

"Promoting the Craft, Science and Future of Beekeeping since 1947"

THE BEELINE

Official Newsletter of the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association



ISSUE: Summer 2023

Editor: Laura Miller

Assistant Editor: Cate Clark

CIBA MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, May 20 5 p.m.

Northridge Baptist Church

3700 6th Avenue, Des Moines

Speaker:

ISU Extension bee specialist Randall Cass will talk about small hive beetles and other non-varroa honey bee insect pests. A light meal will be served after the business meeting. More on **page 3**.

CIBA SUMMER FIELD DAY

Saturday, July 22 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Iowa Arboretum & Gardens

1875 Peach Avenue, Madrid

We'll have hands-on demonstrations in the morning, lunch provided by CIBA, and two indoor presentations in the afternoon. Wear your bee suit! Details on **page 4**.

Questions? Call Don Moody (515) 770-5754, or ds.moody1@hotmail.com

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER:

August 10, 2023

Email submissions and comments to:

Laura Miller, Beeline_editor@yahoo.com

We encourage you to receive the newsletter via email; however, we understand if electronic delivery is not for you! You may update your subscription by contacting Linn Wilbur, lwilbur50201@gmail.com

*Has a bee ever landed on you,
and instead of getting scared,
you appreciated the possibility
that you got confused
with a flower?*



FROM THE PRESIDENT, JAMIE BEYER

The April 15 CIBA auction was well attended with lots of equipment and bees sold. It was THE place to buy and sell – this year being a good example of stuff that sold cheap and stuff that sold for almost new prices. We had a blustery day compared to 80-degree temps the day before, but that's April in Iowa. It's always a gamble to plan an outdoor event this time of year, but the weather did not keep beekeepers away!

We're fortunate to have good attendance at CIBA auctions, seminars and meetings. We try to advertise and your volunteer board members do a good job of putting on great events. Quality has become a tradition for our CIBA gatherings.

Since the pandemic and even before, I have seen a growing shift in how people get information about beekeeping. Social media, podcasts and YouTube videos have become a main source of information. However, I think that conferences, seminars and in-person meetings are a source of reliable information. Notice, I said reliable.

It is unfortunate that a lot of people attempt to make money off beekeepers who only want to learn, and they are taken advantage of in many situations. Are the "facts" presented in YouTube videos reliable? (You may want to add: Is the information appropriate for your operation, region and climate?) I have watched many so-called experts saying things that simply are not true. Yes, you can rely on some of this information, but be careful. Presenters at CIBA meetings truly are experts. We can be proud of having this quality.

Probably the most important aspect to beekeeping is connecting personally with other beekeepers. You need to find mentors who give thoughtful advice as a fellow beekeeper and not for profit. CIBA is a non-profit organization with a mission to share information that is factual and not for profit. We encourage networking and getting to know our fellow beekeepers because this social aspect is an important part of learning.

The pandemic drastically changed the social aspect of beekeeping. Instead, we have bonded with our computer screens in a way that I never thought possible. Really??

Think about how important it is to be a social beekeeper. That is the way honey bees survive -- they are the best at showing us how to work together and share information. I personally have become the beekeeper I am today because of the social aspect of learning how to be a better beekeeper. My best friend is not the computer, it is my beekeeper mentor!!

Thanks for being a member,
Jamie

beyersbog@aol.com

Find us on the web: www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CentrallowaBeekeepersAssociation

Join our CIBA Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/353306835159561/

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Editor's Document Navigation Tips

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Document navigation: No matter where you are in this document, if you press the CTRL + Home buttons on your keyboard concurrently, you will go to the top of the BEELINE.

CIBA Club Meetings/Communications

CIBA meets 6 times annually, the third Saturday every other month. During active beekeeping season (May and September), they are late afternoon or early evening; in off-season (November and January) they are early afternoon. The March winter seminar and July field day are full-day events.

The official CIBA newsletter, the **BEELINE**, is published four times a year on the first day of January (Winter, beginning in 2023); March (Spring); May (Summer) and September (Fall). A special Student Edition is published each January for people enrolled in central Iowa beekeeping classes.

CIBA members also receive the **CIBA Newscast** email from the president on months when the BEELINE is not published (not available for members who choose to receive CIBA info only via USPS).

CIBA Bee Bits, an email newsletter with helpful hints about beekeeping, comes out the 15th of each month (not posted on the CIBA website and available only for CIBA members who receive CIBA info electronically).



CIBA Program Updates

CIBA Member Meeting: *Get the Lowdown on These Honey Bee Pests*

Date: Saturday, May 20

Time: 5 p.m.

Where: Northridge Baptist Church, 3700 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines (map and directions on CIBA website)

Schedule: We'll have a business meeting, a light supper provided by the CIBA food committee, then Iowa State University Bee Specialist Randall Cass will present the program, "Small Hive Beetles and Other Non-Varroa Honey Bee Insect Pests."

Randall Cass joined Iowa State in 2017 as the institution's first bee specialist for ISU Extension in more than 70 years. He coordinates bee research, manages ISU's honey apiary, lectures, and provides outreach to beekeepers, farmers and landowners. He's worked with small farmers in Guatemala and El Salvador in rural development programs.

Here's what he says about these "other" pests: "We might worry about varroa mites wiping out a bee colony, but other types of infestations can be just as devastating. Wax moths destroy precious comb frame by frame, and small hive beetle larvae with their voracious appetites can 'slime out' an entire hive."



Luckily, there are precautions that beekeepers can take so you will not want to miss his presentation. We'll provide plenty of time to meet other beekeepers and "talk all things bees." The CIBA food committee is planning pasta and light refreshments served prior to the program (free food, thanks to your CIBA membership and donations). Bring a friend, introduce them to CIBA and encourage them to join!

May through August CIBA Board Meetings

CIBA officers and directors have regularly scheduled meetings on the second Monday of each month starting at 7 p.m. (the Zoom link opens at 6:30 p.m.). These meetings are open to CIBA members and you are encouraged to participate. Use the following info to join us for these upcoming meetings:

May 8: Meeting ID: 899 6986 2221 Passcode: 466025

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89969862221?pwd=VXdHOHIWY3VuVml6d2FBWXFoSzN3UT09>

Find a local phone number at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89969862221?pwd=VXdHOHIWY3VuVml6d2FBWXFoSzN3UT09>

June 12: Meeting ID: 882 8435 0116 Passcode: 783767

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88284350116?pwd=ckTLVWJFc3haM1VpV3djTkQ3bzI4Zz09>

Find a local phone number at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88284350116?pwd=ckTLVWJFc3haM1VpV3djTkQ3bzI4Zz09>

July 10: Meeting ID: 838 3436 5238 Passcode: 607873

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83834365238?pwd=M09vMEV6UDg2U2QwcmhQWGhUa2szQT09>

Find a local phone number at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83834365238?pwd=M09vMEV6UDg2U2QwcmhQWGhUa2szQT09>

August 14: Meeting ID: 849 5455 3043 Passcode: 974802

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84954553043?pwd=cjdrTngrc0Nuek5QQUg5UUtsMIBUUT09>

Find a local phone number at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84954553043?pwd=cjdrTngrc0Nuek5QQUg5UUtsMIBUUT09>

To connect via phone, find a local number at the link under each month's meeting information or use Chicago number (312) 626-6799 and then the meeting ID and passcode for that month's meeting.

CIBA SUMMER FIELD DAY: *Plan Now to Attend This Fun Event!*

Submitted by Don Moody, CIBA program chair

Date: July 22

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: Iowa Arboretum & Gardens, 1875 Peach Avenue, Madrid

The day includes a morning of hands-on, up-close-and-personal outdoor stations on hive inspections (for both beginners and advanced beekeepers), making splits and processing bees wax. The stations will be led by expert beekeepers **Curt Bronnenburg**, Spring Valley Honey, Perry; **Pat and Peggy Ennis**, P&P Honey, Goodell; and **Eric Kenoyer**, Kenoyer Farms, Van Meter. The afternoon features two presentations by **Becky Masterman** in the air-conditioned comfort of the main arboretum building. She will talk about the biology behind key management steps that impact honey production and biology-based beekeeping tips and tricks for new and experienced beekeepers.

This event is open to anyone so bring a friend! You do not need to pre-register and CIBA will provide lunch and break refreshments. Wear your bee suit and be ready to have fun! Proceeds from CIBA's successful Winter Seminar are being used to defray costs. This is a great opportunity to join CIBA for half price and become part of a worthwhile organization!



Becky Masterman's enthusiasm for honey bees began during an undergraduate entomology class visit to Dr. Basil Furgala's University of Minnesota Bee Lab apiary. In 1992, shortly after her first hive visit, she was lucky to be hired as an undergraduate technician by the new UMN Bee Lab leader, Dr. Marla Spivak. Becky went on to study the neuroethology of honey bee hygienic behavior under Dr. Spivak's direction and obtained a PhD in 2000. After a career in real estate, Becky returned to the Bee Lab in 2012 and led the Bee Squad program from 2013-2019. Now she manages her own apiaries and co-writes the monthly *Minding Your Bees* and *Cues* article for *Bee Culture* magazine.



Pat and Peggy Ennis work over 500 hives in north central Iowa. Pat is a long-time beekeeper, initially starting with bees in Wisconsin, and working commercial bees in Hawaii and Iowa. Peggy is experienced in many facets of turning products of the hive into saleable items--winning several blue ribbons at the Iowa State Fair. Pat is a former Iowa Honey Producers Association president and for many years has taught a beginning beekeepers class in the Mason City area. P&P Honey sells package bees, nucs, queens, honey and beekeeping supplies, including hive equipment of their own design and manufacture.



Curt Bronnenburg is a second-generation beekeeper and has been involved in beekeeping his entire life. Spring Valley Honey Farms is a family business, owned and operated by Curt and his wife Connie in Perry for more than 32 years. Currently, they manage about 4,000 colonies and market more than 140,000 pounds of honey annually. Their bees pollinate Iowa orchards in the summer and California almond groves during the cold Iowa winters. Their daughters, Christa, Chelsea, Cara and Ciera, help with bottling the honey and making hand-made bath and beauty products from honey and beeswax.



Eric Kenoyer and his wife Keri live in Van Meter where they manage Kenoyer Farms. Eric is District 5 director for the Iowa Honey Producers Association and editor of that group's web site. He is former tire building at the Firestone plant in Des Moines and went to the School of Hard Knocks with a master's in Common Sense.

Cold Auction/Hot Deals: Here's What You Missed

Submitted by Mark Moberly, CIBA Auction Chair

The 2023 CIBA auction has come to an end and thankfully, the rain and snow held off. It was cold and windy like last year, but we stayed dry. And so did 53 bidders who turned out for the April 15 event at Washington Township School near Minburn.

If you did not attend, you missed some super bargains. Some items went for as little as \$1 while others sold for \$400. The live bee colonies with hives again brought \$350 to \$360 each. These hives were ready to split into four colonies each as soon as they got to their new locations.

Buyers found hundreds of supers without frames and both outer and inner covers were plentiful, with stacks of them selling for the price of one cover. These may have been the bargains of the day! However, bee knick-knacks were a hot item with many bidders wanting more than were available. Candle-making equipment was a steal with a full box going for the price of one item in the box. We had many extractors, both electric and manual crank ranging from two-frame to six-frame styles, and one uncapping tank was sold.

The food was incredible, too. Our Royalty Café inside the school offered great-tasting pulled pork or loose meat sandwich meals. Servers even brought home-baked snacks and desserts to the auction area so bidders did not have to miss out on bidding. A big thank you goes to those who made our stomachs happy during and after the auction. All proceeds benefit the CIBA Royalty program.

It was also a time for networking. Many bidders visited with other beekeepers in the café area when the auction ended, eating and having coffee while warming up.

I have many people to thank: those who helped set up, those who checked in sellers and their goods, those who ran the registration/pay tables and those who cleaned up afterwards. I cannot name them all for fear of missing someone. But I do know that without everyone inside and outside the building, this large event would not happen.

CIBA Queen Bethany Kelly (below, middle) and CIBA Princess Leah Casey (below, right) served food at the Royalty Café, with proceeds supporting the CIBA Royalty program. Photos by Mark Moberly and Jan Yegge



CIBA Winter Seminar Draws a Crowd

Submitted by Cate Clark, Assistant BEELINE Editor

See photos on next page!

Our Winter Seminar at the Iowa Arboretum on March 18 was humming with bee enthusiasts. A full day of information on many aspects of beekeeping was presented to 138 registered attendees. As always, CIBA provided fine refreshments during breaks, and Smokin' Big Dawgs BBQ of Ames served a hearty and delicious lunch. Unfortunately, the blustery Iowa weather didn't encourage outside exploring of the arboretum grounds.

CIBA President **Jamie Beyer** moderated the morning session and introduced 2023 CIBA Royalty. Jason Foley, president of the Iowa Honey Producers Association, gave a brief update of IHPA events and reported that House Bill 457 was in process, which would exempt beekeeping input products (including live bees) from Iowa sales and use tax.

Andy Joseph, state apiarist, reported that his recent hive inspections have found decreased losses compared to last ten years' averages. He attributes this positive trend to a tapering off of new beekeepers (we're getting better at this), an improvement in mite control methods, and seasonably cold winters which are actually better for hives' winter survival. He is seeing some hive beetles in inspections across the state, but they're not an issue to the point where he advises treatment.

Andy also explained the origin of the Field Watch program, and how it operates today. It's critical for beekeepers to register their hives annually in order for the program to provide protection from pesticide application damages.

Dr. Judy Wu-Smart, director of University of Nebraska-Lincoln Bee Lab, provided a wealth of practical information about spring cleanup and hive management tasks. She shared her experiences handling hives at the UNL Bee Lab and the lessons learned there. After lunch she presented again, this time on the subject of minimizing injury and disruption when handling hives. Again, examples from Bee Lab work illustrated her practical tips.

Kurt Rueber of the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals discussed food safety in handling honey and took questions on the subject. A recent law change means wholesale processing can be done in the home now. Also, retail sales of honey does not require licensing. He also had application forms for those interested in obtaining a license.

After lunch, Dr. Kristen Clark, president-elect of the Iowa Veterinary Association, also with the Honey Bee Veterinary Consortium, discussed efforts to increase veterinarians' involvement with honeybee care. The U.S. lags in training in this area; the consortium is launching a certification program to fill this void, among other initiatives. More information is available at HBVC.org.

The topic of comb honey production was presented by Shelby Kittle, graduate student at UN-Lincoln. She covered the four phases of production with helpful illustrations from personal experience with the process.

Dr. Mike Simone-Finstrom, USDA Agricultural Research Services, addressed (via Zoom) the topic of breeding bees with a focus on varroa resistance. This big-picture view of the mite problem shows work being done at the front end, in honey bee breeding, rather than a reactionary treatment of hive infestations.

The day's presentations wrapped up with **Pat and Peggy Ennis** of P&P Honey in Goodell, familiar faces to many. Pat made the case for starting hives with nucs vs package bees, with the nuc bees having a head start with brood ready to lay. He laid out the pros and cons of each, though, saying both methods are valid. Peggy shared lots of facts on beeswax, and what can be created (and sold) from this by-product from honey production.

Many thanks to those who purchased items in the Royalty Silent Auction. The day's bidding resulted in over \$500 to support the CIBA Royalty program, and successful bidders took home some wonderful bee-related goodies. Many thanks also to those who contributed items for this auction: **Chris and Jim Crandell, Ann and Linn Wilbur, Cindy Spiker, Val, John and Dan Just, Keri and Eric Kenoyer**, Lappe's Bee Supply and Honey Farms LLC, and Dadant & Sons Inc.



Carrying on the Legacy (top left): The first recipient of the Susan Kelly Memorial Scholarship is Morgan Spaulding (center), surrounded by Susan's four daughters (from left) Olivia, Bethany, Elianna and Abigail.

Crowning Royalty (top right): CIBA president Jamie Beyer and 2022 CIBA Queen Olivia Moody pose after crowning CIBA's 2023 Queen Bethany Kelly and Princess Leah Casey. IHPA Queen Rachel Vakulich also attended.

Packed House (bottom left): This was the first year for the Winter Seminar at the Iowa Arboretum.

Great Food (bottom right): Attendees rated the food from Smokin' Big Dawgs BBQ as top-notch.

Other CIBA Business

New Chair for CIBA Royalty Committee

Please thank **Keri Kenoyer** who has stepped up to lead an important part of our organization, the CIBA Royalty program. As chair, Keri will set up presentations for the CIBA queen and princess, provide them with resources and other support, and help them develop leadership skills that will last a lifetime. She also oversees the annual application and interview process for new young people to represent CIBA as queen, princess or ambassador.

Keri and her husband Eric live in Van Meter and have been tending bees for about eight years. Both have been active in CIBA, with Keri most recently leading the food committee. Keri steps into the committee following Susan Kelly, who died last year from injuries sustained in a car accident. Joining Keri on the committee are **Carole Ann Vannoy**, **Julie Sander** and **Abigail Kelly**.

To set up an appearance by our current queen and princess, contact Keri at cibaroyalty@gmail.com or 515-490-2011. Thank you, Keri!

The Royalty Corner

Submitted by 2023 CIBA Queen Bethany Kelly

The beginning of my queenship has been mostly filled with scheduling programs and gathering all the resources necessary for providing good presentations. On March 16 I attended the Iowa Honey Bee Day at the State Capitol in Des Moines. It was great getting to talk to legislators and I enjoyed explaining the importance of bees to Iowa's agriculture. A plus was that I talked to Capitol visitors about bees!

Right after that, **Leah Casey**, our new CIBA princess, and I were officially crowned at the CIBA Winter Seminar. We also announced speakers during the event, along with Iowa Honey Queen Rachel Vakulich. I enjoyed meeting so many beekeepers and I learned a lot from the speakers.

In April, I visited a group of students in the Ankeny area. We talked about the honey bee life cycle and the importance of honey bees. I have a few programs coming up in May and June that I am excited about, including Ag4Kids Day!

I also am excited to use a new observation hive purchased by CIBA from donations to the Royalty Fund. It will be super helpful for both Leah and me. CIBA members have been generous in their support of the silent auction at the Winter Seminar and the Royalty Café during the CIBA auction. Thank you!

If you want to schedule a program with Leah or me, please send an email to: cibaroyalty@gmail.com.

Your CIBA Royalty also manage a page on Facebook and Instagram. Keep up-to-date on our activities and events, plus get amazing bee facts and cool recipes on Facebook (search for CIBA Honey Queen/Honey Ambassador Program) or Instagram:centraliowahoneyroyalty



Capitol Royalty

We had a great attendance of club representatives at Iowa Honey Bee Day on March 16 (left to right):

Leah Casey, CIBA Princess;

Brita McCollum, Boone River Beekeepers Queen;

Allison Hager, American Honey Princess;

Rachel Vakulich, Iowa Honey Producers Association Queen;

Bethany Kelly, CIBA Queen; and

Vannessa Vonderohe, North Iowa Beekeepers Queen.

Observation Hive for Sale

FOR SALE: 10-frame observation hive. Frames included. \$25. Call Tony Christensen, (515) 240-4957.

CIBAlist is a service for members to submit up to 2 classified ads per year.

Meet Your New CIBA Director: Marlon Mormann

Tell us about your interest in bees and why you became a beekeeper.

I have been a beekeeper for more than five years. I got interested in bees because we love comb honey and the science behind beekeeping. I manage seven hives at my home in Des Moines and on property I own in northeast Nebraska. My favorite part about beekeeping is to produce comb honey and teach others about beekeeping.

I joined CIBA after my first year of beekeeping. I needed help and I have really enjoyed the seminars.

What do you hope to contribute to CIBA as a board member?

I want to help advance the profession. Beekeeping is a neat small business that can expand from a hobby to something that makes real money. It is a business that anyone can start on their own without significant finances. There aren't many business opportunities like that anymore. That said, I am not in it for the money, just to have fun.

What's your biggest challenge in beekeeping?

Varroa mites, just keeping the bees alive. This year I am focusing on trapping some swarms.

What's your advice to new beekeepers?

Start small, be patient, never be shy about asking the club experts for advice.

Congrats to ISU Bee Researcher

Source: ISU News Service

Congratulations to Dr. Amy Toth, who was recently honored for her work with bees.

Dr. Toth is professor of Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology at Iowa State University and a co-leader of the ISU Bee Program. She received the 2023 Bailey Research Career Development award. It will fund a three-year project, titled "Uniting Conservation and Genomics to Address Bee Declines," to see how foraging activity, diet, pathogens and parasites play a role in declining native bee species. Conservation genomics integrates "big data" with genomic sequencing to protect endangered species. She will study multiple species of bumble bees currently found in Iowa.

There are over 15 different species of bumble bees in the state, some of which are thriving, and others that are nearly extinct or have gone locally extinct. Dr. Toth plans to genetically sequence the bees themselves and their internal organs, as well as pollen found on the legs of live bees to provide information on nearly every aspect of a bee's life and activity.

This project builds on Dr. Toth's work over the past 15 years. As a result, she believes that answers to questions including where specific bees prefer to forage, which diseases are decimating certain species of bees, and what resources are needed to reverse widespread population decline will become available.

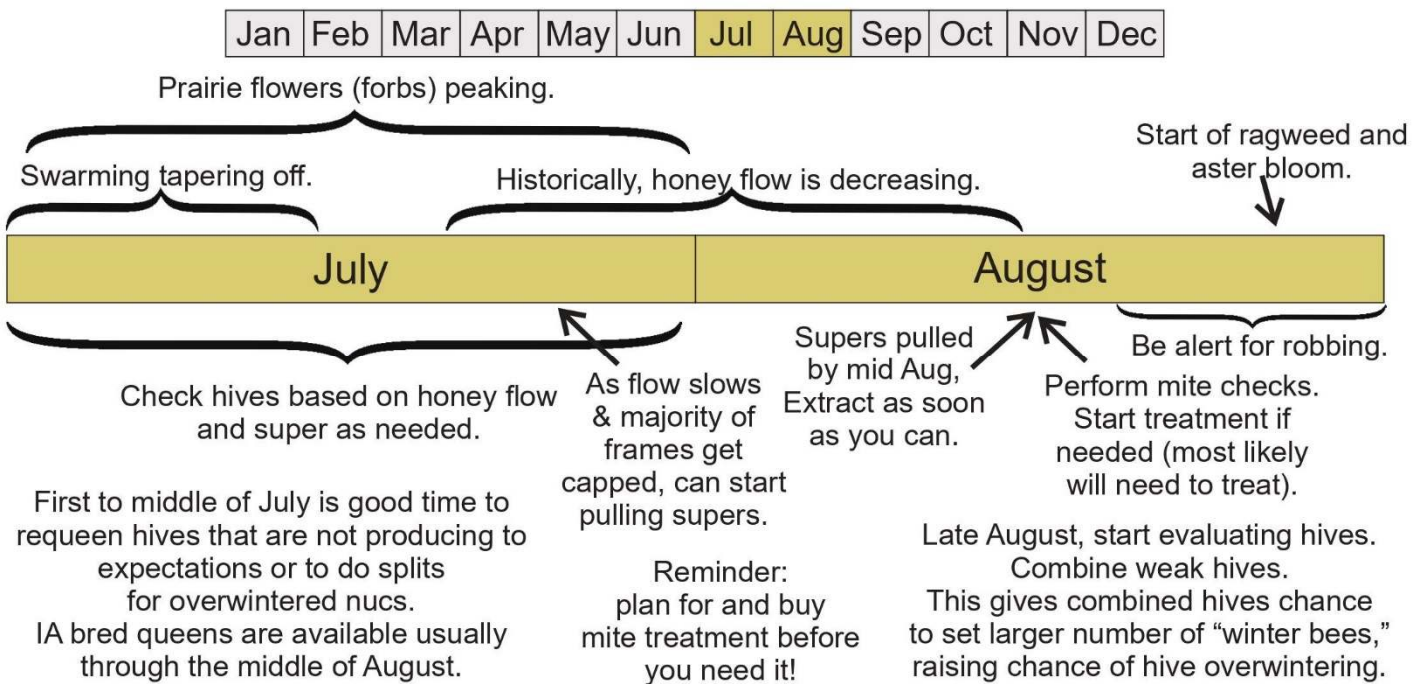
Many of you know Dr. Toth from her presentations at CIBA meetings and other ways she supports local beekeepers. Please thank her for all that she does for bees and pollinators.



Marlon with granddaughter Mayleigh Maxine.



Central Iowa Timeline of Beekeeping Tasks



Dates are average--adjust for early or late season

Note: This framework was developed by CIBA member Linn Wilbur and reviewed by CIBA directors prior to publication here. It covers the months until the next BEELINE is published to give members a better idea for planning time and tasks related to their bee operation, based on average temperatures in central Iowa. Copyright 2023 Central Iowa Beekeepers Association



Reason to Celebrate? World Bee Day is on May 20, the sixth celebration since it was declared by the UN General Assembly on December 20, 2017. Its purpose is to raise awareness about the importance of bees and other pollinators to humanity in the light of food security and global hunger eradication as well as concern for the environment and biodiversity. The effort began in Slovenia, which has been considered the birthplace of modern beekeeping.

Honey Bees: Good Guys or Bad Guys Part 2!!

Submitted by Jamie Beyer, CIBA president and sideline beekeeper

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a continued discussion from the excellent article by Dr. Amy Toth, Iowa State University professor, that was published in the Spring 2023 BEELINE newsletter

When I first became interested in honey bees eight years ago, I heard about this controversy of how introduced honey bees compete with native bees for forage. It really surprised me that entomologists were saying this. After further research and reading articles similar to what Dr. Toth wrote, I agree that this may be a problem. As she mentioned, just how much they compete with, and are affecting, native bee populations is still under debate.

Since then, and having more experience in beekeeping, my eyes have been opened to a world of nature that I had never before experienced. Even after a lifetime of being a fish and wildlifer (I have a master's degree in fish and wildlife biology and years of experience with critters) I did not know nature as well then as I do today because of my work as a beekeeper. Like most of you I am more aware of nectar/pollen-producing plants that pollinators prefer and how I can plant more of them. Then I became more aware of what is harming all pollinators – like pesticides and lack of diverse habitat.

To top all this, I became more of a nature lover, if that was possible. The beauty of nature through the lens of looking at how social insects such as honey bees survive is astonishing to say the least. I, like the rest of you, cannot get enough of this beauty and wonder. How many hours have we simply sat and watched bees come and go from a hive with our eyes only a couple feet from the entrance? In almost every instance, I become calmer and I discover new, fascinating behavior that I had never before noticed. How can this be? Can it be due to the fact that we evolved from nature and our nervous systems depend on being a part of it? This is one increasingly validated theory.

Over a lifetime of being a fish and wildlifer I have been involved with a lot of organizations focused on protecting wildlife. I was heavily involved with the Iowa Wildlife Federation that focuses on protecting habitat for all wildlife in Iowa. What a great group!! This was when Pheasants Forever was starting, and they were “competing” for members. I wondered how people could support an organization interested in habitat for just one wildlife species. Geeze, look at them now -- everyone LOVES pheasants!! Even though the ring-necked pheasant is an introduced species, I also learned quickly that protecting habitat for pheasants protects habitat for all wildlife.

To come full circle, here's my response on whether honey bees are the “good guys” or the “bad guys.” Honey bees are what some call a *gateway bug*. According to Marla Spivak, who runs the famous University of Minnesota Bee lab:

“We're on a learning curve, all of us. It's like honey bees were a portal – the door to much larger issues, conservation issues in general.”

Insects are more interesting to me now and all insects will benefit from my efforts as well as the efforts of bee groups including the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association. All pollinators are in the limelight now -- bumblebees, mason bees and the list is endless. There is money to be made selling honey bee stuff, also mason bee and other native bee stuff. Many honey bee catalogs have started to offer supplies for other pollinators.



In 2022, honey production from beekeepers with five or more colonies in Iowa totaled 2.45 million pounds valued at more than \$5 million, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service's honey report.

Beekeepers have become a champion of reduced pesticide use, habitat improvements, promoting planting of native plants, planting more prairie and trees and not mowing as often. Even the extended families of beekeepers are becoming advocates. The discussion goes way beyond honey bees. It is important to include Monarch butterflies in this discussion because they also are a Gateway Bug.

(continued on next page)

(Part 2: continued from previous page)

Another surprising aspect of beekeeping is when someone finds out that I am a beekeeper I become the center of attention. Everyone wants to know how the bees are doing and all talk about their beauty and how they survive. It is a great conversation starter for sure. Everybody wants to save the honey bee, and I think people are starting to talk about saving native bees as well.

I believe honey bees will be part of our ecosystems no matter how much they may compete with native pollinators. They have been part of our ecosystem since white man colonized the Americas. Why all of a sudden is the honey bee the “bad guy” when it has competed with native bees for centuries? Our native bee populations have only recently been determined to have declining populations.

The honey bee is the only insect on which we can make significant money. They add to the economy, not only for the honey they produce but also the pollination they provide for our crops. This is huge, from almonds to blueberries and apples, and the list goes on.

Native pollinators also need our attention because their populations have been declining. Honey bee populations would be falling if there was not such a huge interest in “saving the bee.” Almost every week I am approached by “wanna bee” beekeepers asking how they can get into the hobby/business.



Honeybee pollination services are valued at more than \$3 billion each year for U.S. crops, according to the National Institutes of Health.

When most people think about “saving the bee” they think of the honey bee. When people find out that I am a beekeeper, some will thank me, but I always remind them that survival of native bees also is a big concern. Again, our efforts as beekeepers to promote more habitat and less pesticide use is one step to saving native bees. It is going to take efforts of many more concerned people who want to “save the bee.”

I want to add that feral (wild) populations of honey bees are almost nonexistent according to our state apiarist Andy Joseph. Historically the feral populations have been everywhere. Yes, wild honey bees occasionally can be found but Andy thinks that these are swarms from beekeepers’ hives. They almost always end up not surviving for longer than a couple years.

Everyone loves honey bees, just like everyone loves pheasants. Look at what we can do as partners – both native bee lovers and honey bee groupies. My point is that we must change how people think about mowing less, planting more habitat and using fewer pesticides before change can happen. Honey bees and Monarchs can help create that shift in thinking. These two gateway bugs can be the motivation for people to make important changes.

In the last issue of the BEELINE, Dr. Toth did a great job of introducing us to the controversy of honey bees being the “bad guys” versus the “good guys.” My take on this subject is that honey bees are the **GOOD GUYS!!**

Show Off Your Bees at the Iowa State Fair

For those with a competitive streak, consider an entry (or two) in the apiary division at the Iowa State Fair this year. The deadline to register your entry is July 14; the fair runs August 10-20.

Winning entries are a popular exhibit on the second floor of the Agriculture Building. The competition has entries for observation hives, photography, all types of honey and bee-related products, even educational displays in both youth and adult categories. Details and registration can be found here:

<https://www.iowastatefair.org/participate/competition/enter-iowa-family-living>

You’ll find a number of CIBA members on the list of past year’s winners. The word is that entering something from your apiary in the state fair is a lot of fun – so try it!



New ISU Research Explores Honey Bee Productivity

Submitted by Randall Paul Cass, ISU Bee Extension Specialist

This spring is an exciting time for the Iowa State University Bee Program. With grant funding from multiple new sources, the lab will be conducting multi-year research projects related to honey bee productivity in Iowa. Moreover, this means new members will join our team in 2023.

The ISU Bee Program welcomes new master's student Jarod Perez to lead research on a three-year project funded by the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (NCSARE). Building on previous research conducted by Dr. Ge Zhang, the project explores prairie strips as suitable habitat for beekeepers to maintain their apiaries in the summertime. Dr. Zhang's research showed that small apiaries (4 hives) kept in prairie strips produced significantly more honey than hives kept in other agricultural landscapes. The aim of the new research project is to explore whether scaling the size of the apiary to 24 hives affects this increase in honey production at prairie strips sites.

This project partners with commercial beekeepers to include their hives and colony management practices. With this experimental design, the project will directly compare hives managed by commercial beekeepers, rather than scientific researchers, kept at apiaries in two different landscapes: prairie strips, and the private apiary sites of the commercial beekeepers. In the final year of the project, the team will conduct a market evaluation of prairie strips honey and consumer preference, plus develop an online tool to connect landowners with bee habitat on their property to beekeepers looking for new apiary sites.

The ISU Bee Program also welcomes two additional master's students. Carl Bowling will join the team on a project related to keeping bees at solar panel sites. Another graduate student will develop information to add Iowa to the Bumble Bee Atlas.

Due to its popularity, the ISU Bee Program will continue to produce both farm honey and prairie strips honey for sale. Since the program began bottling and selling honey in 2020, it has sold out each year. The team is looking forward to expanding honey production as it welcomes new students to conduct research over the next few years.

Bumble Bee Atlas

<https://www.bumblebeeatlas.org/>

More about prairie strips honey

<https://www.cals.iastate.edu/news/releases/taste-iowa-state-honey-flavored-prairie-pollinator-fest-june-25>

More about prairie strips

<https://www.nrem.iastate.edu/research/STRIPS/>

ISU Bee Program

<https://bees.cals.iastate.edu/>

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