PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

The Estival Solstice has arrived, and Summer is now officially on everyone’s mind. We look forward to breaking out the Summer gear and lighting up the grill and other fun outdoor activities. Hopefully, your honeybees have been gearing up as well. Please keep a close eye out for signs of swarming, I have received a great many calls already.

The Massachusetts Beekeeping Association’s EAS Planning Committee has been working hard to prepare for the final push to EAS MA 2023. I cannot urge you enough to go online and look at the content-rich program of speakers, workshops, and planned social activities (schedule included). This is going to be a wonderful opportunity for you to increase your beekeeping knowledge and make lifelong beekeeping friendships from across the country. It is most definitely worth your time and expense to attend this Conference for a day, two days, or all five days! I know that our County Beekeeping Associations do a tremendous job providing educational opportunities to their beekeepers - EAS is like an enriched County Meeting for five straight days and evenings! Conference Pre-registration is required, and registration for dorms and our special meals will close on July 8th. Eastern Apicultural Society (easternapiculture.org)

We were sorry to have to cancel the Franklin County and Mass Bee Field Day at UMass this past summer. We will work to get this popular event back on track for next summer. Oh, on the scheduled day for Field Day, it poured all day in Amherst.

The Bristol County Beekeepers Association is hosting the Fall Mass Bee meeting. Our meeting will be held on November 4th at the Bristol Community College in Fall River. Mark your calendars. The meeting will be free to all Mass Bee members in good standing and $15 to non-members.

In conclusion, Mass Bee is super excited to have the honor of hosting the prestigious EAS conference in our State this July 31-August 4th on the UMass Amherst campus. Do not miss out, it was last held in Massachusetts in 2001 and who knows when it will be this close to you again! Why wait 20 years to experience an EAS in Massachusetts, join us this summer.

Sincerely,

Mary Duane
President Mass Bee
President Eastern Apicultural Society
Attention All Beekeepers

Join Us for Workshops, Presentations, and Fun Social Events. Enter Your Honey at the Honey Show!

Who?  Beekeepers of ALL Levels
What?  Eastern Apicultural Society Conference*
Where?  University of Massachusetts Amherst Campus
When?  July 30-August 4th (pre-registration required)

Some of the Amazing Speakers

Bob Binnie
Dr. Rachael Bonoan
Dave Burns
Dr. Dewey Caron
Dr. Judy Wu-Smart
Dr. Kim Skyrm
Dr. Samuel Ramsey
Dr. Tom Seeley

Megan Denver
Dr. Cameron Jack
Paul Kelly
Dr. Heather Matilla
Dr. Kaira Wagoner
Dr. David Peck
Dr. Tammy Horn-Potter
Kirk Webster

+++ And Many More +++

For more information and to register please go to Eastern Apicultural Society (easternapiculture.org)

*The Eastern Apicultural Society (EAS) is a non-profit educational organization for the promotion of beekeeping-education and excellence in bee research.
With the bee school class of 2023 in the books, HCBA looks forward to another great year of beekeeping and comradery. This year’s bee school, in person thankfully, was again opened by Ken Warchol; whom better to get a new cohort of students excited about beekeeping than Ken himself. Our once a month full day class covered the biology of our beloved honeybee, seasonal management techniques, equipment options, swarm management (delivered by Dave Lewcon) and the maladies that our honeybees face during the beekeeping season. Our collective goal is to educate and develop beekeepers vs bee-havers as we all know we can’t just “have” bees anymore. HCBA also shares our collective belief in mentoring both new and not so new beekeepers. Mentoring is offered to all of our bee school students.

Spring finds HCBA getting our teaching apiary ready for in-person lessons and a furtherment of our queen rearing activities allowing members to obtain locally mated queens at a nominal cost. It’s proven to be a challenge making us understand the prices queen rearing operations charge for their stock. Nonetheless, we soldier on.

HCBA meets on the 3rd Thursday of every month where we work to provide informative and entertaining topics to our members. The Big E, a major event for HCBA will be here in a blink of an eye. We spend the duration of the fair showcasing various honey products provided by our members and discussing the importance of the honeybee using our observation colonies located in the Massachusetts and Stroh buildings.

Information about HCBA can be found on-line at https://www.hampden-county-beekeepers.org/

Wishing you all a successful and productive beekeeping season.

Mark Lantzakias
HCBA—President
Greenfield’s 13th Annual Bee Festival Celebrates the Father of Modern Beekeeping

FRANKLIN COUNTY — ON May 20, the 13th annual Bee Fest featuring hive painting projects, plant giveaways, and children wearing yellow and black running around the front lawn of the Second Congregational Church, the city celebrated the Rev. Lorenzo Langstroth’s contribution to modern-day beekeeping on Saturday.

While Langstroth was experimenting with beehive setups in the 1850s, he discovered the ¼-inch that occurs naturally between honeycombs in beehives. He realized if he replicated this “bee space” and made a hive with movable frames, he could advance the world of beekeeping.

In 1852, Langstroth patented his movable comb hive, and the design quickly took off across the country and the world. “He became the father of modern-day beekeeping,” explained Art Canterbury, vice president of the Franklin County Beekeepers Association. “He made a huge impact on the entire world, and it all started in Greenfield.”

Starting 13 years ago as a small event with activities for children at the church, Bee Fest has grown to attract families across the region. Bee Fest, while fun in nature, is an educational tool to teach children to care for bees and other pollinators needed for the food system.

“It’s important for kids to care about honeybees because they begin to recognize all pollinators,” Art Canterbury explained. “What helps honeybees helps all pollinators.”

Commissioner Ashley Randle and representatives of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), our state organization that supports farms, educators, and events that relate to agriculture, came to Bee Fest to promote local bee health, they distributed native pollinator plant seeds.

One new event offered at this year’s festival was a painting party to decorate 20 beehive boxes. Inspired by a Slovenian tradition of painting nativity scenes on hives, community members painted boxes belonging to Tom Graney’s Old Deerfield Apiary and the Canterbury Family’s Howling Tree Hill Apiaries.

Bees often have trouble finding their own hive when they are lined up and all the same color. By painting the hives, this project helps bees find their homes and gives residents an opportunity to let their creative juices flow by painting scenes inspired by the beloved insect.

Bella Levavi

Greenfield Recorder
Happy Summer (and peak of beekeeping season!),

I closed out my spring activities with two fantastic events, an elementary school visit to Swift River School and the Greenfield BeeFest.

My visit to Swift River School may have been my favorite activity yet as Honey Queen. School administrators gave me time to meet with every grade K-6, every teacher, and every student in the entire school! I was able to give a presentation and answer many questions—students were well-behaved and very engaged. We discussed what they could do to be pollinator helpers at their home and in their community, why local honey is best, and how they might become beekeepers. It was a splendid event!

It was packed for each presentation in the cafeteria with boys and girls even on the floor!

Teachers had me take a picture with each class—how sweet!

My family and a few friends also joined me at the Greenfield BeeFest on May 20.

Although a bit overcast, it was an incredible community turn out with hundreds of people gathering in the front of the Second Congregational Church (home of Father Lorenzo Langstroth, father of modern day beekeeping) and stretching across to the Greenfield Common.
Attendees enjoyed painting hive boxes, making flower crowns, face-painting, info sessions with live bees by the Franklin County Beekeepers Association, food, games, and even a large band with members dressed as bees! It was fantastic! We closed the event with my unveiling of three new “bee” sculptures around town. Meeting the artists and unveiling the bees was really special.

It’s been quite fun to keep running into our MA Ag Commissioner and MDAR Representatives at all these special events. Ashley and Katie are so supportive!

This summer I have a few activities planned. I am hoping to see many of you as I assist with the Eastern Apiculture Society conference, July 31-Aug 4. Organizers have planned an incredible event, if you haven’t registered, I highly recommend it! I am also looking forward to attending some summer fairs including the Heath Fair.

Finally, looking forward to Fall, I am excited about the Franklin County Fair, Big E (MA Day is Sept 21!), Topsfield Fair, and the Garlic and Arts Festival, with more events being requested. It’s going to be a great close out to my reign!

Ha-“BEE" Summer,

Queen Caroline
Notes From the Bee Whisperer
By Ken Warchol.

Let me take all of you Massachusetts Beekeepers back to March of this year.

Most of us found the mild winter season was good for our bees as long as we treated correctly for mites last fall. Those of us who did find our losses less than previous years was due to the mild winter season and your hard work. Many of our colonies started early brood rearing in December and the colonies grew quickly as a result eating through their winter stores by the end of February forcing us to feed sugar patties to sustain our bees with no nectar collection with their increasing numbers. As I checked brood frames on a 68 degree day at the end of March, I found colonies with between 5 to 10 frames of brood and the need to feed sugar syrup to sustain the bees.

April started off with some 60 plus degree days which did not last long and turned to 2-3 weeks of rainy 48-55 degree days limiting nectar collection throughout the month. May likewise started off with some warmer temps which did not last with inter-dispersed warm and cooler days and colder nights in the 30’s. The bees were able to take advantage of the warm days and my scale hives at a number of locations showed 12-15 pounds of nectar coming in on some days. Keep in mind, the nectar contains 80% water which has to be evaporated to produce honey I placed 2 honey supers on all hives to avoid honey-bound brood chambers which are a pain to deal with in opening up space for the queen to lay eggs in. This takes us to the end of May and into June.

What is happening out there in the bee world right now and how should we be managing our bees? I am waiting for those long warm days of 75-80 degree days where a large force of bees can get out to forage to get nectar and pollen as opposed to staying in to keep the brood at 93 degrees. However the bees and the beekeeper cannot control nature and no matter what we do we cannot change nature. So what is it that we can do to make sure everything is going right in our colonies?

Evaluating our queen to make sure she is doing her part in keeping the colony strong. She should be maintaining at least 8 to 9 frames of brood throughout the summer season to maintain colony strength. Keep in mind that summer bees only live 5-6 weeks. As I came to learn in the USDA study under Jeff Pettis from 2009-2013 a colony needs this many frames of brood to sustain the hive throughout the summer and fall. We also like to see nice full frames of larva with not much more than 10% empty cells. We look for a nice brood pattern and remove a poor queen if the bees have not done so with supersedure. This requires a regular (I like weekly) evaluation.

At the same time, it is important to note any abnormalities in the brood such as punctured cappings and probe underneath to see the symptoms that might indicate European Foul Brood (EFB), sac brood, chalkbrood or mite damage and viruses. The sooner you catch this and take action then the sooner your colony will spring back. If not, then the colony will spiral downward quickly and may be impossible to bring it back. Remember that the colony in many cases needs your help to spring back. A case of EFB can take the colony down quickly and spread to other colonies whereas if you catch it when only 3-4 cells then you can bring it back quickly with treatment which the bees cannot do themselves. So that weekly check is important for that reason.

Keep an eye out for honey-bound /pollen-bound situation in your colony. Do not blame the queen when it is not her fault! During heavy nectar flows the bees will bring in nectar fast and furiously and clog up the brood chamber leaving no space for the queen. I have often seen this in my years of inspection where the colony had only 2-3 (8 inch brood patches in the entire hive). The hive will grow weak very quickly and you should not blame the queen. Blame the workers if you want or blame yourself if you gave them no room for nectar gathering. Sometimes even with empty honey supers the workers will do this during an intense flow. You now must come into the scenario and either spin out filled brood frames(8) or freeze them and place them back into the colony during a later dirth(dry period when there is little to no nectar coming in especially late summer-fall or for winter stores in October. Keep in mind that honey-bound can stagnate and slow your hive growth.
Notes From the Bee Whisperer

The other one big issue through the next six months that you have to monitor for is the “mite issue”. You must be on this throughout the year. The varroa mite can take your hive down very quickly and do tremendous damage vectoring many viruses which add to the trauma of the bees. There are visual signs where you may see 8-10 punctured cappings and see white pupa heads and wonder why. The mites often take the life out of a larva or pupa before they hatch. The bees sense there is no respiration or life and uncap it and chew it down to remove it (their grooming quality). Even seeing only 5-10 of these indicates there is trouble down below. It means possibly 100’s of mites doing damage under the cappings and vectoring viruses. This can cause a colony to collapse very quickly.

What should I do you may ask?
DO AN ALCOHOL WASH ASAP: This will tell you very quickly your mite levels. Over 3 mites spells trouble and tells you that you need to take action quickly.
The July meeting of the WORCESTER COUNTY BEEKEEPERS IN PRINCETON I WILL DEMONSTRATE THIS PROCEDURE. ALL BEEKEEPERS ARE WELCOME. The meeting starts at 11 AM. Check the Worcester Beekeepers website for details.

You must select a substance to treat with. There are many and you must read directions. With over wintered hives I treat with Mite-Away Quick Strips at the end of June, end of August with mite-away and at the end of September with APIVAR after all my honey supers are off. This is based on the 12 alcohol washes I do on my hives. It varies but for the most part, those times are pretty close to on target.

Keep in mind that once your mite levels are high there is a point of no return no matter what you do. Be on top of the mite situation. Your hives need you against the mites with them.
Lastly, I will address swarming. It has already started and will continue right through mid July and even beyond. Overwintered hives will swarm mainly May through July. New packages drawing foundation will not usually try swarming until August or September when swarming is dangerous in that they cannot build up for the winter cluster. Or the new queen will not get mated from-September on due to less drones and colder temperatures.

Early May to July swarms can build up and queens will get mated. However, swarming will decrease the numbers by as much as half and there goes your honey flow.

The other aspect of this is when your hive swarms and goes into the wild, it will rarely make it on its own due to the varroa mites. I have experimented with 5 bee trees that were cut down and brought to my house. The first winter 4 out of 5 perished due to mites when we cut them open. The other colony tree died the next winter again to mite issues. My dad back in the 1950’s would loose a swarm and say “oh well, they will re-populate nature”. Today, I see a lost swarm as a waste and feel bad for them. A change in attitude over the course of 60 years. Keep your bees at home and make splits. I say do swarm prevention. A difficult task as I will vouch for that. Now is prime swarm season so stay on top of the swarms. Yes,YOU

I always say that we must all work together as beekeepers with our bees in order to be successful. I know your bees will appreciate it. There is nothing more joyful knowing your bees made it through the winter and you see them flying on that first warm day in March with fresh pollen. Let’s all make it a successful year!

Best,
Ken Warchol
I don’t see this article as much as an instruction as I do a testimonial. I hope I can answer the questions that people usually ask about single deep hives when they are considering switching from double deep configurations.

In the spring of 2021, we converted our 2 apiaries, a total of 13 hives, from double to single brood chamber configurations. Steve Repasky, whose talk on the subject changed my mind about single deeps, said that this was a bold move, converting them all at once. I told him that he was so convincing in his presentation that I had absolute confidence that it would work. For the winter 2021-22, all 13 colonies overwintered in single deeps. For the winter 2022-23, 14 of 15 colonies survived.

Prior to Steve’s talk, I had the same questions that many beekeepers have. Following are my answers to those based on what I have learned.

If managed properly, no they won’t. The key is to make sure that the brood box doesn’t get filled with nectar such that the queen has no place to lay eggs. This could be said for any hive configuration, but it’s a bit more critical in the case of single deeps. It’s all about nectar management. A wise long-time beekeeper once told us to add honey supers to our hives when we see the first dandelions bloom. With single deeps that changes to daffodils. Supers must be added before any significant nectar flow occurs. Queen excluders are a must if one is to truly maintain a single deep configuration. The bees will store nectar in the super closest to the brood box and will use that nectar for food, rather than storing the nectar on the brood frames (for the most part). Sometimes nectar will be deposited on brood frames by the foragers and then moved up into the supers later. When the honey super closest to the brood chamber fills with honey, the bees will start storing nectar on the brood frames. It’s best to start with 2 supers and then add additional supers to the bottom of the stack, so that the available space is closest to the brood nest. I usually swap a frame or two with one of the other supers just to be sure that there’s food close by.

One of the benefits of this method is that, during the active season, practically all of the honey is stored in the supers, unlike a double deep configuration where there may be 4 or more frames of honey “trapped” in the brood boxes, and it is sometimes never used. The hive shown in the photo had its fifth honey super added on June 4th, the other four being pretty much full. With available equipment limitations and a safe limit to how high the supers can be stacked, it is important that honey is extracted as soon as it is ready, so the empty supers can be returned to the hive. As long as the super closest to the hive is left in place, there is no danger of depriving the bees of food.

Top-bar hive beekeepers know the answer to this. No. I have seen eggs on frame #1 during a full inspection and then found the queen on frame #10. She literally traverses the hive looking for available space to lay. The hive will establish an equilibrium whereby brood will constantly be emerging, and the queen will use the space to lay as it becomes free. As long as the cycle is not disturbed by nectar being stored, that equilibrium will be maintained. Just as in any configuration, if the hive gets abnormally congested, it will need to have brood removed or a split made before swarming is initiated.
“How can they store enough food to get them through a Northeast winter?”

It is my opinion that the single deep approach works best with non-Italian strains of bees. Italian honey bees tend to maintain a relatively large brood nest into the winter, but in a single deep, this space is needed for food stores. Bees such as Carniolans, Russians, Saskatraz, and others tend to shut down brood production earlier in fall, so in a single deep, the supers can be removed in late September and either by a fall nectar flow or sugar syrup feeding, the hive can be filled with winter food. The thing that is hard for some to grasp is that the bees will cluster on the stored honey, in a smaller cluster that will be very frugal with winter food stores.

In a double deep configuration, we would set a target fall hive weight of 110 pounds as measured with a Fischer’s Nectar Detector hive scale. There would be several full frames of honey in the outboard positions that are never accessed as the bees move up through the center of the hive. In our single deep configurations, we shoot for 75 pounds total hive weight. This has worked the past two years; there was even honey left over in the spring.

Some beekeepers will leave a medium super of honey on the hive for winter, but Steve Repasky maintains that this no longer single deep management by definition. A bigger problem in my opinion is that the queen ends up laying in the super in the spring.

We converted from double to single deeps in spring when the colony was smaller. Splits were made if needed at that time. It was a good opportunity to cull out old ratty comb and keep the best ten frames in the hive.

I’m not getting any younger, and the elimination of the lifting of the top brood box during an inspection has been a blessing. The chance of killing or injuring a queen while moving brood boxes is eliminated, and you don’t have to consider the old dilemma of reversing the brood boxes in the spring.

In 2022, honey yield in our 10 colony apiary on an acre of land was 40 to 100 pounds per hive depending on the colony.

But don’t just take my word for it – search for YouTube videos by Paul Kelly, Steve Repasky, Ian Steppler, and others. I can tell you it works. You must be diligent about your inspections and honey super management. But you should be anyway.

-Ed Szymanski

Lunaria Farm and Apiary, Franklin, MA
Cornell Master Beekeeper
Past President, Norfolk County Beekeepers Association
NCBA Intermediate Bee School Director
A SUMMARY OF THE ENRA HEARING ON MAY 10TH, 2023
by Connor Martin, MBA Legislative Committee member

As testimony after testimony was presented, a clear image of public opinion emerged. There were very few testimonies given in opposition to any pro-pollinator/anti-pesticide bills, and notably a few of the opposing citizens simply thought the bills were not far-reaching enough and should be made stronger before being sent forward.

There were around half a dozen people who testified about the tragic death of a beloved local celebrity, an eagle named MK. MK died because she consumed a rat which had ingested poison from a trap.

A common theme emerged as the hearing continued: people want pest control to be less harmful to the environment and human society. Whether they spoke out against the use of pesticides near schools, or mosquito spraying, or rat traps; people called for stricter regulations of harmful chemicals and the creation of ecologically-based programs.

There were many members of the state legislature who testified on behalf of these bills. Some even directly addressed the issue of just how many crucial bills simply wither away in committee. It is obvious from the voices of the hearing that the citizens of Massachusetts want change on this issue. With the hearing so relatively early in the session of the state Congress, there is a reasonable chance that we see some bills furthering our interests as beekeepers and pollinator lovers move out of committee.
In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association shares with you the news of the passing of George J O’Neil III of Barre, MA on June 4th, 2023. George was a long-time member of the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association, Worcester County Beekeepers Association, and the owner of Autumn Morning Farms Beekeeping. George was always willing to share his knowledge and love of beekeeping with everyone he met. He will be deeply missed by the beekeeping community.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Bristol County Beekeepers Association is hosting this year’s Fall 2023 Mass Bee meeting.

Our meeting will be held on November 4th at the Bristol Community College in Fall River.

The meeting will be free to all Mass Bee members in good standing and $15 to non-members.
IT'S TIME TO RENEW OUR MASS BEE MEMBERSHIP!

Membership in Mass Bee is based on calendar year so if you have not renewed for 2023, 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/