

Massachusetts Beekeepers Association

Quarterly Newsletter of the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association

Uniting beekeepers through education, advocacy, and sponsorship so as to protect and foster honeybees and beekeeping in Massachusetts and beyond.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



January 1, 2024

After a mild start to Winter, I wonder what the remainder of winter weather will be like. I hope that you had a most enjoyable Holiday Season with your friends and family. As I reflect on 2023, I would like to extend my thanks once again to all the Massachusetts Beekeepers who helped to make EAS 2023 Amherst an enormous success.

The positive comments from Conference attendees keep coming in.

I hope that Massachusetts Beekeepers had a wonderful time at the November Fall meeting in Bristol County. A big thank you to Bristol County Beekeepers Association President Mike Delaney and his crew for making this meeting such an enjoyable success. Paul Kelly and Deborah Krueger presented valuable information to improve our beekeeping techniques. A great deal of effort goes into running a State Meeting, please be sure to thank the Bristol County Association members!

Thank you to all the individuals who participated in the State Honey Show at the Fall Meeting. A special thanks to Essex County's Christine Delaney who organized the State Honey Show. Congratulations to Lauri Bisconette, the winner of the Best in Show for her perfect score in the Best Cooking for her amazing Biscotti. Also, congratulations to Art Canterbury, President of Franklin County Beekeepers for earning the most points in the Show. The Mass Bee Honey Show results are listed later in this newsletter.

Please save the date for the upcoming Mass Bee Spring meeting on March 16. The meeting will be at the Topsfield Fairground and hosted by the Essex County Beekeepers Association. The speakers are Dr. Kim Skyrn, Dr. Elizabeth Barnes, Connecticut State President Bill Hesbach, and UMass Amherst Graduate Student Caro Munoz Agudelo. The Massachusetts Beekeeper of the Year will also be announced.

Please stay tuned for upcoming information.

WINTER NEWSLETTER

January 2024



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I am incredibly pleased to announce that Mass Bee Field Day will be back this summer. It is on June 15th at the University of Massachusetts Stockbridge School of Agriculture, 911 North Pleasant Street in Amherst. The Franklin County Beekeepers Association will be hosting this event. We are still soliciting beekeepers to present at the event. Please let me know if you are available to present or if there is a technique that you would like to see demonstrated.

The Mass Bee Legislative Committee is working to represent Beekeeper interests at the State level. The MBA is the voice of Beekeepers across the Commonwealth, please let us know your concerns and how the MBA can best support your County Association.

In conclusion, as we begin the new year, I hope that you will consider sharing your talents and skills with your fellow beekeepers across the State. Mass Bee has many openings for its members to become more involved. Please reach out to any Board Member to discuss your future involvement.

Mass Bee had an exciting 2023 and let us keep the positive energy going forward.

Bee Healthy,

Mary Duane

President Mass Bee
EAS Master Beekeeper



MBA 2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD :

President:

[Mary Duane](#)

Vice President:

[John Cheatham](#)

Treasurer:

[Jacqueline Rutledge](#)

Recording Secretary:

secretary@massbee.org

Corresponding Secretary:

[Carolyn Holmes](#)

Registrar:

registrar@massbee.org



The Essex County Beekeepers Association is hosting this year's **Mass Bee Spring 2024 Meeting**

Our meeting will be held on Saturday March 16th
@ 8 am—3:30 pm
at the historic Topsfield Fairgrounds

Free to Mass Bee members

Log in to [Mass Bee](#) to Register and select your lunch option

Coolidge Hall Topsfield Fairgrounds, 207 Boston Street, Topsfield, MA 01983

See more about this Event later in this Newsletter

FOLLOW US:

www.massbee.org/



Spotlight on a Beekeeper by Mary Duane

Beekeeper: Alexandra “Alix” Bartsch

Beekeeper Since: 1978

Introduction: My primary beekeeping association is the Middlesex County Beekeepers association. I also belong to several other wonderful county associations hwere in Massachusetts as well as, of course, the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association and the Eastern Apiculture Society.



How/Why did you get involved with Beekeeping? I was inspired by a wonderful biology teacher at Lexington High School, who encouraged me to pursue beekeeping. I loved the observation hive that used to be kept in the Boston Museum of Science library, and I also had an uncle living in Lexington, who had bees in an apple tree -fascinating!

How many hives do you keep? About 50, give or take

Key Beekeeper(s) who helped/mentor you? I learned beekeeping at Drumlin Farm in Lincoln, Massachusetts The instructor was a Concord Beekeeper named Tom Sisson who became a lifelong friend. I also have learned much from many of the old-timers, who we all know at the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association, and our old friend, Al Carl who used to be the Massachusetts Chief Apiary Inspector and my boss in the 80s.



Advice for new beekeepers: Look before you leap. While I dearly love being a beekeeper, it is far more difficult and expensive than it used to be.

Favorite Honey Type: I love the honey from our Linden trees here in Lexington and I'm very grateful for the generations that came before us who planted so many of these beautiful trees.

Tip on finding the Queen: Center of the brood chamber, she's the one with a tail twice as long

Most interesting Swarm Story: I have been the Swarm coordinator for Middlesex County for many years, so I have many stories. The best swarms are the ones that bring out the neighborhood and families can see that bees are both fascinating and gentle creatures. I always bring a jar of honey and ask our county beekeepers to bring honey to anyone who reports swarms, so we can save as many as possible.



What I find extra special about Honey Bees: Honeybees are a Superorganism. Their communal behavior is extraordinary. I once told Tom Seeley that I believed that the more we know about Bees the more difficult it is to not believe in a divine creator. I'm not sure he agreed, though.

Favorite food or meal that you use your honey on: Creamed honey on toast for breakfast. With a cup of good coffee, it's the best thing ever



Special Beekeeping project: I mentor the Lexington High School Bee Club which was started by my daughter and Tom Fiore's daughter about eight years ago. I love working with these wonderful young people.



Favorite Beekeeping Book: The Beekeeper's Lament by Hannah Nordhaus. The life of the bee by Maurice Maeterlinck. 50 years among the bees by CC Miller. Well, there's a lot of them. I love the old ones.

THERAPEUTIC BEEKEEPING AT THE BEDFORD VA with Mel Gadd

For the past few months, Mel Gadd has been working with a group at the Bedford Veteran's facility to implement a therapeutic beekeeping program. Beekeeping requires one to be focused and in the moment which can be very relaxing, as can sitting and watching the bees come and go. In contrast, honey bees will quickly remind a keeper if they are not paying attention. It starts with a change in the sound of the hive, and progresses to bees bumping the beekeeper, buzzing around their head, perhaps even attempting to sting.

Combining beekeeping with mindfulness practices has been shown to be helpful for PTSD afflicted combat veterans. It requires one to be present & calm and there may also be a positive rush of adrenaline — all of which improves mood and helps decrease stress & anxiety.

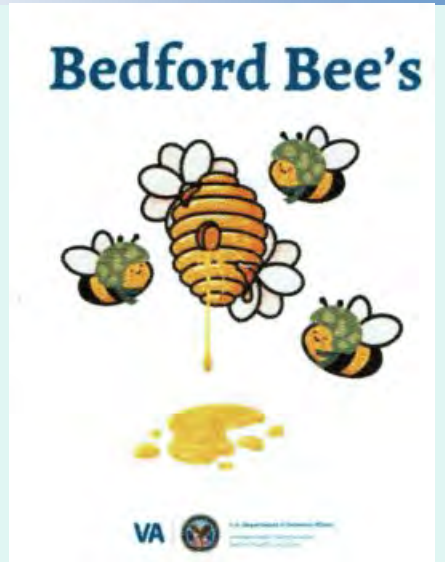
As there is a positive environmental impact, the veterans know they are contributing to the greater good. As important pollinators, bees are responsible for our every four bites of food we eat.

Mel says there are plans to expand the program:

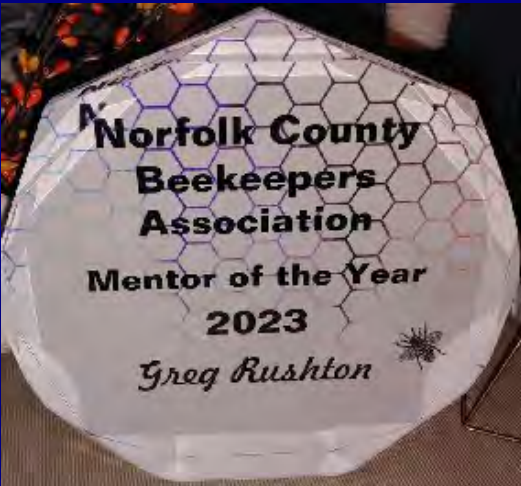
- ◆ Increase the number of hives.
- ◆ Add a large observation hive to the greenhouse to allow vets with physical disabilities to be involved
- ◆ Expand the pollinator garden
- ◆ Purchase additional equipment, such as extractors and protective clothing.
- ◆ Provide field trips to apiaries in the region as additional learning experiences
- ◆ Incorporate a writing program so vets can describe their experiences with the Therapeutic Beekeeping Program.

Left to Right: Veteran's Administration Staff — Joe, Daughters of the American Revolution representative — Sandy, and Mel.

The DAR donated \$500 to support the program.



Happy New Year!



Send your Bee Club Pictures and Stories for the next Newsletter!



Massachusetts Beekeepers Association Spring 2024 Meeting

When 03/16/2024
08:00 - 15:30

Location Topsfield Fairgrounds, 207
Boston St. Topsfield, MA
01983

REGISTRATION

- **Existing Membership (Family)**
Memberships in "good standing". Pre-registration required. Please log in to register for the meeting and to select your lunch option.
- **Existing Memberships (Single)**
Memberships in "good standing". Pre-registration required. Please log in to register for the meeting and to select your lunch option.
- **New Membership: Family – \$25.00**
With this option, you will be joining Mass Bee and registering for the meeting. Please select your lunch option.
- **New Membership: Single – \$15.00**
With this option, you will be joining Mass Bee and registering for the meeting. Please select your lunch option.



Local Hotels

SpringHill Suites by Marriot,
Peabody MA [SpringHill Suites](#)

Double Tree by Hilton,
Danvers MA. [Double Tree](#)

Come join our meeting host, the Essex County Beekeepers Association, on Saturday, March 16th at the historic Topsfield Fairgrounds.

Presenters



Dr. Kim Skyrn our Chief Apiary Inspector from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources ([MDAR](#)) Apiary Program will be giving us an update on the Apiary Program's plans and events for 2024.

Elizabeth Barnes, Ph.D. is the MDAR Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator, Crop & Pest Services. She will be giving a presentation on the Spotted Lanternfly in Massachusetts.



William Hesbach is a Connecticut native with a background in engineering. He's an Eastern Apicultural Society Certified Master Beekeeper and graduate of the [University of Montana's](#) Master Beekeeping Program. Bill is on the Board of Directors for the [Eastern Apicultural Society](#), and is President of the [Connecticut Beekeepers Association](#). He will be giving presentations on Pollen and the Dynamics of Honey Bee Flight and Reproduction.



Caro Munoz Agudelo is a graduate student at UMass-Amherst. She will be giving a presentation on the analyze pesticide levels in honey of Massachusetts beekeepers and assess relationships between pesticide levels and land use around the apiary.


... Continued MassBee Spring 2024 Meeting

- ⇒ The 2023 Massachusetts Beekeeper of the Year will be announced
- ⇒ Door Prizes will be awarded, and you can purchase tickets to participate in the raffle.




Don't forget to check in with the vendors for all your beekeeping supplies needs.

Place your order in advance and pick up at the meeting to avoid shipping costs



MANN LAKE
BEE & AG SUPPLY



DR. BILL'S BEES

Betterbee
Beekeepers Serving Beekeepers

HOW TO PLACE A PRE-ORDER FOR SHOW PICKUP.

In the Shipping / Pickup Options select "Pickup at the Betterbee store or show" and then under Pickup Location select the show you are attending.

[Check with the Event website for the final vendor list](#)



12 Days of Beekeeping

- 12 acres blooming
- 11 drones-a-buzzing
- 10 frames-a-flowing
- 9 workers wagging
- 8 queens-a-laying
- 7 hive tools scraping
- 6 candles dipping
- 5 summer swarms
- 4 bee stings
- 3 unlit smokers
- 2 jars of honey

And a beekeeper trying to save the bees!



Mass Bee Field Day 2024

When 06/15/2024
09:00 - 15:45
Location UMass Agricultural Learning Center Amherst, MA

The Massachusetts Beekeepers Association is holding our annual FIELD DAY on Saturday, June 15, 2024. The event is hosted by Franklin County Beekeepers Association.

Field Day location: [MDAR Amherst](#) 911 North Pleasant Street Amherst, MA 01002

The registration table will open at 8:00 am. The Field Day will start at 9:00 am.

MDAR Amherst 911 North Pleasant Street
Amherst, MA 01002
Follow the Yellow Bee Signs

The event is free and open to all.

Field Day Happenings

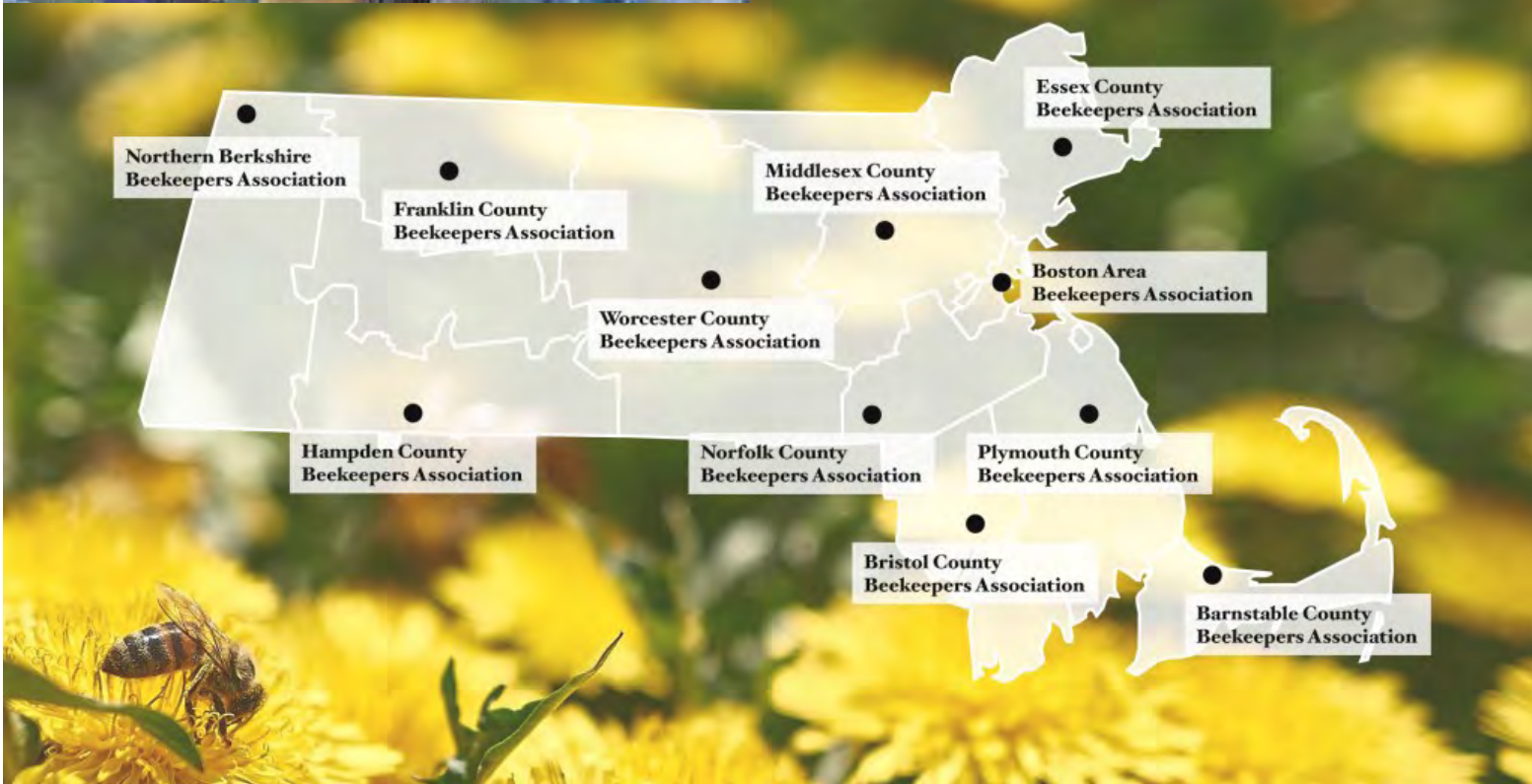
- 4 Presentation Sessions / 6 sites
- Smoker Contest run by Ken Warchol
- Raffle
- MDAR Team
- Vendors



Note: You can order from our participating vendors in advance and pick them up at the Field Day event. This saves you the cost of shipping. Contact the vendor directly to place an order. Massachusetts's Beekeepers Association & the Franklin County Bee Association thank participating vendors for their continued support of our Field Day event.



Stay tuned for a Detailed Schedule



Essex County Beekeepers Association is awarding a \$15,000 grant for Honeybee Research. If you or someone you know is interested in applying, the instructions and application can be found on ECBA's website at <https://www.essexcountybeekeepers.org/grants/grant.shtml>

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Grant Committee at grant@essexcountybeekeepers.org

Honeybee Research

A request for applications 2024



**Essex County Beekeepers
Association**

*The total amount of the grant(s)
to be awarded is \$15,000*

Deadline for applying is March 31, 2024

MASS BEE FALL 2023 Meeting Reflections



The MDAR Team with Massachusetts Representatives
(left to right)

Ashley Randle (Massachusetts Commissioner of Agriculture)

Jessica Glover (MDAR)

Kim Skyrn (MDAR Chief Apiary Inspector)

Rhys Willette (MDAR)

Paul Tessier (MDAR Apiary Inspector)

Paul A. Schmid, III (Representative)

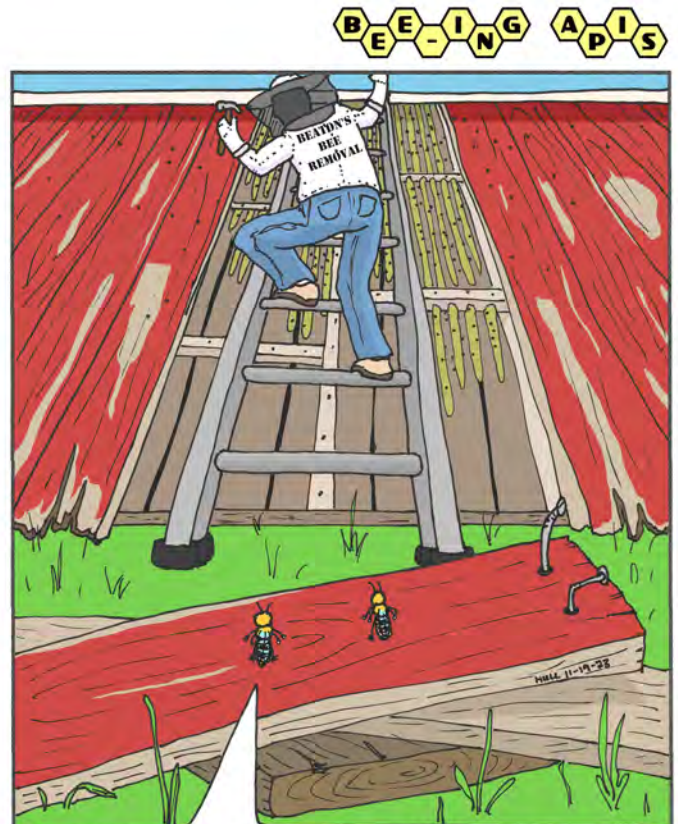


Keynote speaker Deb Klughers of Bonac Bees; presentation on "Get your Sting On"



Keynote speaker Paul Kelly, Chief Apiarist at the Bee Research Centre at the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

Congratulations to Tom Beaton, winner of the 'Bee in Apis' Custom Comic Raffle. Thank you Rob Hull for your donation.



IN ABOUT 15 MINUTES, HE SHOULD HAVE THE WHOLE SIDE OF THE BUILDING OPENED UP. THAT'S WHEN WE GIVE THE SIGNAL FOR THE ENTIRE HIVE TO ABSCOND TO THE ORCHARD!

MASSBEE CUSTOM COMIC RAFFLE WINNER:
TOM BEATON



HONEY SHOW and COOKING COMPETITION RESULTS

<u>Class</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Exhibitor Name</u>
8	BEST TWO 1 LB JARS OF LIGHT HONEY	
	1st	AMY TESSIER
	2nd	NAN FOURNIER
	3rd	SARA ROY/CHRISTOPHER LEW
9	BEST TWO 1 LB JARS OF LIGHT AMBER HONEY	
	1st	MARY ANN ZUHER
	2nd	ART CANTERBURY
	3rd	CHRISTOPHER SPANGLE
10	BEST TWO 1 LB JARS OF AMBER HONEY	
	1st	NAN FOURNIER
	2nd	AMY TESSIER
	3rd	LESLIE KNOWLES
11	BEST TWO 1 LB JARS OF DARK AMBER HONEY	
	1st	PETER DELANEY
	2nd	DORIS ARCHMAN
	3rd	
12	BEST TWO 1 LB JARS OF DARK HONEY	
	1st	ART CANTERBURY
	2nd	
	3rd	
13	BEST COOKING <i>RULES</i>	
	1st	LAURI BISCONETTE
	2nd	
	3rd	
BEST IN SHOW		LAURI BISCONETTE FOR HER BISCOTTI
TED SHYLOVSKY AWARD FOR BEST WAX IN SHOW		NOT AWARDED
PERFECT SCORES		LAURI BISCONETTE FOR HER BISCOTTI
MOST POINTS IN SHOW		ART CANTERBURY



CLASSIC

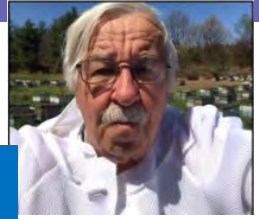


QUEENLINE



Notes From the Bee Whisperer

By Ken Warchol.



THE 6 DANGER-POINTS THAT A BEEKEEPER MUST KEEP AN EYE ON IN THEIR BEE COLONY FOR SUCCESSFUL WINTERING IN NEW ENGLAND

It was 70 years ago that I think back about a precious memory that I remember so vividly on Christmas Day, 1955.

I received my first bee hive as a Christmas gift along with a \$5.00 gift certificate for a 3 pound package of bees from Sears Roebuck. I was so excited. My dad said we will put it together and paint it over Christmas vacation.

I could not wait to have my own beehive.

Since then, it has been 70+ years as a 6th generation beekeeper, 45 years as a Massachusetts Apiary inspector, 6 years of research under Dr. Alex Lu and the Harvard Research Team, 5 years under Dr. Jeff Pettis and the USDA research team at the Beltsville Bee Lab, and 70+ years as a member of the Worcester County Beekeepers. However, that excitement of going into a beehive is still there for me and inspires me to work hard to keep those precious little creatures alive during the tough winter months.

I refer to the Winter management and the part you must play and be aware of in your bee colony. I refer to it as the **6 danger points** that you must be aware of in order to keep your hive alive. Before I jump into those 6 points, I must point out that much of what you did with your fall management will also determine the fate of your colony. Did you check the quality of your queen this fall to be sure that she was still well fertilized laying a vibrant brood pattern going into the winter? Did you check your brood for any signs of disease? Did you leave your colony with plenty of honey for the winter months to generate heat and feed new larva? Did you leave your colony with sufficient pollen to produce nutritious bee bread for the larva? Did you properly close up your colony with sufficient ventilation? These are all key questions you need to answer with a yes that will get the colony to where they should be ready for winter success with good management. A strong colony going into the winter months (early December) will weigh between 7-9 pounds or 30,000 bees on average. The Harvard study and the USDA study showed us this as Dr Callahan and I weighed the bees in those 76 colonies over the 5 years of the study. We did the weighing on a 40+ degree day around Thanksgiving time.

This now takes us into winter management and the **6 danger points** to keep an eye on.

The first and foremost concern is the varroa mite and associated viruses and did I treat successfully with fall treatment. Did I use the right treatment at the right time keeping in mind that most treatments are temperature dependent. Did I do an alcohol wash to check my mite levels going into the winter cluster. Were there any signs of viruses (very difficult to determine without a test). Did I combine a weak hive that could possibly have mite/virus syndrome with a strong healthy booming hive that could now be exposed to this complex. This is why I now discourage combining weak hives with strong hives unless you know that the colony is free of viruses. I have made this mistake many times years ago. I combined a weak hive with a strong hive only to see the strong hive declining by the end of February due to mites and viruses passed on from the weak hive after tests came back. I now evaluate cluster size in late February and if a cluster has dwindled down to a very small cluster, I shake off the frame or 2 of bees on a cold nite into a plastic garbage bag and sadly crush the bees to prevent spring robbing exposing nearby bees to mites and viruses. A thriving cluster would have 3-4 frames or more of bees by the end of February. If it is a softball size cluster by the end of February or early March then you can see that there is something wrong. I find that this is the #1 danger point in taking a colony down compared to starvation in the 1950's. A suggestion that I find helps a healthy cluster is to put in 2 strips of apivar into your cluster in January when the cluster is at its smallest size to knock down the mite numbers that are still left in a healthy cluster. This would do nothing for a declining virused cluster.

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Notes From the Bee Whisperer



THE 6 DANGER-POINTS THAT A BEEKEEPER MUST KEEP AN EYE ON IN THEIR BEE COLONY FOR SUCCESSFUL WINTERING IN NEW ENGLAND - Part 2

A second danger point to watch out for is starvation. This danger point has been around forever, but sadly, we still continue to find this as an issue in today's beekeeping. There is nothing more devastating to me than opening a colony and find out it has starved. To see their little brown eyes looking up at me saying, "why did you do this to us" brings tears to my eyes and to many beekeepers that I had to say 'you let them starve". Good management here can save them from starvation. Most colonies start their winter cluster in the bottom part of the top deep chamber in December and move upward slowly consuming honey to produce heat. By mid January, they are half way up in the top chamber and have started brood rearing and consuming the honey at a much faster rate in the middle of the chamber having eaten all the honey in the middle and now remain there keeping the brood at the needed 93 degrees as they move upward expanding their brood nest and gradually outward. A cold spell at this point can spell disaster. The bees have to tighten up their cluster to keep the brood warm and sometimes even sacrificing the brood on the outer perimeter of the brood cluster. The bees will stay with the cluster ultimately starving as they are unable to get to honey on the outer frames. In this situation you can be their saving grace by recognizing the situation and placing a sugar patty on wax paper overlapping the cluster with one fourth of the patty so they can keep it warm and consume it to keep heat and feed the larva.. I place the patty on the frames, not above the inner cover. The colony often gives us a danger point signal when they start coming out through the inner cover looking for food. I do a weekly check from this point on as they can consume an 8 inch patty that is ½ inch thick very quickly when they have a lot of brood. I will give you a little tip here. I drizzle honey into my sugar patty and press live pollen that I trapped over the summer season into the patty. The reason for this is that the sugar has no nutrients whereas the honey has what bees need to be healthy. The pollen is so they can keep the brood rearing going with the pollen needed for them to produce bee bread for developing healthy larva. Remember bees need honey and pollen. This danger point can be avoided if you are on top of things.



A third danger point is proper ventilation in the colony. Keep in mind that bees need air coming into the colony and a place to vent out the excess moisture in the colony. Most of us use the entrance reducer with the 5 inch opening for incoming ventilation and the notch on the inner cover for outgoing ventilation removing the excess moisture. Some use a steel mouse-guard with 24 tiny holes to also keep mice out of the colony. However, NEVER USE BOTH AT THE SAME TIME! One or the other for proper inward ventilation. However, outward ventilation is often insufficient with the small hole in the inner cover facing downward. On your **weekly check**, feel the underside of the inner cover for build up of moisture or black mold indicating moisture. Excess moisture drips down on the bees and freezes with cold temps on the upper part of the cluster causing bee losses and damage to brood. If you find excess moisture in the colony, then I recommend putting popsicle sticks on the rim of the upper super to vent out the excess moisture. If you are using a riser to accommodate the sugar patty then place the popsicle sticks on the upper rim of the riser and then put your inner cover on the riser with the notch in your inner cover facing down. I find that this does a great job reducing moisture build-up in the colony without having to use moisture absorbers above the inner cover.

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Notes From the Bee Whisperer



THE 6 DANGER-POINTS THAT A BEEKEEPER MUST KEEP AN EYE ON IN THEIR BEE COLONY FOR SUCCESSFUL WINTERING IN NEW ENGLAND - Part 3

A fourth danger point is suffocation. It is not as common in taking down hives as the other points that I have made. It is still an issue that needs to be dealt with. Long cold spells tend to bring about suffocation more often than warmer winters. This seems to occur later in the winter season as many of the old bees start dying clogging up the opening in the entrance reducer not allowing air into the hive and bees head for the small entrance in the inner cover. With little air coming in either way, the bees all head for the small cracks between the two brood chambers and end up suffocating. We saw this situation 5 or 6 years ago after 2 long cold spells and loads of bees dead at the entrance, on the frames clogging up the top notch and loads of bees suffocated at the seam where both brood chambers met. Most suffocated hives with the same layout. It is wise to remove the entrance reducer every couple of weeks and with a hanger scrape out the dead bees from the bottom board. This is another good reason to use popsicle sticks for ventilation. The other major reason for keeping your ventilation entrances open is to allow the bees to cleanse themselves on those 4 to 5 days in the winter when the temperature goes up to 50 degrees and the bees can get out and make that cleansing flight. You will see the hundreds of yellow spots all over the snow near to the hives as they just cannot hold it any longer.

A fifth major point is hive location for the winter months. In the summer months colonies in New England can withstand pretty much any location. This changes with the winter months. Colonies in large open fields with heavy winds coming at them can cause the bee cluster to break up into smaller clusters and freeze as they are unable to keep the heat needed with a small cluster. Be sure that if you are using screen bottom boards to close them up for the winter to avoid wind tunnels in the hive and breaking up the cluster. Also putting up a wind break with bails of hay 8-10 feet in front of your colony. Be sure your hives are leaning forward slightly to keep melting snow from running into your hive. Place your colonies in sunny areas to give them the benefit of natural heat and out from under large trees and keep them away from swampy and heavy moisture areas. Hive insulation can help in these types of conditions. Just do not over-insulate and cut off needed ventilation. You want to give your hive every advantage possible. When large snowstorm drops heavy snow, be sure to clear snow away from the front of hive to allow ventilation. You can leave the snow and on the sides for insulation.

A sixth and final danger point that I have added in the last 5 or 6 years into my winter management talk deals with **bears**. On December 9th, I received a phone call from a club member about their bear damaged hive in Spencer and what to do. The hive was pretty much all separated and dead. It is so sad to see this sight when you know you worked so hard to bring your colony through the season and to see it now dead. I highly recommend an electric fence with at least 5,000 volts to prevent bear damage to the colony that you put your heart and soul into all year around and then have to face disaster. It seems that the bears did not go into hibernation as early this year and were out and about.

I have now discussed with you the 6 danger points in wintering hives in New England. It takes a lot of effort plodding through heavy snow to get to your colonies to do your winter management but your love for your bees carries you onward knowing full that they will do their part. Then that first warm early spring day comes along and you see the sight of your bees carrying in fresh pollen and you say to yourself, WE DID IT! What a feeling that is. What a team effort! However, I always say, "There are no guarantees in Life"

Best in Beekeeping

Ken Warchol

I want to get loads of emails saying "I love my Bees"



In Memoriam

Long time Beekeeper, Augustus “Gus” Skamarycz AKA “The Bee Man” of Tyngsborough, Massachusetts passed away October 31, 2023.

The Honey Bee and Beekeepers have lost a friend, mentor and advocate with his passing.



For 53 years, his hobby and passion was beekeeping and at times he had up to 200 colonies. He mentored many people and taught at UMass Medical Center in Worcester, Gardner High School and many other places. His service to beekeeping included roles as Past President of the Middlesex Beekeepers Association, President of the Mass Federation of Beekeepers, Worcester County Beekeepers Association and a life time members of the Maine Beekeepers Association and the Eastern Apicultural Society. He was a judge at the Topsfield fair for Wax and Honey for 30 years. He spoke at numerous organizations about bees and honey.

Linda Hoffman, “The Orchard is at Pink”

When the apple orchard was at *pink*, I used to call Gus Skamarycz, our beekeeper for many years before he retired.

My call at *pink* would let him know the blossoms had donned their lipstick and were almost ready to greet the bees. He would wait a few days, and then arrive before sunup with two hives. I would meet him in the orchard, his bees still asleep.

“Why so early?” I asked the first year.

“I want the bees to open their eyes in a new place, see the blossoms, and go to work,” he replied.

Climate Change and Beekeeping – How Can Bee Colonies and Beekeepers Adapt?

by Ed Szymanski



2023 was a challenging year for many beekeepers that I know. At first, everything looked well – the winter was on the mild side (for the most part), rainfall was good, nectar was flowing, honey supers were filling up, and mite counts were low.

Then, as we got into late summer, things changed. Many days over 90°F made it harder to do inspections, challenged the bees to keep the hives cool and go about their usual business, and the humidity affected the rate at which the honey cured. Supers were stacked 4 and 5 high in our yard. Honey had been extracted earlier in the summer for a decent yield, but there was so much uncured nectar still on the hives.

In mid-August, we applied our Formic Pro mite treatments even though counts were moderate. We feel that it's important to knock down the mite populations before the winter bees are raised. This meant keeping the hives closed for 2 weeks. In the meantime, it began to rain excessively. At the end of the treatment period, we went into the hives and found that many had pretty much run out of food. Honey supers were practically empty, and brood boxes were also short on food stores.

The agitation in the yard during inspections was high, and fighting and robbing made it difficult to inspect. Many colonies were given sugar syrup and entrances were closed up even more than the standard mouse guard/reducer that we use. Inner covers screened, everything we could do to minimize robbing at a time of year that is not usually a problem for us. Of course, our bees were probably off robbing other beekeepers' colonies as well, and who knows what the health conditions of some of those might be. And then, 2 weeks after the finish of the treatment, mite counts spiked to high levels. One colony, having had counts of 3 or 4 mites per 300 bees, spiked to 26! We had to treat again at that time. We did see a few cases of Deformed Wing Virus in colonies where it had not been seen earlier.

What happened? How did the abundant food supplies dry up so quickly?

I think there were 2 main factors - the number of days that it was raining affected the bees' ability to get out to forage, and when they could, I believe that the nectar had been diluted or washed out completely from the flowers. I had heard of this phenomenon, but never really experienced it until now. I recommend reading [The Effects of Rainfall on Plant-pollinator Interactions](#) (Lawson and Rand, 2019) a peer-reviewed paper available for download from Springer.

Why did the mite counts increase dramatically? I heard this from several other experienced beekeepers. The reason that seems to stand out is that robbing dramatically increased because of the sudden decrease in nectar availability. We can put robbing protection on our hives, but we can't really stop them from going out to other yards in search of food. Unless, of course, we can be sure that they have enough at home.

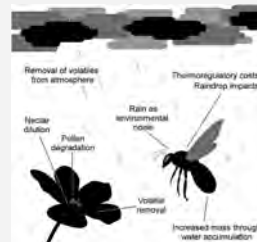
Other climate-related issues we are bound to face include increased incidence of flooding, high winds, and temperature extremes. Some beekeepers in Massachusetts already have. And as Lawson and Rands point out, excess rainfall also affects pollen quality and availability. Pollen shortages will affect colony development and can cause great stress on the bees.

I don't have the solution to these problems. I'd like to research the possibility that there are flowers that are less likely to be affected by rainfall. There are many other issues to consider as well. I think that we, the Massachusetts beekeeping community, need to find speakers and have discussions to address the issues around the climate effects on honey bees (and other pollinators) and on beekeepers, some of whose livelihoods are directly affected by this. I welcome any comments and discussion about this.

-Ed Szymanski

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Cornell Master Beekeeper
Past President, Norfolk County Beekeepers Association
NCBA Intermediate Bee School Director
2024 NCBA Beekeeper of the year





NOTICE

Apiary Program (honey bees)

MDAR's Apiary Program's mission is to sustain honey bee health and promote the apicultural industry in the Commonwealth by providing support to beekeepers, pesticide applicators, farmers, land managers, educators, students, municipalities, and the public.

ZOOM WEBINAR SCHEDULE

March 5, 2024

- o MDAR Marketing Programs and Services
- o MDAR Business Classes
- o MDAR Grants
- o USDA ELAP Program

March 12, 2024

- o MDAR Pesticide Update
- o MDAR Veterinary Update

March 19, 2024

- o MDAR Bee Aware Honey Bee Health Survey Results
- o USDA Honey Bee Health Survey Results
- o Seasonal Bee Sample Data and Trends

March 26, 2024

- o Interested in BEE-coming a Beekeeper? Learn about How to get started, State Laws/Regulations, Seasonal Management, and More!

To obtain more information or additional support, please contact the Apiary Program through [email: bees@mass.gov](mailto:bees@mass.gov) or by phone: (508) 281-6784.



Events will be held virtually via Zoom on **Tuesdays from 7pm-9pm** and are free and open to the public, but *may not* be recorded so be there.

Pre-Registration is required: <https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/>

RECIPE

Lemon Ginger Biscotti with lemon pistachio glaze

Recipe by **LAURI BISCONETTE**, "Best of Show" at the MassBee Fall Meeting 2023

(gluten/dairy free)

INGREDIENTS (yield 36 biscotti)
 1/2 cup (4oz) coconut oil (solid)
 1/3 cup (2.66oz) granulated sugar
 1/3 cup (2.66oz) honey
 1 TBLS (0.50oz) finely chopped lemon zest
 1/2 cup (4oz) finely chopped crystallized ginger
 1 tsp (0.166oz) vanilla extract
 2 large eggs
 2 1/2 cups (20oz) gluten free, (one to one) baking flour.
 3 TBLS (1.5oz) *hemp hearts (optional)
 2 tsp (0.33oz) baking powder
 1/4 tsp (0.0416oz) salt

GLAZE
 1 cup (8oz) confectioner's sugar
 1 tsp (0.166oz) finely grated lemon zest
 3 TBLS (1.5oz) lemon juice
 1 cup (8oz) pistachios, finely chopped



INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper, set aside
 In a large bowl, beat together butter, sugar, honey and lemon zest until well combined, scraping sides of bowl as needed. Add ginger and vanilla extract and mix again. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition.

In another bowl, add flour, baking powder, and hemp hearts salt. Stir with a whisk to combine. Add half the flour mixture to the batter mixture and mix until combined. Repeat with the other half of flour mixture. (you may need to use a spatula to stir up and mix any dry batter from the bottom of the bowl.) Divide the batter into 2 equal size balls with your hands.

Lightly flour your countertop. Form each ball of dough into a 12" log, then place lengths on the prepared cookie sheet about 3" apart. Press down each log slightly to flatten the top so it is about 3" wide.

Bake for 30min or until lightly golden on top and slightly firm to the touch. Remove cookie sheet from oven and allow to cool about 5 minutes.

Lower oven to 300 degrees for next part of baking

With a spatula, carefully move logs to a cutting board. With a serrated knife slice the logs into 1/2" slices. (you can cut straight across or diagonally for a longer biscotti)

Place each slice, turned onto its side, back onto the cookie sheet, place biscotti back into the oven, bake for another 12 minutes. Remove from oven, turn each biscotti onto the opposite side, place biscotti back in the oven for additional 12 minutes of baking.

Glaze

In small bowl, whisk together confectioner's sugar, lemon zest, and lemon juice until smooth. Drizzle the glaze over cooled cookies, sprinkle with chopped pistachios. Let glaze set up for about 15 minutes. Serve immediately or store in an air tight container for up to a week.

*hemp hearts, chia seed, poppy seeds are all good options.

Light and lively
 Enjoy

DO YOU NEED TO RENEW YOUR MASS BEE MEMBERSHIP?

Membership in Mass Bee is based on calendar year so if you have not renewed for 2024, please do so now – you don't want to miss out on all the information and events!

We are now accepting on-line applications. This makes it easy to join and keep dues and information up to date using a credit card. You can also mail in your check .

Please see the [Mass Bee website](#) for information.



Join Us - Become a Member of Mass Bee!

Benefits of Mass Bee membership:

✓ Three Membership Meetings a Year

- ◇ The Field Day at UMass in June. The Field Day is a tremendous event allowing interactive, hands-on bee demonstrations that give great confidence to attending beekeepers of all skill levels.
- ◇ The Spring and Fall meetings. The location of these meetings moves from County to County allowing all areas of the State to participate. At these meetings we strive to bring you 2 keynote speakers on relevant beekeeping topics. While hosted by a County, Mass Bee covers the costs of the event (venue, speakers fees and travel, food, etc.).

✓ Legislative Support

Monitoring and responding to issues arising both locally and Statewide. This Committee is politically active meeting face to face with law makers and regulators to rally for and protect Honeybees and pollinators. Updates on issues are presented in each Mass Bee Newsletter.

✓ State Representation

We speak for all beekeepers in Massachusetts and make our point of view to all the states in New England. We are paid memberships to all surrounding states, allowing us to keep members aware of surrounding States activities.

Our hope is that you continue to support Mass Bee with your membership and also become active members helping to guide and implement Mass Bee activities. **Please join or renew your membership today.** <https://www.massbee.org/membership/>

[Download an Informational Brochure About Mass Bee Here.](#) This brochure contains interesting bee facts as well as info about the benefits of joining Mass Bee

Membership Application

Application Date: _____

Check #: _____ Amount: _____

Membership Year: _____

New: _____ Renewal: _____



Memberships are based on the calendar year and are due each January 1st.

NAME(S): _____

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP TYPE:	Individual	\$ 15.00	_____
	Family	\$ 25.00	_____
	Organization	\$50.00	_____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL #1: _____

EMAIL #2: _____

PHONE: _____

County Beekeeping Association: _____

Completed applications along with payment made out to the "MBA" should be mailed to:

**MBA Memberships
PO BOX 415, Northborough, MA 01532**

Or fill out the form online on our web site at <https://www.massbee.org/membership/>