



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

As I write this, we just experienced another significant snow storm, and we are expecting a smaller snow storm followed by some very cold air this weekend. As beekeepers, we were enjoying a warmer than normal December. People actually found the weather nice enough for them to crack open their hives and add some sugar. I, like all of you that still had a live hive the last time you checked on them, worry about how they will fare during these tough weather systems. I checked on the 3 hives at MCC after the previous snow storm. This storm saw a fair amount of snow, then it warmed up enough to melt a bit, and then it got cold again so the melted snow turned to ice. I found ice on the landing boards that just about filled the bottom of the hive opening. I broke the ice up with a hive tool to open that back up. In front of 2 of the 3 hives, I had maybe 20 dead bees, which I took as a sign of the hive being alive. The bees were just out front so I think they were dead bees being cleaned out of the hive, not bees that flew out for a cleansing flight and froze as they left the hive. The 3rd hive didn't have any dead bees in front of it. I didn't try to tap the side of the hive to hear them buzz because I have an insulating sleeve around the hives. In Larry's class, he taught that tapping the hive a bit gets the bees to buzz without breaking the cluster, and having some dead bees out in front of the hive is a good sign. I'm really looking forward to Spring to hopefully find the colonies have successfully overwintered.

I hope we're closing in on a time when we can meet in person again now that they have begun administering the Covid-19 vaccinations. The state of Illinois has chosen to use the number of residents vaccinated verses the total number of residents of the State to be able to open things like meetings. Whatever metrics are used, I just want everyone to be safe when we are allowed to meet in person. No one is looking forward to seeing NIBA members in person more than me!

Tom

MEETING AGENDA

6:30 New Beekeeper's Q&A - Marcin

7:00 Pledge of Allegiance

7:02 Old Business -Tom

7:05 New Business -Tom
NIBA historian -Tom
Survey for mentors -John
Membership renewals -
Ralph

Bee order -Ralph
Garfield Park speakers -
Marcin

Randy Oliver study -
Marcin

ISBA Dead out seminar -
Larry

ISBA History video -Larry

7:20 Tim Wilbanks owner
Heritage Honeybees

8:00 Photo Contest -
Stephanie

8:05 Spin the Wheel for a
gift card -Stephanie

8:10 anything else for the
good of NIBA

8:15 Adjournment

ISBA 130TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION PARTY

The Anniversary Meeting originally planned for March 2021, at Dadant & Sons in Hamilton, IL, has been postponed until further notice.

MENTORS WANTED

NIBA (John Leibinger) will be sending out a survey asking for mentors. We are looking for beekeepers that are willing to help fellow beekeepers with questions they may have or offer hands on help at their hives. We will also be looking for more experienced beekeepers to help at the NIBA mentor sites at MCC and Sherman Hospital. We're offering two mentor meetings a month at both sites, and we want to expand the number of mentors available to help share the load. We will be using SignUp Genius to coordinate and sign up for the mentor days. We will have different start times for both sites, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.



Do you like history? Are you passionate about preserving memories? If so, then you may want to be the NIBA Historian. We would love to provide some NIBA history to our club. We appreciate the hard work our founding members did to get a State Charter and lay the ground work for what we have today, and they should be remembered. Who started NIBA? Do we have any relatives of the founding members in the club now? Remembering former members for their vision and hard work should be passed down to future members. We do have one banker's box of photos and documents to look through to give you a bit of a start. If you are interested, please contact any board member.



NIBA, along with other local beekeeping clubs, is sponsoring three virtual speaker presentations through the Garfield Park Conservatory in March. These presentations are free to current NIBA members. Marcin will be talking about the amazing speakers and dates at our February meeting. Please sign up to watch these presentations. NIBA wants to help you become a better beekeeper. Speaker events are a great resource for valuable information.

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 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!

NIBA WRITING CONTEST

Why do you keep bees?

Beekeeping is our thing. We gather to talk about bees, read bee magazines, and Zoom bee talks from all over the world. To us it is normal while driving to slow up while examining beehives we had not seen before and to look with longing at fields of luscious bee forage along the roadside. This is us.



So why does one keep bees? That is the question you are being asked to answer in 100 words or less to enter in the NIBA honeybee writing contest. Indeed, beekeepers are a unique subset of humans. The contest seeks to hear what makes us different. What moves you to hang around with thousands of stinging insects? Hmm... That likely makes us unique.

All NIBA members are eligible to enter. All are encouraged to reflect on their bees, their time with the bees, and what draws them to their hives continuously. You are a beekeeper... a keeper of bees. Why?

Entries must be submitted by **March 15, 2021** and will be read anonymously by the members of the NIBA board (who are ineligible to win the contest!). The winning entry will be awarded a beautiful copper smoker... almost too beautiful to light up. Highest-rated entries will be published in the Sweet Stuff during the coming year.

Submissions should be sent to WhyIKeepbees@gmail.com. Please include your name and your number of years among the bees.

ASK CARL

**At what point during the winter will the cluster start moving?
Is the movement constant or just slow or are they stationary for a while and move when it's time?**

In late summer and early fall, the bees set up the area for the winter cluster. The area they cluster in is the same area where the winter bees are being raised in. They have back-filled the surrounding area with honey and pollen as the winter bees hatched.

So rearranging the brood nest, late removal of honey, and late feeding in the season does not benefit the bees.

The cluster will start to move when there's no incoming nectar and they have to dip into the reserves. And in doing so they stay close to the honey. The movement varies and is slow when temperatures are in the low 40s. As temperatures drop, they crank up the heat and consume more honey and move accordingly.

I don't think they are stationary, but the movement is so slight that it is hard to detect. During time of no brood rearing, they only use 1-1 1/2 pounds of honey a week. When brood rearing starts they use a lot more. Each frame of brood requires a frame of honey and pollen.

Years ago when tracheal mites were common, you often saw colonies that died from starvation. The mortality rate was so high that the cluster shrunk and they lost contact with the honey.

Today you will also see hives with small clusters that don't make it through the winter. When winter bees were being reared, the mite load was too high so too few winter bees were produced to replace the summer bees as they died. As a result, the winter cluster has to work overtime to stay warm and in doing so gets worn out too soon.

So, timely mite treatment and survival are tied together.

JANUARY PHOTO CONTEST WINNER



Cristy Binz – The Circle of Life

WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Community Education—Spring 2021



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, contact personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu.

CHORES OF THE MONTH – FEBRUARY

John Leibinger

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

What's happening in the hive?

Our winter weather has been fairly mild as of this mid-January writing. Healthy overwintering colonies will start raising brood for the coming year. Later in the month, *if we are blessed with some warmer weather*, some early pollen from willows and maples may be available for early foragers. This fresh pollen along with pollen and bee bread stored in combs will allow for some early feeding of brood. The brood will require warmth so the bees will be consuming more honey (carbohydrates) for the energy they will require to produce the needed heat.

Update Feb.2nd: It looks like our mild weather is in our rearview mirror. Second week of February is forecast to be cold....like single-digit highs cold during the day and single- to double-digit below zero cold at night. I hope the bees had better insight into the weather than our forecasts and held back on starting to raise brood.

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

Monitor the food stores available to your colonies. Hefting the back of the hive may give you an idea of the amount of stores still available. A peek inside on a warm day may also provide insight. A sign that the bees may be in need of feed is their location in the hive. If they have worked their way to the top box, just under the inner cover, they may have consumed all the honey in their pathway and may need assistance. Check for honey on frames adjacent to the outer edges of the cluster. You can do this visually or you can carefully run your hive tool down this seam scraping against the adjacent comb. If the hive tool comes out with honey on it, there is food the bees should be able to access. If not, supplement with sugar-based feed, e.g. dry sugar, sugar bricks, winter patties, fondant, candy board, etc., to help them through the remaining winter. Providing pollen or pollen patties will provide needed protein for brood development.

Check for activity at the hive on warmer days. Have they been taking cleansing flights? Don't be alarmed at seeing some dead bees on the snow outside the hive. These are bees that likely left the hive for a cleansing flight and were too weak (or they chose a day that was a bit too cold for them) to make it back. This is not necessarily a bad sign. It is a sign that there are likely live bees inside. If your entrance is plugged up with dead bees, scrape them out to clear the opening so that others can get out for cleansing flights (put back reducers and mouse guards afterwards). Though you may scrape out a lot of dead, it doesn't necessarily mean the colony is dead. Someone pushed them to the front in an effort to clean out the hive, so there is/was life inside.

Consider setting up a spare hive with new equipment or some you have recently cleaned up.

When you have a reasonably warm day in late April or early May to do your first complete inspection, you can position this spare equipment next to one of your overwintered colonies and methodically transfer the frames from old to 'new'. While doing your inspection, this gives you an opportunity to evaluate all the frames and replace some as you see fit. It also provides the opportunity to rotate frames from top box to bottom if that is part of your management process. Maybe the colony strength is such that you will downsize to a single box while the colony develops (or continue the season under a single brood box management approach). Anyway, after making the transfer of the first colony to the fresh 'new' box(s), clean up last year's equipment and repeat the process with your next overwintered colony.

NOTE 1: Be very observant for any signs of disease before making the woodenware transfers.

NOTE 2: Be sure to transfer the frames with brood in the same order/positions that they were positioned in original hive.

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:

Read, Study, and Learn....Books, Periodicals, Classes, Club Meetings, Podcasts, Internet videos (yes, that also means youtube videos, they range from poor to great....reading, attending classes and club meetings and asking questions will help you learn which are good and which are not). All of these resources will help.

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. 2021 will likely start with mentoring via email, text, phone calls, or for the more tech savvy, video calls. Just be aware that there are beekeepers interested in helping other beekeepers. As my beekeeping therapist says...the first step is to ask for help.

Order your equipment, tools, and protective clothing. Try to start with a minimum of two hives. It allows for comparisons. Understanding what 'Normal' behavior is in a colony of bees is an important skill to acquire. Multiple colonies allows you to learn this faster. Multiple colonies also allows you to share resources (potentially very important) between colonies if needed....more on this as the year progresses.

Order your Bees. Try to start with a minimum of two hives...see above. Don't get hung up on bee race/stock, e.g., Italian, Carniolan, Russian, Buckfast, etc., they are likely mutts anyway (forgive the sarcasm). Packages or nucs (nucleus colonies)? There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Ask questions and listen to the reasoning provided. For new beekeepers, a nuc provides you with some drawn comb which greatly enhances early spring survival. Keep in mind, whoever you ask will have a bias, so it is just an opinion**here is mine:** since you should start with multiple colonies, get at least one of each and learn something. You will get to experience installing both types. You will get to see the development of each type. If circumstances dictate only getting one colony, it should be a nuc with the drawn comb. It will allow for the greatest chance of success and higher likelihood of getting a first year honey crop. Next year you can pass on your experience and learnings to the next 'Newbee'.

Assemble and paint your equipment. It's fun and can be creative....on the painting side at least. Don't get too creative on the assembly of equipment. Follow the instructions. The bees will appreciate it.

Start thinking about the location of your apiary.

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

Breakdown the dead-outs. Pick a pleasant day and start the cleanup process...Doing it early, before much warmth and moisture occurs, will make an unpleasant job less unpleasant and much less smelly.

Don't just clean things up. See if you can determine what caused the problem. There is a high likelihood of a mite related problem if you did not rigorously pursue mite load reduction in a timely fashion last year. Look for signs. Take some pictures at several different angles. Consider signing up for and offering to share pictures of a frame or two (brood frames) at the March 20th ISBA meeting featuring Dewey Caron. Dewey will be instructing on dead-out postmortems so this may be a great opportunity to find out if you could have taken some action to prevent your loss. You will find it interesting, I'm sure.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Take an inventory.

A) Equipment/Supplies inventory

Make a list of what your equipment, tools, and supplies.

- Do you need to replace frames or foundation (a honeycomb replacement program should be part of your annual routine)?
- Is your equipment in good order? Is your wooden-ware due for a paint job? Are your tools in good shape? How about your protective clothing? Have you laundered your bee wear to be ready for a new season?
- How about supplies, e.g., feed/nutrition supplements, pest/parasite controls, etc.?
- Is your current equipment sufficient to help you achieve your goals for this year (see **B.** below)?

B) Goals inventory – Very Important

What do you want to accomplish this year in beekeeping? You may have multiple goals. What are your priorities of these goals? Here are some thoughts:

- Do better than the state average honey yield per colony? More simply, increase my honey yield over last year.
- Successfully over-winter my bees.
- Move closer to achieving sustainable beekeeping (not having to buy new bees every year).
- Learn to create and use nucleus colonies to over-winter more colonies and increase the number of colonies in my apiary.
- Learn to raise my own queens.
- Learn to produce comb honey, e.g., Ross Rounds, cut comb honey, chunk honey, or section boxes.
- Learn to produce Creamed Honey.
- Learn to make Mead.
- Learn how to process and use beeswax. Make candles, lip balms, hand creams, soaps.
- Are you interested in encaustic painting? Are you interested in creating wax art?
- Do you need to re-evaluate your equipment to be sure you have what you need to achieve your goals (see A. above)?

If you have some of these interests, raise the issue at a club meeting and propose having a sub-group session to explore the subject.

C. Bee Inventory

-How many colonies do you want to start this year with? How many do you have that will overwinter? Are you sure?? A live hive in early February is a **hopefully** live hive in April....we still have a couple tough months to go....don't be caught bee-less in April.

- Order as early as possible to reserve your bees. Packages or Nucs? Decisions, decisions.....

I'll leave you with this:

It is February. Get ahead of your season. Read, Study, Learn. Your pre-season preparation will set the tone for your success for the year. Now is the time!

Can't wait to go from this.....To this!



BENEFITS OF NIBA MEMBERSHIP

Just a reminder to current and future members of NIBA, here is a partial list of member benefits:

1. Includes membership to both NIBA and ISBA (Illinois State Beekeeping Association) for only \$20.00 for individual membership and \$30.00 for family membership. After March 15, 2021, add an additional \$5.00 for renewing members.
2. NIBA has monthly meetings and always presents interesting info about Beekeeping and often has guest speakers. This month Tim Wilbanks from Heritage Honeybees will address the club.
3. NIBA has been expanding the mentoring program with several club hive sites and also individual mentoring this year.
4. Members get to order bees from the club with very attractive pricing.
5. Club picnics have been a tradition and hopefully will return soon!



Ralph Brindise Treasurer



We as NIBA members have been asked to participate in a Randy Oliver study! Marcin will go over the details at the February meeting. Here's your chance to become part of beekeeping history--the data you provide will be part of a Randy Oliver paper.



**NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
2021 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Affiliated with the Illinois State Beekeepers Association (ISBA)

Check one: Renewal Membership New Membership

Check one: Individual Membership - \$20 Family Membership - \$30

(Includes Single Membership in the Illinois State Beekeepers Association, additional ISBA memberships, \$10 each)

If applying after March 15, 2021 and you are a renewing member, please add \$5.00.

Name(s):		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone:		
Email address (if family membership, include all emails. Newsletter will be sent to all emails):		

Yes, I would like a **black and white** paper copy of the newsletter mailed to me, add \$10 for handling.

Yes, I would like to order a NIBA name tag(s), add \$10 per name tag.

Name tag(s) should read (please print):

Please tell us more about yourself:

I have been a NIBA Member since _____ (year)

I plan to have _____ colonies/hives this season I

have been a beekeeper for about _____ years

I am a Master Gardener/Beekeeper _____

Check all that applies:

I sell honey ___ willing to Coach/Mentor ___ Swarm Catcher ___ willing to remove Bees from buildings ___

Personal skills I would be willing to donate to NIBA (i.e. Beekeeping experience, accounting, webmaster, event planning, community education, carpentry, legal, business management, retail knowledge, other)

Complete this form and mail with **check payable to: NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (NIBA)**

TO: NIBA Membership, c/o Ralph Brindise, 517 Northlake Road, Lakemoor, IL 60051

2021 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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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

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. 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 847-571-1899 or 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!

The queen marking
color for 2020 is
WHITE.

