



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2025

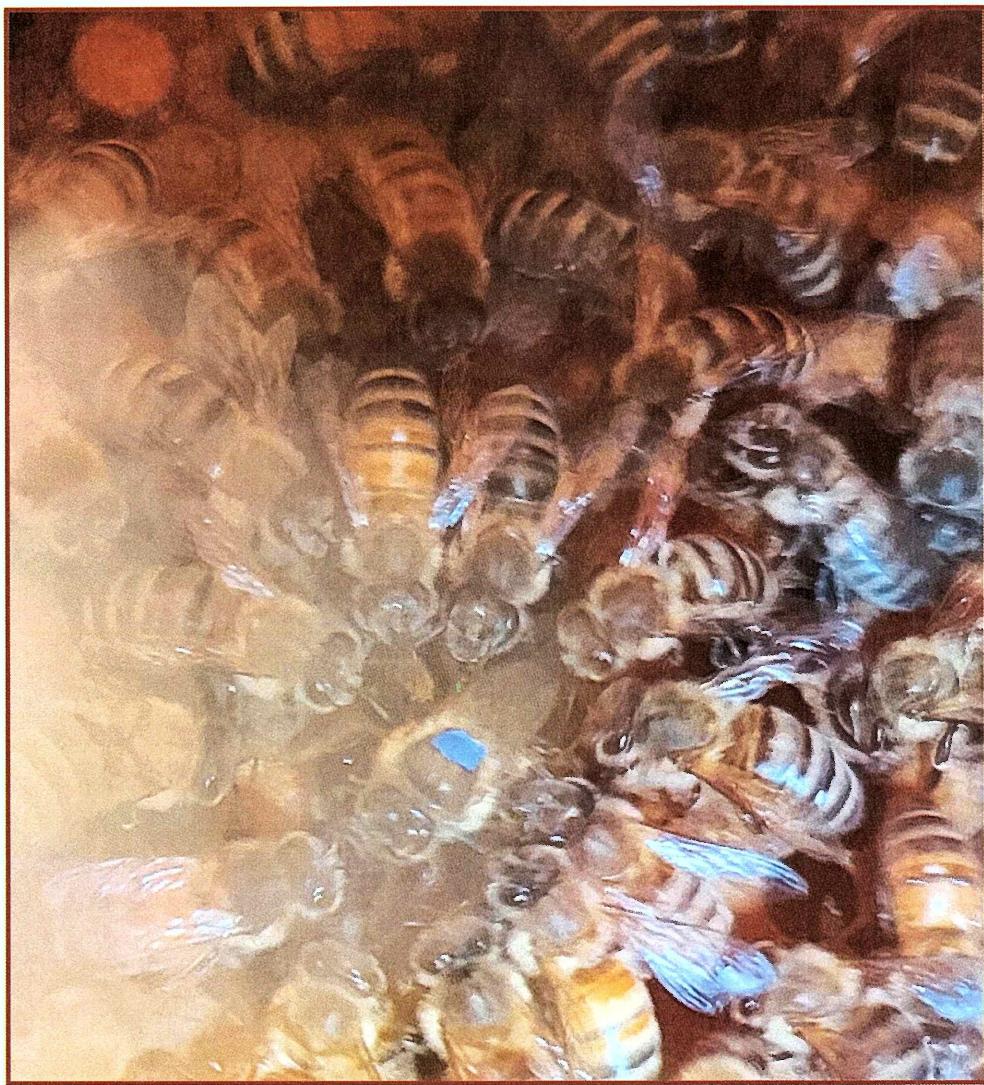
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Well here we are in June already! Time is certainly flying this year, it's as though I just got used to the month of May and it's now June.

This is when NIBA gets most of our requests to participate in events, the biggest one is of course the McHenry County Fair, the day we set up the booth is July 28th, the Fair opens at noon on July 29th and runs through the night of August 3rd. We've also gotten requests to set up a table on July 13th at Planet Palooza which is held in Woodstock and the Annual Heritage Fair held by the Historical Society in Union. NIBA needs volunteers for all of these events, we talk to people about bees and beekeeping and sell honey. Each NIBA member knows about bees and beekeeping and can usually answer the questions people ask, don't be afraid to volunteer because you're never alone in the booth. I've been asking for volunteers for a couple of months and I have heard from one person who has stepped up in a big way to do the booth setup. This is a big help, my mind doesn't have that gear for how to make the booth look nice and inviting but she certainly does. Our booth configuration will look different this year, instead of our second booth going down the aisle we are taking the booth that the Avon lady has had so we will have 2 booths at the front with both facing the door of the D building. This will allow us to welcome more people into the booth to see our tables and talk to us. We still need to fill these positions, honey donations, volunteer coordinator and help with setup and tear down. I'm going to setup the SignUpGenius so people can sign up for a shift or shifts they want to work. The SignUpGenius is user friendly which makes it a great way to sign up to work a shift. More to come about this soon. The money we collect from honey sales throughout the year helps pay for everything NIBA does, speakers, the room at MCC, the bees and hives at MCC, the booths at the events we go to, raffle and door prizes etc. We all need to chip in to help NIBA continue to move forward, without each of us pulling on the rope in the same direction a small minority will be doing the majority of the work which isn't fair to that small group of people.

Tom



Hey everybody! Look what the queen is doing!

Thoughts about Apisphobia

Larry Krengel

Are you a bit nervous around your bees? Many beekeepers are. Even though we want to be a part of the colony's life, even though we are curious, even though we are fascinated, many are still a bit nervous. Pulse rate is up. Eyes are dilated. Don't worry. It is normal, especially among the newer keepers and others in the presence of wild animals.

Some think the bees can sense anxiety in a beekeeper. On those occasions a colony becomes more aware of the world around their beeyard... a *just in case* reaction. The colony is likely, some say, to be more defensive. It seems possible that we could calm the bees by controlling our own angst.

The old advice “fake it ‘til you make it” might be helpful. Mentally rehearsing a calm time in the beeyard, envisioning a tranquil visit to the bees before entering the yard might help. Psychological studies have proven the advantages of positive self-talk. Fake it until you make it.

I have a bee bench in each of my beeyards. As most visits begin, I sit quietly and watch what is happening. Even during the height of the season with organized turmoil going on all around, I sit close to the action while I consider my upcoming actions. Calm helps me and the bees.

The life of a hobby beekeeper is a good one. There is no need to hurry. There is nothing that needs to be done NOW. In most cases, if I don’t complete a task today, I can tomorrow.

It happens in the beeyard

NIBA’s beeyard is a great asset to its members. There are numerous gatherings during the season from installing bees in the spring to extracting honey in the fall, from counting mites to making splits. Mentors and mentees are encouraged to join in. Watch your emails for dates, times and directions to the yard.



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!**

Chores of the Month – June 2025

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive...and around us?

The colony population should be expanding rapidly and reaching its peak this month. Compared to last year, we have had a slow start to the growing season. It has been cooler and drier. Nonetheless, the bees in my yard are thriving.... maybe a bit too much based on my colonies swarming activity and my marginal attention to swarm mitigation. Honey production on the other hand is a bit behind last year. Looking at Growing Degree Days (GDD) for my location in Huntley, IL, I am at 412 GDD thru 6/4/2025. Last year, we reached this level on 5/22/2024. That is just shy of being two weeks behind last year. The two-week forecast vs last year is about even so I am not looking to catch up soon. That said, there will still be a lot of nectar flowing as the temperatures rise next week. All beekeeping is very localized so your trend may be a little different. **Lessons to Learn:** 1) Growing Degree Days...something to learn about and follow as it relates to the growth of local flora. (See General information below for a cursory explanation of GDD, why you should care, and a link to a GDD calculator). 2) Watch out for getting 'honey bound' as the temperatures rise this month. If you haven't provided sufficient space for the colony to store honey in supers, they will store it in the brood nest and that may lead to having 'bees in the trees' rather than in your hive boxes.

June nectar flows will be picking up significantly as the month progresses and nectar and pollen sources are quite diverse and abundant in our area, so there will be a wealth of resources for colony growth. Resources/nutrition lead to growing healthy hives. You should notice that the bees are no longer taking sugar syrup but rather are collecting nectar from natural sources. Remove the feeders at this transition.

As a point of emphasis: June is still a strong month for swarming. Large healthy colonies are susceptible to an increased swarming urge. Make sure that there is plenty of space for colony expansion. The queen needs room to lay eggs. The workers need room for nectar and pollen storage. As you inspect frames in the brood nest, be mindful of excessive nectar/sugar syrup storage in the brood nest. Excessive storage in this area can restrict the queen's ability to find space to lay and can lead to swarming or reduced colony growth due to lack of egg laying space. There is a management principle known as 'keeping a clear brood nest'. This is of particular interest for those of us who utilize a single brood nest management process. Remove and replace excessive brood nest storage frames with frames of open drawn comb or new foundation. ADD HONEY SUPERS to provide space for the workers to store nectar!

Keep in mind that the bee population is not the only expanding population. Varroa mites will be on the increase also. Monitor their growth by doing regular mite checks (monthly sugar roll or preferably, the more accurate alcohol wash). Know what you have and keep records. Keep their growth in check by utilizing a miticide, organic acids, drone comb culling, a brood break, sundry other IPM methods, or combinations of any of these. Consult the honeybeehealthcoalition.org website for guidance. 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 colony to thrive and survive.

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:

Download the forms to register your bees with the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Insects/Bees/Documents/beekip.pdf> (Ctrl+Click link)

Finish assembling and painting additional equipment, if you have not already done it (be better prepared next year). You should be on a second deep brood box (or third or fourth if using medium brood boxes) now or very soon (brood box addition may vary depending on your management philosophy and specific goals). Let's hope for the best and have extra honey supers and frames built and ready to install this month if you haven't already done so.

Feed your Bees. Feed them until they stop taking the supplemental feed. If they haven't already (and likely they have), they will switch over to entirely natural nectar sources at which point you can remove the feeders.

Spend time observing your bees. This is one of the reasons you took up this hobby. Observe their comings and goings. If you have multiple hives (and you should) observe and compare the behaviors of the different colonies. Talk to other beekeepers. This is 'mission critical' to learning what 'normal' is, and a key to becoming a better beekeeper. Are the bees bringing in pollen? What color? What is the source? (See Pollen Identification Chart link in General Info section below).

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. Ask for help and guidance. A good mentor with practical experience will be able to ask you the right questions (along with answering some) and provide valuable guidance.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Be very observant of signs of swarming and take appropriate action. This is most relevant to overwintered hives and recently installed nucleus colonies. Many reports indicate that, despite their late arrival, the nucs appear to be really thriving....so much so that many folks have reported seeing queen cells and others have already experiencing swarming. Swarming is not likely a big problem (but not unheard of) for new beekeepers that started with packages on new foundation or foundationless, but for the rest, keep your eyes peeled for telltale queen cups/cells at the bottom of the frames. Do they have eggs or larvae in them? If they do, the swarm is coming (unless you take action to mitigate the urge) if not, keep watching and provide additional space in the brood nest and add supers as needed. Additional information on swarming can be obtained by reading Megan Milbrath's article on Swarms (see link below under General Info [Meghan Milbrath on Northern Swarms](#) for an extremely comprehensive dissertation on swarming).

Add Honey Supers to provide space for bees to move nectar/honey out of brood area and, of course, to start collecting early honey. Keep in mind that unripened nectar takes more space than honey, so as your super gets half full, be sure to add another.... maybe two if there is a strong flow coming. A strong colony can fill supers quickly. You don't want to get behind the curve this time of year.

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.

Make sure the bees have a water source as we move into the heat of summer. Bees collect water to help cool the hive as part of their thermo-regulation efforts. (**Do not let the water source become the neighbors swimming pool.... that only casts a bad light on the beekeeping community and will only bring you grief.**)

Monitor for Varroa Mites monthly. (See General Info section below for references to mite checking procedures)

Treat for Varroa Mites as needed. (See General Info section below link to Honey Bee Health Coalition which has info on mite treatments)

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 counts, 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. (See [**Hive Inspection Form**](#) link in General Info section below of one of many checklists that can be found in a quick Google search. Not necessarily the best...just an example.)

The following is a repeat of last month, but it bears repeating. May and June are the months for swarms and this year there seems to be no shortage of swarming behavior.

Get your swarm traps out! Anybody interested in getting **FREE BEES?** This is the time of year to take advantage of the natural biological rhythms of the hive. Overwintered colonies are highly likely to swarm. Why not be an opportunist and capture a colony that otherwise will find a hole in a tree? It is fun, challenging, and **IMMENSELY EXCITING** when you find bees in your trap. Additionally, these are often colonies that have overwintered.... Northern Illinois proven stock capable of handling our winter.... wouldn't you want to add some of that quality to your apiary? Here is a swarm trapping/baiting website...Jason is 'the man' when it comes to swarm trapping. He has lots of advice and encouragement on swarm trapping along with free plans for building swarm traps. Check it out.

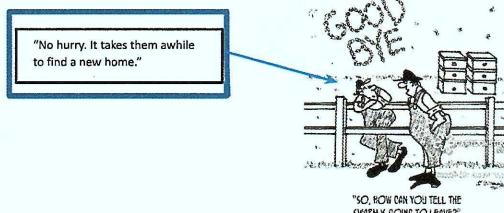
[Jason Bruns on Swarm Trapping](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Swarm Traps and Bait Hives](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Assemble some gear to BE PREPARED to catch a swarm hanging in a tree, on a fence, or somewhere else they aren't wanted! Be ready in case a friend calls and says "Get here quick, my neighbor is freaking out! There are a bunch of bees hanging on my neighbor's swing set and we don't know what to do!"

From personal experience, I can tell you that the difference in truly being ready and thinking you are ready is the difference between catching that swarm and waving goodbye to them. I have watched a swarm exit a hive and recorded them massing up on a tree branch at about 12 feet up. "This one will be easy", I mused. I then decided that I wanted to add a few more undrawn foundation frames to the swarm's new hive so that I would take maximum advantage of the swarm's proclivity to produce comb. In that extra 10-15 minutes I was prepping frames, 'my soon to be caught swarm' had reached consensus on a new home and off they went. They were in

*the tree for only about half an hour. I had never seen bees leave that quickly.
Be Prepared.... Really Prepared.*



Note: Swarm trapping/baiting and swarm 'catching' are two different things. Swarm trapping/baiting involves putting out 'bait hives' for bees to find and inhabit (and then join your apiary). Swarm catching involves capturing a swarm from a tree, bush, fence, or any of a hundred other areas that an initial swarm may land at shortly after exiting the hive and while waiting for the scout bees to find a new home. Usually this is the result of a panic phone call you receive from someone who knows you are a beekeeper. This can be an **INTENSLY EXCITING** activity.

Get your blood flowing! Capture or Trap a Swarm!

Fascinating video to watch the action going on in a clustered swarm. You can observe a lot of scouts doing waggle dances. It gets really interesting at around 24:15 minute mark.

[Check out this swarm video](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Catching a swarm](#) (Ctrl+Click link)



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)

Pollen identification chart:

[Pollen Color Chart](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Inspection sheets:

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

[Inspection Checksheet \(detailed\)](#) (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)

Mite Treatment Information [Honey Bee Health Coalition](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Meghan Milbrath on Northern Swarms](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Growing Degree Days (GDD) – Just a primer

GDD are a means used to measure the cumulative warmth in a particular area. It is an estimate but found to be a fairly accurate and useful tool for many (like horticulturalists, farmers, and of course beekeepers) looking to know when plants/crops will reach various stages of development.

The GDD calculation is straight forward. In our area and as it pertains to beekeeping, it is the result of subtracting 50 degrees (referred to as base 50) from the average between the high temperature of the day and the low temperature of the day. If the result is less than zero, there are zero degree days recorded. Each day's accumulation of Growing Degree Days is added to the prior days to provide a cumulative total for the year...and that is what is important to us.

Example: High temp of the day= 70 degrees. Low temp of the day= 50 degrees Average between the two (70+50=120, 120/2=60) is 60 degrees. Remember, this is an estimate, not an hour by hour weighted average temperature.

60 degrees – 50 degrees (the base) = 10 degrees. This is the number of degree days for that particular day.

So, what is the 50-degree base about? Generally (yes, there are exceptions), plant growth/development/blooming is minimal below 50 degrees in our part of the world and for the plants/trees that we have interest in. Once the average temps exceed 50 degrees growth starts and things start to happen.

Why is this important to me as a beekeeper?

Each plant or tree has a specific time in their development when they bloom. This development is directly influenced by the cumulative warmth the plant experiences. GDD is a means to measure that cumulative warmth. If you know that a particularly important tree blooms at 300 GDD, you can influence your colony management to have a maximum foraging force in place when the date for that 300 GDD nectar flow arrives (assuming honey collection is one of your goals).

How? Well, maybe you delay making elective splits until after that particular tree blooms. Maybe you do a Demaree manipulation rather than a split. Maybe you combine that weak hive you have to a stronger one to make a colony with a huge number of foragers to take advantage of the flow. Being aware of the upcoming flow can allow you to control your feeding to maximize early comb production and stopping your feeding so that your honey crop is produced from natural nectars and not partially from sugar syrup. 'Knowing the future' allows you to get supers on in a timely manner to maximize honey production. It also allows you an opportunity to collect 'crop specific' honey. Do you want specific Black Locust 'water white' honey? How about a crop of delicious Linden honey (a personal favorite)? You can do it and knowing about GDD and your local plants/trees GDD bloom timing can be an enormous help.

How do I know a specific plant's/tree's GDD bloom level?

- Ask other beekeepers that have tracked this information.
- Record the GDD bloom number and date each year for different plants/trees and track it. (Have you heard anyone mention record keeping?)
- Consult local arboretums and botanic garden web sites for bloom GDD.
- Contact regional, state, local ag extension services.

Here is a link to a Growing Degree Days calculator. There are others that you can find on the internet.

[Growing Degree Days Calculator](#) (Ctrl += Click)

Growing Degree Days...Another Tool in Your Toolbox...Use it



News from the NIBA beeyard



It was a full day at the NIBA beeyard on Thursday where 10 members gathered. Two colonies were sampled using the alcohol wash. Nicely, zero varroa were found.

Two supers were added to a colony presently overflowing its two deep hive bodies. Happily there was no sign of swarming plans.

Another colony was found to have a large number of sealed queen cells, but no queen. As the group gathered in the yard, a swarm had been seen departing across the nearby farm field. Perhaps that swarm departed the queen-cell-filled colony. That colony is being allowed to requeen itself.

A week ago additional frames of brood moved from a donor colony to a colony will be used to raise local queens. As this colony is quite strong and should produce healthy queens. A Cloak board was added to that colony. Queen rearing is under way.

The next beeyard session is scheduled for Thursday, June 12, at 4:00 PM, before the membership meeting. There is lots of action as we get into the heart of bee season.



were
that
hoped,

Kids in the beeyard

The NIBA beeyard will be used by Stephanie Slater for use with a Kids in College bee class. This class meets four days from 9:00 to noon beginning June 9. There is still room in the class. Starts soon. Pass the word.

A Week with the Honey Bees, Grades 6-9 - McHenry County College

Mentoring and the promotion of beekeeping keeps NIBA investing in an active beeyard. In addition to being available to a number of MCC classes, the beeyard will be visited by teachers involved in the Ag in the Classroom program and a Farm Bureau class for local farmers and their families. The beeyard is a great investment.



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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 adfhoney@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**

