

BROWN COUNTY BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2025



Mission: We are dedicated to promoting sustainable, responsible and healthy beekeeping practices in Northeastern Wisconsin for both experienced and first time beekeepers. We strive to create a fun environment where learning opportunities exist for association members and the public.

www.browncountybeekeepers.com



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sustainable beekeeping means different things to different beekeepers or organizations. Take a look at the three general classes of beekeepers; hobbyist, sideliners and commercial. Looking at the economical sustainability of their operations, the commercial operations would look at this factor as important in their operation. Whereas the hobbyist may put economic sustainability behind other factors they deem more important.

One definition says sustainable beekeeping is the practice that considers relationships between bees, humans and the environment. Another organization defines it as the pillars of beekeeping, sustainable harvest, disease management, and natural approaches. Looking inward at your apiary, or looking outward from it as it pertains to your beekeeping management. Both perspectives are important, but you have to learn to walk before you run. So let us look inward from a hobbyist stand point.

From a hobbyist point of view sustainability may be just over wintering your bees successfully and not having to buy bees in the spring. The reality of beekeeping is you are going to have hive losses during the winter. So, if your operation needs to have 4 hives to produce the honey you need in the fall, and on the average only 50% of hives make it through the winter, that leaves you with two hives in the spring. Well, you can buy two nucleus colonies or is there a more sustainable way to deal with these anticipated losses.

How about making your own nucleus hives and overwinter those? Every spring when trying to manage hives swarming, I hear beekeepers talking about destroying those queen cells. Well, let's harvest those cells and some of those extra bees to make nucleus hives. Again, anticipating a 50% lost, you would need to make four nucleus hives to have two nucleus hives available in the spring to replace the two production hives that were lost over the winter. If your losses are not as bad as anticipated, you would have extra nucleus hives to sell. That would be much more economically sustainable to your apiary.

I will keep expanding on sustainable beekeeping in future president's messages.

- That's what this month's buzz is about

President: Chris Groth
president@BrownCountyBeekeepers.com



March 2025 Association Meeting



SOCIAL HOUR

March 19th Before the Meeting
5:30PM - 6:15PM

Rance Bennett



Hello everyone! I'm Rance from the Old Hive, and I'm thrilled to be presenting at the Brown County Beekeepers March Meeting. I'll be discussing various methods of de-crystallizing honey and addressing some common myths and facts about honey crystallization. Here are a few examples to pique your interest:

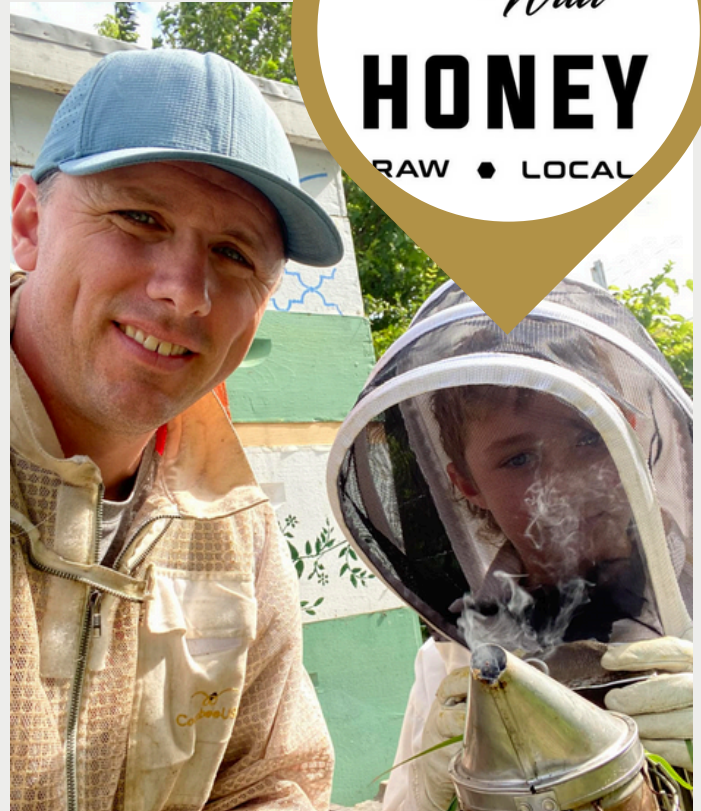
- **Myth:** "Crystallized honey is spoiled honey."
- **Myth:** "Using metal spoons with honey destroys the enzymes."
- **Fact:** "Honey can be used on wounds."
- **Fact:** "Honey is the only food source produced by an insect that humans eat."

Crystallization, also known as granulation, is a natural process that helps honey preserve itself. This phenomenon occurs due to honey's composition, which typically includes natural sugars and around 20% water. When the glucose separates from the water, crystals form, but the honey remains largely unchanged and just as tasty.

Several factors contribute to crystallization, including the percentage of glucose vs. fructose in the honey, the temperature at which the honey is stored, the amount of pollen in the honey, and the type of flowers from which the nectar and pollen are collected.

There's a lot to discuss, so I hope to see you at the pre-meeting before the main event!

MARCH EDUCATION QUEEN REARING



Online

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83602973837?
pwd=PLWbTfCGJTeNzREpXBUqZ2ZAcDlfok.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83602973837?pwd=PLWbTfCGJTeNzREpXBUqZ2ZAcDlfok.1)

Meeting ID: 836 0297 3837

Passcode: 914327



Presidential Beekeeping "Divided We Freeze: A Beekeeper's Trial"

Three hives, two stings, and one dead out. Since my last update on February 1, I've visited my hives twice. Unfortunately, during one visit, I found a hive that had died. Wayne and I examined it and discovered a queen still brooding, with a 6-inch circle of brood on both sides of a frame. However, we also noticed a queen excluder in place—something I mistakenly left in the hive.

This oversight caused the cluster to split, with half staying near the food and the other half with the brood. Sadly, this division led the hive to freeze out. After realizing the issue, I promptly removed the queen excluder from the remaining three hives.

It wasn't all smooth sailing, though. At one point, I found myself stuck in a trailer with some very unhappy bees. The result? Two stings and a suit covered in bee poop. Ah, the wild ride of beekeeping.



Vice President Nathan Frailey, SR.

vicepresident@BrownCountyBeekeepers.com

Severe and Sudden Losses of Managed Honey Bees Across the Nation

Project Apis m.

2025 Colony Loss Results: Survey Data and Sample Analyses.



As commercial beekeepers in the USA inspect their bees after winter, to transport over 90% of the nation's managed honey bees to pollinate California almonds, they are discovering alarming colony losses. These losses are severe, broad, and may impact food security through inadequate pollination services. Survey results are still accumulating, but information gathered from 234 beekeepers found average recent losses well over 50%, with a combined financial loss of over \$139M. Combined with losses during other times of year, this additional loss puts many beekeepers at a loss rate of 70%-100% over the past 12 months.

Additional Information and Resources:

[Read Press Release 1](#)

[Read Press Release 2](#)

[PDF with Colony Loss Survey 1 PDF \(1st analysis\)](#)

[Watch the webinar recording now](#)

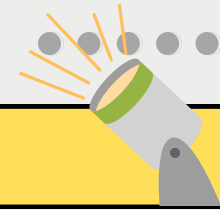
Honey bee health affects us all. Whether you're a beekeeper, a grower, or simply someone who enjoys fresh food, your support ensures that science continues to guide solutions for sustainable pollination and agriculture.

Thank you for being part of the solution!

Project Apis m.



SHELLIE MILHEISER

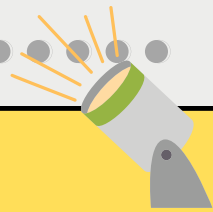


Hello everyone! My name is Shellie Milheiser, and my beekeeping journey began in the spring of 2022. I'm not entirely sure what sparked my initial interest, but I think it stemmed from my love of gardening and flowers, combined with an awareness of how crucial bees are to those passions. It also helped that my neighbors in our subdivision operate Fox Honey Farm, a commercial beekeeping business. I'd been buying honey from them for years, and our conversations gradually fueled my desire to start my own hives. That spring, I purchased a few nucleus colonies (nucs) from Fox Honey Farm and one from Let it Bee, starting with three hives in total. Armed with a few books and some YouTube videos, I dove headfirst into the world of beekeeping!

My husband and I have some land in Tigerton, WI, where we established two hives, and we keep one hive at our home in De Pere. Looking back on all the information we consumed from books and videos, we realize now that we were quite inexperienced. I didn't even know about the Brown County Beekeepers Association (BCBA) at that point! We installed our nucs on a cool, rainy, overcast spring day – we didn't even think to use a smoker! But we did it. We were a mix of nerves, excitement, and hope that we hadn't inadvertently harmed our precious bees.

Thankfully, we didn't harm them, and my new hobby quickly turned into an obsession. As many of us know or are learning, it's truly fascinating to observe a hive in action. We were mesmerized by every honeybee we saw on a flower or tree. We watched them build up their stores and admired the beautiful colors of the pollen they collected. By the end of our first season, we'd even managed to harvest about 100 pounds of honey! We were thrilled! We invested in an extractor, a refractometer, and the necessary tools for extraction and simply went for it. One challenge I faced as a woman beekeeper was the weight of the supers. Early on, we came up with a solution since we didn't have many supers to add during the nectar flow: we used totes. We inserted dowels into the totes to hold the frames, allowing us to adjust the weight as needed. We extracted immediately and returned the "wet" frames to the bees to refill or added new frames for them to build out. We used a combination of both methods at first. Having a partner to help with the heavy lifting is definitely beneficial.





SHELLIE MILHEISER

After our first honey harvest, Naturally Sweet was born. Our family and friends all wanted some honey. We'd also been hobbyist maple syrup producers for a while, so the name felt fitting for everything we were doing.

Going into the fall of our first year, I knew we needed to treat for mites. After consulting with Let it Bee in Greenville, we decided on Formic Pro. We administered the treatments and continued with our fall preparations for winter. We fed the bees and readied the hives for the cold months. We were fortunate that two of our three hives survived the winter. We did have a deadout at our home hive, likely due to mites or mite-borne viruses. This led to the fun of buying more nucs and splitting hives – I was completely hooked!



Eventually, we discovered the BCBA and started learning more and more about beekeeping. I found Travis Linskens (of Freedom) who sells nucs and lives close to me. The more I networked, the more I learned. Last year, I bought a nuc from Dick Sturm, and we had a great conversation. He encouraged me to attend the BCBA meetings.

I was a bit intimidated by the sheer volume of information to learn, and I don't know if that's a common feeling for everyone or if it's just me. The main takeaway I want to share is to never be afraid to learn, meet new people, and make mistakes. I'm a bit of a Type A personality and somewhat introverted. I dislike it when things don't work out as planned, which I think is something everyone can relate to. Asking questions and learning from different club members has helped me become a more well-rounded beekeeper. I'm excited about the knowledge I'm gaining every day. Keep learning, and don't hesitate to ask for help, whether you're a woman or a man!

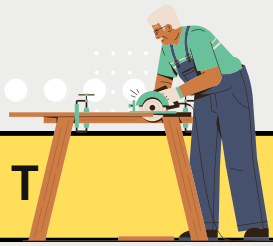


SHELLIE MILHEISER

Follow along with me on FaceBook [@NaturallySweet](#)

MEMBER TIPS

MAINTAINING YOUR INVESTMENT



Maintaining a thriving bee colony requires skill, dedication, and proper equipment upkeep. Winter is the perfect time to perform essential beekeeping equipment maintenance. With bees inside their hives, only flying on warm afternoons, it's an ideal opportunity for beekeepers to make necessary repairs and upgrades. Taking advantage of these colder months ensures that repairs are less disruptive for the hive and less stressful for you as a beekeeper. Performing winter beekeeping equipment maintenance is crucial for extending the life of your equipment and maintaining a healthy colony come spring. By keeping your hives in good condition, you'll avoid larger, costlier repairs in the future, maximizing your investment in beekeeping supplies and equipment.



Tom Marquardt from ECO-BEE presenting his custom painted brood box

Hive Equipment Maintenance

Focus on hive box repairs during winter. Honey bees cluster for warmth and are mostly inactive, allowing you to perform necessary repairs without causing unnecessary disruption. This helps ensure your hives are ready for the warmer months ahead.

Rotten Corners and Separated Finger Joints

Pine hive boxes, though durable, can degrade over time due to exposure to the elements. Corners may rot and finger joints may separate, allowing moisture to enter the hive and creating an unhealthy environment for your bees. Rotting wood also attracts wood-boring insects. For effective repairs, use exterior-rated putty. Mix the desired amount with water and apply in layers using a putty knife. For larger gaps, create a thicker putty mixture, shape it into a ball, and push it into the cavity, smoothing it out to restore the damaged area's shape. The thickness of the putty ensures it stays in place while curing, offering a long-lasting repair.

Preserving Beekeeping Equipment

Beekeeping equipment is typically painted or sealed with a wood sealer to protect against the elements. Over time, these coatings can crack and degrade, leaving hive boxes vulnerable to damage. Winter is an excellent time to repaint or reseal your hives, even with bees inside. The cold weather keeps them inside, minimizing disturbance.

Repainting or Resealing Hive Boxes

Repainting or resealing hive boxes is crucial for maintenance. A fresh coat of paint enhances the hives' appearance and provides additional weather protection. Use water-based outdoor paint for quick drying. Oil-based paints are durable but take longer to dry. If repainting over oil-based surfaces, sand and clean them first. Apply paint with a large brush or roller, using smaller brushes for details. Avoid painting hive entrances when bees are active.

MAINTAINING YOUR INVESTMENT

Wood Sealants

Wood sealants, like paint, protect your equipment. Oil-based sealants offer long-term protection but dry slowly, while water-based sealants dry faster and are suitable for winter use. Apply thoroughly, focusing on detailed areas.

Wooden Brood Boxes and Supers

To clean wooden brood boxes and supers in beekeeping, start by scraping off beeswax and propolis using a hive tool or a metal scraper. Gently pry apart the frames from the brood box or super, being careful not to damage the wood. Once the frames are removed, use the hive tool to scrape off the excess beeswax and propolis from the interior walls of the box, paying special attention to the corners and crevices where buildup is likely to occur. After scraping off the debris, wipe the surfaces with a clean cloth or sponge dampened with warm, soapy water, rinsing frequently to prevent spreading any contaminants. For stubborn stains or residues, you can use a solution of water and washing soda to help break them down. This process helps maintain a healthy environment for your bees by preventing the growth of molds and bacteria.

Beehive Stand Maintenance

Check the stability of your beehive stand. A stable stand prevents hive collapses, protecting both the equipment and bees. Winter is ideal for this as hives are lighter. If the stand is unstable, consider replacing it. Metal stands are durable and long-lasting, while wood stands offer an economical, yet durable, alternative.

By performing these winter maintenance tasks, you'll keep your equipment in top condition and ready for the new season, ensuring the health and productivity of your bee colony.

Happy beekeeping!

Tom & TJ

ECO BEE Equip LLC

Secret blue ticket giveaway.!

Do you need any new equipment or advice on maintaining your existing equipment?
Talk to Tom at the March meeting and receive a blue ticket for our secret giveaway!



GIVEAWAY

2025 WISCONSIN BEEKEEPING EVENTS

WHPA Spring Meetings

March 22nd, 2025

Chippewa Valley Bee Expo

April 19, 2025

BCBA Intro To Beekeeping At The Hive

May 17th, 2025

WHPA Summer Meeting

June 14, 2025

Central District Meeting information below

www.wihoney.org

Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds
Chippewa Falls, WI

Events include honeybee demonstrations, cooking with honey, raffles, food trucks, seminars and youth programs.

www.chippewavalleybeekeepers.com

NWTC Sustainable Agriculture Gardens.

8:00am to 10:00am Part 2 of our Introduction to Beekeeping Class.

Must be pre registered

www.browncountybeekeepers.com

DoubleTree by Hilton
150 South Nicolet Road,
Appleton, WI

2025 Summer Meeting Agenda TBA

www.wihoney.org

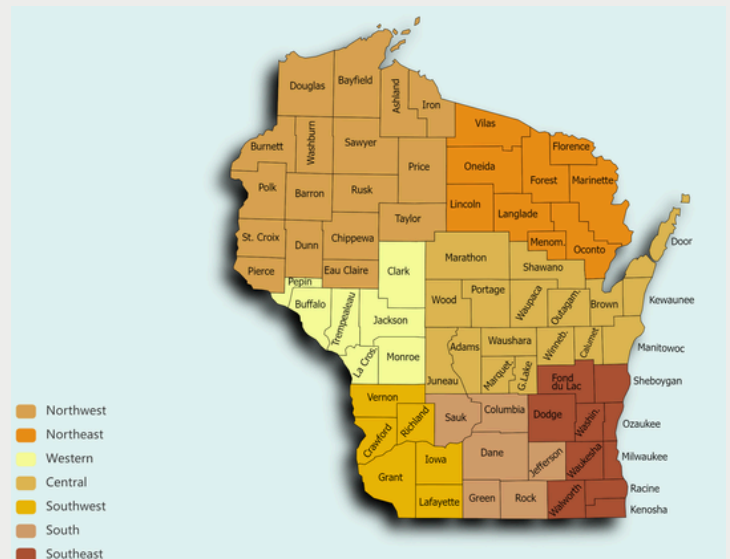
WHPA SPRING DISTRICT MEETINGS

• Central District Meeting - 3/22/25 - Waupaca

• Southwestern District Meeting - TBA

Learn from guest speakers and fellowship with other beekeepers.

CENTRAL DISTRICT – Saturday, March 22nd from 9am – 12pm at Par 4 Resort Golf Course, 201 Foxfire Dr. Waupaca, WI. Coffee & donuts provided/\$5 for non-members. Guest Speakers: Charlie Koenen speaking about spring buildup, backyard bees and alternative hive bodies. Doug Koltermann will speak about oxalic acid strips. Patrick Sizemore, WI State Bee Inspector will give a presentation about DATCP and apiary inspections. Panel Discussion and WI Honey Queen Emily Sydow. Contact Marty Mykisen 920.427.4695; mykisen@mykisen.com.



BCBA-CENTRAL DISTRICT

2025 BCBA Meeting Education Calendar

Reg = Regular Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30p
 MBM = Meeting Before the Meeting: Same Wednesday, starts at 5:45p

Date	Education	Type	Presenter
January 15, 2025	Varroa Mite Management	Reg	Dick Sturm
February 19, 2025	Identifying and Managing Honey Bee Diseases Minnesota Bee Squad	Reg	Jessica Helgen Bee Squad Pgm Director or Jenny Warner Bee Squad Beekeeper
March 19, 2025	Queen Rearing	Reg	Keith Zaidel, Zaidel Wild Apiary
	Honey Decrystalization	MBM	Rance Bennett, This Old Hive
April 16, 2025	Spring Management	Reg	Dave Elsen
	Installing Bees	MBM	
May 21, 2025	Girl Next-Door Honey	Reg	Hillary Kearney
June 18, 2025	Dr. Chelsa Cook, Marquette	Reg	Dr. Chelsa Cook, Marquette
August 20, 2025	Fall Management	Reg	Panel
	Honey Extraction	MBM	Nathan Frailey
September 17, 2025	Wax Processing and Products	Reg	Rance Bennett, This Old Hive
October 15, 2025	Discussion Panel	Reg	Wayne Steigelman Facilitates
November 19, 2025	Products of the Hive and Honey Judging Contest	Reg	Stephanie Slater and Club



March Management

Here is what to expect in and around the hive in March.

This is the month of the colony's minimum adult population, after winter losses, but before significant spring build-up. The queen is laying at or near full strength and brood is being reared if pollen/protein is available. Bees may be able to bring some pollen into the hive on occasional foraging flights, but because of the growing population and limited external resources, nutritional needs increase and the risk of starvation is high.

Seasonal Conditions

In Green Bay WI, in March, the average minimum and maximum temperatures are 22°F and 39°F, with 8" of snowfall and 2" of additional precipitation.

Inspection

When inspecting a colony in the winter, it is not necessary to open it. See the January guidelines for evaluating its health. Consider renting the club infrared camera to see where the cluster is located in the hive.

Nutrition

Most colonies that starve die in late winter or early spring. They need more food for brood rearing, but cannot yet forage. At this point, they should have at least 3-4 combs full of honey. Feed them if the colony is light or the stores obviously empty, or if the bees are visible through the inner cover at the very top of the hive. Use dry sugar, fondant, or a candy board, or replace empty combs with combs of capped honey. When replacing comb, do so on a warmer day and be quick about it. You will likely need to continue to feed until nectar and pollen are available and accessible outside. The location/proximity of the bees to their food stores is key. If the cluster is far to one side of the food stores, you can carefully move it closer, keeping it together while you do so, or move frames of honey closer to it.

You might consider feeding pollen substitute or supplement to support or further stimulate egg laying. If you do so, be sure to use clean pollen.

If you plan to rear queens this year, lavishly feed the cell finisher colony chosen in the fall (carbohydrates and protein) for early spring buildup.

[For more management info, visit our month by month education on the BCBA website.](#)



**FACEBOOK SITES
MANAGED BY BCBA**

Brown County Beekeepers
updates on club happenings

Northeast WI Beekeepers
beekeepers helping beekeepers

Brown County Beekeeping Association

Member Benefits

Club Sponsor – Hansen Honey Farm, Rhinelander, WI

- \$5 off each package or nuc of bees until May 2024 (Min purchase required)
- 5% discount for all BCBA members for ongoing purchase
- For online discount code, contact secretary@browncountybeekeepers.com
- When purchasing in-store only, let them know you are a member of the BCBA.

Club Sponsor – Let It Bee, Inc., Greenville, WI

- 5% discount for all BCBA member purchases, except nucs. In-store only.
- When purchasing in-store only, let them know you are a member of the BCBA.

[Click here for the Club Sponsor Website Page](#)

Club Equipment Rental

Perks of being a member! [Click here for the full rental list.](#)

American Bee Journal Subscriptions

(Contact Club Treasurer for Discount form)

Club Education Reimbursement Opportunity

Club members are eligible for up to \$25/ calendar year for continuing education

Eligibility Guidelines:

- Must be a current member for at least 12 consecutive months.
- Member must submit their request to the Leadership Team prior to the event including details on how it aligns to the Club's Mission.
- Note: BCBA sponsored events, books or magazines not eligible for reimbursements.
- Club Expectations of Members Receiving Education Reimbursement
- Overview of the education to the club or an education session.
- Write-up with photos and/or video for club publication.

2025 Club Officers

President: Chris Groth

president@browncountybeekeepers.com

Vice President: Nathan C. Frailey, Sr.

vicepresident@browncountybeekeepers.com

Website Chair: Carl Fisher

info@browncountybeekeepers.com

Social Media: Wayne Steigelman

Club Education CoChairs: Mimi Gerner and Dave Elsen

Treasurer: Chad Ford

treasurer@browncountybeekeepers.com

Secretary: Edmund Poillion

secretary@browncountybeekeepers.com

Education Outreach Chair: Julie Mazzoleni

Board Member at Large: Dick Sturm