may need additional emergency feeding, particularly as we enter February when low levels of brood rearing commence.

There are heater bees at the inside of the cluster that 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:

Unless we have a few days of unseasonably warm weather or you perceive your hive weight being unreasonably light, this is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.

Periodically walk out to your hives and take an external look at them. Remove snow from around the entrance and look to see that there haven't been any pests causing a problem .

Try to get an idea of the remaining stores by 'hefting' the hive. Lift up the rear of the hive and feel the weight. If fairly light, you may need to provide some emergency feed, i.e., winter patties, fondant, sugar cakes, dry sugar, etc. (dry feed, not wet). Another indicator would be if you see the cluster high up underneath the inner cover (if you are looking on a warm day). Emergency feed should be placed directly above the cluster, under the inner cover, in direct contact with the tops of the frames. (Restrict your activity to the top of the hive and avoid breaking into the hive bodies.)

Make sure that if you have an upper entrance/exit and 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.

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 shifted the odds in their favor.

Some odds and ends to keep you active and engaged this winter:

Melt down beeswax. During this time, excess comb, bits, scraps and older wax from frames can be melted down to form blocks of beeswax for future use.

Make beauty products. Lip balms, lotions, creams, salves and scrubs are all fun things you can learn how to make, use, gift or sell.

Make candles. The beeswax that was melted down can be turned into homemade candles.

Research new techniques. Beekeeping is a field that continues to grow. New hives, alternative feeding methods, and integrated pest management techniques are always adapting and improving.

Repair and replace old hives. This is a great time to repair and paint your extra woodware, and replace worn frames and/or foundation. It's also time to assemble new hives.

Prepare for spring splits if you want to increase your hive count. Most hives that come out of winter with strong numbers can be split (or they may split themselves, i.e., swarm). Learn how to make splits and what equipment is necessary. Alternately, learn some swarm mitigation techniques, e.g. spring queen replacement.

Build a swarm box. Be ready to catch a swarm this spring with this fun project. Learn about tanging and give it a go...let me know how it works out.

Train new beekeepers. Volunteer to share your experiences to help train new beekeeper

Start preparing for the 2023 season:

Pay your association dues for 2023.

Renew your annual Apiary Registration with Illinois Department of Agriculture.

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

Launder your bee clothing. Over the course of inspecting hives clothing picks up honey, propolis, dirt, and most importantly, bee venom. The venom odor with its accompanying alarm pheromone sets you up for upsetting the bees before you ever open a hive. This should be done routinely during the beekeeping season, but at least let's be sure to get a clean start to 2023. **Note:** Use a scent free detergent.

Continue to increase your knowledge of bees and beekeeping:

- Read and study about bees and beekeeping
- Attend beekeeping meetings
- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees. Learn about the relevance of Degree Days.
- Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.

Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.

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

Order your bees if needed. Nucs? (Highly recommended for new beekeepers without drawn comb.) Packages? New Queens?

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

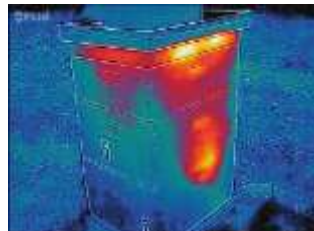
Think about and set new goals for 2023. What do you want to accomplish this year?

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)

***Spring is just ahead.
There is a new beekeeping season on the
way!***

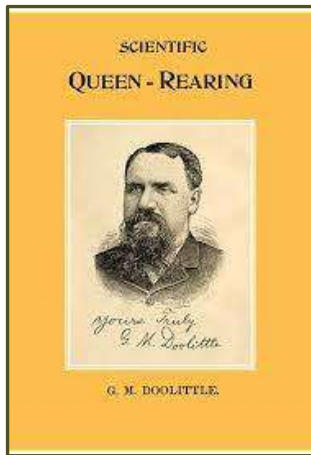


SEVEN WAYS TO REAR A QUEEN

Larry Kregel

The more I studied beekeeping, the less I knew, until, finally, I knew nothing. - Charles Martin Simon's humor

Seven ways? Talking about raising **honeybee** queens, that is. In the Middle Ages expanding one's bee holding was accomplished by capturing swarms. Little was known about methods of creating honeybee queens at the



whim of the beekeeper until the arrival of the Langstroth hive in 1851. By the end of the 19th century there were multiple dozens of books and pamphlets written describing a queen rearing method preferred by each

author.¹ With movable frame hives came the invitation, the excitement, the challenge of directing the raising a queen bee. If one looks carefully at the advice offered by these texts, it becomes apparent that there are some basic principles. The way the author applies these principles is what makes each system unique.

In the 1880's Gilbert M. Doolittle wrote *Scientific Queen Rearing*, the queen rearing method that became the gold standard – but certainly not the only method – for raising queens.² Interestingly, in the introduction Doolittle points out that his system is not scientific!

Today the major honeybee queen breeders use the Doolittle method. Doolittle's method is rather complicated, requiring significant bee power and an investment in equipment. Beyond that it requires mastering the challenge of "grafting" larva. For us normal folks there are many useful alternatives to be found in the numerous queen rearing manuals that have been, and still are being, written.

In the MCC class that I will run in March, we look at the Doolittle and six other queen rearing methods from the history of beekeeping, methods that all could be employed today. We analyze the methods looking for the common ground and rating each for its usefulness in our small-scale beeyard apiaries. Why only seven? Because it is a one-evening class.

The goal is not to provide the ultimate directions for successfully raise queens in the backyard. Rather the class endeavors to develop an appreciation for the simplicity of queen rearing and instill an excitement for the challenge using one of the many methods.

If I have enticed you, I invite you to join me on March 1 at MCC. The link to register for the class is on the NIBA website – NIBAINfo.org - or the ISBA website - ILSBA.com. If not, consider downloading the Doolittle text and investing a couple of evenings absorbing the insights of a 19th century master beekeeper. The challenge of queen rearing awaits each beekeeper from the moment one's first colony is installed. One of the signs of moving from "bee-haver" to "bee-keeper" is a successful bout of queen rearing.

1. Only a century and a half earlier Charles Butler in his book *The Feminine Monarchy* popularized the thought that the King Bee was really a Queen.
2. Doolittle's entire book is available online at <https://archive.org/details/cu31924003263724/page/n11/mode/2up>



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.



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



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

2023 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Marianne Hill

Club Extractor Coordinators – Randy Mead/Al Fullerton

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinator – Sally Willer

Website and Newsletter Submissions

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

This is YOUR newsletter. Please feel free to contribute. Or let us know if you have any topics you'd like to see covered. mariannehill1213@gmail.com

Manual Honey Extractor

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.**

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**, 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
2023 is RED.**