



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Noel Williams

Hi Everyone,

Well the nectar flow is in full swing, and our bees are really cranking. Brood production looks great, and we're doing everything we can to prevent swarms. Although I don't know how successful April and I are in that regard. We're starting to check the hives more frequently to see if we need to add supers, and so far that has paid off.

The next NIBA general meeting will be Thursday, June 8th. Larry Kregel will be leading a mentoring session at the MCC-NIBA bee yard (located next to the pole barn by the radio station on the east side of the campus) from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Participants will be able to take part in hive inspections to determine the health and status of each colony. Bob Hillman, NIBA's mentoring program coordinator, has recently sent out more information about the session in a separate email on this same NIBA-newsletter feed. NIBA will also be hosting our next full mentoring session on Saturday, June 24th. Watch your email for more information on that upcoming event.

By the way, NIBA's mentoring program can be as valuable to the 'mentors' as it is to the 'mentees'. Even if you've only been keeping bees for a couple of seasons, you would be amazed at what you already know. Please consider lending a hand at one or more of our mentoring sessions. You can help your fellow beekeepers and maybe pick up a few tricks yourself. Contact Bob Hillman at rthillman0690@msn.com to let him know you want to help out!

The June 8th general meeting itself will start at 7:00 pm, with the newbie Q & A session

beginning at 6:30 pm. The highlight of the evening is a presentation by former NIBA Director and NIBA Beekeeper of the Year, Stephanie Slater. Stephanie has been a small-scale beekeeper for 7 years. Her honey bees produce award-winning honey in southeastern Wisconsin. Stephanie has been competing in honey shows since 2019 and has won many awards on the local, state, regional, national, and international levels. She was recently awarded Beekeeper of the Year by the Wisconsin Honey Producers Association in the fall of 2022. Stephanie then immediately went on to receive the 2023 Best in Show award at the American Beekeeping Federation American Honey Show for her white honey.



Stephanie will discuss how to prepare entries for honey shows--specifically focusing on the McHenry County Fair honey show. Even if you are not someone interested in the competitive nature of honey shows, knowing how to prepare and present your bees' perfect product is essential for marketing your honey and other hive products.

At the end of the meeting, a special drawing will be held for a 3-frame honey extractor made ready-to-go by NIBA Director Al Fullerton. Tickets will be sold only at the meeting, so if you want in on a chance to win this handy prize, you need be there!

Please plan to attend the NIBA annual picnic on Saturday, July 8th. Because we're having the

picnic event there will be no regular club meeting in July. Further details will be coming soon.

The McHenry County Fair is getting closer. We need a lot of help every year in order to man the club booth and manage other aspects of our participation in the event (of special note, we are looking for someone to help us solicit donations and put together a prize basket that we can raffle off at the fair). Please offer a few hours of your time to support your fellow club members in this

worthwhile project. It is a lot of fun and you get an opportunity to compare notes with other beekeepers while you're at it. You could walk away from the day with a new nugget of knowledge that changes your beekeeping life forever! And remember, corndogs. I love corndogs. Oh, and ice cream. That's good, too!

Until next month, bee seeing you!

Noel.

UPCOMING MENTORING SESSIONS:

All sessions are held at the MCC – NIBA Beeyard location

Thursday, June 8th, 4pm

Pre-Meeting Gathering – Inspect hives – observing health and strength of colonies – do we need more supers?

Saturday, June 24th, 10:30a

Hive inspection, Mite Count, Demo MAQS install

Saturday, July 15th, 10:30a

Extraction Process Demo

Saturday, August 19th, 10:30a

Hive inspection, Mite Count, Demo MAQS install– Prepare for Dearth – Feeders, Robbing Screens

These are hands-on demonstrations. We will be opening active hives. We always encourage anyone in any Beeyard to bring their protective gear, smoker, etc... and use them to suit their personal level of caution. Don't forget your hive tool and your reading glasses if needed.

We encourage active participation and open discussion - if you are uncertain about a beekeeping practice – this is your opportunity to ask an experienced beekeeper.

IN CASE OF RAIN OR EXCESSIVE HEAT THE SESSIONS MAY BE CANCELLED. IF THE WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR THE SESSION IS DOUBTFUL, PLEASE CALL BOB HILLMAN AT 847-739-6004 FOR SESSION STATUS UPDATE.

KIDS SPENDING TIME WITH THE BEES

Larry Kregel

Do your kids and/or grandkids watch you when you visit the bees? Do you find a veil for them so they can get closer? Do you carefully select a drone and hand it to them for careful inspection? I am guilty of all this and more. Honeybees are fascinating for adult and child alike.

Last summer I taught a week-long bee class for 7th to 9th graders for the McHenry County College Kids and College program. This year, Ralph will lead the class.

The half-day class spends time in the classroom talking and watching videos. (no final exam!) Each day the class adjourns to NIBA's beeyard at the college. With veils and gloves provided the kids get the chance to open hives, handle frames and watch the workings of a honeybee colony. It is an exciting and educational summer experience.



Is there a kid you would like to treat to a summer bee adventure? Check it out <https://www.mchenry.edu/kidsandcollege/schedule.pdf> - Pages 6 and 8. Or call the College at 815 455 8758.

Last I heard the first session is filling quickly. There is still room in the second session. I remember as a kid (many moons ago) spending summers being told to go out and play. Times have changed. Engineered adventures are today's thing. With only a few (relatively speaking) summers of youth to invest, we work to fill them with satisfying and challenging activities. Here is an opportunity.



CHORES OF THE MONTH - JUNE

John Leibinger

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

What's happening in the hive?

The colony population should be expanding fairly rapidly and reaching its peak this month. As of the date I am writing this (May 30) our weather is 10 days ahead of last year in terms of Growing Degree Days (GDD). GDD is a means of measuring cumulative warmth over a time period. That means that we didn't reach this year's cumulative GDD until June 8th last year, 10 days later than this year. That early warmth translates to faster plant growth and earlier blooms which results in lots of pollen and nectar availability, which in turn supports faster colony buildup. So, this may be a good news or bad news story depending on how you monitored and managed your colonies. If you added supers early and kept the brood nest from becoming pollen or nectar bound, you have created a virtuous cycle (good news) and are likely well on your way to an early and productive honey crop. If you didn't pay as close attention, you may be at the point that your bees' brood nest is becoming a bit bound up and the queen is struggling to find egg laying room. In this case a vicious cycle (bad news) has been created and at its worst could result in your colony swarming. **Lessons to Learn:** 1) Manage your colonies or they will manage themselves and you may not like the answer (depends on your personal goals). 2) Growing Degree Days...something to learn about and follow as it relates to the growth of local flora. (See General information below for a cursory explanation of GDD, why you should care, and a link to a GDD calculator).

Like May, June nectar flows and pollen availability are quite diverse and abundant in our area, so there is great wealth of resources for colony growth. Resources/nutrition lead to growing healthy hives. You should notice that the bees are no longer taking sugar syrup, but rather are collecting nectar from natural sources. Remove the feeders at this transition.

As a point of repetition for emphasis: Large healthy colonies are susceptible to an increased swarming urge. Make sure that there is plenty of space for colony expansion. The queen needs room to lay eggs. The workers need room for nectar and pollen storage. As you inspect frames in the brood nest, be mindful of excessive nectar/sugar syrup storage in the brood nest. There have been a number of people reporting issues of their hive's brood nest becoming "honey bound" or "pollen bound". Excessive storage in this area can restrict the queen's ability to find space to lay and can lead to swarming or reduced colony growth due to lack of egg laying space. **Remove and replace excessive brood nest storage frames with frames of open drawn comb or new foundation. ADD HONEY SUPERS!**

Keep in mind that the bee population is not the only expanding population. Varroa mites will be on the increase also. Monitor their growth by doing regular mite checks (monthly sugar roll or preferably, the more accurate alcohol wash). Know what you have and keep records. Keep their growth in check by utilizing a miticide, organic acids, drone comb culling, a brood break, sundry other IPM methods, or combinations of any of these. Your specific approach will be influenced by your personal goals and philosophy, but, if you have a mite problem, doing nothing is not an acceptable answer if you want your colony to thrive and survive.

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:

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)

Finish assembling and painting additional equipment, if you have not already done it. You should be on a second deep brood box (or third or fourth if using medium brood boxes) now or very soon (brood box addition may vary depending on your management philosophy and specific goals). Let's hope for the best and have extra honey supers and frames built and ready to install this month if you haven't already done so.

Feed your Bees.. Feed them until they stop taking the supplemental feed. If they haven't already, they will switch over to entirely natural nectar sources at which point you can remove the feeders.

Spend time observing your bees. This is one of the reasons you took up this hobby. Observe their comings and goings. If you have multiple hives (and you should) observe and compare the behaviors of the different colonies. Talk to other beekeepers. This is 'mission critical' to learning what 'normal' is, and a key to becoming a better beekeeper. Are the bees bringing in pollen? What color? What is the source? (See Pollen Identification Chart link in General Info section below).

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. Ask for help and guidance. A good mentor with practical experience will be able to ask you the right questions (along with answering some) and provide valuable guidance.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Be very observant of signs of swarming and take appropriate action. This is most relevant to overwintered hives and recently installed nucleus colonies. Many reports indicate that the nucs appear to be really thriving...so much so that a many folks have reported seeing queen cells and others have already experiencing swarming. Swarming is not likely a big problem for new beekeepers that started with packages on new foundation or foundationless, but for the

rest, keep your eyes peeled for telltale queen cups/cells at the bottom of the frames. Do they have eggs or larvae in them? If they do, the swarm is coming....if not, keep watching and provide additional space in the brood box and add supers as needed. Additional information on swarming can be obtained by reading Megan Milbrath's article on Swarms (see link below under General Info [Meghan Milbrath on Northern Swarms](#) for an extremely comprehensive dissertation on swarming).

Add Honey Supers to provide space for bees to move nectar/honey out of brood area and, of course, to start collecting early honey.

Maintain the space around your hive(s). Your bees work hard at thermo-regulation of the hive. Help them out. Trim weeds and grass to allow maximum air flow as the temperatures rise. Maintaining a clear flight path to the hive also increases their foraging efficiency.

Make sure the bees have a water source as we move into the heat of summer. Bees collect water to help cool the hive as part of their thermo-regulation efforts.

Monitor for Varroa Mites monthly. (See General Info section below for references to mite checking procedures)

Treat for Varroa Mites as needed. (See General Info section below link to Honey Bee Health Coalition which has info on mite treatments)

Make sure that you keep records. This is a very important element of the learning process...whether you are a first year beekeeper or a forty year beekeeper....you should always be learning something. Record inspection dates, time and temp and weather conditions, quantity of bees, bee behaviors, signs indicating the presence of the queen (eggs, young larvae, actual sighting), number of frames of brood and stores, brood pattern and frame/comb condition, available laying space, observations of signs of swarm preparation, pollen coming in (color, type if possible), drone production, Varroa Mite counts, presence of Small Hive Beetle or other pests, and a number of other issues. Record anything else that is outside of 'normal' once you learn what 'normal' is. Take notes in the bee yard. You will be surprised at how easy it is to get confused over what was observed and which hive it was observed in if you wait to record info after the fact. (See **Hive Inspection Form** link in General Info section below of one of many checklists that can be found in a quick Google search. Not necessarily the best...just an example.)

The following is a repeat of last month, but it bears repeating. May and June are the months for swarms.

Get your swarm traps out! Anybody interested in getting **FREE BEES?** This is the time of year to take advantage of the natural biological rhythms of the hive. Overwintered colonies are highly likely to swarm. Why not be an opportunist and capture a colony that otherwise will find a hole in a tree? It is fun, challenging, and **IMMENSELY EXCITING** when you find bees in your trap. Additionally, these are often colonies that have overwintered....Northern Illinois proven stock capable of handling our winter....wouldn't you want to add some of that quality to your apiary? Here is a swarm trapping website...Jason is 'the man' when it comes to swarm trapping. He has lots of advice and encouragement on swarm trapping along with free plans for building swarm traps. Check it out.

[Jason Bruns on Swarm Trapping](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Swarm Traps and Bait Hives](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Assemble some gear to BE PREPARED to catch a swarm hanging in a tree, on a fence, or somewhere else they aren't wanted! Be ready in case a friend calls and says "Get here quick, my neighbor is freaking out! There are a bunch of bees hanging on my neighbor's swing set and we don't know what to do!"

From personal experience, I can tell you that the difference in truly being ready and thinking you are ready is the difference between catching that swarm and waving goodbye to them. I watched a swarm exit a hive and recorded them massing up on a tree branch at about 12 feet up. "This one will be easy", I mused. I then decided that I wanted to add a few more undrawn foundation frames to the swarm's new hive so that I would take maximum advantage of the swarm's proclivity to produce comb. In that extra 10-15 minutes I was prepping frames, 'my soon to be caught swarm' had reached consensus on a new home and off they went. They were in the tree for only about half an hour. I had never seen bees leave that quickly.

Be Prepared....Really Prepared.

"No hurry. It takes them awhile to find a new .."



Note: Swarm trapping and swarm 'catching' are two different things. Swarm trapping involves putting out 'bait hives' for bees to find and inhabit (and then join your apiary). Swarm catching involves capturing a swarm from a tree, bush, fence, or any of a hundred other areas that an initial swarm may land at shortly after exiting the hive and while waiting for the scout bees to find a new home. Usually this is the result of a panic phone call you receive from someone who knows you are a beekeeper. This can be an **INTENSLY EXCITING** activity.

Get your blood flowing! Capture or Trap a Swarm!

Fascinating video to watch the action going on in a clustered swarm. You can observe a lot of scouts doing waggle dances. It gets real interesting at around 24:15 minute mark.

[Check out this swarm video](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Catching a swarm](#) (Ctrl+Click link)



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)

Pollen identification chart:

[Pollen Color Chart](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Inspection sheets:

[Inspection Checksheet \(basic\)](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Inspection Checksheet \(detailed\)](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Sugar Roll Method: [Sugar Roll Mite Inspection - YouTube](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Alcohol Wash Method: [Alcohol Wash for Mite Control - YouTube](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Mite Treatment Information [Honey Bee Health Coalition](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Meghan Milbrath on Northern Swarms](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Growing Degree Days (GDD) – Just a primer

GDD are a means used to measure the cumulative warmth in a particular area. It is an estimate, but found to be a fairly accurate and useful tool for many (like horticulturalists, farmers, and of course beekeepers) looking to know when plants/crops will reach various stages of development.

The GDD calculation is fairly straight forward. In our area and as it pertains to beekeeping, it is the result of subtracting 50 degrees (referred to as base 50) from the average between the high temperature of the day and the low temperature of the day. If the result is less than zero there are zero degree days recorded. Each day's accumulation of Growing Degree Days is added to the prior days to provide a cumulative total for the year...and that is what is important to us.

Example: High temp of the day= 70 degrees. Low temp of the day= 50 degrees Average between the two (70+50=120, 120/2=60) is 60 degrees. Remember, this is an estimate, not an hour by hour weighted average temperature. 60 degrees – 50 degrees (the base) = 10 degrees. This is the number of degree days for that particular day.

So, what is the 50 degree base about? Generally (yes, there are exceptions), plant growth/development/blooming is minimal below 50 degrees in our part of the world and for the plants/trees that we have interest in. Once the average temps exceed 50 degrees growth starts and things start to happen.

Why is this important to me as a beekeeper?

Each plant or tree has a specific time in their development when they bloom. This development is directly influenced by the cumulative warmth the plant experiences. GDD is a means to measure that cumulative warmth. If you know that a particularly important tree blooms at 300 GDD, you can influence your colony management to have a maximum foraging force in place when the date for that 300 GDD nectar flow arrives. **How?** Well, maybe you delay making elective splits until after that particular tree blooms. Maybe you combine that weak hive you have to a stronger one to make a colony with a huge number of foragers to take advantage of the flow. Being aware of the upcoming flow can allow you to control your feeding to maximize early comb production and stopping your feeding so that your honey crop is produced from natural nectars and not partially from sugar syrup. 'Knowing the future' allows you to get supers on in a timely manner to maximize honey production. It also allows you an opportunity to collect 'crop specific' honey. Do you want specific Black Locust 'water white' honey? How about a crop of delicious Linden honey (a personal favorite)? You can do it and knowing about GDD and your local plants/trees GDD bloom timing can be an enormous help.

How do I know a specific plant's/tree's GDD bloom level?

- Ask other beekeepers that have tracked this information.
- Record the GDD bloom number and date each year for different plants/trees and track it. (Have you heard anyone mention record keeping?)
- Consult local arboretums and botanic garden web sites for bloom GDD.
- Contact regional, state, local ag extension services.

Here is a link to a Growing Degree Days calculator. There are others that you can find on the internet.

[Growing Degree Days Calculator](#) (Ctrl += Click)

Growing Degree Days... Another Tool in Your Toolbox... Use it

HELP WANTED - NEWSLETTER EDITOR

After many years of great service to NIBA, Marianne Hill will be stepping down as Editor of the the club's *Sweet Stuff* newsletter. Thank you, Marianne, for your time and dedication to publishing this critical information source each month.

We are in need of a volunteer to step up and take over monthly publication of the *Sweet Stuff* newsletter. Marianne estimates that it typically takes her no more than six hours each month to collect material, edit, and produce the publication.

Please consider taking on this very important role as Editor of the *Sweet Stuff*. You can contact Noel Williams at nwilliams1250@yahoo.com if you have questions or, even better, are ready to say "Yes, I want the job!".

2023 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Newsletter Editor – Marianne Hill

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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.**