



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2021

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

As the days get a bit longer and warmer, our excitement grows. The bees we ordered will be arriving soon!! Whether this is your first year or your 20<sup>th</sup> year, there's a certain level of excitement when starting the new beekeeping season. Maybe if this is your first year, there's some fear to go along with that excitement. The work is just starting when you pick your bees up, and now you have about 10,000 bees per package relying on you...kind of. You will second-guess the weather—is it too cold or windy to install your bees, or are we expecting snow in the coming days? “WHAT SHOULD I DO” is racing through your mind. Fear not, you’ll be fine. Please reach out to experienced NIBA members for guidance on the best ways to install your bees. Sometimes it’s best to run home and install them right away. Other times you might keep them in your garage or basement for a few days until the weather is milder. Ask those giving you your bees what they would do. You might hear, “well I do this, but I don’t recommend you do that” (Marcin™), but you’ll get solid advice from those volunteers. Remember, ask three beekeepers and get six answers—all good solid answers, but that’s because there aren’t any hard and fast rules in beekeeping. A few years ago while volunteering at the McHenry County Fair, NIBA member Chuck Matchen told me as a cabinet maker and

### 4/9/21 MEETING AGENDA

- 6:30 Package Installation – Marcin
- 7:00 Pledge of Allegiance – Tom
- 7:02 Old Business – Tom
  - Mentors
  - Mentor Hives
  - AFB/EFB test kits - Marcin
  - Bee order – Ralph/ Tom?
  - Why I Keep Bees winner - Larry
- 7:10 New Business
  - Photo contest - Stephanie
  - NIBA member bee survey – Marcin
  - Fair committee – Tom
  - Fair sign up - Tom
  - Show honey sign up – Tom
  - Honey donations – Tom
- 7:25 How do you count your bees? – Marcin
- 7:40 Let’s talk about queens – John
- 8:45 Anything for the good of the club
- Adjournment

blacksmith, there were hard and fast rules, things that remained the same time after time. In beekeeping, nothing is ever the same. We’ll have good years and bad years, and those definitions will be different for each of us. If you have one hive, and you lose it over the winter, that 100% loss is devastating to you. But if you have 10 hives and lose one colony, that 10% loss is a great outcome. Taking Larry Krengel’s class at MCC both intrigued me and scared me. Learning about beekeeping was so interesting, but could I do it? The weather was nice my first year, so I was able to install my package the day after I picked it up. I had a friend, Pat, that volunteered to help me. He wasn’t a beekeeper, he’s

just crazy. I had my bee suit, and Pat wore a coat and a veil with a pair of gloves. What could go wrong? I had a few kids from the neighborhood that wanted to watch and a couple of other friends that wanted to watch from a distance. They all gathered to watch me shake ~10,000 bees out of their package and into the hive. I had gone through what Larry had talked about in class a thousand times but still wasn't sure I would remember the process. Remove the feed can, put something over the hole in the can, pull the queen cage, put a small marshmallow in your mouth to soften it up, pull the cork from the queen cage, put the marshmallow in its place, put the queen cage in between the middle frames, and pour the bees in. Everything was going smoothly until I got to the put the marshmallow in my mouth to soften it part...I was wearing a complete suit so I couldn't just place the marshmallow in my mouth! Pat said he could just lift his veil up and take care of that, and I was good with that. Some bees always escape when you remove the feed can, and they were buzzing around us, which was a little unnerving. But I was suited up, what could go wrong? As Pat lifted up his veil enough to get the marshmallow into his mouth, a few bees got into his veil, which caused him to move around to get the bees out, and while doing this he ate the marshmallow. He took a second one into his mouth, and I reminded him not to swallow it. He got it wet and handed it back to me so I could place it where the wooden plug was in the queen cage. The bees were still in his veil, so he moved away from the hive to remove his veil and get them out without getting

stung. Everything else went just as Larry said it would. I was now a beekeeper! Pat has continued to help me with my bees. He's helped NIBA members pass out bee packages. He's helped collect frames and extract honey. He's usually the one filming me for the Son of a Nutcracker Productions when I'm doing something to put on my YouTube channel, Tom the beekeeper (a shameless plug). Pat and I were hired as firefighters together in 1980, and we worked together for more than 20 years. We have a level of crazy that possibly hasn't peaked yet. Everyone needs a friend like Pat in their life. I'm the idea guy ("hey, let's try this"), and he's the guy that says what time do you want to meet?

For you new beekeepers, you have the knowledge to get this done. Being nervous is normal. Enjoy the adrenaline rush that comes with doing this process. Go through those steps, maybe have a small bowl of water to dip the marshmallow into to soften it up and install your bees. The bees will do what they need to do to get back to the queen. They've spent a week or so together, so the workers and drones will be looking for her queen pheromone and will get into the hive to be with her. Go back in a few days to make sure the queen has been released and enjoy the quietness of the hive. Forget about everything else that's going on and just pay attention to the bees. Talk to them so they get to recognize your voice. Some research shows the bees might begin to recognize your smell, and good or bad, how you smell can either calm or excite the bees. If you are worried about installing your

bees and you don't have a friend like Pat, NIBA has many members that will help you. We hope to do a live video of a package installation, but of course we need our bees to do that. We have mentors for the mentor hive sessions at MCC and Sherman Hospital. Reach out to one of the NIBA Officers for help at your hive location, we'll try to find someone to give you side by side mentoring. We all want to become beekeepers, not bee buyers, and by continuing our education on bees. we can help each other. We have a 30-minute zoom session at 6:30 before our regular meeting that is set up for new beekeepers. Learn more about beekeeping, ask questions and get detailed answers by experienced beekeeping members. NIBA has partnered with other groups over the past year to provide members free access to many zoom webinars by well-known beekeepers from around the world to learn more about beekeeping. Please take advantage of the upcoming webinars to educate yourself. None of us is as smart as all of us, always be willing to help other beekeepers and become a lifelong learner about our little friends. If you're so inclined, find a good book to learn more about beekeeping. There are also many good podcasts about beekeeping, I myself like "The Hive Jive" and "Two Bees in a Podcast".

During the March meeting, I mentioned that NIBA was interested in a program that Michigan State University is running, Heroes to Hives, that teaches veterans how to become beekeepers. There are around 22 veteran suicides a day, and the thought is that giving

veterans bees to work with helps give them purpose, and talking with veterans that are beekeepers helps them adjust to civilian life again. This idea was brought up by NIBA member Jerry Gudauskas, who is an Air Force veteran, at the end of February, and through the generosity of NIBA members we have our first participant! Veteran Gerardo Banuelos. NIBA member Jim Haisler said he would donate an 8-frame hive, and NIBA Director Marcin Matelski said he would donate a 5-frame nuc to Gerardo. NIBA member Chris Johnson said he had equipment he could donate to Gerardo if the hive wasn't complete. I was blown away by how quickly this happened. As a Navy veteran of the Viet Nam era, I remember how poorly our veterans were treated as they returned home, and I am continually amazed at how well veterans are treated today. People buy them meals in restaurants, give up a first class seat on an airplane to a veteran. This outreach by NIBA members made me burst with pride to be a member of NIBA. The camaraderie, the friendships, the help given by a group of likeminded people that just want you to succeed as a beekeeper is what we're about. We have another veteran that will be joining us in the April Zoom meeting that lives in Elgin and is looking for a mentor to help him out. You only need to be a beekeeper to help him learn about bees. I signed up to be a mentor with Hives for Heroes, another group that helps veterans become beekeepers. It's different from the organization from Michigan State University. The veterans in this group mentor with you for the first year, and then they receive a split from your bees in the second year. I

urge you to look this group up if you would like to mentor a veteran. They need mentors in Northern Illinois.

The McHenry County Fair will be back this summer!! Please consider volunteering for a shift in the NIBA booth to talk to people about bees and beekeeping. This is a fun activity where

you might also meet someone from NIBA you don't know and forge a new friendship. Those people attending the Fair always look forward to trying to find the queen in the observation hive, buying honey sticks, and looking through the NIBA display.

Tom

## CLUB PROJECT FOR ALL NIBA MEMBERS

Have you ever wondered how your hives are doing compared to others? Would you like to know how strong and populous your colonies are at any given time? Or how to maximize honey production? The club has a project idea that may help you figure those things out. We'll be building a database of what NIBA members' hives look like throughout the year. It'll work best when we all pitch in and contribute. We'll have a presentation on the idea at the April meeting, including how to estimate bee population in your hive at any given time, and we will put more info about it in the May Sweet Stuff.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO KRISTEN MUELLER!

Kristen is the winner of a copper smoker for her entry in our "Why I Keep Bees" essay contest. Thank you to everyone that submitted an entry. We'll share these wonderful essays in the Sweet Stuff over the next several months. To start us off, here is Kristen's winning essay:

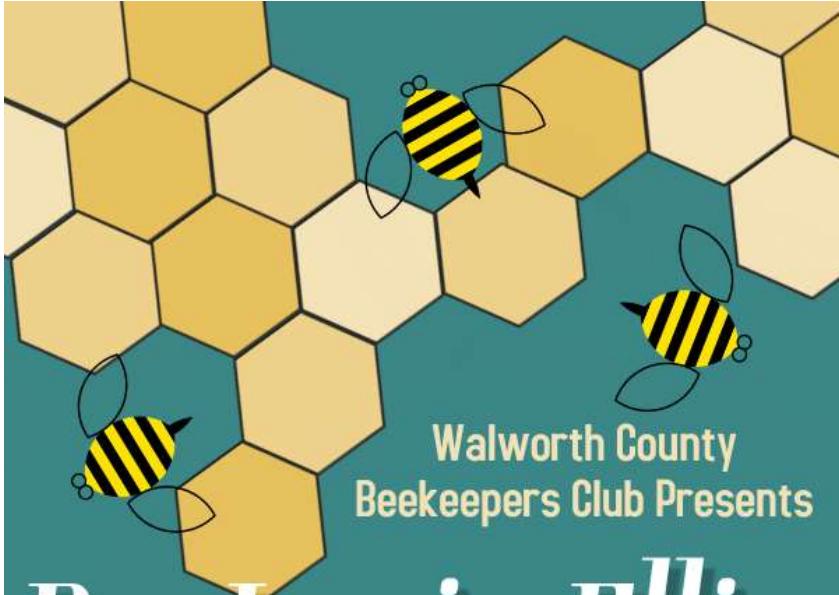


**When I am with my bees I am humbled by nature. As I prepare to open a colony, I slow my breathing and push everything out of my head. I am fully and totally with my bees: every action, every thought. The bees go about their business, totally in-sync with the seasons and with themselves. For a moment, I step outside of the human psyche and feel the raw pulse of nature. This is why I keep bees.**

## SAY BEES!

We know many of you enjoy taking photos in your apiaries. We'd like to invite you to submit your favorite beekeeping-related photos. We'll conduct an informal poll during the monthly meetings, and the top pick will be featured in the following month's newsletter and as the group's Facebook page cover photo. Here are the details:

1. Submit one photo per month by 9:00 pm the Thursday immediately preceding the scheduled monthly meeting.
2. Email your photo as an attachment to [stephanie.d.slater@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.d.slater@gmail.com) with "NIBA Photo" typed in the subject line.
3. Please include your name and a short caption in the body of the email.
4. Each month's top pick may be used for future club activities.
5. Participate in as many months as you'd like!



Walworth County  
Beekeepers Club Presents

# Dr. Jamie Ellis

April, 20th  
@ 7:00pm

Zoom link will be  
emailed on April 18th

Topic: Swarming & Swarm Control

Co-Sponsored by:  
Racine/Kenosha Beekeepers  
Brown County Beekeepers  
Northern Illinois Beekeepers

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## ASK CARL

### **When is the best time to split an over winter colony and still have the parent colony make a honey crop? What signs should I look for?**

In mid March, I add pollen patties and start to stimulate the bees to rear more brood. By mid April, I'll be able to see if they are strong enough to be split. I use the dandelion bloom as an indicator. If a split is done around April 15-20, there will be incoming pollen and nectar. The bees will be able to get two brood cycles in by early June. It can be done later, but it will affect the size of the honey crop. When doing splits, it is important to use little or no smoke, so you do not drive the bees off the frames. Here is an example of how you want to organize a split: two WELL FILLED capped combs of brood moved above a double screen, plus honey and pollen frames, plus a purchased queen (because we can't mate queens in our region this early in the year), and the rest of the box filled up with drawn comb and/or foundation. This is about the same as a two to three pound package. Over the following ten days, the majority of the brood will have hatched but not started to fly. This is the time to move it to a different location and feed, if needed.

Here are two websites that cover the subject very well and give you a lot of options. You will find a lot of good information on these sites, so I encourage you to check them out.

[theapiarist.org/demaree-swarm-control/](http://theapiarist.org/demaree-swarm-control/)

<https://www.theapiarist.org/vertical-splits-making-increase/>

## MARCH PHOTO CONTEST WINNER



"Me and My Grandpa"  
submitted by Ron Zimmerman.

## CHORES OF THE MONTH - APRIL

**John Leibinger**

*Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.*

**and so it begins.....**  
**Stay Safe**

### **What's happening in the hive?**

Overwintered colonies should be well on their way to raising brood for the coming year. On warm days the bees will be out foraging pollen from some early flowering plants and trees. 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. 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 overwintering 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.

**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 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.  
**Remove Winter Wrappings as the weather warms.**

### **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 except maybe the frames and foundation. To minimize the possibility of damage, you may want to keep them inside until the day that you get your bees. Put them in place just before going to pick up the bees. Mix your sugar syrup 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 might still be a little difficult to come by right now with the 'social distancing' policy, but verbal or written communication will be available.

**Ready or not here it comes!** No worries. 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. A few more seasons under your belt and you will look back on this time with a knowing smile. Since in person meetings are still on hold this year, and you may not have received hands on instruction on package installation, review several YouTube videos on package installation. Have a checklist for your package or nuc installation. **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/beekip.pdf> (Ctrl+Click link)

### **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. Mites do also, so you don't have a 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.

### **For All Beekeepers, it is time to:**

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

Prepare your feed.

Review your Beekeeping Goals for 2021 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:**

**Note: Not trying to toss in a 'buzz' kill, but we have had snow in April the last several years.**

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9qu-zMhtQ0>

Are you seeing pollen coming in?

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

Practice safe.....social distancing, from other beekeepers, not the bees. Don't worry about the bees. They won't give

you any viruses.



## **It is April. Welcome to the 2021 Beekeeping Season!**



## I THINK THEY LIKE ME

Larry Krengel

My interest in honey bees started, as for many, with an appreciation for the taste of honey, and I learned there was a better taste to be had from the roadside stand than from the chain store. That led to an increased curiosity



about bees. I took advantage of any situation that would give me more insight into the private life of the bees. This was before the internet, Google, and Facebook. I had to read books and catalogs. The Sears catalog had a great section on bee equipment and they even sold bees mail order. *First Lessons in Beekeeping* has been around for 100 years, and I found a copy of it in the feed store.

My first live experience in a beeyard came when I stopped to talk with a beekeeper who sold honey on his farm. He offered to take me out to his beeyard. It was a beautiful day. The bees were busy, and he told me we could visit the bees with impunity. They would not even know we were there.

As I stood six feet away admiring the constant flow of traffic to and from the hives, the bees began head butting me. Moments later I received my first beeyard bee sting. The bees took no exception to Irv, who was to become one of my beekeeping mentors.

Irv had been keeping bees for forty years before our paths crossed. I have over the years wondered if his long standing relationship with his bees made him a welcome and recognized visitor to the yard. Perhaps the bees recognized him, but did not know me. I was sensed as a threat they needed to defend themselves against.

Today, I seem to have some, not total, impunity in my own beeyard. I can work much as Irv did.

Is it possible that the superorganism, the honeybee colony, comes to recognize their keeper and accepts his or her company? It is an interesting question, but likely not burning enough to draw the attention of a doctoral student to write a thesis on the subject. Until such time, I will assume that my bees come to know me.



## 2021 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Director – Stephanie Slater

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Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Marianne Hill

Club Extractor Coordinator – Randy Mead

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinators – Cathy Davis & Phil Webb

## Membership Has Its Benefits!

- By Randy Mead

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent a club 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.

To reserve a date, contact Randy at 847-571-1899 or [rmeadtoys@gmail.com](mailto:rmeadtoys@gmail.com).

## Are you on Facebook? So are we!

Search for Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association. It's a closed group, so you need to request to join—but we're happy to approve your request.

We're an active and knowledgeable group. Lots of questions and answers about preparing for each season, robbing, etc. And LOTS of pictures!

Join the fun today!

## Website and Newsletter Submissions

[www.nibainfo.org](http://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](mailto: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. [newsletter@nibainfo.org](mailto:newsletter@nibainfo.org)

The queen marking color for 2020 is **WHITE**.

