

SMOKER SIGNALS



ISSUE NO 1 | JANUARY 2026 | VOLUME 1



A message from Med

Happy New Year everyone. I hope all of you had a great holiday season. Around Christmas my son was able to detect heat signals in all of my hives in Hilliard with his camera equipment. And, with the very warm weather, I did notice a lot of bee activity. Then, over the last several days, I was able to go to my apiaries and do some further inspection through the “portholes” in my quilt boxes. Several of the hives did need a refill of their supplemental sugar blocks. Fortunately, I did not see any excessive mortality at the entrances of the hives. And for this winter, there has been no ice buildup at the entrances. So far so good.

TOPIC 1

JANUARY GENERAL
MEETING DETAILS ON
PAGE 2

TOPIC 2

COBA SCHOOL
SCHEDULE ON
PAGE 3 AND 4
(FOLLOW LINK)

TOPIC 3

SIMPLE AND
QUICK RECIPE
FOR YOUR HONEY
ON PAGE 5

Smoker Signals cont.

I recently came across a Facebook site, Bee Haven, that has some very interesting posts. Bee Haven is advertised to be “a Canadian, science base beekeeping community. They share evidence-backed education, real-world experience and a bit of humor, welcoming beginners to seasoned beekeepers while supporting healthy bees and pollinators.” Two recent posts that I found very informative, dealt with anatomy and physiology of the bees wings as well as the antennae. As an example, I was reminded that there are thousands of sensory receptors in the last segments of the antennae that detect smell, touch, taste, temperature, and humidity. I learned that the drone’s antennae have one extra segment compared to those of worker bees. This “extra segment gives the drone more surface area for scent receptors” that help them detect the queen’s pheromones. “Drones are literally built to find her”. I personally plan to monitor this website for this sort of information.

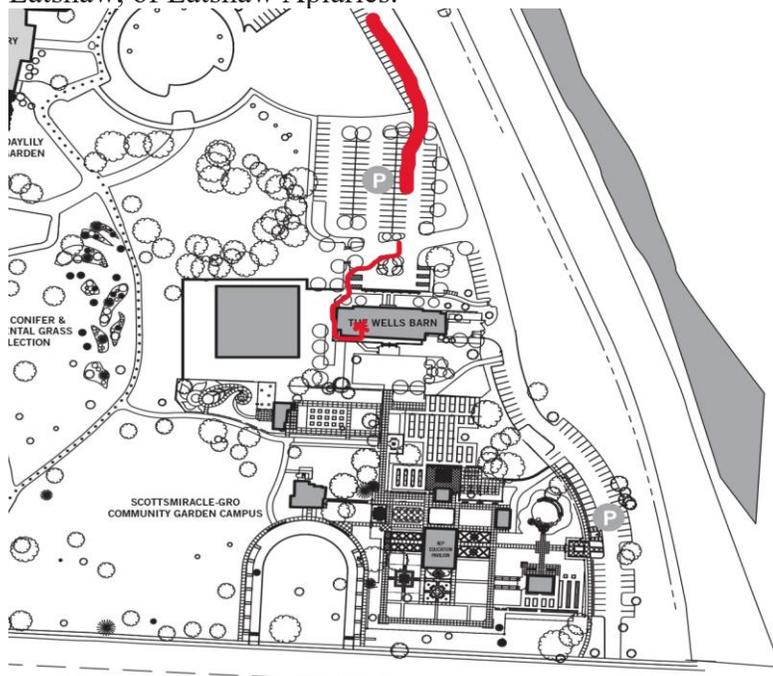


Bee Haven

Registration for our upcoming Bee Schools is progressing well. And we already have several outreach opportunities in the planning stages. Look for COBA interest surveys to be coming out in the near future. I encourage all of you to consider helping out with these events as well as our various COBA activities. As a reminder, our first monthly COBA meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 21 in the Wells barn starting at 6:30. Entry will be through the south doors. Hope to see you there!

General Meeting

The COBA January 21, 2026, meeting will be at Franklin Park Conservatory, in the **Lower Level of Wells Barn**. To enter, go to the entrance on the other side of the parking lot. Use the wooden walkway from the main entrance to the entrance on the garden and apiary side of the building. There are stairs and an elevator to go to the lower level, once you are inside. Social hour and potluck are at 6:30, and the meeting starts at 7 p.m. The featured speaker is Dr. Joe Latshaw, of Latshaw Apiaries.



JOE LATSHAW, SPEAKER FOR JANUARY MEETING



At the young age of eight, Joe Latshaw saved his money and purchased his very first beehive. His love of bees has grown ever since. Joe completed B.S and M.S. degrees at Ohio State University and later a Ph.D. at Arizona State University focusing on honeybees and behavioral genetics. Joe now runs a premier selective breeding program in the beekeeping industry. Joe frequently investigates beekeeping challenges and shares his work in trade journals. His research interests include winter survivability, benefits of genetic diversity, queen rearing, and successful hive management without the use of chemical treatments.

Greener Growth:

COBA Cuts the Paper to Save Forest

Hello everyone,

We wanted to share an important update with our members.

Pending a vote from our board of trustees, we have identified a new membership platform that we plan to transition to in the near future. This move represents a major step forward for our organization and how we serve our members.

Once implemented, this platform will allow us to move away from paper records and manual tracking. Members can expect automated communications, easier event check-ins, improved record keeping, and a more streamlined overall experience. This will also allow our leadership team to spend less time managing administrative tasks and more time focused on education, outreach, and club programming.

We are proud to say that we are the premier bee club in Central Ohio, and it's time our systems reflect that. This transition will help us operate at a higher level and better support our growing membership.

Special thanks go out to Med, Claudia, Winnie, Mike Hall, Jeremy Woelfle, and Morgan Rudell for their dedication to COBA.

More details will be shared after the BOARD's vote. Thank you for your continued support and for being part of such a strong and engaged beekeeping community.

—

Central Ohio Beekeepers Association Technology Task Force

Bob Bowers

COBA BEE SCHOOLS FOR 2026 DATES

**OPTION 1 -
SCOTT'S
LAWN/MARYSVIL
LE BEE SCHOOL
ON SAT FEB 28, 8A
TO 430P.**

**OPTION 2 - FOUR
2-HOUR SESSIONS
(6:30P-8:30P) ON
WEDNESDAY
EVENINGS - FEB
25, MARCH 4,
MARCH 11, AND
MARCH 18 AT
WATERMAN FARM
HQ AT OSU.**

**OPTION 3 -
LIBERTY MUTUAL
INSURANCE SAT.
MARCH 14, 2026,
8A - 430P. 518 E.
BROAD ST.
COLUMBUS OH**

**SIGN UP HERE.
PROGRAMS
[HTTPS://SHARE.G
OOGLE/W9MH5Q3
201VCBJT1W](https://share.google/w9MH5Q3201VCBJT1W)**

Smoker Signals cont.

Create a Buzz: It's Time to Teach What You Know

The bees may still be clustering, but it's almost time for Outreach Season. Schools, libraries, and clubs are scheduling honeybee presentations. If you are interested in volunteering to help, contact Claudia at: claudiakhoureybowers@gmail.com.



“January is the quietest month in the garden. But just because it looks quiet doesn't mean that nothing is happening.”

-Rosalie Muller Wright

Bee joke:

What is small, black & yellow and drops things?

A fumble bee.

**BEE
SCHOOL
SPRING
2026
SCHEDULE**

<https://share.google/IZtOZKwXDzGyEdUN8>



Smoker Signals cont.

Honeyed Burrata Toasts

These addictive appetizers are made with toasted bread, creamy burrata and crystallized honeycomb – taken over the top with fresh mint, flaky sea salt, and orange zest!

Course Appetizer, Hors D'oeuvres

Cuisine American, Italian

Prep Time 10 minutes

Total Time 10 minutes

Ingredients

- 1/2 large French baguette cut into thin slices
- 6 oz burrata cheese torn
- 1 tbsp fresh mint chopped
- 3 tbsp raw honeycomb
- 1 tbsp fresh orange zest
- 1/2 tsp flaky sea salt

Instructions

1. Slice the French baguette and lightly toast if desired – you can also serve untoasted. Place on a serving platter.
2. Tear the burrata over the slices of bread, distributing evenly
3. Sprinkle mint evenly on top of the burrata toasts, then cut off pieces of honeycomb and distribute evenly among the toasts
4. Grate fresh orange zest over top of the toasts and sprinkle flaky sea salt over the top as well. Serve immediately!



A Great big Thank-You! to everyone who donated The Central Ohio Beekeepers Charitable Foundation Annual Fundraising Campaign. Members donated almost \$5,000. The funds will go toward supporting the Youth Scholarship program and Veterans' Beekeeping School.

A Request of COBA Members

I recently finished Dr. Thomas Seeley's book, *The Lives of Bees: The Untold Story of the Honey Bee in the Wild*. It is quite good and I highly recommend reading it if you have not. In this book, Dr. Seeley reviews the studies of feral bee colonies (his and many others') and then compares that with our managed bee colonies.

In his discussion on swarming, he noted that

- 30 days prior to the colony's first seasonal swarm, the colony goes thru a big drone build-up. This is driven by the fact that it takes 24 days for the drone eggs to develop from egg to adult, and then another 12 days to achieve sexual maturity. In the end, this build-up fills around 20% of the brood chamber with drone larvæ.
- 16 days prior to the swarm, they start developing replacement queens. This is driven by a queen taking 16 days to develop from egg to adult and another 6 days to reach sexual maturity.

After laying the queen eggs, the workers then put her on a severe dieting program, reducing her weight by 25%! (It is an interesting read – pg. 161.)

This math means that just after the swarm, there will be plenty of queen options for the colony, and plenty of drones to inseminate the other colonies' queens.

Based on Dr. Seeley's book, I have some theories I want to test, including

1. Can the hive be split just before the swarm using a walk-away split (a simulated swarm), and not lose the productivity of the bees?
2. Can we use phenology to predict when the bees start this 30-day calendar, or is it simply a fixed window of time?

The first theory is easy to test if we know when to time it.

The second one could be difficult, but fortunately, we have a tool which can be used to easily measure the

Phenology is the study of periodic events in biological life cycles and how these are influenced by seasonal and interannual variations in climate, as well as habitat factors (such as elevation).

Examples include the date of emergence of leaves and flowers, the first flight of butterflies, the first appearance of migratory birds, the date of leaf colouring and fall in deciduous trees, the dates of egg-laying of birds and amphibia, or the timing of the developmental cycles of temperate-zone honeybee colonies.

Wikipedia entry on Phenology, 06 January 2026
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenology>)

Smoker Signals cont.

phenology “calendar”: **Growing Degree Days** (GDD).

Growing Degree Days was developed by the French scientist René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur in 1730. It is an odd concept to embrace as it is not actual days but should be seen simply as a numeric value. If you want a deeper discussion on GDD, see the sites noted below.

Wikipedia entry on Growing Degree Days, 06 January 2026
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Growing_degree-day)

Dr. Dan Herms, a professor emeritus of entomology at the Ohio State University developed an extensive calendar based on years of observations of plant and insect activity. His work was developed into a calculator on a web site we can all use: **The Ohio State Phenology Calendar** (<https://weather.cfaes.osu.edu/gdd/>). To use it, enter the zip code where you want to know the number.

[Phenology & Bees](#)

In searching to find anything of note about this idea that GDD might be used to predict swarming, I only found three sources (noted

below). There were a few web sites also, none of these gave us any planning tools.

So maybe we can develop such a tool.

[Now for the Request](#)

When you find a swarm (or lose bees to a swarm), please send me:

1. The best estimate you have for when the bees left, and
2. The best estimate you have for the zip code where the bees were.

Please sent it to me at: Rich.Colvin@iCloud.com.

I will use that information to start building a chart of the GDD dates and swarm counts. I want to compile this over a number of years to confirm the validity of any information.

If my theory is correct, there is a good correlation between GDD and times for bee swarms. And by identifying that, we can start planning ahead for swarm season to be more ready for when it comes.

Rich Colvin

[Theory #3 to Test](#)

P.S., I am testing another theory I have from Dr. Seeley’s book regarding the quantity of drones. He noted that the typical colony rears 7,500 drones to adulthood, using 17-20% of the nest area. This provides enough drones to accommodate the typical 2.3 swarms per hive.

Smoker Signals cont.

Dr. Seeley also found that, after the swarm, the bees quickly converted the open drone comb into jumbo honey stores.

A typical feral hive has 12.6 ft² of nest comb which equals:

- 9.6 medium frames, or
- 6.5 deep frames

To that end, in the early Spring, I will be adding two frames of drone comb to my 5-frame hives: 1 in each of the two bottom brood boxes. I want to see if they use it well.

What is drone comb? The typical cell size for feral bees is 5.19mm, whilst drone cells are 6.5mm (25% larger).

References:

1. Published Articles

- a. "Phenology of Honey Bee Swarm Departure in New Jersey, United States", *Environmental Entomology*, Volume 47, Issue 3, June 2018, Pages 603–608, by D C Gilley, T J Courtright, & C Thom (<https://academic.oup.com/ee/article-abstract/47/3/603/4958150>)
- b. "Using Phenology to Keep Bees in Maine" *American Bee Journal*, vol. 160, no. 3, March 2020, By Michael Donihue (<https://personal.colby.edu/~mrdonihu/GDDABJarticle.pdf>),
- c. "Phenology and Its Value to Beekeepers", *Bee Culture Magazine*, 15 April 2015, by Denise Ellsworth (<https://beeculture.com/phenology-and-its-value-to-beekeepers/>)

2. University web sites

- a. The Ohio State Phenology Calendar (<https://weather.cfaes.osu.edu/gdd/>).

3. Web sites (unknown validity)

- a. Applying Growing Degree Days to Beekeeping (<https://www.beekeeping.isgood.ca/hive-management/swarms/applying-growing-degree-days-to-beekeeping>)

Bee Degrees Days (<https://bumblebeewatch.blogspot.com/2010/03/bee-degree-days.html>), 21 March 2010

Applications are open until Feb. 4, 2026, for Veterans' Beekeeping School. Do you have family, friends, or co-workers who are veterans and interested in beekeeping? Go to the Foundation website for more information and applications.





Habitat



Resources



Workhorse/Pollinator Plant selection via ERA Tool

By Sarah L Sullivan, PhD

Please submit suggestions for future articles to sarah@fruitstrengthfarm.com

The **Ecoregional Revegetation Application (ERA) Tool** is a pollinator-friendly search-and-print plant database designed to support the selection of optimal native plant species for pollinator habitats.

<https://www.nativerevegetation.org/era/>

- Directions for using the tool appear in a pop-up window.
- After selecting a state and clicking on the map within that state, a pop-up window appears with a concise table of 25 of the workhorse pollinator plants for that ecoregion.
- Clicking “Download Workhorse Plants” for the Central Corn Belt Plains (Ecoregion 54) in Ohio, yields an excel spreadsheet with 336 lines and 51 columns. A single line runs across 15 pages. Half of the 336 plants are Honey Bee forage plants. And 95% of the Honey Bee plants are larval host plants for other pollinators. The pollinator relevant columns are at the far right of the spreadsheet in columns AH through AY.

Workhorse plants are native plants within a specific ecoregion that are known to be hardy, durable, consistent, tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions and are widely distributed throughout the ecoregion.

Pollinator plants provide significant pollinator benefits such as: adult food, larval food, and nesting and structure for native bees

ERA Workhorse/Pollinator plants are the most useful for creating pollinator habitat.

I am using this tool to increase the plant biodiversity of my acreage. I downloaded and saved the spreadsheet for my ecoregion to easily refer to it while identifying plant species that are already established on my acreage and to identify plant species that are absent so that I can add them.

My goals are to increase the forage available to my bees while increasing the diversity of birds, butterflies, native bees, and other pollinators.

Smoker Signals cont.

Happy New Year From Rich Herman

This year in May 2026, I will start my 32nd year of beekeeping. I started with a five-frame deep nuc installed in a ten frame deep brood box. The woodenware came from a local beekeeper. I assembled new frames and wax foundation that I purchased from Kelly Bee Supply in Ky. (Mann Lake). Thirty years ago, it was common practice to use two deep brood boxes, medium honey supers and shallow supers for cut comb honey. My first year was successful with ten medium frames of honey harvested. Currently, I still prefer to use double deep brood boxes with medium boxes for both honey and cut comb.

DON'T STARVE YOUR BEES

This time of year, I like to make sure the bees have ample food supplies available. My go to would be Dadant AP23 winter patties and / or Hive-A-Live fondant placed on the top bars, inner cover deep side and top cover. Feb/Mar time you can provide Dadant AP23 pollen patties and/or Ultra Bee Pollen Substitute from Mann Lake. Late winter/early spring, I use Pro Sweet from Mann Lake. I go to 1:1 sugar syrup with Honey- B- Healthy when the temperature warms up and stays warm.

EARLY SPRING

My bees are indicating Spring will be here soon. My five-frame double deep has a lot of brood. Note this was a fast inspection to minimize exposure to temperature. (58 degrees and sunny). Two frames with almost no honey with lots of brood on both sides of one frame. Brood in various stages ie: capped brood, large and small larvae. Didn't take time to check for eggs which would be obvious. (minimize heat loss). This hive will most likely need another box in 4-6 weeks. I will place a five-frame medium box to make a medium nuc. I plan on increasing the number of medium nuc for this year. At this time if anyone is contemplating doing an O-A vapor mite treatment you would need to do 3-5 times to kill the mites during the 21 day brood cycle. I plan on doing an alcohol wash in the next 2-3 weeks weather permitting to check mite count. Depending on mite count I will most likely use Apivar mite treatment to have lowest mite level before honey supers go on.

**HAVE AN AWESOME BEEKEEPING YEAR
COBA MENTOR & INSTRUCTOR RICH HERMAN**



Opportunity Knocks

Hi,

My name is Jack, and I am reaching out to you as a passionate beekeeper and seller of the “**BEESTKEEPING | Royal Queen Rearing & Royal Jelly Kit**”. Considering your expertise and influence within the beekeeping community, I would like to send you a free kit for your review and to share your thoughts with other beekeepers in your area.

I am very excited to introduce to you our product, which is designed to help beekeepers and queen bee producers efficiently raise their own queen bees and produce royal jelly.

I believe this kit will be very valuable to the beekeepers and queen bee producers who follow you, and I would love to hear your feedback.

I await your reply and the address to which I shall send the free kit.

Best regards,

Jack

info@beestkeeping.com

<https://beestkeeping.com>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DKtk8aisgkb/>

<https://www.instagram.com/beestkeeping/>

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