



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2021

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Fall is upon us and winter isn't far away so hopefully all that you could've done to get your colonies through the winter was accomplished. It's time to take a breather, read some books, maybe attend some beekeeping seminars and reflect on all that you accomplished in beekeeping during the last year. Whether you're a first year beekeeper or have been a beekeeper for many years there is always something new to learn and try. If beekeepers didn't try new things we'd still be keeping bees in skeps instead of Langstroth style hives. We should learn from what worked for us or beekeepers that we know and if something didn't work learn from that too. Change is something beekeepers learn to embrace, no 2 years are ever the same so we're constantly learning more about beekeeping.

November is a month we in America celebrate Thanksgiving, it's a time to reflect on the blessings we have been given. Whether it's for family, financial, religious or beekeeping or all of those, please take some time to reflect on your blessings. After more than a year isolated from friends and family I hope you all have a safe and family filled Thanksgiving!

*Tom*

**This is our last meeting this year since we do not meet in December. Our next meeting will be January 14, 2022.**

### 11/12/21 MEETING AGENDA

6:30 Q&A Newbees Q & A

7:00 Pledge of Allegiance

7:02 Presentation: Steven Repasky speaks on single brood box colonies

8:10 Old Business

8:15 New Business  
ISBA Updates  
Election Committee Slate  
Nominations from the floor  
November Election  
Director Appointments

8:30 Raffles

Anything for the good of the group

8:45 Adjournment

### **Attention Everyone**

**We must enter the college on the lower level. The B Building entrance near the flagpole will be the only open door.**

## UPDATES FROM THE BOARD

Tom Allen

The November Board meeting was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> and some of what we discussed and approved were the following items:

- NIBA will be purchasing one additional Broodminder kit this winter, which will bring the number of kits up to three. The kit include a hive scale and two temperature and humidity sensors. Each kit will be loaned to a NIBA member that agrees to follow certain rules regarding its use and the reporting of the readings in an agreed time. If you are interested in using a kit beginning in spring, please reach out to a Board member about your interest. More information will be coming out soon.
- NIBA will be trying a new program that will refund a member for a book if the member agrees to do at least one presentation at a meeting about the book. Prior approval for this is required; more information will be coming out soon.

## ASK CARL

Carl Christiansen

What's a beekeeper to do from November to February?

Check the hives to see if they have enough stores. Make notes of the light ones and feed them later, especially late in February when brood rearing could have started up and they begin to eat more. Add half to one-inch insulation on top of the inner cover, a layer of newspaper will work too. Occasionally check the upper and lower entrance and remove dead bees from the entrance. It is beneficial to provide some form of windbreak. Perform an Oxalic acid drip late in November to the middle of December on a calm day in the 30's. You want the bees to be clustered. Check out the [Oxalic Acid Treatment Table](http://scientificbeekeeping.com) from [scientificbeekeeping.com](http://scientificbeekeeping.com). Read the whole article. I use the weak solution, so if measurements are off a little it does not harm the bees. It is the least expensive treatment and highly effective when done at the right time during the broodless period. If you like to wrap, do it, I quit several years ago. If you are concerned about snow by the entrance, make a front porch. 3/4 x 2x 16



## PROPOLIS

Larry Krengel



Greetings Beekeepers –

It is a nice time of the year when togetherness is the theme. Thanksgiving with family around the table. Thoughts of Christmas trees begin to appear. And, the bees get together in a cluster staying warm in anticipation of the spring. Togetherness.

One of the tools used by the bees to keep the colony healthy during months of clustering is propolis, a substance brought into the hive by the bees largely from the pitch of trees. The term comes from the Greek language meaning *the beginning of the community*. Over millennia of evolution the bees have learned to use propolis to as glue to hold the hive tight and to apply it as a means of controlling bacteria, viruses, and fungi that might grow in the dark of their home.

Long before mankind knew about the causes of disease and infections, they discovered propolis as a medicinal that they applied to wounds. It was even applied to food and eaten – a health food thousands of years gone. Today we have learned to uses other antibiotics to control infections, but the bees still depend on propolis... and it works rather well.

Dr. Marla Spivak from the University of Minnesota is a well-known award-winning bee researcher whose present research interests include the important role propolis plays in the bee hive. For many years beekeeper have cursed the propolis that stick things together in the hive... but there is much more to the story. On November 17 Dr. Spivak will make a presentation to the Central Association of Bee-Keepers of London, England on the subject of the function of propolis in maintaining colony health... and it is available for virtual viewing by all. Because of the time difference, it will happen early afternoon central time. Check it out at <https://www.cabk.org.uk/event/benefits-of-propolis/>.

P.S. Had honey butter on my apple bread toast this morning. Great start to the day. One half cup of butter, one-quarter cup of honey, ¼ teaspoon of cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon of vanilla extract. Wisk it together and enjoy.

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

**American Honey Producers Association Conference and Trade Show** – December 1-4, 2021. For more information, visit: <https://www.ahpanet.com/2021-ahpa-conf-and-tradeshow>

**American Beekeeping Federation Conference and Trade Show** – January 5-8, 2022  
For more information, visit: [https://www.abfnet.org/mpage/2022\\_Conference](https://www.abfnet.org/mpage/2022_Conference)

## NUBEES AND WINTER

Larry Krengel

The attrition rate among nubees is thought to be quite high. It is hard to tell because many new to beekeeping try to watch YouTube and then go to the backyard to install bees. I suspect that sows the seeds for disappointment. They quietly leave the field. It is like taking up mountain climbing by reading about walking.

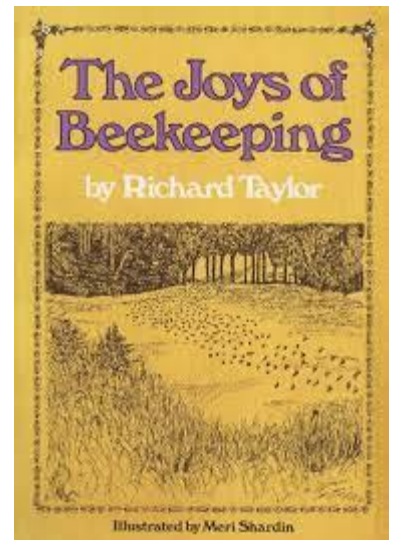
Many of you have read my “first steps...” hand out that I use with my Beekeeping 101 class. It advocates preparation. If you have associates who find your passion with beekeeping contagious – and many of us do lead friends into keeping bees – suggest that this is the right time of the year to begin. The bees will not arrive for six months. Preparation does not eliminate frustration and failure, but it provides a way of dealing with it and fosters success.

Joining a local beekeeping association is a great first move. Just hang around with beekeepers. Learn the lingo and become a more insightful consumer. Do some basic reading. I suggest starting with two books that have stood the test of time –



*The First Lessons in Beekeeping*,  
Keith Delaplane  
Available from Dadant and  
Company, [dadant.com](http://dadant.com)

*The Joys of Beekeeping*, Richard  
Taylor  
Available on Amazon and elsewhere



“First Lessons” gives the practical basics without burying you in nifty details. (They come later.) “Joys of Beekeeping” talks about how beekeepers think. Brain training. Subscribe to a bee journal or two – American Bee Journal or Bee Culture. Sign up for a beginning beekeeping class or two – best in person, but now days online can work well. Avoid the teacher who has all the correct answers. In beekeeping, they don’t exist. Avoid the *new and improved* beekeeping systems. Learn the old standard Langstroth system first. It allows the beginner to find assistance more easily and in five or ten years, one will have enough experience to evaluate the suggested “improvements”. Most of the beekeeping evangelists who think we have done it wrong for the last 150 years have followings of naive nubees. Those with experience look carefully before they fall.

This is the time for the aspiring to become the informed. One of those many adventures in life.

I received a note from Kendra with a couple of questions about wintering bees. She first asks about winter ventilation. If you read the thoughts of the Darwinian beekeepers, they point out that in nature bees do not have good ventilation in their nests in hollow trees. So how do they handle the moisture that condenses in the hive? Air does not convect up through the colony in the winter. Why should we insist on it?

The biggest difference between the natural hive and the Langstroth hive is insulation. Our modern hive is  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick sides and top. The insulated tree gives much more stability to the temperature control engineered by the bees. For that reason, our managed system has a greater problem with condensation. The solution for us is to provide top venting where warm moist air can be vented.

We may try to provide additional side and top insulation in the winter, but it is still lacking. How much ventilation is a subject for a beekeeping debate. I find that only a small amount works well – the notch in the inner cover. Some place Popsicle sticks under the corners of the inner cover to give a small gap all the way around. Because bees follow their evolutionary urges and do not understand our modern hives, they will often work to propolize these vents especially if we arrange them too early in the fall. I feel it is important to keep them open. Cold seldom kills bees. Condensation will kill bees.

Kendra also asked about setting up the Mountain Home system. My method is rather simple. I remove the inner cover and place a sheet of newspaper over the top and pour granulated sugar on the paper. I provide holes in the paper to allow for the ventilation we talked about above – sometime one hole in the middle, sometimes holes around the edge. In order to make this work, I use a spacer that raises the inner cover over the piled sugar. This spacer is often call a shim... or in honor of the beekeeper who promoted it years back, an Imirie shim. George Imirie was a beekeeper of note in times gone by. (If you would like to read more of George's beekeeping wisdom check out his archives at [http://pinkpages.chrisbacherconsulting.com/.](http://pinkpages.chrisbacherconsulting.com/))

The Mountain Home system is used on hives that I feel will need an “assist” in the winter. Colonies in two deeps with lots of stores on board will be left to their own. Mouse guards are important this time of the year. I used to make my own. It was fun being self-sufficient, but now cheap mouse guards are easily available. Here is a picture of the ones I use on most of my hives. Clustered bees will not protect their comb in the winter cold and the mice will destroy multiple comb if given the chance.

Cold has arrived... late... but it is here this week. The bees are now in a cluster. If disturbed, they find it difficult to reassemble. Bees separated from their sisters will die. I try to disturb the cluster as little as possible. That is likely good for the beekeeper, also.



## CHORES OF THE MONTH - NOVEMBER

John Leibinger

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

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

**Unless we get another warm spell, you are not likely to see much activity in your hive(s).** Winter is just around the corner and the bees are settling in for the season. The nighttime temps will be running between the 20s to low 40s. Daytime temps may reach very low 50s occasionally. The bees are clustering to save some heat. They will be starting to consume their winter stores and will not be taking in sugar syrup at these temperatures.

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

#### **Finalize your colony activities for 2021\*\*:**

**\*\*Note:** These are much the same as October chores, with a few deletions. The deletions are primarily to avoid cracking open the hive bodies and breaking the propolis seals that the bees have created to reduce infiltration of the winter winds. I will repeat for emphasis..... ***This is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.*** Also, some of the notes below are specific to ventilation hives. See the October notes for condensing hives.

**Consider an Oxalic Acid sublimation treatment** to eliminate any remaining varroa mites that may have been in the colony or brought in by a late season robbing episode. One advantage of an OA sublimation this time of year (besides the obvious effectiveness it has when treating a broodless colony) is that you will not need to crack open the hive bodies and ruin the hive's propolis seals that were created to keep out the imminent winter winds.

#### **Tilt hive forward a little bit to assist moisture drainage.**

**Rake up leaves and debris from around the hive** to lessen the opportunity for mouse and pygmy shrew problems.

**Add mouse guards.** If you have Pygmy Shrews the openings will need to be reduced to about ¼" to 5/16". Don't forget....mice can climb, so protect upper entrances also. If you use entrance reducers as your mouse guard, make sure that the egress slot is at the top not the bottom. It seems counter intuitive, but if the slot is at the bottom it is easily plugged up with dead bees thus rendering it useless. When placed 'upside down' it allows the live bees to climb over the dead bodies to exit. A little inconsiderate and heartless of the bees if you are given to anthropomorphism.

**Make sure you have an upper entrance/exit.** It helps with ventilation and it is an easy egress point for bees to take cleansing flights in the winter. Make sure it is mouse/shrew proofed. Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees.

**Add an appropriate feeding shim and some solid feed** in the form of winter patties, a candy board, sugar bricks or cakes, or dry sugar above the top hive body. You may want to add emergency feed in later winter and having a spacer already in place will make that effort possible. Prepare ahead of time.

**Make sure there is adequate ventilation** to remove moisture from the hive. Bees breathe and metabolize the carbohydrates they consume to produce heat. A by-product of that metabolism is moisture, and it must find its way out of the hive to reduce dripping from condensation. **Cold wet bees are dead bees. It is preventable.**

**Consider adding a moisture board or quilt box** or some other method of capturing the moisture and preventing it from condensing and dripping on the bees.

**Consider (strongly) adding insulation at the top of the hive** to further reduce the opportunity for condensation.

**Consider wrapping your hive** to insulate or at least to eliminate infiltration of cold winter winds. Wraps are often done in black on the theory that there is a little solar heat gain on sunny winter days.

**Consider creating a wind block** with snow fencing, straw bales, large lawn bags filled with leaves ( word of caution: straw bales and to a lesser extent, bags of leaves may be attractive to mice, so use them with that warning in mind), or basically anything that you can position to break the force of the direct wind against your hive.

**Consider strapping down your hive** for the winter to prevent winter winds from toppling the hive.

**If you have been a conscientious beekeeper** throughout the 2021 season and have monitored and controlled varroa mites, left the bees with sufficient stores, ended the year with healthy bees and a young queen (less than a year old), you have provided your bees with the chance of thriving in Spring 2022. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

**Start preparing for the 2022 season:**

Renew your annual Apiary Registration with Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Clean up any dead outs that you have experienced this season.

Continue to increase your knowledge of bees and beekeeping:

- Read and study about bees and beekeeping
- Attend beekeeping meetings
- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees.
- Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.

Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.

Review your 2021 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.

Set new goals for 2022.

***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)



"He likes to bring them indoors for the winter."

## 2021 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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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  
2021 is WHITE.