

2026 Stahlman Bee Notes

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There is an old saying, "Things are what they are by way of comparison." There has been much for me to compare the present time with the past. Much of beekeeping is a repeat of the past **except** this coming year presents a challenge to both beekeepers and bees that did not exist when I was young.

This is a new era of beekeeping well past the invention of the movable-frame hive of L.L. Langstroth many years ago. Since that time much has changed. Langstroth is credited with so much but the most important thing he did was provide beekeepers with a chance to open a hive and inspect what was happening inside without doing much harm to the bees.

Invention has been the hallmark of our lives. Each era faces new challenges. A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) will soon help you manage your hives. Check out something called Brood Minder.



These photos were copied from the Brood Minder web site. There are individuals now able to determine what is going on inside a colony of bees without taking the time to even go to the bee yard. Let me say, this is

good but I find so much comfort going out to my hives and looking inside and determining for myself what I see. We now find two schools of beekeeping. One using technology to keep bees – good for anyone who manages a large number of colonies or someone wanting to be an arm-chair beekeeper. The other group will be traditional beekeepers. Our forefathers kept bees in straw skeps, log gums, and crude box hives. In fact, I was born at the end of that era when the topic of transferring bees from crude boxes to standard movable frame hives was taught in bee school. That is similar to the

practice of moving bees from a feral nest in a tree or building into a standard hive. The class included the term “driving bees.” Do you know how to drive bees?

All individuals intending to manage honey bees must be aware that A.I. is a tool. Data collected is helpful but honey bees are living creatures with special needs. A.I. helps spot some of those needs.

Let me start with fundamentals: No one is going to change the behavior of honey bees or make them tame to work. They march to their own tune. Honey bees are not restricted by boundary lines like fences. We are dealing with a remarkable insect. As a keeper of bees, one must follow certain fundamental principles. I have often asked myself what would be a better way to manage my bees.

The best advice I can give to any of you is to learn as much as you can about the biology of the honey bee. Honey bees need three things – (1) They must have ample space for building comb for brood rearing and honey and pollen storage. (2) Honey bees need to eat all the time – they do not hibernate so food sources must be available to maintain life. (3) Bees must have adequate protection from the elements and stress. Stress can be caused by weather changes, lights, noise, excessive handling and introduced pests.

Humans are a cause of much of what is affecting the survival of bees, and mites were transported to our land as were our ancestors. I am not sure what the Indians thought about the invasion of Europeans arriving on their shores? Europeans brought honey bees with them and soon the Indians had a name for them “White man’s flies.” Seeing those new “white man’s fly” was a sign of trouble. We will be seeing the invasion of other harmful threats such as *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* which is now spreading across the middle east from Asia. (See the current issue of Bee Culture Magazine page 36 January 2026.) A quote from the article, “Researchers who have studied the mite describe it as even more destructive than *Varroa destructor*.

Honey bees have enemies - Not counting the damage that can be done by a beekeeper mismanaging a colony of bees. They face natural hazards such as cold, strong winds, and water. And then pests – a number of pests such as ants, bears, raccoon, wax moth , spiders, and birds.

As this year begins, I would like to leave you with something to think about – Successful beekeeping is accomplished by those that understand the behavior of bees, the environment in which they live and attend to the needs for their existence. Looking at bees is not the same as understanding the nature of the honey bee and the issues affecting honey bees.

Beekeepers must learn to work with honey bees. The bees can not be tamed and if one thinks they can manage and control honey bees completely, they soon find the bees flying straight to the woods or being robbed by neighboring bees.

I wrote an article about the Up’s and Down of beekeeping many years ago. Things have changed and are changing. I do not see the standard Langstroth hive being replaced but beekeepers have other choices that use the interchangeable frame principal.

When someone says to you that there is nothing new under the sun, don't believe them. As I write this article I found someone working on a better hive concept to answer if something could be done that would disrupt the behavior of varroa mites. Not something chemical but a physical change in a bee hive.



This is a drum hive. Evidently research has been going on for some time to see if the Varroa mite might be disoriented when frames are rotated.



RESEARCH PROTOCOL

- ❖ Will the drum rotation control Varroa Mites?
- ❖ Durability of the hive?
- ❖ How do the bees react to the circular design?
 - ❖ Will bees draw wax?
 - ❖ Will the queen lay eggs? Where?
 - ❖ Will burr comb / propolis interfere?
 - ❖ What design changes are needed?



Evidently honey bees do adapt to the drum rotation. Not sure what the effect is on Varroa mites. But these hives may be released to the market

soon if the research shows promising results.

Invention of hive equipment has always been part of the History of keeping bees. I would like to share this topic in future issues. So many books have been written about beekeeping and if you are new to beekeeping, I would advise you to be careful of what you buy. Flow hives sold in large numbers a few years ago at very high cost, are now worth little and abandoned. You might find a few still keeping bees in them. A good example – I bought some used bee equipment 2 months ago for \$100.00. Included were 4 standard supers with frames, an incomplete flow hive plus some equipment such as inner covers, top covers, feeders, and a smoker operated with electric batteries. The seller just wanted to get them out of the garage because they were taking up too much space. As a collector of smokers and unusual bee items, this was a gold mine and I could put the four top covers

and bottom boards to work with my own bees. As a supplement to this newsletter I have included a pdf PowerPoint called “The success in keeping bees is found in their song.”

The Power point presentation is valuable for anyone who has kept bees for a few years to understand why their bees die. As a pdf, I can include it with this newsletter. It can not be sent as a pptx file which is 74,861 KB from my computer.