



# Bee Buzz

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

## Introduction to Beekeeping

One Day Virtual Class February 20, 2021 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

This class is a comprehensive introduction to the fascinating and complex life of the honey bee colony and the fundamentals of managing a hive of bees as a beekeeper. The topics covered include: Bee Biology and Colony Behavior, Equipment You Will Need, Your First Hive– Acquiring Bees and Setting up Hive, Opening and Inspecting Your Hive, Pest Management and the Beekeeping Year: Seasonal Management Activities. All members of the SBCA are invited to attend this informative session for free. Please send an email to [stclairbees@gmail.com](mailto:stclairbees@gmail.com) and we will send you an invite to the ZOOM meeting. Attendance is limited.

## Upcoming Membership Meeting.....

Your attendance at the next membership meeting is requested. It will be held via ZOOM on Sunday February 28th, at 7:00 PM. We will be discussing - evaluating overwintered bees and emergency nutrition needs, making a plan for spring time, and preparing equipment for packages, nucs and splits.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

100 years ago	2
New Librarian	2
Meeting Topics	3
Bee Humor	3
Find the Queen	5
Meet the VP	6-7

## PROGRAM DIRECTOR NEEDED

The club is still in need of a Program Director. In order to have educational meetings we need a Program Director to arrange the speakers and topics. The position is a three year term and entails the following duties:

- ◆ Develop a committee of interested members
- ◆ Set up an annual plan of programs with the committee for club meetings which will serve to educate our membership
- ◆ Serve as the contact for outside speakers
- ◆ Provide membership with information about the program for monthly meetings

If you are interested in filling this position please contact President Julie McKinney.



Things haven't  
changed much....



## Beekeeping 100 years ago....

This is from a book published in 1919 called the How To Do Things –The Farm Journal in Philadelphia

### *When Bees are Put Outdoors*

#### March the Beginning of the Bee Calendar

Beekeepers who wintered their bees out-of-doors in hives properly protected, will have little to do with them in March, unless they live in the Southern States. Those who wintered their colonies in special repositories or cellars, however, will find the month of March to be an exceedingly busy one: for, generally speaking, March is the time to put the bees out-of-doors. Some progressive beekeepers, in places where the temperature during the winter gets below zero, wait until the pussy-willows are in bloom before setting colonies out.

#### Wrapping the Hives

In taking the colonies out of their winter quarters it is best to give them some added protection in the form of telescope cases, after first wrapping the hives with old newspapers. Where cases are not at hand, the hives can be wrapped with old papers and the whole then wrapped with a waterproof paper, tied in place, leaving the hive entrance open for air, etc.

#### Spring Dwindling

Reports from many beekeepers tell me that spring dwindling is one of their greatest handicaps, that the colonies become so weak that they are not strong enough to secure much surplus from the early flows, that it takes practically all spring and summer for the bees to recover from spring dwindling, and that they become strong only in time for the late flow from buckwheat, goldenrod, and aster.

I have in mind one beekeeper in New York State with colonies running into the hundreds, whose whole surplus is practically from buckwheat. He has told me on several occasions that the reason he secures so little from the clover and basswood is because of spring dwindling, which so reduces the number of bees in each colony that it takes the colonies all summer to build up. The added protection given the colonies when placed outdoors will in a large measure overcome the spring dwindling.

## 2021 Club Meetings - All meetings are on ZOOM for now and start at 7:00PM

Feb 20—Beginners Beekeeper Class

Feb 28—Topics: Colony Evaluation, Read up on Splits, Requeening, Queen Rearing, and Nutrition. Equipment prep.

Mar 26 Topics: April Tasks, when to put on supers and preparing for Swarms. What to look for in a healthy colony? When do you need to split?

Apr 30—Topics: Swarm capture and care, Supers. Foundations used by members and why. So you want to be a mentor, now what?

May 28—Topics: Brood breaks What happens to the hived colony after the swarm occurs.

Jun 25—Topics: Prepping for the DARTH, Hive robbing, To feed or Not to Feed? Mite control. Honey extractions and bottling

July 30—Club Meeting Topic: Winter prep starts now! Small hive beetle control

Aug 27—Club Meeting Topic : The Next Six Months.

Sep 24—Club Meeting Topic: Honey Bee Biology—different breeds of Honey Bees and their traits

Oct 29 Topic: Starting NUCS

Nov 26—Topic” Year end wrap up. What topics do you want covered next year?

## A Little Bee Humor

Q: Who is the bees favorite singer?

A: Sting!

Q: Who is the bees favorite pop group?

A: The bee gees!

Q: What is a bee's favorite part of a relationship?

A: The Honeymoon period.

Q: What did the sushi say to the bee?

A: Wassabee!

source: <http://jokes4us.com/animaljokes/>



# The Kentucky Beekeeper's Calendar

by Thomas C Webster Apiculture Extension Specialist

## January and February

### What's Happening Inside the Hive?

The bees keep their winter cluster intact, except on the occasional sunny days in the 50's and above when the bees can fly. The queen begins to lay eggs, and brood rearing begins in the largest, healthiest hives.

Kentucky often gets a sharp cold spell in January. Cold weather will not hurt the bees if they are ready for it—with a good cluster size, plenty of stored honey, and the mites and nosema disease under control. This is not too surprising, since hives are well adapted to overwinter successfully in northern Canada. At KSIU we have measured bee hive cluster temperatures above 80° or 90° on snowy January days.

### Beekeeper Chores

This is the time for constructing, painting, and repairing equipment. Most of the new catalogs from beekeeping supply companies will be available in January. Your goal should be to have the bees and equipment ready for making honey by mid-April. Old, dark comb should be removed from frames in storage. Do not install the foundation yet— that should be done just before the frames go into the hives. Foundation will dry, crack, and be rejected by the bees if it is exposed to the air for a long time prior to going into the hive.

If you are buying queens or package bees this year, order by January. By February or March, many of the producers will be booked solid and not able to promise your shipment of bees before May. The availability of queens and packages depends partly on the winter weather in the southern states where they are produced. A relatively cold winter will delay their production of bees.

There will be a few days in these months above 60°. If possible, take a few minutes to look at your

hives. If no bees are flying from a hive, you probably have lost it or it's very weak and could die soon. Open it and take a look.

When examining a hive in late winter, you will be concerned with several things. Are there signs of serious tracheal mite infestation? It's normal for a few dead bees to be carried out of the hive on warm winter days. But if many bees are crawling and clustered on the ground in front of the hive, suspect tracheal mites. They will be unable to fly and a few may have "K-wing" (wings sticking out at an odd angle). Often problems can be diagnosed at KSU or the Kentucky Department of Agriculture from a sample of worker bees taken from a weak hive.

Does a cluster of bees nearly as large as last fall remain? How many bee frames are left? The bees should still have several frames with honey they stored last year. You may add honey frames from other hives that have more honey, if necessary. But do not break the cluster of bees by placing frames of honey inside it. The bees will need to maintain their cluster through the remaining cold weather of late winter and early spring.

Middle or late February is a good time to install Apistan or Checkmite strips of varroa mite control. By getting the strips early, it's possible to leave them in for a full eight weeks (Apistan) or six weeks (Checkmite) and then remove them well before the honey flows begins in late April. Mark your calendar so that you remember when the strips should be removed.

### Observations and Ideas

Take a look at the maple trees through the month of February. The maple flowers are drab, dark red and bees collect yellow pollen from them. This is an indication of the first availability of food for the bees, and that the end of winter is coming.

This page left blank

## Meet the Vice President ..Tom Simpson

*Below is an article that appeared in the ISBA Newsletter in July 2019*

### **MEET YOUR 2018 BEEKEEPER OF THE YEAR: TOM SIMPSON**

*By Charity Davis-Woodard*

Ray Chapman first met Tom Simpson in the summer of 2011. Tom had recently decided he wanted to start keeping bees and, with a friend's help, built three top bar hives out of white pine. For the V-shaped top bars he used mixed hardwoods including cherry and black locust and routed the corners. Now he needed some bees.

Tom found Ray's honey business listed on the internet and contacted him about purchasing a nuc. Though not enthused about the style of hive Tom had chosen to use, Ray said he had a swarm he hadn't hived yet and agreed to try and install them in Tom's TB hive. Once Tom arrived at Ray's with the hive they spread a tarp on the ground behind the bee yard, and Ray shook the bees in front of the hive. So began Tom's education in bee behavior as he watched the bees walk into his hive. No queen was spotted among the crowd of bees. Unfortunately, they absconded the following day, and Ray asked him to collect the empty hive.

Tom hadn't given up. Searching online he found a video showing a group of college students cutting Langstroth frames to fit a TB hive. He convinced Ray to watch the video, and they decided it might just work. Tom made a cardboard template to fit the TB hive, which he used to very carefully cut down the five frames of the nuc he bought from Ray. He had attached half-inch pine strips with drywall screws to the top of the altered five frames so they were now ready to hang from the frame rests in the TB hive. They shook the bees back onto the comb, and Tom took the hive home. The following week he bought a second hive from Ray, this time a Langstroth. Ray thought he was a little crazy for wanting two different types of hives, but Tom wanted to see what he could learn from each.

He kept both hives well-fed and despite the late start (July), both colonies survived the winter and went on to be productive members of Tom's growing apiary for 3 or 4 years.



Throughout his early years he admits to bugging Ray to death, eager for any information and help he could get from such an experienced beekeeper with whom he was developing a warm friendship. "What I admire about Ray is he never criticizes others and is still trying and willing to learn. Always willing to share." Tom still remembers the first time he watched Ray open a hive to make up the top bar hive. "How gently he handled the bees. Him catching a swarm in shorts and a t-shirt while standing underneath the tree. He got a few stings but didn't say anything. I still say 'ouch'."

As time went by Ray's wife, Cookie, also became a close friend to Tom and his wife Gay. Now in his 8th year of beekeeping, and with total support from Gay, Tom runs a very successful sideliners business, selling several thousand pounds of honey a year as well as dozens of nucleus colonies and hives. He loves producing nucs for new beekeepers and then introducing



them to their bees one frame at a time while installing them directly into their equipment. He calls them his girls. Sharing with new beekeepers is important to Tom. “What I enjoy is passing it on. I talk to some that are on the fence. I say let’s get in a hive before you invest a bunch of money. It’s almost like watching a kid catch their first fish.”

Tom learned some tough lessons early on, suffering the pain of European Foulbrood in his 3rd year and dangerous levels of aggressive ant invasions soon after. Now he considers Small Hive Beetles and the assorted problems related to Varroa Destructor to be the greatest challenges. After growing to nearly 100 hives in 9 yards (2017), his current goal is around 40 hives in fewer locations. He works hard to find the very best locations he can, with abundant and varied forage away from cultivated farmland. Attributing much of his success to the encouragement and frequent cooperation of his wife Gay and the great patience of his mentor Ray, Tom readily admits he wouldn’t be where he is today without their support.

Tom grew up in East St. Louis, IL, and worked as a gardener and farm hand during his growing up years. Following boot camp, Tom completed the Navy Welding School in San Diego, CA and spent 3½ years working on nuclear submarines in the U. S. Navy. Once back in Illinois, Tom worked as a tube welder and mechanic for 30 years with Boilermakers Local #363 in Belleville. It’s easy to see why Ray Chapman felt Tom was worthy of recognition by ISBA for his accomplishments and his desire to give back by mentoring many beginning beekeepers and serving on the board of his local organization, the St. Clair Beekeepers Association in southwestern Illinois. With the knowledge gained through years of hard, persistent work, his incessant curiosity about and passion for honey bees, and his friendly, engaging manner and desire to “spread the word” about beekeeping, Tom is a successful ambassador for ISBA in Illinois and beyond.



Bethel Refuge Apiary -  
today



### **St. Clair Beekeepers Association**

Email: [stclairbees@gmail.com](mailto:stclairbees@gmail.com)

**Promoting interest in bees and  
beekeeping in Southern Illinois.**

**The purpose and function of the St. Clair Beekeepers Association is the promotion of interest in bees and beekeeping by such means as encouraging...**

- **Good beekeeping practices**
- **The utilization of bees for pollination of agricultural crops**
- **The dissemination of information about bees and beekeeping**

## **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Our next club membership meeting will be held on February 28th at 7 p.m. At this time we are planning on holding the meeting online via ZOOM . You may join this meeting from your smart phone, tablet or computer. We will send an email with a link to join the meeting.

Watch for more info on our webpage [www.stclairbees.com](http://www.stclairbees.com) or St. Clair Bees Association Facebook