



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2020

President's Message

Tom Allen

Happy November, at least I think it's November. As I write this we've had a string of days with temperatures in the 70s, which has allowed most of us to check on our bees and even add some liquid feed for them. I'm not complaining at all, hopefully this warm spell will help our bees overwinter. I hope you had a productive October in your apiary, personally I'm very excited because my 3 hives all look pretty strong going into the winter. Because the hives are used for our mentors, we were able to treat them, put some feed on them and insulate them in mid-October. There are two single deep colonies and third colony has two deep brood boxes and a full honey super for winter feed should they need it. I feel we've done everything we could to help them get through the winter. I owe a big thanks to Ralph Brindise and John Leibinger for their guidance and help this year.

NIBA has again paid for every member to register to watch 2 live beekeeping presentations at the Garfield Park Conservatory, November 18th with Dr Samuel Ramsey and December 2nd with Dr. Humberto Boncristiani. This is an effort NIBA is doing to for members to take advantage of zoom presentations by some very prominent beekeeping researchers. Our Board has attempted to keep the club going forward during this pandemic which has caused some clubs to stop everything until they can meet in person again. We felt we could find ways to continue meeting so we could keep doing what our club has always done, educate new beekeepers and have a way to connect with experienced beekeepers. We had our first year of a structured mentor program and we've paid well you paid to watch these tremendous people in the beekeeping world talk about their research and experiences so please take advantage of them. I saw Dr. Ramsey last year at the ABF convention last year in Schaumburg and he was amazing. I didn't feel his presentation was above my head, quite the opposite he spoke in plain English so we could really understand what he was talking about. I don't think it matters if you are a first year beekeeper or a twenty-year beekeeper you'll get something from his presentation. Dr. Boncristiani is a long time beekeeper that's doing research on the interaction between

ABF VIRTUAL

**Three Nights Only:
January 5-7, 2021**

GET THE INTERACTIVE BEEKEEPING ADVICE YOU'VE
BEEN MISSING THIS YEAR DUE TO COVID-19.

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KEEP A LOOKOUT FOR DETAILS AND REGISTRATION
See You There!

honey bees, Varroa mites, viruses and the diseases they cause and how we as beekeepers can interfere in the process.

This year's ABF Convention is virtual. Being a member of ABF comes with many benefits for every beekeeper, one of which is free registration for this year's convention.

We had our last mentor session in October and both the MCC and Sherman locations had members there to go through the hives one more time. We treated with Oxalic Acid sublimation at MCC one more time before we wrapped the hives up for the winter. It was a cold windy day that had a few water drops added in just for the fun of it so we didn't keep the hives open too long. I

hope everyone that attended any of the mentor sessions had fun and learned new beekeeping skills by getting some hands on training with the mentors. We hope to expand the program next year by making the sessions regularly scheduled monthly. More information will come out about that in an upcoming meeting.



NIBA Teams up with Sherman Hospital's Prairie Restoration

Larry Krengel

The honeybee is an important element in today's environment. Even as our population grows and we further tame the world with houses and roads, as we pave our drives and pour concrete curbs and sidewalks, the honeybee still finds a way to survive and serve. In support of this, NIBA not only works with new and existing beekeepers, but also helps to encourage a greater understanding of the important place the honeybees holds in our world.

As part of this effort, NIBA lent financial support and beekeeping expertise to the organic garden and prairie restoration on the campus of Sherman Hospital in Elgin. This summer the program established a teaching beeyard with two colonies. As part of this effort, introductory sessions have been offered to the hospital and gardening community and NIBA has used these hives as a mentoring site.

It was a good year for the fledgling beeyard that provided a 100+ pound honey crop. The honey is being sold to the hospital community with the proceeds going to further develop the site.

In recognition of the efforts in renovating the prairie, the hospital group (made up of many including Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists) received an impressive award from the Conservation foundation certifying them as a Conservation@work site. NIBA's support helped make this recognition possible.





Chores of the Month – November

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

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 2020:**

****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'll repeat for emphasis.... ***This is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.***

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 to provide 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 2020 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 2021. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

Start preparing for the 2021 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 2020 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.

Set new goals for 2021.

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)





Ask Carl

Q. Should we be feeding bee pollen substitution in the fall? If so, how much?

Pollen substitutes are mainly used to encourage brood rearing, like in mid-March to get the colonies built up for the honey flow or for splitting and for use on packages when installing early in April. Pollen substitutes can also be used on colonies late in July, August, and September when there is little pollen available to encourage brood rearing of winter bees.

Q. Does feeding one pound make any difference then not feeding at all?

You can give them as much as they will eat, but in smaller portions. Pollen subs can dry out and also become a breeding ground for hive beetles. Any amount is better than nothing, but when natural pollen is available, they tend to ignore the substitutes.

Friday's Meeting Agenda

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

7:00 Pledge of Allegiance

7:05 Old Business Tom

7:10 New Business Tom

7:15 Photo Contest Stephanie

7:20 Honey Show Winners

7:30 Marcin Hive Findings

8:05 Wheel of Fortune Winner

Honey Show Winners

LIGHT AMBER

1st Place - Stephanie Slater
2nd Place - Sue Dietz
3rd Place - Alberta England

AMBER

1st Place - Jim Haisler
2nd Place - Christie Binz
3rd Place - Donna Taliaferro

Photo Winners

Ralph Brindise and Al Fullerton tied!



Figure 1 - Bee on Sedum by Ralph Brindise



Figure 2- Clear the pad...the gold team is coming in hot and heavy by Al Fullerton

Don't forget to submit your photos each month by the Thursday preceding the meeting.