

# Thunder Bay Beekeepers' Association



## President's Report

We often talk with new beekeepers about mentoring and how we recommend this for any newbee (new

beekeeper). There are good things and bad things about being mentored. I have had 2 mentors in my career as a beekeeping student. My first mentor and introduction to honey bees was an old Ukrainian fellow who taught me amongst other things all his bad habits. There are many aspects of beekeeping that he taught me that I continue to include in my hive management system. Some not! My current mentor has taught me that with the ever-changing landscape in agriculture, recommended practices and trends change weekly in the honey bee industry. He always stresses to me: If you have a closed mind to new ways and have all the answers, you should not be a mentor, or a beekeeper! So for all of you newbees: find a few beekeepers to mentor with or to shadow. Use what works for you and always keep an open mind. The other thing to keep in mind is "the bees do not read the books we read".

I have taken advantage of this warm weather and moved half of my colonies out of the overwinter room on Sunday evening & Monday morning, March 11 & 12. As I monitor the bees daily during the winter it allows me to experiment with and observe the colonies different behaviors during the cold season. One question I would like to share with you, that I am sure you will find interesting, is how much honey stores do the bees eat while being housed indoors? Out of the colonies I moved outside, the average consumption of honey for each colony was 8.09 kg or just less than 18 lbs in 125

days overwintered indoors. The colony that consumed the least was 4.55 kg. (10 lbs) The highest consumption by a colony was 12.40 kg. (27 lbs) in 125 days. The 1 colony I lost, on January 14 had consumed 33.4 kg (73 lbs) of honey and starved in 66 days. The queen had not quit laying, as was evident by the frames of brood and the dead emerging brood, seen once the hive was examined. This is not a queen that you want in our climate.

For the new beekeepers from last year, now is the time that your hives are brooding up. They consume honey like crazy to keep the brood nest at the optimum temperature. I would suggest that all beekeepers ensure that your bees have a continued supply of 50-50 sugar syrup available to them until the first strong nectar flow. Now is the time you may want to throw on a pollen patty if you choose to do so. Or if weather permits place a pollen substitute (not patty) on a tray in your yard and watch how the bees collect it. Amazing!!

Last fall I was asked by the Provincial Apiarist to participate in a study that looked at virus profiles of mite-free bees, comparing them to the virus profiles of mite-positive bees. The mite-positive bees would come from a location near to the mite-free bees. The locations of the bees to be studied are:

Mite free – Thunder Bay, ON; Mite positive – Rainy River, ON

Mite free, Corner Brook, NL; Mite positive Annapolis Valley, NS

Mite free, Cape Breton, NS; Mite positive, Guysborough County, NS

The research was being conducted by Geoff Williams – A Canadian Honey bee researcher-PhD candidate working at the Swiss Bee Research Centre in Berne Switzerland. Sample kit and instructions were not received until Nov 7, too late to sample. Hopefully this year Geoff will have the funding dollars to

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complete the study. I will keep everyone up to date with this research.

We still continue to remain varroa mite free in Thunder Bay. As more and more people wish to become beekeepers, we need to ensure that we get the message out about our mite free status. With our Association attending public events the demand for us to attend such events has grown. These are the venues that we get our message out. The problem is we do not have enough volunteers to attend these important events. Please consider volunteering for 1 event. You do not need to be an expert in bees. If you are interested contact Evelyn ([evelynharris@tbaytel.net](mailto:evelynharris@tbaytel.net))

IN CLOSING, I would like to thank all those who attended the March meeting and welcome all the new members and future beekeepers. Remember, we all need to be diligent at keeping our area free of the mites and nasty diseases that the rest of the industry has to contend with. We are very fortunate.

Let's all hope that this weather stays mild and our bee mortality is low from the winter. Good luck in the upcoming season. See you all at the May meeting.

Barry

## Meeting Schedule

- May 8<sup>th</sup>
- July Workshop -- TBA
- September 11<sup>th</sup>
- November 13<sup>th</sup>

While meetings are open to anyone interested in beekeeping, **only members may vote** at meetings. Please remember to **bring your 2012 membership card** with you to meetings.

## Call for Volunteers!

Can you represent the TBBA at the:

- Farmers' market,
- School talks
- Earth day (Apr 22)
- National Day of the Honey Bee (~May 29<sup>th</sup>)
- Hymers Fair (put up/take down display)

Contact: [evelynharris@tbaytel.net](mailto:evelynharris@tbaytel.net)

Many thanks to the 2012 volunteers to date:

- Gerry Stricker x 2 events
- Darlene Spakowski x 2 events
- Evelyn Harris x 2 events, + her granddaughter, Wren.
- Alice Villa
- Bob Hughdie
- Barry Tabor x 2 events
- Simon Hoad
- Linda Turk x2 events
- JoAnne Henderson
- Chris Carolan



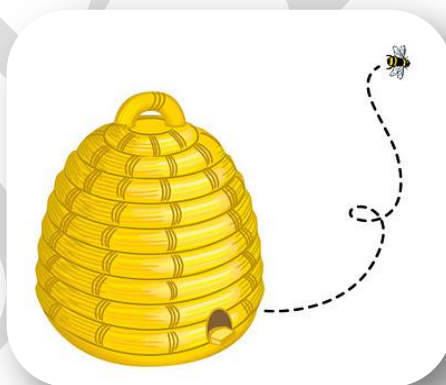
## Contribute to the Newsletter?

If YOU would like to write an article or share your beekeeping experiences, please send your document in either Word or plain text to the secretary by email ([clayacres@tbaytel.net](mailto:clayacres@tbaytel.net))

Deadline for next newsletter is May 24<sup>th</sup>.

## Where is your Bee Yard?

At the last AGM, we started a district map noting the placement of bee yards. The idea is to provide a visual guide that can be used in presentations to other interested groups, such as the OMAFRA or HydroOne for discussions about pesticide use, or in chats with your township Council about using trefoil for roadside management.



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*Plus, it was fun just to see where all the bees are!*

TBBA does not share personal information (such as whose bee yards are where) but it is handy for TBBA to know whose bee yards are in a particular township. In discussions with township Councils, we hope we would be able to contact you for your support for a roadside management program in your bee yard area.

If you weren't at the meeting, Linda Turk will have the map at the next few meetings and I would encourage you to add your "dots" to the map.



**Birdsfoot trefoil** is a common pea plant grown all over North America for feeding livestock and covering farm fields. Though common, it has a complicated flower, making it difficult to get inside to collect nectar or pollinate. Only bees can figure out how to enter a birdsfoot trefoil blossom and the honeybee is especially good at it.<sup>1</sup>

Birdsfoot trefoil is a deep-rooted perennial and can be long-lived in areas where it is adapted. Trefoil pods are very prone to shatter, therefore the long-lived reputation of this crop can often be attributed to the growth and seed production of volunteers. It thrives on poorly drained soils of moderate to high acidity, and is also fairly tolerant of salinity. The traditional production area was eastern Canada, but winter-hardy varieties have resulted in a large movement of seed acres to Manitoba.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adaptations for Pollination – Birdsfoot Trefoil.  
[www.exploringnature.org](http://www.exploringnature.org)

<sup>2</sup> Birdsfoot Trefoil Seed

The plants are poor competitors in the seeding stage and slow to establish. A companion crop is definitely not recommended. Inoculation with the proper bacterial inoculant is very important, especially for land that has not grown trefoil before. Early seeding and good weed control are essential. Seed at about four lbs/acre (4.5 kg/ha) to a depth of about one-half inch (1.25 cm) in rows spaced 12 inches (30 cm) apart.

**TBBA**

**Suite 228**

**1100 Memorial Ave**

**Thunder Bay ON P7B 4A3.**

## Beekeepers' Mnemonic?

*When raising queens you  
always get the best.*

This mnemonic helps remember the years associated with each colour for marking queens.

When (White) raising(Red) queens you (Yellow) always get (Green) the best (Blue).

Colour	Years
White	1 and 6
Red	2 and 7
Yellow	3 and 8
Green	4 and 9
Blue	5 and 0

This year, being 2012, the queens will be coloured RED

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## Update, Wildlife Compensation for Beekeepers

Good news regarding the wildlife damage situation!

Anyone registered with OMAFRA can receive bear damage compensation.

So... since bears are a problem for us in NW Ontario, you need to register with Paul Kozak, Ontario Provincial Apiarist. It is **free** but will give you access to compensation should your beeyard suffer bear damage.

Links to the registration form, and to other good info, is available on our website.

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## From The Book Shelf

by Darlene Spakowski

### **Storey's Guide to Keeping Honey Bees**

by Malcom T. Sandord and Richard E Bonney

ISBN 978-1-60342-550-6

Published 2010

As a new beekeeper I love to hear stories from the experienced beekeepers in our area and, therefore, I was delighted to read Storey's Guide to Keeping Honey Bees.

Throughout this book are wonderful stories told by a well-known beekeeper in our area, Jeanette Momot, as well as stories by other beekeepers around North America. The stories are funny, informative, entertaining and full of wisdom.

Storey always publishes well-written and easy-to-follow books and this one is no exception. It covers everything you need to know about beekeeping in an organized manner.

It is interwoven with tips for the beginner as well as the experienced beekeeper. It is illustrated throughout the book with step-by-step instruction, as well as suggestions for new methods when working with our bees.

## Hymers Agricultural Fair

*1st Celebrating 100 years*

*Labour Day Weekend*

## New Honey Competition

### *Liquid Honey*

Prize: \$12

2nd Prize: \$8

3rd Prize: \$5

### *Cut Comb Honey*

1st Prize: \$12

2nd Prize: \$8

3rd Prize: \$5

### *Mead (wine made with honey)*

1st Prize: \$12

2nd Prize: \$8

3rd Prize: \$5

Categories are sponsored by the TBBA

Please refer to the Hymers Agricultural Society webpage/prize book for more information on how to enter the competition

[www.hymersfair.com](http://www.hymersfair.com)

This book was a delight to read because of the connection I felt to the other beekeepers who shared their stories. It will be a book that I keep as long as I am a beekeeper and am sure I will enjoy it each time I refer to it. Happy reading.

## The Bee-Friendly Herb Garden

By Darlene Spakowski

As a herbalist, working with honey bees is an important part of my herb garden. In the next few newsletters I hope to introduce you to some bee-friendly herbs that you may use for your health as well as your culinary delights. Bees, herbs, and gardeners are all connected in a very special way and I hope you will enjoy this section.

**Borage:** Use for culinary, medicinal, and beverage.

Known as the Herb of Gladness for its exhilarating effect. Try adding chopped young leaves and flower to salad or summer drinks. Borage is great for cleansing the liver and lifting your spirits. The bees love this plant.

**Burdock:** Used for culinary and medicinal purposes.

Roots of this common wildplant are said to have "blood-purifying" properties. Burdock is useful for skin diseases, including eczema.

Recent medical evidence supports folkloric use for tumors.

**Calendula:** This herb is used for culinary and medicinal purposes and makes a wonderful tea.

Flower petals give delicate flavour and strong colour for salads, egg dishes and cheese dishes. It is also used as a saffron substitute. Calendula is invaluable in first-aid skin lotions and ointments.

**Feverfew:** The bees really love this herb and I always have it growing in my garden.

One to four leaves eaten daily in a tea or in a sandwich reduces the number and severity

of migraine attacks. It gives a sense of well-being, lack of tension, and relief from arthritis.

**Plantain:** A beekeeper's best friend! If you get a sting, grab a couple of leaves of plantain, chew, and apply to the sting. It gives immediate relief. Leaf juice is reputed to have blood cleansing properties, to strengthen weak lungs, fight colds, diarrhea and similar digestive complaints. Poultice of fresh leaves on wounds prevents infections.

Some other bee-friendly herbs you might want to try in your gardens are: Angelica, Aster, Agrimony, Bergamot, Caraway, Chamomile, Chaparral, Clover, Cohosh, Echinacea, Hollyhock, Marshmallow, Motherwort, Passion Flower, Hummingbird sage, and Vervain.

In the upcoming newsletters I will describe how you can use these herbs in your daily life. Good for the bees and good for us.

## Willow Springs Creative Centre is eager to partner with the TBBA.

Willow Springs Creative Centre will be an ideal location for a Training Beeyard. We would love to work on a mutually beneficial plan so both organizations and in turn our community as a whole can prosper.

Willow Springs Creative Centre has:

- A rural location that is not too far from the city
- An accessible building and garden area
- Begun to establish a beeyard with one hive and we are committed to add at least two more hives this year
- Several active volunteers who are very keen beekeepers/apprentice beekeepers
- The ability to host gatherings, with excellent catered meals, for small



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- groups to groups of 20 (inside) and 40 outside.
- Submitted an Earth Day application to assist us in developing our beeyard to meet the requirements of being a teaching site
- The desire to do educational programming with school children about bees, monarchs and vegetable gardening
- 2 acre yard filled with perennial, vegetable, shade, and herb gardens. We are open to planting any native species that if beneficial to pollinators.
- Someone on site to allow people to visit the hives regularly throughout the week
- A desire to partner with other local progressive organizations like the TBBA

We are more than willing to come to your next meeting to provide you with a complete presentation about Willow Springs Creative Centre and our work.

## TBBA Website

In 2011, there was an average of 6 ¾ visits to our website per day, each viewing an average of 2 ½ pages. Many thanks to Randy Creighton who manages our website.

There are 49 people on our Face Book group! A great place to ask questions & get answers, see pictures and videos of local bee yards AND it costs the Association and members nothing!

## Need Some Answers??

- Education in my bee yard (Hwy 608): Join me in my bee yard for beekeeping instruction for all levels of Beekeepers. Call or text Chris at 620-4071
- Available to help answer beekeeping questions? or try to help? contact Bruce (bbbrowne@tbaytel.net)

- An open house in our Apiary (weather permitting) or Honey house.
  - Every Saturday afternoon 1 pm until May 2012 at 1170 Lakeshore Drive, Shuniah ON.
  - Evening visits can be arranged to suit most schedules.
  - Familiarize yourself with bee equipment, tools, techniques, work within the apiary (weather permitting)
  - Socialize with like minded people
  - For more info call Barry (807) 983-2341 or (807)621-6849 email (masay@tbaytel.net)

**Classified!**



Bees	Price
Spring- 1 Brood chamber overwintered ( last year's mated queen) limited quantities available	\$300.00
4 Frame nucleus mid June – July 15	\$160.00
4 Frame nucleus July 15	\$140.00
3 lb package of bees	\$130.00
Mated Queen* June 15 to Sept	\$25.00

**\*Our Queen stock has been chosen from colonies that tested positive for hygienic behaviour using the industry testing standard- liquid nitrogen brood kill test.**

*Equipment Description	Price
9 5/8"x 20" Honey Super/ Brood chamber	\$12.50
Unassembled	\$15.00
Assembled- Glued	
stapled & primed	
¾ depth Super- Assembled- Glued	\$12.50
stapled & primed	
9 1/8" Langstroth frame Unassembled	\$1.00 ea
standard size	
8 1/2" Plastic Waxed Foundation	\$1.25 ea

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Screened bottom board with tray	\$15.00
Bottom board	\$10.00
Ventilated Inner Cover ( upper entrance & primed)	\$10.00
Telescoping Cover	\$15.00
1- Entrance reducer	\$2.50
Starter Kit 2- Assembled- 9 5/8"x 20" Honey Supers 20- 9 1/8" Langstroth frame Unassembled 20- 8 1/2" Waxed Foundation 1- IPM Screened bottom board 1- Ventilated Inner Cover 1- Telescoping Cover 1- Entrance reducer	\$125.00
Bumble Bee nesting Box Kit	\$20.00

(807) 983-2341 [masya@tbaytel.net](mailto:masya@tbaytel.net)

### Werner Gysi

A published and much sought after speaker about Biodynamic Beekeeping and he will be coming to Thunder Bay! Werner will be keynote speaking about Beekeeping:

#### *The Wholistic Approach*

**When:** June 15<sup>th</sup>

**Where:** Lakehead University Community Garden (Rain location RC 1001)

**Time:** 7 p.m.

Hosted by Food Research Network and TBBA

### Bee Chat: Interview with a New Bee Keeper

What are the challenges of our new bee keepers? I met with Shane MacLeod to get an idea of his experience. Shane moved from Cape Breton Island to Ontario and he and his wife Cindy moved from Thunder Bay to live on an 80 acre farm in Nolalu.

My first question was how he got his interest in keeping bees. He was keenly aware of the plight of bees in the world today and need help them any way we can but he and his wife Cindy also have a wonderful plan. They will use the bees for honey and also for pollination when they plant their large gardens and orchard to supply both their needs and bring any surplus to

market. Shane has experience and knowledge of planting and already has his Heritage seeds in storage waiting for spring. They also plan to raise chickens for eggs and eventually to supply fertilizer for the soil. A self-sufficient plan we hope more young people take on to secure their future basic needs.

I asked how he was preparing for bee keeping. He has been reading, using the internet, collecting books (he just got a copy of The ABC XYZ of Bee Keeping) and talking to other bee keepers for guidance. This is a challenging time for new bee keepers as people have different views and experiences, making it confusing at times. The books are good but often refer to other climates not always relating to the type of seasons we have here in Thunder Bay. It is still best though to talk to people who have had bees and experience in the area. They have 2 nucs ordered for start up in the spring and getting the necessary equipment prepared.

What would help Shane and his wife as they start up keeping bees? Shane thought a pamphlet from the Thunder Bay Bee Association that gave info such as: What companies are reliable to order from, what basic equipment it takes to start up 2 or 3 hives, where to get nucs, Contacts and info resources that could help guide a new comer to get started. I promised I would take this back to the TBBA and we also talked about the advantage it might be to have a question and answer period at the bee meetings to clear up some concerns new people have. This way we all could gain from other's experience and relate better to than only checking out what the books say. I wished him well and thanked him for his valuable input and we hope we can help all new bee keeper that want to be successful

### Famous Beekeepers

You'd be amazed just how many famous people have kept bees, including historical figures such as Alexander the Great, Tolstoy and Sir Edmund

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Hillary. Here are some of the many modern-day public figures who are abuzz with bees.



## Matt Damon

An...honorary member....., Matt Damon [*True Grit, The Bourne Ultimatum, Good Will Hunting, etc*] was enrolled into the British BKA .... Damon learnt the art of beekeeping from his grandfather as a child, and although nowadays his busy lifestyle means he doesn't always get to tend to his bees personally, he employs a full-time beekeeper at his home in Florida and often gives gifts of fresh honey to friends and relatives<sup>3</sup>.

## TBBA Education (Public & Member)

- Library Chat – for New Beekeepers & Bee Keeper Wanna-bees
- LU FSRN Food Forum
- Hive and extraction equipment (TBBA general meeting)
- Basic Understanding of Pesticides (TBBA General meeting)
- Seedy Social (Gillies Com. Centre)
- 2012 Ontario Treatment Recommendations for Honey Bee Disease and Mite Control (TBBA email)



## 2012 Membership Numbers:

44 (with 4 new beekeepers)

Education topics suggested on the membership forms:

- Merging technology and beekeeping
- Protecting hive from predators

- General/bee education question and answer session. at general meetings to see how others handle bee problems.
- Starting a hive
- How to start, beekeeping for beginners
- Stories from other beekeepers --their experiences with their hives.
- Keep it simple
- Splitting hives
- Swarm prevention
- Organic beekeeping - requirement

## Same Question; Different Answers!!

Opinions in beekeeping can vary amongst beekeepers – ideas are not carved in stone but opinions would be helpful for other people. For example, wintering bees is done similarly by most, but the amount of insulating and venting are much different. What works for one beekeeper who has done some experimenting, will often be willingly shared with new beekeepers! Just ask!

Basically the old saying “You can ask a dozen beekeepers a question and get a dozen answers” is true. All may work and all may be somewhat similar. Listen to a couple of ideas and chose what you think will work for you. If you are unsure, talk to your mentor and/or the person who sold you the bees, at least to get you through your first season.

Many thanks to

Dominion & Grimm Inc.

For their 2011 donation

[www.dominiongrimm.ca](http://www.dominiongrimm.ca)

<sup>3</sup>[www.britishbeekeepersassociation.com/about/famous\\_beekeepers](http://www.britishbeekeepersassociation.com/about/famous_beekeepers)



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