



Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 37 • JULY 2013

Modern Beekeeping



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The Buzz

I am Jenny Everett, the new CEO and President of the Walter T. Kelley Company. I grew up in the great state of Vermont with a strong sense of outdoor adventure and community spirit and I am very excited to arrive at Kelley's and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. I am married to my wonderful husband (A.R.) and we celebrated our 7th anniversary on July 1st and have two beautiful nephews, Teddy Jr. and Nolan Everett. When I am not enjoying beekeeping or time with the family, I can be found running trails in Mammoth Cave National Park and reading outside in the amazing landscapes at my house.

Why do I love beekeeping? I am a hobbyist beekeeper and I am working on my third hive which will be an observation hive located at the front of our headquarters. Beekeeping means a lot of different things to different people. To me, my primary enjoyment is the intellectual exercise of beekeeping. You can never learn enough and some days, it seems you never can fail enough! What a challenge! One of my favorite reading enjoyments



Ev and future beekeeper Payton (age 6) taking a closer look.

in the bee world is the original works of Aristotle. While he did not get everything right (we have to cut him some slack given 300 BC time frame), he was a major contributor in bee understanding. He is suspected of coining the term “propolis” from the Greek word “pro” (before) and “polis” (city) meaning “Defender of the City” or “In Front of the City”. I know a lot of us beekeeper folks focus on whether a hive is “queenrite”, but shouldn't we also ask ourselves “how is the glue” that holds this hive together? Without propolis, the hives cannot perform optimally and may even collapse. Propolis, “the glue”, serves as a protective barrier, a provision of warmth, a strengthening of structure, and an eliminator of harmful microorganisms and predators. In life, do you ask yourself, are you the “biggest insect” or are you the “glue” that repairs, strengthens, and allows the hive to grow and prosper to greater heights?

When I am not pontificating on ancient bee anecdotes, I enjoy teaching children the wonders of beekeeping. There is nothing like that magical moment when a child's eyes go wide, the mind exercises, and their curiosity expands to learn more about bees, to understand how they work, and how they contribute to our vital food supply. You will see me many times in the future hosting children-oriented beekeeping classes so please take part and bring your kids!

Why did I join Kelley's? At Kelley's, we have great people with an even greater legacy and tradition that spans well over 80 years. We are a family-driven company with over 30% of our workforce related to each other and old-fashioned values based on integrity, partnership, optimism, trust, and class. We exist to not only provide quality beekeeping supplies at exceptional value and convenience with superior customer service, but also provide a relationship and experience for you to create defining beekeeping moments whether it is your first hive, your first swarm, or your first split. We will be reaching out to you, listening to you, and helping you. You have a voice and it will be heard by this phenomenal team, whom I am very proud of for their contributions to this great company. We will be the leader in providing the best beekeeping experience.

We are building a great future, are excited to serve you, and look forward to creating many special beekeeping moments together with you.

Best.

Jenny “Ev” Everett
CEO and President

Bee Thinking About

For July, 2013



Beekeeping reward: a just-uncapped frame of honey glistens as it awaits its turn in the extractor. Photo courtesy of T. Rosenthal.



Sponges in a bird bath make a safe and colorful landing board. Photo courtesy of J. Albrecht.



Varroa mites prefer to lay in drone cells because of the longer development time of drones. Drone comb, if removed on time, can take away a lot of future mites. Photo courtesy of V. Marek.

For many beekeepers, July is one of the more rewarding and interesting months in the apiary. The *rewards* may come via liquid gold if that's what you're after, the joy of seeing your splits come fully online, or those pollination checks making your bank balance shine. The "*interesting*" part is because July is often a month where promise either blossoms, or falls flat as some of the major perils of beekeeping (pests!) roll in, and lay eggs everywhere.

As always, what you need to be considering for your apiary this time of year varies by geographic region, management practices, and the weather. Here are some things to ponder.

A long, cool, drink: You're probably enjoying many of those this time of the year; your bees desire them as well. Consider leaving a spigot dripping slowly, or keeping fresh water in a nearby bird bath with rocks or sponges for their safe landing.

Feed? Drought is common in many regions of the country. Not only do bees need water, but the plants they need also require water. If there's insufficient forage, you may need to feed your bees to get them through a dearth (along with ensuring they have water as noted above).

Keep a close eye on even your most booming hives, especially those from which you've pulled honey. If you cut down their stores too low and they're unable to build back up because of weather, they may really suffer. The queen will stop laying if there are insufficient stores.

Mites (growl): We all have them. The trick is to not have too many of them. Combating mites consists of first doing mite counts to determine if there's a problem, assuming that you will do something with the knowledge. Some beekeepers don't do mite counts because they're not going to do anything about them anyway. Their philosophy is that if the colony isn't able to successfully keep mites in check then they don't want to promote those genetics in the bee yard.

If that's not your management philosophy, and if you've determined you have a mite problem¹, there are a couple tricks you can use this time of year to help knock down the mite population. Unfortunately, like almost everything in beekeeping, opinions vary on their effectiveness. Here are a few weapons:

- Breaking the mite brood cycle, using drone comb or by making splits
- Powdered sugar treatment
- Miticides

Time to split? Yes, Varroa, it is time for you to split. We suspect telling them to do so won't be that effective though!

When we say "time to split", we're referring to making one hive into two. If you have strong hives, and if conditions are right in your area to promote build-up for winter, consider splitting. You can typically combine them again come fall if they don't work out.

Small hive beetles (SHB): We wish those would also go away, far, far away. See the article in this issue for more thoughts on dealing with these nasty critters. Stay on top of them; left unchecked they're devastating.

More boxes, or less: Stay ahead of booming colonies with honey supers, and stay atop colonies challenged by pests (SHB, wax moths, etc.) Don't give them more space than the bees can successfully control.

Pollen production: for many parts of the country, if you raise bees for pollen, it is about time to put on the traps. (See article in this issue.) Order what you need now from Kelley's.



Ventilation: Make sure those booming colonies don't overheat. There are lots of ways to assist with air flow, like our practical vent super. Shade may also be helpful in times of extreme heat.

Update the logbook: Remember that logbook? The one all good beekeepers have to track honey production, queen lineage, splits, pest invasion, when to pull the drone comb, etc.? That information will be invaluable when it comes to hive combinations in the fall, and lots of other considerations like requeening, splits, etc. If you haven't yet started your logbook, (you're not alone) do it now. Save that brain space for other things, like mental notes to send pictures of your beautiful hives, honey harvest or SHB infestation to the editor of this publication.

As always, your comments and contributions are welcome, email Editor@KelleyBees.com or visit kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

I wish we'd understood how important it would be to have some shade on our hives in the afternoons during these weeks of 95+ and even 100+ temps. Our bees have been hanging out on the front of our hives just to survive from the heat inside, and that means not much work is getting done inside.

— T. & M. Iddings

¹ Check our index, available at www.kelleybees.com, for plenty of articles on counts and treatments.

Healthy Bees

Battling the Small Hive Beetle

By Camilla Bee, Editor

The small hive beetle (SHB) is one of the most dreaded pests that prey on honeybees. Chances are, you've already seen one or two per hive this year, or perhaps, one or two hundred, or more. What can you do?

Unfortunately, SHB are a hot topic this time of year, every year. Because of that, we've covered combating them extensively in past issues. All back issues of this newsletter are available at www.kelleybees.com, and the index at the same location will point you to several helpful articles.



One type of beetle trap available from Kelley's are Beetle Blasters, Catalog # 56-B.

We caught up with some of our recent Field Day speakers and other contributors to collect their suggestions.

Healthy Hives Are the Best Defense

"SHB do not have to be a problem," states Dennis Brown¹. That's a bold statement considering he's a southern beekeeper, where the SHB are most problematic. Dennis continues:

- Keeping strong hives is priority. Removing hiding places like frame spacers/holders and yes, those "Club Med for beetles" inner covers. The bees will run the beetles up into the inner cover where the beetles will lounge around in comfort until they get hungry or want to lay some eggs. Then they dash down onto the comb, lay a few eggs, grab something to eat and then get chased back up into the inner cover.
- Don't leave inside feeders on for long periods.
- Old equipment with cracks and holes should be repaired or replaced.
- Keep strong hives, don't provide your bees with more room than they can take care of and take away beetle hiding places.



"Just a routine beetle population," noted Hogan of this handful of easily visible beetles.

Healthy Hives; That's Key

Virginia Webb, a third generation beekeeper from Georgia², combats beetles with strong hives. She also recommends the Beetle Blaster traps. **One More Time: Healthy Hives Are the Best Defense.**

Frequent contributor and bee expert Cleo Hogan echoes the above, "keep the hives strong and the bees will take care of the beetles." If Hogan encounters less than 50 while working one of his Kentucky hives, he's not bothered. If he sees more than that, there's a problem.

Chemicals are of limited use. Hogan instead battles the problem by fortifying the bees' defenses. Honey supers are removed to ensure the bees can adequately patrol; the hive may be further reduced to just a single box, or a nuc, until the bees gain the upper hand.

1 Dennis Brown, of Lone Star Farms, www.lonestarfarms.net, and author of *Beekeeping: A Personal Journey* and *Beekeeping: Questions and Answers*.

2 www.mtnhoney.com/

Moving On?

SHB gained the upper hand? Joe Taylor, a Kentucky Beekeeper of the Year, shares a more radical solution: move the hives. Beetles pupate in the ground and then travel back into the hive. According to the University of Alabama³, most SHB stay within six feet of the hive, but they can crawl much longer distances if need be.

Taylor also recommends an on-going agricultural salt treatment around the hives, an approach we've covered in previous issues. Taylor notes that 50 pounds handles about 10 hives, and ag salt is fairly cheap. He sprinkles a coffee can of salt around his hives each visit.

"I'm not convinced it helps, but I feel like I'm doing something," he admits. Bees like salt though, so there's an added benefit.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

3 http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-7075.pdf



The Baitable Beetle Jail, Catalog # 56-JA.

Beneficial Clover is Blooming

By Ol' Drone

Well, the dandelions have finished their heavy bloom and now there is another "weed" that the pure grass zealots are trying to eliminate from their "pristine grass only" lawns. The beekeeper looks at these two early spring flowers in a different way.

Dandelions provided the first important nectar and pollen nutrients for spring start up in the hive. Now several types of clover are in bloom and it is the most important honey plant, amounting to about 30% of the honey sold in the US. Considered by most consumers to be the premium grade table honey, clover is light in color, mild in flavor, and preferred for cooking as well as the popular sweetener for tea. Recent publicity that dark honey is "more healthful" has changed the opinion of many customers as there are now more requests for the dark honey. Clover hay is used as a forage crop in many areas and like alfalfa, it is rich in protein. The ideal soil condition is a "sweet soil" meaning alkaline rather than acid.

Clover comes in all sizes and many colors—mainly white, pink, and red. The lowest growing includes the White Dutch type, often used in lawns, and the slightly taller alsike type that has a slight tint of pink. Honeybees make good use of both of these low clovers. The bright red blossoms of the red clover are displayed a foot above the ground and you may see honeybees visiting them. Unfortunately for the honeybee, their tongue is too short to reach the sweet nectar and so they cannot make honey from this plant. Some races of honeybees have longer tongues and may reach a little nectar. Also some honeybees cut a hole in the side of the blossom to reach the sweet stuff but they cannot make much honey from the red clover.

Like the red clover, there is another native variety that grows 3-4 feet in height and is commonly seen in the poor soils along roadsides. This is called the sweet clover. In the Midwest, sweet clover is grown as a cultivated crop, and considered an important honey nectar crop. The blossom on sweet clover is different from the low growing types as the tiny flowers form a small spike several inches long held high above the plant instead of the spherical arrangement as in the low clovers. Clover is a type of legume and all legumes have the ability to "fix nitrogen," meaning they enrich the soil wherever they grow. The growing of clover in your lawn gives your soil free nitrogen fertilizer and helps make your lawn greener. Growing clover also helps the honeybees to make a honey crop.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Managing in a Drought

By Ol' Drone

Notwithstanding the torrential rainstorm and serious flooding going on in various parts of the country, there is a far more serious, long-term problem concerning extensive drought conditions in many of our Midwestern states.

Beekeepers have been facing the challenge of serious drought in the entire Midwest for the past few years. Beekeepers unable to compensate for water shortage may not harvest any honey crop and will not have raised strong enough colonies to provide commercial pollination of early crops such as almonds. Beekeepers and ranchers, both facing short food supplies for hives or herds, are cutting back livestock (or bee colonies) to conserve scarce supplies. Culling those hives that are poor producers is one method. Where the logistics allow the effort, the best way to get a honey crop is simply move all hives to a region where good nectar flow (and water) is available. For example, Southern California has drought conditions every summer and successful beeks move away to follow the blooms. Combining hives is a useful tactic and requeening with a young productive queen usually helps.

Watch out and protect from robbing, as this bad habit will occur when flowers are in short supply. During dry, drought season the bees need more water to cool the hive and to feed the brood. Also important however is to feed continuously whenever nectar forage is not available. Feeding sugar is essential for survival and they also need some pollen (substitute). Too much pollen will stimulate brood raising; that is unsustainable during drought. A Missouri beek was able to save his bees during a bad drought, without moving, by heavy feeding all year round.

The world's honeybee population has shown survival skills to continue to exist during millions of years of challenges and they will probably continue to do so.



Conditions were anything but dry at our recent Field Day, but the learning and enthusiasm were undampened.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Kelley's 2013 Field Day, An Overview

By Camilla Bee, Editor



Dr. Dewey Caron, keynote speaker, reviews how to read what a frame is communicating.

of 2013's Field Day, which brought experts from all facets of beekeeping together to educate, share, and collaborate. If you were one of the 400+ friends of bees from all over the US who attended, once your head stopped swarming with all the knowledge you gained, and your shoes dried out from the drenched grass and occasional showers, you were likely delighted to be part of the swarm, sharing in the knowledge, fun, and camaraderie.



The field demonstrations allowed for people to get close to the hive, or as close as they wanted to be!

Over 30% of the managed hives didn't make it through the winter of 2012-13. That's one out of every three.

Yikes.

Is that substantial loss rate the "new normal," or just a reflection of an awful year? And what do we do about it? Dr. Dewey Caron, keynote speaker at Kelley's Field Day on June 1, addressed that topic in the opening presentation. We'll be covering more of this industry expert's insights in future issues, but wanted to share a key point Dr. Caron made about the losses.

"Talk with other beekeepers," Caron urged strongly. "Find out what they did, and why; what worked for them, and didn't. Communicate with each other so we can find ways of reducing these losses."

"Communicating" was a guiding, underlying principle of 2013's Field Day, which brought experts from all facets of beekeeping together to educate, share, and collaborate. If you were one of the 400+ friends of bees from all over the US who attended, once your head stopped swarming with all the knowledge you gained, and your shoes dried out from the drenched grass and occasional showers, you were likely delighted to be part of the swarm, sharing in the knowledge, fun, and camaraderie.

In future issues we'll be overviewing more of 2013's Field Day events, and featuring some of the knowledge shared that day.

Until then, pictures are worth thousands of words. Here are some reflecting the fun and informative day.

We hope to see you next year!



Rain aside, folks still gathered around the live hive demonstrations.



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1. Carl Jackson leads a session. 2. Attendees ponder a point. 3. Busy as bees, the caterer prepares a delicious lunch. 4. What's that? A really innovative hive designed to alleviate the challenges of lifting and to provide access for folks physically challenged. We'll be sharing more about this in future issues. 5. The knowledge, and the bees, overflowed. 6. A little rain didn't dampen enthusiasm! From left to right, the rain-speckled Mary K. Franklin, Sharon Hatfield, Allison Williams. 7. In the sewing room, our talented seamstresses busily made on-the-spot alterations. 8. A future beekeeper eagerly awaits the next presentation. 9. We feel you're almost never too young to start beekeeping! 10. Kelley's front porch—a great place to meet new friends, catch your breath, and reflect on the day's events. 11. We loved all the smiles at Field Day.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Abandoned Bee Hives (Part 2)

By Dana Stahlman

Master Beekeeper, Author, and retired OSBA President

Editor's Note: *This is the second installment¹ in Dana Stahlman's account of analyzing a surviving colony found in an abandoned bee yard. Dana's experience and informative pictures make for interesting and instructive reading. Thanks Dana!*

The Mystery Inside the Hive

Spring 2013 was a long extension of winter. Based upon my past experiences, many hives that are alive in January and early February are dead by March. Thus, I was uncertain of this hive's survival until spring arrived and the question was answered. As it turned out, the bees did survive the winter. On April 22, 2013 I was able to begin the transfer from the old abandoned hive into equipment which would allow me to manage the bees.

I knew from past experience that a hive that has not been managed for a number of years presents problems. First, frames are usually glued (propolized) into place. If I had to pry frames from the hive body there would be a lot of damage. If the hive died out and at some point wax moth had destroyed the comb, I would find cross comb rebuilt by the new bees in the hive—making it almost impossible to remove any frames. And, old frames are fragile; I had to be prepared to tie comb from within the old frames into new frames.

I assembled the needed tools. A hive tool would be essential to scrape and cut burr comb and propolis from the frames, but it would not be the best tool for removing frames. I had previous experience in taking unmanaged hives apart and I assure you that one never knows what is below the inner cover. My kit consisted of a hammer just in case I had to remove one side of a hive box to get the frames out, a pry bar (heavier than a hive tool) to pry frames from the rabbet, a pair of scissors and some string, extra frames with drawn comb, some empty frames without foundation in case I would need to go the extra mile and tie brood comb into them, a good fire in my smoker, and protective clothing. Taking a hive of bees apart by prying frames from each other is not going to make for a lot of happy bees.



Again it is easier to share this story with photos.

Here is the hive a couple of months later. Still no bees in the super above the queen excluder. The inner cover, unsalvageable, has been pried from the honey super.

Note that the new hive body, and bottom board are placed next to the abandoned hive, ready to receive the usable frames and new frames if necessary. Once the transfer process is well under way, the new box and bottom board will be placed exactly where the abandoned hive now stands.

This is a look in the entrance of the abandoned hive. The bees are coming and going and indicate a fair population. Note the propolis built to reduce the entrance opening. The original pallet for this hive protected this bottom board from sinking into the ground. It is not salvageable. Usually one of the first pieces of bee equipment to rot or fail is the bottom board. Also notice something that looks white (more about that later).



All photos courtesy of Dana Stahlman.

Note the propolis built to reduce the entrance opening. The original pallet for this hive protected this bottom board from sinking into the ground. It is not salvageable. Usually one of the first pieces of bee equipment to rot or fail is the bottom board. Also notice something that looks white (more about that later).

1 The first installment is in our June issue, available at www.kelleybees.com.



The Honey Super

The honey super has white plastic frames, indicating that this super was added at a time when plastic was available and fits with the farmer's description that this hive was managed about ten years ago. This view is from below and still shows acorns stored by some creature that used this nice dry comfortable abode during some absence of honey bees. There is no indication of wax moth damage to the hive which tells us again that bees have occupied this hive for some time and the interruption in bee presence was brief.



The Queen Excluder

Normally the queen excluder is removed before winter. In this case, it had been left on the hive making me wonder why? The hive might have been managed through the summer of the year it was abandoned. But as you can see, it is heavily covered with burr comb and there is damage to one corner. I did not want to salvage it and using it again did not seem to be a wise choice.



Top Deep Brood Chamber

The cluster of bees can easily be identified. In selecting the side of the box to start removing comb, one must start as far from the cluster as possible. In this case the choice is easily made.



The first frame to be removed is the near the bottom of this picture. I started there because there were no bees on it, and second because I needed to pry it out. (The propolis and burr comb, along with any burr comb on the bottom bar would likely crush some bees as it is moved upward.) As it turned out both this frame and the frame next to it were filled with honey stores.

The First Frame Removed

Note the top bar is heavily propolized and I have tried to show how the bees glue and build burr comb to a frame that has been in a hive body for a long period of time. Not only were the ears on the top bar well-attached to the rabbet but the bottom bar was attached to the frame below and the end bar was attached to the brood box. The interesting thing is the bees still remained fairly quiet through the rough effort I made in getting this frame out.



Plan on doing some damage to top bars as frames are removed no matter how careful you might be.

Frames are removed one at a time by prying them away from the cluster toward the open part of the hive box.



Prying Frames from the Brood Chamber Box

Notice the use of the hive tool. I use it to clean the burr comb from the top bar and bottom bar and any other scraping action needed with the hive.

The time to start cleaning burr comb from frames is while the frames are still in the hive body. The top bar is quite easy to clean this way, while the bottom bar and end bars can be cleaned only when the frame is removed.

If there are bees on the frame removed from the hive, be sure to check for the queen before you start removing any burr comb.

Once frames can be removed, the mystery of the hive's health, brood pattern, queen and condition of the comb may be evaluated. This can only be done using this method of transferring bees into a new home. You may have been thinking there might be an easier way to move the bees from this hive into another hive body! There is. That method—simply removing the super and queen excluder and placing a new hive box (the new home) on the hive and waiting until the bees move up into it—requires waiting a period of time before getting answers to the hive's health, etc. I do not have the patience to wait that long to see what I found.

The condition of the frames and comb in this hive indicated that I could move them into the new hive without much trouble, but would have to replace them soon. Of the seventeen frames in the two brood chamber boxes, I found that I could use at least eight in the new hive.

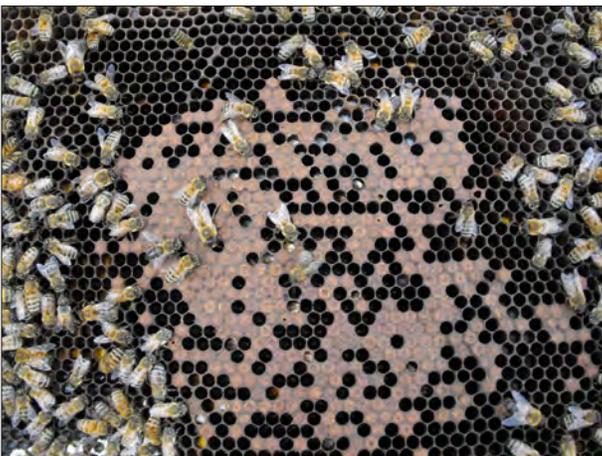
A Look at the Frames and Comb



The first two frames removed were filled with honey and would provide a food supply for the new box. The comb in those frames was old and black and as soon as the bees use the honey stores, new frames with new foundation will replace them. The cluster started on the third frame in from the side of the box as shown here.

I removed this frame carefully. I was hoping to get lucky and find the queen, but after the frames were out of the box, I found this frame with some brood, but in need of immediate replacement.

A close look at the brood pattern indicated that the queen was laying and there was brood in all stages of development. However, if you look closely you will see a problem. My heart stopped when I saw dead chalk-like mummies in quite a few cells.



Remember that white object on the bottom board entrance in an earlier picture? Even before I opened the hive, I was aware there might be a chalkbrood problem. A quick check of the bees on this frame indicated that the bees were removing some of the mummies and I did observe some drones.



But, this frame is not something I wanted to transfer into another box. As a former bee inspector, I know that many diseases are spread by beekeepers. One of the easiest ways this transfer occurs is to use old equipment or equipment that clearly has some form of disease—spores or fungal growth—from diseased hives. This happens a lot in making splits².

The big question was “what would I find on the next frame removed from this hive?” If I would have found additional frames with chalk brood, I would have used the bees pretty much like a package and introduced them to a new hive on either drawn comb without disease, or new foundation. This would require feeding them and waiting the typical

development time of a package of bees rather than the advantage of having her brood population.³

Since this frame was on the outside of the brood cluster, I knew that I might face the problem of shaking all the bees onto new comb. This was not American Foulbrood which would have stopped the transfer process immediately and condemned this hive to the burn pit.

This frame was also very old. In fact the comb had been built on aluminum-embossed foundation used many years ago⁴. Some of the aluminum foundation can be seen in the lower left corner.

Old comb contains a lot of bad stuff and this frame illustrates a good reason to replace old comb before it can become a sink to promote diseases such as chalkbrood fungal spores.

The next frame was not affected with chalkbrood, nor were any of the others that I removed. I decided to keep most of them because they were filled with eggs, larva, and capped brood which would help this hive move on after the damage I was doing to the box and frames. This disease problem also caused me to change my plans on how this hive would be managed over the rest of this year.

So far I had a good population of bees, a queen, and bees that seemed to attempt to clean up the disease problem.

I had old comb and hive equipment which needed to be replaced on a managed schedule. I could save and use these bees. I would have to use comb I did not want to save the egg laying effort of this queen, but it would be replaced over time.

Part 3 will cover the management of this hive thru 2013.

2 I wanted to prevent the queen from laying more new eggs into this particular frame. I did burn that frame along with the existing boxes, but first shook all the bees back into the transferred hive. This frame did have some capped brood and larva that could have been raised, but the bottom line is this frame would be carrying disease to equipment free of that disease. I have always been a believer in burning diseased equipment and since this equipment is well over 50 years old, it was not a hard decision to make.

3 This is the advantage beekeepers have when they have overwintered hives or nucs—the queen already has brood in various stages of development. This hive had a very good overwintered population of bees.

4 This foundation was last sold in the late 1950s. It was not popular because if the wax for some reason was removed from the aluminum, the bees refused to put new comb back on it. This product, Eby's Permanent Foundation, was sold as “the greatest advancement in Bee Comb Foundation construction in years! Makes wired foundation obsolete Durable, Long-Lasting ALUMINUM is inter-leaved between two sheets of 100% Bees Wax” and to my knowledge has not been advertised for sale since 1959. It was not widely accepted by beekeepers for use in their hives regardless of the hype given to it by Eby.

Tips for Extracting Honey

By Tamara Rahm

Successful honey extraction starts long before the honey house and the extractor. Just as a house should not be built on a weak foundation, neither should your honey supers.

- Long term success starts with your foundation being properly installed, and by this I mean that it is straight in the frame. This is important so that the bee can draw the comb as evenly as possible. The first time supers are installed they should be pushed tightly together in the center of the box.
- Know when to install your supers. Foundation will take longer to work (draw out) and fill than drawn comb. I install my foundation sooner than drawn comb, but nectar flow should be somewhat heavy so the bees do not try to eat the foundation.
- If you intend to grade your honey by flavor you should know the nectar source. One tip is to mark the date on the super when it was installed on the hive.
- Know when to remove your supers. The golden rule for proper moisture content is about 80% capped. When possible I try for no less than 90%.
- Be ready to extract before you pull the supers off. Everyone has at least some small hive beetles and they will quickly destroy the honey and your comb.
- Room temperature is also important. Warm honey will flow more easily, but too warm and the wax can become difficult to work with. I like it in the mid-80s.
- Uncapping knives and tools are generally based on personal choice and price. There are hot knives, cold knives, uncapping plane, and the uncapping needle roller. Remember, when uncapping you are only trying to remove the cap, and not to destroy the cell.



Kelley's carries everything you need for efficient extraction. These are just a few of our offerings.

- Understanding moisture content is also important. Grade-A honey is between 14-18% moisture. Too much moisture and your honey can ferment. This is about the only thing that will make honey go bad. A cheap refractometer can be a good investment.
- Wet supers are what you are left with after extraction. Proper storage and reuse will save you lots of money, time, and “bee energy” over time.
 - If you are not going to immediately reinstall your supers after you have extracted the honey, you need to create a robbing yard. Place your supers a distance away from your bees. Place the supers on something like a spare bottom board, and then place a top on them. Bees and other insects will rob the honey from the frames over the next few days. This will create dry supers that are ready for storage.



Tamara Rahm shares extraction knowledge with eager participants at our recent Field Day.

- If a fumigant was used you will need to air the supers for 24 hours before putting them back on the hives. If no fumigant was used they can go right back in the hive.
- More honey to the frame? When reinstalling the super you can reduce the frame number by one frame. Space the frames evenly across the box. The bees will draw the comb from the frames farther out and more honey will be stored in each frame, and it will be easier to uncap.

We hope these tips help you with your honey extraction efforts. If you have any additional tips that you would like to share, please send them to Editor@KelleyBees.com.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Upcoming Events

JULY 2013 EVENT

Heartland Apicultural Society Annual Conference

July 11-13

Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville, TN

www.heartlandbees.com/

AUGUST 2013 EVENT

South Florida Bee College

August 16-17

This event will be hosted by HBREL at the University of Florida.

Walter T. Kelley will not be attending this event.

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/honeybee/extension/SFbee_college.shtml

SEPTEMBER 2013 EVENTS

WAS Conference

September 14-21

Santa Fe, NM

<http://groups.ucanr.org/WAS/WAS-Conference>

Alabama Beekeepers Association Annual Meeting

September 27-28

Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery, AL

More details to come.

We'd love to share news of your upcoming events.

Please send the event name, date, website and/or contact information to me by the 10th of each month for inclusion in the following month's issue. Editor@KelleyBees.com

You can save shipping costs by meeting us at industry meetings.

We note on our website which meetings we'll be attending, and we'd love to meet you there to hand-off your equipment.

The Pollen Hive Product, an Overview

By Harrison Overholt

Editor's Note: Marking his 19th season in the apiary, Harrison Overholt is a member of the Allen County (KY) Beekeepers. He manages about 35 hives for pollination, honey/pollen production, in south central Kentucky.

His inspiration for beekeeping began after the sudden death of his cousin, beekeeper J. R. Epley, as well as consideration for replacement of farm income from the tobacco income loss. He holds membership in the Kentucky State Beekeepers Association and the Tennessee Beekeepers Association.

The joys of beekeeping can produce many avenues to enhance income. Honey, for which there is acknowledged consumer demand, is the most accepted reward of the world of beekeeping. In many climates, such as Kentucky, the honey window of opportunity is about six to eight weeks in the spring.



Pollen comes in a variety of colors. Honeybees in this photograph filled their 'pollen baskets' with an off-white pollen.

Other products of the hive are not as well known as honey, yet can produce income and enjoyment within other windows of the calendar. Beekeeping for pollen is a very manageable practice during other summer and fall months that can reward a disappointing honey harvest.

How Pollen is Collected

Insects perform an essential task in assisting the life of the plant to produce another generation by transferring pollen grains among the reproductive organs. Their efforts are rewarded with the sweet nectar and pollen from the various plants the insects visit. The protein of pollen is essential to build strong exoskeletons, just as it builds strong bones in humans. The hind legs of a honeybee include a comb, rake, and hairs for the collection of pollen from plants. Generally this is referred to as the pollen basket. A beekeeper can monitor the abundance of the area fauna, soil moisture and health of the hive by observing honeybees returning to the hive with pollen.

Pollen grains are of various sizes, textures, and colors; thus the pollen basket can hold several dozen grains, yet look like a small pellet upon arrival at the hive entrance. It is a joy just to watch the bees arriving on the landing board. No experience or expense is needed for this entertainment opportunity.

Harvesting Pollen

Pollen is harvested as the bee enters the hive. The harvesting device, referred to as a pollen trap, requires the bee to cross through it before she proceeds to the brood area. There are various pollen trap designs. In my operation I've been pleased with the Sundance bottom-mount trap. Other traps include:



8 and 10 Frame Pollen Traps Catalog # 62 (left) and Catalog # 69 (right)

A front entrance trap, which you mount onto the front of the bottom board, thus the hive bodies do not have to be removed for placement. My understanding is that this is not a large volume harvesting system.

A top hive-mount trap can be placed under the inner cover, which also means that hive bodies do not need to be removed for placement. However, the bees will have to be restricted from the normal entrance and rerouted to the new entrance. Remember the bees will now travel down to the brood area and across any honey not harvested. It would be much like using your home's back door instead of your normal front door, and making allowance for the switch.

The variety of trap styles requires some research to determine the best operating method for your hard-working girls as they bring in the pollen.

Managing Pollen Traps

After placement of the trap, it will take a couple of days for the bees to become accustomed to the obstacle between them and their destination. If there are any openings, such as broken corners of the hive body, it will be a golden opportunity for them to make a beeline for alternate hive entry.

Pollen traps have reservoirs for collecting the dropped pollen. As the pollen has some moisture, pollen will need to be harvested daily, especially if there's high humidity. Beware! There will be other opportunists interested—ants, wood roaches, adult hive beetles and wax moths might also enjoy the dark protein pantry the reservoir provides and is another reason for daily harvesting. There's no need to cancel your vacation plans to harvest your pollen daily though, as the bottom mount has a sliding entrance board that may be lowered, and the bees will be able to enter the hive above the trap until your return.

Drying Pollen

After harvesting there will need to be some drying—simply spread the pollen on a flat surface to air dry; it doesn't take very long. The “pellets” will be soft upon harvesting, and will become hard upon drying.

Some consumers may want to bypass the drying stage of pollen, feeling is a healthier product without the drying. In this case, after cleaning it, be sure to keep the pollen refrigerated, as the moisture level will cause mold.



Pollen Cleaner, Catalog # 418

Cleaning Pollen

After drying you will need to remove any debris (such as bee legs, wings, mites and ants) which simply may be blown away as pollen is transferred from container to container. You can invest in a pollen cleaner, which uses the same technique of wind blowing out the debris as the pollen falls into your container. You may have to physically remove adult hive beetles, as their weight will act like the pollen and probably not blow out with other debris.

Freezing Pollen

The next step is to freeze the pollen, eliminating any wax moth eggs that may have been laid in the pollen during the harvesting and drying process. This is a very important step, as the consumer does not like the “value added” protein of wax moth larva. If time is of the essence you can freeze without drying, and dry at a future convenience.

Storing Pollen

Storage of pollen is best in the freezer. A one-gallon closable baggie holds five pounds of pollen, and allows for easy recording of the harvest period. Condensation will form on the outer container upon thawing, but will not form on the contents during the thawing process.

I hope this will intrigue a little of your beekeeping adventure skills, and that management of your girls will be a sweet and successful venture.

Watch for next month's issue, which will cover packaging and selling pollen.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Honeybees, Opportunities, and Hive Monitoring Systems

By Anne Marie Fauvel, fauvela@gvsu.edu

Affiliate Professor at Grand Valley State University, Michigan

I became interested in honeybees a few years back. In fact, people around me say I have become obsessed with them. It began as a hobby but these fascinating insects quickly took over my life, as I am sure many of you can relate. You know how some people bring their work home? Well, I brought my passion to work; we academics have that luxury.

I am a biologist. Scratch that, I am a generalist with a background in biology. All right, I am a Liberal Studies professor, who tries to make sense of the natural world around us. Heck, I am an opportunist.

I was part of a Green Team at a small satellite campus of GVSU in Holland, Michigan. Our Green Team had been working on multiple small projects to green up the campus, save energy, and lower our carbon footprint.

Opportunity #1: Establish the first, small apiary on campus as a sustainability project that also emphasized community education.

While the project proposal bounced back and forth between various administrative offices, I planned events to educate and involve students. Knowing that a research component would strengthen our proposal, I also looked for ways we could get involved in research.

Research is often specific and narrow, not the lot of a Liberal Studies generalist. However, luckily, I married a wonderfully focused scientist who often brings me back to Earth with practical ideas. He suggested a scale to monitor the real-time weight of a hive. I wasn't initially enthusiastic about the idea—it didn't promise to be the honeybee-saving breakthrough I had imagined. But, I went with it and learned that simple ideas can often reach far.

Opportunity #2: Work on a Hive Monitoring System (HMS) as a form of interdisciplinary research.

Another great perk to the academic world is that at your fingertips is a comprehensive network of experts. You see, it was a feat for me to assemble my first bee boxes—I am not gifted with carpentry or engineering skills. So, when my husband suggested I build a hive scale, he didn't literally mean that 'I' was to take on the challenge.



All photos courtesy of Anne Marie Fauvel.

We are looking for bee clubs, commercial beekeepers, private or small hobbyists willing to buy a HMS and a cellular data plan to start contributing data to the Bee Informed Partnership national survey and become part of the ongoing research to better the health of our beloved honey bee population.

During the winter 2012 semester, before our bees arrived, I enlisted the help of a team of senior engineering students to develop and build a digital, solar-powered scale, and a second team of senior computer and information systems students to develop the software to automatically collect and disseminate the data to a website built around the project.

And so our scale was built and the website launched; here comes the scientific jargon. The scale is built from a

simple T-slot extruded aluminum frame fastened with compatible joining brackets. Its brain is an Arduino Microcontroller loaded with custom software and linked to six analog input sensors. The brain speaks via a cellular shield, stacked on top of the Arduino, which provides the SMS (text messaging) send/receive functionality using a SIM card and cellular service plan. All of these electronics are sealed in a watertight junction box and powered by a 12-volt battery attached to a 15-watt solar panel.

In operation, four of the six sensors measure the hive's weight, two of the sensors measure the temperature inside and outside the hive, and the Arduino-driven SIM card sends the information to the cloud via a Google voice account. This information is displayed on a student-designed website (<http://beecloudproject.appspot.com>). The scale SIM card can also receive messages. This means I can text a command to the scale from anywhere asking for data to be collected every 5 minutes instead of every 30 minutes, for example.

We installed our bees in two new hives on the Holland campus in the spring of 2012; one of the hives was perched on the snazzy HMS. And the data flowed like nectar.

Until one day when the data just stopped coming in.

I asked the engineers to come out and suit up to troubleshoot. Finding all well mechanically and electronically with the HMS, we turned to computer science students; it must be their fault. But no, their side of the system was working fine too. Where was the problem? Sometimes with complex systems it is easy for overlook the basic. Turns out I had forgotten to pay the data plan that month. It is on a monthly automatic payment plan now.

So what can one do with beehive weight data, you may wonder? What's the point? A Google search (yes we academics are that sophisticated) turned up the NASA HoneyBeeNet project, which became my ultimate goal.

HoneyBeeNet (<http://honeybeenet.gsfc.nasa.gov/>) was a NASA-funded project that collected data over the past 60-some years. I say was, because the project is in the process of transitioning from NASA to the Bee Informed Partnership (<http://beeinformed.org>), a national data collection and analysis effort based on public surveys. The goal of Bee Informed is to better evaluate, understand and reduce bee colony losses.

NASA's HoneyBeeNet superposed the honey bee's weight information with satellite images of the surrounding vegetation to analyze and draw conclusions about the honey flow or the pollination season timetable in the context of climate change. Dr. Wayne Esaias from NASA and the University of Maryland coordinates the efforts of the HoneyBeeNet. You can find more information about his research in the February 2013 issue of Bee Culture magazine.

The last data in the HoneyBeeNet database from the State of Michigan dated back to 1954; no Michigan locations have contributed since. If GVSU could get in on the HoneyBeeNet we would be the only point of reference for the State of Michigan.

Opportunity #3: Contribute to a national data collection effort impacting both honey bee populations and climate change research.

Now, this generalist is excited!

Last spring, like many new beekeepers, I battled with the consequences of unusually warm weather, swarms, failing

I asked the engineers to come out and suit up to troubleshoot. Finding all well mechanically and electronically with the HMS, we turned to computer science students; it must be their fault.

queens, supersedures, unsuccessful splits, desperate colony combinations, and all the emotional trauma associated with starting an apiary. By the time things settled in the apiary and data was coming in, the honey flow had pretty much come and gone. I took stock of my losses and hoped for a better next year. Knowing I certainly still had much to learn about bees, I headed out to Apimondia 2012.

Among the speakers that weekend was the highly dynamic Dennis vanEngelsdorp from the University of Maryland, also the director of the Bee Informed Partnership. I decided to go shake his hand after his talk and mention my attempt to contribute data to HoneyBeeNet. During our conversation, I asked if they had any plans to make the data collection a bit more automated, as emailing spreadsheets was still the standard method. Dennis mentioned they were exploring a SMS messaging data collection. I found myself speaking before I could think: 'We did that, would you like to see our website?'

Opportunity #4: Collaborate with HoneyBeeNet and the Bee Informed Partnership to develop a national network of electronic hive scales to enable colony survivorship and disease outbreak modeling based on real-time hive weight data.

Although I left Apimondia excited about starting to collaborate, my excitement edged toward panic: I really don't know anything about computer programming, SMS messaging and web portals. Back at home I reached out to my colleague Jonathan Engelsma, a professor in the GVSU School of Computing and Information Systems, who had led the students to build the software for our in-house project and, as it turns out, is a longtime beekeeper as passionate about bees as I am; and so, GVSU's collaboration with 'the big boys' began.

A larger HMS project is developing. We—now including Dennis vanEngelsdorp and Karen Rennich from the University of Maryland and Bee Informed Partnership, Dr. Esaias from NASA and the University of Maryland, James Wilkes from Appalachian State University and Shane Gebauer from Brushy Mountain Bee Farm, Jonathan and myself, have set some initial goals.

A short-term goal is to deploy a network of 100 HMS, with local bee clubs and beekeepers, large and small alike, to pilot a larger and more comprehensive effort. A second short-term goal is to enable participants and other interested beekeepers to view real-time online data from the networked HMS.

Longer-term goals are to extend the HMS network to beekeeping operations to provide real-time alerts to aid colony management and to highlight any emergent nectar-dependent factors, or, as in last year, drought conditions that affect short- and long-term colony health as well as other things like parasite loads. We have some preliminary data linking nectar flow with *Nosema* populations. Nectar flow is also linked with brood production which in turn is linked to *Varroa* population growth.

We are progressing on several fronts. We are honing the electronic scale design so it best fits our needs, based mostly on Dr. Esaias' sage experience, and partly on our recent endeavors at GVSU. We are seeking a supplier to manufacture the scale and to provide "consumer service" for the systems when they are deployed. And we continue to develop the software side of the project at GVSU under the direction of Prof. Engelsma.

Finally, here comes an opportunity if you would like to be involved: we will soon be recruiting a pilot group of 100 participants. We are looking for bee clubs, commercial beekeepers, private or small hobbyists willing to buy a HMS and a cellular data plan to start contributing data to the Bee Informed Partnership national survey and become part of the ongoing research to better the health of our beloved honey bee population. We'll have more information by the fall on what it will look like and what it will be able to do. The cost is not definite at the moment, but best estimates put the total expense between \$400 and \$600.

The 2013 season is well underway, and my colonies are off to a good start (knocking on wood). In the months to come, we will continue to develop the HMS and will begin to collect data nationwide. Like a good healthy honey bee visiting a variety of nectar sources, I will be looking for my next opportunity.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

A-Bee-Cs

When Do You Need to Find the Queen?

Of the (hopefully by now) tens of thousands of honeybees in your hive, only one of them is super important. Fittingly, it's the one called "the queen."

We all understand how important she is, but is it important to see her every time you inspect the hive?



The queen mother gets respect. Photo courtesy of Stephen Lester.

As you may have noticed by now, beekeepers have many contradictory opinions on most subjects, including this one. Thus, we're sharing Dr. Dewey Caron's wisdom on this issue. He led a discussion on the topic at our recent Field Day. When he posed the question "when do you need to find the queen?" it was remarkable how many different opinions there were.

According to Caron, there are really only "about" two times when you need to see the queen.

The first instance Caron suggested was in response to an audience answer of "when you want to see how pretty she is!"

"Right!" laughed Caron. He noted that when your uncle is in town and wanting to see the bees you're so excited about, and you finally get him out to the hive, you should probably try

and show him the most important bee in the hive. It'll be important to him.

The second instance is when you're requeening. You'll need to take out the old queen (or queens, as there are often mother-daughter combinations ruling the hive this time of year).

"And that's it," affirmed Caron. As long as you're seeing evidence of the queen when you're inspecting the hive—like capped brood, open larval brood, eggs (one per cell, rarely two), developing queen cells, you're likely good.

But we understand if you want to find her just to admire how pretty she is.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Beek Hint

It's not just bees that don't like Bee Go; the TSA doesn't care much for it, either. Leaving from the airport on Monday I was screened, found to have "explosives" residue on my hands, and taken in the little room for full-body pat down. Seems the nitrates in Bee Go showed up on my hands, even though, yes, I had washed them. Although if I had doused myself with Bee Go I'm sure they would've let me through post-haste!

As for the Bee Go usage, I'd handled it on Saturday, but even on Monday some residues still remained.

—Tom Springer



Love of Bees

It's Our Anniversary

Hello.

Three years ago we published our first issue of *Kelley Bees News Modern Beekeeping*. That issue covered, among other things, dealing with small hive beetles and venting hives in the summer, topics also covered in this issue. Some things never change.

And, some things really do. That first newsletter was about a third the size of what we typically publish each month now, and we're challenged to keep it at 30 or less pages. There's so much to learn and share about the important honeybee.

Thanks for your ongoing contributions, questions, photographs and support. Please keep it coming as we enter our fourth year. You can always email me at Editor@KelleyBees.com. I love hearing from you.

Please let me know what we can do better with this publication to help you in the life-long learning adventure of beekeeping.

Thanks for all you do for our favorite insect.

Best regards,

Camilla Bee, Editor

PS: Yes, we will be bringing back "Foraging for Fun" and recipes in future issues, right after we cover some of the more pressing seasonal topics.



Kelley Bee News



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FAQs

Editor's Note: Because if you ask ten beekeepers the same question, you may get at least ten different answers, we're sometimes walking on controversial ground with this regular feature. Our recommendation is to read, research, and discuss to figure out what's best for you and your bees. There are few black and whites in beekeeping.

Q. I live in Broken Arrow, OK. When would be latest to remove current queen to allow bees to create a new queen and expect proper mating? —*K. Sinclair*

A. We caught up with Kentucky senior beekeeper Joe Taylor to answer this one, who summarized with “as long as there are still plenty of drones of a mating age, you should be good.”

“When is too late” varies by area and current weather conditions. Joe was quick to answer “July,” but then noted “unless there are plenty of drones later than that.”

There's a couple of things to keep in mind though. If your area is experiencing a drought, the available drone population might fall off quickly. And, if you're allowing bees to create a new queen, that's a substantial break in the brood cycle. By the time the new queen starts laying, and those bees emerge and start foraging—is there enough time for the colony to build up sufficient stores and population to overwinter?

Another consideration is the risk of losing that virgin queen. Will she return from her mating flight, or become intimate with the belly of a bird? Do it early enough in the season to give yourself options if she doesn't successfully mate or return from mating.

Joe added “If you made a nuc with the old queen, you could combine again if something goes wrong.”

Q. Has anyone had any issues with the plastic queen excluders such as lower production for the supers after the excluder? Maybe the workers can't get through with the pollen? Also, are screen inner covers that helpful during the summer months? Thanks. —*David C.*

A. Beekeepers are divided on the topic of queen excluders. Many wouldn't put on a honey super without first installing a queen separator; many don't like them because they can impede the bees' progress. (They're often referred to as “honey excluders.”) Your call, but if you encounter brood on a frame you want to extract, you can first cut it out.

Good ventilation is critical, year 'round. Some beekeepers prefer a vented super. You can also let the heat off the hive with small sticks raising the inner cover (like a popsicle stick, plus there's the added bonus of first having to eat the popsicle), a hot air escape, a screened inner cover (shown below), etc.

Moving Screened Inner Cover, Catalog # 60



Q. One of my swarms left a day after I brought them to their new home. What do you think about putting a queen separator under the box to make sure they don't take off?

A. Some beekeepers recommend that, but there's risk. A swarm is often composed of multiple swarms—a large primary one with the old queen, and smaller ones with virgin queens. If you know you have the old queen (maybe she's marked with a previous year's color?), a queen separator would keep her at the new location.

But, if you retain a virgin queen, you've captured the swarm for nothing. If she can't get out and mate, the colony is doomed.

Q. I have a question to which you may have the answer: Do you know of a method for cleaning and restoring the flexibility to cowhide leather bee gloves? I have an excellent pair of bee gloves that is so inflexible that they cannot be used. Please give me any information that you may have. —G.

A. Readers?

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 



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Sweet as Honey

“ I’ve been working with a senior beekeeper of over 60 years since 2010. I have read all the books but nothing can take the place of the experience he has taught me. In fact, he still has Walter T. Kelley extraction and bottling equipment manufactured 20 years ago. I care for 6 hives on different farms in Logan and Todd counties and my good friend has 16 hives on his farm in Olmstead, KY.

Well, when you work with “The Little Debbies” as he calls ‘em, you get so comfortable working in and around the hive, you don’t put on a veil or suit. I’ve followed “suit” and haven’t worn a suit for two years and got a powerful sting only twice.

I recently transferred an ugly two-story nuc box structure. Wow, those were some of the meanest bees and let me tell you, a towering inferno of smoke could not calm them down! With all that crackling wood and transferring frames, the “Little Debbies” lit me up like the 4th of July. I didn’t resolve to cursing or dancing an Irish jig around the new hive, just kept working and smoking the burning stings around my legs, arms and two good ones on my nose. Makes your eyes water doesn’t it!

My point, experience comes from making bad decisions. The next time I perform surgery on a hive I haven’t worked or at least paid off the guards, I will work with a bee suit and veil. There is no sense in tempting fate.

Despite licking my wounds, I still love beekeeping and the necessary benefit they provide to the world!

Hope everyone has a wonderful season. —*M. Neill, KY*

Folks, stinging is a unavoidable part of keeping bees. We’d like to share your experiences, thoughts and any suggestions in a future issue.

I’d really appreciate it if you’d shoot me an email answering any or all of the following:

About how many stings do you average a season?

Is there a story or helpful hint behind your worst stinging encounter(s)?

How do you handle them?

What protective clothing do you routinely wear?

What soothes your stings?

Anything else?

Send your answers to: Editor@KelleyBees.com

Thank you in advance.

A beekeeper sent us this, which he entitled “A Beekeeper’s Motto”:

“ Life is full of connected moments from the past that build character... and enjoyment of present moments which bridge us to the hope of a brighter future.

“ Harvesting swarms, I’ve found using a small battery-powered circular saw is great. Unlike standard loppers that require two hands and often jar the swarm off the limb when it cuts through the quiet little saw can be used with one hand while you hold the branch with the other. —*G. Allen*

“ Duh. Here’s helpful hint. When taking pictures of your bees with your smart phone, make sure the phone is using the camera that points outward, not the one that takes a picture of you. Otherwise, you’ll get lots of pictures that look like this ... —*L. Prudden, Maryland*



“ My friend and I picked up three packages of bees in May and they are doing fine. One package contained a dead queen and Kelley graciously, and as promised, sent a replacement. In the time frame of getting the new queen several bees had died and were lying on the floor of the cage. When the new queen arrived I placed her, in her cage, close to the package for two or three days.

Then I chose the method of installation by taking out several frames of the deep super and placed the packaged bees down in the space provided by taking out some frames. I placed the queen, in her package, down between two frames. Subsequent inspections reveal that the colony is doing fine and bringing in pollen; that is a good sign.

I tried the internal feeders on my two hives at first, but due to having to take off the top cover to find out if feed was needed, I switched to the front entrance feeders. It hasn’t been a good spring earlier on account of much rain. Things are looking better. —*Granite*

You might enjoy this gentle story: <http://www.storiesfromschool.org/2013/05/no-bee-left-behind.html>

While it has its fair share of commercial promotions, this free smartphone app has great, helpful pictures and plenty of information for honeybee health. As the press release said:

“ The app, suitable for nearly all smartphones and tablet devices, can be downloaded free. It runs on Apple or Android, on iPhones, iPads, Samsungs and Blackberrys and the full range of smart mobiles.

To access the free Vita web app from your smartphone, simply use your internet browser to go to www.healthybeeguide.com. The app requires an internet connection, is not available from app stores and will not store information on your phone.

Dronings from a Queen Bee

Pants Are Overrated

By Charlotte Hubbard

I'm on a swarm list, and crave calls from people hoping I'll take away the stinging insects swaying under their picnic table, or from their kids' swing set. Most beekeepers love to capture swarms, but the timing can be tricky. You have to be ready to drop everything and go after them.

I've solved this timing challenge, because I now know when and where swarms will occur. *When?* Whenever I'm going out of town I'll get plenty of calls about bushel basket-sized swarms on low branches. *And where?* Always within a few miles of my home. (Golly, maybe they're my bees swarming!)

As an example, I travelled to Kentucky in early June. The first swarm call came within hours after leaving Michigan. A woman three miles from my house had a basketball-sized swarm of honeybees hanging from a tomato cage, which I also could have if I'd please-please-please take the bees away. Would I pretty please come get them? Soon??!

No, and I apologized to her profusely. I was truly, very, very sorry that I couldn't get that swarm, or the tomato cage.

Upon awakening in Kentucky the next day, I checked my phone. Two new messages. Two new swarms. Both allegedly mammoth; both within ten feet of the ground. I like to think that honeybees don't plot ways to mock me, but the second caller said the swarm giggled as they handed him my phone number on a small piece of paper.

We returned from Kentucky three days later. My phone, like the cat pouting because we abandoned him (with a cat sitter nonetheless) for three days, was oddly silent.

The next day I awoke to a sunshiny, low humidity, perfect Michigan day, and a phone call. Glory bee! The caller, a spirited, delightful retiree named Jimmy, had a swarm. Jimmy lived only a mile away. The swarm was huge. It was swaying a few feet off the ground on a dwarf tree in his backyard. It seemed too good to be true.



And it was.

We were there in 25 minutes, but the swarm was not. We wandered with Jimmy about his picturesque backyard, hoping to find the bees on a nearby, low-hanging branch.

We'd just met the chatty Jimmy, but he insisted on sharing a few important things with us. First, he loved the Lord. Second, he was afraid of bees. And third, he carried at least one gun with him at all times for protection. In fact, he had a pistol in his pocket right then. Jimmy seemed perplexed that his many guns were useless against the invading honeybees.

Rounding a corner, we heard buzzing (and I swear, giggling.) Bees were swirling about a nearby pine, and then settled about 15 feet up.

My husband Marshall, Jimmy, and I stared at the nice-sized cluster for several minutes. Marshall and I stared from directly under it. Jimmy stared, er, peeked from a barn door 20 feet away. Staring doesn't do anything to get them out of the tree, but every beekeeper I've ever seen capture a swarm spends several minutes just bee-holding it.

Of course this was too good to be true.

After more staring, Marshall and I considered going after them. We discussed where to precariously place the ladder, which branches we might have to prune, etc. Jimmy was very agreeable to our plan, because it involved making the stinging insects go away.

As a precaution, we suited up. Marshall donned his protective jacket, and oops, in our haste, he'd left the house wearing shorts.

I offered to dash home and fetch a pair of pants for him. Our home, containing pants, was a mere mile away.

"Don't bother. Pants are overrated," shrugged Marshall with a smile.

Jimmy, who was hopping up and down from stinging insect anxiety, gasped. "That's just not right!"

You know what else isn't right? Overanxious guys with guns in their pockets.

Marshall assured Jimmy he'd be fine, explaining the typical demeanor of swarms. Even if the swarm hadn't read the same books though, Marshall had a cranky ankle and knee. If there were stings, they'd be helpful.

That only increased Jimmy's already extremely high agitation. "They might sting you!! Marshall, it would tickle me pink if I could please lend you some pants," he reiterated.

Marshall again declined. For a few seconds I wondered if Jimmy would grab ones of his guns and insist that Marshall put on pants.



Marshall demonstrates that pants are overrated.

Marshall (minus pants), started up the ladder.

"By the way," whispered Jimmy loudly from his barn hiding place, "what church do you attend?"

I found that an interesting question at an interesting time. Did he want to be sure that if Marshall tumbled off the ladder he knew who his Maker was? Or that the bees were going to a good Christian home?

Sometimes swarm captures go as planned, and this was one of them. Marshall went up the ladder; the bees on a branch came down with him; none of them even thought about stinging. Jimmy resumed breathing regularly.

Thank God for bees, people who care for them, and people who call when they want them out of their backyards.

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