Dreadfully missing working your bees?

Yep, me also. And I've been to lots of meetings and classes and read and studied even cleaned up and repaired some equipment, but it just isn't helping much. I miss them ... and seeing the occasional dead bee dead in the snow only makes me miss (and worry) more.

There's a couple mini-cures for this. The first is the Kalamazoo Bee School, February 15th. Yes, this is a shameless plug for the school my local club is sponsoring. (When you're the volunteer editor you can do things like this.) We've got a grand line-up of fresh and favorite speakers, including Jim Tew from Ohio, and the always informative and engaging Ana Heck and Chris Beck ... just to name a few. Check out this website for more info, and register soon to take advantage of the early-bee discount. Other bee schools for which I've received information are noted bee-low.

A second mini-cure for bee-pining is this newsletter. It is info-packed, including some interesting feature articles. For example, Eric Hayner of Mattawan has successfully received plenty of grants for a school program; he shares more below. Salute to Eric for helping these young folks understand some of the glory of nature, and salute for such fabulous photos. I've included a smattering of them throughout this newsletter; unlabelled photos are Eric's. You can check out more of them at Eric's website.

I also want to thank the many folks, like Eric, who have taken time to contribute to this newsletter ... especially the MBA reps. They're busy volunteers. Thanks for all you do for bees.

Photo courtesy of Cathy King

May 2020 bring us abundant sunshine and appropriate rain, healthy hives, successful splits and those misplaced hives tools.

Happy New Year -- Charlotte Hubbard / Editor

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Upcoming MBA Spring Conference Preview

The MBA Spring Conference will be held March 6 and 7 at the usual venue, the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. Find out more at the MBA website; Dr. Larry Connor has worked hard to schedule great sessions and events.

Dr. Kirsten Traynor is the keynote speaker. She fell into beekeeping when she won her first hive in a raffle in 2002. Fascinated by the social complexity of the hive, she won a German Chancellor Fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to study the differences between European and American beekeeping. Upon her return, she earned her PhD in bee biology from Arizona State University. She has authored two books “Two Million Blossoms: Discovering the Medicinal Benefits of Honey” and “Simple, Smart Beekeeping”. She’s the former editor of American Bee Journal and Bee World. In January 2020, she launched a new quarterly magazine 2 Million Blossoms:
Inspections, A State Perspective

by Mike Hansen

At MDARD we recently completed sampling for the National Honey Bee Survey. In 2019 we collected 24 samples for this survey. We identified 5 apiaries, and 8 colonies in each of those to sample both in the spring and again in fall. In addition to sampling for mites, disease and viruses, we sampled wax to be analyzed for pesticide residue. In addition we identified 14 apiaries, sampling some in the spring, some in the summer and some in the fall for mites, viruses and disease pressure.

MDARD has participated in the National Bee Survey since 2010. Data from the National Bee survey generally lags about a year behind, but can be found on the Bee Informed Partnership website. The information collected in this survey supports the efforts of USDA to protect US beekeepers from the introduction of honeybee pests and diseases. USDA helps to establish this survey to identify a baseline for honey bee pests and diseases in the US. With this data, USDA can more effectively enforce the Federal Bee Act, protecting US beekeepers from the introduction of pests from other countries.

MDARD inspectors conduct disease inspections on shipments of honey bees headed to states where a health certificate is required for entry. Beekeepers wanting to move bees to another state should first check the Apiary Inspectors of America website, and review the laws of the receiving state. They can also contact the state apiarist in those states and ask about their regulations. When a state requires a health certificate, MDARD will conduct the inspections necessary to meet the requirements of the receiving state. A health certificate is then prepared and provided to the receiving state, and to the beekeeper to print and carry when they move the bees. MDARD is required to charge for these inspections.

Red Imported Fire Ant: While we don’t have Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA) in MI, there are many beekeepers who bring bees to MI from RIFA-infested states. For those beekeepers wanting to move bees directly to California for almond pollination, MDARD can assist conducting an inspection according to California’s Voluntary RIFA inspection protocols. Inspection is done to ensure that fire ants, noxious weeds, soil or other restrictions are addressed before bees are shipped. Beekeepers benefit from streamlined entry into California. The inspection is not required, but for those beekeepers who take advantage of the program, having the certificate of quarantine compliance has simplified the process.

If you want to know more about inspections available, please drop me at note at hansenmg@michigan.gov, call me at 269-429-0669, or contact MDARD at 800-292-3939.

Educational Opportunities

The first quarter is traditionally a time for bee schools and other educational opportunities.

I'm passing on what's been shared with me, but there are plenty more undoubtedly. Please also see some of the reports from the various reps, covering events in their districts.

In addition to the many events at Dow Gardens (see left), also consider:
WINTER NOTES FROM THE FAR NORTH

District 7 Report

by Joel Lantz

*Again, I am writing this back in the "woods cabin." I have a warm fire with a lot of snow coming down....a great spot for a bit of reflection. (See below photo.)

* Winter came early for us in 2019, over 60" of snow by December 26th, followed by a warm-up over Christmas but snowing hard as the year concludes. There still is over 1½ feet of snow on the ground.

*While gone for 10 days in October, I came home to several dead hives. These were healthy, treated hives – I suspect they got into something. This would be unusual for fall but not unheard of. This is the first time in over 30 years I have lost bees in the fall...very discouraging say the least.

*On a more positive note the UP clubs have been active and continue to see increased interest in beekeeping. We are planning our 3rd all-UP Conference – March 28th, 2020. It has continued to grow each year.

*Beekeeper, Isaac Behrens of Marquette/Skandia is starting to raise some queens here in the area. Maybe our dream of locally adapted "snow queens" will become a reality....stay tuned!

*Now is the season to do some serious reading about our favorite little insects. Both the Bee Culture and American Bee Journal have great articles. Most local libraries have them and lots of back issues. I picked up Larry Connor's book "Keeping Bees Alive" and have found it a great read. As usual for my winter, I peruse my old copy of The Hive and The Honeybee by Dadant. This is a great base of accumulated bee knowledge, but there is always a need to review the latest research.

*I have been asked many times about the price of UP honey. There is a lot of variation but generally around $20 per quart at retail. Some marketing and name recognition will push that up to $30 or a bit more. No problem selling all that is produced.
*Hope to see you at the Spring Conferences. MBA conference March 6&7th and the UP Conference March 28th. Both of these have into beekeeping sessions. There will be a beekeeping 101 session in Escanaba on January 25th (https://www.facebook.com/baydenocbeekeepingclub).

*Please contact me with any concerns or questions at: www.upbees.weebly.com or lantzjoel@gmail.com

The hives are tucked in till at least March – no digging them out now. There were some fall losses in the area…. I think maybe more mite and virus issues.

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**Updates from MSU Bee Program**

*by Ana Heck*

**Wintering MSU Sentinel Apiaries:**

Beekeepers can read a [late season management](https://msubees.msu.edu) in MSU Sentinel Apiaries on the [MSU Bee Blog](https://msubees.msu.edu).  

**Varroa Trends in MSU Sentinel Apiaries:**

As part of the [Bee Informed Partnership (BIP) Sentinel Apiary program](https://beeinformed.org), the MSU Bee Program monitors apiaries throughout Michigan. Each month, we look notes on our colonies and management. We also sent a bottle of bees from each colony to the Bee Informed Partnership for the lab to quantify the number of bees and mites in each sample. (Pictured left: Bottle of bees to be shipped to the Bee Informed Partnership for analysis. Photo: Ana Heck)

We sampled 8 colonies per yard in Lansing and Novi and 4 colonies per yard in Benton Harbor, Escanaba, Hickory Corners (at the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary), and Lake City. After looking at monthly varroa levels, here are some takeaways and trends we’d like to share:

- **We had to do a lot of work to keep mite populations at safe levels.** All of our yards received 3 or 4 mite treatments in total this year. Some colonies may have needed an additional or earlier mite treatment to prevent a spike in mite levels.
  - **Mite level growth can vary among colonies in the same yards.** We saw huge increases in mite levels in some colonies, while we didn’t see the same increases in others. In Lansing we saw one colony’s mite levels jump from 0.5% in September to 12.8% in October, while another colony in the same yard increased from 1.1% to 2.4% during the same period. In Lake City, one colony’s mite levels jumped from 0.0% in July to 5.3% in August, while another colony in the same yard remained only jumped from 0.0% to 0.4%.
  - **Skipping early-season mite treatments did not turn out well.** In Novi, we skipped a June miticide treatment in 3 colonies that had severe cases of European Foulbrood. By August, the mite levels of these colonies were at 6.6%, 8.1%, and 18.6%, while the other 5 colonies in the yard that received the June treatment were at or below 3.8%.
  - **Beekeepers shouldn’t assume that mite levels are low just because they treated.** While the vast majority of mite treatments decreased mite levels, the exact effect was not always easy to predict. For example, we saw one colony’s mite levels decrease from 3.2% to 0.3% after treatment, while the mite levels of another colony in the same yard increased from 0.3% to 2.9% after treatment.
  - **Apiaries close to other bee yards were more vulnerable to huge spikes in mites.** We saw the biggest increases in mite levels in Lansing and Novi, and both yards are close to other bee yards. On
the other hand, mites levels in 4 colonies at the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary (a yard not close to other bee yards) stayed below 1% through September, and the highest mite load recorded in October was 3.7%. It should be noted that yards far from other bee yards still received at least 3 mite treatments throughout the beekeeping season.

- **Mite numbers can vary between samples.** Since the Bee Informed Partnership calculates the number of bees in each of our samples (instead of assuming each sample has 300 bees) and uses a special machine to dislodge mites, our mite numbers are more accurate than field alcohol washes and powdered sugar rolls. Still, mite levels can vary between samples taken from the same colonies on the same days. For example, 2 samples taken from the same colony resulted in mite counts of 3.4% and 0.0%. In another colony, 2 samples resulted in mite counts of 5.3% and 3.5%.

- **We expect colonies that experience high mite levels and/or parasitic brood mite syndrome to die,** even if we are able to successfully lower their mite levels. Since mites spread viruses within colonies, a high mite load at any point in the year can lead to a high virus load that persists for months after the mite population was knocked down. For example, we had a colony in Novi with a mite infestation of 5.8% in July, 18.6% in August, 0.3% in September, and 0.5% in October. Even though the late summer and fall mite treatments were effective at dramatically dropping the mite levels in this colony, we expect the colony to die because the winter bees that are supposed to survive through the winter were likely exposed to high virus levels.

- **Mite levels made a comeback in October.** In Lansing, mite levels in one colony were at 0.5% in September and then at 12.8% in October, and another colony was at 0.0% in September and 6.7% in October. We treated all apiaries with an oxalic acid dribble in November. One notable exception to the high October mite levels was the Novi yard in which all 7 of the sampled colonies were at or below 0.8% in October. Full formic acid treatments in both late August and late September may have helped keep Novi mite levels from spiking.

Beekeepers can find varroa-related resources from MSU at keepbeesalive.org.

**District 3 Events & Other News**

by Rich Wieske: rich@greentoegardens.com

SEMBa's Bee School programs starts February 29, with registration for the three beginning classes starting January 7. This year we've expanded to Bowers Farm School in Bloomfield with two of the beginning classes offered there.

The Intermediate program will be at Tollgate beginning March 1; you must be a SEMBA member to participate in any of our classes and can join on SEMBA's web page.

Also Beginning Classes will be offered at Macomb County Community College North Campus beginning February 1 and directed by Jim Ford.

Pine River Bee Club will be offering a program starting in March during their membership meetings. Jackson Interpretative Nature Center will be starting up a new Beekeeping program in March.

WCCCD is scheduled to offer a program if enough folks register.

And there is talk of a Beginning Bee program at Belle Isle Nature Center, details still being worked out.

Residents of Detroit can contact Kido at Keep Growing Detroit to participate in their Sweet on Detroit
Stay Connected with Michigan State University!
And lots of great resources!
by Ana Heck

Beekeepers can learn about Michigan State University Sentinel Apiaries from the MSU Bee Blog. Enter your email address in the box on the right side of the page to subscribe and receive new blog posts in your inbox.

One of the easiest ways to learn about beekeeping articles, resources, and events is through Michigan Pollinator Initiative’s Facebook page. Beekeepers who “like” the page will see some posts in their newsfeed. Note: the page is public and can be view by people who are not on Facebook.

Are you looking for ways to help bees? Consider contributing to a local beekeeping association and advocating for pollinators. MSU has a new list of resources for bee clubs and a list of resources related to pollinator advocacy on its website.

Speaking of pollinators ...

Sue from da UP shared "Love getting your Newsletters. Lots of good ideas and info.

In this last one Masterman mentioned 'bee lawns'. I think it is an important and a relatively easy way we can all contribute to enriching pollinator nectar sources. In the University of Minnesota’s Bee Lab & Bee Squad Fall Newsletter (beesquad@umn.edu) they have a link to a flowering bee lawn manual that is marvelous.

It would be great if you could include this information along with a little pep talk in our next newsletter."

Information included? Check.

Pep talk? I think Sue's note accomplishes that also. Folks, time to start dreaming as you flip through seed catalogs (or websites) about how you can change your little corner of the world to help insects.

And thanks Sue! I hope this encourages folks to develop their own bee lawns, and provide feedback and info for this newsletter.

Charlotte Hubbard, Editor

Helping Students and Bees
by Eric Hayner

I started the Bee-Inspired Beekeeping Club in the Spring of 2017 after attending Kalamazoo Valley Community College’s Beekeeping 101 course. I am a Special Education teacher at a middle school and hoped to provide students with an experiential, hands-on learning, through community-based problem-solving and project-based activities. The Bee-Inspired Beekeeping Club offers a context for youth to find positive and meaningful ways to engage in their community and in their learning process while studying and caring for one of the most important contributors to our society, the honeybee. The Bee-Inspired program provides a nature-based therapeutic service to students who need a hands-on, mold-breaking experience to engage them socially and academically.
Students who participate in this program perform a variety of activities. Most importantly we tend to the hives in our apiary, (currently we have three but have had up to six), by doing things like making and feeding them sugar syrup, performing mite checks, maintaining the health of the hives and every one's favorite; looking for the elusive queen so we can appreciate her size and beauty!

During the winter months our club harvests and sells honey as well as makes beeswax wraps as a fundraiser from which the profits of both go back into funding the club. We use power and hand tools to build and paint hive boxes, assemble frames, render our own wax, make fondant (back-up sugar bricks), and do education on how to be a beekeeper and on the science of the honeybee. We also talk about lessons we can learn from bees, how to properly light a smoker, and we share our favorite bee jokes and puns.

This club has been completely grant-funded through the generous donations from the Midwest Energy Cooperative (MEC), the Mattawan Public Education Foundation (MPEF) and the Michigan Association of Environmental Professionals (MAEP) as well as with the money raised through fundraisers and honey sales. Last year I wrote a grant in conjunction with our school's Conservation Club to plant pollinator friendly trees and flowers in the school's courtyard, enhancing this area's beauty while benefiting our local pollinators.

Additionally, it is the intention that students develop a deep respect and cooperation both with bees and all of nature for our mutual benefit. Ideally, this student/teacher-centered project will fuel an enduring, growing movement of inspirational natural beekeepers mentoring future generations' love, care and respect for our fellow beings.

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**District 6 News**

*by Theresa Bristol-Miller; km3tblem@gmail.com*

Greetings from District 6. The days are starting to get longer, slowly but surely, and queen bees will gradually gear up for spring. I predict that January and February will fly by and soon it will be March and we can begin to work our bees again. One must have some optimistic thoughts.

A couple changes in our local club leadership to note. Saginaw Valley has a new president, Randy Barkley, and Dan Keane as VP. Mid-Michigan has a new president, Dave Krieger and Don Shockley as secretary. Thank you for accepting the positions of leadership. Our clubs are run by volunteers and your time and dedication is appreciated.

Seven Ponds will take the lead on planning the Fall 2020 Conference to be held in Flint this year. Anyone wishing to help with the planning or to volunteer please contact myself, Terry Toland, or Seven Ponds President Preston Zale.

This October, the Outstanding Beekeeper of the District was awarded to Jamie Ostrowski of Deckerville. Jamie is the owner of Queen Bee Enterprises and third generation of her family to run Arnold Apiaries Inc, a 4000-hive pollination and honey business. Jamie's grandparents started the business in 1954. It continued with her parents Paul and Jane Arnold and continues with Jamie and her son. That's four generation of bee stings! To me that is a wonderful legacy. Seldom today in the agriculture business can we see the next generation carry on.
I met Jamie about 10 years and 10,000 questions ago. She always will be my go-to person for the tough bee problems. Trust me when I say I am not the only person she has mentored. Hundreds might be under-exaggerating. She always takes the time to patiently answer any issues. She speaks at clubs, has taught classes at the farm and MBA conferences and will let anyone tag along for a day in one of her 160 bee yards. Her passion for beekeeping and her seemingly unending patience for helping others is why I felt she was a great choice for outstanding beekeeper for our district.

These awesome photos, featured in the Sioux Bee-Sue Bee Honey Association Co-op's Know Where Your Honey Comes From campaign, were secured by Todd Smith; thanks Todd.

Jamie will be at the SEMBA Spring Conference 2020. Also, bee on the lookout for our Michigan beekeeper’s face on their website and trucks. Thank you, Jamie, for helping local beekeepers learn and grow.

**District 2 News**
*by Dave Pearce, dpearce007@hotmail.com*

**A2B2**’s fourth annual Holiday Gala on Dec. 10 was a huge success. The owners of Bløm Meadworks of Ann Arbor gave a fascinating presentation on mead and mead making, and attendees were able to sample 25 varieties of mead from 12 meaderies including Bløm and Schramm’s. Proceeds from the Gala are earmarked to purchase a storage trailer to be used onsite at Matthaei Botanical Gardens.

Registration for A2B2’s season-long bee school will open to non-members on January 1. Classes begin February 16; price is $155 per person. See website for dates and details: [https://www.a2b2club.org/about-bee-school.html](https://www.a2b2club.org/about-bee-school.html)

“So you want to be a beekeeper” is coming up on Saturday, January 25, 1pm-4pm. This is a beginner-friendly overview and discussion of what it takes to get started in beekeeping, why you might want to, and what to expect. FREE and open to the public.

On Jan. 14 Dr. Meghan Milbrath will be presenting a lecture on the topic of **Swarm biology and swarm control**.

**Lost Nations Bee Club** is having their annual meeting on January 8. They’re also hosting a one day Bee School on Feb 1.