



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – MAY 2020

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Well happy May! Our club bees arrived and should be installed in our hives, so they can start their busy lives with us as their stewards. After all, the bees do what they want to do. We try to anticipate what that is and work with them to get the best result. It's very early in the season but so far, I've had a few issues that the bees worked around on my behalf. I'm working with the hives placed at MCC. I didn't check on them to see if the queen was released for 5 days, and in those 5 days they felt the need to build comb around the queen cage in two of the hives. During my first hive inspection I found the queen right away. If I was confident enough to mark her, it would have been easy to do. With the 2<sup>nd</sup> hive, as soon as I lifted the inner cover I saw a problem. The strap of the queen cage got folded over when I placed the inner cover, and that prevented the bees from eating the marshmallow. I removed the marshmallow and placed the cage back in the hive, sort of like a quick release. I installed the nuc that same day. It was full of bees--they were exploding out of the nuc when I opened it up. The frames had lots of capped brood, eggs, larvae, and honey, and they needed to get more frames to continue to grow. I got back out to the hives today (Friday) to check on things and add syrup to

them. I saw the other 2 queens so I'm really ahead of where I usually am. I pulled the empty queen cage out of the quick-released hive, changed the batteries in the BroodMinder sensors, and added new jars of syrup. They are all looking great!

Our May meeting will be another virtual meeting using the Zoom platform. A presentation for newer beekeepers will begin at 6:30--you can join in around 6:15. The regular meeting will begin at 7:00. I hope those of you that attended the April meeting thought it was a good meeting and will join in for this meeting. I heard from several members that they enjoyed the meeting, they felt we shared more information than they expected. Trying to make these virtual meetings meaningful is at the top of our priority list. This is an important time in the beekeeping world, and we're doing our best to get you the information needed to be a successful beekeeper. If you feel you need more help or have a question you need answered, don't hesitate to reach out to one of the NIBA Officers or Directors. Our contact information is on the NIBA website and in the newsletters.

***NIBA is excited to offer its members an online learning opportunity. This year's Bee Forum at Garfield Park Conservatory is going virtual with 3 different sessions by 3 excellent beekeeping experts:***

<b><i>Sunday, May 17</i></b>	<b><i>Dr. Gene Robinson</i></b>
<b><i>Sunday, May 24</i></b>	<b><i>Dr. May Berenbaum</i></b>
<b><i>Sunday, May 31</i></b>	<b><i>Randy Oliver</i></b>

***NIBA members can sign up for the Bee Forum free of charge by using discount code NIBA. To register, go to this link <https://garfieldconservatory.org/event/11th-annual-bee-forum-bee-science/2020-05-17/> and use NIBA code during checkout process. One registration signs you up for all 3 sessions. You will get a Zoom link before each event that will allow you to access the presentations. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity and sign up early to guarantee yourself a spot. Space is limited.***

## The agenda for Friday's meeting

6:30pm - Marcin will do a question and answer session with new beekeepers or anyone that has a question

7:00pm - the regular meeting starts, Tom Allen, Pledge of Allegiance

Old Business

New Business

Ralph's report on the bee order and pickup

Larry Kregel's presentation on swarms

Anything for the good of the group

Hello to all members old and new! We are 167 members strong as of April 30, only a few less than last year. Not bad under the circumstances.

The 2020 Spring bee package/nuc delivery went well considering the safety restrictions that were implemented. Thank you to everyone who followed the delivery instructions. Special thanks to Stephanie Slater, Marcin Matelski, and Gene (Wolf Tek) McCray for volunteering to help with the delivery! Ralph B



## MORE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Stephanie Slater

In addition to the online educational opportunities we shared last month, we've attached a list of *Online Resources for Beekeepers* shared by the University of Maryland Bee Squad. Check them out and let us know if you learn something extraordinary.

Bee Culture magazine is currently offering digital versions of their current and past issues (through 2014) for FREE until social distancing is over. To read it free online, go to [www.beeculture.com](http://www.beeculture.com) and click on the "Latest Issues" tab at the top of the page.

In March, the University of Florida Honey Bee Lab started hosting a new podcast called *Two Bees in a Podcast*. Check it out here:

<http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/honey-bee/podcast/> or here: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/two-bees-in-a-podcast/id1494010558>



- National Colony Loss & Management Survey <https://beeinformed.org/take-survey/>
- University of Maryland Bee Squad <https://umdbeesquad.com/>
- Bee Informed Partnership <https://beeinformed.org/>
- eXtension- Bee Health <https://bee-health.extension.org/>
- Honey Bee Suite <https://www.honeybeesuite.com/>
- Scientific Beekeeping <http://scientificbeekeeping.com/>
- University of Guelph <https://honeybee.uoguelph.ca/videos/video-list/>
- The Bee MD <http://www.thebeemd.com/>
- University of Florida Honey Bee Lab <http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/honey-bee/>  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- NC State <https://www.ncsuapiculture.net/online-classes>
- Honey Bee Health Coalition <https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/>
- Pollinator Network @ Cornell <https://pollinator.cals.cornell.edu/>
- Keep Bees Alive- Michigan State University <https://pollinators.msu.edu/keep-bees-alive/>
- Mite Check <https://research.beeinformed.org/mitecheck/>
- University of Florida Master Beekeeper Program <http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/honey-bee/extension/events-and-activities/master-beekeeper-program/>
- Cornell Master Beekeeper Program <https://pollinator.cals.cornell.edu/master-beekeeper-program/>

- University of Montana Online Beekeeping Certificate Program  
<https://www.umt.edu/sell/programs/bee/default.php>
- Xerces Society <http://www.xerces.org/publications>
- Pollinator Partnership <https://www.pollinator.org/guides>
- UMD Extension <https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/topics/native-plants>  
[https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/\\_images/programs/hgic/Publications/HG120\\_NativePlantsofMD.pdf](https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/_images/programs/hgic/Publications/HG120_NativePlantsofMD.pdf)
- Maryland Native Plant Society <https://mdflora.org/publications/gardenersguidelines/gguides.html>
- Native Bees [http://jarrodowler.com/specialist\\_bees.html](http://jarrodowler.com/specialist_bees.html)  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usgsbiml/>

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT SWARMING

Larry Kregel

Swarms are exciting... exciting to bees and beekeepers alike. For the bees the excitement is a celebration of success. The goal of living things, including honeybees, is to see that their species and, more specifically their genetics, are passed into the future. As the hoard of bees take flight from the parent colony, they have succeeded.

To the beekeeper the excitement is to meet the challenge of having the mass of flying, milling, hanging bees. Be they high or low, big or small, still in flight or hanging in a huddling mass... the goal is to get them into the hive box, set them in the apiary, and make honey.



I have little advice to the bees on how to deal with their exciting purge. It would do no good if I did. But I often ponder how the beekeeper properly views and successfully deals with the swarm.

There was an interesting article in the April issue of ABJ written by Meghan Milbrath. She lists reasons that swarming is not good for bees or beekeepers and points out that the beekeeper has the opportunity to guide the swarming impulse. She contends that by the time swarm cells are hanging in the hive, the beekeeper has missed that important opportunity.

At our Friday meeting, I will share my thoughts on Harmonious Swarming – somewhat practical and somewhat philosophical. Consider joining the meeting.

A thought from Dr. C. C. Miller written a century ago –

*If I were to meet a man perfect in the entire science and art of bee-keeping, and were allowed from him an answer to just one question, I would ask for the best and easiest way to prevent swarming.*  
C. C. Miller, 50 Years Among the Bees

NIBA meets Friday at 7:00 (6:30 for the nubees).

## THEN AND NOW – IS IT THE SAME?

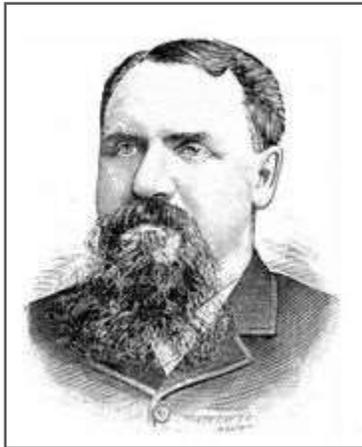
Larry Krengel

The way in which we think about historic figures is interesting. Were they like us? Beekeeping has many notable figures going back as far as written history goes. Consider Plato and Aristotle, both beekeepers, who wrote about the royal larger bee... the king bee. (Gender bias existed before the 20<sup>th</sup> century.) They seem not to have noticed that the king bee laid eggs. We remember François Huber, the blind Swiss beekeeper, who discovered that queen bees mate in flight and is credited with being the first to understand the role of royal jelly.

Yet, without a doubt, the string of notables in beekeeping grew greatly following the invention of the movable frame hive – the Langstroth hive – in 1851. In the late 1800s and early 1900s numerous beekeepers capitalized on the ability to examine the workings of the colonies. This time was filled with the writings of hardened beekeepers fueled by their inventions, new equipment (smoker, honey extractor, queen excluder) and their insights from careful study of swarming and queen development.

When we read of these times now 100 years gone, we tend to think of these great people without realizing they have the same awe of the honeybees as we do today, as having the same thrill and pleasure in spending time with the bees. They stepped into their bee suit one leg at a time. They were like us.

One example is G. M. Doolittle. Today's premier honeybee queen breeders use the Doolittle technique as described in his *Scientific Queen Rearing* book from 1888 written after two decades in the beeyard striving to develop these methods. He was indeed a man who found joy in his time with the bees. After spending many years among the bees he ultimately wrote–



*I never spent an hour in my life, even up to the present time, in work pertaining to bee culture without its being a real pleasure to me and this was brought about by those winter evenings when I first began to read up on the subject. Many a night have I lain awake from one to three hours, planning how to accomplish some result I desired to achieve in regard to the practical part of apiculture, which, with the help of what I had read, caused me to accomplish what I had sought after.*

There is a special satisfaction in knowing that the preeminent persons of beekeeping draw the same pleasure from their time with the bees, the same pleasure that draws us back as each new season arrives.

Let the new bee season begin.

## CHORES OF THE MONTH – MAY

John Leibinger

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

Packages hived in mid-April will be producing their first new bees for 2020 around the time you are reading this and should have a mix of brood at all stages. In the next few weeks, depending on your mix of new foundation or drawn comb, they should be about ready for the addition of a second box (if you are managing via a two deep hive body process), so be prepared. Alternately, if you are utilizing a three medium brood box management process, you will soon be adding the third box. Nucs hived in mid-April should be well on their way to having built out any new comb they were provided in their lower box and may well be requiring the addition of a second box soon. The weather will have a significant influence on the rate at which they build out their comb, and frankly, the weather this year has not been very favorable for a quick start. Overwintered colonies, depending on their strength, will be building population fairly quickly (again weather dependent) and are likely candidates for swarming from early May and on into June. I have not been hearing of any swarming action yet but that can change very quickly with favorable weather. You will notice some drones already hatched and will likely see additional drone brood at various stages. You should be observing a lot of pollen collection daily. There was a lot of pale yellow maple pollen (or light gray from red maples) coming in during April. Most recently you may be seeing much more orange pollen which is from dandelions which are heavily blooming. You will also notice that they are consuming sugar syrup at an increasing rate in early May. Keep them well fed to promote colony growth.

### ***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.** Though my personal observation is that there is a lot of natural pollen coming into the hive right now, these supplemental protein sources are good insurance to help the colony raise brood as they build forager numbers. This is particularly true considering the highly volatile and crazy weather patterns we have been experiencing. The weather can raise havoc on the pollen supplies. A typical colony will consume upwards of 60 pounds of pollen over the course of the year, so a little early help is a good thing.

**Check for swarm cells.** A quick check can be made by tilting a complete hive body up and looking at the bottom of the frames for swarm cells (the top box is the most likely box that you will see the swarm cells in unless you have already done a hive body rotation). Be careful not to let the top box slide off when doing this. Get assistance if needed.

**SUPER UP!** If you have a strong colony of foragers, consider removing feed and adding supers to take advantage of early nectar flows. Early honey crops are possible.

**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 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 .**

### ***For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:***

**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)

**Finish assembling and painting *additional* equipment,** if you have not already done it. You will need a second deep brood box (or third or fourth if using medium brood boxes) now or very soon. You may need an additional 'cover box' for feed jars or buckets. Let's hope for the best and have honey supers built and ready to install in late May or early June.

Keep feed on the bees. You should be able to monitor their syrup consumption every couple of days without going deep into the hive and causing undo disturbance.

**Feed your Bees. Feed your Bees. Feed your Bees.** This cannot be over-emphasized. Well feed colonies are larger and more productive. Feed them until they stop taking the supplemental feed. At some point in the month, they will likely switch over to entirely natural nectar sources at which point you can remove the feeders.

**Spend time observing your bees.** This is one of the reasons you took up this hobby. Observe their comings and goings. Are they bringing in pollen? What color? What is the source? Take notes.

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

**Get a Mentor from the Bee Club.** Ask for help and guidance. During these times of social distancing, the help is likely to be via phone, e-mail, or text rather than hands on but still could be very helpful..

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

**Review your Beekeeping Goals for 2020 and act accordingly.** See February month's chores list.

**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. Consider learning a bit about Growing Degree Days(GDD). This will give you great insight into when your local plants will be blooming. As you see the blooms emerge, note the GDD year to date for future reference.

[Explanation of Growing Degree Days](#) (Ctrl + Click link)

[Great Growing Degree Day Chart/Tool](#) (Ctrl + Click link) [Nice Seasonal Pollen Color Chart](#) (Ctrl + Click link)

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. Here is an example of one of many checklists that can be found in a quick Google search. Not necessarily the best...just an example. [Hive Inspection Report](#)(Ctrl+Click link)

**Remove entrance reducers.** Probably in the mid-late May timeframe. As forager numbers increase and forage availability peaks, you want to make sure that the bees have easy access in and out of their hive. This is a very busy and very important time of the year for them to collect and store pollen and nectar. The ready availability of pollen and nectar resources virtually eliminates the issue of robbing this time of year.

**Monitor the hives for swarming signs.** Probably not a big problem for new beekeepers that started on new foundation or foundationless, but for the rest, keep your eyes peeled for telltale queen cups at the bottom of the frames. Do they have eggs or larvae in them? If they do, the swarm is coming....if not keep watching and provide additional space immediately.

**Get your swarm traps out!** Anybody interested in getting **FREE BEES?** This is the time of year to take advantage of the natural biological rhythms of the hive. Overwintered colonies are highly likely to swarm. Why not be an opportunist and capture a colony that otherwise will find a hole in a tree? It is fun, challenging, and **IMMENSELY EXCITING** when you find bees in your trap. Additionally, these are often colonies that have overwintered....Northern Illinois proven stock capable of handling our winter....wouldn't you want to add some of that quality to your apiary? Here is a swarm trapping website...Jason is 'the man' when it comes to swarm trapping. He has lots of advice and encouragement on swarm trapping along with free plans for building swarm traps. Check it out.

[Jason Bruns on Swarm Trapping](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

**Assemble some gear to be prepared to catch a swarm hanging in a tree, on a fence, or somewhere else they aren't wanted!** Be ready in case a friend calls and says "Get here quick, my neighbor is freaking out! There is a bunch of bees hanging on my neighbor's swing set and we don't know what to do!"

**Note:** Swarm trapping and swarm 'catching' are two different things. Swarm trapping involves putting out 'bait hives' for bees to find and inhabit (and then join your apiary). Swarm catching involves capturing a swarm from a tree, bush, fence, or any of a hundred other areas that an initial swarm may land at shortly after exiting the hive and while waiting for the scout bees to find a new home. Usually this is the result of a panic phone call you receive from someone who knows you are a beekeeper. This can be an **INTENSELY EXCITING** activity.

## **Get your blood flowing! Capture or Trap a Swarm!**



**Welcome to the 2020 Beekeeping Season! Stay Safe.**

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Newsletter Editor – Marianne Hill  
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Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger  
Snack Coordinators – Cathy Davis & Phil Webb

### 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.