



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2019

THE BEE PULPIT

Dave Hill

Happy New Year!!!

It's been another year of ups and downs for those of us who love the hobby of beekeeping. We sometimes note in conversation about the hobby that if you want 6 opinions, ask two or three beekeepers! There's a lot of truth in that statement. Beekeeping is both simple and complicated at the same time, and when you quit learning new things and growing in your experience level, you're giving up on the hobby and may soon be an "ex-beekeeper". We are always learning and adding to our knowledge and experience, and that's good for all of us.

2018 was a very busy year of club meetings and activities. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped in so many areas to make this club one of the best in the State (and perhaps in the U.S. for that matter)! I am honored to be involved with such a great group of beekeepers who share their time and talent to

make the hobby attractive, fun, and educational for everyone involved.

Since our bees are in the midst of winter activity (or lack of), I thought I'd share some observations about winter survival of honey bees in northern Illinois. A healthy full-size colony, with adequate honey stores, and a strong and healthy queen, can survive extremely cold temperatures. After we have taken the excess honey stores, it takes somewhere between 80-90 lbs for winter survival. Typically one medium super yields 65-75 lbs, so that gives you a good idea. Most beekeepers in our area use two deeps for overwintering, and if the bees have done their job, there should be enough honey stored for the winter. A few folks leave a medium super on as an extra precaution. As the temperature drops, the bees go through their stored honey faster and faster. At very low

UPCOMING EVENTS

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday, January 11, 7pm

McHenry County Farm Bureau
1102 McConnell Rd
Woodstock, IL

McBEES FRIDAY

Friday, January 18, 7pm

McDonald's
250 S Eastwood Dr (Route 47)
Woodstock, IL

BLAIN'S FARM & FLEET BEE DAYS

Saturday, January 20

Woodstock **9 – 11 am**
11501 US Hwy 14, Wdstck

Elgin **1 – 3 pm**
629 S Randall Rd, Elgin

Sycamore **1 – 3 pm**
6674 Logan Ave, Sycamore

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday, February 8, 7pm

McHenry County Farm Bureau
1102 McConnell Rd
Woodstock, IL

BEEKEEPING CLASSES

February/March/April

McHenry County College
8900 US Route 14
Crystal Lake, IL

Kishwaukee College
21193 Malta Rd
Malta, IL

temperatures a colony with a small population can't stay warm. Any marginal hive will not be able to produce the heat required for survival. But a large, healthy hive has the cluster numbers to maintain the necessary temperatures to survive.

Heading into winter when the temperatures hit 57°F, the bees start forming their cluster on a frame with honey present. And when the temperatures drop to 23°F or below, the bees on the inside of the cluster begin vibrating their wing muscles (fanning) to generate heat, which aids in bringing up the internal core temperature of the

cluster. The outer shell of bees of the group are motionless, acting as insulation. The inner bees who are vibrating their wings continuously trade places with the outer bees so they can get warm. The whole process is like a swarm that leaves the hive to gather on a branch. The queen is in the center and the inner bees constantly trade places with the outer ones to maintain the temperature necessary for hive survival. When there is brood in the cluster, the bees maintain around 90°F to 95°F. Without the brood, the cluster core is closer to 75°F. The outside of the cluster is kept at around 41°F.

Club membership applications for 2019 are on the NIBA website and we'll have them available at the club meetings. Please take time to get your membership renewed soon. We will also begin the process of taking orders for the Spring bee packages and nucs that members can get through the club.

The first club meeting of the year will be Friday, January 11th at 7pm at the McHenry County Farm Bureau building in Woodstock. Hope to see you there!

Dave gave me May Berenbaum's cookbook, Honey, I'm Homemade – Sweet Treats from the Beehive Across the Centuries and Around the World. This is the first recipe. Enjoy!

FIRST-PRIZE HONEY HERMITS

This recipe is from the Culinary Honey Competition at the 1934 Illinois State Fair. Hermits constituted a separate competition category. Why they're called hermits isn't clear. The name might be because the cookies were originally baked individually rather than together as bars, although, ironically, later recipes do call for baking hermits in bar form. Another explanation is that the recipe originated with the Moravians, ethnic Protestant settlers in Pennsylvania well known for their spice cookies; Moravians were called Herrnhutter in German or Dutch, which may have been contracted to "hermits" by English-speaking bakers.

½ C butter	¼ C candied pineapple, chopped
½ C sugar	½ t cinnamon
½ C honey	½ t salt
1 egg	1½ t baking soda
¾ C dates, chopped	2 C flour

Cream butter, sugar, and honey. Beat egg and add to creamed mixture. Stir in chopped dates and pineapple. Mix and sift dry ingredients, and combine with creamed mixture. Drop dough by teaspoonful on greased cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees 20-25 minutes.

Yields 2-3 dozen cookies.

Source: Adapted from the Annual Report of the Illinois State Beekeepers Association, 1934.

BEEKEEPING CLASSES OFFERED BY LARRY KRENGEL



McHenry County College, 8900 US Route 14, Crystal Lake, Illinois

To Register – visit www.mchenry.edu/mymcc or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, call Tracy Berry at (815) 455 8758.

Beekeeping 101

The demand for bees for pollination is up, so there's no better time to learn about bees and beekeeping. 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: \$59

Course Code # NPG S38 009
Thursday 2/7–2/28 7–9:20 p.m.
Room A119



Seven 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 honey bees or come from migratory bee operations where dangerous viruses are exchanged. Discuss seven simple methods of raising healthy honey bee queens. With a few insights and a small amount of equipment, the backyard beekeeper can raise locally adapted queens from their own bee stock with a great record of winter survival, good temperament, and excellent honey production. Fee: \$25

Course Code # NPG S83 009
Thursday 3/7 7–9:20 p.m.
Room A119

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

Course Code # NPG S39 005
Saturday 4/20–4/27 10 a.m.–Noon
Location TBA

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

Course Code # NPG S04 001
Monday 2/25 7–9:20 p.m.
Room A103



Kishwaukee College, 21193 Malta Rd, Malta, Illinois
For information contact Laura Gregory at (815) 825-9641.

To register by phone, call (815) 825-2086.

Beekeeping Basics

A one-day class, meeting on Saturday, February 3, 9:00am to 5:00pm. A class introducing the basics of keeping bees and managing honey bee colonies. 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.

Seven Ways to Rear a Queen

February 20, 7:00pm. This one evening class discusses methods of raising honey bee queens. Purchased queens are often raised in areas of Africanized honey bees or come from migratory bee operations where dangerous viruses are exchanged. With a few insights and a small amount of equipment, the backyard beekeeper can raise locally adapted queens from their own bee stock with a great record of winter survival, good temperament, and excellent honey production.



Blain's Farm & Fleet Bee Days Event

On Saturday, January 19th, the local Blain's Farm & Fleet Stores in Woodstock, Elgin, & Sycamore will be hosting a Bee Days Event. We have been invited to be on hand to let customers know about NIBA and answer any questions they may have regarding Beekeeping.

They are looking for representation at Woodstock 9 am to 11 am, and Elgin and Sycamore, 1 pm to 3 pm.

They are offering a 20% off coupon for all Beekeeping supplies purchased on Jan 19th.

Please contact Tom Allen at (815) 861-1237 or tallen122@yahoo.com if you are interested in helping out.

The Wilkes County-based Brushy Mountain Bee Farm, one of the largest beekeeping equipment suppliers in the nation, has been closed and its employees laid off due to insolvency.

Harvard Eggs, Feed & Produce is in their 15th year of doing business. They are the largest supplier of beekeeping equipment in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin.

Sue Dietz tells us that they did not skip a beat and are now carrying Mann Lake products. They are also expanding their beekeeping department, giving it more space and convenience.

Consider supporting local small business by stopping in to Harvard Eggs, Feed & Produce to check out their beekeeping supplies.

CHORES OF THE MONTH - JANUARY

John Leibinger

HAPPY NEW YEAR

What's happening in the hive?

Dead or Alive?.....Lessons from a winter bee yard visit with the kid next door

Kid: Where are all the bees? Did they fly south for the winter?

Beekeeper: No, they didn't fly south. They're in the hive.

Kid: Are they hibernating like bears?

Beekeeper: No, bees don't hibernate. They slow down their activity. Right now the bees are all clustered real tight...not moving very much.

Kid: They must all be frozen. I think they are all dead.

Beekeeper: No. They're not all dead...or at least I hope they aren't. That's why we are out here...to find out.

Kid: Well I think they're all frozen. See...there's a bunch of frozen ones in the snow around this hive.

Beekeeper: Actually...that's a good sign. It means that they're probably still alive.

Kid: (Quizzical 8-year-old look) They sure look dead to me. There must be a hundred of 'em!!

Beekeeper: Yeah, well, there are a few...maybe fifty or sixty...but that's OK. There are probably twenty thousand more in the hive that are still alive.

Kid: What makes you think that? I think they are all dead here in the snow.

Beekeeper: When it is sunny and a little warmer than usual, the bees come out and take a short cleansing flight...to poop...(Giggle from the kid) and some don't make it back to the hive, like these you see in the snow. Most make it back.

Kid: Well how do you know they aren't all dead? I think they froze to death.

Beekeeper: You see all these little brown spots in the snow?

Kid: Yeah, there's a lot of them.

Beekeeper: That's bee poop, and there are a lot more spots than there are dead bees out here. I think many of them made it back safely. Let's see if we can check it out. Bend down by the side of the hive and put your ear near it. I will rap on the side and you listen.

Rap!

Bees: Bzzzzz...

Beekeeper: Did you hear that?

Kid: Yeah, I heard them buzz. Are they gonna come out and sting us??

Beekeeper: No, but hearing them is a good thing...they are still alive.

Kid: Why didn't you just take the top off and look inside?

Beekeeper: Well, they have to work pretty hard to produce enough heat for them to stay alive, and if I take the top off, they lose some of that heat and have to work even harder to warm up again. When they work harder, they eat more of their stored food, and sometimes they run out of food and starve. Hopefully they will have enough. Sometimes I do have to open the top real quick to put some sugar inside for them to eat.

Kid: How do you know if they need sugar?

Beekeeper: I don't always know, but there are some things I look for to give me a clue.

Kid: Like what?

Beekeeper: Like, how heavy does the hive feel? I tip it up from the back like this and see how heavy it feels. Then I judge whether I think it has enough weight, which is mostly their stored food, to get them through the winter. It takes a little experience to have a feel for the weight. As a last resort, I can pop the top and take a quick look. If the bees are all clustered at the top of the hive, I'll probably need to put some sugar in there for them.

Kid: Let's go look at the other ones!

So, here's what's going on:

The bees will be clustering to maintain colony warmth for the next several months. Slowly working their way up the hive, they will be consuming the food that they have stored away specifically for this time. There are heater bees at the inside of the cluster that 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.

For All Beekeepers:

This is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster. You may, however, need to open the top for a quick food inspection or emergency feeding. See *dialogue above with the kid.*

A mild winter, like we have had so far, generally allows the bees to be a little more active in the hive. The result is they consume more of their stores. Be aware that they may need additional emergency feeding.

Periodically walk out to your hives and take an external look at them. Remove snow 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 you have an upper entrance/exit and 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.

If you have been a conscientious beekeeper throughout the 2018 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 2019. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

Some odds and ends to keep you active and engaged this winter:

Melt down beeswax. During this time, excess comb, bits, scraps and older wax from frames can be melted down to form blocks of beeswax for future use.

Make beauty products. Lip balms, lotions, creams, salves, and scrubs are all fun things you can learn how to make, use, gift or sell.

Make candles. The beeswax that was melted down can be turned into homemade candles.

Research new techniques. Beekeeping is a field that continues to grow. New hives, alternative feeding methods, and integrated pest management techniques are always adapting and improving.

Repair and replace old hives. This is a great time to repair honey supers, build new deeps, and replace worn frames and/or foundation. It's also time to assemble new hives.

Prepare for spring splits. Most hives that come out of winter with strong numbers should be split (or they may split themselves, i.e., swarm). Learn how to make splits and what equipment is necessary.

Build a swarm box. Be ready to catch a swarm this spring with this fun project.

Train new beekeepers. Volunteer to share your experiences to help train new beekeepers.

Start preparing for the 2019 season:

Pay your association dues for 2019.

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

- Attend beekeeping meetings

- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees. Learn about the relevance of Degree Days.

- Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.

Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.

Set aside some money - for replacement or expansion bees, new/replacement equipment and supplies.

Order your bees if needed. Nucs? (Highly recommended for new beekeepers without drawn comb.) Packages?

Review your 2018 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.

Think about and set new goals for 2019. What do you want to accomplish this year?

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)

***Spring is just ahead.
There is a new beekeeping season on the way!***

LET'S TAKE IT EASY

Larry Kregel

I meet a lot of low-time beekeepers. Some have just started with bees and some have a bit more time, but have still not learned to take it easy with the bees. Even after a couple of years with bees in the back yard, time with the bees continues to create adrenaline surges and a rise in the blood pressure.

As a result of the lack of ease with the bees, these beekeepers fail to spend quality time with the bees leading to an understanding of the events of the colony. Knowing the mite levels, finding queen sign, and checking the brood pattern are all important to one's ability to manage the life of one's bee holdings. I have spoken to beekeepers who have never found their queen. (OK, that is tough, but with time in the hive it is doable.) A worthy goal for the keeper wanting to be successful with the bees is to learn to *take it easy*.

In the Beekeeping 101 class this year, I will encourage the nubes to make a concerted effort to learn to think like a bee, perhaps act like a bee in the beeyard, and feel as ease among the bees. It will help the bees and the keeper.



I have been pondering the hallmarks of an at-ease beekeeper. What are the signs of a "slick" beekeeper? Can you sit on your bee bench and calmly observe the activities of the landing board? Do you

set the smoker on top of the hive when lighting it? Have you tried leaving the gloves in your pocket (just in case)? Do you feel confident with what you do with that first frame you remove during a colony visit?

It is hard to define the state of oneness a beekeeper feels when "taking it easy" with the

bees. One knows it when that state exists. It feels good.

Over the years I have asked my bees to make comb honey for



me. I have tried a number of the many techniques for producing honey in the comb – with no intention of extracting it. The challenge of producing comb honey is a test of a keeper's insight into the propensities of the honey bee colony. It is not an easy job.

The advent of the honey extractor made getting a honey crop (liquid honey, that is) easier and allowed one's colonies to create larger crops because the bees no longer need to construct comb from scratch. Estimates vary, but somewhere between seven and twenty pounds of honey are required to produce one pound of wax. When extracting supers are employed, the only wax bees need to produce is for the new cappings.

The honey extractor was invented in the 1860's in Italy, however many think the era of extracted honey did not take hold until the 1920's.



For those intervening years, extracted honey was looked upon with suspicion because it was vulnerable to adulteration. Unscrupulous beekeepers would increase their crop by adding corn syrup. Honey in the comb was "certified pure" by the bees. Ultimately convenience won over purity.

In days gone by, there was no question about how to eat honey in the comb. Today when I mention eating honey in the comb to the uninitiated, they have a hard time fathoming how it is accomplished.



Some of the best honey you will ever eat comes off the hive tool when scraping burr comb from a frame. (The trick is getting it inside your veil!) Chew it like gum... great tasting gum. I think most will then spit out the wax when the taste is gone, but it is inert and can be swallowed. Have you tried comb honey on a hot bagel or English muffin? In moments the wax melts allowing a great olfactory bouquet to escape as you bite the treat. Upscale restaurants offer comb honey in their cheese bar. On a cracker with a bit of blue cheese the honey snack is excellent.



Nowadays the hard part is finding the honey in the comb. It is not on the shelves at the Jewel. Is that ready for change? Perhaps. Today's interest in raw, local produce and unprocessed food lends itself to comb honey. Perhaps the time is now for beekeepers to return to honey in the comb.

I had the opportunity to open a nuc I am overwintering in my garage. (I seldom open colonies in sub-50-degree weather.) I was surprised to see the amount of brood still in the combs. I wonder if the warmer than usual weather might be the cause. I am still not sure if this is a good or a bad sign. They have one full frame of honey, and I can continue to feed as needed. This nuc was made with one of the Russian queens we got in some packages last spring. They have the reputation of surviving the winter with smaller clusters. Maybe they do this by continuing to raise young. Beekeeping has more questions than good answers

Speaking of answers, NIBA meets on Friday, January 11, at the Farm Bureau at 7:00pm. You might want to get there early to get a good seat. Members are starting to think about spring bees so the attendance will likely be up. I hope to see you there.



May it be a great New Year for you.

MCBEE'S FRIDAYS

MEETING AT McDONALD'S

Let's gather to chat. No agenda, just time for us to get together. Time to get to know our fellow beekeepers. Time to compare notes. Time to ask questions.

Interested? Just show up. No need for reservations.

Third Friday of the Month – **January 18, 7 pm**

McDonald's, 250 S Eastwood Dr (Route 47), Woodstock



2019 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Dave Hill
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Membership Has Its Perks!

- By Randy Mead

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent a club honey extractor? We have two to choose from. Rental is \$10 for a 3 day rental. \$20 (\$10 for rental and \$10 deposit) is due when you pick up the extractor.

Schedule a pick up time, extract your honey and return the equipment in 3 days. The \$10 deposit will be returned if the extractor is clean.

To reserve a date, contact Randy at rmeadtoys@gmail.com.

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.
newsletter@nibainfo.org

Are you on Facebook? So are we!

Search for Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association. It's a closed group, so you need to request to join—but we're happy to approve your request.

We're an active and knowledgeable group. We've had LOTS of pictures and videos of your hives! Share your experiences, ask your questions.

Get in on the conversation. Join the fun today!

**The queen marking color for
2019 is GREEN.**