

# COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

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Editor: mike ffrench

## A bee tree for me

A bee tree is an upscale accommodation for bees formally living near the ground (apiary). Groundhogs, foxes, raccoons, et al, frequently change location for reasons of safety and hygiene. Birds build a new nest every year. Is it unrealistic to expect bees to stay in the same place year after year after year?

How high up the bee tree is the nest; how many per acre; distribution; collection of; queens from; why trees?

Where in the topography are the bee trees located—outer edge, deeper in, solitary trees? All of these?

Are they a natural home, or do they just want to get away from interfering humans?

The third floor windows of the hospital were unscreened and open. Why I asked the nurse? “Because flies and mosquitoes don’t fly this high.” Interesting! Can we apply this logic to bees and their choice of elevated home sites? Does it protect them from hive beetles, ants, wax moths, yellow jackets, skunks etc?

## Thank you guys

A special thanks to Robert Johnson and Mary Hobbs for ordering and distributing this years bee packages on behalf of COMB. Volunteers are thin on the ground, and we need to show our appreciation for their efforts. On behalf of the club, thank you for a job well done.

## Extreme beekeeping

Keeping bees can be mind-bending at times, and may afflict those of lesser mental coping skills. Such a person is my friend Big Rod Schuper. Big Rod, after many years of costly losses due to varroa, went off the deep end and took a flame-thrower to his ten hives. Big Rod is now recuperating in the ‘home’ and tells me the staff has trouble affixing his bee veil to his straitjacket.

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

## Cranial reset

Beekeeping — the thinking man’s hobby.

Able to put aside the cerebral mish-mash that bedevils intellectuals, beekeepers are invested in reality, not endless debate.

## Saving Cuz

President Donald Trump and the GOP Congress have engaged in a broad regulatory rollback, hitting everything from Internet privacy standards to environmental regulations. So it is more notable than usual that one worthwhile federal initiative got through recently: The *rusty-patched bumblebee* is being added to the endangered species list after all. Not only is

this remarkable because the Trump administration allowed the listing to proceed over objections from fossil fuel and other business interests, it also highlights the ongoing importance of caring for at-risk pollinators, which, free of charge, play such a crucial role in the food industry, and power the agricultural economy.

“Without them, our forests, parks, meadows and shrub lands, and the abundant, vibrant life they support, cannot survive, and our crops require laborious, costly pollination by hand.” Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director, Tom Melius, said in January. The service reports that insects, mostly bees, contribute \$3 billion of economic value to the U.S. every year.

Citing “a swift and dramatic decline since the late 1990’s,” the service moved to list the species as endangered just before Trump’s inauguration. But the new administration froze all new regulations, so the listing did not come into effect Feb. 10, as planned.

Fortunately, the delay was not a long one: The first bee of any type in the continental U.S. is now protected under the Endangered Species Act. That means the federal government will move to protect the bumblebees’ habitat and restrict activities that drive down their numbers.

They could use the protection. The nation has lost nearly a million honeybee colonies since 1989, from a peak of 3.5 million. Beekeepers have been able to fight the honeybee decline through careful management. But bumblebees and other native species do not get the same sort of commercial attention, even though their “buzz pollination” technique, in which they shake pollen loose by buzzing their wings, is particularly effective.

It may not be easy to repopulate the *rusty patched bumblebee*, which must contend with shrinking habitat, climate change and pesticide use. Even so, at least the federal government will no longer delay the effort — assuming, that is, Republicans refrain from defunding it in their next budget.

From *The Washington Post* reprinted in the *Jackson Citizen Patriot* April 10<sup>th</sup> 2017

## Ask Buzzer

Dear Buzzer,

I have a large variety of flowers trees and shrubs, but I hardly ever see any bees or other pollinators on them.

Why is this? Signed, Empty Nest

Dear Nest,

They are most likely being pollinated by the night shift.

Just because you can’t see them, doesn’t mean they can’t see you.

Dear Buzzer,

I must be the world’s lousiest beekeeper, I have six hives and my bees die every year. Is it time to give it up? Signed, Bee Killer

Dear Killer,

Don’t give up! Your bees might die, but during their lifetime (short as it is) they pollinate trees, shrubs and flowers, which will reproduce long after your bees have died (sorry to bring that up again) and benefits us all. Plus you are keeping the package bee industry afloat.

C.O.M.B. officers

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Deadline for next issue is June 2<sup>nd</sup>