



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2024

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

As I write this it looks like we're having a blizzard! Anyone who picked up bees early or has bees that overwintered has got to be worried about them as they look out at today's topsy turvy weather. Hopefully they cluster up and make it through these next few cold days, the weather guessers are saying we have warmer weather coming next week. The rains we've been having probably impacted you as well as the cold temperatures have. Keeping the area around your hives dry helps us as we work the bees, not setting the covers and frames down in water keeps the integrity of the hive strong. In some cases in years past NIBA members have had hive bodies floating off of their stands, that's pretty extreme but if your apiary is in a low area that collects water you will be better off fixing that problem before you install your bees.

Speaking of installing bees our package delivery occurs Saturday April 6th between the hours of 9AM and 1PM. Thank you Ralph Brindise for taking care of the order and coordinating the delivery with Tim of Heritage Honey Bees. Thank you to Al Fullerton and John Leibinger for driving up to load the bees and bring them back to hand them out. I'm not sure who the rest of the volunteers there passing the bees out are but this couldn't be done without all of these NIBA members! Those of you waiting for the nuc order Ralph will coordinate that with you when he has a solid date for the delivery.

If any newbees or anyone has a question about installing their package please reach out to a NIBA Board member or an experienced beekeeper. The Board members contact information is listed on the NIBA website at WWW.nibainfo.org

The McHenry County Farm Bureau is holding Ag Days on April 9th through April 11th. This event educates 3rd and 4th graders about different agricultural things including honey bees. The students walk to each booth and listen to a 6-minute presentation.

We also have Gardenfest at McHenry County College on April 13th from 730AM to 4PM.

We are holding two special raffles in March and April. One will be for a 3-pound package of bees donated by Dave Meyer of Meyer Bees. The other will be for tickets donated by Marcin for the two-day Randy Oliver event in April at the Garfield Park Conservatory. Both of these will be drawn at our meeting on April 11th.

I hope to see you at the meeting!
Tom



The NIBA bee package pick up will be **Saturday, April 6, 2024 from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm** at the following location:

**3514 North Rt 47
Woodstock, IL
60098**

Look for sign directing you into the driveway.

You must pick up your bee packages that day during the specified time or designate someone to pick them up. **We will not hold them for you.**

2024 Bee Forum

Garfield Park Conservatory's 15th Annual Bee Forum will be held on Sunday, April 28, 2024 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Randy Oliver will be presenting "*The ins and outs of practical beekeeping*".

Randy Oliver is probably the most recognizable beekeeper in the world right now and GPCA is excited to have him back in Chicago this year. If you're a beekeeper then you know how incredible beekeeping can be, but you also know how incredibly frustrating keeping bees can be. Randy's goal during the presentation will be to help beekeepers understand why bees behave the way they do and apply that to their daily beekeeping. Registration and more info at <https://garfieldconservatory.org/event/15th-annual-bee-forum/>

On Saturday April 27th Randy will lead a hands-on class that will cover topics ranging from disease identification to queen and colony health assessment to maximizing honey production. There will be 2 classes offered, each lasting 90 minutes, and mostly covering the same topics. To learn more and register for the hands-on class visit <https://garfieldconservatory.org/event/hands-on-beekeeping-class/>. Space is limited for the classes, so register early to reserve your spot.

The Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association will have two individual tickets for the 4/28 Bee Forum that will be raffled off

Fun Facts About Bees and Beekeeping



- Bees are being used to study dementia. When a bee takes on a new job usually done by a younger bee, its brain stops aging!
- Bees have their own "facial recognition software," and can recognize human faces.
- Bees use the sun as a compass, and on cloudy days, use polarized light to find their way.

The Great American Smoke Out (No, not that one) Larry Krengel

Greetings Beekeepers –

Recently I received a video of their first hive inspection from a nubee. All went well... except for the smoker. Those smokers do know how to quit at the most inconvenient times.

It is good to have a smoker at the ready. I generally light a smoker whenever I am opening a hive... just in case. Some begin by smoking the landing board before opening the top. Most often I do not, unless I suspect I am not going to be welcomed by the bees – Bad weather, strong winds, historically defensive colony. Why smoke low and send the bees to the top where I am going to begin my work?

Yet, the smoker is great help when I need to hide my smell. Smoking my hands before beginning removes the greasy smell from that McDonalds hamburger I just finished... or whatever I have been touching. The smoker is also helps in crowd control. Because I tend not to wear gloves, I try to move the bees away from where I am going to work. Very little smoke and a bit of patience works.

Many beekeepers have a favorite smoker fuel. Some feel certain smoke calms the bees more. One can even buy “smoker packs” for the best smoke. I have no idea what is in them. Choosing not to be that analytical I generally burn what is handy.

A quick comment on my technique for lighting a smoker and keeping it lit... Starting with an empty smoker, I try for a roaring blaze initially. A big fire is a good start. Newspaper or dried oak leaves are often available and burn quite well. Flames jump out of the smoker. Then I go for something that will burn but not flame... like burlap or barn twine. A handful of pine straw works well as does mulch from the garden. McDonald's is a good source of smoker fuel. (One of the excuses for stopping for that hamburger on the way to the bee yard.) Whenever I do the drive-thru they give me a handful of napkins of which I use one. The rest are put aside for smoker fuel. Thanks Micky D, they smolder great.

I add the fuel in stages while pumping the bellows and use my hive tool to tamp down the burning mass so as to not burn the hair off my knuckles.

I try for a great conflagration for a good start but then stuff the smoker full so it will smolder long and slow. If I tamp the fuel down firmly, there will not be enough oxygen brought in to make a legitimate fire. Ultimately, I don't want a flame, but a smoldering mass. When I puff the smoker, my goal is to have a thick cloud of cool

smoke. I want to avoid a hot flame or glowing embers that could melt the wings from the bees.

Even with the best of preparations, smokers are known for going out at an inconvenient time.

There are many ways to keep bees... and many ways to light a smoker. With time each beekeeper develops a personal touch with the smoker. It becomes a Zen moment – watching the smoke roll from the smoker – with peaceful and quiet anticipation of communion with the bees... hoping the tranquility of that brief moment of preparation translates to the waiting colony.

The goal is to master lighting the smoker once as you enter the bee yard and extinguish it when you leave. A goal that will continue to be illusive.

As a side note, Smokey the Bear would remind you that only you can prevent forest fires... or fires in the back of your truck... or in your garage... Good beekeeper technique requires dumping the remains of the smoker fire and stomping it dead out when the day is done. Better live chicken than dead beekeeper.

Larry



Chores of the Month – April – and so it begins.....

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive?

Overwintered colonies are well into raising brood for the coming year. On warm days the bees will be out foraging pollen from some early flowering plants and trees. About mid-month, likely earlier this year, the dandelions will start blooming and you will see a lot of their tell-tale tangerine-orange pollen being brought in. Though temperatures may be a bit low to do a prolonged deep dive inspection early in the month, the influx of pollen is a good sign that the colony is raising brood. Brood rearing requires significant protein which is sourced from the incoming pollen. If weather conditions are preventing foraging, use pollen patties and/or pollen substitutes as supplemental feed. The brood will require warmth so the bees will be consuming more carbohydrates (honey, or sugar syrup) for the energy they will require to produce the heat needed to raise their brood. You may well see bee poop or signs of dysentery at the exit points for bees. My guess is that you won't see as much as you might have seen in prior years since there have been many warm days allowing for cleansing flights. If you do see some, don't panic and jump to the conclusion that your bees have Nosema. This is more likely an accumulation of feces the bees are finally getting to void. It could be dysentery, but dysentery is not Nosema. Nosema can only be determined by inspection of bee guts via microscopy. If it is dysentery, it will likely clear up fairly quickly as the bees get foraging and consuming fresh nectar. If it is Nosema, the only approved product on the market right now is Fumidil-B (Fumagillin) but its efficacy on the most prevalent type of Nosema (*N. Ceranae*) is marginal.

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

Feed. Sugar syrup at 1:1 ratio (2 lbs. sugar/1 qt water) is conventional this time of year. A small amount of heat will dissolve the sugar quickly. Allow to cool before feeding to bees.

Pollen, pollen substitute, pollen patties. These supplemental protein sources may help the colony raise brood until natural pollen sources become more abundant. My personal observation is that there seems to be a fair amount of natural pollen being brought in, but it won't hurt to add a little insurance.

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 (with frames) above or simply the addition of super(s) may be a better alternative. There are other manipulations that you can also do to mitigate swarming such as the Demaree method or creating splits. There is a plethora of info on these processes available on the internet or even at your local bee club meeting.

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. This time of year, place new foundation frames just outside of the brood nest. This will also help to reduce the swarming urge.

Remove Winter Wrappings as the weather warms. No need to hurry on this though.

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

Breakdown and clean out the dead-outs. It can be a dirty job as well as a disheartening one. Don't procrastinate. Depending on the cause of death of your colony, you may want/need to replace all your frames/combs. Viruses die with your colony for the most part. Mites do also, so you have minimal worry that either of these will carry forward. *If you had a bacterial foulbrood disease that killed your colony, the problem could carry forward.* This would not be typical so don't rush to this conclusion. Seek an experienced beekeeper or apiary inspector for some advice.

Frame Rotation. Consider removing some older and/or 'condition challenged' frames and replace with new foundation as part of an annual comb renewal program (assuming that you will be rehabilitating this hive this season).

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:

Bees will be arriving soon so make sure all equipment is ready to go.

Finish assembling and painting your equipment. If you have not done this already, **Get On It!** Don't procrastinate, the bees will not wait! 😊

Set up your Equipment in your Apiary. Have everything in place. This means your equipment, your tools needed for installation, and feed. Mix your sugar syrup the day before picking up your bees. Try to minimize your last minute scrambling. The process will go smoother.

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. Ask for help and guidance. Hands-on assistance would be great but verbal or written communication is always a great help too.

Ready or not here it comes! No worries. Chill. You have done your homework. You have Read, Studied, and Learned. A little nervous anticipation is all part of the excitement of becoming a beekeeper and right about now it is

reaching an apex. Take a breath. A few more seasons under your belt and you will look back on this time with a knowing smile. If you have not received hands on instruction on package installation, review several YouTube videos, or use a lifeline and 'Phone a Friend' (or mentor) on package installation.

Have a checklist for your package or nuc installation. It helps keep you organized and focused.

Have all your tools and supplies ready ahead of time. It bears repeating. Avoid the nervous scramble.

Again, no worries, coaching and virtual help is available.

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)

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Review package installation procedures if you are getting new bee packages.

Review nuc installation procedures if you opted for nucs instead of packages.

Prepare your feed.

Review your Beekeeping Goals for 2024 and act accordingly. See earlier month's chores list.

Wash your beekeeping suit or jacket to remove general dirt and specifically to remove lingering essence of alarm pheromone from previous 'suit stings'. Tip: Use an unscented laundry detergent.

General Info:

A couple of ways to install packages:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZknUirqbQk> Randy Oliver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lt7BWolTbw> Penn State

Are you seeing pollen coming in?

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

It is April. Welcome to the 2024 Beekeeping Season!



2024 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen

tallen122@yahoo.com

Vice President – Ryan Harrison

rharrison74@gmail.com

Secretary – Kristen Mueller

khuschitt@gmail.com

Treasurer - Ralph Brindise

rbrindise@att.net

Director - John Leibinger

jleibinger@aol.com

Director - Al Fullerton

adfhone@gmail.com

Director – Andre Szechowycz

aszzech804@gmail.com

Program Chair – Larry Krengel

Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa

Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinator – Robin Tibbits

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

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 adfhone@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.

**The queen marking color for
2024 is Green.**

