



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2020

President's Message

Tom Allen

For me, December is a time for reflection, not just about my hives but how my year in general went. A year ago we could never have imagined what we would be going through and how our lives would be impacted by the COVID-19 virus. We as a Board were excited about some new things that were coming to fruition, meeting in a new larger room at MCC and an actual mentor program just to name a couple. We, along with the world, were thrown a big curve ball in March when we had to stop meeting in person. I think if anyone had stock in Zoom in February they're sitting pretty good today. I hadn't heard of Zoom before but have gotten to use it a lot over the past 10 months and think it's a platform that has really helped groups stay current while we can't meet in person. We've had access to presentations by some first class bee researchers that we wouldn't have been able to see without Zoom so some good things have come out of this pandemic. I hope you and your families have all stayed safe during this unprecedented time!

I feel we had a successful first year of the NIBA mentor program, especially considering we started it during the COVID pandemic. We had good attendance by members who received some great hands-on learning experiences. Thank you John Leibinger, Ralph Brindise, Larry Kregel, Marcin Matelski, Jerry Gudauskas and Randy Mead for being mentors, not only for those that came to mentor sessions but to so many that needed help with their colonies. I look forward to a better second year in 2021!

Finally, I appreciate each one of you for being a NIBA member this year, every group is only as good as its members and you've kept us going in 2020. This year is unlike any year we've ever experienced and the NIBA Board and the directors have responded to make NIBA the best possible version we could be. Not being able to physically meet beginning in March, we had our first Zoom meeting in April and have tried to make every monthly meeting since engaging and relevant. Marcin Matelski began holding new beekeeper sessions at 630 before our regular 700 meetings, this gave new beeks the opportunity to ask questions without more experienced beeks feeling the meeting was below their knowledge level. John Leibinger, Ralph Brindise and Larry Kregel also helped hold information sessions during our regular meetings. Stephanie Slater puts up a monthly photo poll where those attending the meeting can vote on their favorite photo and the winning photo is the NIBA Facebook cover for the next month. Stephanie also puts up a Wheel of Fortune type game where the winner wins a gift card to Harvard Egg and Feed. The name of every member that's attending is entered on a wheel and it spins at the end of the meeting to reveal the winner, fun stuff. I say thank you to Stephanie Slater at the end of each meeting for taking care of all of our technology, the truth is

that without her taking care of the Zoom meeting and the polls I'd be lost so here's one more big THANK YOU Stephanie!!

Here's to hoping all of our colonies live through the winter!!

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and a Happy New Year to all of you!

~Tom

New Member Profile – Ron (and Sal) Willer

2016

- “Hosted” hive from garden club member, when Rolling Meadows approved beekeeping
- Rob became my first mentor; hive inspections; harvested honey
- Several attempts to treat mites with oxalic vapor failed; lost hive to Varroa mites

2017

- Spring: purchased same hive and added package of bees
- New mentor – Jackson – Rob's adult son - now inspects Rolling Meadows' hives
- Treated for mites but hive collapsed in December due to Varroa mites

2018

- Added new package of bees to empty hive
- Treated for mites three times with oxalic vapor
- Harvested the honey; flavor affected by oxalic
- Added crystallized sugar to top board in October; checked weekly
- No activity in November – hive collapsed due to mites

2019

- Set up hive with new package in spring
- Normal until late July: bees became aggressive
- Received bee stings whenever I approached the hive
- Late September: Jackson had to help with honey harvest, as bees were swarming onto me
- Late October: too late (?) for mite treatment, so did not perform
- November: colony collapse, due to Varroa mites
- Did queen die, causing aggression in hive?

2021 Club Bee Order Information

Information on next year's bee prices has been decided. A 3-pound package will be \$128 and a nucleus colony will be \$160. As always, we will try to get you the queen type you order but it's controlled by what our supplier has given us. They will be passed out on a first come first serve basis. The order form will be up on the website WWW.NIBAINFO.org soon.

Chores of the Month – November

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

~John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive?

Not much that can be visually observed. 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 month or two.

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 mid-upper 40's, you could consider an Oxalic Acid 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.

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 (as best you can without opening the hive).

Make sure 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.

Consider strapping down your hive for the winter to prevent winter winds from toppling the hive. I had a heavily weighted nuc blow over during our high winds last month 😬. (No visible harm. Though it fell over, it was very well propolised and only the top was off. All other parts stayed 'glued' together 😊.) It is now strapped down!

If you have been a conscientious beekeeper throughout the 2020 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 2020. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

Start preparing for the 2021 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

- Attend beekeeping meetings
- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees.
- 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, and association dues.

Review your 2020 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.

Think about new goals for 2021.

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!

Ask Carl

Q. I see bees flying on mid forty degree days in November. They don't seem to be bringing anything back to the hive. Are these cleansing flights or are they wasting energy and resources?

Seeing bees flying in November with temps in the mid-forties could be caused by sunlight warming up the front of the hive. On a calm sunny day, the front of the hive can heat up quite a bit. I measured temps between 70 degrees and 80 degrees on dark colored hives (brown, gray, weathered wood) and about 50-55 degrees on white and yellow and about 55 degrees on blue. So temps like that would have caused the bees to leave the hive and go for a short trip and, at the same time, cleanse if they had too. A cleansing flight usually happens on a calm, sunny day in the spring or late winter with temperatures in the mid-fifties. If it happens on a day with snow on the ground the telltale signs are easy to be seen.

At the end of November, I saw them bring in a small amount of pollen (probably the last of the season). Pollen is often available after a light frost for quite some time.

Check out these links for more information:

<https://www.mitecalculator.com/bee-yard-blog/2018/3/24/how-bees-fly-in-cold-weather>

<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/old-bees-cold-bees-no-bees-part-2/#:~:text=They%20do%20so%20in%20a,do%20it%20without%20visible%20shaking.>

Next Meeting

We look forward to meeting with you again on Friday, January 8, 2021. Don't forget to submit your photos for the monthly drawing any time before 1/7/2021. Photo contest entries can be emailed to stephanie.d.slater@gmail.com with "NIBA PHOTO" in the subject line.

Christmas Subscription Specials

1 Year to Bee Culture for \$12.50

Normally \$25 - Savings of \$12.50

Promo Code: MERRY2020

2 Years to Bee Culture for \$20

Normally \$48 - Savings of \$28

Promo Code: XMAS2020

3 Years to Bee Culture for \$35

Normally \$69 - Savings of \$34

Promo Code: SANTA2020

1 Year Digital to Bee Culture for \$10

Normally \$15 - Saving of \$5

Promo Code: ELVES2020

Online Order ONLY -

www.beeculture.com

BEEKEEPING

Beekeeping 101 (878)

Larry Kregel

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. This class will be delivered via Zoom. You'll be notified with access information 24 hours before the class begins.

Fee: \$59

| Course Code # | Day | Date | Time |
|---------------|-----|----------|-------------|
| NPG S38 001 | W | 2/3-2/24 | 7-9:30 p.m. |

Seven Ways to Raise a Queen (879)

Larry Kregel

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. Gain information and seven simple methods of raising healthy honeybee queens. With a few insights and a small amount of equipment, the backyard beekeeper can raise locally adapted queens from bee stock with a great record of winter survival, good temperament, and excellent honey production. This class will be delivered via Zoom. You'll be notified with access information 24 hours before the class begins.

Fee: \$25

| Course Code # | Day | Date | Time |
|---------------|-----|------|-------------|
| NPG S83 001 | W | 3/3 | 7-9:30 p.m. |

Beekeeping Field Study (1044)

Larry Kregel

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. Please make sure to update your email address when you register for the class to ensure you receive all information in a timely manner.

Fee: \$59

| Course Code # | Day | Date | Time | Location |
|---------------|-----|------------|--------------|-----------------|
| NPG S39 001 | S | 4/10, 4/24 | 10 a.m.-Noon | Off-campus, TBA |



To register for a class, visit www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, please contact personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu

JANUARY 5-7, 2021

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Webinar

Free to
sponsor club
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Dr. Kirsten Traynor

**Tuesday,
1/19/2021**

7:00 pm

Zoom

Event Sponsors:

Walworth County Beekeepers Club
Racine/Kenosha Beekeepers Club
Brown County Beekeepers Association
Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association
Lake County Beekeepers Association

Join us for an evening with Dr. Kirsten Traynor. Dr. Traynor will discuss the honey bee versus native bee debate. Dr. Traynor works full-time as a honey bee researcher, edits the quarterly magazine *2 Million Blossoms*, and guest co-hosts the *Beekeeping Today* podcast. The Zoom link will be emailed 1/16/2021. No registration required. Contact stephanie.d.slater@gmail.com with any questions.