

BROWN COUNTY BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

MAY 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

This week (May 3) I see a phenology event for beekeepers. I have noticed dandelions blooming around the landscape. When you see the dandelions, it is time to split the overwinter hives. In checking my hives at the apiary, there was brood in the upper and lower deeps, but no queen cups yet. So, the adage has some truth in it. Checking the weather data, we have had about 24 Growing Degree Days so far this year and we are a bit behind from last year at this time. Also, the pears were blooming at the apiary also. That maybe a future phenology indicator event for splitting if it holds true.

The activity in the hive is going to get intense as the bees build numbers before nectar flows. We need to be mindful of the swarming impulse and observe the signs. You should be inspecting the hive once a week to keep on top of it. That will allow you to observe if they are building swarm cells and allow you time to manage the swarm impulse. You may see the bees backfilling the brood frames with nectar. A sign they are running out of space. Time to add space. Is the bottom deep open, maybe a reversal will give the needed space. You might have to add honey supers or another deep to solve the space issue.

You may have seen swarm cells formed since the last inspection. That urge you can not roll back. The best option is a split. Move the old queen out into a new set up or a nucleus. You can let the old hive raise a new queen or buy a queen to give you a head start on egg production. If you buy a queen, don't destroy the queen cells. Give some serious thought to using those to develop some new hives for future queens or production hives. Focus on sustainability of your apiary.

If you are concerned about honey production being reduced with a split, look into doing a Demaree Split Method. Basically, it is a dual queen hive that keep all the worker force together to maximize the honey production in the hive. You can research that method to see if it is something you would like to try.

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

President: Chris Groth

president@BrownCountyBeekeepers.com



Meet the Girl

Hilary Kearney founded Girl Next Door Honey in 2012 in her home town of San Diego, California after graduating from UC Santa Cruz with a degree in Fine Art. Breaking from tradition, she developed a beekeeping business that does not rely on honey sales or pollination services for economic success. Instead, Girl Next Door Honey focuses on bee-centric programs such as natural beekeeping classes, apiary management, classroom presentations, beehive tours, live bee removal and more!

Hilary's beekeeping exploits and unique business model have inspired people all around the world. She is the author of the beekeeping blog Beekeeping Like A Girl and maintains a popular Instagram account. When she's not rescuing bees, teaching about bees, photographing bees or managing one of her fifty colonies... she's sleeping and dreaming of bees.

Click below to learn more...



MAY EDUCATION



Online

Join Zoom Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87964461430?pwd=gjKL7aGUW6ncgMgNzy9mec1Z0WRVu1.1>

Meeting ID: 879 6446 1430

Passcode: 805886

Member Experience by VP Sr. Frailey



Click on logo for more information from our club sponsor

The last thing most people want to do in their freetime is their dayjob. For example, plumbers are infamous for having a leaky faucet in their home, accountants have other accountants do their taxes, and cooks like to get takeout for dinner. I do maintenance for a living, so naturally, I don't like maintaining bee equipment. It's just not a part of the hobby that I enjoy. When I heard about wax dipping as an option, I jumped at it. To me it's a long lasting solution to my everlong maintenance problem. But it doesn't come without its own issues. Here's what I learned when I had 65+ pieces of equipment dipped at Hansen Honey Farm.

- The woods of Rhinelander are cold in early Spring. I should have brought more layers.
- It's an all day event. Chris Hansen started the fire under the wax dipper at 8am and by noon it was barely at temp. He could dip 8 deeps or 12 mediums at a time. Each dip takes a minimum of 3 minutes, but really until the foam stops rising. Then you take it out, cool it, and give it a 2nd quick dip. We dipped for 4 hours.
- Older equipment seems to hold more moisture.
- Wax dipping will not cover up dirty equipment. I had some boxes with brown poop stains on white paint. It's now sealed in permanently. Maybe I should have scraped AND washed some of my boxes.
- Wax dipping can warp poorly constructed boxes. I have a nuc lid that was tacked together, never painted, and used for 4 years. The lid has now warped...nothing some nails, a 10lb hammer, and some properly placed cuss words can't fix.
- New equipment looks gorgeous after wax dipping.
- My boxes are now sealed inside and out.

All in all, I'm happy that I did it. I am confident in the condition my equipment is in and will likely continue wax dipping as I rotate equipment out. If you have any questions, feel free to ask.

BCBA Vice President – Nathan Frailey Sr.



JIM SHARP - WALKAWAY SPLIT

**Walkaway Split: A Mite-Smart and Swarm-Smart Beekeeping Strategy**

Managing varroa mites and preventing swarms are two of the most important challenges beekeepers face each season. An effective and low-intervention method to address both is the **walkaway split**—a simple division that removes the existing queen and a few brood frames into a nucleus colony (nuc), giving the parent colony a brood break to reduce mites and discourage swarming. This method not only creates a new colony but also sets up the parent hive for a highly effective **oxalic acid treatment** during its temporary broodless period.

When timed correctly in early spring, this strategy can also be done with minimal impact on honey production, especially if the colony has full sheets of brood close to emergence. Those bees will still emerge in the parent hive and be ready to forage during the spring nectar flow—even while the new queen is being raised.

An additional benefit is isolating the best queens in Nucs to have easy access to young larva to graft from for queen rearing.

Why This Method Works

Oxalic acid is one of the most effective organic treatments for varroa mites, but it only works on **phoretic mites**—those on adult bees—not those sealed in **capped brood**. By removing the queen and stopping brood production in the parent hive, a broodless window opens, allowing oxalic acid to reach virtually all mites in the colony. This often results in a significant reduction in mite load with just a single treatment. Additionally, removing the queen significantly reduces the colony's swarming impulse. In spring and early summer, rapidly growing colonies with abundant resources are naturally inclined to reproduce by swarming—a process where the old queen and roughly half the bees leave to start a new colony. This reproductive strategy leaves the original hive with ample resources and the task of raising a new queen. By taking the old queen in a split, you eliminate one of the key elements needed to trigger swarming, effectively disrupting the colony's drive to divide.

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In early spring, many colonies have full frames of capped brood that are about to emerge. By performing the split just before this brood hatches, you retain the foraging force needed for the nectar flow—ensuring that honey production is minimally disrupted even as the colony is requeening and break the mite cycle.



When to Do It

This split is best done in **early to mid-spring**, just as colonies are expanding rapidly and drones are becoming available for queen mating. This timing aligns with the buildup toward the nectar flow, giving both hives time to grow while taking advantage of natural brood cycles. It's also a great method in late summer or early fall for mite reduction before winter when honey production isn't a factor. A brood break in late summer is ideal for reducing the colony's population—fewer hungry mouths to feed—as nectar availability declines. It also provides the perfect opportunity to treat for mites and ensure the colony raises healthy winter bees.

Step-by-Step: Making the Queen-Right Walkaway Split

Step 1: Select the Right Colony

Choose a robust colony with good brood patterns, plenty of bees, and a healthy, productive queen. Ideally, this hive should have multiple frames of capped brood that are about to emerge.

Step 2: Find and Remove the Queen

Carefully inspect and locate the queen. Once found, place her in a queen cage temporarily if needed to prevent loss during frame manipulation or place that frame of bees with the queen in a nuc.

Step 3: Prepare the Nuc

In your new nucleus hive, place:

- 2–3 frames of brood (ideally including one with emerging brood and another with eggs or young larvae)
- 1 frame of food (pollen/honey)
- The queen (released onto the brood frame after bees are added)
- 1–2 empty drawn comb or foundation frames

Shake in extra nurse bees from the brood frames to help care for the brood and queen.

Step 4: Reassemble the Parent Hive

Leave the remaining bees and brood in the original hive. Ensure at least one frame has very young larvae or eggs so the colony can raise a queen. The colony will recognize its queenless and begin constructing queen cells within 24–48 hours.

Step 5: Close and Reorient

If the nuc will remain in the same yard, consider plugging the entrance for 24 hours or placing a branch at the entrance to encourage reorientation. Otherwise, move the nuc 2+ miles away to avoid forager drift.

Oxalic Acid Treatment Timing

Around **Day 21–25** after the split, all brood in the parent colony will have emerged, leaving it **temporarily broodless**—the ideal window for oxalic acid treatment.

At this point:

- Use **vaporization (sublimation) or dribble method** per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always wear proper PPE.
- Treat once during this broodless period for maximum effect.
- Avoid disturbing developing queen cells during the days leading up to emergence (around Day 16).

Requeening the Parent Colony (If Needed)

If the parent colony **fails to successfully requeen**, don't panic. This method offers a natural **backup plan**.

Around Day 28–35, check the hive for signs of a newly mated queen—look for eggs, small larvae, or polished cells. If no eggs or young brood are seen by Day 35:

- The colony likely failed to raise or mate a queen.
- Use a frame of eggs from the nuc if it has a laying queen and you'd like the colony to try again.
- Or, more reliably, take the old queen and requeen the parent colony directly with the nuc.
- You can also order and install a new mated queen if needed.

Requeening with the nuc provides a simple, self-sufficient solution—no need to buy a queen or risk unknown genetics. And because the queen is already accepted and proven, she's more likely to be accepted by the parent colony.

Final Thoughts

The queen-right walkaway split is a low-tech, high-impact beekeeping tool that meets multiple goals: **mites, swarms, and sustainability**. Done in early spring, especially when capped brood is close to emerging, it allows the beekeeper to maintain foraging strength and maximize honey production while also interrupting the brood cycle for effective mite treatment.

By splitting a colony at the right time, treating during the broodless window, and monitoring queen success, you not only control varroa but also ensure your colonies stay strong, productive, and less prone to swarming—all while increasing your hive count.

JIM SHARP

Jim has over 25 years of beekeeping in Texas, Indiana and Wisconsin. He takes pride in being sustainable by grafting queens and raising nucs.

Jim has also has experience with Africanized bees but we would assume he didn't wear shorts. ;)



STINGLESS BEES IN COSTA RICA

My wife, Lori, and I recently visited Costa Rica and took a guided tour in the rainforest complete with crossing 6 hanging bridges. One of the highlights of the hike for me was the “stingless bees” that our guide pointed out to the group.

The entrance to the hive was much smaller than a dime in the trunk of a large tree. The bees themselves were slightly larger than a gnat and much smaller than a house fly. This bee was one of 60 different species of “stingless bee” in Costa Rica. Since they are stingless “How do they defend their hive?” you ask. When invaded by another insect the soldier bees latch on to the invader, beat their wings, creating heat, and frying the invader. You can see the soldier bees hovering by the entrance to the hive. These bees are depicted online as “Gentle Bees with Magical Honey”. The honey (which I was not able to find and taste) is supposed to have an uncommon flavor and strong antibiotic properties.



HIVE RECIPES FROM THE RECIPE REBEL

**To those who may want a 'healthier' version of Scotcheroos:
The original recipe of Scotcheroos is made with white sugar and corn syrup. I felt there had to be a better way and I found this (and made them for the BCBA meeting on 4/16/25):**

Honey Peanut Butter Scotcheroos

Bottom Layer

1 1/2 cups all natural peanut butter (I used Skippy creamy)

1/2 cup honey (I used Dick's Bees honey (haha))

pinch of salt

4 cups Rice Krispies



Top Layer

1 cup chocolate chips

1/2 cup butterscotch chips

2 tablespoons coconut oil



Line 9x13" pan with parchment paper or grease it well

Mix peanut butter, honey and pinch of salt in a large bowl. Mix till smooth. Add Rice Krispies and fold gently together.

Press into the prepared pan with hands or spatula.

Melt the chocolate and butterscotch chips and coconut oil together in a small saucepan or in the microwave till melted. Pour evenly over the first layer and spread with spatula.

Place in the freezer for 2 hours. Remove from the freezer and let sit for a while before cutting - topping will crack if too cold when cutting.

Store bars in the refrigerator as they will not set up and be firm.

--

Carol Sturm

gramma of two pink plus one blue!!

Maker of critters, watcher of fish, birds & bees 🐝

New home to the GMD named Denali!!

Mother of four plus more

Go Pack Go 🏈

Menasha, WI

GIVEAWAY



Secret Blue Ticket Holder!

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	Wayne Steigelman Nathan Frailey
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



2025 WISCONSIN BEEKEEPING EVENTS

Intro To Beekeeping

At The Hive

WHPA Summer Meeting

WHPA Honey Booth at the Wisconsin State Fair

WHPA Fall Convention

May 17th, 2025

NWTC Sustainable
Agriculture Gardens.

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

Must be pre registered

www.browncountybeekeepers.com

June 14, 2025

DoubleTree by Hilton
150 South Nicolet Road,
Appleton, WI

2025 Summer Meeting
Agenda TBA

www.wihoney.org

**July 31st – August 10th,
2025**

Volunteers are needed in the WHPA Honey Booth! Working at the booth is great fun – you can spread the buzz about bees and honey! All volunteers receive a free admission ticket into the WI State Fair. TO VOLUNTEER AT THE WHPA HONEY BOOTH, **[Click Here](#)**

November 6-8, 2025

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON in
NEENAH, WI

Keynote Speaker: Bob Binnie,
owner of Blue Ridge Honey Co.
in Lakemont, Georgia.

www.wihoney.org

WHPA BEAR COMMITTEE NEWS

Wisconsin beekeepers, below is a map of the USDA Wildlife damage specialist that covers each county within the state.

After calling your district office they can get you in touch with your county's Wildlife damage specialist. If your county does not have an assigned specialist, they will get you in contact with the closest option. If you do experience bear damage, please report any and all damage that occurs.

This is the best way

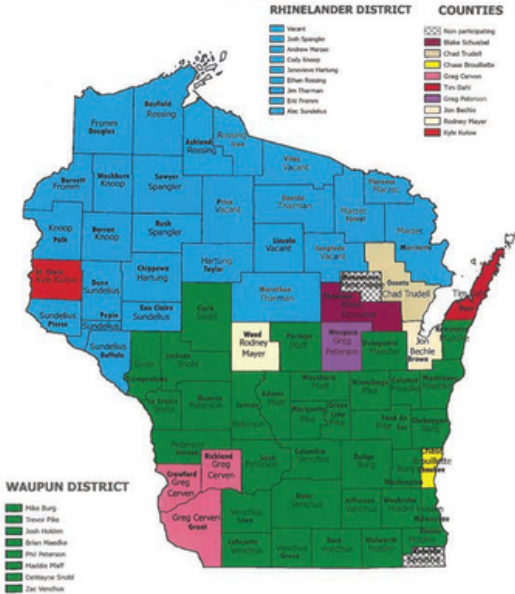
to show the DNR the impact that black bears are having on Wisconsin beekeepers. When the wildlife damage specialist is called, it is a formal complaint and will be recorded. All of the bear complaints will be presented to the Black bear advisory committee meeting by the head of the Wildlife damage specialist. This will be more impactful than our internal tracking the past few years.

Last year there were only 13 apiary damage complaints reported to USDA wildlife damage specialists. This is extremely underreported! Please take the time to report any damage that black bears cause to your honeybees. Please contact me or anyone from the WHPA Bear Committee with any questions.

Nick Thill

WHPA Bear Committee:

- Nick Thill n.thill@hotmail.com 262-689-1484
- James Hillemeier james.hillemeier@gmail.com 715-347-4996
- Dan Piechowski hhf32@centurytel.net 920-566-4132
- Dan Ziehli danziehli@gmail.com 608-343-0716



May Management

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

In the hive

Egg laying and brood rearing are in high gear, with the brood area expanding rapidly. The bees are foraging for pollen and nectar to support this colony growth. They are likely to be less defensive than in fall, with less to protect and lots to do! With the growing population and possible overcrowding, mid-May is the beginning of swarm season. Queen cups are being built along the lower edges of brood frames. If the hive is crowded, some cups will likely be laid in. The drone population is growing. The Varroa mite population is also building.

Monitor Swarming – As colonies grow rapidly, watch for queen cells and signs of swarming. If necessary, split hives or provide additional space.

Add Honey Supers – Ensure your mite treatments are completed before adding honey supers. Place queen excluders if needed.

Limit Hive Disturbances – Frequent inspections can disrupt colony productivity. Aim for a single brood nest check this month.

Support New Splits – If you've split hives earlier, continue feeding sugar syrup to help them establish.

Strategic Super Placement – Add a new super when the current one is 70–80% full. Placing it underneath encourages efficient filling.

Attend Bee Meetings & Track Blooms – Stay informed about local nectar flows and connect with other beekeepers.

For more May 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