



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2020

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Here we are, it's August already, even though many of us think our days could be used in the movie Groundhog Day! Beekeeping in August usually brings the spoils of our beekeeping labor front and center--HONEY. This is when we see what the blood, sweat, and stings have gotten us (or haven't gotten us) for our hours in the bee yard. For many beekeepers, honey is the reason they got into this hobby. Some have transitioned the hobby to a full time job.

For me, it was accidental. I wanted to take a class at MCC, and my wife found Larry Krengel was teaching the beginning beekeeping class. I had just watched a video of a flow hive and thought this was what all beekeepers used everywhere. Boy was I wrong! After 3 classes with Larry, I was hooked. I was going to be a beekeeper. We really didn't use honey at our house so I just started beekeeping as a hobby. People that saw my hives started asking me for honey. The honey I've extracted has gone to neighbors for their understanding of bees near their pool or on their flowers, to my buddy, Pat, for helping me, and to

my kids and other relatives. I learned after my first year that we don't always get honey, so we should appreciate it when we do.

This year seems like the perfect

beekeeping year. I've seen firsthand four honey supers stacked on a deep box, something I thought I would only see in photos. Two of our NIBA mentor hives at McHenry County College have three supers, and it looks like the bees will have most of it filled and capped soon. I've been out to help several new beekeepers, and even though all are in their first year most had at least one super. I hope you are all getting some of the spoils for your labor. Savor it, and don't give it all away!

We held our first mentor days event on July 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> and it was successful despite the Covid

### MEETING AGENDA

6:30 Q&A with Marcin

7:00 Pledge of Allegiance

7:05 Old Business

7:10 New Business

7:15 Corky Schnadt

7:20 Examining brood, patterns, queens, etc.

Q&A session immediately following presentation

Anything for the good of the group

Adjournment

restrictions. We had everyone wear a mask and tried to maintain social distancing when possible. I think everyone learned a lot. Even though all the mentees have worked with their bees, working on the mentor hives with a mentor gave them more confidence. The mentors talked them through everything from removing frames to doing a mite check. Seeing the difference between different types of mite checks or how to mark the queen (or how not to mark the queen, in my case) are invaluable lessons for the new beekeeper. Thank you to Jerry Gudauskas, Randy Mead, John Leibinger, Ralph Brindise, Marcin Matelski, and Larry Kregel for being mentors, and thank you to Marianne Hill for setting up the SignUp Genius! Thank you to the mentees for being willing to suit up on a hot day to learn about a hive inspection. (Some joined NIBA the day they were at the hives.) We hope to have at least one more event like this. It doesn't matter if you're an

experienced beekeeper, you can still learn something new.

I know everyone isn't ready to venture out even with social distancing, so maybe we can try a Facebook live event that would give NIBA members a firsthand look as a mentor goes through a hive or does a mite check in the future? Just thinking of ways to increase our engagement. Our first Zoom meeting had around 80 people attend, and the number of attendees has been dropping each month. Please give it a try or come back. I think we've had some timely and great presentations each month, but if we're missing something, please contact me and let me know. This is your club, and we want to make it work for as many of the members as we can. Covid-19 has changed our behavior, but not the bees' behavior, and we are doing our best in these ever changing times.

**Tom**



**JULY PHOTO CONTEST WINNER  
STEPHANIE SLATER**

**“Honey Bee Eggs”**

## MENTORING DAYS

On July 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>, a group of mentors met with new beekeepers to do hive inspections on the Club's hives at McHenry County College, McHenry County Fairgrounds, and Sherman Hospital. Many thanks to Tom Allen, Ralph Brindise, Jerry Gudauskas, Larry Kregel, John Leibinger, Marcin Matelski, & Randy Mead, for sharing your expertise.

Many of the comments heard from the mentees: "Definitely time well spent." "You guys were awesome helping me gain some much needed knowledge and confidence. Much appreciated!" "Just wanted to Thank the Mentors who took their time out to educate us at the fairgrounds." "We had a VERY helpful hands on session on Sat am with Jerry and Randy - Many Thanks - really appreciate your time!"

Watch for future Mentor Days!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eruCKRMd88U>

## SAY BEES!



We know many of you enjoy taking photos in your apiaries. Starting in June, 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!

*Hi all,*

*I hope everyone is doing well.*

*In honor of National Honey Bee Day, I'll be doing a virtual beekeeping session at the Garfield Park Conservatory Saturday, August 15, from 10am – 11am. I'm not sure what exactly what I'll be doing. It'll be weather- and bee-dependent. It may be about setting up hives for winter, or deciding on which hives to combine, or queen replacements. Or I may do honey extraction if weather is bad. But we'll be talking bees for sure. Registration is free but required.*

<https://garfieldconservatory.org/event/virtual-ask-a-beekeeper/>



## BEES IN THE SHERMAN HOSPITAL PRAIRIE

NIBA and ISBA contributed to the establishment of a beeyard in the restored prairie near Sheran Hospital that is being overseen by a group of Master Naturalists. It was a great first year with each of two colonies filling two supers. The honey will be sold to further develop the beeyard and the prairie. NIBA has used this site for mentoring sessions recently and will again in the future. NIBA Director Al Fullerton brought his mobile extraction trailer to the site to extract the honey.



## CHORES OF THE MONTH - AUGUST

John Leibinger

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

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

The colony population will have peaked by this month. You should be observing lots of bees and still see plenty of brood at all stages being raised to replace the older bees in the colony. The rate of laying of the queen will typically start to taper off from the rate that has been experienced through the spring season.

Temperatures are heating up so ventilation and available water sources are 'must haves' for your bees.

The bee population is no longer expanding, but the Varroa mite population likely is. You must monitor their growth by doing regular mite checks (monthly sugar roll or alcohol wash) and take appropriate action to remediate any problems. (See links in General Information section below.)

The bees should have stored some nectar from May and June and you will likely be finding capped frames of honey in your supers even though the weather has been quite challenging. Unfortunately, many have also found that the bees have been storing a lot of honey in the brood chamber(s). This often leads to a honey bound situation that in turn can lead to overcrowding swarms and based on the word on the street, there has been a **LOT** of that going on. The solution is to keep providing the bees space to store the honey. Don't wait for the bees to cap the existing frames before adding additional supers. Remember, when the bees bring in nectar it is very dilute and takes up lots of space. Over time they remove the moisture and cap the honey, but in the meantime they still require more space for the continuous inflow of new nectar. If you don't provide the space via supers, they find it in the brood chamber. You may have pull some of those honey filled brood frames and replace with new frames or extract and replace them.

This may be the month to start harvesting those capped frames. If you do so early, replace the supers and you may get some more production. Late June and early July blooms from Catalpa and Linden trees has the nectar flowing! Nectar flows continue into July with more herbaceous plants than trees and then taper off as we enter August. When removing honey to harvest, make sure that there is still plenty of honey left for the bees to survive the dearth in August. If you decide to harvest all your supers sometime this month, and if the nectar flow slows down, you will need to feed sugar syrup to help get them through the lean times of mid to late summer. Keep in mind that 'honey' storage at this time will likely be mostly the sugar water you are providing. When a flow restarts for the fall, you will have to decide whether to replace with fresh supers (with drawn comb) to collect a fall harvest or to just let the bees continue storing for their winter needs.

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

**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.

**Provide additional ventilation** to assist the bees in maintaining proper hive temperatures. This can be in the form of ventilated inner covers or as simple as propping the outer cover to allow more air circulation. The additional ventilation is also helpful in the conversion of nectar to honey. Better ventilation eases the job of moisture removal from the stored nectar.

**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 thermos-regulation efforts.

**Monitor for Varroa Mites monthly and take action if needed.** (See General Info section below for references to mite checking procedures)

Know what you have and keep records. Keep varroa growth in check by utilizing a miticide, organic acids, drone comb culling, a combination of IPM methods, or a brood break. **Pay attention to labeling instructions** when using treatments and be mindful that you cannot leave honey supers on for all methods of treatments. The only treatments currently approved for use while honey supers are on are Hopguard 3, Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS), and Formic Pro. 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.** You must have healthy hives going into later summer so the colony can raise healthy nurse bees that in turn raise the winter bees that will carry them through until next Spring.

**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 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. 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.

**Monitor the hives for queen signs.** Stuff happens....the queen may be failing and the bees need to replace her. She may have died for some reason. You need to know that they have the resources to make a new queen or you will have to provide those resources from another colony. Alternately, you can buy and install a queen. Don't allow your hive to remain queenless. Doing so will likely lead to a 'laying worker' condition. This is a problem that is not easily resolved and oftentimes results in the death of the colony. Stay ahead of problems and take action when needed.

**Harvest honey appropriately.** Don't overharvest, there are some lean weeks ahead for your bees.

**Return extracted frames to the hives** for them to continue to make more honey. If you are calling it a season for your honey crop, place your super of wet combs above your inner cover and below your outer cover. The bees will come up and clean/dry it out and refurbish the comb to 'like new' condition. This makes for much easier winter storing also.

**Consider starting to split out some nucs** to raise bees for next year if this is part of your goal plan.

**Consider raising some queens to go into fall/winter with fresh young queens.** Statistically, survival of winter colonies improves and reduction/delay of spring swarming is a result. Don't delay though, time is of the essence. There are many ways to go about this that do not require a lot of equipment or experience. At the backyard beekeeper level, you can keep it pretty simple. The bees are very good at this if you create the proper conditions. Do some research.

**Start to watch out for robbing later in the month.** Reduce entrances or add robbing screens if needed. Don't dawdle around when harvesting honey.

## 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)

## [Varroa Mite Treatment](#) (Ctrl+Click link)



## A BEEKEEPER DEALS WITH COVID-19 SOCIAL ISOLATION

Larry Krengel

Some people are having a hard time dealing with sheltering in place to avoid catching and spreading the Covid-19 virus. It is hard not to have interaction with other humans with the same freedom we had only a few months ago.

Well, this beekeeper has remained closely cloistered... with few exceptions. However, I have the advantage over my neighbors of having a few million ladies to keep me company. Of course, they live in the white boxes in my beeyards.

I have always talked to the bees when visiting them. Perhaps recently, I talk a bit more. I have always thought they talk back, not in words but in the whirl of activity in the hive. Their company is not as good as the conversation at a NIBA meeting, or the talk with near strangers at Starbucks, yet I appreciate my time with them.



Earlier this week I thought it wise to expend some bee time counting mites. I like to take my sample from bees shaken into a bucket from three brood frames. Using the powdered sugar roll, I was pleased to find modest mite

numbers. I talked to bees as I rolled them, set them to the side for a rest and followed that by another roll. After shaking the sugar onto a white surface, I turned the sampled bees loose on the top of the inner cover so they could crawl back into the hive and have their sisters clean them off... thanking them for their service. One of them smiled back. Honest, she smiled at me. I even got a picture of it. Are delusions and hallucinations symptoms of Covid infection?

Having yet more time on my hands, I decided to make my very first batch of mead, the drink of the

gods. I like doing things the old fashioned way. When the Vikings were making mead back in the 800s and 900s, they knew nothing about yeast. They knew nothing about the alcohol created by the yeast. Even not knowing about the role of yeast,



they learned how to introduce yeast into the must to create the drink they desired. Modern mead makers often feel compelled to choose from a variety of commercial yeasts and heat the ingredients to kill off all the natural yeast. (It is always a shame to heat honey.) Out of respect for my Viking ancestors, I used natural yeast... whatever came with the honey and the fruit I placed in the fermenting jar. It worked well. I am now on my third batch. The last one was a rhubarb/strawberry recipe. Sipping a bit of mead eases the isolation of the current situation. Perhaps we can start the viral internet rumor that rhubarb mead is a cure for Covid-19. We could make **local** honey a required ingredient. I need to contact Dr. Fauci.

It seems we will be dealing with the demands of staying healthy and safe from the evil virus for a while longer. I expect I will find a way to share my unnaturally quiet life with my friends the bees in more creative ways. Stay safe. Your bees need you.



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Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger  
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## 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)

## 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 [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 the Fall season and preparing for winter, robbing, etc. And LOTS of pictures!

Join the fun today!

The queen marking color for  
2020 is BLUE.