



Jackson County Beekeepers Monthly Newsletter

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# Hands On at the Apiary



Deja vu! June 2017 - Visit to Keith Fletcher's Apiary on Akso Rd in Scottsboro. Do you recognize yourself? We visited the apiary again on October 6, 2022. See below.

October 2022  
TOP NEWS

## 2022 Club Meetings

**Club meeting on Thursday, November 3, 2022,** at the ALFA building on Hwy 72 in  
Scottsboro.

**We have a great speaker come back for a repeat visit.**

**Bill Elliott will discuss hive treatments. He treats his hives year-round and will discuss the various treatments he uses and the benefits of treating throughout the year.**

The meeting will start at:

- **6:00 PM**

## Current Management (year 2)

February is traditionally our changing of the Guards so to speak, and as of February 4th, 2022 our leaders are:

- Ray Latham - President
- Keith Fletcher - Vice President (Acting president while Ray has surgery)
- Dustin Davis - Secretary
- Meindert Dijkhuis - Treasurer/editor

Current directors are:

- Lane Walden and Jeremy Mulkey will be up for re-election since their 1-year term is up this year. (They fulfilled the remaining term of 1 year left vacant by Ray Latham and Keith Fletcher when they were elected President and VP last year).
- Rob Woody and Charlie Smith were elected for the full 3-year term. (This is year 2)
- Terry McClendon will continue to serve the remainder of his term. (year 3)

**Deb Davis has requested to be dismissed from her duties. (This was her last year too) We're looking to fill her spot. Let us know if you like to volunteer. (Calling all ladies!!!! This is your chance.)**

## Club Resources you can use!

- If you want to use any equipment, like the extractors, or EZ-Vape, for instance, CALL or TEXT Keith Fletcher at (703)887-6071 and reserve whatever you need.

## 2022/2023 Membership Renewal Continues

Although February is traditionally the month to renew your membership, we like to encourage you to still become a member. If you sign up in November or December, we'll carry your membership over to 2023. We voted to have monthly face-to-face meetings again early this year, but some of you may still not feel comfortable to join in person due to Covid. The Board would like to encourage you to renew your membership by mail instead.

Please forward your \$10.00 membership payment (remember, it covers your whole household) to:

- **JCBA, attn Treasurer Meindert Dijkhuis, 794 Hendrix Rd, Sylvania, AL 35988.**

Please include your Name, Address, Phone-number, and eMail. You will receive your proof of payment in return mail.

## Be a Contributing Editor.

If you have ideas, articles, YouTube video links, or subjects you would like to share with our Club Members, please let me know by sending me an email to [meindertdijkhuis@gmail.com](mailto:meindertdijkhuis@gmail.com)

Feel free to write something, and I'll be glad to add it. We want to share information.

## Let's Talk Bees!

I am changing this section a little, because I missed my normal publishing time before the month's club meeting. Life got busy, and I did not have time to research the questions I received last month, and hence, didn't get to write either. Since we had an awesome meeting in Keith Fletcher's apiary in Scottsboro on 10/6/2022, I thought I'll write about that, show some pictures, and then try to answer the questions I received. Here we go!



We have visited Keith's apiary before in June of 2017. Hope you enjoyed my intro picture I found in the archives. This time, Keith kept 2 nucs and 2 full hives at this site.



First we all donned our bee-suits. The first action was to put the nucs in an 8-frame box. The colony in this picture was very docile, and Keith was able to handle the frames with ease. Although all frames were occupied with bees, this colony was on the small side. We looked for honey on the 2 outside frames, and any brood on the 3 inner frames.

The outside frames did have honey on them, but most of it had not been capped.

The 3rd frame also had pollen and open honey, and scattered brood. That, in general, is not a really good sign of strength of the colony and or Queen.

We did find the Queen! Do you spot her in the 3rd foto?



We moved all 5 frames in a larger 8-frame box. Three empty frames were added to provide additional room for the colony to store more honey for winter with the addition of a feeder we later added. Keith added a quart bucket the bees can access from below through the inner cover. He added a super to protect the bucket and bees and closed it off with the outer cover. The 4th picture shows the feeder in the super.





Super with feeder. Bees access food from below.

The 2nd nuc was a different story. When the hive was opened, we noticed the difference immediately. The hum of the bees increased markedly, and there were a lot more bees in this colony. Every frame was packed with bees. This hive also had capped honey on the 2 outside frames. The 3 inner frames had honey on the edges, and a nice uniform brood pattern in the middle of each frame. We did not find the queen this time, but the capped and open brood cells were enough of an indication that she was present.

Keith proceeded to move the frames in a larger 8-frame box too, and added 3 empty frames as well. Like the 1st one, we added a super to the inner cover to hold a quart bucket with sugar syrup, and closed the hive off with the outer cover.



Outer frame with a nice honey pattern.



3rd Frame covered in bees.





Good brood pattern



Lots of bees in this colony



Next we opened the 2 fullsize 8-frame hives. Because nightfall was approaching, we did not do too much to these colonies.

We added a top feeder to the 1st one. You can see in the picture that the trays float on the syrup, allowing the bees to access the food.

The second hive did have a honey super on it.

After we opened the hive we found no honey at all in this honey super. Keith decided to have a quick look at the brood box to see what that looked like, and we did find honey and brood on the frames. Keith removed the honey super, and added the syrup feeder, like the other hive. The honey super was removed, because at this point in the year, the bees will not have time to fill any of it. The store they created in the







brood box will help, along with the sugar syrup in the feeder, to hold them over during the coming winter. Of course, Keith will have to come back in a week or two to refill the feeders. Depending on how needy the 2 nucs are, he may even need to come back and check in a week. I did want to show the picture with the open brood in the last hive. Pretty cool.

## Questions from the Field

Question from B Stickney

I was in Turkey a few years ago, and I noticed a couple apiaries, one of about 10 or 12 hives and the other of about 15 or 20. Each hive looked a lot like ours from a distance, but on my closer approach (no one was around), I noticed that **each hive had the entrance at the top of the hive side wall**, not at the bottom, as ours are. The hives were various sizes (probably depending on colony maturity and size), as ours are, and each entrance had no entrance reducer, and they were at the small end of ours, but not unusually so, even for us. My question is, **why were their entrances on the top of the hive, and why are ours on the bottom? What are the reasons, advantages, and disadvantages of hive entrance placement? Does the entrance position really matter?**

Dr [Thomas D. Seeley](#) wrote in *Honeybee Democracy*: "The (*wild*) bees had revealed to me that they prefer a nest entrance that is rather small, faces south, is high off the ground, and opens into the bottom of the nest cavity. These four preferences regarding the entrance opening no doubt help a honeybee colony survive against threats of cold winters and dangerous predators. A small entrance is easily defended and helps isolate the nest from the outside environment. An entrance high up in a tree is less apt to be discovered by predators than one near the ground, and is certainly inaccessible to predators that cannot fly or climb trees. An entrance at the bottom of the nest cavity rather than at the top may



help to minimize the loss of heat from the colony by convection currents." says, "The bees had revealed to me that they prefer a nest entrance that is rather small, faces south, is high off the ground, and opens into the bottom of the nest cavity. These four preferences regarding the entrance opening no doubt help a honeybee colony survive against threats of cold winters and dangerous predators. A small entrance is easily defended and helps isolate the nest from the outside environment. An entrance high up in a tree is less apt to be discovered by predators than one near the ground, and is certainly inaccessible to predators that cannot fly or climb trees. An entrance at the bottom of the nest cavity rather than at the top may help to minimize the loss of heat from the colony by convection currents."

However, that's for wild bees. We beekeepers have given them man-made homes, not all conforming to a hollow in a tree. The most used Langstroth hive model does have a bottom entrance which can be sized from small to large depending on season or preference. Beekeepers in the United States will add an upper entrance to their hives, but that is mostly for ventilation purposes. Personally, I am a bit hesitant to do this, because I believe it may create the opportunity for robbing by other bees, especially if there is a shortage of food out in the wild. (Alabama dearth period during the Summer) or if the colony is not as strong as it could be. If you need to ventilate, use a small stick or shim to raise the outer cover or box to allow for better air movement in the hive. A screened bottom may also be a good solution in tandem with the raised outer cover. I don't know much about beekeeping practices in other countries, especially the middle east. However, I found a good article about beekeeping in Turkey, and to my amazement, beekeepers there are now more organized, and also use Langstroth hives, although some modifications may be made to address the climate (hot days, cold nights). B did share a few pictures with me.



From what I see in these two pictures, I think these hives are used for pollination purposes. Telltale single box hives, and a cool feature, a foldable landing board. They can be closed when the hives are relocated to another site. Pollination is also a big industry in Turkey. If you blow the picture up, you can see the boards are mounted on a piano hinge, and can be closed by pushing them up, and securing them with a nail. The round holes, and in some

cases, slots, are for ventilation purposes only, although the bees will use them as an alternate entrance.

In my opinion, the hives with the landing boards closed are not in use. B did see bees go in and out, but most likely the bees are robbing whatever is left in them. If any of you have additional information or insight; please share.

B had an additional question: **Does feeding your bees make them lazy.**

The easy answer: No, but let's look at why you feed bees in the first place.

Part of our job as beekeepers is to know what food our bees are bringing in, in fact, that is one of the main purposes for inspecting hives regularly. If the bees have no stores and there are no flowers around, then we need to feed them. We also need to know the nectar flows in our area to help us decide when it is wise to take honey and when it is better to leave it for the bees. Beekeeping makes us more in touch with nature because we have taken its place in the rearing of bees in managed hives.

You feed;

- if your bees do not have adequate food stores (honey) to get them through a dearth, whether that be summer or winter.
- if you have a package of bees that have no comb built.
- if you have a swarm or new cutout that has no food stores, even if there is a nectar flow.
- if it is Fall and you want to build your numbers before winter.
- provide a pollen substitute. The bees will only take if they need it.

The above makes sense when you think about what we do to bees. We must always keep in mind that we are raising bees in an unnatural environment. Yes, those who design beehives, have studied bee behavior and created an artificial home that is as close to how the bees naturally build their hives, but still it is not a natural home. We have to supplement insulation or shade when necessary because bees usually pick cavities that are naturally well-insulated from the elements. We have to add boxes to create bigger places so that they can grow and not swarm. We give and take frames, queens, and brood. This is NOT how bees naturally live. We also possibly keep bees in areas where floral sources are not abundant or where the number of colonies is greater than the abundance of food. Just like cattle, chickens or dogs and cats, for that matter, we feed them because we are their caretakers and they would starve without our intervention.

Does feeding bees make them lazy? No, but bees are opportunists. If they find an easy food source they will use it. As long as you do the feeding of bees within the hive, and during a time of need, all is well. It keeps them alive. However, if you feed from a communal source, like the large bucket feeder stations, you may inadvertently attract bees who don't need that feed, and they will produce honey from sugar syrup. Something you don't want to happen when you sell your honey, or even when you consume it yourself. Communal feeders often attract bees from other apiaries in your area if they are within

flying distance. So, know who your fellow beekeepers are, and where they are located. You may be feeding their bees, and cause the honey to be based on sugar syrup without their knowledge. Not a good thing.

Be aware of what's going on in your hives, and act accordingly. Feed or not to feed the bees depends on the environment at the moment.

I copied excerpts for this answer from [Gardenvarietybees.com](https://www.gardenvarietybees.com) article about feeding bees (August, 2020) which used excerpts from a speech by Bob Binnie. (see link: <https://youtu.be/SUSdPVqiZs0> )

## CALENDAR

Based on the Beekeeping Calendar for our climate zone, we should: (Covers June-August)

For July and August, address the following:

1. Check ventilation. Use popsicle sticks to raise the cover slightly to improve airflow, for instance.
2. Check for surplus honey. This may be the start of harvest season. (July 4th weekend)
3. In Alabama, we may see a dearth during the hot summer months. Bees may start feeding on the honey they already collected.
4. Start putting out communal feeding areas. For instance, I keep a feeding table out near my apiary and feed sugar syrup. I also noticed bees heavily foraging on water. I have a pond nearby, and the bees use certain spots to collect water.

For September address the following:

1. Check for the queen, and see if she's still producing eggs
2. It's time to add a mouse guard
3. Medicate for AFB, EFB and Nosema
4. Medicate for Varroa mite if needed
5. Medicate for tracheal mites
6. Check for hive beetles, and remediate if needed
7. Check for surplus honey: harvest or redistribute to hives with low stores

For October address the following:

8. Check food reserves, and feed colony if reserves are low
9. Prepare hives for winter

(From Beekeeping for Dummies, 3rd edition by Howland Blackinton)



# Favorite Book List

## ***Keeping Bees in Horizontal Hives: A Complete Guide to Apiculture***

Georges de Layens & Gaston Bonnier

Dr. Leo Sharashkin (editor)

374 pages, 250 ill.

\$39.95. ISBN 978-0-9842873-6-9

Deep Snow Press, 2017

## ***Keeping Bees With A Smile: A Vision and Practice of Natural Apiculture* ( I Like!)**

Fedor Lazutin

Dr. Leonid Sharashkin (editor)

402 pages, 140 ill., 32 full-color photos

\$24.95 (on sale). ISBN 978-0-9842873-5-2

Deep Snow Press, 2013.

## ***Honeybee Democracy Hardcover – Illustrated, October 10, 2010***

by [Thomas D. Seeley](#) (Author)

Can be purchased Used for \$14.00. \$22.00 on Amazon

Honeybees make decisions collectively-and democratically. Every year, faced with the life-or-death problem of choosing and traveling to a new home, honeybees stake everything on a process that includes collective fact-finding, vigorous debate, and consensus building. In fact, as world-renowned animal behaviorist Thomas Seeley reveals, these incredible insects have much to teach us when it comes to collective wisdom and effective decision making.

## ***Raising Honeybee Queens***

by Gilles Fert (Author) Dr. Leonid Sharashkin (editor)

144 pages, 150 full-color illustrations

\$29. ISBN 978-0-9842873-8-3

Deep Snow Press, 2020

**Note: The above books are available in the JCBA Library.**