



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2021

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Well here we are in October, even though it doesn't feel like it winter will be upon us soon. NIBA has tried to help you learn about different ways to get your colonies ready for the cold temperatures of winter and ideas on how to make sure your boxes are ready too. Knowledge is power and the more you learn the better beekeeper you'll become. This should transfer into more overwintered colonies. I think overall we've had better than average numbers of colonies that made it through the winter. We will continue to find speakers that help you become a better beekeeper.

I was extremely saddened to tell you about Dave Hill's passing Sunday. Dave was a friend, that when he was the NIBA President helped the club move forward and I learned a lot from him. His wife Marianne has been our Sweet Stuff newsletter editor, helped with our Facebook page as well as the Illinois State Beekeepers Association Bulletin editor.

We will continue to hold hybrid meetings, hopefully those that want to meet in person feel they can safely do that. We want all members to continue learning from our speakers whether that is on zoom or in person so please join us.

Stephanie Slater has been selected as the NIBA member of the year for 2021!! The selection came from the nominations sent in, the other candidates were all deserving as well in my opinion. Stephanie has helped NIBA continue to meet during the Covid shutdown through her technological skills but is a huge part of us holding hybrid meetings. Stephanie is also a NIBA Director that steps up to help

anyone that needs help with something. She's there to pass out bees, volunteers at the Fair, sends club emails, helps with the Facebook page and has helped get the newsletter out. All this while the President of the Walworth County Beekeepers Club. Please congratulate Stephanie the next time you see her or send her a message congratulating her!

I have found a couple of people to be on the Nominating Committee and I'm looking for one more to fill out the committee. If you're interested, please let me know, you will be tasked with presenting a slate for the 2022 NIBA Board at the November meeting.

**Tom**

### MEETING AGENDA

6:30 Q&A Newbees Q & A

7:00 Pledge of Allegiance

7:02 Moment of Silence for Dave Hill

7:05 Presentation: Clare & Martin of Buckfast Abbey

8:10 Old Business  
Green Living Expo  
Nomination Committee  
Board Positions  
Honey Donations  
Donating Honey for  
Military Christmas  
Stockings

8:25 New Business  
NIBA Member of the Year  
Award  
ISBA News/Updates

8:30 Raffles

Anything for the good of  
the group

Adjournment

## MY FIRST YEAR IN BEEKEEPING

Holli Boyle

I can't remember when I started thinking about keeping bees. Maybe it was when my husband's years of pie-in-the-sky talk of buying acreage in northern Wisconsin finally turned into "I guess we're doing this."

"But no farm animals," he said, a vague reference to the chickens we'd had in our small suburban backyard for three years, or perhaps he'd aimed to stave off any suggestion of alpacas, another now-and-then dream of mine.

"Fine," I said casually, "but I want bees." And just like that, I had decided to keep bees.

My new hobby didn't seem like it was going to be too expensive until I found out I needed a bear fence. Boxes, frames, tools, jacket, bees--it all adds up pretty quickly. It briefly occurred to me that perhaps my \$10 a jar bi-weekly honey habit wasn't so costly after all.

Within the first month of installing my first package (only one sting!), they swarmed. How could this happen? They have so much room! Where did they go? There was much agonizing about queens for a period until finally I checked, and, Glory Be! those who were left were back in business.

My first mite check in early June got me my second sting from someone who got up my pant leg. I did the sugar shake because I couldn't yet bear to intentionally kill any of my dear ones, just as they were getting going. Of course there were mites, and I dutifully added Apivar strips to both hives. In using Apivar, I knew I wouldn't be able to take any honey this year, but by this time I had decided that my goal was just to get my bees through the winter. What I had NOT considered, however, was how I was going to get the strips out forty-two days later. It turns out, bees can make a lot of honey in forty-two days. When I put the strips on, bees were in one hive body. By the time I took them out in late July, I had added more boxes, which were now full of heavy honey. I took Ibuprofen for a week after that.

Now it's October of my first year. I've gone from an anxious, "what did I get myself into?" novice to a more relaxed "the bees know what they're doing, I'll try not to screw it up" slightly more experienced novice. I've read books and magazine articles, watched videos and zoom meetings, consulted the websites of noted bee experts, and yes, observed my bees. Recently, as I stood watching them going in and out of the hive, hauling out the drones, I got stung again, twice.

"Okay, okay, I get it," I told them. Back off, they said. And so I have.

*Holli Boyle, now in her first year with the bees, joined NIBA during the Covid Zoom era. She lives and now keeps bees in Rhineland, Wisconsin. Holli is a regular online attendee at the NIBA meetings.*

## NIBA MEMBER OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS

Thank you to everyone that submitted nominations for the 2021 NIBA Member of the Year. We have an amazing group of people in this association. We would like to recognize all the nominees and share some of the kind words said about each of them:

**Tom Allen** – Although there is no playbook on how to lead an organization during a pandemic, Tom did so with patience, compassion, and effective leadership. He makes it look easy.

**Ralph Brindise** – Ralph is the biggest support for new beekeepers. His dedication and knowledge are greatly appreciated. He supported our membership with some big projects this year including the package/nuc order and serving as the superintendent for the McHenry County Fair Honey Show.

**Sue Dietz** – Sue continues to support our club by donating raffle prizes and so patiently answers all of our questions when we shop at her store.

**Jerry Gudaskas** – Jerry is a great mentor and gives freely of his time and resources. He instilled in me the curiosity about bees that led to my decision to keep bees. My interest in this fascinating adventure could not have happened without his assistance.

**Marianne Hill** – Marianne has been a strong leader in our association. She produces a quality newsletter each month and supports the interaction in our Facebook group.

**Marcin Matelski** – Marcin is an amazing beekeeper, mentor, educator, and advocate for beekeepers. He is generous with his time by inviting beekeepers to his apiary for mentoring sessions. He helps bring in excellent speakers. We are lucky to have Marcin in our club.

Dear NIBA Members,

Fall is the best time to plant trees and shrubs, and we should always be trying to improve our habitat for the bees. As in past years, I have trees for sale that are high on both the pollen and nectar scale. I have one Black Locust tree left for \$15. If you are interested, you can email me at [meadtoys@gmail.com](mailto:meadtoys@gmail.com).

Thanks, Randy Mead

## CHORES OF THE MONTH - OCTOBER

John Leibinger

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

***What's happening in the hive?*** Hive activity will be markedly reduced this month. Winter is just around the corner and the bees know it. The "Ousting of the Drones" should be winding down as the month progresses. The foragers are still scouting for natural nectar and pollen sources or other sources to pillage. Beware of robbing....from both ends of the process. If your hives are **being robbed**, the result is obviously disastrous. If your hives are **doing the robbing**, though it may seem less obvious, the results can be equally as disastrous. The weak hive that they may be robbing could be weak because of varroa mite infestation. When your bees are in the weak, infested hive, the parasitic varroa will be looking for a way out so they can find a healthier host. They will hitch a ride on your bees and find their new home in your apiary. **Now you have the mite problem!** Difficult to prevent, but you can mitigate the likelihood by making sure that you are providing plenty of sugar syrup at 2 parts sugar to one part water (four pounds of sugar to each quart of water). If your bees have plenty of access to food, their need to rob other hives will be lessened (but not necessarily eliminated).

There are still some winter bees being raised though the numbers will be far less than last month. We have already had some cool nights that would lead to clustering at night. The bees will recognize the need for establishing appropriate space for clustering and the need for food stores nearby. They will move and store their provisions accordingly.

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

**Get the Bees ready.**

**Get the Environment ready [two options: Ventilation Hives- hives that utilize top ventilation (currently the most common method utilized) and Condensing Hives-hives that do not utilize top ventilation].**

**Bees: Feed, Feed, Feed!** 2:1 sugar syrup (4 pounds of sugar for each quart of water) to maximize the concentration of carbohydrates and minimize the excess water they need to remove from the solution. It's getting cooler and it is harder to evaporate that excess moisture.

**Consider an Oxalic Acid sublimation or dribble treatment in later October** 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 seal that was created to keep out the imminent winter winds.

**Consider a Direct Feed Microbial treatment** to improve the gut microbiome of the bees.

**Environment: For those who utilize Ventilation Hives**

**Remove queen excluders if present.**

**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.** 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 in 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 lean towards 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. Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees.

**Add an appropriate feeding shim/spacer and maybe 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 (very 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 with the thought of providing a little solar heat gain on sunny winter days.

A quick search on the internet will provide you with a plethora of information on many approaches to hive insulation. **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.

**Environment: For those who utilize Condensing Hives**  
 Mostly the same as above (*Differences italicized and marked with \**):

**Remove queen excluders if present.**

**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.** *\*No upper entrance or ventilation hole in a condensing hive.* 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 in 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 lean towards anthropomorphism.

**\*No Upper Entrance .** *Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees. Since there is no upper entrance, you should check your hives periodically and specifically after a snow to see that the bees have egress to make cleansing flights.*

**Add an appropriate feeding shim/spacer and maybe 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. Alternately, you may want to put this emergency feed in place prior to closing out your hives for the winter.

**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.

**\*Add insulation at the top of the hive** to reduce the opportunity for condensation on the lid.

**\*Wrap your hive with insulation** to insulate and to eliminate infiltration of cold winter winds.

**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.

## General Info

[More on Condensing Hives](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

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)

Formulas for making 2:1 syrup for fall feeding:

Sugar (lb)	1	2	4	8	16	32
Water	1cup	1 pint	1 quart	1/2gal	1 gal	2 gal

Note 1: Do not boil sugar syrup (its OK to boil the water prior to adding sugar but not after). Boiling can lead to the creation of HMF (Hydroxymethylfurfural) which is toxic to honeybees.

Note 2: Some people are concerned about using sugar from beets. There is no difference in the sugar (sucrose) from beets vs cane sugar (sucrose). Sucrose is sucrose. Genetic modification (GM) in beets modify the proteins in the plants, not the sucrose.

Note 3: Use white table sugar (sucrose) only. Do not use brown sugar or molasses. Do not use organic sugar.

[How to make one type of candy board.](#) (CTRL + Click)

### ROBBING SCREENS



### MOUSE DAMAGE



## MOUSE GUARDS



## VENTILATION

## WIND BREAKS



## HIVE WRAPS



## A RENEWAL OF PERSPECTIVE

John Leibinger

*Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together. Another joy of beekeeping!*

I have been writing the **‘Chores of the Month’** for a while now and recently had a moment of enlightenment. I have been focused almost solely on the tasks associated with keeping bees....all stuff that you might do to responsibly manage your bees to provide them a reasonable chance of surviving. In this endeavor, I seemed to have drifted from one of the key elements that drive people to keep bees. That element is simply, **Joy**. So, in an effort to provide a little more balance in my perspective, I thought I would write about some of the more joyful wonders of beekeeping. I will try to make my musings somewhat seasonally relevant. Let’s get to it.....

**The Joy of Fall is in the air.** The bee season is winding down and the hard work for the year is mostly complete. The bee yard still shows life

on warmer days and that brings me joy. I know that I have provided my best effort to help my bees make it through to spring. There is a degree of satisfaction and peace, maybe even a sense of well-being that comes with that. It is a sense of joy. Since I am discussing fall, my neighbors pumpkin patch is spectacular. The pumpkins are plentiful and beautifully rounded, not in small part due to pollination efforts from my bee yard. That is joyful both to him and me. **The Joy of the Honey Harvest.** Yes, it can be a lot of work, but when done with friends and family, especially children; it can be a delightful experience. It is a time to create joyful family memories to be remembered at future Thanksgiving gatherings. It is a sense of accomplishment and pride at bringing a delicacy from nature to your table. That is

joyful. I have been known to indulge in honey laden wax cappings while working the honey harvest. The fragrance is intoxicating and the sweetness explodes on your tongue. It is pure joy. If this was your first harvest, it will be all the more memorable and all the more joyful.

**The Joy of Honey.** Whether it be honey in the comb, creamed honey, or liquid honey, this is one of the by-products of beekeeping that brings joy to most people. Enjoying the fruits of your labors, or more precisely, your bee's labors, is truly a joyful experience. Start your day with the nooks and crannies of an English Muffin filled with fresh honey, or a cup of yogurt with a dollop of golden honey folded (not stirred) into it or your choice of berries drizzled with honey, all topped off by your morning coffee or tea lightly sweetened with a spoonful of honey. A little over the top...maybe. Joyful...surely.

Do you bake for the holidays? Substituting honey for refined sugar can be a way to provide a healthier alternative sweetener. It is joyful to bake and more joyful to bake with healthier ingredients.

Have you ever tried dipping pecans in honey and eating as a snack? JOYFUL!

**The Joy of Honey Gifting.** Giving the gift of honey to others brings joy to the beekeeper. Receiving the gift of honey brings joy to the recipient. Friends and neighbors, maybe the mail delivery person, the receptionist at your doctor's office... the list is long for those who would find joy in that gift and you will find joy in giving it. Last year our club gifted honey for holiday stockings being sent to several hundred service members. Be filled with pride and joy. Beekeeping is not all about *chores* and *varroa mites* as I have been presenting. Whether it be reading, learning, mentoring, the comradery of fellow beekeepers or some of the items discussed above, there is much JOY to be had.

November 13, 2021 - ISBA Annual Meeting - Springfield, Illinois

The November 13, 2021 Annual Fall meeting is the 130th Anniversary of the Illinois State Beekeepers Association

The [agenda](#) and [registration form](#) are now available online. Both are in PDF format. The [registration form](#) is in a fillable format for you to access, complete, print off and then mail in with payment.

**Featured Speakers -**

- Dr. Jim Tew
- Dr. Adam Dolezal
- Plus IDoA Bees and Apiaries Report by Brian Rennecker

The vendors as of today are:

- [Hillco Bees](#)
- [BL Plastics](#)

Advance registration only (check or money order made payable to the ISBA) - walk in attendance will not be accepted.

- Different venue - the Fall Meeting will be held at the [Northfield Inn and Conference Center - Springfield](#)
- ISBA Member price \$20 - Includes lunch
- Non Member price \$30 - includes lunch
- ISBA Members who are active duty military or veterans - \$10 includes meal
- Attendance will be limited to the first 150\*
- The [Northfield Inn](#) is offering a special room rate of \$85 per night plus taxes. Each room has double queen beds and includes complimentary breakfast. **You will need to call the Northfield Inn to make your reservation at the special rate.**

The latest Covid-19 mitigation information applicable to Springfield, IL and Sangamon County will be posted here.

\*At the present time we are planning on a maximum of 150 attendees. The maximum number may be decreased if capacity limitations are imposed

VISIT [WWW.ILSBA.COM](http://WWW.ILSBA.COM) FOR THE FULL MEETING AGENDA AND REGISTRATION FORM

## 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.