

# COMB Courier

“I speak for those who cannot speak for themselves”

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Editor: mike ffrench



## Merry Christmas



To Beekeepers Everywhere  
The planet extends its gratitude

### Ask Rufus

The conundrum of package bees. How many bees do we order in January, when we won't know how many bees we will need in March? Best guess? Well Rufus, what is your take on this?

Rufus replies: “First of all I had to find out what conundrum meant – a sort of riddle. I got the explanation from my Third Webster’s Dictionary (unabridged). Yes, even in this day and age of Wikipedia I still use a dictionary. Why? Because more often than not, when leafing through a dictionary I come across other words in the process that I would not otherwise look up thereby increasing my vocabulary. What was the question again? Ah, yes, package bees retro-thinking. I wish I could be of more help on this, but I too am saddled with this problem. A note of optimism though, if you pre-order package bees based on losses of previous years, one of two things will happen 1) You will have more bees than you have hives. 2) You will be able to replace dead-outs without any need to buy more equipment. If you have option (1) you will increase the number of hives for next year with a better than even chance of getting more bees through winter. Does that help?”

At a conference two years ago a commercial beekeeper said that their days are numbered unless something is done about colony collapse disorder and varroa mites. He also said that when he first started trucking bees to the almond farms in California, the growers would check for full hives. If the frames weren't covered in bees they would pay a percentage for the frames that were covered. Now, because of the scarcity of bees they will pay full price for each hive regardless of the number of frames covered. What do you think of that Rufe?

“What we need are friends in Congress, those are the people who can help us. More often than not they are not aware of the problem or the catastrophic effect on the food supply that the disappearance of bees will engender. The bee industry is more than the sum of beekeepers and bee equipment suppliers, it affects our health, supermarkets, transportation, and a host of related services. Write, phone, or email your representative and senator in Lansing and Washington D.C. if enough people knock on the door—we will be heard!”

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## A book for Christmas

For those who haven't quite filled their bookcase with bee books, here is another one. *Beekeeping in 20,000 Easy Lessons* by D.E.D. Weery. The author takes you through all the hints and advice he has received over the years at bee conferences, seminars, magazines et al, ad nauseum.

## Out of Africa

Kenyan etymologist Dr. Katherine 'Bogie' Bogart, has written an excellent tome on myths of African bees *The African Queen*, with her colleague Prof. Humphrey 'Hump' Hepburn.

Bogie writes: "African bees have been given the appellation 'Killer Bees' which in my estimation has been greatly exaggerated. These so-called ferocious beasts are said to kill people unfortunate to get too close to the bees. If this were true, African bee trees would be surrounded by dead animals and littered with the corpses of humans unlucky enough to have unwittingly neared the bees nesting site."

Hump posits: "Deaths attributed to African bees are usually children and adults allergic to bee venom. A healthy adult, wearing a good pair of running shoes and capable of sprinting for half a mile—has nothing to fear. Common sense dictates that if African bees attacked in such numbers required to kill an adult human, the colony would be decimated in short order.

Evidence to back up these claims may be observed in the U.S. by the lack of killer bee stories on the so-called *World Evening News*. A few years ago these stories were given prominence because they were grist for the television mill. People get jacked up about humans being killed by wildlife, this way they can turn a blind eye to the daily slaughter of human on human."

## Get this

Have you noticed the words *perhaps* and *try this* or variants thereof, appear quite frequently in bee books.

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

## Oxygen only please

"Oxygen Only Please" After the extended use of the chemicals oxalic acid and formic acid, I expect the bees to post this notice at the hive entrance after getting 'fogged' a couple of times a year.

For the penurious beekeeper, oxalic acid is also sold as wood bleach.

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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 December 30th