July 2017

July and August’s Ramblings of a Bee Bumbler, from your PRESIDENT

As I write this I am preparing for a trip to Cuba. I will be traveling with other agricultural leaders from our state visiting farming operations in Cuba. We will also learn about the countries culture and history. At my request, the tour will also include a visit to a beekeeping operation. Honey is one of the important agricultural products that the Cubans export. The day after I return from Cuba I will be off to El Salvador on a mission trip building houses for a family in need. Again I will try and visit a beekeeping operation like I did last year. It is really interesting to me to see how much bee keepers are alike around the world, the issues we all face and how those issues are addressed in other countries.

Hopefully everyone has their spring crop harvested and as they say “in the barrel”. From the reports I have seen this spring was a mixed harvest around the state. The cool nights this spring and then all the rain affected a lot of our floral sources this year with little or no nectar flow. I know my harvest was about half of what I was hoping for due to the weather and also personal health issues. This brings me to my topic for the first part of this letter. In May of this year I was diagnosed with CLL, Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia. This type of leukemia is caused by contact with chemicals. I am a Viet Nam veteran and had possible exposure to Agent Orange. What I want to talk about though is your exposure to chemicals and possible side effects. As beekeepers we use pesticides in our hives, herbicides around our hives and a lot of chemicals around the house. Some of you may work around chemicals at your job. Are you following proper use of and wearing personal protective equipment while handling these chemicals? Are you disposing of the empty containers and varroa strips properly? My Agent Orange exposure was in 1968 and 1969 - 49 years ago. You never know how things that happened years ago might come back and bite. Bee aware, Bee prepared and Bee Careful.

The fall field day is planned for the 21st of October. There will be something for all levels of beekeepers and gives the public a chance to see just what types of research is going on there. As in the past, lunch will be included in the registration costs. The registration information has been posted on the new LBA website along with a lot of other helpful information. Our Facebook page has also had some revamping and we are doing all we can to keep you, the beekeepers of the state, informed.

The Executive Committee of the Louisiana Beekeepers Association is planning a fall meeting with the club presidents from around the state. The LBA board feels this will give the clubs an opportunity to express concerns and share ideas on how to make our state association work for you. We are still working on the date but the meeting will probably be in the Lafayette area. We will also be sharing with the club presidents a short write-up about what is covered in our quarterly board meetings. Again we hope this will open lines of communications between the state association and the local clubs. Your state association is only as good as the members make it and we want your input.
The LBA is your organization and the Board is here to serve you. If you have suggestions for us to make the organization better or ways to better serve our members, please feel free to contact us. Also, there are several bee clubs scattered throughout the state. Tables listing the LBA board members and the various bee clubs in the state are posted at the LBA website (www.labeekeepers.org). Join your local club and get involved. Help us help our fellow beekeepers be the best stewards of this valuable resource and produce the best honey in the world.

I know 2018 is still months away but it is never too late to start planning. Will you expand your operation? What about equipment upgrades? What about Queens? Running a successful beekeeping operation takes planning so start planning now. May your fall crop be plentiful and your colonies strong.

Randy Fair, randy@beebumbler.com, 1-318-588-2899

For this beekeeper, your BBB editor, the 2017 spring honey flow was lackluster as well. Some beekeepers in CENLA reported a good harvest but out of 17 hives I manage, I only saw three out of the bunch doing much. In addition to the lackluster harvest, due to the weekly rains, I wasn’t able to drive to my hives and harvest until the first week of July – a month behind when I normally harvest. The honey in the supers showed the change-over from spring to summer honeys as well: our spring honey is more golden yellow while the summer and fall are more amber-colored. The supers placed on the hives in June had the amber-colored honeys in them.

CENLA had rains every week and I’m sure there were some low areas that flooded. The bees kept working however and I’ve received swarm calls right through June – a bit later than I expected. Normally such calls taper off by June.

The Annual Convention Committee has also been busy planning the 2017 convention for this December and we are already making plans for 2018. This year’s convention is to be held in Pineville, Louisiana with the 2018 convention to be held in the Lake Charles area. I will present more on this following the Baton Rouge Field Day in October.

With this letter, I am continuing a section that talks to “A Year in the Life of a Beekeeper – My personal view”. This BBB# 4 encompasses January – August. In addition I am sharing articles regarding $ for LSU entomologist’s study on honeybee stress, national honeybee losses, man’s love with the bees going back 40,000 years, tart cherry pollination in the lake states and hobby beekeeping in Louisiana.

Enjoy.

**Articles of Interest:**

- Honeybee Losses Improve from Horrible to Bad
- A Year in the Life of a Beekeeper – My personal view (updated with each new BBB)
- Honey, I love You: Our 40,000-year relationship with the Humble Bee website: (https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/may/24/honey-i-love-you-our-40000-year-relationship-)
- Tart Cherry Pollination website: (https://beeinformed.org/2017/06/21/tart-cherry-pollination/)
Bayou Bee Bulletin

- Beekeeping is a Growing Hobby in SW Louisiana - Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter Extension Agent; contact: khawkins@agcenter.lsu.edu
- LSU Researchers Receive Nearly $1 million to Study Honeybee Stress

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Articles of Interest

Honeybee Losses Improve from Horrible to Bad
SETH BORENSTEIN, Associated Press; May 26, 2017

WASHINGTON
“There’s a glimmer of hope for America’s ailing honeybees as winter losses were the lowest in more than a decade, according to a U.S. survey of beekeepers released Thursday. Beekeepers lost 21 percent of their colonies last winter, the annual Bee Informed Partnership survey found. That’s the lowest winter loss level since the survey started in 2006 and an improvement from nearly 27 percent the winter before. The U.S. government has set a goal of keeping losses under 15 percent in the winter. “It’s good news in that the numbers are down, but it’s certainly not a good picture,” said survey director Dennis vanEngelsdorp. “It’s gone from horrible to bad.” Reduction in varroa mites, a lethal parasite, is likely the main cause of the improvement, said vanEngelsdorp, a University of a Maryland entomologist. He credited the reduction in the parasite to a new product to fight the mite and better weather for pesticide use. The 10-year average for winter losses is 28.4 percent.
“We would, of course, all love it if the trend continues, but there are so many factors playing a role in colony health,” said bee expert Elina Lastro Nino at the University of California Davis, who wasn’t part of the survey. “I am glad to see this, but wouldn’t celebrate too much yet.” For more than a decade, bees and other pollinators have been rapidly declining with scientists blaming a mix of parasites, disease, pesticides and poor nutrition. While usually hive losses are worst in the winter, they occur year round. The survey found yearly losses also down.”

A Year in the Life of a Beekeeper – My personal view – (Updated with each new BBB)
A monthly beekeeping task and management calendar of events

While visiting a CENLA Beekeeper Club member in early February, he made a recommendation that I send out monthly, a notice of what we as beekeepers should/could be doing that month with our hives and what we should be expecting/planning for in the next month. That sounded like a very good idea. Some of this can be found within the chart we’ve passed out at several of our meetings over the last few years: A year in the Life of a Beekeeper – An Annual Beekeeping...
Task and Management Calendar*.  {*Capital Area Beekeepers Association; Baton Rouge, LA publication}

What I’m presenting with these monthly exposes is directed at the hobby beekeeper, not the commercial, queen breeder or queen rearer, though they too would carry out much of what I’m stating.  In all cases, I document all my visits and what I do with a field book.  Never trust your memory and this documentation becomes especially useful over time.  With that in mind, here is what I’m doing this February and what I’m expecting for March.

January
Check colony strength.  Check honey stores.  Repair or replace equipment.  Visit the apiaries/hives at least once a month.

February
By early February I am beginning to prepare for the hive build-up, especially if I’m using Italians or hives that I’ve created from captured swarms – these are prone to early population buildup and need food to do so.

It is this month that I move out of my winter mode of checking the hives once a month, to that of every 2 weeks.  Sometimes I get antsy and start looking at them every week.  I check for honey stores and if lacking I initiate sugar water feeding (2:1 ratio).  Whether I have decent honey reserves or not, I begin feeding pollen concentrates (I use Bee Pro patties from Mann Lake).  Check for colony strength.  Are the numbers low, moderate or high?

I also do a sampling for Varroa mites, using the powdered sugar shake method but you can do a sampling use sticky boards, visual, drone brood sampling (see my talk from fall of 2016), ether roll alcohol wash.  If greater than 2% of the bees are infested, I fumigate with oxalic acid.  This spring all of my hives came through the winter with very low mite populations so I didn’t treat them.  [I’d recommend that you visit Randy Oliver’s website to become familiar with the treatment options and techniques regarding Varroa mite treatments.


Looking at my field book from last year, the earliest swarm capture I made was March 17.  With that in mind I believe that swarming season would begin March 1st and that would mean that drones were/are being produced as early as mid-February (it takes about 2 weeks after a drone pupates before it is sexually mature.  That would mean that the queens would be pupating out in early March as well.  You should be looking for these things to be occurring.

How best to find these things out you might ask?  Plan on rotating your brood boxes before the first of March.  While doing that you can observe what’s going on inside the hive.  It is this time of year that I monitor the presence and development of the drone brood and drones.  Through monitoring of them I will know when the queens will be produced.

If you are cognizant of queen rearing, then start preparing to do this.  Check for queen productivity.
Continue with your repair or replacement equipment.

**March**
I’m into that time of year when I visit the yards every week.

Continue to check honey stores and colony strength. The bee populations will/are building and they will need plenty of pollen and honey/sugars to help create those large populations, good drones and queens.

If you are into swarm capture, then get ready now. Call and leave your name with the LSU Ag system, local fire and police departments, etc. Be ready to move quickly. Have a container handy to place the swarm in, a ladder, pruning shears, clean water &/or sugar water spray bottle, mosquito netting, nuc box at home, etc. However, before responding to calls ask a few things: How long has the swarm been there? How high is it? What is its size? Get a contact person’s name and phone number and ask them to call you if the swarm leaves before you get there. If you can’t get to it for several hours, let the caller know that and if you can’t make it, tell them that and recommend someone else, if you know anyone. If you make an appointment to come, do so or call. My first swarm capture this season came on Wednesday, March 1st. I captured about 30,000 bees and they are now in a hive with plenty of honey and a pollen patty.

Continue feeding up until the honey flow is on – I began placing patties in mid-February and by February 25th I’d placed a second patty as the first had been consumed. You will know that the honey flow is on when the bees stop feeding on your sugar water and/or pollen patties and you see them bringing in lots of pollen and filling the hive with honey. At that time stop feeding, remove the patties and store them in the freezer until later in the year or next spring.

Make colony increases and prepare and/or make hive splits, nucs and prepare for queen rearing.

Plan on adding honey supers as needed - when I have 7 out of 10 frames full of honey I add another.

Treat for ants and vegetation in the yards.

*One thing I didn’t mention in the last newsletter but which I do whenever I find the queens, I make sure they are marked. I do this for new or old, whether in established hives or swarms. You are there, do it and be prepared at any visit to do it. There are established color codes but use whatever suits you.*

**April**
With April the honey flow in Central Louisiana is probably in full flow. At this time of year natural hive production, queen replacements, swarming and the like are occurring. If you value
your bees it behooves you to create splits, capture queen cells, build nucs, and if you choose, to sell queens, nucs, and hives that you have created.

Many queens that overwintered and spent their best creating large populations of bees for this spring’s honey flow have become overextended and many die and/or need replacing. This is where the nucs and/or queens you’ve been creating come in handy. I usually replace the queens in those hives that look like the brood pattern is suffering with new queens. Sometimes, I just replace the queens anyway, rather than wait for a possible failure – it can happen quickly and one week the hive looks great and the next it’s being overrun with wax moths. Whenever you replace the queen(s) be sure to monitor that hive for the next few weeks to be sure she’s been accepted and brood production is coming on line.

Continue adding honey supers as needed. Treat for ants and vegetation in the yards.

May
In May I continue with weekly hive maintenance by treating for small hive beetles (I use SHB traps on the top frames and a West trap with powdered lime in the bottom, below a screen), ant and vegetation management, adding supers as needed and most importantly: monitoring the individual hives for brood production and possible pest/diseases. This latter point will entail breaking open the hives to look at the brood pattern/condition. I don’t do this every week but I do it at least twice a month. With strong hives that I’d checked once or twice in mid-March that are full of bees and putting on supers every week or so, I usually break into their brood chambers and check them once this month. Back in February when I’d rotated the brood boxes I was able to examine my hives in depth. Now I do a quick perusal of the frames looking for possible signs of swarming (queen cells), brood production, poor brood production, eggs, uncapped larvae, drone brood, etc.

Though all my hives came through the winter with low varroa mite populations, I have sampled for the mites and have treated all my hives with oxalic acid via fumigation. I do this with all swarms and nucs – once I’ve got them established. As the bee populations’ increase and the drones come on line, so the mite populations tend to increase. Sample, monitor and treat as necessary. This season, I chose not to use drone brood frames to control varroa mites, but if you choose to do so, be sure to pull them once the cells are capped. It’s always a good idea to break open some of your drone brood and take an inventory as to how many mites you see. I opened 20 random cells in three out of five hives in one yard and counted two mites. That indicates a low count – in those hives. As stated above: [I’d recommend that you visit Randy Oliver’s website to become familiar with the treatment options and techniques regarding Varroa mite treatments.]

This last April I did lose some queens but was able to save all the hives’ bees by either requeening or hive combinations. The nice thing about combining hives is that you can always come back and split those hives and add a new queen – if you have them (queen cells/nucs). I never combine a hive with obvious disease or heavy mite issues with a strong colony. As I treat for mites regularly and requeen often, I usually don’t see hives with major disease/mite issues.
As I do my spring honey harvesting the first week of June, I start documenting how many supers I’m going to pull in June, about two weeks prior to harvest.

**June**

Depending upon the weather, I usually harvest the first week of June. During the harvest I pull those wooden-ware items that need repair or servicing and replace them. I should mention that I try and utilize the efforts of new beekeepers during the season not only to train them but to assist with maintenance in the yards. They often ask for that service and I enjoy their company and help. It may take longer to complete a field check and sometimes they kill a queen or drop a box but that’s part of the journey to becoming a beekeeper (once a few summers back they managed to wipe out three queens and several queen cells – all in one visit!) At honey harvest their assistance is greatly appreciated and I give each of them a gallon of honey when we finish. I should make note here that I “really dislike harvesting and processing honey!” Whenever I can get help and get this part of the business completed I never say “no thanks”.

June generally is the tail end of the honey flow for CENLA – though this season I’m not so sure. The floral sources are changing with the weather heating up and the rains slacking off. Weekly field checks and maintenance continue. Supers are still added when needed.

Swarm season is or has come to an end by this month. In your hives, a good indication of this is the lack of drone production. When the bees stop making drones then they aren’t making queen cells either. If you are trying to raise queens then you will need drones to mate with them.

**July & August**

Due to the frequent rains, I wasn’t able to harvest in early June, but rather in early July. As such, we had a mix of spring honey (more yellowish) and some summer honey’s (amber colored) in our harvest. When harvesting, I always take empty supers with me to place as needed on those hives where all the supers are pulled – which isn’t often. Usually there is an uncapped and partially filled super on the top of any hive.

This season, I’m still seeing some drone brood in some brood boxes so there are queen cells being produced in some hives out there. For the most part however, swarm season is pretty much over. The summer heat and humidity are in place by now with the respective floral sources at this time of the season. For Louisiana, most honeys produced in the summer and fall months is amber-colored, versus the lighter more yellowish spring honey.

Weekly field checks and maintenance continue. Supers are still added when needed. This year I have started using Swiffers in the tops of my hives for the control of SHB’s. I’m still using the SHB traps and the West traps. I use ½ of a 4” x 8” sheet and rotate them out every two weeks. In one hive where I had an aggressive SHB population I placed two full-sized sheets. Of note, though I usually look at the West traps every two weeks, due to the weekly rains, I look at them every week. Reason: often, after a heavy downpour, the trap gets water in it and the lime needs replacing.
I’m still sampling for varroa and have used oxalic acid fumigation twice over a two week period since May in each hive. With the frequent rains we’ve been having it was hit or miss getting to the yards with my truck so at one time I used a battery on a small wagon and long battery cables to apply the charge needed to convert the crystalline oxalic acid to a gas. I avoid using formic acid or MAQ strips in mid-summer due to the heat.

By mid-August I will begin counting the supers that will need harvesting in early September. By so doing you can plan ahead for what you should be expecting at harvest time, both in space needed in/on the vehicle(s) during removal from the apiary and in materials needed in processing at the processing center.

**September–October – See BBB#5**

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**Honey, I love you: Our 40,000-year relationship with the Humble Bee**


Humans have always had a special relationship with bees. And while the archaeological evidence is sparse, what does exist shows the richness of ancient human activities.

By: [Holly Norton](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/may/24/honey-i-love-you-our-40000-year-relationship)

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Earlier this month I received my first package of bees. A package refers to a box containing 3 pounds of bees, or roughly 12 thousand *Apis mellifera*. And while introducing a new species of animal to your home seems like a hugely cathartic event, there was no ceremonious exchange of
insect between myself and the store from which I ordered them, which was a bit of a let down. I accepted the humming box, placed it in the hatchback of the family car, and drove home. After donning my bee suit and gathering all my tools, it took me about 12 minutes to physically place the bees into the brood box, the part of the hive where the queen will lay her eggs and rear new drones and workers. And with that our family joined an ancient fraternity of bee keepers.

Humans have intricately intertwined their existence with bees for millennia. Interestingly, bee keeping and honey hunting have been largely ignored in the archaeological or ethnographic records, and we have to be satisfied with minor glimpses into such activities. One of the earliest recorded instances of humans interacting with bee products comes from a modest spear point found in a Spanish cave, which was attached to its shaft with the aid of bee’s wax 40,000 years ago. Ancient rock art from such diverse places as southern Africa, Turkey, Bhutan, and Australia depict various aspects of bee hive life cycles, often with human figures attempting to access the hives. Most of this was created by nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples who hunted wild honey sources. Some of these depictions, such as red and white paintings from Zimbabwe, depict not only honey and comb, but also depict brood, the reproductive portions of the hive where the queen lays the eggs and the larval bees grow to maturity each in their own cells. Understanding brood and when hives are the most (re)productive would have aided hunter-gatherers in collecting wild honey. Such cultures also ate the brood, which is rich in fat and protein.

The ‘Zlota Galaz’ beekeeping facility at work in Nowy Gaj, Poland, has some nice examples of traditional up-right mud “skeps” that have been used for beehives since the middle ages. Photograph: Wojciech Pacewicz/EPA
The archaeological evidence for bee keeping, not just wild honey collecting, is sparse, but what does exist is geographically broad. Bees were a common symbol in the Ancient World, with the practice of bee keeping seeming to be an important aspect to the Neolithic revolution and the emergent dependence on agriculture. For instance the honey bee held a special place in Ancient Egyptian mythology, being born from the tears of the Sun God Ra. Bees are a hieroglyph that occurs as parts of titles of state, and depictions of horizontal hives decorate some tomb walls. Early direct archaeological evidence is from Israel, in the ancient city of Tel Rehov (Tell es-Saram in Arabic) dating to the tenth-to-ninth centuries BCE. While many bee hives are often
outside of cities, this site recorded 30 hives, with an estimated total of 100 hives at the time of
use, within a dense urban area. This discovery was striking for a couple of reasons. Not only
does it speak to the prominent role of honey and other bee products in ancient economies, but
keeping up to 100 hives in an urban area speaks to the possible ecology of the city and the wide
availability of food for the hives.

**On the road with Malaysia's honey hunters – in pictures**

Many excavated hives like those at Tel Rehov, or depicted such as in Ancient Egyptian art works, are of
cylindrical, horizontal hives, often built into walls and made of fired clay or ceramic. This was not
necessarily universal, however. Archaeological evidence has indicated that in Greece upright clay pots
were used for bee hives. As of 2012 the archaeologists working on bee hives in Greece reported that no
lids or lid fragments had been recovered for these vessels. Experimental archaeology re-creating these
clay-pot hives, and using both clay lids and wooden bars or strips, and using these clay hives to actually
to rear bees proved that ancient apiarists could have utilized movable combs, meaning they could remove
portions of the bee hive and transfer them to other vessels, much like the movable frames in modern box
hives today. To many it is an esoteric point, but modern bee keepers see the Langstroem hive, or the stack
of boxes we recognize today in country fields, as the technological advancement that allowed for
movable hives. For that to have occurred thousands of years prior to the modern hive is
extraordinary to many.

In medieval and pre-modern Europe hives were often kept in boles, or wall recesses that housed
wicker and mud skeps that served as the hive. These have been especially well recorded in
England, Ireland, and France but are found throughout Europe. These types of operations were
associated with gardens or agricultural fields, such as vineyards.

Bee boles at the Lost Gardens of Heligan near St Austell.

[Facebook Twitter Pinterest]
Before the arrival of modern bee hives, a skep or upside-down basket housing the bees was placed in the recess for protection. Photograph: RichardDerwent/GuardianWitness

Along with clay and basket skeps, cultures all over the world utilized natural vessels for hives. While the honey bee is an “old world” insect, there were stingless bees, *Apis meliponinae*, that were kept for honey by the Ancient Maya in the New World, usually in logs that were closed by ground-stone discs. Interestingly, when these discs were first identified by archaeologists in the 1970s, they were found in pairs of the same size, separated by short distances. These pairs differed in diameter from other pairs of stone discs, and are thought to have been made to the same diameter as the opening of the log. Ethnographically these types of log hives are seen stacked in “A” frames and were described by 16th-century Spanish explorers to the region. The Maya also had a Bee God, Ah Mucan Cab. Mayan bee keepers, like bee keepers in many other cultures, created a fermented drink, Balche, made from the honey of the stingless bee and tree bark. This was reportedly widely used on ceremonial occasions related to the life cycle of keeping the bees and the harvest of the honey and wax.

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Stingless bees produce a highly prized honey in Yucatan, Yucatan. Photograph: The Guardian

These types of vignettes, while almost illusory, add a bit of dimension to our understanding of the prehistoric, ancient, and pre-modern world. Activities such as bee keeping were undertaken by a minority of people then, as today, but help to remind us of the richness of human activity. Beyond the functional aspects of honey and wax, entire monographs could be written on the various cultural meanings and symbols surrounding bees, and indeed have been - the bible of bees across cultures is Eva Crane’s 1999 tome “The World History of Bee Keeping and Honey Hunting,” which includes a wealth of archaeological information. The 2015 monograph “The Tears of Re” by Gene Kritsky is a cultural and economic history of bees in Ancient Egypt. Bees remain important in our contemporary lives. A 2014 study of urban bee keepers in Brooklyn by Moore and Kosut illustrated that bee keeping in the United States was an essential practice for a certain demographic of people looking to have some control over an increasingly
fraught climate. The ability to practice a sustainable hobby allows people to participate in a new way of living in a crowded world, a way of living that simultaneously harkens back to old ways of living. I’m personally reminded that I may fall within that demographic. While I am neither an expert apiarist nor an expert on the archaeology of apiaries, I find it comforting that this is an activity that is part of a universal human experience. Most of us no longer worship any given bee god, but many of us still see the return of pollinators to our little patches of earth as a sign of spring and a yearly renewal. Another interesting aspect of the Moore and Kosut article is that the authors are also engaging in an emerging field of anthropology, “intra-species” or “critical animal” studies, where the animals themselves are informants alongside their human counterparts. With the impact that honey producing bees have had on human cultures across the globe for thousands of years, I would argue that they probably have a lot to tell us.

Since you’re here …
… we’ve got a small favor to ask. More people are reading the Guardian than ever, but far fewer are paying for it. Advertising revenues across the media are falling fast. And unlike many news organizations, we haven’t put up a paywall – we want to keep our journalism as open as we can. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. The Guardian’s independent, investigative journalism takes a lot of time, money and hard work to produce. But we do it because we believe our perspective matters – because it might well be your perspective, too. I made a contribution to the Guardian today because I believe our country. The U.S. is in peril and we need quality independent journalism more than ever. Reading news from websites like this helps me keep some sense of sanity and provides a bit of hope in these dangerous, alarming times. Keep up the good work! I appreciate you. Charru B
If everyone who reads our reporting, who likes it, helps to support it, our future would be much more secure.

Tart Cherry Pollination

June 21, 2017 • Around the Country | Blog | Pollination
https://beeinformed.org/2017/06/21/tart-cherry-pollination/

The summer of 2017 is an exciting time for the Bee Informed Partnership as industry support and beekeeper interest has facilitated the expansion of a new BIP Tech Transfer Team based in Michigan. This expansion into a new territory means learning about the specifics of the local landscape, agricultural systems and beekeeping calendar in order to better serve the local beekeeping operations. Most Michigan-based beekeeping operations spend the winter in Florida or other warmer states and return to Michigan in the spring for fruit pollination and honey production through the summer and autumn.
Cherries are an important part of the local economy and point of local pride in the Traverse City area. Tart cherries are one of the most prevalent pollination crops in Michigan and many beekeepers rent their colonies to orchardists during the spring prior to moving them into summer honey production yards. The Montmorency cultivar makes up nearly the entire commercially produced tart cherry crop nationwide with Michigan accounting for approximately 75% of the tart cherries produced nationally. The industry is centered around the Traverse City area, which is known as the “Cherry Capital of the World” and hosts the National Cherry Festival annually around the 4th of July.

There are 32,000 acres (NASS, 2011) of tart cherry plantings in the state, with the industry concentrated in the “fruit belt” on the western side of the state bordering Lake Michigan. This fruit belt is characterized by sandy loam soils and benefits from the climactic effects of proximity to the big lake with tart cherries generally being hardy in climate zones 4-7. The moderating impact of the lake somewhat delays the bloom timing, therefore lowering the chance of a damaging frost post fruit set. This region of the state also has large acreages of other specialty crops including sweet cherries, apples, peaches, pears, grapes, hops, and a variety of berry crops.

Montmorency cherry orchard blooming in Oceana County

Unlike many varieties of sweet cherries (Prunus avium), tart cherries (Prunus cerasus) are self-fertile, meaning pollen transfer is only required within individual flowers on the same tree and orchard plantings do not need to include pollinizing varieties. Tart cherries bloom in the May when weather in the region can be cool, wet, and windy often hampering pollination efforts. Despite their self-fertile capabilities tart cherries do benefit from honey bee pollination with reports indicating that yields are substantially increased by the presence of honey bee colonies during bloom. Cherry blossoms provide both pollen and nectar to foraging bees.
Cherries are a relatively good source of spring pollen which is dark yellow in color but nectar is generally not gathered in quantities large enough to produce substantial yields of surplus. To maximize pollination in what can be brief windows of suitable conditions growers are recommended to stock honey bee colonies in the orchard at a coverage of 1-1.5 per acre. The bloom period for cherries where they are receptive to pollination is generally 7-8 days although this can be accelerated or slowed by hot or cold weather patterns. Bees are typically in for two weeks or less and the rental fees are in the range of $50-55 per colony. Honey bees typically visit cherry blossoms in the morning so it is recommended that growers avoid activities that may disrupt bee activity (such as mowing and spraying) during this time.

Forager on cherry blossoms

In addition to honey bees some growers have begun supplementing hired honey bee colonies with mason bees (Osmia spp). Honey bees do not typically forage at temperatures below 55°F so creating suitable habitat for other pollinators that are capable of foraging at lower temperatures can help achieve fruit set during periods of marginal weather. “Over pollination” leading to a need for extensive thinning of fruit is rarely a problem with cherries as it can be in other crops. The crop typically matures 2-3 months after pollination with harvest occurring in mid-July. Harvest is done mechanically by shaking the trunk and collecting the fruit in tarps where it is then immediately submerging it in cold water to preserve freshness limit bruising and separate debris. The vast majority of the crop is processed by freezing, drying, canning, or juicing.
Ripe Cherries are a sign of summer in western Michigan

Written By: Dan Wyns
Dan Wyns has written 8 posts in this blog.
I was introduced to honey bees over a decade ago while in New Zealand on a working holiday and have been consumed with caring for and learning about them ever since. Prior to joining BIP I was a commercial beekeeper in New Zealand and western Canada where I was fortunate to gain a diversity of beekeeping experience across a variety of climates and agricultural landscapes. I joined BIP in 2014 as a member of the PNW tech transfer team and spent 3 years working with beekeepers across OR, WA and ID. The addition of a Tech Transfer position in Michigan has allowed me to carry on working with bees and beekeepers while relocating to my home state. I was born in Grand Rapids, raised in Grand Haven, and studied in Ann Arbor so the opportunity to serve the beekeeping community here is especially satisfying. My family roots run deep in Michigan horticulture and I look forward to continuing that tradition by working to promote colony health and support local agriculture.

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Beekeeping is a Growing Hobby in SW Louisiana - Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter Extension Agent

For the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our web site at: www.lsuagcenter.com

About ten years ago, Louisiana had about three or four beekeeping clubs. Now, according the Louisiana Beekeepers Association website, the Bayou State has 17 beekeeper clubs. The interest in honey bees is growing statewide, and southwest Louisiana is following a similar pattern.

Since 2014, a few local beekeeping clubs have been providing training in “Basic Beekeeping” program, and over 160 people have completed the basic class:

| Table of the Number of Beekeepers Completing Basic Beekeeping School – by Club and by Year |
|-----------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                              | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Total |
| CENLA                                         | 0    | 13   | 13   | 10   | 36    |
| Lake Area                                     | 0    | 50   | 21   | 20   | 91    |
| SW LA                                         | 22   | 20   | 15   | 0    | 57    |
| Total                                         | 22   | 83   | 49   | 30   | 184   |
In 2013, the some extension staff at the LSU AgCenter in partnership with volunteer beekeepers developed the “Basic Beekeeping” program. This group recommended *First Lessons in Beekeeping* by Dr. Keith Delaplane, Apiary Specialist at the University of Georgia and 1986 LSU entomology Master’s graduate.

![First Lessons in Beekeeping](image)

**Figure 1 First Lessons in Beekeeping, the text for Basic Beekeeping Class**

Then the members of this group developed PowerPoint slideshows from the chapters of *First Lessons in Beekeeping*. Topics in this bee class include: bee breeds, bee biology, bee hive & its accessories, getting started, management for honey production & pollination, products of the hive, off-season management, honey bee disorders, parasites & nest invaders. The group also added a unit on the rules and regulations of Louisiana to enable future beekeepers to comply with apiary practices. There is also a slideshow entitled, “Louisiana Honey Plants”.

An important aspect of the beekeeping class is the hands-on, practical bee yard visit. Before entering the bee yard, students learn how to light a smoker and to maintain adequate smoke for calming the bees. Other safety items include how to use a bee veil, bee suits and other protective apparel.

In the bee yard, the instructor will demonstrate the use of a hive tool for opening a hive and for pulling frames for examination. Students will see what a good brood pattern looks like. The instructor will try to show the class what a live queen looks like, but she tends to be uncooperative and tries to move around in a hive. The inspection of the hive will also reveal what capped honey looks like. The small hive beetle (SHB) is a common hive pest and will probably be present during hive inspection.

![Bee yard visit from 2015 Bee Class](image) ![2016 Basic Bee Class Graduate](image)

**Figure 2. Bee yard visit from 2015 Bee Class**  **Figure 3. 2016 Basic Bee Class Graduate**
At this writing, seven of 17 Louisiana bee clubs have received the “Basic Beekeeping” program from the LSU AgCenter, but only three have reported their class results. Four of the 17 bee clubs have meetings and classes in four AgCenter offices.

For more information, please contact Keith Hawkins, County Agent, 337-463-7006. Also, you may also obtain regular “beemail” updates about beekeeping by sending your request by email to khawkins@agcenter.lsu.edu.

**LSU Researchers Receive Nearly $1 million to Study Honeybee Stress**

“BATON ROUGE – Two Louisiana State University researchers are getting nearly $1 million for a two-year study of how mite treatment and stress affect honeybee health. Kristen Healy and Daniel Swale are working with U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers in Baton Rouge and the nation’s largest beekeeper, the LSUA AgCenter said in a news release Thursday. They’ll be studying 400 hives of honeybees owned by Adee Honey Farms of Bruce, South Dakota, including some that are moved to “California for the fall almond harvest and then to Mississippi for the winter. Healy said they will sample pollen, nectar and bees from hives during and at the end of the study. “We can look at which colonies failed and which ones didn’t and quantify which stress variables were more important to the relative health of the bees,” Healy said. LSU is getting $935,000. It’s among seven universities getting a total of $6.8 million from the USDA to study pollinators. The USDA estimates honeybees pollinate $15 billion worth of crops.”

**Internet Sites You Might Find Useful**

- Epi-pen Allergy Shot News  
- Ever wonder how the honeybee views the world - How Bees Can See the Invisible: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CpEV9_J0v8&feature=youtu.be
- The Beehive Journal - A depository of over 300 different beehive designs with photos, 93+ plans for beekeeping equipment and bee hives, beekeeping information and links from around the world. Submissions of photos and related information welcome. To post a comment click on the Beehive title, component title or the comment icon. Help us grow by linking to us, telling others, becoming a follower or a guest author. : http://beehivejournal.blogspot.com/2009/01/build-it-yourself.html
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Over the past five years the number of our newsletter advertisers has steadily increased. In appreciation for their support the LBA has offered vendor booths to these advertisers at our annual State Convention free of charge. Vendor displays have also increased, providing our guests with a convenient venue for purchasing the beekeeping products they might need. These vendors in turn contribute door prizes and auction items to the LBA, making the event more enjoyable for our guests. Those who pre-purchase supplies through the vendors can have them delivered and avoid shipping charges.

Advertising is an important marketing tool for beekeepers and your beekeeping business is important to the Louisiana Beekeepers Association. Give us an opportunity to provide a portion of your advertising needs in 2016.

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Remit your advertising fee to LBA Treasurer, Ms. Beth Derr; Ph. 936-591-2399; Jefferson, TX 75657; beth@labeekeepers.org and forward your company’s camera ready, 4 inch by 3 inch jpeg ad image to Mr. Tim Haley, LBA Newsletter Editor, at: tamh212@suddenlink.net
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