



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2020

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Here we are in the month of September, and our timeframe to work with the bees gets compressed. If you were lucky enough to have your bees make enough honey for them and to share with you, it should have been extracted by now. Feeding the bees, doing mite checks and treatments need to be done this month. Going forward we need to do everything we can to get the colony in position to overwinter. As a club, educating our members is why we're here. We will hold at least one more mentor session to help members become familiar with what needs to be done and the hands on experience at the mentor hives to know how to do it. Let's all become proactive about fighting the mites as far into the season as possible so we can have higher than average colony overwintering numbers. We are the largest beekeeping club in the State of Illinois. Let's raise our overwintering success numbers.

Our Zoom meeting numbers have been dropping as we get further into the year, which is also happening to other groups in general. We understand people are tired of looking at a computer screen, either because of work or you're missing that sense of community you get by being in person. But you're missing out on some really good presentations. I think most, if not all of us, would rather meet in person. I miss shaking hands with you before or after a meeting, talking about your bees or anything else that's going on in your life. I will not take these for granted again. Over the last

two months, I've seen questions on the Facebook page about an issue or subject that was covered in the meeting. Most meetings are done shortly after 8PM. We have tried to keep the monthly presentations about what is going on in the hive that month to make it easy to check your colonies against what was presented.

We held another mentor session August 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. We extracted honey from the MCC hives, and they did mite checks and hive inspections at the Fairgrounds and Sherman Hospital hives.

*Tom*

## MEETING AGENDA

6:30 Q&A with Marcin, John, Ralph

7:00 Pledge of Allegiance

7:05 Old Business  
New Website, Ralph & Terri

7:10 New Business  
Honey Frame Photo Contest, Stephanie

New Newsletter Column,  
"Ask Carl", Stephanie

NIBA Honey Show at  
October Meeting, Ralph &  
Corky  
Get your entry in by Oct 1

Drawing for those that  
attend our monthly  
meeting, Tom

Sweet Stuff Survey, Tom

AFB/EFB test kits, Marcin

7:25 Fall/Winter hive prep,  
Marcin

Q&A session

8:05 Drawing, Stephanie

Anything for the good of  
the group

Adjournment



## AUGUST PHOTO CONTEST WINNER DAVID MURILLO

**“Young Beekeeper”**

Hello NIBA members,

We're excited to introduce a new segment for the newsletter - **Ask Carl**. Carl Christiansen is a long time beekeeper and NIBA member. He has provided valuable advice to many of us over the years, and we're happy that he's agreed to do it virtually now. Please submit your question for Carl at <https://forms.gle/AUefmt8qB7XeqXVB9>, and we'll provide his answer in the next newsletter.

### **Virtual Honey Show**

Do you have blue ribbon honey? NIBA is excited to host a virtual honey show in October. Here's what you need to know:

- To enter, submit one jar of extracted honey in a one-pound queenline or classic jar
- Two classes: light amber or amber
- Entries should have no labels. You can (but not required) include a label with your entry that will be affixed by the judges after the show
- All entries become a donation to NIBA for fundraising purposes
- Deadline to enter is 10/1/2020
- Information on drop off locations to follow
- Score sheet to be provided to entrants via email after the show

This event is for fun as well as an educational opportunity. We'll learn more on how to best prepare, package and market. During the October meeting, the judges will demonstrate how honey is judged. If you're extracting honey, please set aside one jar so you can join the fun.

### **Club Survey**

We want to hear from the membership! In the next few weeks, we will be sending out a survey to all members and we hope all of you will provide feedback. Your responses are valuable and will guide the board on the club's direction for 2021.

## MENTORING DAYS

We held a second mentor days session August 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> and gave new beekeepers hands-on experience doing mite checks and extracting honey. We had 3 mentors and 5 mentees at the MCC hives on the 21<sup>st</sup> ready to extract honey. We went through the hives to start checking frames to see how many we would be extracting. As we checked the honey from some open cells, we found



the honey to have a moisture content under 16%. We used different refractometers to be sure the readings were correct. We extracted about 10 gallons of honey from 2 of the hives. The 3<sup>rd</sup> hive wasn't far enough along to share honey with us. We need to do a mite check soon.

Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup>, a group met at the Fairgrounds hives and did mites checks and general inspections. They used the sugar roll test and the new Dawn dish soap test and got zero mites both times.

Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup>, a group met at the Sherman Hospital hives and did mite checks and general hive inspections.

They also used the sugar roll test and the Dawn dish soap test but they found about 4 mites per 100 bees.



None of the mentor hives have been treated for mites yet, but it should happen in the near future.

## NEW HAPPENINGS

**Photo contest-** This month we're changing things up a bit. The monthly photo contest held during the meeting will be a picture of a frame of your honey. Send Stephanie Slater a photo of your best looking frame of honey, and we'll judge them during the meeting. I hope to see lots of photos this month! The winner of the contest is placed as the background photo on the Facebook page and is published in the following month's Sweet Stuff!

**Ask Carl-** A new addition to the Sweet Stuff will be a column named after the column answer man, Carl Christiansen. The column will be called Ask Carl, and it will give experienced beekeepers a place to ask questions that are a bit more complicated than the new beekeeper would ask. Carl is a long-time beekeeper and NIBA member and has always been a great resource during our meetings. I'm pleased that he's agreed to do this! I remember when Dave Hill asked Carl to get up and tell us how he started beekeeping. I wish I had taken a video of what Carl said because it was that great.

**Our new website-** Terri Reeves and Ralph Brindise (I think mostly Terri) have been working to convert us from our previous website host to it being hosted by Go Daddy, and it hasn't been an easy process. The previous host made it nearly impossible to jump through the hoops to move our website, but through the perseverance of Terri and Ralph, we are really close to going live with the new website.

**Survey-** We will be sending out a survey about the Sweet Stuff. We are extremely happy with how Marianne Hill has put the newsletter together—weaving the stories and articles together can't be easy, and ours looks great. After some members told Board members they don't read the newsletter, we discussed ways to make sure Marianne's hard work isn't wasted. Please answer the questions honestly. Maybe you're too busy or you get too many emails—let us know. We can explore options that work for the majority of the members.

**Drawing-** We're trying to boost meeting attendance, so we will hold a drawing at the end of each meeting. The names of the members attending the meeting will be entered into the drawing, which will be done at the end of the meeting. The winner of the drawing will receive a \$15.00 gift card to Harvard Eggs, Feed and Produce!

**Honey Show-** NIBA will be conducting a honey show in October. The initial judging will happen beforehand, but the final judging will happen live during our October meeting. Every member can participate by entering a single 1-pound glass jar of Light Amber or Amber honey. It must be in a classic or queenline glass jar. Please **don't** put a label on the jar, but if you want a label on it later, include one with the jar when you drop it off. We will have 4 drop off locations: Ralph Brindise 517 Northlake Road, Lakemoor; John Leibinger, 12313 Hensel Road, Huntley; Al Fullerton, 2104 Crystal Lake Road, Cary; or Sue Dietz, Harvard Eggs, Feed, & Produce, 17205 McGuire Rd, Harvard. The honey entry must be dropped off by October 1<sup>st</sup>, there will be a box clearly marked by the front door of each location for your entry. Make sure your name is either in the bag or removable on your jar. Every entry will be judged by Ralph Brindise and Corky Schnadt for color, clarity, fill level, etc. before the meeting. Ron Fischer will judge the best 3 in each color category on a live Zoom portion of our October meeting. This is a unique opportunity to enter a honey show that is only for club members where you will get feedback on how your honey stacks up against the other members.

**The entered honey will be donated to NIBA to be sold in the future.**



## 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!

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. Like last year, I have Trees and Shrubs for sale that are high on both the pollen and nectar scale. The Shrubs (Button Bush & Pussy Willow) I am selling for \$10 each. The Trees (Basswood/Linden & Black Locust) I am selling for \$15 each. I also have Tulip Trees which I had to cut back this year, and I am selling them for \$10 which is a great deal. I have a limited supply, and these will be sold on a first come basis. If you are interested, you can email me at [rmeadtoys@gmail.com](mailto:rmeadtoys@gmail.com).

Thanks, Randy Mead

## ASK CARL

We asked Carl what he does to prevent robbing in his apiary. Here's his advice:



- Be on the ball August 1<sup>st</sup>. Reduce entrances to about 1" using entrance reducers. If it's hot (like we had just a couple of weeks ago), the colony may need some more air flow so you can lift the telescoping cover a little.
- If the bees aren't making honey, they will pilfer from smaller colonies.
- Be careful when removing honey supers when there is no honey flow. Don't leave hives open and exposed, and protect the supers immediately. You can pile straw up in front of a hive to stop robbing.
- Don't make up nucs too late or they will be at risk for being robbed out.
- Make sure Boardman feeders are not dripping.
- Always have 10 frames in your brood boxes. You will have more bees but fewer drones when the frames are closer together because there is less room for them to build drone cells.

## CHORES OF THE MONTH – SEPTEMBER

John Leibinger

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

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

**You will observe that the colony population will start to decline noticeably this month.** There will, however, still be significant brood rearing going on as the nurse bees work to raise the ‘winter bees’ that will carry this colony through the winter. Winter bees are very important bees for the survival of the colony, so do all you can to assist them through their wintery journey. That means leaving or providing them with sufficient stores to overwinter, providing them protection against robbing, providing protection against mouse infiltration, providing protection against wind infiltration in the hive, and helping prevent disease by controlling the ever present Varroa mite.

**You are likely observing the Fall ‘Ousting of the Drones’.** Don’t confuse this with robbing. A small group of workers will be ganging up on a drone, dragging him to the edge of the bottom board and dumping his lazy, freeloading carcass over the abyss (drama added for the smiles of our ever increasing female beekeeper population).

**You may notice a significant change in the odor (not a pleasant change) of your hives (second or third week of Sept, historically, but maybe a bit different this year....it has been a strange weather year).** This is very common, and is a result of goldenrod pollen collection. FYI, I was just out observing my hives (late August) and pollen is coming in like a spring day, some bright yellow, some yellowish orange, and some off white. Life is good in the beehive!

**You may well be seeing robbing occur.** With a little good weather, we may experience a Fall nectar flow primarily from goldenrod and asters, but as the month progresses, food sources will become more lean and opportunistic robbing may occur. Weak hives are most susceptible, so consider combining a weak hive with a stronger one to help the combined colony make it through winter. If successful, you can split the hive in early Spring to increase your colony count.

A robbing event can not only kill a colony, but can destroy drawn out comb which is, arguably, the most valuable resource you have in the hive.

**Expect to find your bees have developed some ‘attitude’ as we get into the month.** Reduced resources not only lead to robbing behaviors but also defensive behaviors. Dress accordingly.

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

**Finalize your annual harvest if you haven’t already.** Let the bees collect and store some natural fall food after your harvest. Return wet supers to the hives to allow the bees to clean them up. Place the supers above the inner cover and below the outer cover.\* This has a twofold benefit. First, the bees can pull the remaining honey from the super and store it in the boxes below. Second, it gets the super frames cleaned up and in many cases repaired and ready for winter storage. You may be surprised at what a nice job they do.

\*Beware the possibility of promoting robbing when doing this. Seal off any outside entrance from the inner cover. Don’t use a ventilated inner cover when doing this.

**Bottle and label your harvest.** Sell some, give some to friends and family, prepare some Holiday gifts, **donate some to your favorite bee club** for fund raising.

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

It is very important to get the mite loads under control now. The brood that will be raised as winter bees are in process. Help them out. Pay attention to labeling instructions when using treatments and be mindful of temperature ranges for various types of treatments. 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 colonies to thrive and survive and come out of winter as healthy hives raring to go for 2021. This is a great step towards sustainable beekeeping.

**Be very aware of robbing.** It happens quickly and can be devastating. Reduce entrance openings to the smallest size on your entrance reducers, or alternately, install robbing screens. There are many types of robbing screens, some very simple and some a bit more ‘inventive’. Check the internet for robbing screens and you will get an abundance of ideas. You will have to use your judgement on the direction you take. Be aware that robbing is not just honey bee to honey bee, but oftentimes involves wasps, hornets, and yellow jackets. If you are inclined to use a yellow jacket trap, do not place it near your hives as it may tend to draw more yellow jackets to your hives and cause greater problems.

**Add mouse guards.** Nights will start to cool off soon and mice will be looking for warm, dry spaces to make fall and winter nests. Don't let that be your hives.

**Check your hives for honey stores.** Consider moving existing full frames of honey to outer edges and partially filled towards the center allow bees easier access to filling them. Do not break up/ separate the brood nest to accomplish this.

**Start feeding and don't stop until they stop taking it.**\*\* Use a 2:1 sugar to water syrup mix. Check your feeders often enough to keep them filled. Avoid using Boardman type feeders this time of year to reduce inducing robbing.  
 \*\* If they still seem to be consuming by the end of October(which is doubtful) you may want to stop. They will need time to reduce the moisture content of the syrup before winter sets in.

## 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)

Hive Inspection Checklist (Ctrl+Click link)

**Sugar Roll Method:** [varroa mite monitoring - The Sand Hill](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

**Alcohol Wash Method:** [Alcohol Wash for Mite Control - YouTube](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

## ROBBING SCREENS



## MOUSE DAMAGE



## MOUSE GUARDS



## FALL/WINTER PREPARATION SHOPPING LIST

- Robbing screens
- Mite treatment
- Sugar (Granulated white sugar)
- Microbial supplement
- Mouse guards (or an outdoor cat 😺 )
- Hive top insulation
- Quilt Box/Moisture Board or equivalent for winter moisture absorption

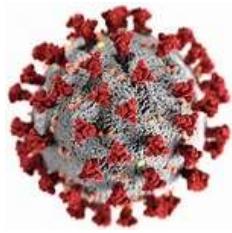
- Candy Boards
- Spacers/Imirie shims for winter emergency feeding
- Hive wraps, i.e., Bee Cozy, tar paper, insulation, etc.
- Wind Breaks
- Straps for securing hives

## OUCH!

Larry Krengel

I got another sting today. It was in one of those places that really hurts. You likely know where those places are. For the nonbeekeepers who ask, "Doesn't it hurt when you get stung?" Yes, it does. But it does not last long. Kindly, for those who do not show a severe allergy to bee stings, there

could be a real upside. Reported in a number of places including Bee Culture



(<https://www.beeculture.com/catch-the-buzz-beekeepers-have-less-covid-preliminary/>) there seems the possibility that bee stings could reduce one's susceptibility to Covid-19. It is still an open question with no research to back it up. The online magazine Science Direct published an article by a group of scientists suggesting further investigation was warranted <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0041010120302245>). It seems academics think this is an interesting lead to follow.

For years folk science has reported that bee sting therapy (BST) was successful in dealing with autoimmune diseases such as arthritis and lupus. The American Apitherapy Society (<https://apitherapy.org/>) continues to promote BST for dealing with a number of debilitating diseases. I have not heard that they have added Covid-19 to that list.

Is it true? Can bee stings be good for you? I, for one, do not need scientific confirmation either way. It will not change my time with my bees. If it is indeed good for me, so be it.



I need not intentionally search out therapeutic bee stings. They seem to come along regularly with my preoccupation with keeping bees. But thinking they make me healthier soothes the pain, if only a bit. It is not a medical opinion, certainly not, but often believing helps things come true. Cross my fingers and knock on wood... just in case it helps.

## 2020 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Club Extractor Coordinator – Randy Mead

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinators – Cathy Davis & Phil Webb

## 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!

## 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)

The queen marking color for 2020 is BLUE.