



Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 41 • NOVEMBER 2013

Modern Beekeeping



Photo courtesy of Ben and Kimberly Carpenter.

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The Buzz

November is the month to give thanks and you know what that means for the Kelley Nation—FREE SHIPPING THANKSGIVING WEEK! If you're new to the Kelley Nation you may not know that this has become an annual tradition at Kelley's so let me outline the program for you. If you live in the continental United States you can save on shipping costs by ordering a minimum of \$200 between November 24th and November 30th. All orders placed



Photo by Herb Lester

from the 48 contiguous states over \$200 during Thanksgiving week will be shipped for free! It's just WTK's way of saying thank you to our loyal and new customers. Reminder: the employees of WTK will be celebrating Thanksgiving with their families on Thursday, 28th and Friday 29th, so we won't have anyone taking phone calls on those two days. If ordering by phone, give us a call between Monday and Wednesday of that week—and don't forget our new website is ALWAYS available at www.kelleybees.com. If you haven't visited it yet, give it a try—I believe you'll enjoy the website experience.

Just like November, this month's edition of *Modern Beekeeping* is full of wonderful sights, picture in your mind the boldest and brightest maple tree radiating beautiful autumn colors; delightful sounds, as in traditional family gathering enjoying good family fellowship; and delightful smells, very few things trigger wholesome goodness like the smell of a basting turkey and your mom's dressing wafting through the house on Thanksgiving day—oh, and football, lots of football. Delightful sights, sounds and smells abound in our November newsletter.

This month's edition of *Modern Beekeeping* is again full of great information for beekeepers at all experience levels. You'll hear from Ben and Kimberly Carpenter, from Hungry Bear Farms in upstate New York, as they share their overwintering beekeeping practices in our colder climes. There's also the finale to our Bee-Sting reporting which highlights many of the home remedies that so many of our wonderful readers forwarded to us. Biggest take away: play it safe and wear your veil! You will also see an article written by Mary K. Franklin (long time WTK employee and ambassador) sharing how to make beautiful beeswax candles from foundation for holiday gifts. Dana Stahlman, long time contributor to *Modern Beekeeping* takes us all down memory lane to a time when beekeeping and life were a little less complicated. Dana, I believe many of our readers will picture and smell the underpinnings of that truck. Readers: you'll just have to read it for yourself.

Speaking of sights and sounds, be sure you read the article and check out the pictures of the Clarkson Honeyfest! You'll see our very own queen bee (customer service rep: Kaytlin McClure) holding the Grand Champion Float trophy that WTK was presented at this year's event. You'll also read how the legacies of Walter and Ida carry on as Walter T. Kelley continues to positively impact the city of Clarkson, KY.

Lastly, for those of us that weren't able to take a week off and catch a plane to Kiev, Ukraine, you'll get the bee's eyes view from Anne Marie Fauvel of Grand Valley State University as she continues to share the sights, sounds, and smells of her Apimondia 2013 experience. It looks like apitherapy beds, like the *Mayflower*, are coming to America. We end the November newsletter with an article written by Charlotte Hubbard, as she describes and provides a great pictorial of her hive removing experience in the great state of Michigan.

It's November, the month we take time to give thanks, enjoy our family and friends and delight in the harvest, savoring the fruits of our labor. Let's all be sure to live in the moment and make memories with those most precious to us.

Bee thankful,

Kevin Harrub

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Sales and Purchasing Director
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Kelley Nation



What would one call a group of people united by a similar language, culture and purpose? That sounds very much like the definition of the word “nation”. It also very nicely describes the beekeeping community that Kelley’s serves. Let’s look at those defining words more closely. Similar language: frames, foundation, queens, supercedure, varroa mites—we call this “bee speak” at WTK. We speak it—you speak it, those outside the nation don’t understand it. Similar culture: independent, hardworking, continually learning, willing to share our findings or experiences with family, neighbors or new acquaintances. Does that describe the beekeeping community—you bet it does! Lastly, similar purpose: everyone that keeps bees has one purpose. There may be many different reasons for our love or involvement with bees but ultimately every person in the “nation” has one purpose—keep our bees alive and healthy—one might suggest that we’re all involved in saving bees one hive at a time, whether it be our own or those that belong to folks we mentor. What is the common denominator of those that make up this nation of beekeepers and our desire to save the bees? If you happen to be a regular reader of this newsletter, or years ago you bought your first bottom board, deeps and a smoker from Kelley’s and you continue to make us your beekeeping supplier; or perhaps you’re currently preparing to purchase your first Kentucky Special because you’ve decided that beekeeping sounds like a noble or worthwhile pursuit—then you are officially part of the Kelley Nation—a group united by similar language, culture and purpose—with a mission to “Save the Bees!” Future articles on the Kelley Nation will highlight what part some of you are playing to “Save the bees.” This month we focus on three team members from Kelley’s. Meet Ev, Eric and Kevin.



I’m Jenny “Ev” Everett, the CEO and President of the Walter T. Kelley Company, and more importantly, I serve as the Bee Advocate. At Kelley’s, we are driven by a larger purpose that transcends normal business practices because we have a strong duty and obligation with our mission to “Save the Bees.” As you know, beekeeping is absolutely vital to the health of our nation’s agricultural system and without it, a substantial portion of our great nation’s food supply would disappear. In my role as Bee Advocate, I am working with researchers, legislators, and academics to improve this awareness, test solutions, and remove barriers for bees including the ban of harmful pesticides such as neonicotinoids and the battle against Varroa mites. I am committed to helping our current beekeepers succeed, setting them up

for success, and investing in our communities to educate and inform others about the strategic importance of beekeeping. Also, in support, we will also be donating a portion of our profits to the EAS Foundation for Honey Bee Research, a competitive grant program for funding research on topical programs in honey bees. I have a great team with Eric, Kevin, and the rest of the Kelley's family, but only through the work of many, can we solve and cut this Gordian Knot of beekeeping issues. Please join us to help "Save the Bees."



I'm Eric McMichael, the Director of Operations at the Walter T. Kelley Company; I'm also known as Bee Product here at Kelley's. I am responsible for the day to day operations of Manufacturing and Shipping. Here at the Kelley Company, manufacturing is split into five categories with each having a Department Supervisor. They consist of a Woodshop, Metal Shop, Wax Department, Sewing Department and the Shipping Department. Having been around manufacturing operations for several years I have seen many changes in manufacturing practices. I was introduced to Lean Manufacturing in the late 80s and have seen how costs were driven down, quality improved and faster customer service by using the Lean Manufacturing principles. We, here at

Kelley's started our Lean journey 3 years ago and have seen vast improvements in all areas. By using these principles we are now in a constant continuous improvement mode which also aligns with our mission to "Save the Bees". As everyone knows the honeybee population has been on the decline due to colony collapse disorder, varroa mites, pesticides and probably other reasons we have yet to figure out. One of the Lean sayings is, "if you keep doing what you are doing, you will keep getting what you are getting." If we don't change we should not expect a different result. We have and will continue to change our products based on customer need and more importantly the welfare of the honeybee.



I'm Kevin Harrub, the Director of Sales and Purchasing at the Walter T. Kelley Company and I serve as the Bee Partner at Kelley's. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word partner as: one of two or more people, businesses, etc., that work together or do business together. I could not have stated it better myself. In my position as Director of Sales and Purchasing it my responsibility to partner with our customers and our suppliers to ensure that we offer the best products, employ and work with the best people and perform the best practices (the 3 Ps) in the beekeeping supply industry. Products: We are committed to offering a line of products that meet your expectations for quality and selection, constantly striving to offer our customers

the best value in every category from wooden ware, wax, sewing, metal or resale. It is this commitment to our customer and supplier partnerships that keeps us constantly working toward providing the best beekeeping products in the business. People: At Walter T. Kelley, we recognize that our company is only as good as the people on our Walter T. Kelley team. That team includes our employees and our business partners. Excellence and integrity are cornerstones to our business philosophy and our way of "doing business"—we expect those values to be reflected in our employees and our suppliers. Practices: We have developed and continue to improve our hiring and training practices in all departments while simultaneously developing practices and procedures for our vendor partners that ensure consistently high results. Why such high standards—it's simple, as part of the Kelley Nation we're on a mission to "Save the Bees."

Now it's your turn! Please send us your "Save the Bees" story to editor@kelleybees.com. All stories submitted will be reviewed with some being chosen to highlight in future articles about the Kelley Nation. Who knows, your story may be the spark that ignites a crusade as we all work to "Save the Bees."

Bee Thinking About

For November, 2013

Ask three beekeepers what you should be doing in your apiary, and you'll get at least three different answers.

It's not because they want to frustrate you, but rather because what works differs by strength of the colony, the weather, the season, experiences, and other variables.

The intent of this section is to highlight some considerations for your apiary this time of year. For area specifics, please read, research, and talk to local beekeepers, and document what you do, so you can figure out over time what works best for your apiary.

Things to Check Inside the Hive, Weather Permitting:

"Weather permitting" is usually defined as 50° F. or above, with no breeze, or a light breeze. A good indicator of whether it is sufficiently warm to open and work a hive is if there are bees—more than one or two—out flying.

If you haven't done so already, you may want to access the hive to:

- Ensure they have enough stores for your geographic area.
- Ensure stores are arranged so the bees can get to them, placing honey above and to the sides of the brood nest.
- Ensure there are enough bees to appropriately cluster in the cold months ahead. If not, consider combining hives if it isn't already too chilly.
- Remove any hive medications.
- If using a Langstroth hive, flip the inner cover so the gap side is down. (See "FAQs", this issue.)
- Double-check that you didn't leave on a queen excluder.

What if there aren't enough stores?

If the bees haven't gone into cluster, feeding honey, 2:1 sugar syrup, pollen patties, etc. may be helpful.

If there aren't sufficient stores, or even if you believe there are but want to be sure, a candy board or "sugar ceiling" is good approach. The Mountain Camp Method (see photo below) is an often-recommended insurance policy, and if it isn't needed by the bees, you can use the sugar in solution in the spring.



Bees in the north in early March, consuming emergency stores until forage returns.

Mountain Camp Method

Place a 2" spacer rim atop the frames.

Place 2 sheets of black and white newspaper directly atop the frames. This will cover roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ of the surface area, leaving $\frac{1}{3}$ of the frames visible. Be sure to keep the newspaper within the spacer rim. If it extends to the outside, it may wick moisture into the hive.

Mist the newspaper with a spray bottle of water.

Dump about a third of two pounds of white sugar on the newspaper; mist until it begins to clump.

Repeat until all of the sugar has been applied.

Place the inner cover atop the rim spacer, and then the top cover. The reason for the light mist is to get the sugar to clump a bit so the bees don't carry it out as foreign material.

Things to Check in the Apiary:

- Review the overall apiary for any potential weather hazards. When winter storms arrive, are there branches likely to come down? Things to blow into the hives?
- Do the hives need a wind break from prevailing winds? Straw bales, lawn chairs, overturned picnic tables—wind breaks don't need to be pretty.
- Ensure there's a substantial weight atop the hive for gusts.
- Did you put on the mouse guards?
- Reduce the entrances?
- Are the hives slightly tilted forward so any condensation would drain out?
- Do the hives have extra ventilation holes? Keep an eye on them. Sometimes a small vent hole will get clogged with a dead bee, or dead bees will clog the entrance/exit.

Other Things to Bee Thinking About:

Store your comb to prevent moth damage. Freezing temperatures take care of moths, but if Mother Nature doesn't provide them in your area, consider moth crystals to protect the bees' substantial efforts.

Join a bee club, and if you're already in one, consider volunteering as a presenter, the person who makes the coffee, the greeter, etc. Bee clubs are a key link in helping this insect we all love and need, and there's always things you can do to help.

Become a better beekeeper—through club participation, meetings, reading, and videos. Several major bee meetings are coming up. They're a great opportunity for learning and meeting some great people, and enjoy some interesting locations.

Consider spreading an appreciation for honey bees: volunteer to mentor a new beekeeper, or speak about bees at a local elementary school. The guy you work with whose nephew has been thinking about keeping bees? Seek him out and see how you might help.

Review how your season went, and make plans for next year. Don't forget a Plan Bee, should wintering losses be higher than expected. You need to order package bees early.

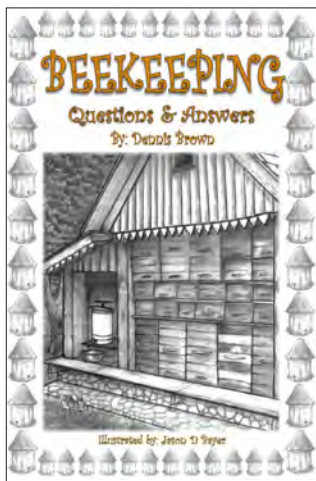
As always, your comments and contributions are welcome, email Editor@KelleyBees.com or visit kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯



A stack of hive bodies, protected from wax moths. A small amount of Para-Moth Crystals protects several hive bodies.



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Beekeeping in the South

By Dennis Brown of Lone Star Farms, www.lonestarfarms.net

Author of Beekeeping: A Personal Journey and Beekeeping: Questions and Answers, both carried by Kelley's.

Here on Lone Star Farms in Bryan, Texas our bees are working the aster and goldenrod plants. When that activity comes to a close we will be thinking about checking our mite levels in the hive.

We like to use the Kelley screen bottom board that comes with the *slide in monitoring board*. It is easy to use and it doesn't disrupt the activities inside the hive. We merely paint a thin layer of vegetable oil on the board and slide it in the groove on the bottom board. We pull the board out and count the number of mites on the board after a twenty-four hour period. In my book *Beekeeping: A Personal Journey* I cover the acceptable levels of mite load according to the time of year.



Screened Bottom Board,
Catalog # 57

If the mite load is too high, we will treat the hive using powdered sugar. Most books you read will tell you to treat the hive once every week for three weeks. This is not good information. You should treat each for a period of *four* weeks in order to cover the "Drone" brood which hatches in 24 days. Drone brood contains 80% of the mite load. If you only treat for 21 days you have missed the larger portion of mite load.

To treat a hive you should sprinkle one cup of powdered sugar into **each** box on the hive. You should separate each box to perform the treatment, not just dump the powdered sugar on the top box and hope that it goes down to the lower box. When you treat each box, leave some of the powdered sugar on the top bar of each frame. Most books will tell you to scrape it off down between the frames. If you leave some on the top bars, it will act like a time release. The bees will over time knock it down between the frames as they move around inside the hive.

You should perform this treatment once a week for four weeks. After that time, perform another mite load test. If the mite level is still too high after that second **four**-week treatment, you should re-queen with a hygienic queen. If it is too late in the season to purchase a new queen, you will need to perform more powdered sugar treatments until it gets too cold in order to help keep the hive alive until a queen becomes available.

Finally, you should splash water under each hive after each powdered sugar treatment. Powdered sugar will pass through the hive and land on the ground below the hive. The water will dissolve the powdered sugar. The bees in the area will forage under the hive to pick up the sweet sugar if present and in doing so, the mites that have fallen to the ground will merely hitch a ride on a foraging bee and return to that bee's hive.

I hope that this information helps and next month I will go into why mite levels go up. Enjoy your bees.

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

Healthy Bees

Reflections

For most beekeepers in this hemisphere, the time is approaching when we will be able to catch our breath. This slower season is the time to reflect on what went right and what you'd do differently in your apiary this year, as well as begin to dream about next season.

Our 2014 catalog will be out soon, providing plenty to dream about. Please also check out our offerings at www.kelleybees.com.

Some other timely reflection may be found in this excerpt from the October 1925 edition of *Modern Beekeeping*. It was written by Ralph Ziegler.

Beginners Department: As the honey gathering season draws reluctantly to a close, we are inclined to wonder how many of those who started with bees last spring are still beginners and how many are real beekeepers.

All have no doubt made mistakes.

Those who have blamed themselves for their errors, taking steps to correct them and prevent their happening again are real beekeepers, while those who blame the bees, the weather, the package bee shipper, the equipment manufacturers and everything else in sight are still just beginners.

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

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Overwintering Advice for the Northeast

By Ben and Kimberly Carpenter

www.HungryBearFarms.com

What you should do to prepare your bees for winter varies by geographic area, strength of the hive, and your management practices. We caught up with a Kelley's distributor in New York; following are their insights and approaches to managing bees in that region for the months ahead.



Checking to ensure the colony is healthy going into fall. Photo courtesy of Ben and Kimberly Carpenter, pictured.

How Much Honey do You Leave on the Hive?

In Upstate New York, we will leave on the hive, as a minimum, two deep hive bodies, and make sure they have about 120 pounds of honey for the winter.

This at the minimum is what we leave for the bees so they have adequate stores to make it through until April when foraging plants come back out. If the hives are light going into fall, we may feed with 2:1 syrup or feed our own honey back to them. We may let them rob out some supers at a different part of the yard so they will take it back and fill up the empty spaces in the hive with honey.

Do You Feed Patties, and if so, When?

We will feed protein patties/ pollen patties whenever we feel the hives could benefit from having more protein and increasing brood production/ having better brood rearing nutrition. If pollen sources are low we will give them a boost if they need it. If the colony is small and needs help we will give them an easy source of food so they don't have to travel so far and use up their resources. We have seen great improvements in colony health with the addition of more protein in their diet.



For winter feeding we will usually start giving them protein patties in late January/ early February when the queen begins actively laying again. We will also feed with fondant patties that we make, composed of sugar, water, our honey and Honey B Healthy^{®1}. We will also be mixing in this year Vitamin B Healthy[®] from the makers of Honey B Healthy[®]. If the colony has adequate stores and doesn't need it, they won't take it in if it's on there. If they have enough pollen they will leave the protein patties alone but just eat the fondant patties if they run low on honey. Or vice versa.

We usually do not put feed on colonies until they have moved up into the top box and are close to running out of their stores. We do this because we do not want them to ignore their stores that they have in the bottom boxes. We want them to naturally progress from the bottom of the hive to the top, not stay at the top and ignore their winter stores.

We will monitor our hives and pop tops in December to see how they are doing with just a quick peek in. You will be able to see if there are bees at the top by looking through the hole in the inner cover. We will also tap on the hives and listen to whereabouts they are. If they sound like they are at the very top box and we can't see them at the inner cover, we will pop the inner cover up quick to see. If the cluster is at the top then we will put patties on them so that they do not starve to death.

¹ Adds Kim: "We have our own fondant recipe on our website that is easy and the bees just love it. It has step by step pictures that I took also with directions."

Our philosophy is that if our bees need some help getting through the winter, you should feed them as naturally as possible. I would rather give them protein, honey or a fondant patty to make it through until spring rather than letting them die. The bees have enough problems, we don't need to purposely let them die just because we think they need to toughen up or die. The only time we feed is when the bees need it and we never feed with high fructose corn syrup—only the ingredients we mentioned before and natural ingredients. And in the springtime, the bees just explode from the hives and do great the rest of the season. And they are healthy bees, not sick bees, which is what we want.

“Our philosophy is that if our bees need some help getting through the winter, you should feed them as naturally as possible. I would rather give them protein, honey or a fondant patty to make it through till spring rather than letting them die.”

Do You Wrap the Hives? What About Mouse Guards?

Many people in New York will wrap their hives with tar paper for the winter, especially if they are in a wind-prone area. Where our hives are located, we do not need to wrap them as the trees act as a windbreaker for them as we are in a knoll on the base of a hill. Our yards are pretty protected.

Beekeepers in our area have become quite inventive with what they use to keep their hives protected. Some beekeepers will put up snow fences behind their hives to protect them from the wind. Others have used black garbage bags that they have filled with leaves and put those around the hive, and ratchet strap or tie them around as a wind break/insulator. Some will also use foam

insulation around the hives or insulated hive tops/inner covers. Others will put bales of hay or straw around the hives to act as a windbreak or insulator—but they always are sure to put mouse guards on the entrances.

We will use either the wooden entrance reducers on the smallest opening or metal mouse guards for our hives, as do many others. Those who do not use guards will end up with a lot of mouse damage in the spring to their colonies as many of us are in the country and there are a lot of field mice.

Do You Overwinter Nucs?

If we have nucs to be overwintered in double deeps we will wrap them with tar paper if they are not in a protected spot, or will put them behind taller hives, which act as a wind break. The nucs we have overwintered without wrapping have turned out great and in the spring their population is just exploding and ready to go! We've had great success overwintering nucs.

Do You Add Vent Holes to Your Hives, or Have Other Ventilation Tips?

We use IPM bottom boards—those with mesh screening. We leave them open all year 'round except when we are checking our mite levels and we will put the mite board in then.

“It's not the cold that kills bees, it's moisture in the hive and inadequate ventilation.”

Ventilation is the biggest problem in the winter time in New York. If hives do not get enough ventilation they will develop mold inside the hive. From the heat of the cluster of bees in the winter, moisture will condensate and fall back onto the cluster if there is not sufficient air flow. This will ultimately chill and kill the cluster. We will keep the bottom board with mesh open and will use ventilated inner covers (covers with a hole in them and top entrance notch) and will also prop the top up with popsicle sticks to aid in air circulation. It's not the cold that kills bees, it's moisture in the hive and inadequate ventilation.

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

Bee-Havior

The Stinging Finale

Compiled by Camilla Bee

Thanks to our wonderful readers, who generously shared their insights, experiences good and bad, and advice for dealing with the unfortunate side of beekeeping, the stings.

This is the third and final part in our series. Things that could be gleaned from reading through all of the feedback include:

- *Prevention is key.*
- *You never know what is going to happen. Many stings occurred when the beekeeper had thought everything was fine.*
- *You should always wear a veil.*
- *Hopefully, at some point, you'll be able to laugh about it.*
- *Even the readers who shared some awful stinging stories didn't give up beekeeping.*



Back in early spring I saw a huge swarm hanging in a tree. So as I always have in the past I donned my hood and gathered up my cardboard box and prepared to get some free bees. I haven't worn my bee suit to catch a swarm for years, just my hood. I had a screened bottom deep hive body with some drawn comb standing by. As I approached the swarm they seemed a little agitated as I got closer. When I was just about to shake the limb they were hanging on they attacked me with a vengeance.

I tried not to run, but after the first 10-15 stings on my bare arms I couldn't wait around any longer. I took off for the house some 150' away, swatting at the bees chasing me. My wife had been watching from near the house but she couldn't see the bees on me until I got closer to her. She saw me running and knew something was wrong. She grabbed a towel and was trying to help get the bees off when they started after her. After she got stung a couple times in the face she retreated inside and told me I was on my own.

I believe I have learned a good lesson—wear the suit until you know the kind of bees your dealing with. I got stung over twenty times and while I was scratching a lot for next day or two, I suffered no ill effects.

—C. Evans, Kentucky



The worst sting was in late winter during a slightly warm day when I thought it would be safe to lift the lid and give a quick glance in. I was abruptly greeted by a “warrior princess” with a sting on my ear. That night I went to work, but the next day my ear was twice its normal size. The amount of Benadryl® I was taking prevented me from working the following night. After two days of this my ear went back to normal size and I returned to work. Just FYI your ear is mostly cartilage and if the stinger gets into the cartilage there is not a heavy enough blood supply to this type of tissue to get the toxins out quickly.

—B. Staggs, Missouri



Jeremy Barnes and one of his larger hives. Jeremy explained "You can see that there are two colonies each with their own entrance, two queens separated by queen excluders and a deep with honey. I have found that this combination is particularly effective in terms of honey production." All photos courtesy of J. Barnes.

Jeremy Barnes of Meadowsong Apiary, "where the Queen is strong, the drones are good looking and the workers are above average" shared that "for the most part I do not wear protective clothing working my hives, mainly because I can see so much more clearly without a veil. But I do have a bee suit close at hand and put it on at the first signs of trouble, often detected by a change of tone in the noise coming from the hive.

Earlier this year we had a major wind storm and one of my larger hives (7 supers) blew over and was lying upside down with the bees exposed to the wind and rain. They were not happy! and I knew I need to get them right-side-up asap.

I dressed in full protective gear, including leather gloves. I did not get stung at all but when I took my gloves off (pictures below) I removed the stings with a pair of tweezers and counted them, more for my own amusement than anything else, and put them in a plastic container. 525 in all!"



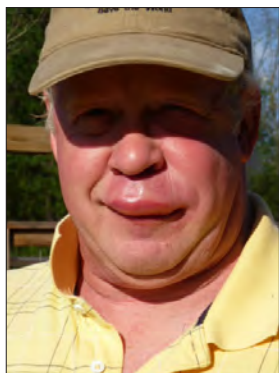
I get 50 to 75 stings a year. I wear a jacket and veil, usually I wear shorts and do not use gloves. The most painful sting is on the neck or face which is rare. The rest ignore as the pain is brief.

[The stings] haven't made me any smarter as I keep going back for more (stings). I have around 50 hives and am sure I have many more love stings to come. I do go into the yard in sometimes less than perfect weather if I have something to do that day, so I do cause them to be a bit temperamental at times. I have this effect on my girls, ask my wife and daughter.

—Ken P.



Iris, my wife was off to a neighbor's very strong hive (with permission) to borrow a frame for an observation hive to take to a bee talk. Running late, she didn't smoke, got into the hive but found the middle bodies too heavy to lift.



Hurrying home to get some lifting assistance, she left the hive unassembled. Throwing on my suit in the car during the ½ mile ride back to the now unhappy hive, I made the critical error of zipping my hood before zipping the overall front. In short order, I got her demo frame and reassembled the hive, but in even shorter order, the angry ladies found the dime-sized hole under my chin between the suit's two zippers and made their way into my hood. I counted seven stings while carrying the observation frame to the car.

Iris went to her talk, I drank my dose of Benadryl® and as a precaution sat with a bag of frozen peas on my face while the neighbors monitored me for any further sting reaction. Good news—I had a nice visit with friends while Iris did her talk, but it was not a pretty sight.

—David D.

Thanks David, for sharing. Pictures are worth a thousand words of reminding us to suit properly.

I have been keeping bees since about 1988 or so. Initially I averaged a couple dozen stings a year as I figured out how to work with them and be gentle. One season was a little skewed...

I received a frantic call from the local county fair planning people one August night. The county fair was opening that weekend and they had discovered that there was a beehive (it's always a beehive, even when it's a hornet nest).

Anyway, the alleged beehive was high up in a barn in the middle of the field where they would be parking cars. The next day I grabbed my equipment, suit, hive box and a can of wasp and hornet killer in case it wasn't honeybees (as was usually the case.)

It was a rather large honeybee colony up in the rafters. I grabbed an extension ladder and started up. If I remember correctly, I just donned gloves and a veil, not bothering with a full suit (mistake). Twenty feet up in the air, when the bees get aggravated and start stinging, there is not much you can do.

I kept calm, tried to grab as much comb and bees as I could and put them in the pillowcase I had with me. They were

"I knew I was experiencing a reaction and I did not want to acknowledge or admit it. I love bees!"

all over my neck and back. I got a good colony out of that (plus free fair admission) but when all was said and done I had almost 30 stings. Didn't bother me too much, I actually felt rather euphoric and happy. I have since learned that a moderately high level of stings can bring on a systemic (whole body) effect that includes euphoria. Oh well.

Anyway, sorry to digress, but that is not the story I was going to write about: About four years ago I went to check my hives. I think I got stung twice, on the arm. I had gotten to where I seldom use protection (except a veil—after I got stung in the eye back in '97, but that's another story). I feel more comfortable with minimal protection and also am better able to be gentle with the bees. I closed up the hive and went down to the back porch to enjoy a cold drink.

I sat down, picked out the stingers and got ready to relax for a few minutes while the smoker died out. The sting areas started to swell. After about ten minutes my whole arm was red. I started feeling hot. I went inside to look in the mirror and sure enough my face and neck were red and very swollen (remember I was stung in the arm.) One of the signs of an allergic reaction is having responses more than a few inches from the sting site.

I went back outside and noticed that my palms were also swollen and red. Worse, they itched something fierce. I was feeling a bit alarmed (mild panic is also part of an allergic reaction) and was annoyed. I knew I was experiencing a reaction and I did not want to acknowledge or admit it. I love bees!

Anyway, now about 20 minutes after the stings I started coughing. It was like something was stuck in my throat, and again I recognized it as a reaction. I was very careful to ensure I had no trouble breathing—being ready to ask my wife for help. After about ten minutes the coughing subsided, and the swelling started to go down too. I realized I had a rather close call with minor anaphylaxis. After about an hour or so everything had pretty much subsided. The doctor I went to the next day confirmed that it was anaphylaxis and recommended that I stop keeping bees and see an allergist.

After some tests they determined I had a mild allergy to honeybees and also to bald faced hornets. I have been on 'sting or immunotherapy' since then. I have been stung a half dozen times since then and have had everything from a minor reaction to none at all. I keep an EpiPen® around but hope never to use it. I still keep bees, but now I use a full suit when I work them.

Discussions with my allergist (who is great) have revealed that many beekeepers develop this type of allergy after a number of years. Evidently, when I was young and stupid, I got stung a lot and built up a lot of antibodies in my blood to bee venom. Now that I am old, more experienced (but still stupid), I get stung less. In these cases your body can build up a lot of antibodies to the proteins in bee venom, and when you don't maintain the high sting rate things can go out of kilter and you can react to the antibodies and develop allergies to future stings. (I am not a doctor—just my layman's interpretation.) My doctor says he has a lot of patients who are (still) beekeepers and have the same allergies that I have.

—Daniel S.

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

Beek Hint

Earlier this year, we asked readers about their stinging experiences, including what worked for them if they got stung.

Many respondees said the same thing—it's best to not get stung. As Burton B. said "If you pop the top and smell the ripe banana smell of alarm pheromone or bees are bouncing off your veil like crazy close it up and come back another day."

Many respondees then went ahead with "but when it happens ..." because it seems no matter how cautious we might think we are, stings happen. Here are some of the "solutions" we collected:

- Ice
- Cortisone
- Prednisone
- Lidocaine
- Benadryl®
- A penny pressed on the sting
- Aloe
- Charcoal paste. "You can buy charcoal capsules from a health food store. Just wet the site with cool water and sprinkle a little charcoal from a broken capsule works like a charm," shared R. L. from Tennessee
- A paste made of water and meat tenderizer
- A paste made of baking soda and water
- An onion—rubbing its juice on the sting stops the pain and swelling also if applied within a few minutes
- Toothpaste, deodorant and garlic were also suggested, and used as the onion is used
- Honey. Notes Jeff H. from Louisiana, "One of the BEST sting killers I have found is honey from the hive. When stung and it is sensitive (hurts a lot!) I touch my hive tool into some honeycomb and dab it onto the sting (after removing the stinger). Quick relief!"
- Bleach pen

You may want to consider some of those possible remedies; what works for some folks though probably won't work for others. Unfortunately, there are lots of us who have the same experience Carter D., described of "Nothing I have found reduces the several days of swelling I experience with single stings."



THIS bee did not sting.
Photo courtesy of
Charlotte Hubbard.



Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Making Beeswax Candles

Submitted by Mary K. Franklin, Kelley employee

With the holidays just around the corner, why not consider giving a unique gift, hand-rolled beeswax candles? It's easy and a great way for children to learn that a handmade gift is special—from your hands and your heart. I have done these for years and find it is a fun project for myself, my children, and now my grandchildren Great for Girl Scouts, Sunday School and Bible School, or whenever I just want to give a special little gift.



All images by Christine on her blog, [Slow Living Essentials](#).

For Each Pair of 8" x 7/8" Candles, You Need:

- One 8 x 16-inch beeswax sheet (brood thickness, Kelley Catalog # 127).
- One 10-inch length braided candle wicking (Kelley Catalog # 401 Wicking).
- Waxed paper or other protective covering for your work surface.
- Cutting tool. Scissors get sticky from the wax. I use a pizza cutter rubbed with olive oil.
- Hair dryer (optional).

Directions:

1. Cut the beeswax sheet into two 8-inch squares.
2. Use a hair dryer to slightly soften the wax. Use the low setting; avoid over-softening the wax.



3. Place the wick flush with the end of the beeswax, centered so that there is equal overhang on both sides. 1 inch of wick should extend beyond each side. Fold the edge of the beeswax over itself just enough to cover the wick, and press down firmly to completely enclose the wick.



4. Roll up the wax, taking care to keep the edges even. It can be a little tricky to get started and to keep the roll tight around the wick; to get a tighter roll, insert a piece of waxed paper between your fingers and the wax. As you roll the wax, move the waxed paper along so it doesn't get caught up in the roll. This not only gives a tighter roll, but it also prevents the heat of your hands from making the wax too soft and therefore difficult to work with. On the last roll, be sure not to press too hard. You don't want to mar or flatten the beautiful bee cell design.

5. When the candle is completely rolled, press the edge of the wax into the candle to seal it, softening with a hair dryer if necessary. Remember, keep that bee cell design unblemished.



6. Choose which end of the candle looks most attractive—this will be the top of the candle. Trim the extra wicking from the bottom, and lightly “pinch” it all the way around to give a finished look and allow it to fit better in the candle holder.
7. Repeat for the second square.
8. To prime the wicks, take small pieces of wax sheet and press them around the wicks.
9. Trim the wicks to ¼ inch and the candles are ready to light.
10. A bit of ribbon or raffia and a sprig of greenery add a nice holiday touch.

Note: Both the beeswax and wicking can be purchased from Walter T. Kelley Company.

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

Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER 2013

Wisconsin Honey Producers Fall Meeting
October 31-November 3
Racine Marriott, Racine, WI
www.wihoney.org/

Iowa State Beekeepers Fall Meeting
November 1-2
Best Western Regency Inn, Marshalltown, IA
abuzzaboutbees.com/buzzingblog/?p=96

Kentucky State Beekeepers Association Fall Meeting
November 2
First Baptist Church, Somerset, KY
www.ksabeekeeping.org/

Ohio State Beekeepers Association
November 2
Tolles Career Center, Plain City OH
Kelley's will not be attending this event.
www.ohiostatebeekeepers.org/event/osba-fall-conference-2013/

Walter T. Kelley's Beekeeping 101 Class
November 2
Clarkson, KY
Class size limited to 50. Register now at:
www.kelleybees.com/articles/41/Walter-T.-Kelley-s-Beekeeping-101-Class

Georgia Beekeepers Association SOWEGA Welsh Honey Show
November 3
Exchange Club Fair in Albany, GA
Kelley's will not be attending this event.
sowegabeekeepers.org

Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Convention
November 7-10
Southfork Hotel in Plano, TX
Kelley's will not be attending this event.
texasbeekeepers.org/events/

Colorado State Beekeepers Association Winter Meeting
November 8
Kirk Hall at the Douglas County Fairgrounds
Kelley's will not be attending this event.
coloradobeekeepers.org/wintermeeting/

Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Fall Meeting
November 8-9
Best Western Inn, Lewisburg, PA
www.pastatebeekeepers.org/fallmeeting.htm

ILSBA Annual Meeting
November 9
Illinois Dept. of Agriculture State Fair Grounds, Springfield, IL
www.ilsba.com/

Empire State Honey Producers Association, Inc. Fall Meeting
November 15-16
Comfort Inn and Suites, Syracuse, NY
Kelley's will not be attending this event.
www.eshpa.org/index.php

Mississippi State Beekeepers Association Annual Convention
November 15-16
Clarion Inn and Summit Center, Tupelo, MS
www.beekeepers-association.org/mshoneybee/

Massachusetts Beekeepers Association Fall Bee Meeting
November 16
Red Apple Farm, Phillipston, MA
www.massbee.org/

California State Beekeepers Association Annual Convention
November 19-21
Harrah's/Harveys Tahoe, Stateline, NV
Kelley's will not be attending this event.
www.californiastatebeekeepers.com/events.html

Connecticut Beekeepers Association Southern New England Beekeepers Assembly
November 23
Groton Inn and Suites, Groton, CT
Kelley's will not be attending this event.
www.sneba.com/

DECEMBER 2013

The Louisiana Beekeepers Association Annual Convention
December 6-7
Clarion Inn, Covington, LA
www.labeekeepers.org/

JANUARY 2014

American Beekeeping Federation 2014 North American Beekeeping Conference and Tradeshow
January 7-11
Baton Rouge River Center, Baton Rouge, LA
www.abfnet.org/

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.

Beekeeping in the Good Old Days, and These Days

By Dana Stahlman, Master Beekeeper, Author, and retired OSBA President

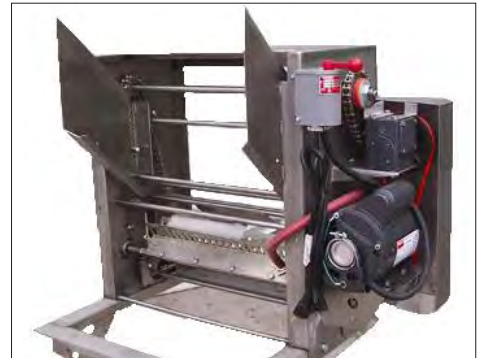
Editor's Note: *One of my favorite things about bees is the people you meet, especially the older beekeepers who can talk about the glory days when there were broad fence rows of forage, and before there were Varroa and pesticides practically everywhere. I recently caught up with Dana Stahlman, who has decades of beekeeping insights. His reflections on beekeeping "in the day", nowadays, and a few on life in general are thought-provoking.*

A friend prodded me into looking back at my early memories of beekeeping in Paulding County, Ohio. Recalling one event in particular, I began to realize that bees and I haven't changed so much as the passage of time from one era to another.

The event I recalled was a trip moving bees from Paulding County to an area along the Ohio River in southern Ohio. I must have been 14 or 15 years old at the time—not yet old enough to drive. The task was to pick up a number of hives—one at a time—and with hand labor and the help of a Kelley Hive Loader to get them up on the bed of the truck. Flashbacks like this do strange things to the memory; I can still hear and smell that truck and recall the excitement of sleeping under it until daylight when the bees could be unloaded.

It was hard work and I was not invited to go along for the ride—I was expected to help load and unload the hives. Commands were simple: Get your *** (behind) over here! Smoke the entrance (expletive)! There was no time for chit-chat.

The job was simple as well. Load the bees as the sun was going down, drive three or four hours to the new bee yard, get out of the truck and unroll the sleeping bag, and as soon as the sun started to show on the distant side of the Ohio River—unload the bees and head for home. We even carried our food with us. It was somewhat like a camp out except we had a destination and a trip home just as quickly as was possible.



Equipment such as this Silver Queen Uncapper, Catalog # 323, would have made beekeeping a bit easier. It uncaps 9 frames per minute, and accommodates 40 frames at a time.



Interesting that good queens were a problem "back then" as well. This queen appears to be working hard. Do you spot her? Photo courtesy of Charlotte Hubbard.

Then I started thinking about the roads. In the 1950s I had no idea of what an interstate highway was. Our route was down State Rt. 127 thru every town, stop light and what traffic was on the road at that time of night, and a firm belief that if everything was tied down to the truck as it should be, we would get the bees unloaded and get back home by noon. The speed limit was 50 miles an hour and if we could make 45 miles in an hour we were doing well. I might add that shifting gears required double clutching and there was no power steering.

The bees were moved to goldenrod and aster areas for the final trip to Georgia in November. Hopefully they would get a good fall crop because the bees were stripped down prior to moving. Of course, it was great to help because I was excused from school to do farm work, fairly common in that time.

There were problems as I recall:

Getting good queens was an issue believe it or not!

Swarming was a big issue. It was a common practice to drive into the bee yard and find a swarm hanging from shrubs or trees all the time. I wasn't old enough to understand the economic consequences

of a swarm but knew well enough that a swarm cost us a super of honey. Bees were a livelihood for many beekeepers and beekeepers did not do much pollination work—at least my family did not rely on pollination fees. It was all about honey production.

If we had a drone laying worker hive, it was taken apart and supers from that hive were placed on top of other hives to get filled with honey. Not much time was spent working with weak hives: my dad told me that he did not want welfare hives! Today I see a lot of welfare hives! Splitting was done in the spring and when the honey flow was under way, all effort went into making sure the bees were kept strong. A weak hive during June—usually a failing queen—was needed for honey supers and used that way. It seems as if that was one of the problems—not enough supers for the bees to store honey.

Need supers? Kelley's carries medium, shallow, commercial grade and cypress supers.



Medium or IL Super, Catalog # 38A



Shallow Super, Catalog # 27A

Flash forward to today—I was reading the U. S. Report *National Stakeholders Conference on Honey Bee Health* October 15-17, 2012 which was attended by the Who's Who in apiculture and wondered what happened to the good old days. Yes things have sure changed. My grandson is hard to understand. He wants to get paid for everything he does! He spends hours at night on his phone writing messages to friends with words like LOL and u. Honey is selling for more than \$2.00 a pound and to think that not too many years ago, I was selling it for a government support price of \$.53 a pound, and packages of bees for \$20.00 and queens for \$4.00; gas was \$.78 cents a gallon. But I did not have to deal with chemicals being put into my hives—some are complaining about chemicals and here we are—I just took a trip to Springfield and passed a big milking operation with big tanker trucks waiting to pick up the milk. Not a cow or pasture in sight (just big air-conditioned red barns). Those cows have seen quite a change from the good old days of at least an acre per cow! And some are worrying about the antibiotics being pumped into cows that end up in our milk supply.

Then the thought hit me: Beekeepers really do have something to worry about as well. Our honeybees produce honey which is regarded as being pure. So far honey has flown under people's radar as far as pure is concerned. I see beekeepers using almost everything in their arsenal to help honey bees survive. This includes antibiotics as well as chemicals. It is now possible to subject the honey produced to a chemical examination and any publicity pointing out that some honey is contaminated with chemicals or antibiotics would destroy the idea of pure honey.

The finger pointing is going on all around us—blame placed on chemicals, GMOs, etc. What happens when someone points out that beekeepers are doing the same thing farmers are doing—using chemicals and antibiotics?

Honeyfest 2013—One to Remember!



The Walter T. Kelley float, winner of the Grand Champion Float Award

Clarkson, KY—home of Kentucky's official honey festival celebrated its 19th year in a week long celebration that culminated with a parade, concerts and 100+ vendor booths selling honey, food, and all things honey bee on September 28th. This year Kelley's went all out to support the community that has supported it for so long. Following are a few of the highlights:

- Clarkson Mayor Bonnie Henderson accepted a \$5,000 donation from Jenny "Ev" Everett of the Walter T. Kelley Company. Everett said, "Mr. Kelley built this great company, but was best known for investing in the community and the people around him. As a company, we are returning to the core philosophy of investing in community and people. We are proud to make the donation of \$5,000 to the Clarkson Community Center in support of this mission."
- We had over 60 employees and family members participate in the Honeyfest parade, either through the construction of the WTK parade float, making bee costumes or throwing candy and beads from the float.

- Walter T. Kelley's Honeyfest Parade float won the following awards in 2013:
 - 1st Place Business
 - 1st Place Honey Bee Theme
 - 1st Place Original Bee Theme
 - Grand Champion determined by the Honeyfest Committee
- Kelley's once again had a booth where we rolled beeswax candles, sold honey, honey candy, t-shirts, books and other honey related products.
- Our President, Ev, ran in the 5k mid-week, coming in 1st for all female age groups. Next year's goal—beat the 3 guys that came in ahead of her this year.

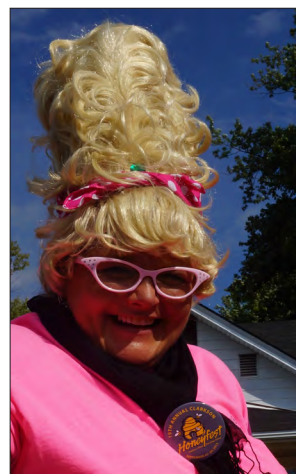
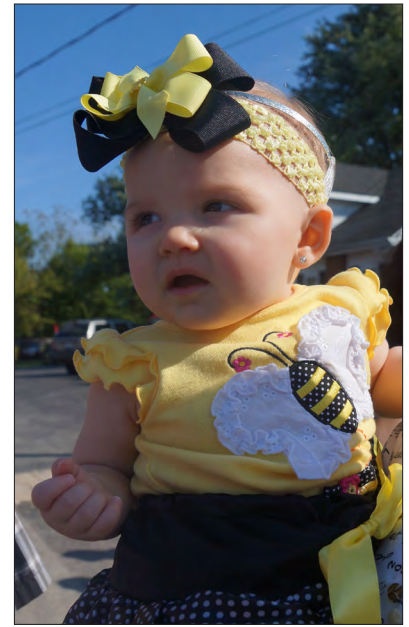
Huge thanks to all our employees of Walter T. Kelley and their family members that made the 2013 Honeyfest a special one for Walter T. Kelley and the city of Clarkson.



Views of the WTK float. And, in case you didn't recognize her, that's WTK's Maxine Edwards, and member of the Honeyfest Committee, far right.



We love how amongst the superheroes is a honeybee.



The beehive hairdo is fabulous for any occasion.



Kiev, Ukraine, Apimondia 2013

By Anne Marie Fauvel, Grand Valley State University

Like scout bees, we set out to explore a new bee land far from the comfort of our local flower patch. We oriented with a variety of bee aficionados from around the world, huddled as a small swarm in the “bee” bus and set out to discover Ukraine before attending the 43rd Apimondia.



A bee car, photo courtesy of M.K.

We were welcomed into the hives of local beekeepers, which in general run small scale operations. Commercial operations average 500 hives in Ukraine, these family run businesses were colorful and spotless with modern feeding/harvesting techniques. The traditional single layer 15-16 deep frame hives are still in use, while Langstroth hives seem to slowly be gaining in popularity.



Photos courtesy of the author.



The apitherapy beds.

We foraged marvelous apitherapy beds where an individual is healed by sleeping with/on beehives. Upon one luscious whiff of the hive scent and the lulling buzzing sound of the bees, we instantly planned backyard installations for next year. The Agricultural University was scholastic yet revealing in the socio-economic agricultural ways of Ukraine. An eco-settlement was enlightening.

Our “Bee Doctor” rolled out the royal carpet to share the tastes and techniques of procuring drone milk and royal jelly, which he ships around the world.



Gifts from the hive.

We were greeted like queens with the traditional gift of bread and salt by enthusiastic, traditionally dressed children at a K-12 school. For more than 20 years, school children have enrolled in an integrated mandatory beekeeping program. Many of the children graduates are now beekeepers.

And finally, a small city beekeeping supply store gifted us honey bears while we bought their bargain colorful veils and suits.

We were amazed by the innovative and integrative nature of beekeepers throughout Ukraine. We were also struck by the amount and variety of bee products produced and used both locally and worldwide. The Ukraine ranks fifth in the world in honey exports. Especially, we were touched by the endearing Ukrainian beekeepers we met on our tour.

On to Apimondia, the international bee congress and its scientific program.

Back in Kiev, our small swarm was suddenly combined with a much stronger colony. The organizers of Apimondia forgot to remove the entrance reducer as 8,000 delegates and exhibit hall participants bearded at the registration desk. Like diligent little bees, foregoing any personal space, festooning and at times even levitating with the crowd, we waited between 4

and 6 hours, many of us in the rain, to gain our registration badge. It was indeed a scary nightmare, but we must admit that the rest of the congress experience was successfully pollinated by this memorable queue. Pressed extremely close together for hours, we quickly bonded with people from all over the world, exchanged bee stories and areas of interest and passion.



Five hours after registration opened, the line is still two hours long. Photo courtesy of M.K.

Once in, we of course divided the labor. There were seven themes:

- Apitherapy
- Bee Biology
- Bee Health
- Beekeeping Economy
- Pollination and Bee Flora
- Beekeeping for Rural Development
- Beekeeping Technology and Quality



Each of us went out to survey the different rooms and presentations, and brought back the valuable food for thought. For the next four days, the information flowed like the nectar on a sunny summer day.

Colony losses and *varroa destructor* were hot topics and coveted by many, with the exception of new friends from Colombia and South Africa dealing with *scutellata* and *capensis* bees respectively who have no such problems. These issues are felt almost worldwide although the survey numbers are significantly higher in the United States. The Swiss documentary *More Than Honey*, directed by Markus Imhoof, was showcased on the first day following the opening ceremonies. The main message strongly hinted at the intensive beekeeping practices in America as a cause of the demise of our bees.

Tom Seeley's keynote presentation forced us to look at honey bees surviving well in the wild and reconsider our current approaches to beekeeping. His conclusions might advise us to think about smaller colonies, spread further apart and allowed to swarm regularly. And we might want to keep them 30 feet high, if only we can figure out a practical way.



Another keynote presentation by Koos Biesmeijer from the Netherlands approached pollination as a complex interaction system. He concluded that a sustainable pollination system requires integrated and holistic data collection and modeling to assess where pollination deficit will occur, involving managed and wild pollinators and landscapes. We were fairly sure vast monoculture areas don't fit his area of study.



There were also many talks about selection, the variety of crops and GMOs in the environment, much about pollen and other bee products, as well as a variety of pesticide residues in the hive, honey adulterations and hive monitoring.

Apimondia 2013 covered just about everything bee. The experience was fascinating and overwhelming all at the same time.

Now back in the nest, we will revisit and digest this new found knowledge, stored and capped to sustain us through the cold winter days while we long for the eternal hopes of the new season to come.

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

Some of the beautiful hives displayed at Apimondia, 2013.
Photos courtesy of M.K.

A-Bee-Cs

Winning Smoker Tips

By Camilla Bee, Editor

New-bees may be close to wrapping up 2013's in-hive activities. If you fell in love with this fascinating insect, you're probably already feeling symptoms of bee withdrawal.

One bee-related thing you can do to help abate those painful withdrawal symptoms is to practice preparing your smoker such that it doesn't stop 30 seconds into working that power hive, and generates gentle smoke.

An activity we're seeing at more and more bee meetings and club outings is a smoker contest. (See side bar on next page.) We interviewed the winner of the Michigan's Beekeepers' Association Summer Picnic smoker competition, Chuck Bauer¹. While the contest was judged on smoke produced, not duration, Chuck said his approach has yielded smoke for as long as 2.5 hours.

Materials Needed

- Cedar chips (Chuck uses the same cedar chips he used as a moisture blanket for overwintering hives).
- Dried sumac "cherries" (the often-red, flower-like portion of sumac). Chuck picks stag horn sumac in March or April on a nice, sunny early spring day. By then the sumac has been dried by the winter winds.
- Phone book. Not the one you use when you need a furnace repair person. And, as phone books may soon be a thing of the past, you may want to stockpile them to use both for your smoker, and to some day sell as an antique.
- Smoker.
- Your preferred lighting mechanism (blow torch, matches, lighter, etc.).



Example of sumac "cherries". Photo courtesy of Chuck Bauer.



One of the smoker products Kelley's offers.



Contestant Doug Lindhout uses a small blow torch. Photo courtesy of Charlotte Hubbard.

¹ Chuck won bragging rights and a smoker. "Smokers," he notes, "are like hive tools. You can never have enough of them."

Example Smoker Contest Rules

Each contestant will have five minutes to light their smoker.

Each contestant then puffs their smoker.

The judges stand back and watch all smokers, as well as walk by to judge them individually.

The winner is whichever smoker is judged to discharge the most smoke.



Yes, just your basic phone book. This and following photos courtesy of Chuck Bauer.



Adding cedar chips.



Smoke! And plenty of it, for a long time.

Directions

1. Ensure your smoker is relatively clean of any soot build-up.
2. As always, make sure it is safe to light your smoker—nothing flammable dangling, good ventilation, no kids running by, etc.
3. Crumple two pages from the phone book, light them, and quickly place in the bottom of the smoker.
4. Add just enough cedar chips to cover the paper.
5. Puff the smoker gently to ensure flame, while adding more chips.
6. When there's a good burn going, fill up the smoker with a combination of sumac and cedar chips. Notes Chuck, "The sumac produces a nice sweet smoke, the cedar chips are said to irritate those nasty mites that we beekeepers all hate." Approximately 2-3 inches of cedar chips/sumac will usually generate enough smoke to work 2-3 hives (unless of course you're conversing with every bee you meet).
7. Smack the smoker on the ground lightly just a couple of times to pack the fuel. If the fuel is packed too tightly, the smoker will go out. As you work the bees, give the smoker a "smack" now and then.
8. Puff the bellows gently to fan the flame as needed.
9. When the smoker is not being held, face the bellows into the wind to pull fresh air through it to keep it going.

Smoker Champion Chuck also shared these tips:

- If you want to put the smoker out, a piece of duct tape or cork plug will put the fire out.
- If you put the smoker on the tailgate of your pickup truck, it produces a perfect circle; it also makes a nice melted circle in the carpet in the back of your minivan too.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

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 recently purchased some pollen patties from you folks. I won't need them for a few months, should I freeze them?

A. Phone-answering beekeeper Stacy Hill at Kelley's recommends storing them in the freezer, noting, "They should hold up nicely until spring."



Pollen Patties, Catalog # 720

Q. Will you be running the usual free shipping in November? —David, Arkansas

A. Earl King, Kelley's salesperson at the Arkansas Beekeepers Association Fall Meeting, shared that it will be offered as usual Thanksgiving week. Check www.kelleybees.com for details.

Q. I would like to know if cedar or redwood is harmful to bees? I am making a winter feeder for this season and intend to use the wood. —John O., Connecticut

A. Special salute to Cleo Hogan for his expertise. Cleo answers "No, cedar and redwood are not harmful to bees. I have taken a number of colonies out of cedar trees over the years. Redwood is not native to Kentucky so I have not found bees in them. The only problem with redwood is, it will split if holes are not pre-drilled. Also, redwood is very expensive.

Cedar is excellent for bottom boards, deep supers, and not so good for honey supers due to the odor of cedar transferring to your honey. This can be mitigated by using very seasoned cedar. One advantage of cedar is it is very weather resistant even if not painted.

All studies I have seen say there is NO benefit from cedar as far as keeping out moths, small hive beetles, etc. While cedar in closets, chests, etc. will repel some insects, (and bees are insects), it will not repel bees, and, once bees are living in a cedar hive the propolis they coat the hive with will no longer repel insects either. But, cedar makes beautiful hives when finished natural. Cedar is just too expensive except for show hives. Also in working cedar lumber, it is much more brittle than pine, or poplar.

Unless you want a show hive, sell your cedar/redwood lumber on Craig's List, and buy more pine or poplar."

Q. The inner cover is stamped "this side up" but some beekeepers are telling me to flip it for the winter. What's the deal? —Dusty, Indiana

A. If the inner cover has a shallow side (or often a flat side) and a deep side, and if you're not using something else (something absorbent/insulating, for example), flip it such that the deep side is down. That allows bees to crawl over the top of the frames to get to honey if/when the time comes.

If you're using a candy board or adding patties, you'll also need to flip it deep-side-down to make room for them.

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

Sweet as Honey

Have you checked out our new website yet, www.kelleybees.com? We think you'll like the education and videos section, and our focus on beekeepers. We know you'll like the simplified shopping experience to find and order what you need.



A varroa mite at the Apimondia 2013 Exhibition Hall. On one hand, if they were really this size, it'd be easier to see if the colony had an infestation. On the other hand, if they were really this size, there'd probably be way fewer beekeepers! Photo courtesy of M.K.

Looking for a place to get your honey bee questions answered live? A reader recommended *Hive Talk*, with David Burns and Jon Zawislak, EAS certified beekeepers, who take questions and discuss bees in a weekly call-in talk show format. Back episodes and more information are available at <http://www.talkshoe.com/tc/129777>.

Reader M. B. shared this captivating video of honey bee mating:

<http://m.popsoci.com/science/article/2013-09/follow-queen-bee-her-maiden-mating-flight?dom=tw&src=SOC>

Beekeeping has its own unique vocabulary, and the word bee lends itself to fun like we've had with this newsletter (Bee-yond, Bee-hind). Some bee folks in Arkansas shared another term—nobee. It's what they call folks who want to keep bees but don't yet have them.

As a reminder, certain dates for package bees sell out quickly. Order early to get your preferred date, starting in December.

Dronings from a Queen Bee

Knock Knock, Anyone Home?

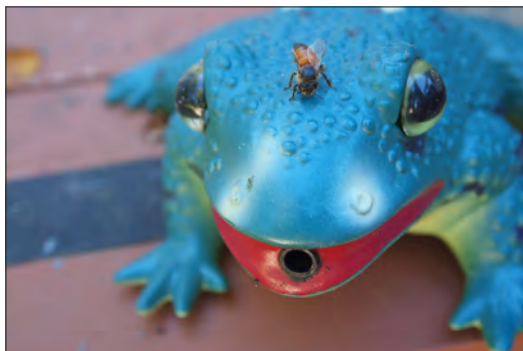
By Charlotte Hubbard, www.hubbardhive.com

The requirements for a perfect Midwest fall weekend were met—low humidity, brilliant sunny day with cool nights for sleeping with the windows open, and a season of promise still ahead for we Michigan football fans. Other than blocking off critical hours to watch the game, my only weekend plans were to catch up while enjoying early September’s last bit of summer.

And then, the phone call from Kris, who had honeybees living above her attic. They’d been ceiling-mates for many years, but now they were becoming overly friendly¹, and Kris’ sister, who was extremely allergic,



The honeybees’ front door, located above the oft-used humans’ side door.



Honeybees were just standing around, on this frog, on the picnic table, on the sidewalk, etc.

feared entering the home because earlier in the summer the bees had been quite aggressive². A few weeks prior there had even been honey dripping³ from the crack in the ancient soffit down upon the doorway to the home, attracting even more stinging insects. Could I help?

Hubby and I took a Friday evening drive to the century-old farmhouse a half hour away. In the setting sun the hive activity was obvious, the golden rays reflecting off of translucent wings as hundreds of insects dipped in and out of the hole.

The hole was “up there”, which is what you say to the homeowner when you really want to say, “Are you nuts? Who even has a ladder that long? And you want us to stand on it to relocate thousands of stinging insects?”

I’m the odd person who loves heights, and also loves bees. There’s not a whole lot of us in that double subset. But even to me this particular combination was intimidating.

While we stood there gazing, a honeybee landed on me. This happens to me a half dozen times a year. I think honeybees sense I’m their friend and are just as curious about us as we are about them.

This amber girl strolled around my knee for a bit, and then transferred onto my hand where I could better examine her, and began licking my watchband. I figured it held residual sugar from working my bees (typically accidentally spraying myself and everything else around me when I do), but didn’t think much more about it.⁴

We began noticing other honeybees just hanging around. They could fly—thus likely not a tracheal mite issue—but were reluctant to do so. They seemed somewhat purposeless⁵.

“They know you’re here to help,” suggested Kris hopefully, as she watched the honeybee walk on my arm. “You are going to help, right?”

1 That should’ve been my first hint.

2 And that was a good second hint.

3 Argh, a third hint that flew by.

4 Just another big hint.

5 Hint #5. I’ll make a handy list for us all for future reference.



Even after lots of banging to break up the slate, only about a half dozen bees were only slightly interested.



Heights, stinging insects and power tools—the ingredients for a 911 call.



Comb damaged by wax moth, with plenty more of the invasive insects being raised.



Flies joined the wax moth in destruction. In the foreground is a wax worm probably wondering what happened to its cozy home.

Hubby and I looked at each other, and sighed. We could always record the game. The only thing that could improve a perfect late summer weekend would be relocating a thriving colony of honeybees. We elected to grab a bite to eat and make a plan.

Kris recommended a local diner that we will still be laughing about when we're in the nursing home. It was done in a hunting theme, with over 30 deer heads staring glassy-eyed at us from one wall alone. As the old joke goes, I sure would like to see the other side of that wall. We gave our order from the camouflage-print menu lying on the camouflage tablecloth to the camo-wearing waitress, and marveled at the booths' camo vinyl, and that they made camo-formica. There might have been more things to marvel at, but we couldn't see them as they were, well, camouflaged.

When it comes to heights I've taken some stupid risks. Luckily, opposites attract, and Hubby said we couldn't do this unless we rented a bucket lift. Going up in a bucket lift has always been on my, um, bucket list, so I was all for that.

That Saturday morning we hauled our just-rented lift across country, along with an extra protective suit so Kris could observe, a hive and extra bodies, smoker, queen cage, empty frames, rubber bands and string, paint spatulas, crowbars, and saws of various kinds.

With safety straps attached to us and then the bucket, up and across and up and across and up we went. "Articulated bucket lift" is on my Christmas list, a must-have for every beekeeper.

We nervously removed the asphalt shingles, expecting to be swarmed by angry bees at any second. The good news was that only a few checked us out, and not with any hostility. The bad news was that under the shingles was a thick slate roof. No wonder they weren't yet upset.

I suspected breaking apart the slate with a crowbar might liven up things. But I was wrong—another sign of something not right.

We removed the slate to find thick planks, from trees that probably grew in the 1800s. Still only a handful of bees watched us, not the hundreds we'd seen about the hive the previous day. Increasingly odd.

We cut through and removed part of the first plank, and quickly spotted the problem: we weren't the first intruders into what had once been a sizable colony.

We searched for a brood nest, evidence of a queen, anything to possibly combine with our own hives or overwinter in a nuc, but there was no hope for carrying on some of these bees' genetics.



Area under roof, halfway through clean-up by humans. It was once an extensive colony.



Underside of one of the removed planks. The invasion was too much for a weakening colony, but what a productive colony it must've been.



Homeowner Kris examines where her house mates once also lived.



Now on my beekeeper wish list—a bucket lift like this, only taller.

Kris, who also always had “ride in a bucket lift” on her bucket list, suited up to see the situation first hand.

We removed all the comb and invasive pests possible, and soaped it all down, which we heard discourages bees from setting up home-sweet-home there in the future. We covered the roof until Kris’ repairman could address it next week, as pre-arranged. A nuc box, containing queen scent and comb from the hive to hopefully attract the homeless, was left overnight on the lower rooftop. We also gave Kris a jar of our honey, thanks for trying to do the right thing for bees, and for the education the experience provided us.

What Might’ve Happened?

Our suspicions are that the once-powerful colony had swarmed earlier that summer, and the new queen never returned from her mating flight. Without a continuing source of workers, the colony grew increasingly weak, and was finally invaded by wax moths (who broke open the honey and thus the leaking of it a few weeks prior along with the earlier aggressive behavior) and robbers—thus the hundreds of insects we observed at our first visit.

As Fate Would Have It

The next day we retrieved the nuc box and the bucket lift. Due to uncanny timing as we pulled into our backyard, we saw one of our hives boiling out the front entrance, and swarm into the overhanging pine. We cackled merrily because this was one swarm that wasn’t getting away—we still had 24 hours before we had to return the rented bucket lift.

Those bees had the last laugh though; the lift didn’t go up far enough.

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

Abandoned or Nearly Abandoned Hive? Some Possible Indicators:

Leaking honey: Often a sign that the hive is weak, or abandoned. Honey won't usually leak from a well-attended hive. In this case, capped stores were likely broken open by wax moths.

Overly friendly bees: Bees robbing a hive, if they meet a defense, may be quite aggressive. Bees robbing an abandoned or nearly defenseless hive may be just hanging around awaiting the right opportunity.

Aggressive bees: When the hive first started to weaken, the defenders likely gave it their all. About anything was a threat, and thus the inflamed behavior Kris had noticed earlier in the summer.

Bees wandering about without a clear sense of purpose: A wizened beekeeper told me he's seen this before in bees who have no hope and nothing to defend, particularly if they're hungry.

Starving bees: Purposeless, home trashed by raiders—old foragers may just be hanging around desperate for any convenient sugar fix.

Slower hive exits and a dip: Foraging bees leave empty and with purpose, robbers leave fully loaded. They tend to climb up the front before taking off, and once airborne, may have a characteristic dip in flight.¹

Lots of insects, not all honeybees: From ground level, this appeared to be a very busy hive. Getting closer revealed the insects were honeybees, wasps, yellow jackets and flies. An abandoned hive has no guard bees and thus a free buffet.

¹ <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-handle-robbing-in-your-beehive.html>