



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – MAY 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Noel Williams

Hi Folks,

It's been a couple of weeks since we installed our bee packages. Our new bees and the two colonies we over-wintered all seem to be doing just fine. I think April and I both agree that the single-deep hive body configuration I mentioned a couple of months back is working pretty well for us, so we'll stay with it for this season too. It sure is a heck of a lot easier to inspect and manage the hive when you don't have to heft 10-frame boxes full of honey to get to the bottom box.

Speaking of hive inspections, our April 29th mentoring session at McHenry County College (MCC) had to be moved to May 3rd due to weather. During that session the participants were able to open the hives and check population, brood pattern and do some general maintenance. It was also a good time to add additional hive bodies (if needed) in order to prevent swarming. This is the time of year to watch carefully for signs the queen is ready to bug-out (pun intended). Thanks to Bob Hillman, Larry Krengel, John Leibinger, Ralph Brindise, and Jerry Gudauskus for leading the adventure that day! Our next mentoring session will be on Sunday, May 21st and will cover mite count techniques. Watch your email for details!



Our NIBA exhibit at MCC Gardenfest on Saturday April 15th was a success! The club sold some honey to participants and began distributing our new

postcard 'flyers' that feature a QR code that the reader can scan with their smart phone. The QR code contains a link that will take them right to the NIBA website, which contains the latest news & NIBA happenings. Isn't technology great? A load of thanks to Tom Allen, Stephanie Slater, Andre Szechowycz, Jackie Tessar, and Bob Hillman for working the event!

On Saturday, May 6th, NIBA held the Swap Meet that we've been promising for the past several months. The meet was held at the McHenry County Farm Bureau building in Woodstock, and it was a great success! We had a nice turnout, and people got to pick up bargains on new and used beekeeping gear. Thanks to Larry Krengel for the idea and setting things up with the venue. Also big thanks to Tom Allen for stocking the kitchen with donuts and coffee! It reminded me of the good old days when the club held regular meetings there. Mmm... donuts...

Our next regular meeting is this Thursday, May 11th at MCC. Larry Krengel will give a talk entitled "Harmonious Swarming". If you have never encountered a swarming situation before, this is a 'not to miss' event! We will also be holding two special raffle drawings that night. The first is for a Nuc of bees offered courtesy of Dave Meyer Bees in Minooka, IL. Thanks to Dave Meyer for this great prize. The second special drawing will be 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 these great prizes, you need be there!



We have received word that Randy Oliver's bee workshop at the Garfield Park Conservatory this month has been cancelled. Some members have purchased raffle tickets for a chance to win a spot in that workshop. NIBA will refund the amount any member has spent with us to purchase tickets for that raffle.

As the weather gets warmer, it's time to think about having a picnic! 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.

Before we know it, the McHenry County Fair will be in sight. 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. 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! Volunteers are given free entry for their day of service. You can then spend the day at the fair. Plus, there's a corn dog stand

just outside the building. What could be better?



Last, but not least, many thanks to Ralph Brindise for his tireless efforts managing this season's purchase of bee packages and nucs on behalf of NIBA club members. Thank you also to John Leibinger, Cristy & Dave Binz, Jamie Borland, and Al Fullerton for helping to distribute the bees to their anxious new hosts! Fantastic work everyone!

All the Best to you and your bees!

Noel



Four years ago NIBA contributed seed money to start a beeyard near the community garden and restored prairie at Sherman Advocate Hospital in Elgin. Volunteers beekeepers have maintained the hives. Each of the last two years the Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists have harvested honey (extracted by our Al Fullerton) and sold it to support their numerous prairie projects. Last year 140 one-pound jars were quickly sold to the members of the Sherman community. Volunteers are welcome to join in maintaining the two Sherman hives

CHORES OF THE MONTH - MAY

John Leibinger

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

What's happening in the hive?

Packages hived in mid-April have been steadily declining in numbers since installation as older bees die off. That will be changing now. The new package colonies will be producing their first new adult bees for 2023 around the time you are reading this and should have a mix of brood at all stages. In the next few weeks their populations will increase rapidly. In a couple weeks, maybe at month's end, depending on your mix of new foundation or drawn comb, the colony should be about ready for the addition of a second box (if you are managing via a two deep hive body process, or supers if managing via a single brood box approach), so be prepared. Alternately, if you are utilizing an all medium box management process, you will soon be adding a third box (that box may be an additional brood box or honey super depending on your management philosophy). Nucs hived in early May will quickly build out any new comb they are provided in their brood box and by mid month may well be requiring the addition of a second box or honey supers, again, depending on your personal management practice and goals. The weather will have a significant influence on the rate at which the bees build out their comb, and so far the first week of May looks dismal but that will improve significantly for the rest of the month. 🌤️ This year's weather has been quite a bit different than last year. Last year we had a significantly cooler April, but after the first week of May everything exploded into bloom in what seemed like the blink of an eye. Getting supers on in early May last year was the ticket for early honey. Let's hope May does a repeat. Watch the weather and your colony development. Try not to miss the early opportunity if it presents itself again. Overwintered colonies, depending on their strength, will be building population fairly quickly (again, weather dependent) and are likely candidates for swarming from now until the end of June. I have not been hearing of swarming action yet, but it will come. You will notice some drones already hatched and will likely see additional drone brood at various stages. If you see a fair amount, consider this a precursor to potential swarming if you have overwintered colonies.

You should be observing a lot of pollen collection daily. There was a lot of pale yellow maple pollen (or light gray from red maples) coming in during April. I observed some blue pollen being brought in from scilla (Siberian Squill specifically) a couple weeks ago. Most recently you may be seeing much more orange pollen which is from dandelions. You will also notice that they are consuming sugar syrup at an increasing rate in early May. Keep them well fed to promote colony growth, but remove if you have the opportunity to collect early honey.

For Beekeepers with live overwintered colonies, it is time to:

Feed. Sugar syrup at 1:1 ratio (2 lbs sugar/1 qt water) This is a conventional mix this time of year to stimulate the colony to increase brood rearing. Some will opt to dilute the syrup even a bit more, maybe 1part sugar to 1.5 parts water to more closely simulate the sugar concentration in nectar. A small amount of heat will dissolve the sugar quickly. Allow to cool before feeding to bees.

Pollen, pollen substitute, pollen patties. Though my personal observation is that there is a lot of natural pollen coming into the hive right now, these early supplemental protein sources are good insurance to help the colony raise brood if the weather creates difficulties for foraging. The weather can raise havoc on the pollen supplies. A typical colony will consume upwards of 60 pounds of pollen over the course of the year, so a little early help is a good thing.

Check for swarm cells. A quick check can be made by tilting a complete hive body up and looking at the bottom of the frames for swarm cells (the top box is the most likely box that you will see the swarm cells in unless you have already done a hive body rotation). Be careful not to let the top box slide off when doing this. Get assistance if needed.

SUPER UP! If you have a strong colony of foragers, consider removing feed and adding supers to take advantage of early nectar flows. Early honey crops are possible.

Rotate Hive Bodies. If your bees have moved into the top box consider rotating the top box to the bottom. The upside to this is that it provides space for the colony to expand upwards and may reduce or delay the swarming urge. The downside is that you may be dividing the brood nest if it spans both boxes. If this situation exists, addition of a third box above or adding supers may be a better alternative.

Frame Rotation. As temps warm up, consider removing some old frames (w/o brood) and replace with new foundation as part of an annual comb renewal program. Place new foundation frames at the outer positions in the hive. Introducing new foundation may also help delay the onset of swarming if you are removing frames from brood box that are bound up with nectar or pollen.

Remove Winter Wrappings by mid month.

Remove mouse guards.

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 will need a second deep brood box (or third or fourth if using medium brood boxes) now or very soon. You may need an additional 'cover box' for feed jars or buckets. Let's hope for the best and have honey supers built and ready to install in early to mid May. Like having a lit smoker, it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. .

Feed your Bees. Feed your Bees. Feed your Bees. This cannot be over-emphasized, especially for packages being started on new foundation. Well fed colonies are larger and more productive. Feed them until they stop taking the supplemental feed. You should be able to monitor their syrup consumption every couple of days without going deep into the hive and causing undue disturbance. At some point in the month, they will likely 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. Are they bringing in pollen? What color? What is the source? Take notes.

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

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. Ask for help and guidance. Help may be in person, via phone, e-mail, or text but no matter how the communication takes place, it still will be very helpful, if for no other reason than the confidence and peace of mind a good mentor can provide. **Take advantage of the club provided/sponsored mentoring activities.**

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Review your Beekeeping Goals for 2023 and act accordingly. See February month's chores list.

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. Consider learning a bit about Growing Degree Days(GDD). This will give you great insight into when your local plants will be blooming. As you see the blooms emerge, or pollen coming in, note the GDD year to date for future reference.

[Explanation of Growing Degree Days](#) (Ctrl + Click link)

[Great Growing Degree Day Chart/Tool](#) (Ctrl + Click link) [Nice Seasonal Pollen Color Chart](#) (Ctrl + Click link)

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 count, 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 (for new beekeepers, this is a prime reason for having a mentor and for having multiple hives). 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. Here is an example of one of many checklists that can be found in a quick Google search. Not necessarily the best...just an example. [Hive Inspection Report](#)(Ctrl+Click link)

Remove entrance reducers. Probably in the mid-late May timeframe. As forager numbers increase and forage availability peaks, you want to make sure that the bees have easy access in and out of their hive. This is a very busy and very important time of the year for them to collect and store pollen and nectar. The ready availability of pollen and nectar resources virtually eliminates the issue of robbing this time of year.

Monitor the hives for swarming signs. Probably not a big problem for new beekeepers that started on new foundation or foundationless, but for the rest, keep your eyes peeled for telltale queen cups 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 immediately ([in the brood box by swapping out honey/pollen bound frames](#) and by adding supers)(simply adding supers is often not enough).

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 are several websites to get you started...

[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 is a bunch of bees hanging on my neighbor's swing set and we don't know what to do!"

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!



Welcome to the 2023 Beekeeping Season!

SUCCESSFUL SWAP MEET



BEEKEEPING FIELD STUDY CLASS

by Larry Kregel
April 15th



MENTORING SESSION

May 6th



2023 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President - Noel Williams

nwilliams1250@yahoo.com

Vice President - Tom Allen

tallen122@yahoo.com

Secretary - Cristy Binz

cwebb429@gmail.com

Treasurer - Ralph Brindise

rbrindise@att.net

Director - John Leibinger

jleibinger@aol.com

Director - Al Fullerton

adfhoney@gmail.com

Director - Bob Hillman

rthillman0690@msn.com

Director - Ron Willer

ronwiller38@gmail.com

Program Chair – Larry Krengel

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.**