



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2024

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a safe a fun New Year, we did at our house. I was excited to see several photos shared on the Facebook page on Christmas day that showed embers bees were out flying. I know those of you that enjoy snowmobiling and skiing aren't necessarily happy about the warm temperatures we had over the end of December. Hopefully you were able to see your bees out flying on those warm days, it gives us hope about getting them through the winter.

NIBA will be looking for someone to coordinate our mentor program using the hives at MCC, if you're interested please let me know. You would be responsible for setting up the monthly mentor session and making sure there are enough instructors there.

Our January meeting will be on the 18th because MCC has the room for one of their events. I hope to see you there!

Tom



A Bee Afternoon in Harvard

The new bee years is upon us. If you are one of the NIBA members now thinking about making the move into keeping bees, consider spending the afternoon of Saturday, January 13, at Harvard Eggs, Feed, and Produce. The proprietor, Sue Deitz, is a big supporter of NIBA and has developed a great resource for local beekeepers. I will be there with Sue to talk about bees, keeping bees, bee equipment, and the first steps in beginning a successful bee season. Join us in Harvard at 17205 McGuire Road. Contact Sue at 815-043-4837.

Larry



Greetings Beekeepers –

Honeybee swarms have been around forever. It is the way honeybees have survived for a hundred million years. Man has been fascinated by swarms for **only** a few thousand years, but even after that time much of the nature of swarming still eludes us.

We have thoughts about what we can see that foretells a coming swarm – overcrowding, older queen, lack of brood and honey space, plentiful forage... It makes us think we know what is going

on. Mostly wrong.

There have been many studies (a number exquisitely done by Tom Seeley), but often the results open more questions. One question that I have asked of a number of researchers is, “Which bees leaves the colony with a swarm?” and “How are those individual bees chosen?” The answer is far from clear.

One study of swarming captured a recently thrown swarm and marked many of its members. The entire swarm was reintroduced to the parent colony where they promptly reswarmed. When the parent colony and the new swarm were then examined, there were marked bees in both. Some of those who originally left in the swarm chose to stay home as the swarm again took flight.

We have long known that rehiving a swarm in the parent colony is not a winning strategy, expecting that those who left would again stubbornly reemerge. We have been told that once a swarm departs the individual bee’s memory of the original home location is erased. That has not been validated here. Some of the swarm bees who were rehived now accept their former home. Likely, others not on the first foray left with the second swarming. Humm...

We have also been told that the queen leaves in the swarm with the older bees who are experienced flyers, leaving the young nurse bees to tend the remaining brood and raise the new queen. It sounds logical. In another experiment, a researcher gathered newly emerged (some wrongly say hatched) bees and marked them. Later he did the same with the next emerged group, but with a different color. Still later with another group and color and so on. (a very laborious experiment) Each age cohort of bees was then identifiable by color. When the colony swarmed, the age of the bees in the swarm could be determined by noting the color. What do you think? All older bees in the swarm? No. The swarm contained bees of all colors, therefore all ages. So much for what we had been told.

Back to my original question, who leaves with the swarm? Still looking for an answer. Keeping bees would lose some of its magic if indeed we knew all the answers.

Swarm season is soon upon us. If we pretend swarming will not happen, we are deceiving ourselves. How will the eventual swarms – or the active swarm preparation – be dealt with? Now is the time to make preparations.

Larry

Excerpted from a recent issue of The Beeline, a once-in-a-while blog I post. Any wishing to subscribe can do so by going to www.groups.google.com and searching for The Beeline.



NIBA 2024 PACKAGED BEE ORDER FORM

ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 15, 2024

*Name(s):		*Phone:	
*Email:			

***Required Fields**

Please read and initial below – checks will be returned if not initialed.

The undersigned acknowledges that NIBA will transport bee packages from the supplier in Wisconsin to a drop-off point in Illinois. The undersigned agrees that NIBA is not responsible for any damage to the bees or cages during the transport and distribution of the same. The undersigned understands that he/she remains at all times, free to order and pick-up bees from alternate suppliers of their choice.

I agree with the above statement regarding NIBA’s Packaged Bee delivery: _____ INITIAL HERE

NIBA is pleased to offer this group bee order as one of the benefits of membership. Therefore, your 2024 NIBA dues must be paid prior to your order being processed, **please use separate checks for bee orders and membership**. Mail your membership forms to the designated address. We will return orders received from non-members. We will order 250 packages of bees and 100 nucleus colonies (NUCs). **Orders will be taken on a first-come first-served basis until all 350 units are sold.**

- Package Price: \$135 each, package contains approximately 3 pounds of bees and a queen.
- 5-Frame NUC Price: \$170 each

Order Information:

My package order preference is given below. I understand the actual delivery timing is determined by many factors including weather and producer availability.

Order Type	Quantity	Queen Preference/Quantity	Price per unit	Total
3 LB Package Pick Up (Targeting mid-April)		Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Russian/Italian Hybrid _____	X \$135	\$
Nucleus Colony Pick Up (Targeting late April/early May)		Italian Only	X \$170	\$
			Grand Total Due	\$

Make checks payable to Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association (NIBA)

Queen selection provides club direction only; the club will receive queens as provided by producers. I understand queens are available on a first-come first-served basis and I may not receive the queen of my preference indicated above: _____ **INITIAL HERE**. We will do our best to accommodate all requests, but queen availability is determined by package suppliers. You may mix and match your queens.

The exact date and time for delivery and pickup will be communicated via the email address above. If you do not have email, you will be contacted at the phone number you provided above. **Orders must be picked up on day of delivery, NO EXCEPTIONS. You must designate someone else to pick them up if you are unavailable.**

Complete and mail order form and check (**NO CASH PLEASE!!!**) payable to: **NIBA** 517 Northlake Road, Lakemoor, IL 60051. Contact Ralph Brindise at rbrindise@att.net or (847) 970-0669 with any questions.

Bee Club Board Member Use Only
Bees Received: _____

Order No _____
Date received _____
Check # _____ / Amt _____

Beekeeping Classes at MCC

McHenry County College

Crystal Lake, Illinois

815 455 8758

McHenry County College has become a center for winter and spring beekeeper education. The four-evening Beekeeping 101 class provided a great foundation for the new beekeeper. Classes in honeybee queen rearing and the production of comb honey offer interesting challenges for the small-scale beekeeper, while a beeyard practicum class gives hands on experience. Classes begin February 7, 2024. *Classes can be taken in person or online.*



Beekeeping 101 for the person new to beekeeping.

Seven Ways to Rear a Queen for the small-scale beekeeper wanting locally accommodated queens.

Comb Honey for the beekeeper wanting a new (but old fashioned) challenge.

Beekeeping Field Study for the guided experience in handling honeybee colonies.

More information is available –

https://mchenry.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassListing.ClassListingDisplay&int_category_id=7&int_sub_category_id=38&int_catalog_id=3#grp_0



Classes will be held on the main campus, 8900 Northwest Hwy #14, Crystal Lake, IL and at the extension Shah Center at 4100 W Shamrock Ln, McHenry, IL 60050

CHORES OF THE MONTH - JANUARY 2024

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

HAPPY NEW YEAR

What's happening in the hive?

It looks like the temperatures are shifting back to more typical seasonal norms. We had several 2-3 day runs of 50+ degree days during December. For those who ventured in the bee yard, you were given a pretty good idea of whether or not your colonies were still alive or had already succumbed to the many stresses bees have to cope with.

As normalcy returns, temperature-wise, 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. This may have been happening during our warm spells in December. **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 (it will come eventually) 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 utilize an upper entrance/exit, 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. (assumes you utilize the ventilation hive philosophy)

If you are managing your hives with the condensing hive approach, be sure that your entrance is not plugged with dead bees. Clean out as needed.

If you have been a conscientious beekeeper throughout the 2023 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 2024. 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 2024 season:

Pay your association dues for 2024.

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 2024. **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 2023 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.

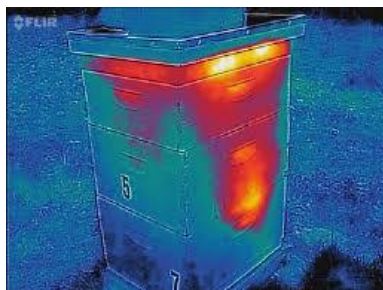
Think about and set new goals for 2024. What do you want to accomplish this year?

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!***



Beekeeping in Front of the Fireplace

Larry Krengel

I can't go out to visit my bees. It is too cold for all of us. How can I get my beekeeping fix?

I can bring in my nuc boxes and paint them. Make some new frames... I'll need them soon. But I need something more "bee-like".

I checked my bookshelves to see what books call to me. I am in the habit of collecting bee books, many of them vintage. Paper has a more satisfying feel than a computer screen. As many of you have heard me say before, little has changed in beekeeping since Langstroth brought the movable frame hive to us. The old books always present something I have not considered before and sometimes confirm what I already thought I knew. Reading one of the old books (with the smell of a library) seems to go well on a cold winter day sitting in front of the fireplace in a rocking chair. (Yes, I really do that.)

Last night my reading choice was *Beekeeping, The Gentle Craft* by John F. Adams (1972). Not a really old one, but just the title puts one in a good frame of mind. Written by a professor of medieval literature, it is his only book on keeping bees. Beekeeping must have been his passion not a profession.

I will not read it cover to cover, but as I page through pieces strike my interest. He does make some claims that I am not sure are valid. He gives thoughts, no cites. He suggests that foragers develop a preference for one type of bloom and that when they return from a foraging flight, they stop for a bit of refreshment and to communicate with fellow foragers before the next nectar run. (a Beebucks stop?) I never noticed, but it sounds good.

Visiting these vintage tomes always gives me thoughts for the classes I teach and I love to borrow the intriguing illustrations of times gone by. I am sure this book is out of print, but for less than ten bucks it is available used on Amazon or AbeBooks.

I do like the premise of the book. Beekeeping for me is a gentle art. Bees need not submit to me. It is my task to understand the nature of the bees and capitalize on that to achieve what we both want and need.

The fire needs a poking.



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. spinkawa@gmail.com

The queen marking color for 2024 is Green.



2024 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Honey Extractor

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent one of the clubs 3 honey extractors?

Two of the extractors are manual, a 4 frame a 3 frame. The third is motorized and is capable of extracting both sides of 9 frames at a time.

Rental fee for either of the manual extractor is \$10.00 for 3 days with a \$10.00 security deposit. The electric (motorized) 9 frame extractor costs \$25.00 to rent for 2 days with a \$75.00 security deposit. Deposits will be returned if equipment is returned on time, clean, and undamaged.

The extractors come with most equipment needed to make the uncapping and extraction experiences go smoothly, except of course, the honey frames and buckets.

To reserve a date contact Al Fullerton by phone or text at 815-382-7139 or email adfhoneymail@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.