

All the Buzz from the Hive

May 19, 2007

Hi everyone! Here we are back again for another season. How time flies when you are busy and we are as busy as a bee!

You've all been reading the horror stories about us bees called "colony collapse disorder". Wish we could enlighten you as to what is going on, but I'm afraid we don't know any more than you do. Luckily for our "keeper", and us, it hasn't affected any of our hives – yet! And let's hope it never does. It's scary!!

We didn't have an easy winter. The Fall was nice and warm, lasted almost up until Christmas, and then all of a sudden the cold weather set in and just didn't let up. I don't think we had a warm day for 3 months. When it's that cold we can't break cluster to move around to where the food stores were.

Our keeper went into the winter with 61 beehives. This Spring when it came time to unwrap us from our winter protection, 3 hives were dead. Another 8 were reduced down to one super. A bit discouraging, but when you hear some of the losses other beekeepers had, she is not complaining. Unofficially, Nova Scotia has lost approximately 25% of their beehives and New Brunswick is even worse, we heard they might have lost up to 85% of their beehives! The feeling in Nova Scotia is that our losses are mainly due the unusual weather in the fall and winter.

Our keeper took our extra honey off by the end of last September and fed us a heavy sugar syrup, which we had taken down into the beehive by the middle/end of October. Usually, shortly thereafter we begin to cluster and settle down for the winter. Not last year! The weather stayed nice, the Queen kept laying and we kept busy and eating. In January when the cold weather did come, it came fast and caught some of us off guard! Most of us managed to cluster. The weather didn't warm up at all, we couldn't even move to where the food was. (No bathroom breaks either!)

Come Spring we had a bit of food left and hardly any pollen. Can't feed eggs and raise new bees without it. Our keeper gave us all some more syrup and fed us a pollen substitute. It's not as good as the real stuff, but it does in a pinch. It's only now that the Queen is beginning to lay any amount of eggs again. There has to be enough bees in the hive to keep the temperature around the eggs and brood at a toasty 93 degrees F. or they get chilled and die.

Spring is coming, though slowly! We've been able to gather pollen from the pussy willows and alders. The maple trees are budding out and we love them. Yum, Yum! We've even spotted the odd dandelion! We "love" dandelions! Just wish you wouldn't cut or mow them down. Imagine, you see a huge buffet of your favorite food, you take some home, come back and it's all GONE! That's what it's like for us when you mow them down. NO FOOD!

Well, I guess it's time for me to get back to work. There's always so much to do around here – feed the Queen, feed the larva, clean the house, make some beeswax, guard the house and finally "FREEDOM". I'll get to fly and visit the world! See ya!

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