

THE HIVE TOOL

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THE CENTRAL MARYLAND
BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
FOUNDED 1973
President Frame**

Fall is an interesting time for bees and their keepers. Bees born now will likely live most of the winter becoming part of the cluster that survives the cold dearth. And since healthy young bees and a strong well-fed colony are essential to overwintering, that is the work of the autumn beekeeper. We would like to see brood covering several deep frames with pollen and honey packed in all around it. Bees should cover the frames equivalent of a story and a half hive. At least, that's what we'd like to see. As one would expect, the more colonies you keep, the wider the variation you might see. But what you'd not like to find upon inspection is a weak colony (one with less than a medium super full of bees and brood) and/or a colony lacking in sufficient stores of honey and pollen.

The latter problem is solved most readily by feeding (starting now and continuing until no more room remains in the hive to store it). Feed bees a heavy sugar syrup in the fall. You might consider feeding a pollen substitute as well for balanced nutrition. The first problem is more, shall we say, problematic. The beekeeper is now placed in the position of deciding whether the colony is strong enough, vigorous and possibly healthy enough to sustain themselves through the winter. Start with evaluating the queen - do you know her age? Her vitality should be evident in the brood nest. Some beekeepers requeen in the fall to insure the vitality of the queen. What about mites? Have you surveyed the mite infestation? treated? Do you think mites are the cause of your weakened or dwindling colony? Is there possibly some viral, fungal or bacterial infection? You can read up on this for more information. I have a few colonies that have not thrived all season despite feeding, mite intervention, boosting the colonies with bees and brood. Is it the queen, the colony itself, the wax comb or equipment? I must now decide what to do with these colonies - combine them or let them go? (I would not combine a questionable colony with a strong, healthy one). All beekeepers face this fall dilemma sooner or later; maybe you're faced with a similar situation right now. Talk to some other beekeepers. Try to reason it out or trust your intuition. Good Luck!

Congratulations and thanks to everyone who helped make the honey exhibit at the Maryland State Fair a success. It was a good year meeting the public and sharing our experiences with beekeeping. Special thanks to Alex Flanagan for her wax and extracting

demonstrations which enthralled her audiences and to all who entered the competition. If you have never entered the honey/wax/and hive products competition, consider doing so next year - now's a good time to start planning for it.

CMBA's Board of Directors has funded two research projects recently totaling \$1000.00. Jody Johnson is studying the effects of chemicals in the hive at the Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville with Jeff Pettis and Wyatt Mangum from Virginia (who recently spoke about wax moths at one of our meetings) is working with mite-resistant/tolerant colonies in North Carolina. We will hear from both of them when they complete their studies. We have also helped to fund the start-up library for the York County (PA) Beekeeper's Association (\$200.00) and given them some ideas about how our own association library operates. We wish them good luck in their education efforts for their members and the public. CMBA continues to receive and evaluate funding requests in support of beekeeping education, research and extension.

If you are a new beekeeper or have not yet extracted your honey (and would like to), don't forget that CMBA has three extracting set-ups available to our members for a minimal charge (\$10.00). We simply ask that you use the equipment in a timely and responsible manner and return the equipment clean and ready for the next member. Contact Chuck Huselton, Lloyd Snyder, or Jeff Nelson for the extracting equipment.

Some beekeeping events of note in the month of October: CMBA's general membership meeting on Tuesday, October 7th, 7:30pm, at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center. Our speaker, Warren Seaver (see related notice). Could someone surprise us with some honey-type refreshments? The first weekend of October don't miss the Honey Harvest Festival sponsored by the Oregon Ridge Nature Center, both Saturday and Sunday. Lots of fun, games and demonstrations - a real family event! And on Saturday October 11th, the Maryland State Beekeeper's Association (founded in 1908!) will celebrate it's 100th Anniversary with a day-long festival at the Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD starting at 10:00am. Again, the whole family is invited to attend and join in the celebration.

Don't neglect your bees just because the season is winding down. This is the time to insure your honey crop and the health of your colony for next season. Don't be a "bee-haver;" be a bee-keeper. Hope to see you soon.

New Librarian For CMBA

It is with pleasure that I announce a new LIBRARIAN for CMBA.

Jeff Nelson, who has diligently carted those books to meetings for me for the last two years, has agreed to take on the role of librarian in January of 2009. Thank you Jeff, for your muscle and great attendance at CMBA board and general meetings! I recently became a grandmother for the second and third times and I have care issues with elderly parents, so this is a welcome change for me.

John Fries has offered to help Jeff, if needed, with cataloguing or subbing as it is important that the library is at every meeting to serve the membership. I have enjoyed being your librarian for the last two years and look forward to seeing you at meetings.

Linda Allman

His last bee meeting:

Beekeeper Bob Hubley passed away on Aug. 31 at the age of 80. While not officially a member of CMBA, he came to several meetings as a guest of Steve McDaniel. In the photo, he's the one on the right, looking at a frame of brood held by Ross Conrad. Bob lived on Falls Rd. just across the Carroll County line and had five colonies of bees. His sons Bob, Jr. and John plan to take care of the bees for him.



Extracting equipment for sale:

12-frame radial stainless steel extractor with motor \$300, Stainless steel honey warmer \$125, Approx. 15 cases 1-lb. jars

Call Ray Ensor at 410-356-6304

New Beekeepers

By James E. Tew

Reprinted from Bee Culture September 2008

The only thing that never changes is the fact that *everything* changes. Through the years I have noted some of the changes that have occurred in beekeeping. For instance, the use of plastic in beehive equipment and beehive parts has resulted in prominent alterations in the equipment we use and the bee clothes we wear. I always remind myself that this general bee industry evolution is a healthy thing even necessary. My high school is still in operation. How terrible it would be if that school had never changed from the day I graduated. I just bought a new mower, but I kept my old one. After just a few mowing sessions with the new one, I can't conceive of ever using the old one again. Cell phones, themselves a fundamental change, seem to dramatically change every year. Diet Cokes represented change from traditional Coca Cola but now Diet is being replaced with "power drinks." If beekeeping were not changing to meet current conditions, as an industry, it would die. So change is a necessary thing, but not necessarily without some pain.

New beekeepers as change elements

Each time an individual becomes a new beekeeper they introduce an element of change. Primarily, new beekeepers are unintentional elements of change. They are not radicals intent on redesigning everything. They simply don't come with the baggage of past beekeeping procedures and events. That new person who started beekeeping on this very day will never have kept bees that didn't have *Varroa* mites. They will never be required to learn all the peculiarities of basswood sections. They will not be using 60# tins but will be using five gallon plastic pails. They will have an abundance of plastic containers for retailing or gifting their honey.

In essence, the new beekeeper will not be burdened with the "*the way we did it way back when*" attitude. Unfortunately, today's beekeeping is not any less simple than bee ways of yore. The new beekeeper will have to be much more disease and pest savvy and will have to deal with a multitude of chemical controls and, increasingly, municipal restrictions.

New beekeepers are not the only element of change

There is a bigger changing picture. Not only are beekeepers and their ways evolving, but things all around us are changing. Though I don't see some looming cataclysmic change in society that will obliterate beekeeping, many of these outside changes are not particularly good for beekeeping. Increasingly, our neighbors are not agriculturally based and are not lovingly concerned for bees and their keepers. I just recently wrote a *Bee Culture* piece about various city ordinances that restrict beekeeping. The beekeeping industry seems to be drifting toward increased urban/ suburban restrictions. Recently, on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*

was an eye-catching article entitled, "*To be or Not to Be a Beekeeper is the Question Facing Hobbyists.*" » The article reported that a (somewhat) new beekeeper put hives in his small backyard in South Portland, Maine. He tried to keep things low-key, but as commonly happens with bees, they don't stay low-key. They drifted to a close neighbor's water sources causing angst for the neighbor and his kids. The low-key project became a "high-key" project. Even though beekeeping organizations buried the city commissioners with support for beekeeping, and though nearly no one supported the issue, it passed by a 5-2 vote. This is a common theme and I suspect it will only become more common as time passes. Things change. People change.

While I am in real danger of repeating myself because of statements written in previous articles, this increasing restrictive attitude is not surprising. In general, people have changed - or at least are changing. No doubt, many of those people who wrote to support city beekeeping are the older, established beekeepers who have been keeping bees in urban environments for years. (*1 have no statistics to substantiate this guess.*) Beekeeping enterprises are increasingly becoming to be like a county landfill. Everyone wants one, but no one wants it near them. Everyone knows they need bees, but many non-beekeepers do not want bees kept near them. This is an evolving issue. Presently, the answer is unclear.

What to do with new beekeepers?

As has always been the case, we need a constant supply of new beekeepers. We need them to grow into established, old beekeepers and then have them worry about attracting yet more new beekeepers. The cycle must be continuous. Where to find these people and how to train them to become accomplished beekeepers is unclear.

My Grand Dad taught me to drive his 1952 Dodge pick-up on rural roads. As a child, I could drive the farm tractor nearly anywhere I wanted to - and it was legal. That seems quaintly shocking now. Even my grown daughters were required to attend a sanctioned driver-education course. Young drivers today are more trained and restricted than I - as a young driver - could ever imagine. My only requirement was to take my Grand Dad's training experience to the licensing office and take both the written and driving test. I did and I passed both the first time. (*On the road test, I was required to parallel park on a hill. I'm not sure I could do that even now.*) As an industry, what are our plans for training and certifying new people? I sense that increasingly the process of just having one teach them self or having another show a new person how to keep bees may be passing. While driving certification is one example, gun safety training is another evolving issue. Then there's swimming classes. I seem to be surrounded by formal training and certification programs for nearly everything". Will there be a future time when a new person will be required to take training and become certified before becoming a sanctioned beekeeper?

A case history of a new beekeeper

I was approached last Winter by a friend of my daughter asking me how to get started in beekeeping. The only procedure I really had to recommend is the old traditional way of starting into the craft. Get a book. Get a beekeeping friend and order a package. He got the book and ordered the package, but he stumbled on the friend part. He asked me to help. Please understand that while I love beekeeping, I don't have the time - and not much energy - for individual training so I probably was not the best choice. I installed his two packages on a clear Spring day

and all went well. I gave him a few instructions and pronounced him a beekeeper. It's the traditional way of teaching beekeeping. You either sink or swim. As I write this, I am reminded of the way I was taught to put on composition shingle roofing. I got a 30 second course from a professional roofer. *Start at the drip edge. Reverse the first row. Nail above the gullet. Trim the edges. Use flashing. Keep the rows straight. You'll do fine.* I had to essentially do the same type training for the new beekeeper.

All seemed to go well. I got reports a couple of times that sounded okay. (I suspect that one of the hives requeened themselves.) In my defense, I did tell him that as the colony packages grew and as the nectar flow subsided; the colonies' personalities would evolve toward the defensive. I told him, "*As the colony grows, the sting penalty will become greater.*" He said he would watch that.

Six weeks later, I got an email message that the new beekeeper had grown in confidence and knowledge. So much so that he took a group of friends out to see his bees. Correctly being concerned for his novice charges, he gave them his protective equipment and admonished the others to stand back while he did the hive deed. He reported that the colony he opened immediately ate him alive. He had bees everywhere and he had civilians watching in stark terror. He took a reasonable number of stings and did not get anyone else stung, but the colony spent the night with the top off. As the days passed, it became somewhat funny to him and he counted it as a "learning experience." I correctly told him that we all make mistakes and we all learn from those mistakes. That's true, but I am asking here how much longer can beekeeping be taught this way? This particular beekeeper keeps his bees on a remote location on a farm. What if his close neighbors had been the ones in South Portland, Maine? Our industry requires new people to become beekeepers but what should be done with them once we get them?

Loss of university training - a negative change in beekeeping

I was initially trained in a university beekeeping class for which I was given college credit. Now that class is gone. That program is gone and my esteemed old professor has passed. For many years my university, The Ohio State University, offered a structured, credited bee

class. That too is all gone. I don't know how many colleges and universities offer traditional bee programs, but in my arena there is a clear decline. Yet, in Ohio, I remain responsible for beekeeping education programs. My challenge is how to offer effective programs. Two years ago, expecting about 2530 participants, I offered a training program for advanced beekeepers. About 145 showed up and 50% of them were new beekeepers. On one hand this is great but on the other hand, I was buried. To truly teach one to manage and manipulate a bee colony, that person needs to truly be inside a substantial bee hive. Reading, watching videos, and visiting web pages only accomplishes so much. In the case of my surprisingly large class, I simply could not show every person every aspect of the bee colony that we opened; plus the knowledge range of the individual participants was diverse. The new beekeeper demand is there, but our training system needs review.

The price of gas is high. Time is tight. In many instances, participants are driving for hours to get to a meeting and then must drive for hours to get home. In my case, local bee groups are becoming ever more important in training and assisting local new beekeepers. Driving is reduced and personal attention is greater. Essentially, I am passing the buck. Since I simply cannot be at innumerable bee training sessions, the path of least resistance is for local bee groups to train local newbies. How to train is the perpetual question.

I don't have the answer, but I have some suggestions

One size does not fit all. The best program in one state will not fit the needs of another group in another state. But in general, I would suggest the following general training points.

1. Keep the group size manageable. You really can't have many more than 10-15 people around one beehive. If group numbers are more than that, try to have more than one hive and additional instructors.
2. Don't use large, defensive hives. Consider moving colonies during the day when field bees are out. Leave a trap box in place to house the field bees until you can return the parent hive to the stand.
3. Make sure everyone has protective gear and is suitably protected. Stinging situations can turn off new people.
4. Have a nicely stocked observation hive for biological discussion. Much of this can be done in the open hive, but a nicely stocked observation hive allows for close and risk-free examination.
5. Don't try to accomplish too much in one session. People are of all ages and their health varies. Don't plan an eight-hour session and try to cover all known bee topics. Many people can't be on their feet that long. Take small bites.
6. Give a certificate of completion upon ending the class. Most of the time the paper will be tossed, but most of us could profit from having something - anything- to

present to a challenging county commissioner meeting to prove that one is a qualified beekeeper. Also, give this for the group to learn to certify new people. At this point, it is perfunctory, but we all know that at some point - some beekeeper is going to be sued for something. Legal action happens all the time.

An improperly planned party?

Have we invited people (new beekeepers) to a party (beekeeping industry) for which we are not properly prepared? We desperately need new, qualified people, but we don't have a uniform way to train and support them. Master Beekeeper programs and other certification programs are great for authorizing legitimacy and competency. Resisting change is normal but some of us need to develop plans for what happens after things do change

ELECTION TIME

No, not THAT election! Although it falls on the same date (the first Tuesday in November), the election referred to is CMBA's election of officers. Several of the current officers are stepping down after varying years of service to CMBA, and it's time for a new crop of leaders to emerge. This organization can only be as successful as those members who volunteer to serve it. Advanced beekeeping knowledge is NOT a requirement; what IS required is the willingness to volunteer your time and energy to the organization, schedule, plan and attend meetings, keep up on the latest beekeeping news and generally keep the ball rolling. As you probably know, money is not a problem. The biggest problem seems to be finding ways to use our money to benefit the larger beekeeping community through education, research and extension. Not a bad job. Nothing like that other election!

Mike Spencer is heading up the nominating committee and is looking for candidates to run for office. You can get more information from Mike or any one of the current officers. No big political campaigns required! Just run!

Bee Wonderful

By Barbara Guamieri

From Ruxton –Riderwood-Lake Roland Area
Improvement Association News – Fall 2008

It is the last week of the Maryland State Fair and John Harmon is a busy bee preparing to go to work. But he is not buzzing off to his usual vocation. Rather he and his son are off to promote their avocation- bee keeping. Though family man and entrepreneur John Harmon appears to be your average suburban guy, he has a honey of a story to tell as the evening apiarist in the "Bee Booth" of the Central Maryland Beekeepers Association.

John and his nine-year-old son Alex, who has also been stung by the hobby, tell fair goers about their backyard apiary and perhaps sell some of their freshly extracted honey. For the last three years John has tended three colonies of honey bees in his Ruxton yard. They have been so prolific that he has had to divide one

of the colonies and move it to his in-laws fields. The hives have become a real family affair.

John's interest in bees began during his family's summers on the Eastern Shore. A neighbor kept hives as part of their agricultural stock and young John became fascinated with their 'up close and personal' behavior. After tasting the honey, he was totally hooked. In his teens he worked summers on a Montgomery County farm where he learned to appreciate the honey bee's inherent value to crop generation. While other things like school and family consumed his attention along the way, he never lost his interest in bees.

Three years ago he decided it was time to introduce his own children to his childhood fascination. This decision was not met with great enthusiasm from his family. His wife Paula could not imagine bees buzzing all about her tender young sons. She was particularly afraid bees would swarm the kids as they played in the backyard pool. Alex and his older brother Jack were cautiously curious but not overly enthused. However, three years of hives in the backyard and honey in the pantry have given all of the Harmon's *and* their neighbors *and* their friends a new appreciation for bees.

No one is more delighted than John at this groundswell of interest. He loves that his sons now discuss the behavior of the bees within the colonies. They are acquiring the patience to hone wonderful observation skills and gaining great insight into social structure and its impact on hive health. They are intimate witnesses of the life cycle of bees the surrounding environment. Young Alex has developed such an interest in his dad's hobby that he attended a beekeeping course this Spring with the Central Maryland Beekeepers Association at Oregon Ridge and is often found hanging out at the hives. Neighbors also often wander over for a curious peek and warm weather party-goers always demand a tour of the apiary. John is happy to share all the buzz about his bees.

But bee keeping is also a very serious business. In the fall of 2006 a world-wide honey bee colony collapse disorder (CCD) shocked the agricultural community. Bees are essential for crop pollination and their disappearance would spell doom for farmers. Scientists are still debating the causes of this event which likely is not a discrete problem but rather a combination of factors. The USDA Agricultural Research Service scientists (www.ars.usda.gov) are studying four broad classes of potential causes: pathogens, parasites, environmental distresses (including pesticides) and management stresses (nutrition/pollen loss). Until a better understanding of CCD is gained, beekeepers remain vigilant about all potential causes.

John Harmon added his observations to this discussion. He gives most credence to the theory that pesticides may be the culprit. His hives are testimony to a healthy, pesticide free environment. His bees primarily

seek nectar from Robert E. Lee Park where huge unsprayed black locust trees offer abundant supplies. They are not exposed to a commercial farming operation nor a golf course where pesticides are heavily used. His bees did not suffer from any reduction in numbers. But he cannot be certain of this, so he must cast a wide net to protect the hives from all possible problems.

Bees don't require daily maintenance like many farm animals. Instead they need seasonal tending. Fall is a busy time for a bee keeper as the hive is preparing for the cold winter months. In spring and summer there are three classes of bees in each hive: the queen, the worker bees and the drones. There is only one queen and her job is to lay the eggs (as many as 1,000 a day) that develop into honey bees. The drones (males) mate with the queen, although only a select few actually have that pleasure. The remainder simply take up space in the hive and are ejected to probable death in the fall by the worker bees. The worker bees (female) slave away at cleaning and guarding the hive, feeding the developing babies, building the honeycomb and collecting nectar to process into honey stores for the winter.

John and Alex feed their colonies during the cooler months when nectar is unavailable. John tries to ward off diseases by lacing their sugary foods with organic prescriptions. The most common diseases are caused by tracheal and parasitic mites. John treats the former with a Crisco/sugar mixture that, when ingested, coats the "lips" of the bee and keeps the mites from being spread. The latter is treated with a mentholated spray or simply a dusting of powdered sugar which the bees will clean, knocking off the parasites in the effort.

In late winter the hives must be inspected. Alex is too young yet to lift the heavy hives but he will assist in the inspections. John will be on the lookout for correct positioning of the brood to promote spring honey production. Sometimes the queen will need to be relocated because of overcrowding. This task can be difficult and not without the sting of disapproval: Once all is well, the queen begins to lay her eggs, the worker bees fill the hive with nectar and by May honey will drip through the combs.

By June John and Alex will be family heroes after they have extracted as much as 100 pounds of the gooey gold sweetness from the combs. Then it is Paula's turn to grill her way to family fame using honey as her marinade on shrimp or chicken and much more. Before long, it will be time again for the fall inspection and so the cycle goes.

If you missed John and Alex at the Maryland State Fair's "bee booth", they would be delighted to take you on a personal tour of their apiary and teach you a little about apiculture. If you are interested, contact John at jharmon@hdc-inc.com.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

David Papke, President 717-246-2339
Steve McDaniel V. Pres. 410-239-7496
Mary Thurman, Secretary 410-467-1812
Bob Crouse, Treasurer 410-265-7999
Jerry Fischer, State Bee Insp. 410-562-3464
Oregon Ridge Nature Center 410-887-1815
Chuck Huselton, Past Pres. 410-592-6598
Lloyd Snyder, Editor 410-329-6671
Editors E-Mail - Irsnyder@clearviewcatv.net

DATES TO REMEMBER

General Meeting – October 7, 2008 – at Oregon Ridge Nature Center. 7:30PM.
Warren Seaver, a Delaware sideline beekeeper, will be the speaker at the Oct. 7 meeting, telling us about his experiences leasing some 500 hives each year for pollination. He and his wife Joan manage 150 colonies of their own and lease about 360 more from another beekeeper, servicing a dozen growers of apples, strawberries, melons, cucumbers, and pumpkins. The leased bees also travel to Florida, California, and Maine before returning to New Jersey.

Note: Open hive demo starts at 6PM.

Board Meeting – October 20, 2008 – 7 PM at Oregon Ridge Nature Center.

**Lloyd Snyder – Editor
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