

COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

Vol. 4 No. 2

February 2017

Editor: mike ffrench

Don't wait, don't be late

Whatever vendor you choose to deal with, now is the time to order your bee packages. Don't put it off waiting for a deal, the price of the packages is steadily rising and not likely to free-fall. Yes, the packages are expensive, but losing our bees is more so.

Bee packages

Shaun Strubel, Nectar Sweet Apiaries, Howell, MI COMB

Contact: **Mary Hobbs** blackberrymary@yahoo.com Tel: 517-242-4463 or **Robert Johnson** ioniapcwizard@gmail.com Tel: 616-841-1083 or packagebees.com for more information. Prices: 3lb. package \$102.00, 2lb. package \$97.00 **Final payment due:** April 1st. **Delivery date:** April 16th.

Dale Woods beeman53@wowway.com Tel: 517-294-0425,

Kay Barber barberk@msu.edu Tel: 517-927-3541

NUCS \$160.00 each. **Delivery date:** last week in April.

Dave Anthony A.W.S. Bees LLC 1268 Nichols Road, Swartz Creek, MI 48473

www.awsbeesllc.com Tel: 810-621-4371 Prices: 3lb. package \$122.00; 2lb package \$112.00; Queens \$30.00 each. **Delivery date:** April 10-15

Stumbling through the apiary

Let me introduce you to Jaundice 'Dice' Jarrow. Dice, also known as JJ, is an erstwhile ersatz savant. Dice is the originator of the mantra: Luckily all my bees died the first winter, so I didn't have to worry about how good I wasn't. Say what!

Dice on mead: "Should you adulterate your honey by making mead? For me—no! I see it as a waste of good honey. If alcohol is what you want, you can buy it much cheaper than you can make it. Monks were the first ones to make mead commercially, how they squared that with their conscience is beyond my pay grade. I mean, it's like a bank robber setting up a checking account.

Should you be drinking while tending your bees? Not a good idea, but on the other hand the upside is, it does help if you are half socked when working with your bees; if you get stung you don't care."

Dice has agreed to share his misadventures in the beeyard in future CC issues in the hope you may learn from his gaffes. Don't sweat the imponderables.

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The birds and the . . .

“Everything is opinion and one man’s opinion is as good as another.”

—Sir John Dishwater

Several years ago I attended a nature fair at Jackson Community College, one of the seminars featured an ornithologist who gave a presentation on bluebirds. Bluebirds, he informed us in a stentorian voice, are insect eaters, therefore cannot winter over in Michigan for lack of food.

I mentioned to him that I had previously witnessed bluebirds in December in an annual Audubon Christmas bird count. “Ah,” he said, not missing a beat, “they must have been living on insects in a nearby dung pile.” I had observed the bluebirds in a cemetery, nowhere near a dung pile, but I decided not to pursue the matter since the expert had taken an adverse position and seemed likely to not move from it.

A few years later I put some bluebird nesting boxes around my property; which were promptly occupied. I observed that the bluebirds raised two families throughout the breeding season. Upon cleaning out the boxes in October, I noticed that there was a pile of elderberry pips around the nest; they had been feeding their young on berries as a supplement to the usual insects, a behavior designed to prepare the chicks for with a taste and stomach for berries should they decide to overwinter. I mentally thumbed my nose at the bombastic ornithologist.

If observation is 60% of science, then in essence we beekeepers are embryonic scientists. In my short life as a beekeeper I have observed a reluctance to face facts; bees, just like the bluebirds, must be allowed to work out their own problems for survival. Our interference, no matter how well-intentioned has not helped the bees.

Despite dire warnings to the contrary, honeybees will not become extinct, but they will not be producing honey for our benefit, they will join their sisters in the wild as tree-bees. Left to its own devices, nature has its own way of resolving difficulties.

ANR week

Mark your calendars for March 10th-11th, this is ANR week at the Kellogg Center at MSU in East Lansing. There will be something for all beekeepers at the conference. Bring your wallet, there will be vendors galore eager to lighten your load.

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

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.foote1962@gmail.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!

Deadline for next issue is March 3rd

Center of Michigan Beekeepers
 2017 Bee Package Purchase
 Shawn Strubel
 Nectar Sweet Apiaries Howell, MI
****Pickup Date – Sunday APRIL 16****

Beekeeper Name & Address:

NAME
ADDRESS
PHONE
EMAIL

Bee Order:

Item	Unit cost	Quantity	Total
2lb Bee Packages w/queen	\$ 90.00		
3lb Bee Packages w/queen	\$102.00		
Total			

Payment:

CASH: \$	
CHECK PAYABLE TO: C.O.M.B.	Check No.
FINAL PAYMENT DATE: APRIL 1 *PICK UP APRIL 16*	

Contact:

Mary Hobbs	blackberrymary@yahoo.com 517-242-4463 Leave Message!
	108 S. Nelson Potterville, MI 48876
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	9255 Jackson Road, Clarksville, MI 48815
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