
September/October Newsletter

1 message

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Will Bees

Publication of the **Will County Beekeepers Association** - Sept/Oct 2021**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT****PLEASE JOIN US FOR NEXT MEMBER MEETING:
OCTOBER 20, 2021 AT 6:30PM**

Will County Farm Bureau

[100 Manhattan Rd](#)[Joliet, IL 60433](#)**THIS MONTH IN YOUR HIVES**

- *Test for varroa mites and treat as necessary.*
- *Adjust brood nest architecture to prepare for overwintering.*
- *Evaluate fall nectar flow.*
- *Feed as necessary to make sure adequate food stores are in the hive.*

Beecabulary

**The Other (Not) Bees**

By: Keith Meiser

I was sitting in front of the computer, reading news articles, barely noticing the sound of the lawnmower in the backyard. My wife, ever energetic, was mowing right behind our beehives when the sound suddenly quit. Moments later she burst through the back door screaming "They're stinging me!" Now I've had one or two guard bees buzz me when I've mowed right up to the entrances of the hives, but never a lot! I jumped up to help her scrape off the stingers but could only see white welts forming so I assumed she had taken my advice on removing stingers promptly to minimize the amount of venom injected. I grabbed some Benadryl

(diphenhydramine) and gave her a couple of tablets as she doesn't have the immunity that I have after many stings through the years and the antihistamine would counter the effects. She was in agony. We counted at least a dozen stings.

After getting her comfortable, I headed out to investigate. I've never encountered such aggression with my bees so I speculated that maybe I had a wild robbing frenzy on my hands. I threw on a veil, lit up the smoker, and started walking down the hill to the hives. No obvious frenzied bees in the air and no excessive sound as I rounded the corner to view the entrances. Nothing. Some bees were clinging together on the outside because of the heat but none came out to greet me. Baffled, I looked behind the hives at the abandoned lawnmower and something caught my eye. A cloud of small yellow insects were flying around it. Yellowjackets!

My unfortunate wife had run the lawnmower directly over the top of the entrance to a colony of ground nesting yellowjackets. They had built their nest under the landscape fabric under the mulch around the hives. Neither of us had seen them earlier, but it was obvious that they had now grown into a populous colony. Being so close to the hives, any insecticide treatment was out of the question. I checked on my wife and she had taken a hot shower but was getting no relief. I plotted my strategy to take care of them after dark.

Rather than a direct attack on them, I decided I would put a clear bowl over the entrance and they would be confused and fly to the sunlight, unable to escape and I would let them expire. Since my wife was now under the weather, I was unable to find a large bowl, but I did find an enormous flower vase that I thought would do the trick. Placing it over the entrance of the nest, it was obvious that it was too unstable to keep from tipping over so I found a piece of wood to put on top to hold it in place. The activity had really riled them up and they flew up, hitting the inside of the glass trying to get to the flashlight. I thought about how clever I was and decided to get a photo to show off. I laid the flashlight next to the vase to get enough light, took out my cell phone and took some shots. Suddenly I realized I was being stung all over. The flashlight had exposed a way under the edge of the vase and the very angry yellowjackets took full advantage. I ran. They got me 6 times and they really hurt. I even brought a couple more in the house with me. The next day I poured water with detergent into the hole and a few days after that, the raccoons dug up the nest and ate everything.

Yellowjackets of course make life difficult for beekeepers in a completely different way. The average person is afraid of stinging insects and usually misidentifies them as "bees". When politicians get involved, as in our local governments, they are likely to set excessive restrictions on or even ban beekeeping to keep the "bees" from disturbing the voters.

In our area, we generally have two types of yellowjackets: the ground nesting native yellowjackets and the much more troublesome introduced German yellowjackets. The ground nesting Eastern Yellow Jacket (*Vespula maculifrons*), are somewhat smaller, more black than

yellow, and not as interested in garbage or picnics. They are generally found in more rural areas and excavate a hole in the ground to build their multilevel paper nest.

The German Yellow Jacket (*Vespula germanica*), arrived from Europe in the early 20th century apparently in machinery pallets made from air-dried lumber delivered to Detroit. They are rarely found away from humans and never nest in the ground, but prefer human made structures. They thrive on poorly secured garbage. They are a little larger, more yellow than black, and are very attracted to human food, especially beer. These are the yellowjackets that make outdoor picnics late in summer and fall difficult if not downright hazardous. They find enclosed areas in buildings and construct a multilayered paper nest surrounded by layers of chewed wood fiber very similar to a bald faced hornet nest.

Ground nesting yellowjackets generally don't give us a lot of trouble unless we stumble on their colony and disturb them. Years ago, I was in west central Illinois taking close-up photos of native solitary bees on flowers, I noticed quite a number of yellowjackets surrounding me. As I slowly backed away, I realized that I was standing with one foot on their entrance, blocking the returning workers from getting in. As soon as I got back, they all tumbled into the hole and none of them bothered me. I wasn't making any aggressive movements and it didn't trigger an attack. I usually see them hunting for insects and caterpillars an inch or so above the grass. In the fall, when the caterpillars are gone, they can become bothersome. They are very attracted to overripe and rotting fruit.

German yellowjackets are a problem for us because they are so closely associated with humans. Often their nests are in occupied structures where people will encounter them. They also feed on insects and caterpillars, but also any protein that is associated with humans. That brings them into close contact with frightened people. Once inside a beer can make a nice picnic into a medical emergency. Because they are mistaken for "bees" this is a major headache for beekeepers. Remember to tell your friends that honeybees are NEVER yellow.

Because yellowjacket colonies do not survive the winter, they produce fertile females ("queens") and males ("drones") in the late summer and fall that will mate and the females hibernate until spring. In the spring, the single fertilized female will start a new nest, by herself, and raise enough workers to continue building the nest and foraging for food to build the population. If anything happens to that "queen" before she raises enough workers to stay home and lay eggs, the colony is doomed and dies out.

Spring is a good time to set out wasp and yellowjacket traps because for each one trapped, there is one whole colony of hundreds of yellowjackets that will never sting a voter that will want "bees" banned. There is a plethora of home built yellowjacket traps on YouTube so I won't describe any here. As for commercial traps, success varies. Because of the seasonal changes in the diets of the yellowjackets, some may work spectacularly in the fall and not attract any in

the spring. I have had good luck with the [TERRO® Wasp & Fly Trap](#). Many others work the same way. There is a covered top that allows the insects to enter, but confuses them if they try to leave because they can't find the entrance. Eventually they will contact the liquid bait at the bottom of the trap which contains detergent, instantly coating the insect and drowning it. Any that you kill is one less "bee" to antagonize people.

BEECABULARY

Monthly words for thought:

- *Hymenopteran*
- *Apiologist*
- *Acaricide*



Robbing Screens

By: Wayne Dailey

This month we discuss robbing screens. First off, what are they for, why and when do they need to be used and how do they prevent robbing?

Robbing screens are used by beekeepers for the (you guessed it) prevention of robbing. Generally, when the nectar flow is ending or over, bees will search for other resources to give their hives the best chance of survival through the upcoming winter. They will continually seek out other hives and try to enter and steal honey stores. If the targeted hive has a strong population of guard bees, they will easily fend off attack from neighboring bees. If the hive is weakened due to any number of reasons such as queen death or injury, varroa, SHB, pesticides, etc., the robber bees will enter the hive and remove the honey stores and nectar and take it to their home hive. You can tell if a hive is being robbed, as there will be bees looking for ways to enter the hive other than through the main entrance, i.e., gaps between boxes, vent holes, upper entrances, etc.

A robbing screen essentially moves the route into the hive to an alternate location away from the hive opening. The robber bees will go towards the smell of honey, which is strongest at the hive entrance. The home bees will figure this out and eventually find the new entrance point. The robber bees have no such instinct, and will continually try to enter the hive at the original entrance.

Robbing screens have no specific design as such, but are designed to move the entrance point of the hive to somewhere that is less obvious to robbing bees. They can be as simple or as complex as the beekeeper desires.



This clever storage tip was provided by Willbees' member Jimmy Etienne to keep his frames safe from mice and moths over the winter.

The bin is a 70 gallon from Home Depot. The bottom rails are steel rails from adjustable shelving 1/2" thick, because the bin is tapered at bottom and 1"X 2" will not work, they work fine on the 2nd and 3rd rows. I used 1/4" bolts to stall the rails. This setup will hold approximately 90 medium frames.



Illinois State Beekeepers Association 130th Annual Fall Meeting will be on Saturday, November 13, 2021. Here is the link to information:

<https://www.ilsba.com/summary-of-events.html>

Here is the link for the printable registration form:

https://www.ilsba.com/uploads/1/3/1/1/131107083/2021_isba_fall_registration_form_latest_version_09-16-2021_fillable.pdf

Beecabulary

Garfield Park Conservatory on November 3

<https://garfieldconservatory.org/event/virtual-beekeeping-lecture-with-dr-katie-lee/>

They are working on the December lecture as the original speaker had to cancel. Watch for info in a future newsletter or a notice sent to your e-mail.

Beecabulary

Mite Monitoring Methods by Randy Oliver

<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/sick-bees-part-11-mite-monitoring-methods/>

Queen Spotting: Meet the Remarkable Queen Bee and Discover the Drama at the Heart of the Hive

By Hilary Kearney, reviewed by Michelle Gattuso



If you are a fan of the "Where's Waldo" book series or have issues spotting the queen, this is the book for you! There are 48 pages, with increasing difficulty, to practice spotting the queen. In between the fold out pages, are useful tidbits to learn (or relearn) information about the hive. The author also tells stories of the unusual places where she has caught various swarms.

Our Will Bees lending library offers a vast selection of books and videos for you to enjoy. Be sure to check out a book at our next member meeting.



Elections are coming up for the November 2021 meeting.

We need a VP (1 yr term), a treasurer (1 yr term), a secretary (1 yr term) and a director (3yr term). Anyone who is in good standing may run for a board position. See the link below for description of each position. Please know that you do not need to be a master beekeeper to serve on the board. For example the secretary is taking notes at meetings and the treasurer just writes checks and deposits checks/cash at the bank.

<https://www.willbees.org/bylaws/>

Swap Meet

Let's all start going through our existing equipment and think about donating it to new beekeepers. Items may be things you originally may have used and replaced or have more than you need. At a future meeting we will all bring these items and raffle things off. More details in the future. We could use a captain for this project. Please reach out to the board if you can help.

Names tags and membership dues.

We would like to print nametags. 2022 dues need to be paid by January 31, 2022 in order to have a printed lanyard at the Feb 2022 meeting.

Look good while supporting Willbees!

If you would like a t-shirt, sweatshirt or hat, please email pcostion@comcast.net

T-shirts are \$10

Hats are \$13

Sweatshirts are \$20

Share what you know.

We are looking for people to help contribute to your monthly newsletter:

- Feature articles that you'd like to write
- Review of a book or article in a journal you read
- An educational opportunity that you are aware of
- Pictures that you'd like us to share
- Recipe using honey you would like to share

Basically, anything interesting. Please email willbees-board@willbees.org with anything you'd like to share today.

Board Members

President: Patrick Schab

Vice President: Alec Parks

Treasurer: Patricia Costion

Secretary: Michelle Gattuso

Directors (years remaining on term): Wayne Dailey (1), Keith Meiser (2), Dave Meyer (3)

Will County Beekeepers Association c/o Will

County Farm Bureau

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630-557-6BEE

www.willbees.org

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