

COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

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Editor: mike ffrench

Chest beating

Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.

—Albert Einstein

I like this quotation by Einstein, because it fits my beekeeping ethos. I am not successful in terms of a beekeeping expert, but by continuing to struggle on with the difficulties associated with beekeeping when others have given up and fallen by the wayside, I feel of value. What I do for bees is miniscule by comparison with my fellow beekeepers, but once again, if I persevere, then I have value. All the hobbyists with one or two hives have value, their efforts encourage others to do the same. Each grain of sand helps to build the dune.

The time is nigh

At the December meeting I listened to Dr. Lawrence Connor with rapt attention. He addressed a problem that we all acknowledge, but have put in a dark corner to die from lack of light.

Larry once again brought to the fore our major concerns as beekeepers. Varroa mites, neonicotinoids, climate change, colony collapse disorder, et al. Number one on the list is varroa, a pest that has been with us for two decades and we have not made one whit of progress in controlling this blight. By ignoring what is required to solve this problem we have put ourselves in the hands of commercial package dealers. Yes, I can hear the roar of protest from the package people, and I also understand their need to make a living. But while we are dependent on packaged bees there is no incentive to solve the onslaught of varroa.

While we remain dependent on the southern bees of Georgia and California, we will never produce a northern bee that can soldier on through the Michigan winter.

When commercial beekeepers chose to use chemicals over the pursuit of a varroa sensitive hygienic bee (VSH), the die was cast. The use of these antibiotics has proved to be a failure, not only in the eradication of varroa, but it led to the introduction of these chemicals in beeswax and perhaps even in the honey itself. No matter how careful we might be in our hive practices, we can never be sure that the chemicals are not migrating to our product.

We are not just *beekeepers*! We are stewards of the earth!

Larry spoke of the need to criss-cross queen breeding patterns between apiaries. We can only do this successfully by cooperation between beekeepers. He also spoke of drone saturation, which is above my pay grade, but that doesn't mean I am not willing to try it under expert supervision.

C.O.M.B. officers
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Let us take a leaf out of the bees playbook. They have adjoining cells to facilitate egg-laying by the queen. Then we too can have cells of adjoining beekeepers who are willing to spend some time with those beekeepers who are enthusiastic, but not sure if they are headed in the right direction in regards to good beekeeping practices.

Say what

Humans somehow feel they exempt from the laws of nature.
—Roddy MacTowel

Walk the walk

We have talked the talk, now it's time to walk the walk. We have spent too much time listening to polemics about what dire straits our industry is in—and it is an industry—it is now time we put our shoulders to the wheel. Individually, we can make small but significant headway, collectively we can make giant strides.

My humble suggestion is that our club members form small groups based on geography and proximity to each other, and assist, support, monitor, and report their success, failures, and observances, to fellow members at the COMB meetings. This consensus of information may or may not always produce a miracle, but it has been my experience that even small changes can make big differences.

C.O.M.B. Monthly meeting.
2nd Monday of the month 6:30pm.
MSU Pavilion, Farm Lane, E. Lansing

Jane's jottings

We all know this is the time of year that the queen starts to lay eggs again. And, she's going to be busy cranking out all those eggs. But, here's what I want to know . . . what, exactly, has she been doing with all that free time since last September? Did she take a nap every day? Has she been knitting booties for all those future babies? Has she been catching up on her soap opera *Days of Our Hives*? Just wondering . . .

Bee Read

If you have a comment, query, problem, or an interesting story or anecdote concerning bees that you would like to share with your fellow beekeepers, here is your chance. Send it in to mjbusybee@frontier.com or debbie.foote@hotmail.com or hand it in at the meeting. Jane Carhartt may be contacted at janesbees@yahoo.com
This is your newsletter, make use of it!

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## Bee Classifieds

If you have any bee-related items you would like to buy, sell, or trade, this section is for you. This service is free for members of C.O.M.B. You may submit ads to Mike French or Deb Foote. There will be a nominal fee for associate members.

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Deadline for next issue is January 29th