

Did you see the front-page Headlight Herald story about the two million honey bees that arrived a couple of weeks ago? There were 154 nucleus colonies, and we were so pleased. Most colonies had at least two of their five frames covered with 6,000 unborn bees, bees ready to eat their way out of their cell. The colonies have come close to doubling in size since they arrived April 23.

But things have been quite challenging in ways we aren't used to. With rain day after day after day, bees can't forage enough to bring in what they need to survive. We've had to do a lot of feeding. Mostly it's one part sugar to one part water with a few additives so that it's not totally junk food. But better junk food than death. The sugar syrup goes into a feeder at the top of the hive. The bees move it down amongst the combs especially where the nurse bees are busy feeding the young larva.

When you solve one problem it sometimes creates another. Feeding so much sugar water in a damp climate creates mold in the hive. Without good ventilation the bees get wet and wet bees are dead bees. We prop up the corners under the cover with popsicle sticks or coins just to let a little of that wet air out.

As if those challenges weren't enough. Who would have thought that one of our new beekeepers in Bay City would lose a colony, ten days into its stay, to bears! Bears don't just go for honey. They also like to eat the bees and the larva for protein. The sight of a huge bear patiently digging out tiny larva is sort of like us trying to get at a single caviar egg with a tablespoon. Quite a challenge. The bees sting the bears faces but the reward must be worth it. Someone in the Bay City neighborhood where the incident occurred taped FIVE bears with a motion activated camera. If you live anywhere near woods and want to have bees, an electric fence is essential and even that isn't guaranteed protection.

I heard a story yesterday about a young elk that took a hive that was ratcheted onto cinder blocks and threw it up in the air. Youngsters at play...

May and June are swarm months. Any colony that survived the winter builds up the bee population strong enough to split. I authored a long article on swarming last month. It can be found in our website: [www.tillamookbeepers.org](http://www.tillamookbeepers.org) in the section "About Bees." I encourage you to go read it. You'll learn how bees put the existing queen on a diet and chase her around the hive so she can fly away with the swarm. Also fascinating is the way scout bees look for a new home for the swarm. They actually have to get the other scout bees to 'vote' for the best find and don't move in until there's a convincing evaluation of the options.

Because of the rain, swarming is going to be late this year. We've only had one hive swarm so far and it ended up hanging in a tall hedge for a couple days because of rain before it was successfully enticed into a hive box.

What I want you to know is that only 20% of the swarms find a good home, raise enough brood, and bring in enough honey to survive the first winter. People who want to help save honey bees will be making a huge contribution by saving a swarm. We have "bait hives" available to make that a safe and viable option. The bait hive is a sealed box with a tiny opening. Inside is a frame of old comb and lemongrass oil which are strong attractants for a swarm. You would put this bait hive in your yard and when bees move in you would immediately call a beekeeper. The beekeeper will move the bees to a new, better, permanent home, feed, and care for them. We could even name the new colony after you, and, of course, you would get some honey in return in the fall! Your empty bait hive would be returned to you. It's all about location, location, location. Properties near the edge of woods and rivers are superior. Bait hives cost \$60. To learn more or purchase a bait hive please click on "Store" on the website. For additional questions, cash purchases, and delivery please email me at [clairemoody503@gmail.com](mailto:clairemoody503@gmail.com).

Bait hives not only catch swarms, but they can also be made into a great family art project and a unique gift for your ecologically minded friends!

Thanks for taking the time to read The Buzz! Perhaps we will eventually become "The Land of Milk and Honey"!