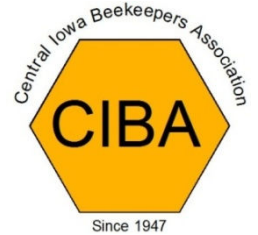


"Promoting the Craft, Science and Future of Beekeeping since 1947"

THE BEELINE

Official Newsletter of the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association



ISSUE: Spring 2023

Editor: Laura Miller and Cate Clark

IOWA HONEY BEE DAY

Thursday, March 16th 7 A.M. to 12 noon
State Capitol – Rotunda
1007 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa

More on **page 8**.

CIBA WINTER SEMINAR

Saturday, March 18th 8:45 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
Iowa Arboretum & Gardens
1875 Peach Avenue, Madrid, Iowa

A jam-packed day of presentations, fellowship and food is planned. You must pre-register for this event so sign up soon!

More on **page 3**.

Questions? Call Dr. Don Sievers: (515) 460-6004

CIBA SPRING AUCTION

Saturday, April 15th 8 A.M. unload; 10 A.M. bidding
Washington Township School
18930 210th Street, Minburn, Iowa

Sign up to sell items today! More on **page 4**.

CIBA MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, May 20th 5:00 P.M.
Northridge Baptist Church
3700 6th Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa
Speaker: Randall Cass, ISU Extension
Topic: *Small Hive Beetles and other non-varroa honey bee insect pests*

More on **page 4**.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER:

April 10, 2023

Email submissions and comments to:

Laura Miller, Beeline_editor@yahoo.com

We encourage you to receive the newsletter via email; however, we understand if electronic delivery is not for you! You may update your subscription by contacting Linn Wilbur, lwilbur50201@gmail.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT, JAMIE BEYER

I have started calling our members just to determine how things are going for them and find out what CIBA can do more of, for them. It has been a chilling bunch of calls already. A majority of them had already lost a bunch of bees even before the end of December. This is what I want to address in this month's report to you.

We have not even had winter yet in November and December so can we really call those hive losses winter kill? I think not. As beekeepers we know that winter is the toughest time of year for bees to survive. So, it has to be extended cold conditions that bees need to endure to survive. Having enough honey reserves to last the entire winter is the first thing that comes to mind, of course. Then there is having enough bees to form a large enough cluster to generate the heat to keep the hive alive. So, if a lot of bees are parasitized by varroa mites, these bees more than likely will die over a period of time in winter reducing the size of the cluster. But again, this is later in winter. Finally, the last major winter killer of bees is moisture dripping down on the cluster. This also is a later winter killer (Jan/Feb).

For hives that die in Nov/Dec the causes, I believe, are in most cases different from those just described. The root of these early winter causes is a change in behavior of bees due to lack of nectar/pollen flow. The field bees become desperate for resources and will go into a feeding frenzy (FF) on anything, even on what they think resembles pollen and/or nectar.

These "desperado" bees will start robbing smaller hives that are near big hives. They literally go into this FF just described. Honey and pollen are stolen from these smaller (weaker) hives. Also, in the process of the robbing the resident bees fight to the death trying to fend off the invader. Not only is the honey gone but the population of bees has been reduced to a nonsurvivable level even in late fall.

I am a firm believer that this FF will also be on pesticides that are intended for other insects. For example, alfalfa fields/pastures sprayed in the fall for army worms, or Golden Malrin that is intended for flies in livestock areas. Or discarded corn or soybean seed that is coated with neonicotinoids which honey bees like. Or water that was used for cleaning out pesticide sprayers in the fall especially in dry years, when even water is in short supply.

This FF behavior is not normally present during periods of nectar/pollen flow. Early spring and fall are when we see this behavior. During the spring you see them going crazy (FF) on the small particles in bird feeders, on grain dust, or even on saw dust.

Continues on page 12

Find us on the web: www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CentrallowaBeekeepersAssociation

Join our CIBA Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/353306835159561/

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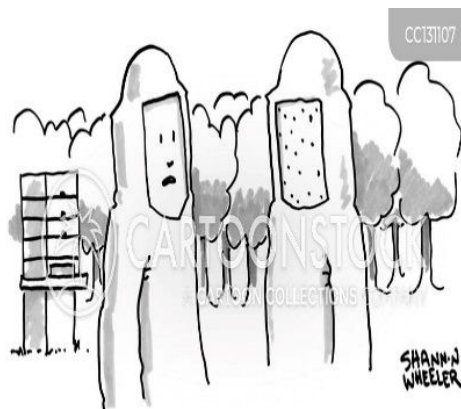
CIBA Club Meetings/Communications

CIBA meets 6 times annually, the third Saturday every other month. During active beekeeping season (May and September), they are late afternoon or early evening; in off-season (November and January) they are early afternoon. The March winter seminar and July field day are full-day events.

The official CIBA newsletter, the **BEELINE**, is published four times a year on the first day of January (Winter, beginning in 2023); March (Spring); May (Summer) and September (Fall). A special Student Edition is published each January for people enrolled in central Iowa beekeeping classes.

CIBA members also receive the **CIBA Newscast** email from the president on months when the BEELINE is not published (not available for members who choose to receive CIBA info only via USPS).

CIBA Bee Bits, an email newsletter with helpful hints about beekeeping, comes out the 15th of each month (not posted on the CIBA website and available only for CIBA members who receive CIBA info electronically).



"John, the bees go on the outside."

CIBA Program Updates

Winter Seminar: Features Fantastic Lineup of Speakers—Last Call, Register Today!

Date: Saturday, March 18th

Time: 8:45 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. (check-in starts at 8:20 A.M.).

Where: Iowa Arboretum & Gardens, 1875 Peach Avenue, Madrid, Iowa

Schedule: Doors open at 8:20 A.M. with the first of seven speakers to begin at 8:45 A.M.

All attendees must register here: centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/winter-seminar-march-2023

If you want to brush up on your beekeeping skills, hear the latest research, try something new with beeswax, or learn about new state laws and licensing, then you will DEFINITELY want to attend CIBA's annual Winter Seminar! Of course, there's always the food and fellowship – two other highlights of this great day planned by the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association.

This year we've moved the event to the beautiful Iowa Arboretum near Madrid. If the weather's nice you can enjoy an early spring walk around the grounds. But you will not want to miss all the networking that takes place this day, from meeting other beekeepers -- newbie-to-expert -- to chatting with the speakers (there will be **EIGHT** this year!).

Our keynote speaker is **Dr. Judy Wu-Smart**, associate professor and extension specialist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She leads the UN-Lincoln Bee Lab where her team has been developing a robust pollinator health program focused on the Great Plains region. She'll talk about spring management basics (for places with REAL winters) and how to minimize injury and disruption of your hives.



Other speakers include **Dr. Mike Simone-Finstrom** who will join us via Zoom from his Baton Rouge Bee Lab on breeding bees to control varroa and improve colony health. You also will hear from State Apiarist **Andy Joseph** on the status of Iowa apiaries, **Kurt Rueber** with the Iowa Food and Consumer Safety Bureau on new state laws regarding honey sales and **Dr. Kristen Clark** of the Honey Bee Veterinary Consortium. Rounding out the program will be longtime northern Iowa beekeepers **Pat and Peggy Ennis** (package bees vs. nucs and what to do with beeswax) and **Shelby Kittle**, University of Nebraska-Lincoln bee researcher and educator.

Registration for CIBA members is only \$30, nonmembers \$35, and \$20 for students (college and K-12), which covers a luncheon catered by Smokin' Big Dawg BBQ and all snacks during the day. More details and registration on the CIBA website: centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/winter-seminar-march-2023

This is a well-attended event and we have space for only 160 people so register early. Questions? Contact Program Committee Chair Dr. Don Sievers, (515) 460-6004 or dwsievers4@gmail.com.

Bee facts you may not know:

- A foraging honey bee can carry 80% of her weight in pollen or nectar
- It takes approximately 3,500 honey bees to weigh 1 pound
- The queen bee can lay between 1,000 and 3,000 eggs per day
- Honey bees fly 55,000 miles to bring us 1 pound of honey
- Honey bees have two stomachs—one for food and another for nectar
- Each honey bee colony has a unique odor for members' identification
- Honey bees have hair on their eyes to help keep their eyeballs clean
- Honey was found in ancient tombs in Egypt and was still edible
- One pollen granule contains 100,000 grains of pollen
- Humans have relied on honey bees for 9,000 years

Spring Auction: *An Auction by Beekeepers for Beekeepers*

Submitted by Mark Moberly, Auction chair and CIBA Director

Location: 18930 210th St., Minburn, IA 50167

Date: Saturday, April 15, 2023

Time: Auction starts at 10:00 A.M.

Consignments begin unloading at 8 A.M.

Reminder: Registration is now open!

Registration (for both buyers and sellers) at:
centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/auction-2023

Don't be last! Register now as a seller to get a good lot position. Register as a buyer at the same time!

Early registration allows us to post items consigned online. Increasing your chance of selling them.

CIBA members get a reduced fee when registering before April 1.

Here is a partial list of items for auction with more coming as sellers register.

- 10 frame double deep with supers, full colonies includes bees -- (10 each)
- Extractor 4/8 manual
- 4 frame electric extractor
- 10 frame outer covers
- 10 frame inner covers
- Ross round boxes and inserts (1 or 2)
- 10 frame screened bottom boards
- Bottling supplies
- Display rack
- Extractor



May Regular Meeting: *Small Hive Beetles and Other Non-Varroa Honey Bee Insect Pests*

Date: Saturday, May 20th

Time: 5 P.M.

Where: Northridge Baptist Church, 3700 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines (map and directions on CIBA website)

Schedule: We'll have a business meeting prior to the program, then Iowa State University (ISU) Bee Specialist Randall Cass will present the program on dealing with insects you don't want in your hives.

Fortunately, we were able to reschedule the planned November visit from Randall Cass. "We might worry about varroa mites wiping out a bee colony, but other types of infestations can be just as devastating. Wax moths destroy precious comb frame by frame, and small hive beetle larvae with their voracious appetites can "slime out" an entire hive." There are precautions that beekeepers can take, which will be the topic of Randall's presentation.



Randall Cass joined ISU in 2017 as the institution's first Bee Extension Specialist in more than 70 years. He coordinates bee research, manages ISU's honey apiary, lectures and provides outreach to beekeepers, farmers and landowners. He's worked with small farmers in Guatemala and El Salvador in rural development programs.

Be sure to put this meeting date on your calendar. We provide plenty of time at our events to meet other beekeepers, visit and "talk all things bees." And, like any other CIBA meeting, you can expect to find a lot of great food. See you in May!

Other CIBA Business

Annual Election Brings in New Directors, Officer

At CIBA's annual meeting in January members elected two new directors for three-year terms and a new vice president. Joining the board of directors are **Marlon Mormann** and **Richard Link**, both of Des Moines (DSM). Current director **Val Just** of DSM was elected to an empty two-year term (she also serves as CIBA webmaster).

President **Jamie Beyer** of Boone was elected to another term as president and **Don Moody** of Collins was elected to succeed **Dr. Don Sievers** as vice president (learn more about Don Moody on page 13).

After serving eight years on the board in various capacities, **Linn Wilbur** has decided to step down as secretary-treasurer. However, he will continue to serve until a new secretary/treasurer is named. The position includes membership, dues and financial record-keeping. If you know anyone who might be interested as serving either as secretary or treasurer or both, please contact any board member or officer. Linn has handled many behind-the-scenes details for CIBA -- we appreciate all his efforts!

Tony Christiansen of Bondurant was elected to the board in November to fulfill the unexpired term of the late **Susan Kelly**. Tony has since resigned due to other unexpected commitments. CIBA also needs a new chair for the Royalty Committee (where Susan also served).

If your new year's resolution was to become more involved in an organization, then **CIBA needs you!** We're always looking for new people to join the board or serve on a committee (where the fun begins!). Please consider participating in one or more of the following committees:

- Program
- Auction
- Royalty
- Food
- Bee Yard
- Mentorship
- Marketing
- Newsletter/Website
- By-Laws

Minutes from the January 21, 2023 Business Meeting

Submitted by Jim Crandall, CIBA Assistant Secretary (Recording) and CIBA Director

The meeting was opened at 1:10 p.m. by President Jamie Beyer. Moved by Arvin Foell and seconded by Abigail Kelly for acceptance of previous meeting minutes; passed. The directors Zoom meeting is the second Monday of each month and is open to all members.

Treasurer Report: An accounting since the last membership meeting and a 2023 fiscal expense and income report was presented. CIBA is in sound fiscal condition with income greater than expenses in 2022. Arvin Foell moved and Jim Crandall seconded to accept; passed. The 2023 budget was proposed and discussed. Arvin Foell moved and Jim Crandall seconded to accept; passed.

Winter Seminar: It will be March 18, 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. with lunch included. We have plenty of great speakers. Please register ASAP, no later than March 15th (no walk-ins), to allow time for caterers.

Membership: 54% have renewed so far.

Royalty Committee: 2022 CIBA Honey Queen Olivia Moody was presented with a certificate and \$250 scholarship. She is a page in the Iowa Legislature this year. Congratulations, Olivia! 2023 CIBA Honey Queen Bethany Kelly and 2023 CIBA Honey Princess Leah Casey were introduced. Queen Bethany is a six-year beekeeper and great speaker. She will be attending DMACC Ankeny for Veterinary Technology. Princess Leah is a senior at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines and will be attending art school in Kansas City this fall.

Insurance Report: Blackford and Associates of Ankeny offer the best coverage at \$1,200 annual premium. Laura Miller moved and Arvin Foell seconded for acceptance; passed.

Proposed CIBA by-law revisions were explained and discussed. Arvin Foell moved and Cindy Spiker seconded for acceptance; passed.

A recipient of the 2023 Susan Kelly Memorial Scholarship has been selected and will attend a future meeting. The recipient is 13 years old and very excited to get a hive and equipment.

2023 Election of Officers and Directors: President Jamie Beyer was re-elected by landslide. Don Moody was unanimously elected as Vice-President. The Secretary/Treasurer position is open; Linn Wilbur, present Secretary/Treasurer, has held various CIBA position over the last eight years and has graciously agreed to remain on the job until a replacement is found. Elected to three-year positions as director were Marlon Mormann and Richard Link. Val Just was unanimously re-elected to a two-year term as director (she also is our wonderful webmaster).

Iowa Honey Bee Day at the State Capitol will be March 16th beginning as 7 A.M. with a free breakfast. You can talk with legislators about bees and it's a lot of fun. All cities and towns are encouraged to proclaim this date as Iowa Honey Bee Day.

The 2023 CIBA auction will be April 15th. Look for more information on our website.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 P.M.

2023 CIBA Royalty Program

Meet Our New CIBA Honey Princess, Leah Casey

Leah Casey, 18, is the daughter of Tracey Casey of Altoona. She hasn't had much experience with beekeeping but says she's eager to learn. "Honey bees have always been a passion of mine," she says. "I love to work with bees wax to make soaps and candles and use it in my art."

Currently Leah is a senior at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines. In the fall she will start a bachelor's program in fine arts at the Kansas City Art Institute, with a goal of becoming an art teacher or art therapist. She participates in many activities including 4-H and the Polk County 4-H Council, Best Buddies, Environmental Club, Student Council, cheerleading, the Teen Art and Clay Academy, Ultimate Frisbee, FFA and the Young Feminist Club. She loves to create any kind of art, also cook and bake, read, write, crochet, listening to music and spending time outdoors. During the coming year as CIBA honey princess, Leah says she hopes to gain more beekeeping skills, meet new people and build her love of honey bees.



Bethany Kelly is New CIBA Honey Queen

Bethany Kelly, 19, is the daughter of Sean Kelly and the late Susan Kelly. She lives in Des Moines and has been beekeeping since spring of 2018, along with her sisters and parents. Bethany has nine siblings: Thomas, Nathan, Abigail, Miriam, Olivia, Caleb, Elianna, Levi, and Jeremiah. According to Bethany they are all super supportive and amazing! (Older sister Abigail was our CIBA Honey Queen three years ago.)



During her year as queen Bethany hopes to continue to learn about beekeeping and bees, share her passion for beekeeping with her peers, encourage the next generation in beekeeping, and improve her speaking abilities. She says, "I am excited to serve CIBA since they have helped me greatly throughout my beekeeping journey."

Bethany graduated from high school in May of 2022, and plans to enroll in DMACC's Veterinary Technical Program fall 2023 or 2024. Bethany enjoys being around and taking care of animals, especially horses, hiking and being in nature, especially in the fall. She likes to write and is an avid reader. She also enjoys baking sweet treats to share with her family and friends. She is active in her church as an assistant Sunday school teacher and coffee maker.

Olivia Moody (right), who served as CIBA's 2022 Honey Queen, poses with the 2023 CIBA Royalty, Princess Leah Casey (left) and Queen Bethany Kelly (middle)



How to Join Upcoming CIBA Board Meetings

CIBA officers and directors have regularly scheduled board meetings the second Monday of each month starting at 7 P.M., with a Zoom link that opens at 6:30 P.M. These meetings are open to CIBA members and you are encouraged to participate.

Here are the Zoom links for connecting via the internet:

March 13th: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81912832820?pwd=eWs2eFBFWFQ2MFdtR1NrbmZtTnhjdz09>
Meeting ID: 819 1283 2820 Passcode: 839478

April 10th: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84101299733?pwd=a3VvT0ZWNNJEbkxQY3phQk9NRmZmQT09>
Meeting ID: 841 0129 9733 Passcode: 166480

To connect via phone, find a local number at <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kbVlb3xQwM> or use Chicago number (312) 626-6799 and then the meeting ID and passcode for that month's meeting.

Call to Action: It's Time to Register Your Hives

Whether you're new or a veteran beekeeper, now is the time to register your hives – or renew your hive registration – on the state's sensitive crops directory.



Since 2016, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) has partnered with the non-profit company FieldWatch™ Inc. to provide online registry tools for sensitive crops, including beehives. Iowa code limits and restricts the timing of commercial applications of pesticides that are toxic to bees on crops in bloom within one mile of beehives registered on the state's sensitive crops directory. According to the rule adopted in 2009, applicators can apply chemicals near registered hives only before 8 A.M. or after 6 P.M. Applicators are not required to contact the hive owner.



Beekeepers can choose to register either on DriftWatch™ or BeeCheck™ -- both are part of FieldWatch. Registration is free, but all registrations expire each year on March 31. Users are required to annually renew registrations to confirm that the hives are still active, and to validate the location and number of hives.



If already registered

If you are already registered, you should have received a reminder email from FieldWatch Customer Service. In that email is a hyperlink to the website to renew your registration. If you haven't already done so, search your email for FieldWatch and take a couple minutes to complete the renewal.

If you cannot find your email sent by FieldWatch Customer Service, go to their website: www.fieldwatch.com or send a message to info@fieldwatch.com.

If not registered

If you have not registered your hives, access Bee Check at: beecheck.org/signup#beekeeper. Fill in the drop down items on the left side of the page.

Ordering signs, flags

DriftWatch sells field signs and beehive flags for beekeepers to use near approved apiaries. These signs can be ordered when you log into your FieldWatch account.



IDALS also sells 12X18-inch aluminum "No Spray" signs for apiaries. To order, go to the IDALS website: iowaagriculture.gov/SensitiveCropRegistry and go to the Field Markers section.



Iowa Honey Bee Day March 16th!

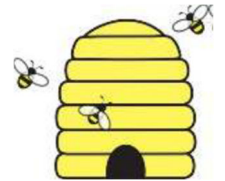
Submitted by Jamie Beyer, CIBA President

For those of you who are new to beekeeping and have not heard about Iowa's Honey Bee Day (HBD), I'd like to highlight the most important fun aspects of participating. Since this is the fifth year of HBD, we have established a great tradition of beekeepers meeting their legislators.

The Iowa Honey Producers Association (IHPA) is hosting a Legislative Reception/Breakfast this March. All elected officials, honey bee keepers and citizens who care about the future of our pollinators are invited.

This year's event is Thursday March 16 from 7 A.M. to Noon at the Iowa State Capitol. We have the Rotunda reserved exclusively for IHPA, on the first floor of the Capitol. This is one floor below the House and Senate chambers, an excellent location for our visibility to the people who pass the laws that regulate our industry. The public is also impacted since the media is there as well.

The opportunity that we have as beekeepers to highlight the importance of honey bees (and pollinators) to legislators and the public could not be better. We will be setting up many displays, including an observation hive. This required special permission to bring into the building; to our knowledge this is the only livestock ever brought into the Capitol. Of course, many other displays will be set up. A flow hive will be there as well as a traditional Langstroth hive.



We have asked Governor Kim Reynolds to sign a proclamation designating March 16 as Iowa Honey Bee Day along with many city mayors and county supervisors across the state. In the proclamations they will be stating that honey bee and native insects are important pollinators for a third of the food we eat. Honey bees face serious threats from invasive pests, decreasing bee friendly forage, variable climate and increasing pesticide and herbicide pressure.

Another draw of Honey Bee Day is that food and drink made with honey will be served. These food items are free to the Legislators and the public. This is always a hit and when they have an opportunity to get State Fair Lemonade -- they do not pass it up.

IHPA queen -- Rachael Vakulich and Princess -- Britta McCollum will be there. Everyone likes to get their picture taken with them. I know I will:-). Also CIBA's Queen Bethany Kelly and Princess Leah Casey will be there. All four will be mixing with the crowd promoting beekeeping.

IHPA Scholarship students and their families are invited to not only attend the event, but it also will be an opportunity for them (as well as anyone else) to tour the Capitol building. This building is owned by us, and it is something that is really outstanding to see and understand its history. I have set up a tour of the building after we finish visiting with Legislators. Just this tour makes it worth attending HBD.

This event is free so take some time off work and get there. It is extremely important for us beekeepers to make a large showing. We do have an impact on legislation that favors honey bees and the future of beekeeping in Iowa.

For more information about this special day please contact: Jamie Beyer, CIBA President & IHPA District 4 Director and Legislative Representative

You Know you are a Beekeeper when:

- Your once-white bee suit is no longer white
- You check out all the labels and prices of honey at every grocery store you go into
- You don't mind driving home with bees flying around everywhere in your vehicle after working your beehives
- You run to the birdbath to rescue a drowning bee
- You can't get your spouse to stop talking bees with customers when they come to the house to buy honey
- You come home smelling like a campfire and you haven't been camping
- You don't mow the lawn because the bees are working the weeds
- You plan weddings, childbirth, surgery and funerals around extracting times

Hive Brood Box Size

Submitted by Linn Wilbur, CIBA member and acting CIBA Secretary/Treasurer

Editor's Note: Linn is a long-time beekeeper who moved to using all medium bee boxes in 2015 when he saw his wife struggling with the large deep brood boxes. It's a decision he has not regretted.

I recently came across what I thought was a good article on selecting a hive configuration if you are using Langstroth-style boxes. The article was in a newsletter from the New York-based beekeeping supply house Betterbee. The article is too long to include in the BEELINE, but is at : betterbee.com/instructions-and-resources/choosing-deeps-or-all-mediums.asp?utm_source=Betterbee+Contact+List&utm_campaign=64db30c609-Betterbee_Buzz_January_2023_11823&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_61e19f35ed-64db30c609-190698009&mc_cid=64db30c609&mc_eid=50892b4755.

Towards the end of the article, they say: "It's your apiary, your back, and your sanity." I thought that summed it up rather aptly. Here is a brief matrix of the options as they present it:

Size	Full honey weight (lbs.)	2 deep equiv.	Pros	Cons
Deep	60-70	2	"Standard" configuration—what most writers assume you are using and advice given accordingly. Most mite treatment dosage given for this configuration. Readily obtain nucs in deep frames.	Weight of brood boxes if bees fill with honey towards fall. If using one size for all uses, deep honey "supers" are heavy. If using medium/shallow boxes, frames cannot be moved between hives.
Medium	40-50	3	Lighter weight. Typically use one size for both brood and honey, which allows moving frames between uses.	Need to look at more frames per hive. More difficult to find nucs in medium. More gaps in brood area. Need to adjust "standard" treatment to compensate for size.
Shallow	30-35	4	Lightest configuration to lift.	Less common box size these days. Even more gaps in brood area and more frames to look at. Fewer options in plastic foundation.

Making the decision to use mediums or shallows is easiest if you make that choice when you first start out or are setting package hives.

When I transitioned it took me two seasons and I did it by pulling the bottom deep brood box each year (usually fairly empty and heavy on pollen come spring) and replacing it with a medium(s) when I did spring reversals. In my case in central Iowa near Ames, my old brood configuration was two deeps and one medium. Presently I use four brood mediums.

The first year I added one medium, leaving me with one deep (on bottom for winter) and two mediums for overwintering. The second spring I added two mediums when I removed the last deep brood box. Less weight is nice (and more appreciated as I get older) but being able to move old honey frames (or honey frames the queen has laid in) down to the brood boxes is a big advantage. To keep track of brood boxes vs honey supers I put a stainless-steel thumb tack on the front and back of each brood box in a consistent spot.



Photo courtesy of the Iowa Arboretum

This colony uses four medium boxes for brood instead of two deep boxes. Linn provides bees, equipment and care for two demonstration hives at the Iowa Arboretum near Madrid. Honey from those bees is sold as a fundraiser for the Arboretum. Members of the Ames High School Bee Club decorated these boxes.

Honey Bees: Good Guys or Bad Guys?

Submitted by Amy Toth, Professor, Iowa State University

Honey bees have been called humanity's best friend among the insects. How can you not love them? They make honey, they pollinate many of our favorite crops, they fascinate us with their work ethic and devotion for the good of the hive. Public opinion of honey bees is high, with several states declaring the honey bee as their official state insect.

It may seem crazy to even suggest it, but there is a growing sentiment among some people who think honey bees might be "the bad guys". What? Why? Where? And how?

First of all, as a bee biologist, I must be clear that in the female-run society of honey bees, where all of the work of making honey and pollinating is done by female workers, if anyone is bad, it's not the guys (drones). It's the girls (workers). Now that we have that out of the way we can seriously ask, "Are honey bees the bad girls"?

Second, let's get some basic facts straight. Honey bees are native to Europe, Africa, and Asia. They were brought over with European colonists to the New World, and quickly spread throughout the Americas to such a broad extent that many people do not realize they weren't always here. But, from an environmental perspective, honey bees do not "belong" here in the USA. Much of the scientific literature characterizes honey bees as "exotic" (meaning they originate outside of the US), or worse, "invasive" (having a large negative impact, Russo et al. 2021).

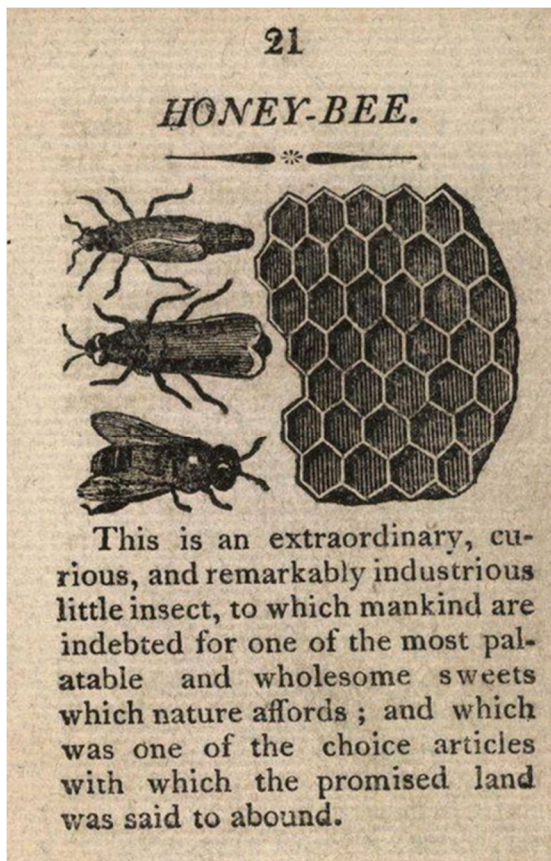
This is where the concept of honey bees' role as beneficial insects is starting to get complicated. Honey bees are clearly beneficial to humans, but are they beneficial to the natural environment? You may think—well, they pollinate, how can that be bad? Honey bees do forage on and pollinate many different plants, but their favorites are often weeds, crops, or other exotic species (think clover, fruit and nut trees, and soybeans).

The confusion over whether honey bees are beneficial is further complicated by the fact that few people in the public distinguish honey bees from bumble bees or other wild, native bees, of which there are over 20,000 different species in the world. Honey bees sometimes even get lumped with wildlife. Even agencies like the Natural Resources Defense Council had a recent campaign to "save the bees", and pictured honey bees all over their promotional materials. But wildlife is really not the right way to think about them. Besides being exotic, the vast majority of honey bees in the US are managed by people; this makes them more akin to domestic animals such as horses. They can be wild, but most of them in the United States are owned and managed by humans.

There has been a lot of attention paid to the plight of the bees in the past two decades. Bee populations are declining, honey bee colonies are collapsing, and we are losing species left and right. We need to "save the bees", right? But which bees need saving, and why?

Now, if you are concerned only with conservation of wilderness and native species and environmental issues, then the honey bee might just end up on your list of public enemies. Studies have shown that honey bees can disrupt pollination relationships between wild, native bees and native plants (Valido et al. 2019). Honey bees may compete with wild pollinators for limited resources, and with tens of thousands of workers at their disposal, they are pretty darn good at it (Garibaldi et al. 2021). Even worse, like many domestic animals, honey bees are full of diseases. And there is growing evidence that many of those diseases, including viruses such as Deformed wing virus and Israeli acute paralysis virus, can jump from honey bees to native bees (Singh et al., 2010, Burnham et al. 2021).

So, are honey bees to blame for declines in native pollinator populations and biodiversity? If we want to "save the bees", should



we be getting rid of the honey bees? These are valid questions, and worth asking in our very own neighborhood. Here at Iowa State University, we have been doing research on these very topics for several years, working with honey bees on farms as well as in restored prairie habitats right here in Iowa. We've been asking-- are honey bees bad girls here in Iowa? Does that imply—gulp— that beekeepers are bad guys/girls too? (I'm being facetious-- it is obvious to me that beekeepers are most certainly good guys and girls. But what about from the perspective of environmental issues?)

The picture so far from Iowa, is pretty good news. We found that soybean and corn farms with honey bee hives show no difference in the abundance and diversity of wild bees present at those farms (St. Clair et al. 2022). In restored prairies, we found essentially the same thing (Pritchard et al. 2021). Our latest unpublished data show that in crop fields with prairie strips, the quality of native bee/prairie plant interactions was unaffected by the presence of honey bee hives (Borchardt et al., in prep). So far, so good. However, there could be more subtle things going on. In the same 2022 study, we found that wild bumble bees in prairies with honey bee hives had higher levels of viruses than prairies without hives. But, virus levels were very low, and the bumble bees did not appear sick. Still, this may be just the tip of the iceberg. Another potential issue is that we looked at the immediate effects of apiaries that had been placed in new locations, and looked at the response of the native bees after just a few months or a year. If honey bees compete with native bees or make them sick, it may take several years to see an effect on the level of the whole population.

The bottom line is—these are important questions worth asking. So far, we aren't seeing any immediate red flags from our Iowa studies, but we still have more work to do in order to have a complete picture of what is going on.

That said, I want to circle back around to something I said earlier. The idea of “bad girl” honeybees running around and harming the environment is based on “if you are concerned only with conservation of wilderness and native species”. I am willing to bet that most people are concerned with other things too, like where your next meal is coming from. We still need honey bees for pollination of our crops, and we love their honey and hive products. Few people would go so far as to suggest we get rid of horses or chickens, even though raising them is not necessarily positive for the environment. So, asking if we should get rid of honey bees is not the right way to approach this question. Perhaps the right question is more to the tune of, “How can we find the right balance of honey beekeeping that meets human needs, in a way that is minimally damaging to the environment”?

I will end with a final note on “saving the bees”. It's clear many species of wild, native bees need saving. We know that some are already lost, and others are heading towards extinction. The European honey bee is not going extinct any time soon. However, we can't deny that our honey bees have a lot of health problems; beekeepers struggle day in and day out to protect their bees from mites, poor forage, disease, and pesticide threats. So perhaps who needs saving the most is the beekeepers. I hope we can continue to work together, learn, and figure out the best way forward to do just that.

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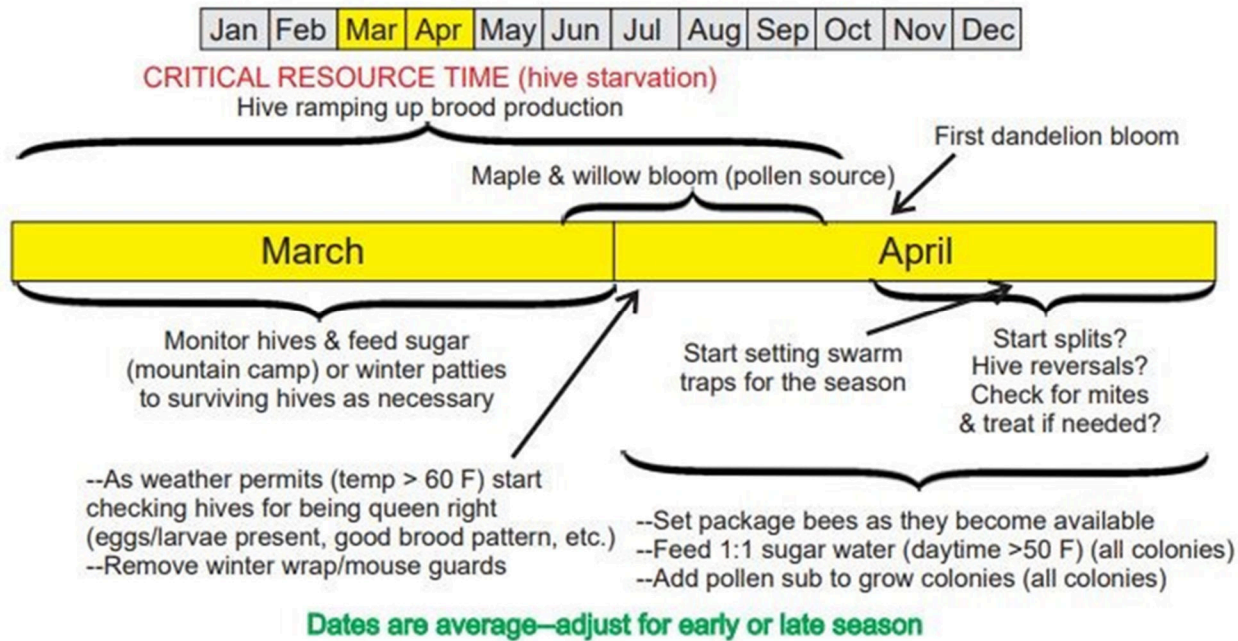
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Central Iowa Timeline of Beekeeping Tasks



Note: This framework was developed by CIBA member Linn Wilbur and reviewed by CIBA directors prior to publication here. It covers the months until the next BEELINE is published to give members a better idea for planning time and tasks related to their bee operation, based on average temperatures in central Iowa. Copyright 2023 Central Iowa Beekeepers Association

President's Report (Continued from Page 1)

However, these things are not toxic to honey bees. In the fall is when this behavior can be a killer of hives, due to pesticide use. They are not normally applied in early spring because insect pests are not a problem then.

It is a complicated subject, but the above explanation of early winter losses is my answer to unexplained losses of bees even before winter really sets in. So many times, I have heard of even experienced beekeepers not being able to determine early winter losses. Research is desperately needed to prove this.

Look at what even we beekeepers do around our hives in the fall. Do we use Golden Malrin or are we cleaning out pesticide applicators or even discarding seed that is coated with chemicals? Then ask the neighbors to your apiaries what they do.

I am focused on attempting to assist members of CIBA who have had early winter losses. Please help me and the rest of us by relating your experiences with this. Contact me by email or phone with any information you have. I will share. Your President, Jamie

Meet Your Newest CIBA Director: Don Moody

At our annual meeting in January, members elected a new vice-president for CIBA, Don Moody of Collins. As VP, he will lead the CIBA program committee. We thought you'd like to meet him.

How long have you been a beekeeper? What got you interested in keeping bees?

My daughter, Olivia (2022 CIBA Honey Queen), and I started in beekeeping four years ago. It was partially because of my involvement with several state associations but mostly because of an opportunity Olivia had at North Polk schools for a bee mentorship program.

How many hives do you have and where are they located?

We have from 10-12 hives depending on the year. Most are in southeast Story County with a couple in northern Boone County.

When did you join CIBA and what drew you to this organization?

Olivia's mentor (as well as the whole family's mentor), Tony Christenson, invited us to a meeting. The rest is great history.

What do you hope to contribute to CIBA as a board member?

CIBA is a great grassroots organization, I want to help build our future by adding members, by continuing our relevant, valuable activities, and by increasing awareness through mentorship programs at area schools and listening to what our members want.

What's your biggest challenge in beekeeping? What do you most enjoy about beekeeping?

The increasing pressure of pests and keeping the colonies healthy is a challenge. Working with bees, and my daughter, and understanding and learning better practices is most rewarding.

What's your advice to new beekeepers?

Find a mentor, attend CIBA meetings, listen and ask questions. Beekeepers are a sharing group of folks.

Tell us a little bit about your family.

Our family consists of three daughters. My wife, Lisa, teaches at North Polk and I work in the crop insurance industry. Our hobbies are raising bees and Hereford cattle.



New CIBA Director Don Moody with daughter Olivia, 2022 CIBA Honey Queen

Beekeeping Magazines

For current and interesting honeybee and beekeeping information

The American Bee Journal (ABJ) at: americanbeejournal.com/ (associated with Dadant & Sons, Inc.) for:

- Calendar of nationwide events
- Subscribe to ABJ (monthly publication)
- Archive of older monthly editions
- Sign up for free periodic email news updates (ABJ E-newsletter) or see past newsletters at: americanbeejournal.com/category/news/abj-extra/
- Free digital sample of ABJ at: americanbeejournal.com/subscribers/abj-digital-sample/

Bee Culture magazine at: beeculture.com/ (associated with A.I. Root Co./Root Publications) for:

- Calendar of nationwide events
- Subscribe to Bee Culture magazine (monthly publication)
- Archive of past articles
- Sign up for free periodic email news updates (Catch the Buzz) or see past newsletters at: beeculture.com/category/catch-the-buzz/
- Listing of web links for resources, suppliers, associations, clubs, etc.

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