



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JULY 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

July started out hot, many friends ask me how do the bees deal with the heat which gets my foot in the door to talk about bees and gives my wife the signal to sit down somewhere. I've spoken with many of you have put more honey supers on than maybe you've ever had on before which is awesome and could mean that you'll have a large honey harvest!

Remember we will be having a meeting on July 17 th instead of a picnic, our speaker will be a young lady that was a bee researcher at the University of Illinois in Champaign Urbana and now works for the University of Illinois's Extension Office out of Effingham Illinois. She did research on and published a paper on the waggle dance which is interesting. She'll be talking about her research as well as what she sees as a beekeeper herself.

NIBA is just about to begin our summer event months. We have been asked to be at more events each year which means that our club is being talked about by more people who hold these events. It also means we need more volunteers to work these events to talk about bees and sell honey. We will be at an event in Lake Zurich that September, if you're interested in volunteering there please let me know.

Looking at the SignupGenius program we still have some shifts completely open and some that need one or two people to fill them up. Please look it up at the link below and sign up to volunteer for a shift. If this is your first shift please include your t-shirt size.

www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0549AFAF2EAAF5C61-57304310-mchenry#/

Tom

News from the NIBA beeyard

By Larry Krengel

NIBA maintains an apiary on the campus of McHenry County College. These hives provide honey sold at the county fair and other events during the year. The profits go to support the many projects of the Association. In addition, our beeyard is used for ongoing mentoring sessions.

We decided to raise queens in the NIBA beeyard this year using the Cloake Board – an invention by Harry Cloake, a New Zealand beekeeper back in the 20th century.¹ To acquire the larvae to raise our queens in the Cloake hive we chose to use the C. C. Miller technique (invented 130 years ago)². We tapped a hive that was doing quite well producing honey in the yard for these larvae. Those genetics seemed good.



The bees did not catch on to our system. We needed to adjust the approach... just a little. It is often that way in the beeyard. Our actions needed to be modified to meet the inclinations of the bees. Ultimately the bees and we, the keepers, made it work.

As of this writing, the bees in the Cloak hive have created numerous queen cells. Many times beekeepers scream “Yikes!” upon seeing a frame looking like this thinking the bees are ready to swarm. Not so here. We are celebrating.

Not all of these cells will become queens. Many will.

The present plan is to disassemble the Cloak hive using the frames to create a half dozen mating nucs. Each nuc will receive one of our queen cells. We may have spare queen cells.

If we have mating success, these can become our wintering queens. Young queens have a better survival rate. We could create new colonies or use these queens to requeen our existing hives.

The advantage of the Cloak system is that many queens can be raised using only one strong colony. For many backyard beekeepers that is an interesting option. It could lead one to be a “sustainable beekeeper.” For all, that is a admirable goal.

1. https://www.betterbee.com/instructions-and-resources/how-to-use-a-cloake-board.asp?srsltid=AfmBOooGSyTr_sf5YHPyXxlycJy18f4ZLks17ynjxgqbT3lrWZesMsSa
2. <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/millermethod.html>

McHenry County Fair is Coming!!!

June 29th – August 3rd

Sign up here to participate in the Honey Show:

<https://mchenrycountyfair.com/exhibitors/>

Sign up to work a booth time and meet some amazing people. We NEED you!



Hive Activity in NIBA Beeyard July 3rd



Chores of the Month – July – still lots to do and the heat is on!

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive?

The colony population will have peaked by this month. You should be observing lots of bees and still see plenty of brood at all stages being raised to replace the older bees in the colony. The rate of laying of the queen will typically start to taper off from the rate that has been experienced throughout the spring season.

Temperatures are continuing to be on the hot side, so ventilation and available water sources are 'must haves' for your bees.

The bee population is no longer expanding, but the Varroa mite population likely is. You must monitor their growth by doing regular mite checks (monthly sugar roll or preferably, alcohol wash) and take appropriate action to remediate any problems. The best place to start to make the decision on how to treat is to visit the Honeybee Health Coalition website and use their Varroa Management Decision Tool. (See link in General Information section below.) **Beware the high temperatures and the type of treatment you use. FOLLOW THE LABEL!**

The bees should have stored some nectar from May and June and you will likely be finding capped frames of honey in your supers. Unfortunately, many have also found that the bees have been storing a lot of honey in the brood chamber(s). This often leads to a honey bound situation that in turn can lead to overcrowding swarms and based on the word on the street, there has been a **LOT** of that going on. The solution is twofold; 1) Provide space in the brood box for the queen to lay by removing 'honey-bound' frames and replacing with new foundation or preferably open drawn comb, 2) Keep providing the bees space to store the honey by adding supers and hope that the bees move some of the nectar/honey up. Don't wait for the bees to cap the existing frames before adding additional supers. Remember, when the bees bring in nectar it is very dilute and takes up lots of space. Over time they remove the moisture and cap the honey, but in the meantime they still require more space for the continuous inflow of new nectar. If you don't provide the space via supers, they will find it in the brood chamber.

This may be the month to start harvesting those capped frames in your supers. If you do so early, replace the supers and you may get some more production. The normal late June and early July nectar flows from Catalpa and Linden trees have or will shortly have run their course, but nectar flows continue into July with more herbaceous plants than trees and then taper off as we enter August. When removing honey to harvest, make sure that there is still plenty of honey left for the bees to survive the dearth in August. If you decide to harvest all your supers sometime this month, and if the nectar flow slows down, you will need to feed sugar syrup to help get them through the lean times of mid to late summer. Keep in mind that 'honey' storage at this time will likely be mostly the sugar water you are providing. When a flow restarts for the fall, you will have to decide whether to replace with fresh supers (with drawn comb) to collect a fall harvest or to just let the bees continue storing for their winter needs.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Maintain the space around your hive(s). Your bees work hard at thermo-regulation of the hive. Help them out. Trim weeds and grass to allow maximum air flow as the temperatures rise. Maintaining a clear flight path to the hive also increases their foraging efficiency.

Provide additional ventilation to assist the bees in maintaining proper hive temperatures. This can be in the form of ventilated inner covers or as simple as propping the outer cover to allow more air circulation. The additional ventilation is also helpful in the conversion of nectar to honey. Better ventilation eases the job of moisture removal from the stored nectar.

Make sure the bees have a water source (not your neighbor's pool!!) as we move into the heat of summer. Bees collect water (and a fair amount of it) to help cool the hive as part of their thermo-regulation efforts.

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

Know what you have and keep records. Keep Varroa growth in check by utilizing a miticide, organic acids, drone comb culling, a combination of IPM methods, and/or a brood break. **Pay attention to labeling instructions (particularly temperature ranges for safe use)** when using treatments and be mindful that you cannot leave honey supers on for all methods of treatments. The only treatments currently, that for sure are EPA approved for use while honey supers are on are Hopguard 2 or 3, Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS), Formic Pro, and Api-Bioxal (a branded Oxalic acid). **Remember: THE LABEL IS THE LAW ...PERIOD.**

Sometimes regulations make obvious sense; sometimes they seem.....hmm....less obvious.

Your specific approach will be influenced by your personal goals, philosophy and ethics, but, if you have a mite problem, **doing nothing is not an acceptable answer if you want your colony to thrive and survive.** You must have healthy hives going into later summer so the colony can raise healthy nurse bees that in turn raise healthy winter bees that will carry the colony through until next Spring.

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. 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.

Monitor the hives for queen signs. Stuff happens....the queen may be failing and the bees need to replace her. She may have died for some reason. You need to know that they have the resources to make a new queen or you will have to provide those resources from another colony. Alternately, you can buy and install a queen. Don't allow your hive to remain queen-less. Doing so will likely lead to a 'laying worker' condition. This is a problem that is not easily resolved and oftentimes results in the death of the colony. Stay ahead of problems and take action when needed.

Harvest honey appropriately. Don't overharvest, there are some lean weeks ahead for your bees. Consider feeding if needed.

Return extracted frames to the hives for them to continue to make more honey.

If you are calling it a season for your honey crop, place your super of wet combs above your inner cover and below your outer cover. Some beekeepers will put an empty super in between the inner cover and the wet super. Either way, the bees will come up and clean/dry it out and refurbish the comb to 'like new' condition. Don't leave them on too long or the bees will start refilling them. This process makes for much easier/cleaner winter storing.

Consider starting to split out some nucs to raise bees for next year if this is part of your goal plan.

Consider raising some queens to go into fall/winter with fresh young queens. Statistically, survival of winter colonies improves and reduction/delay/sometimes elimination of spring swarming is a result. Don't delay though, time is of the essence. There are many ways to go about this that do not require a lot of equipment or experience. At the backyard beekeeper level, you can keep it pretty simple. The bees are very good at this if you create the proper conditions. Do some research.

Start to watch out for robbing later in the month. Reduce entrances or add robbing screens if needed. Don't dawdle around when harvesting honey.

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)
[Varroa Management Decision Tool](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Sugar Roll Method: [Sugar Roll Mite Inspection - YouTube](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

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

Pollen identification chart:

[Pollen Color Chart](#) (Ctrl+Click link) **Inspection sheets:**

[Inspection Checksheet \(basic\)](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Inspection Checksheet \(detailed\)](#) (Ctrl+Click link)



Honeybees of the 22nd century

Written by AI with the little help of Larry Krengel

We beekeepers are the benefactors of the efforts of many centuries of beekeepers who came before us. What might the beekeepers of the 22nd century think of our time? Where might our present path lead? That was in my mind when I asked Copilot to use what it knows about the behavior of honeybees and its insight into today's progress in microelectronics and tell me about a future hive. It did not refer to a Langstroth hive... or a Warre or a top bar or a WBC... it invented a Solaria Hive. Here, with a bit of human editing, is the response...



In the year 2142, nestled within the wildflower fields of the reclaimed Illinois biodistrict, the Solaria Hive stood as a marvel of bioengineering and ecological harmony. To the untrained eye, it was just another beehive tucked beneath a canopy of restored oaks—but to those who knew, Solaria was a masterpiece.

Thanks to advancements in microtech, every bee in Solaria was equipped with a microscopic sensor node—smaller than a grain of pollen, powered by ambient vibration and solar light. These unobtrusive devices didn't alter the bees' behavior but allowed them to become guardians of their environment, transmitting real-time data on air quality, plant health, and even early wildfire detection.

Solaria wasn't just a hive—it was a network. The queen, a genetically preserved descendant of Buckfast lineage, governed not only with pheromones but with enhanced behavioral cues relayed via a neural microgrid embedded in the hive walls. The worker bees performed their duties with astonishing efficiency, orchestrating their efforts based on a dynamic, AI-augmented model that anticipated blooms, weather shifts, and predator threats.

A single waggle dance near the hive entrance could trigger automated deployment of drone pollinators—miniature companions designed to assist the colony during nectar rushes or extreme heat events. These weren't traditional drones but organic-machined hybrids, modeled after honeybee aerodynamics and programmed to interpret bee behavior through motion AI.

Harvest time was no longer a disruption. Smart wiring in the frames monitored honey levels and temperature without any need for invasive inspections. The beekeepers, now called "symbionts," receive subtle alerts via haptic gloves and could conduct nurturing visits using scent shields and visual veil diffusers—tools designed to keep the bees calm and uninhibited. Harvesting became a united effort seen as good for all, part of a united biosystem.

But Solaria's greatest contribution wasn't just honey—it was awareness. The hive could relay pollination success rates, identify chemical drift from nearby agriculture, and even alert neighboring colonies to threats. Through shared hive-to-hive communication protocols, bees had become environmental sentinels, restoring balance to a planet that once stood on the brink.

*And yet, despite all this technology, the bees themselves remained utterly themselves—*independent, communal, tireless in their rhythm. Solaria didn't control them. It learned from them.**

For as long as writers have been writing, a utopian society has been described. It seems that Copilot is following in that vein. The troubles of today will blend into the success of tomorrow think Copilot.

(Makes one think back, perhaps to Zager and Evans in 1969. For those of sufficient age, *In the Year 2525* give a quite different take on the path of technology. If dystopian is your thing, <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=l3yDLvp9le0>. Let's hope mankind and their honeybees do better.)



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Honey Extractor

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent one of the clubs 3 honey extractors?

Two of the extractors are manual, a 4 frame a 3 frame. The third is motorized and is capable of extracting both sides of 9 frames at a time.

Rental fee for either of the manual extractor is \$10.00 for 3 days with a \$10.00 security deposit. The electric (motorized) 9 frame extractor costs \$25.00 to rent for 2 days with a \$75.00 security deposit. Deposits will be returned if equipment is returned on time, clean, and undamaged.

The extractors come with most equipment needed to make the uncapping and extraction experiences go smoothly, except of course, the honey frames and buckets.

To reserve a date contact Al Fullerton by phone or text at 815-382-7139 or email adfhoney@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.

Website and Newsletter Submissions

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

This is YOUR newsletter. Please feel free to contribute. Or let us know if you have any topics you'd like to see covered. spinkawa@gmail.com

**The queen marking color for
2025 is Blue**

