



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

March came in pretty quietly with warmer than usual temperatures. I continue to hear from NIBA members who are finding their bees still alive and thriving. We know that the winter death rates can be higher than 50% in our area but here's hoping that we see rates lower than that this winter!

Our speaker this month is Tim from Heritage Bees who is our bee supplier. Tim always has a great informative presentation and will answer questions. We will also be hosting a vendor night so you'll have the opportunity to buy or order new equipment.

We're still working on the final details for the swap meet to be held at the end of March and when they're finalized we will share them with you. Our hope is to help new beekeepers who are looking for used equipment and current beekeepers who want to expand their apiary the chance to buy equipment from someone who's downsizing.

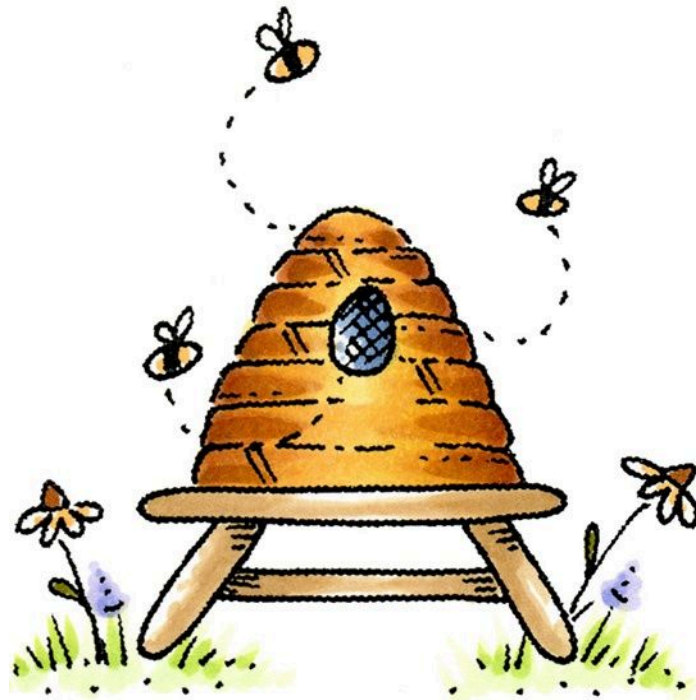
I'm still looking for people to help oversee the mentor hives. We do have several members who will help with the general maintenance of the hives but we need someone to be in charge of the mentor sessions.

I'm also looking for volunteers to help run the McHenry County Fair this year. Anything from booth setup, organizing the honey donations and getting the volunteers for the shifts. Please reach out if you'd like to help out with the Fair.

Show up for this month's meeting to be entered in the door prize drawing. The prize for this quarter is a package of bees, you get a ticket to enter when you show up to the meeting. The next door prize drawing will be held at the June meeting, stay tuned to find out what that prize will be!

I hope to see you all at the meeting on March 13th!

Tom



Free bees for military veterans

Hi all,

*Are you a military veteran who is looking to get into beekeeping? Or do you know a veteran who wants to start keeping bees in 2025? If you answered yes, then please fill out this [form](#) for a chance to receive a free nucleous colony in 2025. I'll be offering up to 20 free nucs in spring 2025, and while no one is excluded from applying, **high priority will be given to those who belong to a beekeeping association and have taken a beekeeping class in the past 2 years.***

In the past I've received way more requests than I had nucs available, so I had to put in some guidelines to accommodate those who want to actively engage in beekeeping beyond "cool thing to do few times a year".

Thanks and happy beekeeping in 2025!

Marcin

Controlling Varroa

Thinking About a Screened Bottom Board

The number one enemy of our honeybee colonies is the varroa mite. We have many members in our association who started their first colonies of bee from packages in 2024 and are overwintering them. That first year the varroa are not as likely to be a fatal problem for a colony started with a package, but this will change in the second year. The danger increases.

The largest increase in the varroa population occurs during the most active brood rearing time and for the new package that period is put off while they construct the brood comb. Because varroa increases occur later in the year, the lethal infestation will less likely to be reached in the first season for a colony hived on foundation.



But for the second year colony (and thereafter) the story is different. Now the brood rearing begins earlier and the queen has empty cells at her disposal. More brood = more varroa. Because the varroa population growth starts early it has the potential to reach a deadly magnitude during that season. Second year beekeepers, watch out! The varroa threat increases.

Time to start considering how to control the mite population. One of the moves that has had some traction in this battle is the use of screened bottom boards. When these became popular a couple of decades ago (shortly after the varroa alarm went off) it was hoped this would eliminate the threat of these head-of-a-pin size creatures. Not so. Research tells us they help, but only slightly. Even though it is not the perfect solution, it can be a part of an IPM – an integrated pest management - program. Some of those mites that are groomed off as sister bees tend each other fall through the screen to the ground. They die shortly when not on a bee.

If screened bottom boards are intriguing to a beekeeper, spring is a good time to add them to hives not so equipped. The hives are lighter and easier to handle. And... every mite that dies early in the season cuts the late season population significantly.

Solid bottom boards can still be used. Many beekeepers do. The screened bottom board is an option. There are many ways to successfully keep bees.

Here is a pretty good YouTube discussion about bottom boards in general.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWyNxuAdldU>

Where do you get screened bottom boards? Some of the beginner's kits that are sold have screened bottom boards. They are readily available from bee supply sources. Perhaps one could scratch that winter honeybee itch by heading to the workshop and making one. Here are plans for one style. There are many on the web.

<https://cityboyhens.com/2015/03/06/how-to-make-a-screened-bottom-board-for-your-beehive/>

Want to see a screened bottom board built on YouTube? There are a number of such videos. Here's one.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cfh1FBekA3M>

For centuries success in beekeeping has been defined as having the overwintered hive alive in April. In today's beekeeping environment that overwintered colony has the added challenge of dealing with the varroa mites as the spring arrives.

Sharpen that hive tool. Spring is in the offing.

Larry Krengel

P.S. Should you want to know more about varroa, consider signing up for the new course – the Varroa Mite: Know Your Enemy – that I will be teaching on April 9 at the MCC Catalyst Center in Woodstock, IL. You can take it in person or online.

https://mchenry.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=9910

Larry



Warren Spencer a club member who makes bee equipment in his shop. He is offering a 10 Frame Basic Package which includes:

- Telescoping top
- 1 Super box
- 10 super w/wood frames and 10 wax foundations
- 10 deep wood frames & 10 wax foundations
- 1 queen excluder
- 1 entrance reducer
- 1 Inner Cover
- 2 deep boxes
- 1 Screen bottom board
- 1 entrance watering feeder

Normal "Out the Door" Price \$281.50 - Compared to Mann Lake Bee Supplies @ apx \$375. You can save \$120 NOW - plus NOT pay any shipping! You pick up in Crystal Lake.

SPECIAL PRICE FOR NIBA MEMBERS - \$253 !!!!! And the offer will be sweetened with **another \$10 off the price if order is received before April 1st!** For any questions or to place an order please call Warren at 815-459-2578

Chores of the Month – March 2025

Please Review February Chores List. Most apply to March also, but with an increased sense of urgency.

What's happening in and around the hive?


As I am typing this on the last day of February, the temperature is rising with a projected peak in the mid 50s. Mighty windy though. The first week of March looks to be fairly mild in the 40s and the second week in the 50s and maybe a day in the low 60s. Who Hoo! For those with some live overwintered colonies, the bees will be flyin' and collecting pollen from the maples and willows. Don't celebrate victory over winter yet though, March is a tough and unpredictable month. The bees have surely started raising brood by now. There won't be much early in the month, but as the month passes and if we get some warm weather, the pace of egg laying will pick up. The bees will need pollen (protein) to feed the brood and honey/sugar (carbohydrates- and plenty of them) to energize the bees to forage and to produce heat to keep the brood warm. Early pollen sources will be available, nectar will not, but **the weather must be favorable for the bees to forage**. The bees may well need assistance with supplemental protein (pollen patties/pollen substitute) for brood raising as well as a source of carbohydrates (sugar/sugar syrup {only if warm enough}) for themselves.

For Beekeepers with live overwintering colonies, it is time to:

Continue to monitor the food stores available to your colonies. Checking the weight of hives by lifting/tilting from the rear may give you a sense of stores available. Unlike the super cold weather temperatures the bees have come through, warmer temps allow the cluster to relocate to available stores within the hive... if they are there. If not, supplement with sugar based feed, e.g. dry sugar, sugar bricks, winter patties, fondant, candy board, etc., to help them through the remaining winter. Unless we have unseasonably warm day and night temperatures, it may be a bit early to transition to liquid feed. Providing pollen, pollen substitute, or pollen patties will provide needed protein for brood development.

Check for activity at the hive on warmer days. You should start seeing activity on warm days. We saw that on a number of days in February this year. Bees will be taking cleansing flights and some will even be out foraging. If things are going really well, you may even see some orientation flights by young bees late in the month. If you have seen no activity on the warmer days we have recently had, your bees didn't survive and it is time (maybe past time) to get your bees ordered for 2025.



You may see some undertaker bees (they are the stiffer looking bees with dark tophats ) dragging dead bees from the hive. Help them out by reaching into the entrance with a tool and scraping out some of the bodies. Try not to be too alarmed by the number of dead bees removed; your colony is still alive. ...have a cookie and enjoy the moment. Alternately, if you don't see dead bees being dragged out, and you are the one scraping out all the dead, be alarmed ...but it is too late to do anything about it now except to get your order in for some new bees. Research, read, and ask others about how you might do things differently to improve your results next year. Replace reducers and mouse guards afterwards. As the temperature warms up later in the month, you should be able to remove the mouse guards and increase the opening at the entrance.

Order any additional colonies of bees you want for 2025...pronto.....time is running out!

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:

Continue to Read, Study, and Learn.... Before you know it Bee Arrival Day will be upon us! Books, Periodicals, Classes, Club Meetings, Internet (yes, that also means YouTube videos...they range from poor to great....reading, attending classes, and club meetings and asking questions will help you learn which are good and which are not). Listen to some Podcasts. All of these will help. Bee Arrival Day and the culmination of all the nervous anticipation of hiving your first colony of bees will be here before you know it!

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. The first step is to ask for help. There will be willing members.

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. ...did I already say that? It bears repeating. Get a Mentor from the Bee Club.

Order your equipment, tools, and protective clothing. See February Chores.

Your Bees should be ordered by now. If not, you need to scramble. See February Chores for additional details.

Assemble and paint your equipment. No time to waste now. Bee Arrival Day is coming. It's fun and you can be creative with your painting...don't be creative on the equipment assembly though, follow instructions. The bees will appreciate it.

Tip: Put dates (month/year) on your frames to keep track of their age to help in annual comb replacement.

Prepare your apiary location. Determine what you will use as hive stands. Make sure that the platform is reasonably level. Consider your mowing/trimming needs for the summer and position hives accordingly.

For Beekeepers with dead overwintered colonies, it is time to:

Breakdown the dead-outs. Pick a pleasant day and start the cleanup process...Doing it early, before much warmth and moisture occurs, will make an unpleasant job less unpleasant and much less smelly.

Don't just clean things up. See if you can determine what caused the problem. There is a high likelihood of a mite related problem if you did not rigorously pursue mite load reduction in a timely fashion last year. Look for signs. Take some pictures at several different angles. Consider bringing pictures(or the frames themselves) of a frame or two (brood frames) to the club meeting and get some other experienced eyes to take a look.

Replace old frames or combs that have too many years on them. Commit to making this an annual effort by replacing at least 20% annually (oldest first). That will keep you from having any combs older than 5 years. Some more progressive beekeepers strive to get on a 3 year rotation of comb. To do that replace a third of the combs each year.

Note: Develop the habit of marking your frames with the month/year that you put them in use. It is a process that will help you maintain the discipline of comb rotation.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Take an inventory.

A) Equipment/Supplies inventory

Make a list of what your equipment, tools, and supplies.

-Do you need to replace frames or foundation (a comb replacement program should be part of your annual routine)?

-Is your equipment in good order?

*Is your wooden-ware due for a paint job?

*Are your tools in good shape?

*How about your protective clothing? Have you washed your suit recently?

*Do you have sufficient (and not expired) supplies, e.g., feed/nutrition supplements, pest/parasite controls, etc.

*Is your current equipment sufficient to help you achieve your goals for this year (see B. below)?

B) Goals inventory....this is a very important issue for beekeepers though probably not thought about enough.

What do you want to accomplish this year in beekeeping? You may have multiple goals. What are your priorities of these goals? Here are some thoughts:

-Do better than the state average honey yield per colony. More simply, increase my honey yield over last year.

-Successfully over-winter my bees.

-Move closer to achieving sustainable beekeeping (not having to buy new packages or nucs every year).

-Learn to create and use nucleus colonies to overwinter more colonies and increase the colonies in my apiary.

-Learn to raise my own queens.

-Learn to produce comb honey, e.g., Ross Rounds, cut comb honey, chunk honey, section boxes.

-Learn to produce Creamed Honey.

-Learn to make Mead (like a Viking!....or a Monk for those with a more introspective demeanor)

-Learn how to process and use beeswax. Make candles, lip balms, hand creams, soaps.

-Learn how to collect/process/use propolis.

-Are you interested in encaustic painting? Are you interested in creating wax art?

Do you need to re-evaluate your equipment to be sure you have what you need to achieve your goals (see A. above)?

If you have some of these interests, raise the issue at a club meeting and propose having a sub-group session to explore the subject.

C. Bee Inventory

-How many colonies do you want to start this year with? How many do you have that will overwinter? Are you sure??

A live hive in early March is a **hopefully** live hive in April....we still have another tough month to go....don't be caught bee-less in April.

-Order as early as possible to reserve your bees. Packages or Nucs? Decisions, decisions.....

I'll leave you with this:

It is now March. Get ahead of your season. Plan, Read, Study, Learn. Now is the time! The Bees will be Flying Soon!

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

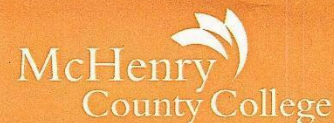
Upcoming NIBA Activities

**Mentoring Sessions
Swap Meet
McHenry County Fair**

If you would like to volunteer/participate in any of these activities, please reach out to Tom (815-861-1237) or any Board member

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER

SPRING 2025



Varroa Mite: Know Your Enemy

Enemy #1 in the honeybee world is Varroa Destructor – the varroa mite. Understanding how the biology of the honeybee and that of the varroa mite intersect is important to successful beekeeping in today's world. This mite attaches to honeybees and their larva weakening them and passing on deadly viruses. A successful strategy for control of these mites is critical to the survival of a honeybee colony. This class will discuss the history, the biology and the control of Varroa Destructor.

Fee: \$25

Larry Krengel

In person

9910

W 4/9

7–9:30 p.m.

Catalyst Campus

Remote

10512

W 4/9

7–9:30 p.m.

Remote

Honey Tasting: A Sensory Analysis of Honey

Honey takes a long journey before it lands in your jar. The final product can be affected by many variables, including the local climate, botanical sources and the honeybees who visit them, and the activity of beekeepers. In this class, we will study varietal honeys using our senses of sight, smell, taste, and touch to fully appreciate the selection of these honeys. We will approach honey tasting as a sensory journey as we review at least five varietal honeys and compare their flavors and profile differences. We will also review and discuss: a Honey Sensory Wheel and how that impacts fragrances within the honey; how to more finely tune our senses to appreciate our local varietals of honey; how honeys acquire certain aromas that often differ from what we would expect; methods of tasting the full balance of flavors of these honeys; how to appreciate the different textures of honey and their impact on our taste buds; and sample 20+ varieties of handcrafted local honeys (creamed, infused, raw, and barrel-aged) and other honey-based products (honey sauces, mustards, and honey hot sauces). Students will receive their own Honey Sensory Booklet for future tastings.

Fee: \$45

Frank Moriarty

10513

T 5/6

6–8 p.m.

Catalyst Campus

Buzzing Beauty: DIY Beeswax Lip Balm Workshop

Join us for a hands-on workshop where you'll learn to create your own natural lip balms using beeswax. Discover the benefits of beeswax and explore a variety of essential oils and natural ingredients to customize your balms. This workshop will cover the entire process, from melting and mixing to pouring and packaging, ensuring you leave with your own personalized lip balm to take home. Perfect for beginners and anyone interested in natural skincare, this fun and informative session will have you crafting your own lip care products in no time. All materials will be provided.

Fee: \$39

Stephanie Slater

10404

W 4/16

6–8 p.m.

Catalyst Campus



To register for a class, scan the QR code, visit www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment, or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, please contact the Community Enrichment Center at personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu or (815) 455-8758



NIBA 2025 PACKAGED BEE ORDER FORM

ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 15, 2025

*Name(s):		*Phone:	
*Email:			

*Required Fields

Please read and initial below – checks will be returned if not initialed.

The undersigned acknowledges that NIBA will transport bee packages from the supplier in Wisconsin to a drop-off point in Illinois. The undersigned agrees that NIBA is not responsible for any damage to the bees or cages during the transport and distribution of the same. The undersigned understands that he/she remains at all times, free to order and pick-up bees from alternate suppliers of their choice.

I agree with the above statement regarding NIBA's Packaged Bee delivery: _____ **INITIAL HERE**

NIBA is pleased to offer this group bee order as one of the benefits of membership. Therefore, your 2025 NIBA dues must be paid prior to your order being processed, **please use separate checks for bee orders and membership**. Mail your membership forms to the designated address. We will return orders received from non-members. We will order 250 packages of bees and 100 nucleus colonies (NUCs). **Orders will be taken on a first-come first-served basis until all 350 units are sold.**

- Package Price: \$147 each- package contains approximately 3 pounds of bees and a queen.
- 5-Frame NUC Price: \$ 175 each
- Queens \$38 each

Order Information:

My package order preference is given below. I understand the actual delivery timing is determined by many factors including weather and producer availability.

Order Type	Quantity	Queen Preference/Quantity	Price per unit	Total
3 LB Package Pick Up (Targeting early/mid-April)		Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____	\$147.00	\$
Nucleus Colony Pick Up (Targeting Mid/late April)		Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____	\$175.00	\$
Mated Queens		Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____	\$38.00	
			Grand Total Due	\$

Make checks payable to Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association (NIBA)

Queen selection provides club direction only; the club will receive queens as provided by producers. I understand queens are available on a first-come first-served basis and I may not receive the queen of my preference indicated above: _____ **INITIAL HERE**. We will do our best to accommodate all requests, but queen availability is determined by package suppliers. You may mix and match your queens.

The exact date and time for delivery and pickup will be communicated via the email address above. If you do not have email, you will be contacted at the phone number you provided above. **Orders must be picked up on day of delivery. NO EXCEPTIONS. You must designate someone else to pick them up if you are unavailable.**

Complete and mail order form and check (**NO CASH PLEASE!!!**) payable to: **NIBA** c/o Sue Pinkawa, 5010 Bonner Drive, McHenry, IL 60050. Contact Sue at spinkawa@gmail.com or (815-355-4630) - with any questions.

2025 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Affiliated with the Illinois State Beekeepers Association (ISBA)

Check one: ☐ Renewal Individual Membership - \$20 ☐ Renewal Family Membership - \$30Check one: ☐ **NEW** Individual Membership - \$25 ☐ **NEW** Family Membership - \$35

(Includes Single Membership in the Illinois State Beekeepers Association, additional ISBA memberships, \$10 each)

If applying after February 28, 2025, and you are a renewing member, please add \$5.00.

Name(s):
Address:
City: State: Zip:
Phone:
Email address (if family membership, include all emails. Newsletter will be sent to all emails):

☐ **Yes, I would like to order a NIBA name tag(s), add \$16.95 per order (which includes postage).**

Name tag(s) should read as follows (please print clearly):

Please tell us more about yourself:

I have been a NIBA Member since _____ (year)

I plan to have _____ colonies/hives this season

I have been a beekeeper for about _____ years

I am a Master Gardener/Beekeeper _____

Check all that applies:

I sell honey ___ willing to Coach/Mentor ___ Swarm Catcher ___ willing to remove Bees from buildings ___

Personal skills I would be willing to donate to NIBA (i.e. Beekeeping experience, accounting, webmaster, event planning, community education, carpentry, legal, business management, retail knowledge, other)

Complete this form and mail with **check payable to: NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (NIBA)**

TO: NIBA Membership, c/o Sue Pinkawa, 5010 Bonner Drive, McHenry, IL 60050

2025 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen

tallen122@yahoo.com

Vice President – Ralph Brindise

rbrindise@att.net

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cwebb429@gmail.com

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spinkawa@gmail.com

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Director - Al Fullerton

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jfjelli23@gmail.com

Program Chair – Larry Krengel

Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa

Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinator – Julianne Anderson

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

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 adfhone@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.

The queen marking color for 2025 is Blue

