



Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 27—SEPTEMBER 2012

Modern Beekeeping



Photo courtesy of Lani Basberg.

- 2 **The Buzz**
- 3 **Bee Thinking About**
 - 3 For September, 2012
- 4 **Healthy Bees**
 - 4 To Feed or Not to Feed
 - 6 Not-So-Golden Side of Goldenrod
 - 7 Four Steps to Healthier Bees
- 10 **Bee-Havior**
 - 10 ZomBee Watch
 - 12 The Writing on the Wall, er, Frame
 - 13 Yellow Jacket Tragedy
- 14 **Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives**
 - 14 Super Solution for Cleaning Supers
 - 15 Conferences/Seminars/Classes
- 16 **A-Bee-Cs**
- 18 **BeeCause**
 - 18 Urban Experimentation
- 20 **Featured Products**
- 21 **FAQs**
 - 22 Newspaper Combine Method
- 23 **Recipes**
- 24 **Sweet as Honey**
 - 26 Future Beekeepers
- 27 **Foraging for Fun**
 - 27 Beekeeping Funnies
- 28 **Dronings from a Queen Bee**
 - 28 Why Do Bees Swarm?



Scan this with your smartphone to go to kellybees.com. >>

The Buzz

I recently returned from the Eastern Apiculture Society meeting in Vermont. It was great to catch up with customers and colleagues while learning about what's happening to care for the insects we all love.

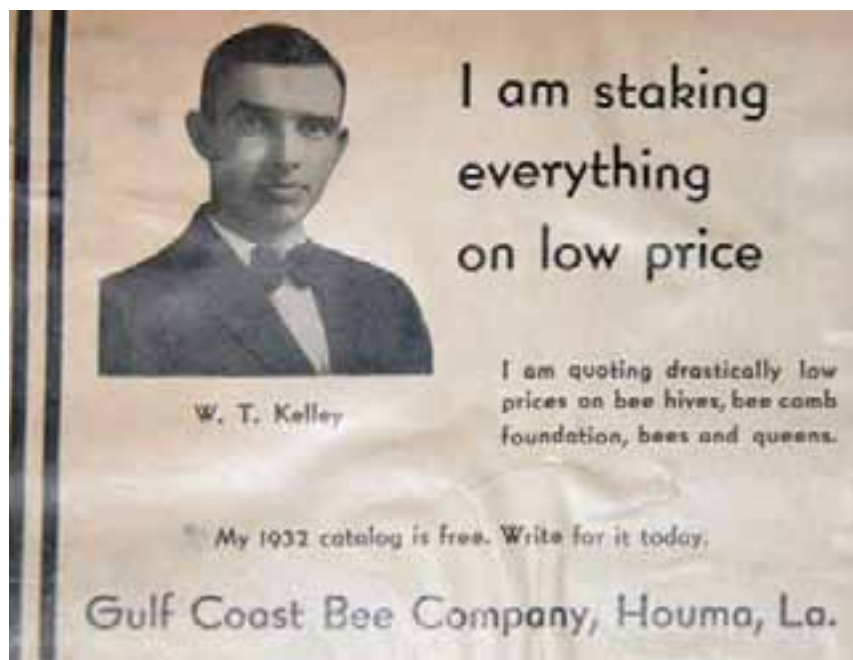
There is SO MUCH going on, including pesticide impact research, apitherapy, urban beekeeping, queen rearing, and natural beekeeping. We could fill 100 pages of this newsletter every month just covering advancements and possibilities.

Every month it is a challenge to figure out what to put in the few dozen pages to serve the broad interests of our readers. Thanks to all of you who provided input to our recent survey. It will certainly shape the content to come.

This month's content covers some start-of-fall information. Successful overwintering is one of the biggest challenges beekeepers face, and having healthy hives right now is critical. We'll be discussing more winterizing options in the next few issues, and welcome learning about what you do in your location and climate so we can share it with others. Please send it, along with any suggestions, ideas, photographs, recipes, etc. to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Thanks, as always, for your continued loyalty. We at Kelley's look forward to serving you.

Jane Burgess
CEO/Partner
The Walter T. Kelley Company



1932

Bee Thinking About

For September, 2012

Here are some things, geographically and weather-dependent, to consider for your apiary about now. Remember, this is in geographical generalities, as we have readers ranging from northern Canada to Paraguay.

As always, your comments and contributions welcome! Please email KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Things to check:

Brood pattern: Check that it is good, although its size will be diminishing. (See photo, last month's issue.) If you don't have a good brood pattern, do you have at least 20 pounds of honey in the hive? (That's what the queen needs to keep laying.) If your area has suffered from the drought, food for bees may be hard to come by. If you have less than 20 pounds, consider supplemental feeding.

Hive beetles and Varroa mite: They can still compromise a hive's health. (See last month's issue for suggestions on how to detect and address them.)

Honey: Sometime in September is about as late as most beekeepers leave supers that they'll be robbing on the hive. Unless you're in the middle of a substantial nectar flow, by removing supers you'll be encouraging bees to consolidate what they need in the boxes you're leaving for the winter.

What do you do with partially filled supers? Lots of options:

1. If you have a safe way to store them from pests, you can do so for later open feeding, like a balmy November day when bees are out flying, or later use, like next early spring. Some folks freeze them.
2. You can "open feed" with them now—scratching open the cappings and placing them about sixty feet from any hives so you don't set off a robbing frenzy close to a hive.
3. If you have multiple hives and multiple partially filled supers, you could mix and match frames to form a super of partially filled supers, which would perhaps be ideal to set atop your power hive to try to consolidate into their stores for the winter, or leave it on the power hive over winter in case they run short.

Space: Continue to reduce the hive to ensure the bees can patrol everything and keep critters in check (South) and keep the hive warm enough (North).

Mouse guards! Installing them if you're in the North, or at least having them ready; getting ready to install them in the South.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. ☀



A power hive, during a hot, humid, heavy nectar flow. The beekeeper ran out of supers and even threw on a deep to try and stay ahead of their (glorious) honey production. Impressive during times of high production, but way too much hive for fall and winter.

Healthy Bees

To Feed or Not to Feed

By Lady Spirit Moon

In the fall of my first year of beekeeping, I was instructed to feed sugar-water to my two hives. At the end of winter there were signs of Nosema all over the outside of the boxes and dead bees on the ground in front. I knew something was wrong and deep down knew I was the culprit.

As a natural beekeeper I have learned if the bees don't take it in, I don't either—no harsh chemicals, oils, chemicals, sugar shakes, traps, supplements, etc. I also use small cell foundations in my brood boxes. But there are times when my girls are notional and draw out the comb the way they want. And that's okay. They draw out the whole comb on foundationless frames in my honey supers. It's been several years and those first two hives were the only hives with Nosema problems.

Listening to the Bees

I am a certified Nutrition Consultant, Master Herbalist, and Certified Beekeeper, www.BEeHealing.Org, in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina. I am also studying Apitherapy from world-renowned Dr. Stephan Stangaciu from Romania. The main apiary on my property is home to 14 beehives of mixed genetics, including feral stock. Another apiary has about six hives at all times of different genetics also with feral stock. I raise my resistant girls by their perspective and I listen to what they tell me. And trust me when I say I, and they, have had a lot of painful conversations.

My riding lawn mower is often referred to as my vibrational meditational machine – and with good reason. It takes me roughly three hours to mow my lawn and having done it so often, I usually use the time to think about things. On one of my vibrational sojourns around the property last summer, I kept going over things in my head. I knew there was a connection to everything I had studied in such a way it would connect honeybees and humans to all of it.

Within an hour floating images in my head fell into one idea. Immediately understanding and so struck by its simplicity, my foot stomped on the mower's brakes. Good thing. As I came out of my brain's workings, I heard my girls buzz their warnings around my head. I was just inches from running into their hive. Apologizing profusely I backed away from the hive, smiling at their bumping my body in several places, but never stinging me.



Few things are more beautiful to a beekeeper than a honeybee filling her pollen sacs. But, as she works to prepare the hive for winter, is there enough pollen available?

Listening to Your Gut

Mowing complete and the image still in my head, I went online to find studies regarding the honeybees having bacteria in their gut. In 2006 German scientists did a study on the gut of three different pollinators; one of them a honeybee.

“The gut of insects may harbor one of the largest reservoirs of a yet unexplored microbial diversity...diversity and variability of bacteria found in the gut of different bee species was analyzed. For three successive years, adults and larvae of *Apis mellifera* ssp. *carnica* (honey bee) ...

Single-strand conformation polymorphism profiles suggested a higher abundance and diversity of lactobacilli in adults of *A. mellifera* than in larvae ...

Further phylogenetic analyses indicated common bacterial phylotypes ... e.g. those related to *Simonsiella*, *Serratia*, and *Lactobacillus*. Clades related to *Delftia acidovorans*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* or *Lactobacillus intestinalis* only contained sequences from larvae. Several of the bee-specific clusters also contained identical or highly similar sequences from bacteria detected in other *A. mellifera* subspecies from South Africa, suggesting the existence of cosmopolitan gut bacteria in bees.”

The operative word in the above paragraph is “*Lactobacillus*.” Wikipedia defines it:

“*Lactobacillus*, also called Döderlein’s bacillus, is a genus of Gram-positive facultative anaerobic or microaerophilic rod-shaped bacteria. They are a major part of the lactic acid bacteria group, named as such because most of its members convert lactose and other sugars to lactic acid. In humans they are present in the vagina and the gastrointestinal tract, where they are symbiotic and make up a small portion of the gut flora ... The production of lactic acid makes its environment acidic, which inhibits the growth of some harmful bacteria ...”¹

Lactobacillus is also in the intestines of dogs, and cats. Man and honeybees, nearly all animals, need the balance of flora and fauna in their digestive tract. As in all balancing acts, we need both sides of any spectrum to understand and appreciate when things are out of balance and unhealthy. Diarrhea tells us when there is too much fauna and not enough flora. In the honeybee the diarrhea is called Nosema.

When the *lactobacillus* flora feeds first on the nutrients coming from the stomach, the digestive tract stays healthy. When there is not enough nutrients for the *lactobacillus* to feed on, bad bacteria takes over and causes diarrhea. Every animal has dysentery from time to time; but when it is not checked and is allowed to continue beyond the norm, or there are not enough nutrients, the body’s immune system weakens. A weakened immune system will contract viruses.

A Need to Feed?

Prebiotics feed the good bacteria in our digestive system and for humans they are fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. Our probiotics are acidophilus. For honeybees, nectar is their prebiotics and bee bread is their probiotics. My bees have kept their honey since the first time I saw Nosema on my boxes. But if I don’t have enough honey and need to feed sugar/water, I have a formula. I put in 11 cups of sugar and enough very

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lactobacillus>

hot water to fill a gallon container 3/4s full then stir until the sugar has dissolved. When cooled I add about 25-30% honey to the sugar-water and stir. Heat kills the healing properties in honey. It won't totally stop Nosema, but your girls will come through the winter far healthier.

If a hive came late in the fall and there was not enough time for them to gather enough pollen, I make my own patties by adding just enough honey to pollen to hold everything together. The ball is placed on wax paper, rolled out to less than 1/4" thick, then frozen. Just before winter, I place the patty, with wax paper, on top of the frames. They will move the wax paper out of the hive or I just tear it off as they eat between the wax paper.

Compromised Nutrition Complications

A friend of mine wrote about finding dead bees in front of her hives with short abdomens. I remembered a major dearth had started last mid-June that stayed until fall. She had no choice but to feed sugar water because she'd had no honey. To confirm my theory and backing up my research, I contacted Dr. David R. Tarpy, Entomologist/Apiculturist, NCSU, who shared the following: "And I agree with the nutrition link with the observed bees, but also note that poor nutrition affects physiological immunity, which can flare various infectious agents. I've noticed Acute Bee Paralysis Virus (ABPV) can be associated with shortened, blackened abdomens, but not always. Another similar one is Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (DBPV). Our screens are finding viruses all over the place, but still we know incredibly little about their epidemiology..."

Lady Spirit Moon is the Ambassador for the non-profit Center for Honeybee Research located in Asheville, NC. This year the Center has put in place two bee yards in which to do their research. Go to www.chbr.org to stay up with what we are doing and our events, sign up for our newsletter, and/or use our tax-deductible Donate button.

[Questions or comments about this article?](#)

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Not-So-Golden Side of Goldenrod

This time of year, honeybees are feasting on this nectar-rich plant when available. Their opinion of its golden goodness may not be shared by us humans.

For starters, goldenrod nectar can cause a "locker room" smell in the hive. Additionally, if the resulting honey is primarily from goldenrod nectar, it might have a strong flavor that many folks don't prefer.²

If you have an undesirable smell about your hive(s), don't be alarmed. In this year of rampant drought, be grateful that bees have such a wonderful (to them) source for their critical winter build-up.

Beyond not panicking, there are a couple things to consider:

1. If the smell is quite strong and undesirable, be sure your hive isn't infected with American Foulbrood (AFB). The USDA's Agricultural Research Division has a great publication about it; check out <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=2882>.
2. Assuming the source of the smell isn't AFB, and if you pull honey from the hive, give it the critical taste test. If it doesn't please your palate, you may want to consider leaving it on the hive for overwintering or marking it to be fed back to bees.

[Questions or comments about this article?](#)

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

2 One reader has shared that while the flavor is "a little zingy," it is excellent honey with which to cook.

Four Steps to Healthier Bees

Editor's note: Kelley's Field Day in June, 2012 was delighted to offer the expertise of Michael Bush, well known for his research and extensive knowledge on natural beekeeping. Following is a summary of Bush's presentation on "Four Steps to Healthier Bees."

Step 1: No Treatments

An area of frustration for many beginning beekeepers is whether or not to treat their bees, and if so, how. Bush is a leader in the growing movement that addresses this frustration by advising don't treat.

Bush explained that there are over 8,000 microorganisms living in a healthy hive. "When you treat, you disrupt those organisms." He provided the example of the impact of using terramycin, a common treatment for the bacterial diseases American and European Foulbrood. Honeybees collect pollen, which they ferment with fungi, bacteria and yeast to create bee bread, which they feed their brood. Terramycin kills bacteria, including the bacteria involved in the essential bee bread process. Clearly, its use makes other things go awry in a critical component of hive health.



Michael Bush speaks at Field Day.

Kelley's Field Day hosted a number of speakers, some whom advocate the use of essential oils for a healthy hive. Bush's take on this? Don't treat. He explained that essential oils kill helpful microorganisms. Also, a colony communicates via scent. Essential oils disrupt hive communications.

Some beekeepers ask why they shouldn't use medications that kill specific pathogens. Bush explained that the complex workings and interactions of 8,000 microorganisms are not well understood. "Some pathogens crowd out other pathogens that may be worse," he explained. He noted that Stonebrood, a fungal disease, makes a toxin that kills Nosema. By addressing one specific condition with treatments, you may be setting into motion events that encourage more insidious issues.

Another reason Bush advocates no treatment is that it "puts selective pressure where it belongs." Bees that can't survive today's challenges, he feels, shouldn't be provided treatments that allow their survival. He shared a complaint he commonly hears of beekeepers having been overrun with "supermites," which has happened because the mites that survive treatments are building up the ability to withstand chemicals thrown at them. Such beekeepers feel they have wimpy bees, unable to combat mites.

Bush advises, again, to stop treating, noting that the bees won't get past succumbing to mites as long as they are artificially supported in their less-than-effective battles with them. He encourages beekeepers to let nature take its course, allowing survivors to further those traits that help them survive. He admits it is tough to see your bees dying, but emphasized, "What we want is the genetics that survive, so maybe it is, in the long run, not such a bad thing."

Bush shared other key advantages to not treating:

- Save money
- Save time
- There's no upsetting the hive's eco-system with unknown ramifications
- You're breeding bees that survive

Step 2: Breed Local Survivors

Your hives that survive twenty degrees below zero, and / or 100 degree heat and dripping humidity, and / or relentless tropical rains, or dry gusts of hot wind for months—whatever is unique to your area? Those are your survivor hives, proven to have adapted to your climate and conditions. “Those are the bees,” said Bush, “that you want in your beeyard.”

Many new-bee beekeepers are hesitant to take the further step in beekeeping of raising their own queens, and / or making splits and nucs. It seems easier to order packages when colonies didn’t survive and to order queens when queens need replacing.

Bush summarized the reason why you should treasure and propagate your surviving stock: they have survivor genetics, the traits that can adapt and thrive in the specific challenges of your environment. This means many important things, such as:

- They understand the timing of your climate, like when to ramp-up egg laying because of what will be available to the foragers.
- They raise queens when it is optimal to raise queens. They know when there will be enough drones to mate well, when local conditions provide the right nutrition for developing lots of healthy bees, when to create queens who will mate with the optimal number of healthy local survivor drones, etc.
- They raise optimal drones when it is best to raise drones. They have an innate sense of timing for the area, knowing when queens will be mating, and ensuring they’re mating with well-fed, healthy drones, etc.



Inside: Survivors.

Requeening?

There are plenty of experts recommending that hives be requeened annually, and often in time for a new queen to take the hive into winter. Bush however recommends that you let the hive decide when to replace their queen, an approach that breeds for longevity of productivity.

“There’s no selective pressure if you replace the queen for them,” he explains. Honeybees will make the best queens, at the best time, to take them through the specific challenges of your locale—if you let them be.

Raising Your Own Queens

One of the most powerful tools a beekeeper can have at his / her disposal is a thriving nuc box. Bush recommends always having a nuc (or several, depending upon the number of hives you have) and queen cells “lying around ... it is a wonderful thing.” When you need a queen, you have one, from (hopefully) survival stock. There’s no waiting for one to arrive in the mail—if you can even order one.

Another advantage of raising your own queens is that you can select the traits you find most desirable, like gentleness, or maximum honey production. But, beyond the benefits to you of breeding your local survivors, you’re also contributing to the genetic diversity of the honeybees.

Step 3: Natural Food, and Plenty of It

Drawing from his knowledge of research, Bush cited several examples showing that natural food is not only what honeybees need, but that unnatural food introduces serious health issues to a colony. He noted that “bees raised on pollen substitutes are more short-lived than bees raised on real pollen,” and that sugar syrup’s pH differs from that of honey, and “messes with bees’ intestines,” adding that there are lots of studies and expert opinions that say feeding sugar syrup leads to more problems and diseases.

He reviewed the impetus behind the decades of recommendations to feed sugar syrup; money is a primary motivator due to the value of honey. Bush noted that not feeding honey is definitely cheaper, unless you take into account the health of your bees!

His recommendation? For winter survival, leave plenty of honey. Not only is there the incomparable advantage of providing them with the best nutrition, but there are several advantages to the beekeeper. It saves you the work of acquiring feed, hauling it to the hives, and potentially setting off robbing on weaker hives, among other reasons.

Step 4: Natural Comb

Bush is an advocate of letting bees build their own honeycomb. For beekeepers, this has its advantages. It is cheaper (no purchasing foundation) and easier (no manipulating foundation into frames and securing it, and handling it cautiously as it may break.) But, it is about the bees, and natural comb is better, according to Bush.

Bush cited that the standard foundation cell size is 5.4mm. Left to their own architecture, bees tend to build cells between 4.4 and 5.1mm, with 4.9 being fairly typical. That’s a 150% difference in volume between what is handed to bees, and what bees will build, given the choice. A smaller cell size, in his experience, practically eliminates Varroa mite issues. Bush cautioned however that once bees “upsized,” they don’t easily reduce cell sizes, as they tend to want a size based upon their actual body size.

Michael Bush has had an eclectic set of careers, currently he is working in computers. He has been keeping bees since the mid 70s, usually from two to seven hives up until the year 2000. Varroa forced more experimentation which required more hives and the number has grown steadily over the years from then. By 2008 it was about 200 hives. He is active on many of the Beekeeping forums with last count at about 45,000 posts between all of them. He has a website at www.bushfarms.com/bees.htm.



Late summer flowers are not only picturesque, but also essential to help bees put up the stores they need to successfully overwinter.



The best food for bees? The varied diet that (hopefully) Mother Nature provides.



Michael Bush

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Bee-Havior

ZomBee Watch

Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from a letter sent to us from John Hafernik, Professor of Biology, San Francisco State University, Trustee and President, California Academy of Sciences

Colleagues and I at San Francisco State University are launching a new citizen science website to track honey bee parasitism by the zombie fly *Apocephalus borealis*. Since you covered our initial discovery of the zombie fly attacking honey bees in the February issue of your newsletter, I thought our new project would be of interest to your readers. Beekeepers are a prime audience for our project and we hope many will choose to participate.

Beekeepers are a prime audience for our project and we hope many will choose to participate.

The official launch date for the site was Tuesday July 24. You can view it at <https://www.zombeewatch.org/>.

Press Release: Citizen Scientists Needed for SF State's "ZomBee Watch"

New web site – ZomBeeWatch.org – will help track location of parasitized honeybees

SAN FRANCISCO, July 24, 2012 – The San Francisco State University researchers who accidentally discovered “zombie-like” bees infected with a deadly fly parasite want people across the United States and Canada to look for similar bees in their own backyards.

Today SF State Professor of Biology John Hafernik and colleagues launched ZomBeeWatch.org, a citizen science project to report possible sightings of the parasitized bees. The researchers hope to find out how far the parasite has spread and how many honeybee hives might be affected.

After being parasitized by the *Apocephalus borealis* fly, the “zombees” abandon their hives and congregate near outside lights, moving in increasingly erratic circles before dying. The phenomenon was first discovered on the SF State campus by Hafernik and colleagues, and reported last year in the research journal PLoS ONE.

ZomBeeWatch offers tutorials on how to become a zombie hunter, complete with step-by-step instructions for monitoring and collecting bees, building a light trap and uploading data.

The ZomBeeWatch site asks people to collect bees that appear to have died underneath outside lights, or appear to be behaving strangely under the lights, in a container or in a glassine envelope. They can then watch for signs that indicate the bee was parasitized by the fly, which usually deposits its eggs into a bee's abdomen. About seven days after the bee dies, fly larvae push their way into the world from between the bee's head and thorax and form brown, pill-shaped pupae that are equivalent to a butterfly's chrysalis.

If it looks like their sample contains hatched parasites, “zombie hunters” can upload photos of their sample's contents to confirm whether they have found a parasitized bee. Along with information about the location of the photographed bee, the images will help the scientists build a better map of the honeybee infection.

ZomBeeWatch offers tutorials on how to become a zombie hunter, complete with step-by-step instructions for monitoring and collecting bees, building a light trap and uploading data.

Although there have been other reports of parasitized bees in Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara and South Dakota, Hafernik said, “what we’d really like to see is if this parasitism is distributed widely across North America.”

Hafernik says he has timed the launch of the site for when the parasitized population begins its seasonal rise. “Right now is the low season for parasitized bees,” he explained, “but they will start ramping up in July and August. In the San Francisco Bay Area, infections peak in September through January. We hope to learn about the timing of infections in other areas of North America.”

Since last year’s report, Hafernik and his colleagues have embarked on an ambitious set of experiments to learn more about the plight of the infected honeybees. In one key project, the researchers, led by graduate student Christopher Quock, will tag infected bees with tiny radio frequency trackers to monitor their movements in and out of a specially designed hive. They hope the tracking system will tell them more about how the infection affects the bees’ foraging behavior and why they eventually abandon their hives.

Hafernik and his collaborators are eager to learn as much as they can about the parasite, since it may be an emerging and potentially costly threat to honeybee colonies, especially those that cross from state to state to be used in commercial pollination.

The researchers hope the intense public interest in the parasitized bees earlier this year will encourage people to visit and contribute to the ZomBeeWatch site. “We’re sort of a mom and pop operation at this point,” Hafernik said, “but if we can enlist a dedicated group of citizen scientists to help us, together, we can answer important questions and help honeybees at the same time.”

[Questions or comments about this article?](#)

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

FREE-FLOWING FROM US:

Knowledge from over 80 years helping bees and beekeepers

Monthly newsletter with over 12,000 subscribers for print and online versions (kelleybees.com/blog)

Service—getting you what you need when you need it is our business and our passion.

Walter T. Kelley Co.

Serving the Beekeeper Since 1924.

kelleybees.com 800.233.2899

PO Box 240 807 W. Main Street Clarkson, KY 42726

The Writing on the Wall, er, Frame

Pulling out a frame of once-new foundation and finding it turned into this (Photo 1) is a wonderful thing!

But when you pull another frame of once-new foundation and find this (Photo 2), you have to wonder what they're trying to tell you!

Please send your speculations and theories to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Beek Hint

We'd used the "stinky stuff" to get most of the bees out of the honey super, but there were a few crawling on frames as I carried the very heavy super into the house.

I was probably thinking about them, or how heavy it was, or how hot it was ... whatever. I wasn't thinking. I dropped the super with 10 frames on the ground, a huge mess.

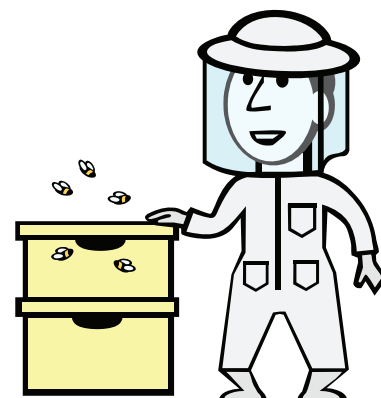
My hint is: you can get the few remaining bees out of a honey super if you smash it on the ground!

When I told other beekeepers about this, ALL of them said they've done the same thing. So, my real hint is: concentrate when carrying a loaded honey super. They're heavy and awkward and easy to drop.

T. Rosenthal, MI

This time of year, "the girls" have plenty to defend and the hives are quite strong. This time of year is a good reason they state it is cruel not to smoke a hive.

J. Burgess, KY



Yellow Jacket Tragedy

By Ol' Drone

In early August there was a bee sting fatality reported in Johnstown, New York. A man brush-hogging a field was stung by many “ground bees.” Honeybees don’t nest in the ground, but yellow jackets do. It was learned that he was allergic to bee stings and forgot to bring with him his EpiPen® bee sting kit.

Yellow Jackets Everywhere

Yellow jacket population increases usually occur in September but since this year everything is about a month early, so are the yellow jackets. Unlike gentle honeybees that are vegetarians, the aggressive yellow jackets are carnivores and feed on other insects. This is why they show up when the delicious aroma of hot dogs and hamburgers floats in the breeze from the grill. They also have a “sweet tooth” and go after the sugar in your ice tea or soda pop. Remind the kids to check for yellow jackets in their beverages, especially if the drink has been left on the table for a while.

Types of Yellow Jackets

There are two types of yellow jackets that build their populations late summer and early fall. The native, most common type makes its nest in the ground and is actually smaller than a honeybee. The other type is one inch—double the size of the honeybee—and is native to Europe. Both of these pests are shiny, bright yellow with black stripes. The other serious pest at the picnic may be the white-faced hornet. This is a large, shiny black bee with white markings on the head. These are the bees that build those big round gray nests hanging from a branch. Both of these bees are aggressive and can sting multiple times, unlike the honeybee.

Honeybee Stings

It is unlikely that honeybees create a problem unless the picnic is in a beekeeper’s yard. Honeybees don’t want to sting, as they lose their life, but they will use their stinger to protect their hive. Unless you threaten them while honeybees are foraging in the flower garden, they usually are very gentle.

Despite the hysteria associated with honeybee stings, they do not cause a medical crisis for 99% of our population. The honeybee has a barbed stinger that continues to inject venom under your skin for a couple of minutes. The best advice is to get the stinger out as fast as possible to prevent injection of the “full dose.”

Fortunately, many people develop a tolerance to stings and their reaction is much reduced after frequent, repeated stings. Most people do not experience any symptoms other than a burning sensation for two minutes, a red spot, and localized swelling. When a person accidentally receives multiple stings there will be significant swelling but a healthy adult usually recovers fully after 300 to 500 stings. Occasionally a mild allergic reaction may cause itching, a rash, or light-headed feeling and these symptoms usually respond to antihistamine pills.

The dangerous type of reaction is a drop in blood pressure and any difficulty breathing. This may be an anaphylactic reaction and requires immediate medical attention. Those hypersensitive to bee venom should carry the pocket bee sting kit EpiPen®, available by prescription. Treatments to desensitize highly sensitive individuals are available from specialized allergists. Treatment is for the specific type of bee: yellow jacket, hornet, or honeybee.

Don’t expect any problems from gentle honeybees but be careful with the “picnic bees.”

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Super Solution for Cleaning Supers

By Camilla Bee, Editor

A general recommendation for cleaning up honey supers after extraction is to put them back on the hive where they came for a week or so. But that's not always practical or possible.

Another common option is to put them out for the bees to lick dry (open clean-up). This method has its pros and cons. The good consists of sticky, dripping supers converted within a couple sunny days to dry and easy to handle; it is beyond amazing what the bees do.

The bad is that it typically is much more than bees doing the cleaning. You've just set up a buffet for every wasp, hornet, ant and other creature in a three county area. Other downsides include:

- Feeding small hive beetles
- Rodents tearing up the drawn comb (drawn comb is incredibly valuable for next season as it jumpstarts the bees' honey production)
- Sharing of diseases, if there are any present
- The possibility of setting off a robbing frenzy in any nearby hives (so put them far, far away)

Yes, the bad list is longer than the good, but I personally use this method when I can't get supers back on the hive for clean-up. I don't want to store "wet supers" as they're an invitation to ants, and often mold and happy mice taking up residence in them as well.

A few readers recently shared what they do to protect valuable drawn comb during the open clean-up process. They place the



While there wasn't much comb left on this frame (honeycomb sliced out for cut comb packages), honeybees nonetheless busily and quickly clean it.

extracted honey super on top of a queen excluder, and place another queen excluder on top of it (or a stack of honey supers), and place the stack on bricks for circulation and easy access from below. Great idea!

I took it a step further, using my trusty wagon which allows me to pull the drying supers out of the rain. (Some of you may remember what that is.) The bricks on top ensure our power-lifter raccoons can't get to the supers. There's a queen excluder over the gap in the front. I had a few problems with mice getting into the larger gaps of the wagon wire, but I believe the roaming neighborhood kitty handled that.

Next month: Extensive information on how to store supers for the winter.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. ☼

Conferences/Seminars/ Classes

Note: As a courtesy, we're delighted to share your association's major event announcements as space allows. These events are different from those listed in the Show Schedule, which are events Kelley's will be attending. The events listed here we are not (currently) planning on attending. We'd love to, but we can't bee everywhere. If you'd like us to list your event, please send the information by the 10th of each month for publication in the next month to: KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Kentucky

Clarkson Honeyfest

- September 26-29 in Clarkson, KY
- ClarksonHoneyfest.com

Kansas

Kansas Honey Producers Association

- Fall Meeting is Oct. 19 & 20 at the Guesthouse Inn, 2700 W. 18th, Emporia, KS.
- Primary speaker: Diana Samataro, Research Entomologist with the USDA Bee Research Lab in Tucson, AZ.
- Other topics and speakers to be announced. ☼

James R. Tew, father of Dr. James Tew, passed away August 12. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family.



Show Schedule

Georgia State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Saturday Sep 8, 2012
- More Details to Come

Tennessee State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Sep 28, 2012
- September 28-29 TN Tech University Cookeville, TN

2012 WAS Annual Conference

- Thursday Oct 4, 2012
- 2012 WAS Annual Conference @ Embassy Suites Hotel, 15920 West Valley Highway, Seattle, WA 98188

Alabama State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Oct 12, 2012
- October 12-13 Taylor Rd. Baptist Church

Arkansas State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Oct 12, 2012
- October 12-13 Ozark Folk Center State Park

Mississippi State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Oct 26, 2012
- October 26-27 More Details To Come

Wisconsin Honey Producers Fall Meeting

- Thursday Nov 1, 2012
- November 1-4 Waupaca, WI 54981

Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Nov 9, 2012
- November 9-10 Lewisburg, PA 17837

Iowa State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Nov 16, 2012
- November 16-17 Marshalltown, IA 50158

Louisiana State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Monday Dec 31, 2012

A-Bee-Cs

Many of our readers are relative new-bees. Thus, this section focuses on bee basics, many of them excerpted from writings by the late Walter T. Kelley, our founder. The following is from the highly recommend publication: HOW TO KEEP BEES AND SELL HONEY by Walter T. Kelley.

Beeswax

Beeswax, the material used by honeybees in the construction of their combs, is a product of their own bodies. It is secreted by certain glands possessed by workers only. Wax glands are at the height of their development and productivity in bees 12 to 18 days old. The wax appears in the form of small, irregularly oval flakes, or scales which project from between the overlapped portions of the last four abdominal segments visible on the underside of the bee. Two scales are produced on each of these segments, one on either side of the midventral line, making eight in all. Wax can be secreted only at relatively high temperatures, stated by different authors at from 92 to 97 degrees Fahrenheit, and after the consumption of relatively large amounts of honey or nectar.



Photo taken through glass (complete with tiny pollen footprints) shows bees in the process of manufacturing wax.

Workers actively engaged in secreting wax gorge themselves with honey and hang in festoons at or near the site of building operations. Here they hang very quietly while their organs of digestion and secretion transform the content of their honey sacs into energy and beeswax, and after about 24 hours they begin to build comb.

If the bees are watched closely during the height of the honey harvest, or if at other times a colony of bee is fed heavily on sugar syrup for three days during warm weather there will be found toward the second or third day little pearly discs somewhat resembling fish scales, protruding from between the rings of the underside of the body of the bee. The wax scales are scraped off by one of the hind legs, the hairy spines of the leg piercing or catching into the scale; then the hind leg, by a peculiar maneuvering, is moved up to where the forelegs may grasp the scale. At this point of proceedings the scale is manipulated or masticated in the mandibles, then it is applied to the comb.

During the process the bee stands on three legs (the two middle legs on either side, and one hind leg not in action), while the other hind leg and the two forelegs, in connection with the mandibles, perform the manipulation.

Comb Building

If a bee is obliged to carry one of these wax scales but a short distance, it takes it in its mandibles and looks as business like with it as a carpenter with a board on his shoulder. If it has to carry it a distance it takes it in a way that is difficult to explain any better than to say it somehow slips it under its chin. When thus equipped, one would never know it was encumbered with anything unless it chances to slip out, when it will dexterously tuck it back with one of its forefeet. The little plate of wax is so warm from being kept under its chin as to be quite soft when it gets back. As it takes it out and gives it a pinch against the comb where the building is going on, one would think it might stop awhile and put it in place; but not that bee, for off it scampers and twists around so many different ways one might think it was not one of the working kind at all.



At first glance, the photographer thought there was something wrong with these bees ... only to amazingly realize she'd witnessed wax-building in action.

Another follows after it sooner or later and gives the wax a pinch, or a little scraping and burnishing with its polished mandibles, then another, and so on; and the sum total of all these maneuvers is that the combs seem almost to grow out of nothing; but no one bee ever makes a cell.

The finished comb is the result of the united efforts of the moving, restless mass and the great mystery is that anything so wonderful can ever result at all from such a mixed up, skipping about way of working as they seem to have.

On the under-lapped portion of the four abdominal segments are published oval spaces known as mirrors. They are the areas of the abdominal segment covered internally by the wax-secreting glands.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Contributions Pretty Please (With Honey on Top)

For upcoming newsletters, we're seeking:

- Information on about how much time spent working your bees per hive—we want to give new-bees some idea of what to expect
- Photos of beekeeping kids, beekeepers, or folks dressed up like bees
- Actually, any bee-related photos. Readers love the pictures.
- Recipes that use honey
- Ideas for what you'd like to see in this newsletter

Please send to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com. Thank you very much!



BeeCause

Urban Experimentation

Thanks to beekeepers, a forward thinking management company, and equipment donated by the Walter T. Kelley Company, about 100,000 bees have the best view in Louisville of the Ohio River. After a full day of gathering pollen and nectar from the well-watered plantings of urban Louisville, they rest atop the Kentucky Home Life Building, in the largest green space rooftop garden in Kentucky.

The purpose of this initiative, designed and maintained by Bernheim Forest, is to see how native plants do in an urban environment. The roof is green, mainly with sedums and three gardens—one of native grasses, one of rock, and one cedar glade. The beautiful hives, painted by artist Tana Peers, rounded out this little piece of heaven high above city happenings.

Kentucky beekeeper Lani Basberg and her husband Jens head up the beekeeping aspect of the green roof. They started two hives this spring at their home apiary in anticipation of moving them to the rooftop—after Derby festivities. Lani felt fireworks on the river and hundreds of people on the rooftop might be upsetting to just-settled bees.



Tana Peers left, and Lani, right. Photo courtesy of Lani Basberg.



Photo courtesy of Lani Basberg.

While installing package bees would've been easier, it probably wouldn't have been as interesting. Laughing, Lani described how they took full hive bodies up the elevator after-hours. The hives were netted and the beekeepers fully suited; you never know what can happen. Luckily, nothing went wrong and the honeybees seemed intrigued by an alternate way to move rapidly through the air.

The honeybees, who were at about the limits of a deep box when installed on the roof, have thrived. They were crowned with a second deep upon installation. By mid-July both hives were already working their second honey supers. Honey was pulled mid-July; a sweet, dark honey that made everyone wonder which plants the bees have visited.

Hauling bees up an elevator and sticky honey back down it, then through an elegant office building is only a minor issue in the experiment of honeybees in an urban setting. A bigger challenge has been the wind exposure that high up, and how to anchor the hives. For aesthetic reasons, a big concrete block atop the hive is not used. Several types of bungees have been tried and experimentation continues as Mother Nature throws different stormy challenges at the hives.

Lani checks the hives every couple of weeks, and happily reports that so far, rooftop bees in Louisville are working, and working very hard.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Featured Products

If you've pulled the last of the honey from the hives, candle and soap making not only solves what to do with the wax, but gives you a jump on holiday gifts.

New this year is our bee, ladybug, butterfly and dragonfly mold, catalog #497.

Also new, and proving very popular, is our round candle mold in varying sizes, catalog # 494-4, 494-3, 494-2 and 493.

If you're new to candle or soap making, consider our beginner kits, catalog #374 and catalog # 499.

And, if you're a bit short on beeswax, we have one and two-pound blocks available, catalog #285 and 284 (for two pounds).

From wicks to clips to molds and pouring pots, we have all you need.



Bee, Ladybug, Butterfly and Dragonfly Mold. Cat # 497



Round Candle Molds. Cat # 494-4, 494-3, 494-2 and 493



Beginner Soap Making Kit. Cat # 374



Candle Making Kit. Cat # 499

**Be sure to check
the web for
our Hot Sizzling
Summer Sales!**

<http://bit.ly/MVPeW4>

FAQs

Please note: Correspondence submitted to the Kelley Bee News Modern Beekeeping newsletter (or subsequent publications) becomes the property of the Walter T. Kelley Company. We reserve the right to print or not print any correspondence and it may be edited for length and/or clarity. It may be published or republished in any format or medium and/or licensed to others for publication. If we publish your correspondence, we may attribute it to you and may include your name and city, unless you expressly request that you remain anonymous.

Q: I would like to see an internet site where I could go and download previous issues. This newsletter is like a library to me.

W Church, Texas

A: There is such a site—www.kelleybees.com. All newsletter back issues are there.

Q: I robbed my three hives which are all within 10 feet of each other. The annual yield is:

- 2nd year hive, 5 frames
- 1st year hive: 4 frames
- Another 1st year hive, 20 frames

Why such differences?

C. Beach, MI

A: It's all about the number and strength of the foragers and the need of feed for larvae in the hive. In other words, it is all about the queen. Over the years we've seen it all over the board in our yards and Kelley's.

And another fun thing? You might think that 20-frame first year hive is your strongest, but our bees always like to surprise us with who survives over the winter and who does not!

Q: Can you put a beehive in the middle of longhorns?

S. Decker

A: Yes you can! Special thanks to Sherry Decker for both asking and answering! As you can see by the second photo, the bees are happy there—they're filling supers.

Q: Can you be more specific about mineral salt? (See previous newsletters.)

M. Stasney

A: Mineral salt is the same salt you would put in livestock feed to supplement livestock such as cattle.



Photos courtesy Sherry Decker.

Q: What's this newspaper combine method I keep hearing about for uniting two hives?

A: It is a great method for combining a weak hive with a strong one, something you may find yourself doing this time of year. Combining two weak hives only results in a larger weak hive.

Here you go! 

Q: When you change out old comb how do you do it? Where do you put the comb so the bees empty it?

M. Graham, KS

A: Every five years and sometimes less you may want to slowly start to replace the comb in the boxes which belong to the bees. If you're combining hives in the fall it's a great time to evaluate each frame, as is the spring, especially if you're going through any dead-outs.

For hives still full of bees, replace comb from the outside of the center frame/box and slide inwards as you continue over the months to replace comb. Never replace comb that contains brood.

Lay comb with stores for clean-up in an additional box or on 2 - 2x4s or lumber up on a saw horse to let them pick out. Also see the article in this issue, "Super Cleaning Solution for Supers."

Replacing comb in honey supers is much easier. When they start to turn dark you can replace them before you store for the winter or before you super in the spring.

Q: While checking my one Lang hive, I observed a couple dozen bees "licking" the outside of their hive. They would take a step, lick, lick, take another step, either forward or backward, lick, lick, etc. It seems to me that I have read somewhere about this behavior, but can't remember where, nor can I find it in any of my books. My other hives are top bar and I haven't seen this on either of them. One of the top bar hives is painted with the same paint as the Lang. Can anyone shed any light on this? Thanks.

R. Kick, N/W IN

A: One theory is that they're licking the dew from the hive, and a different type of hive / different location / different wood / different angle to the sun could account for why there could be more moisture on your Lang hive. But, that's a theory. Other theories?

Newspaper Combine Method

- Cut 2 sheets of (predominantly) black and white newspaper to fit directly on the top bars. (Paper sticking out of the sides can wick in moisture and looks unsightly.)
- Place the sheets that are cut to fit the inside of the box dimensions directly on the top bars.
- Make 6-7 razor slits in the paper between the top bars.
- Place the weak colony above the paper.
- Replace inner cover, vent supers, feeder—whatever you had atop the strong hive.
- In a couple of days these colonies will be united. You may want to check to verify that the newspaper has been chewed through suggesting that the bees are intermingling. If you do check, removing any residual paper will save them the work of getting it out.

Q: We're looking for a license plate for the front of our truck that promotes bees. Do you have one?

P. Allen

A: We have several!

Q: I am starting to read and hear about adding Silk soy yogurt to pollen patty mixture to make them more attractive to bees. Any thoughts or ideas on the subject? Thank you for any time or help you can give me on this matter.

J. Gifford

A: Jane Burgess, Kelley's CEO / Partner, answered this one for us, with: "I would not give bees anything that has not been tested. However, if doing a community feed outside the hive it couldn't hurt to give it a shot; you'll know soon enough if they think it is OK to add to their diet. Soy used to be used as a pollen substitute. Over the years many things have filled the void, I just wouldn't put anything in the hive I wasn't absolutely sure about."

Readers, any insights or thoughts? You can click to the blog at the end of this article to answer, or email me at KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com. Thanks for helping others help their bees.

[Questions or comments about this article?](#)

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. ☀

Recipes

PEANUT HONEY BRITTLE

1 cup peanuts

1/2 cup honey

1 tsp salt

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan and cook over moderate heat.

Stir continuously for 5 minutes or until peanuts are golden.

Pour onto aluminum foil and allow to cool completely.

When cooled, break into pieces and store chilled in an airtight container.

Submitted by Kelsey Salmon.

We love to eat!

And would like to publish your favorite honey recipes.

Please send them to:

KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.



Cat # 188



Cat # 188W



Cat # 58-LK

HONEY DOG BONES

1 3/4 cups flour

1/4 cup quick cooking oats

1 banana

1/4 cup wheat germ

1/4 cup creamy peanut butter

1/4 cup vegetable oil

1/4 cup honey

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 cup water

Preheat oven to 350°.

Combine 1 cup of flour with remaining ingredients in a mixer at low speed.

Knead in additional 3/4 cup flour until dough forms a ball.

Lightly flour surface and roll out dough until 1/4 inch thick.

Cut dough, using dog bone (or any shape) cookie cutter.

Re-roll scraps and continue cutting biscuits.

Bake for 20 minutes on ungreased cookie sheets until biscuits are golden.

Store in airtight container.

Yield: approximately 30 bones.

Submitted by Kelsey Salmon.

Sweet as Honey

Please note: Correspondence submitted to the Kelley Bee News Modern Beekeeping newsletter (or subsequent publications) becomes the property of the Walter T. Kelley Company. We reserve the right to print or not print any correspondence and it may be edited for length and/or clarity. It may be published or republished in any format or medium and/or licensed to others for publication. If we publish your correspondence, we may attribute it to you and may include your name and city, unless you expressly request that you remain anonymous.

“ I often wondered what woes southern beekeepers have that their northern neighbors do not have. Well, unfortunately, I think that I’ve discovered at least one. I love living in Florida and I love the heat. The only time I want to see snow and cold is when I open my refrigerator. However, I do not like the flying insects. They are a Florida beekeeper’s nightmare! It gets so bad that the Dade County Department of Mosquito Control (DCDMC) has to spray insecticide over most of Dade County to control them.

Unfortunately, DCDMC sprayed this summer when I did not know. A few days after spraying, I found four totally bee-less hives. I had captured two swarms and had been given two hives from a fellow beekeeper neighbor. All were lost. If I had known of the spray date, I could have installed an entrance guard that allowed the bees to enter, but not to exit the hive until it was again safe to be outside. This is but one of the problems that southern beekeepers have to deal with. I understand the northern beekeepers do not have this problem.

Therry, via email

“ My first newsletter from you guys. LOVED IT. I do not keep bees yet, but I have been interested for a while and decided to study up until the time was right. It’s a big help and I will be getting started in spring (Lord willing and the creek don’t rise). One beekeeper told me that the best option was to get hives from you and bees from a swarm. Thanks.

Jessee, via email

Earlier this year, we ran a series of articles on honey house considerations. Many readers felt it was an interesting glimpse into what commercial operations might look like, although most of us never expand beyond processing honey on the kitchen counter—and getting it on the kitchen floor, every doorknob in the house, and the cat.

As most of us kitchen counter honey folks know, the entire process of getting from new bees in the spring to jars of honey in the end is very sweet, whether your operations consist of pulling a honey super on a little red wagon or lifting it with a forklift along with dozens of other supers to load on a truck.

And while we salute and cheer the major producers, we also celebrate the little guys. Jim Dunn of Georgia shared his recent harvest of 11 supers from 7 hives, for a total of 200 pints. Jim noted, “This looks a little primitive, but we’re just country folk who like bees.”



The hot knife (Cat #185) and an innovative homemade “holding” board help expedite removing the capping. Notice the bright white cap, indicative of just-capped (not yet walked over by thousands of pollen-covered feet) comb. Continued >>



And so the cranking begins! We're fairly sure and hopeful that the gas can in the background is unrelated to the extraction process.



Inside the extractor. Once it starts spinning out the honey, not only do golden ribbons emerge, but so does the most heavenly scent.



Another hard day on the assembly line.



The finished product (and some tomatoes). How beautiful!

Last issue, we asked readers what they liked / disliked about this newsletter. We've received an amazing amount of insightful answers and will be sharing them in the months ahead. Here are a few, along with our comments. Thanks so much for all the feedback.

“ I really like the layout of the newsletter and the variety of articles each month. I would like to see more articles on problems that beekeepers face and proposed solutions. Those are my favorites. For instance, it was a revelation to me that I could get burr comb out of my queen excluder easily by putting it through a big solar wax melter.

J. Fry

Thanks for the tip! We love it when readers help other readers.

“ I think that in doing business with your company and being able to talk with Mr. Kelly on the phone years ago, that it is too bad that the newsletter didn't happen back before computers.

S. Homewood

We agree; it would've been a great vehicle for him to share more of his vast knowledge. We're trying to accomplish that by excerpting some of his writings, like in the A-Bee-Cs section of this newsletter.

“ I like the newsletter because I think one of the most important things you can do is read, read, read. Gather as many opinions and tips as possible and use them to plan your own methodology. Everyone has their own style and the more info you have at your disposal the better you can proceed with your gut feelings. I’m always happy to get more articles and ideas from the newsletters.
L. Schneider

Thanks for that great advice about beekeeping, and about most things in life!

“ I really enjoy your newsletter. I just wish I had more time to read and reflect on it.
T.Rea

Readers, we appreciate Mr. Rea’s point; others said it was too long to get through with their busy lives. We know the newsletter has gotten much longer over the past year. It is a challenge to find the right length; so many of you responded to our survey by saying you wished the newsletter was longer. We just wanted to let you know we hear you all, and will strive to stay around 30 pages each issue and keep the articles as concise as practical while continuing to have fun in the publication.

Future Beekeepers

Shannon Tieken shared these smile-causing photos of mini beekeepers Madeline, 5 and Elijah, 3. Shannon explained, “We don’t have a youth-sized suit and I wanted to gauge their interest before investing the funds, so they are in one of my suits with the legs rolled up so much that the zipper drags the ground. The end result was that Eli was a little too scared once I opened the hive and wasn’t fond of his lack of movement and Maddie was very interested but got irritated after a while because the bees were “bugging” her.

Both, however, have enjoyed cranking the extractor this summer and chewing wax cappings. I think it’s only a matter of time.”

Way to plant the seed early Shannon. “Bee disease” can affect even the very young.

Annually, we feature your photos of beekeepers and people dressed like bees in our November issue. Thus, this is an early reminder to snap a photo of all your buzzing trick-or-treaters when the time comes! Recent photos or old, cats, dogs, kids or grandparents—please send them to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com. Thank you! 🍯



Elijah (left) and Madeline. Photos courtesy of Shannon Tieken.

Foraging for Fun

Beekeeping Funnies

Thanks to feedback from our recent survey, we received plenty of laughs about bees and beekeeping, like this witty answer from Chuck Bauer of Michigan, on why he keeps bees.

“There are only a few insects that a person can keep in a box and gain a benefit from: crickets to feed to your pet lizard, earthworms to use as fish bait, and of course, honeybees.

Years ago I had a friend who kept a box in his garage that was full of black dirt. It was about the size of a deep super and he kept earthworms in it. Every day he brought out the kitchen scraps and coffee grinds, and as a result he always had a ready supply of bait. Crickets and earthworms you have to feed on a daily basis, and all they produce is more of their own kind and they're not real fun to watch either.

But the honeybee is a magical insect. They are fun to watch at the hive and in the flower garden doing their daily duty in bringing back the groceries from nature's supermarket. I haven't seen a recipe that called for earthworms or crickets, but there are many that have honey.

We're also always appreciative of British beekeeper Stuart Ching, editor of "The Eke," for sharing funnies from "across the pond."

“Beekeeper Paul visited a palm reader. Said the mysterious old woman, “For five pounds, I can read your love line and tell your romantic future.”

Paul readily agreed and the reader took one look at his open palm and said, “I can see that you have no girlfriend.”

“That's true,” said Paul.

“Oh my goodness, you are extremely lonely, aren't you?”

“Yes,” Paul shamefully admitted. “That's amazing. Can you tell all of this from my love line?”

“Love line? No, from the propolis under your fingernails.”

“Two men shared an old farmhouse. One of them grumbled to a visitor, “My lodger makes life unbearable at times. Since there have been so many thefts of hives he keeps his bees in the kitchen and I am frightened that they might sting me.”

“Why don't you open the window and let them out?” came the reply.

“What, and let all my pigeons escape?”

“A group of scientists have been trying to develop a bee with a blunt sting. They have just given up as they found their research pointless.

“A forager bee asked, “What use is the sun?”

“No use at all,” replied a drone. “It doesn't shine at night, and in the daytime it's light anyway.”

Dronings from a Queen Bee

Why Do Bees Swarm?

Last May I flew off to Florida for a long weekend vacation. Concurrently, colonies of bees in my area flew off to find new homes. As I'm on the local swarm list, I received eight frantic calls about retrieving them. Yes, eight, doggone it! Eight families' nightmares are the stuff of beekeeper dreams. They would've nicely expanded my apiary!

However, swarming bees are bees not cooperating with the fickle wishes of humans. Those eight swarms were no exception. By the time I'd flown back from vacation, the bees had flown off again.

Last month I vacationed with much of my family to Canada. Upon clearing Customs, I turned on my phone for the first time in a week to find five messages.

As I'd vacationed with many family members including two of my kids, I was fairly certain the phone messages weren't frantic calls about any family crises. It was more likely that these were "thank you so very very much!" calls from credit card companies.

They were not. Instead, they were frantic calls. Once again, while I was on vacation, bees had swarmed. It was August 11, and I couldn't help but think of that oft-quoted expression "A swarm in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; a swarm in July, let her fly." Note that the poem stops abruptly without suggesting the value of a swarm in August.

Perhaps that's because a swarm in August isn't worth much—not enough time for the colony to build up for winter survival or produce any honey for humans.

Of course, it might also be because nothing easily rhymes with "August."

Thinking that might be the problem while waiting for a cab to the airport, I tried to rhyme "August." It's tough. I asked my little darlings, who responded as they always do, with a roll of their eyes and "Mom, just Google it!"

And so, I searched Google for "words that rhyme with August." While I was immensely proud of myself for being able to do that on my smart phone that is way smarter than me, the kids quickly burst my bubble by noting I should've just searched for "rhyme August."

Anyway, thanks to Google, I now know there are a few things that sort of rhyme with August, like "bust" and "crust." Those seemed quasi-appropriate, as capturing a swarm in August is likely a bust, or worth a gnawed pizza crust.



“Undiscussed” was also offered as a pseudo-rhyme, and it also works, because a swarm in August is probably not even worth talking about.

However, the sweet homeowner with bees dangling from her tree kept talking about her swarm, as three of the five calls on my phone were from her, begging me to please please please come and make it go away. The other two calls were from a guy with a swarm, and the guy calling back to say the swarm had left.

The frantic woman’s calls had been left on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. It was now Saturday, and I wouldn’t be home until Sunday. What were the chances of the bees still being there?

Well, about 100%. When I called the frantic woman to explain why I hadn’t responded and to thank her for trying to help honeybees that had surely moved on by now, she interrupted to tell me that the bees hadn’t yet left, and that the swarm was growing daily—how soon would I come and get them?

As I couldn’t even get a cab to the airport, getting bees out of a tree hundreds of miles away seemed like a remote possibility. I asked her to call me Sunday if they were still there, and I’d see what I could do.

My wake-up call Sunday was from, you guessed it. The swarm was still very much there; she was very much still frantic. I unloaded the vacation luggage, loaded bee capturing equipment, and headed out.

En route, I thought about why a swarm on Day 6 of their move might not be moving. Perhaps, having finally left the hive after weeks of planning, they glanced at the calendar and realized it said “August,” not “June.” I’ll bet the old hive was starting to look really good again. Or, as the address I’d been given was in a residential area, perhaps they were better positioning themselves to watch a lot of football through the picture window.

Driving down a dead-end street, I speculated which of the two remaining homes was likely the one I was seeking. The first house was a quiet one-story home with lots of small trees in the back. The second, adjacent to a public school, had three large, loud, barking dogs in a large cage, three small, loud, bouncing children in a trampoline cage, an uncountable number of kids riding bikes and Barbie Doll cars and plastic horses in circles, and nearly a dozen adults staked out in lawn chairs who, judging by the number of empties at their feet, had been there longer than the bees had been.

Guess which house where the bees were. And now, I understood why they’d stayed. They probably swarmed from a hive where people spent a lot of time staring at them, and decided to stare back at the ongoing three-ring circus in this backyard.

“Are you the bee person?” The calm, grey-haired woman rising out of her lawn chair offered me her hand but not a drink.

I confirmed I was.

“Too bad,” she shook her head. “They left about twenty minutes ago.”

Oh well, it was all for the best. Getting bees out of a tree with a swarm of children, pets and plastic cars below probably wouldn’t have gone that well. And now, I’ve got an update for that old poem: “For a swarm in the month of eight, chances are, you’re too late.”

I also have an answer for why bees swarm: because I go on vacation.

[Questions or comments about this article?](#)

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 