

Kids Korner

Here's The Buzz About Starting A Fascinating Hobby



Clinton County beekeeper, Don Woodring, gets ready to place "wild" colony and honeycomb into a hive body. This hive had swarmed earlier in the year and never located a more permanent home.

THOMAS M. BUTZLER
Clinton Co. Extension
MILL HALL (Clinton Co.) My interest in honeybees was stimulated many years ago. I was trying to learn some ball-playing skills from my dad one spring day when we heard a large "buzzing" sound in the distance. It became louder as a large, black cloud spilled over the treetops and moved into our backyard. Running for cover, we noticed a little man dressed in a white suit following the black cloud. I later found out that the "white-suited man" was chasing honeybees that had swarmed from one of his hives.

This became my second experience with honeybees and aroused my curiosity. My first experience with honey-bees occurred after I stepped on a bee while romping through our dandelion-covered lawn. My feelings for honeybees were not positive as my toe was smarting and swollen.

Don Woodring, a Clinton County resident and experienced beekeeper, first found his interest when he lived in Harrisburg and wished of an agricultural experience.

"I wanted to get into the country and start an agricultural enterprise but I had no property at the time. Beekeeping was the entrance into the agricultural world for me" he said.

Both Don and I wanted to explore the world of beekeeping as many others do. Many want to know what the best course of action is for this endeavor.

Before rushing out and spending money, you may want to begin by exploring books and magazines on the subject. This will give you an idea of what is involved in terms of time, money and commitment.

Interacting with other beekeepers by attending meetings and schools is also a great introduction to this fascinating hobby. A beekeeping school will be held in January and February at the Penn State Cooperative Extension-Clinton County for new and experienced beekeepers.

"I always get something out of these educational events and at least I know some of the potential problems" states Craig Cella, Loganton beekeeper. Often it is not easy to begin an activity such as beekeeping, and this schooling will give participants both technical and practical information. Years ago, beekeeping, was pretty simple with very little management, but with the onset of



Kelly Butzler, professor at Pennsylvania College of Technology, explains the science of beekeeping to an attentive audience during a session at Four Mile Elementary School in Lycoming County by using an observation hive.

honeybee diseases and mites, there is much more management. One can no longer muddle through beekeeping but must keep up-to-date with the latest findings."

Two honeybee mites have placed a damper on this hobby in recent years, and unless steps are taken to prevent or reduce the amount of mites in a colony, entire bee yards can be wiped out.

The Varroa mite, first found in the United States in the 1980's, will feed on the exterior of the bee body and feed on the bee's blood. When a larva is infested by two or three Varroa mites, it will usually die. The tracheal mite, also a recent pest, completes its life cycle and feeding activities in the trachea (breathing tubes). It is believed that this mite interferes with flying.

Because of the high reproductive nature of both of these mites, infested colonies will usually die if left untreated, and colony loss may occur within a few months. In addition to the economic losses incurred by beekeepers, fruit and vegetable growers who depend upon bees to pollinate their crops could suffer shortages.

Some gung-ho people like to jump into beekeeping full force; starting off with 10 to 15 colonies. This is a sure recipe for disaster. Most beekeepers suggest one should start small.

Beginning beekeepers can purchase a hive that is already established from a local beekeeper or purchase beehive equipment from a beekeeping supply catalog, then import packages of bees from the South. For a beginner it is suggested that buying all new equipment with package bees is the best way to start. An established hive can create problems for the beginner in areas such as swarm control and requeening.

Keeping bees will provide endless hours of amazement and gratification for you and/or your kids. The beginning may be made in a small way at a minimum of expense and a little curiosity.

The 2003 Beekeeping Short Course will be held for five consecutive Mondays in January and February at the Penn State Cooperative Extension Office-Clinton County in Mill Hall. Monday classes, which begin Jan. 12, will meet from 7 to 9 p.m.



A typical hive set-up for beekeepers in Pennsylvania.

The following topics will be covered: Jan. 12: Parts of the hive; equipment needed Jan. 19: Installing package bees; how to feed Jan. 26: How honey bees produce honey; extracting honey Feb. 2: Spring and summer management; pollination Feb. 9: Fall and winter management; disease of bees Feb. 23: Snow Day April or May: Hands-on workshop, time and date.

There is a fee for the course to cover costs of refreshments, hand-outs, etc. For more information, call the Penn State Cooperative Extension Service, Clinton County, at (570) 726-0022.

Starting Beehive Costs

Prices listed are for new equipment. Used equipment can be obtained at lower prices from retiring beekeepers or looking at classified ads in the paper.

- Hive body: \$18
- Hive body frames: \$8.50 (10 frames)
- Hive body foundation: \$8.00 (10 sheets)
- Bottom board: \$11.00
- Telescoping Cover: \$15
- Inner Cover: \$7.50
- Veil: \$17.00
- Gloves: \$8.50
- Smoker: \$14.95
- Hive tool: \$4.50
- 3-pound swarm with queen: \$62 or free, if you capture your own swarm.

Smart Stuff with Twig Walkingstick

Dear Twig: I was reading my mother's bird field guide, and it said certain birds — the yellow warbler, for one — live in riparian zones. What's a riparian zone?

A dark green tunnel of trees that shades the waters of a cool clear stream
 A bright, sunny flower-filled meadow that grows right up to the edge of a river
 A deep green doughnut of forest, with a lake in the hole of the doughnut
 Those are examples of riparian zones. Riparian (ri-PARE-ee-un) zones are lands that border our streams and rivers and lakes and ponds
 Many birds need riparian zones — healthy intact ones that is (Many riparian zones have been cleared of trees or otherwise damaged) So do many plants, mammals, reptiles and amphibians
 Riparian zones give them food shelter and water that they can't get anywhere else
 Riparian zones have another job, too. Their roots filter runoff and take out pollutants before the pollutants can dirty a stream. They give us cleaner, healthier waters and a healthier environment as a whole
 Mmm, forest doughnut,
 Twig

Riparian from the Latin ripa meaning river bank

From The Ohio State University — specifically OARDC and OSU Extension



At Lebanon County's Farm-City banquet on Tuesday evening, the youth group from Midway Church of the Brethren provided this reenactment of the first Christmas. From left, Adam Keller, Dan Buffenmeyer, Kevin Bollinger, Caroline Vigilante, Joe Vigilante, Kelly Patches, Matt and Nate Keller, and Brandon Bollinger.