



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2024

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

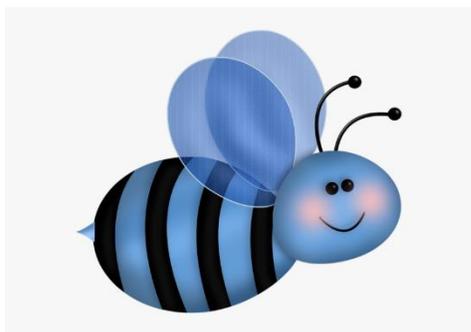
Tom Allen

Well it's December and some days it feels like we're in a deep freeze and some days it's like Spring. Hopefully you've gotten your bees tucked in for the Winter but with the warmer weather we've had they'll be out flying using up their precious resources quicker than if they were just clustered up. Keep an eye on them as we move back into some cold windy days.

The NIBA Board met and discussed the Director candidates for 2025. We had discussed adding some younger members who have been helping us by volunteering. Hopefully this helps people become more familiar with how the Board as a whole operates and gets them interested in an elected position in the future. We did expand the number of directors this year to four, up from the three we've had for the past several years. Our Directors are John Leibinger, Al Fullerton, Brandon Teresi and Jim Jellissen, I look forward to a great 2025!

I want to wish all of you a Happy Holiday and a Happy New Year!

Thank you,
Tom



**Queen
Marking color
for 2025 is Blue**

Northern IL Beekeeper of the Year Award 2024

John Leibinger



Here We Go Again

Larry Krengel

It is almost 2025. Here is a toast to 2024 in the rearview mirror and to a great bee year ahead. Hope this finds all my beekeeping comrades well and excited for a new year with the bees.

So why do you keep bees? My guess is that the nubee can answer that question easier than the veteran. The difficult question is “Why do I keep coming back for another season?” If I asked that question of you, what would you say? A very few say it is to earn a living. Few will tell you they have too much cash and need to find a place to spend it. It must be something else for most of us.

Historically the interest in beekeeping begins to peak in January and February as a run up for bees arriving in April. The beekeeper wannabees are anxious to get ready for spring acquisitions and installations. The journey person beekeepers are counting the winter losses and planning to replace the deadouts. These are the months that the bee associations – like NIBA – get renewal application and often begin taking orders for group buys of bees. To be a part of the action one must go to the website – NIBAinfo.org – and download the forms for membership and bee orders (may not be there just yet). For those who wonder if it is worth the dues to be a part of the association, I would contend that even if you order only one package of bees at the lower association price, your membership is money well spent. That of course does not even consider the many other advantages of being a member of the merry band.

I often send out a list of good reads for the beekeeper as winter arrives (elsewhere here this month). I have been recently rereading one from the list - *SWARMING Its Control and Prevention* by L. E. Snelgrove. I will not put this on the recommended readings for my Beekeeping 101 class (starts in a month!!), but for the journey person beekeeper it is an excellent read. Even if you are not up for using a Snelgrove board (that I have talked about multiple times on the Beeline), Snelgrove's insights into handling the swarming urge at different points in hive development are very useful. Education gives power – true in the beeyard as well as life. Snelgrove's 1935 book is available in reprint.

I recently had a question show up about bees suffocating under the snow. In my experience that does not happen. I guess it might if the snow completely covers the hive for extended periods or if the beekeeper got carried away sealing up the hive box, but I have not experienced such. In my experience even a blowing snow will not drift tight over the entrance and the bees need only a crack along the hive body by the entrance to do fine. I choose to leave ventilation at the top. Again, not much is needed, but some is necessary.

Thinking you need to check your bees? It has been a long time since you have seen them. Resist the urge. I suspect that January inspections are for the good of the beekeeper who needs to feel useful and done to the detriment of the bees. At this point, cracking the seams the bees have propolized and disrupting the cluster will lead to deadly results. If you need to know how things are going in the hive box, “heft” it. Tilt is gently forward and feel how much mass you are moving. If it feels heavy, you are not needed. I will knock gently, and a surviving colony will hum

with enough volume to be heard by an ear close to the side of the box. Hefting and knocking are enough to satisfy me as winter moves on.

Mites under control. Plenty of food. Insulation on the roof. See you in the spring.

Take care of yourselves and those around you. A new year awaits.

Winner of Honey Tasting 2024
Robin Tibbits



Merry
Christmas



Happy
New
Year

Chores of the Month – December 2024

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive?

Not much that can be visually observed unless we have some additional warm days. Damn, it's cold outside! Brrrrr...Winter is here for sure. Not officially until later in the month, but for the skeptics, put on your shorts and sandals and take a stroll outside. For all intents and purposes and certainly from the bees' standpoint, winter is here. The colony will now be broodless and the queen will be reproductively inactive for the next couple of months. The bees will be clustering to maintain colony warmth for the next several months. They will be consuming the food that they have stored away specifically for this purpose. The heater bees at the inside of the cluster will be producing heat and the bulk of the rest of the workers will be surrounding them, maintaining layers of insulation to minimize loss of that precious heat.* Some of those outer bees will perish and fall to the bottom board. Undertaker bees will periodically push the bodies to the front of the hive (possibly blocking off hive egress at the bottom entrance). The bees will slowly rotate from the colder outside layers of the cluster to inner layers to warm up. This will continue throughout the winter. The cluster itself will also very slowly migrate around the hive in an effort to stay near stored food. They are in survival mode.

There has been some relatively recent research by Derek Mitchell at the University of Leeds in England that is challenging the idea that the outer mantle of bees in a winter cluster is functioning as an insulation layer, but rather it is actually functioning as a heat sink in the cluster. This could be another 'Sam Ramsey' moment dispelling old tenets of beekeeping (mites don't feed on hemolymph, but rather on fat bodies in bees). If you would like to read more about this topic see the link in the **General Info section below.*

For All Beekeepers:

This is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.

If there should be a short warm spell in the 40's, you could consider an Oxalic Acid (OA) sublimation treatment to eliminate any remaining Varroa mites that may have been in the colony or brought in by a late season robbing episode. (You can sublimate OA at lower temperatures, but the lower the temperature the tighter the bees cluster. A tight cluster prevents the OA from getting much past the outer layer of bees and thus becomes less effective). 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. If you have been on top of your mite treatment program this should not be needed now.

Periodically walk out to your hives and take an external look at them. Remove snow (assuming it snows this month) from around the entrance and look to see that there haven't been any pests causing a problem (as best you can without opening the hive).

Make sure that if you incorporate an upper entrance/exit, that it is clear of snow and debris. 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. (Note: Do this if you keep ventilation hives. If you follow the condensing hive philosophy, see links and info in October and November 'Chores').

Consider strapping down your hive(s) for the winter to prevent winter winds from blowing off an outer cover or toppling a hive. I have had a heavily weighted nuc blow over during high winds in the past 😊.

If you have been a conscientious beekeeper throughout the 2024 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 2025. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

Start preparing for the 2025 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
- Listen to some podcasts or watch YouTube videos. Some personal favorites are The Beekeepers Corner Podcast hosted by Kevin Inglin, Two Bees in a Podcast with Jamie Ellis, and YouTube videos by Ian Stepler (The Canadian Beekeepers Blog), Kaman Reynolds, Bob Binnie, Fred Dunn, David Burns, Gary Reuter at The University of Minnesota, and Paul Kelly at The University of Guelph.
- Attend beekeeping meetings

- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees and the timing of their blooms... **Very Important and often neglected** (or just not top of mind). This is a great way to spend some of your off season time if you are looking to improve your beekeeping skills. Encourage your club to get a speaker from one of the Chicago area botanical gardens.
 - Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.
- Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.
Start repairing/refurbishing equipment as needed.
Set aside some money - for replacement or expansion bees, new/replacement equipment and supplies, and association dues.
Review your 2024 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.
Think about new goals for 2025.

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)

Derek Mitchell on the outer mantel of the winter cluster as a heat sink rather than an insulation layer. The research paper is linked link near the end of the article. The whole of the research paper is a tough read so you may want to focus on the Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, and Conclusions sections.
[Research challenges beliefs on honeybee insulation](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

And Finally,

Get a plate of your favorite snacks. Pour yourself a cup of tea...or whatever your preferred means of hydration... add honey of course... and

Kick back, rest, and enjoy the Holidays with your family and friends.

There is a new beekeeping season just around the corner!

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Learning bees and beekeeping...

Looking for a beekeeping class? You are invited to join your fellow beekeepers in the McHenry County beekeeping classes -

https://mchenry.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=9695

The class offerings have been increased. The Beekeeping 101 class that has been offered for 25 years will run again – four weeks on Wednesday evenings. In addition will be the comb honey class, a queen rearing basics class, and a new varroa mite class. Honey tasting... and a class on beeswax products. Classes begin in February.

The adventure continues.

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COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER
SPRING 2025



BEEKEEPING

Beekeeping 101

Keeping honeybees is fascinating. Bees will pollinate your garden and provide a sweet crop of honey. In this class, you will learn where to start as a keeper of bees. We'll cover bee biology, modern beekeeping techniques, construction of hives, and how to acquire bees. Keep bees for the fun of it, as a sideline job, or to help your garden and orchard.

Fee: \$75 Larry Kregel
 In person
 # [9695](#) W 2/5-2/26 7-9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus
 Remote
 # [9696](#) W 2/5-2/26 7-9:30 p.m. Remote

7 Ways To Raise A Queen

The number of small-scale beekeepers is increasing, and the demand for locally raised queen bees is growing. Purchased queens are often raised in areas of Africanized honeybees or come from migratory bee operations where dangerous viruses are exchanged. Gain information and learn seven simple methods of raising healthy honeybee queens. With a few insights and a small amount of equipment, the backyard beekeeper can raise locally adapted queens from bee stock with a great record of winter survival, good temperament, and excellent honey production.

Fee: \$25 Larry Kregel
 In person
 # [9697](#) W 3/5 7-9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus
 Remote
 # [9698](#) W 3/5 7-9:30 p.m. Remote

Comb Honey

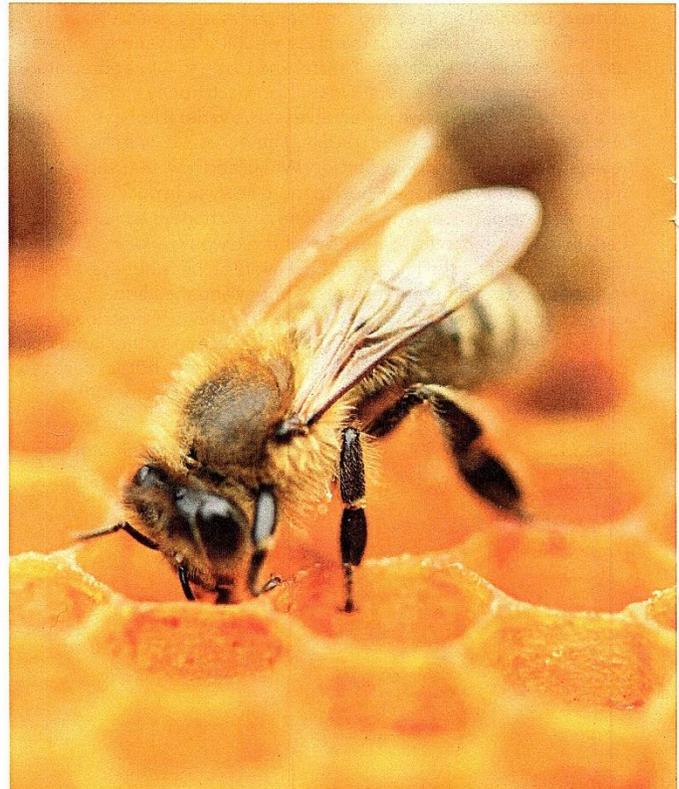
Comb honey is old fashioned honey harvested in the bees own wax case. A hundred years ago honey was removed from the hive and eaten in the comb. Today, extracted honey (honey in the jar) is the norm. This course is an opportunity to return to the old (and some contend the healthiest) way of harvesting honey. Producing honey in the comb is a beekeeping challenge, an old fashioned challenge explored in this class.

Fee: \$25 Larry Kregel
 In person
 # [9699](#) W 3/12 7-9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus
 Remote
 # [9700](#) W 3/12 7-9:30 p.m. Remote

Beekeeping Field Study

This short course will provide practical, hands-on instruction for installing, manipulating, and inspecting colonies of bees. The class will meet in a bee yard, so appropriate clothing and bee equipment will be necessary. Spring is the time to start with bees, and this course will walk you through it step by step. Learn what you need to know to start out right with your bees.

Fee: \$59 Larry Kregel
 # [9799](#) Sa 4/5, 4/12 10 a.m.-Noon MCC
 # [9800](#) Sa 4/5, 4/12 1-3 p.m. MCC



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

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 W 4/9 7-9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus
 # [9910](#)
 Remote W 4/9 7-9:30 p.m. Remote
 # [10512](#)

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

Ah... For A Rocking Chair in Front of the Fireplace

Greetings Beekeepers -

In my recent Beeline I suggested curling up with a good bee book to while away the winter. Someone recently asked if I had a list of my ten favorite bee books. An interesting question. Let me try to answer.

The long history of beekeeping comes complete with a deep well of literature. Books are there to feed most interests – many how-to's, lots of history, personal stories, science from many eras. In the flood of new bee books from the last decade there are a few that stand out, but only a few are likely to become classics. Many on my shelf are vintage. Here are some from my book shelves with a few notes. First are two of the best authors, Seeley and Taylor.

Books by Tom Seeley

Honeybee Democracy

A great read and loaded with insights into the mind of the swarming colony.

Following the Wild Bees

Old fashioned beelining, an endeavor for the patient beekeeper.

The Lives of the Bees

Tom's most recent book, loaded with stories from his years of research.

Books by Richard Taylor

Joys of Beekeeping

By far the best book on being a beekeeper... not on keeping bees.

How to do It Book of Beekeeping

Out of print, expensive on the used market. Must be a good sign!

Written by Dr. C. C. Miller

Fifty Years Among the Bees

After reading Miller's autobiography one longs to be like him.

Written by Sara George

The Beekeeper's Pupil

Quirky. The manservant of the blind beekeeper Francois Huber writes about learning beekeeping from his master.

Written by Roger Morse

A Year in the Beeyard

A how-to book from the era just before varroa, a time when common sense made a good beekeeper.

Written by L. E. Snelgrove

Swarming, Its Control & Prevention

Written by an ingenious man as he worked to master swarm control.

Written by Tammy Horn (Kentucky State Apiarist)

Bees in America

Did bees affect the development of America? Tammy thinks so.

I hope you will enjoy a good read.

Larry

2024 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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rharrison74@gmail.com

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Program Chair – Larry Kregel

Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa

Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinator – Robin Tibbits

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.

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
2024 is Green.**

