

COMB Courier

“I speak for those who cannot speak for themselves”

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Editor: mike ffrench

Main squeeze

Rendering (melting) wax this year I reclaimed 16 quarts of honey. Truth in lending: while the amount of honey may seem excessive, most of this wax has been hanging around for seven years. I can't sell this honey, due to its dubious quality, so I refuse to market it. If I am to produce a saleable honey I must render the wax in a more timely manner, which means I need to extract the honey before rendering—how can I do this? The answer is some kind of press, an old fashioned clothes mangle or even a grape press. Any suggestions?

Waxicle

Jane Carhartt came up with a new word: *waxicle*. This is the wax that spills over the side of the melting pot and sets before you can jug it.

Bee DNA

Yes, bees have DNA just like we do. Same number of chromosomes; thirty-two; (16 pairs). Two kinds of DNA: mitochondrial DNA, which comes through female; and nuclear DNA from both parents. Now we know we have a connection, you might want to look at your bees a little bit less dispassionately from now on.

Bare knuckles

Bare-knuckle bee-keeping: no gloves, no smoke. When you get stung often enough, you will be a certified knucklehead.

Dust to dust

Dusting for varroa—every two weeks in hive body only, keep clear of honey supers. Got that, Knuckie?

Holy smokes

Tip of the month: Always have your smoker cooking and ready to use. No good trying to light your smoker on the run while making a hasty retreat from a swarm of angry bees.

Old world, new world

In 1621 the Virginia company shipped the first beehives to the New World. Now there are two dozen sub-species of *apis mellifera*. Well! Stap me vittles.

C.O.M.B. officers

President Mike Risk
Vice-President Dale Woods
Treasurer Kay Barber
Secretary Dianne Karsten
COMB Founder and ex officio
Dr. Roger Hoopingarner

Communications:

Editor Mike French
Asst. Editor Debbie Foote

Easy street

Is beekeeping as easy as it appears to be? ‘Get out there and be a beekeeper,’ so sayeth the oracle. No training needed – buy a book (plenty of *them*) – buy equipment (by the truckload) – buy bees – get stung (physically and financially) – produce honey, make candles – nothing to it: or is there?

My education in beekeeping came from the School of Hard Knocks (HKU). This is no easy road. My wallet takes a beating every year, only alleviated by erratic honey sales.

Having served a 5-year apprenticeship in the machine tool industry, I understand the value of proper training and discipline by experienced tutors. Apparently, in the bee industry – *and it is an industry* – there is a tendency to adopt the theory that learning to swim well can be attained by being thrown in the deep end. Olympic swimmers don’t achieve their level of expertise by practicing in the local water-hole, they receive professional instruction in an Olympic-sized pool. Beekeeping is far and away more important to our existence than zipping up and down in the pool.

Unfortunately, we take a *laissez faire* attitude to beekeeping that undermines its importance in the natural world. We have to prove our competence to drive a car before we are turned loose on the highway. Beekeepers are turned loose in the apiary just by showing up. An apprenticeship in beekeeping is long overdue, I am sure many of you out there wish this sensible approach to a serious problem was available. I intend to soldier on, but I regret that I did not get into beekeeping earlier in life before my cranial matter started to atrophy.

There are not many young beekeepers, and the reason is lack of opportunity not fear of bees. As a local, state, and national organization, our goal should be to provide that opportunity—for their future and for ours.

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

Zika menace

Lots of bees are being killed due to insecticide spraying for the Zika problem, thereby creating another problem. We don’t seem to be good at solving problems. When are we going to get it right?

Going . . . going . . . gone

Wild bees and feral bees are almost extinct. Is that a fact? Don’t be surprised by this alarming news, extinctions in the animal world are at an all time high due to mankind’s interference in the natural world. Par example: of the subspecies of the northern white rhino, only three are left. How would we feel if we found ourselves left with only three colonies of bees worldwide?

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.

Deadline for next issue is December 2nd