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## Beginner Beekeeping Course

I was one of the many people who attended the Beginner's Beekeeping course put on by the Saskatchewan Beekeeper's Association, June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at St. Joseph's, Saskatchewan. It was an excellent weekend – I can't think of anything else I've done that gave as much value for the money as this course did.

I took the course because I am in the undecided stage regarding beekeeping. There were others like me there, those that knew they wanted to start beekeeping, those that were new at it and those that were returning after a long absence from it. The course spoke to all the different levels of experience quite well. Even one of the

speakers – with decades of beekeeping behind him – learned something new that weekend. But that's beekeeping for you; thousands of years of people raising bees and those bees still have new things to show us!

The course was well planned and presented. There were lectures and slide shows, all of which were well done, and both days had hands-on lessons in the bee yard as well. You can read all that you want (and believe me I have) and attend lectures and presentations but there is nothing like seeing what you've just heard about in action. Even the bees

provided some action by being kind enough to swarm. Not so nice for the bee keeper, but it was the first time many of us had ever seen a swarm.

I was also impressed by how well presented the lectures were. I never felt that they were talking over our heads, and all questions were answered clearly, without making anyone feel as though their inexperience was an irritation. I've been to workshops and classes where that wasn't the case, so I was pleased to see how helpful everyone was.



KB

## In Search of the Perfect Bee - Part 1

When I got the impulse to acquire a hive of bees 15 months ago, little did I realize how much I would be affected by that decision. Luckily, I attended the club's AGM and probably learned more in that day than from a lot of the material I had read and "googled". As a new beekeeper, there is not enough I can say about the value of the club, it's members and especially, the mentorship program. Without the patience of my mentor, I probably would have given up by now, but more on that

later. I bought my first Nuc from Colette and Rick Stushnoff and with their help and the healthy bees, I was able to build that Nuc into a very successful hive that gave me 180 pounds of honey last year. The queen was very productive, produced hygienic bees that had a real foraging zeal and were extremely easy to work. That hive is kept in my backyard and often I can work them with very little need to smoke. Last year, I only received one sting and that through my own fault. I

decided then that I would like to expand by splitting my first hive this year and acquiring four more hives that I would keep on a farm just west of Regina and about three and a half kilometers from my house.

Continued on page 4

## Adventures in Urban Beekeeping:

### "My First Swarm"

One year into beekeeping I am beginning to feel quite comfortable. I have been through one honey flow season, fall feeding, winter wrapping, and now spring. I have the support of a wonderful mentor and other experienced and helpful folk, and work together with other new beekeepers to figure some things out as we go along. Yet, I was quite unprepared for my first swarm. I knew that swarms were a possibility, especially since I now had a full-fledged hive that had

made it through the winter well. What I didn't know was that it could happen so early. On Mother's Day I was spending time with my in-laws when my neighbor called to tell me that some of my bees were in his yard. "How many?" I asked. "Oh, a few thousand," he replied. I apologized to my mother in law and went home to check it out. Luckily the swarm had not gone far, and had landed low down on a large tree where they were easy to access. I had all ready explained to my neighbors that swarms might be a nuisance, but that they are not the angry, chase-you-down-until-you-jump-in-a-river type creatures that are seen on cartoons. They actually believed me, and nobody panicked at all. In fact, many people from the neighborhood came over to check it out and take photos. I myself might have been a bit more nervous if I had to re-hive the swarm on my own, but once again I had an experienced and helpful beekeeper to call.

Andrew (our local swarm response guy) came within the hour. Between the two of us we gathered all the necessary equipment: a spare hive with frames, bottom board, and lid; a bucket; a bee brush; a hand sprayer full of sugar water; and Andrew's modified bee-

vac. I was amazed at how docile the swarm was as we scooped, brushed, and then vacuumed them up and un-ceremoniously dumped them into their new home. A fine spray of sugar water on the re-hived bees helped keep them from flying out and encouraged them to stay and lick each other clean, thereby giving us time to make sure that the queen was in the hive, which would cause the swarm to stay put for good. We never saw the queen, but since the bees settled in, we could assume she was there, somewhere in the middle of the mass.

I thanked Andrew and gave him the swarm to replace a hive that didn't overwinter, gave my neighbor a conciliatory jar of honey for being so reasonable, and vowed to pay more attention to possible spring overcrowding next year. Requeening was also a success and I now look forward to another successful honey flow. No doubt I still have lots to learn, but I continue to be passionate about beekeeping and thankful for Regina and District Bee Club and all the support in the beekeeping community.



Dennie

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(Swarm on base of tree)



### President's Report

Greetings to all, I would like to start by thanking Andrew, K.B. and Dennie for accepting their director positions. Their thoughts, input and work is a great benefit to the Club. It's been a funny year to date to keep up with the girls. Looked like an early Spring and then the monsoon season hit. Now we get to work through the heat. All and all the girls have been up to the task by all reports and there is honey being produced and gathered. We are holding our first summer field day on Sunday, July 29 @ 1:00 p.m. at Colette and Richard's apiary. Thanks to Colette and Richard for

hosting. We will look at a couple different ways of pulling honey so BRING YOUR BEE SUITS and bee ready to take part. We will also have a session on extracting. We are planning on hosting a fall field day early to mid September to demonstrate setting the hives for winter. If you people have any other thoughts and/or ideas bring them along and we can discuss them.

May the flow bee with you,

Jeff Tholl  
 President Regina and District Bee Club

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The SBDC is a major sponsor of our Agribition Booth every year!



### Did You Know

Have you checked out the RDBC webpage lately. Its worth a look. Whenever an interesting article comes along we post it. There are advertisements dealing with a number of bee related products. In the member section you have access to other members contract info, as well as copies of club documents such as newsletters and meeting minutes. There is an article section where you can submit articles for posting, and even a recipe section with many different and tasty dishes to try. One of my favourite parts is a section where members can post want ads for free. These ads are only viewable by other members, however it gives

members a great place to post ads asking for equipment, help, or for products from the hive. So feel free to post those ads, the more people that use it the more effective it becomes.

 Andrew



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## In Search of the Perfect Bee - Cont'd

This past winter I came across studies done by a monk from St. Mary's Abbey at Buckfast in England. He was assigned to the bee yards at the age of seventeen and stayed at the job until he retired some eighty years later. Soon after Brother Adam joined the head beekeeper, Brother Columban, thirty out of the Abbey's forty-six colonies were wiped out by a disease known as Acarine or as we know it, Tracheal Mites. All of the bees that died were of the native British black bee variety. This bee was renowned for being hardy, but somewhat ill-tempered. Not only were the Abbey's bees affected but all the bees throughout Britain. It was a major disaster to say the least.

In 1915 there were only 16 surviving colonies in the Abbey. All of them were either pure Ligurian (Italian) or of Ligurian origin hybrid between Ligurian and English black bee. Brother Adam moved the surviving bees to the isolated valley of Dartmoor, which became a mating station for selective breeding. With no other bees within range, he could maintain their genetic integrity and develop desirable traits.

Brother Adam investigated various honey bee races and made many long journeys in Europe, Africa and Middle-East searching for pure races and interesting local stocks. He imported bees to cross with his

developing Buckfast bee.



Every new strain of bee Brother Adam brought in was first crossed with the existing Buckfast Bee. In most cases, the new desired qualities were passed on to the new generation and the new combination was then made stable with further breeding work. Every crossing with a new race took about 10 years before the desired genes were fixed in the strain. Over seventy years, he managed to develop a vigorous, healthy, and fecund honeybee, which he christened the Buckfast bee..

Well, when I read all that, I figured that these were the bees for me. Realizing, however, that I could not go to England and acquire some Buckfast queens, I gave up on the idea. Then, shortly after, in a recent issue of Bee Culture magazine, there was a small ad in the back for Buckfast queens from a breeder in Ontario – Ferguson Apiaries. I contacted Geoff Wilson

our Provincial Apiarist to ask if I could import some Buckfast queens and he set the import protocols in motion, which included a request from me to the provincial Ag. Minister. After what seemed like a very long time, several emails back and forth to Bill Ferguson and to Geoff, and permission granted from the Ministry, everything came together.

Being new to all this, I was a bit hesitant when Bill's wife, Rosemary, told me they would ship the queens out that night via Canada Post. If you are like me, you probably have some horror story or two about Canada Post, but the Fergusons assured me it would be okay. I expected the package to arrive in two days time, but to my surprise, I got a call the next day from Canada Post. The caller said the postman tried to deliver the package but there was no one home, so instead of leaving the bees in the back of a hot postal van, he drove the bees back to the main outlet, where they were kept in the supervisor's office. I could pick them up anytime. I was so impressed with the driver and the postal service for their care and concern over my queens.

I had ordered four queens from Ferguson's; two for requeening and two from which to build Nucs. After a close check on the one hive that I assumed was queenless, I found it was. I inserted the new queen in her cage and saw that she was instantly accepted by

the colony. They were all attracted to her pheromone and circled the cage. The other hive that needed a queen was a split I made from my very strong backyard hive. That cage was added in the same fashion and with the same reaction. The two Nucs were built from frames from the two stronger hives at the farm. Those queens were added in their cages after a couple of days of the bees being left queenless. The acceptance again was immediate.



That was a week ago. I checked the hives last night (July 16), and they had both eaten through the candy plugs and released their new queens. Both hives were much calmer and in a more pleasant mood. Seems they like the infusion of the Buckfast genes. Both new queens had fattened up and were busily moving around and laying eggs. The proof will be in the next six weeks when both hives will be replaced by the Buckfast stock according to studies that Bill Ferguson has made over the course of his breeding program.



Robin

(see complete article on webpage)



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- 1 x 12 ponderosa pine lumber

# New Executives

Dennie Fornwald



Dennie is a new beekeeper and the founder of Regina Urban Beekeeping. She is a teacher and gardener, as well as an outdoor enthusiast. The mentor program has been great over the years - thanks especially to our past president Colette Stushnoff and director Michelle Frischholtz. Your dedication to the club has been fantastic!"



Dennie

Andrew Hamilton



I have a little over a dozen hives I keep on a farm north of the city. My Great grandfather moved here from Scotland and was one of the creators of the SBA (Saskatchewan Bee Association). He started down here in the Qu'Appelle Valley and eventually moved to the Nipawin area where I grew up. I spent my youth helping my grandparents and father with their bees. I find it very

rewarding to be running bees in the area where my great grandfather started. I joined the club in 2010, and started with 2 hives. Every year since I have expanded a little more. I enjoy answering bee questions and helping new members out.



Andrew

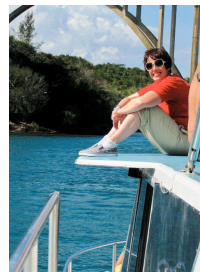
Quebec. I am a parent, a baker, an archivist, a honey collector (more than a dozen different types at any given moment) and future beekeeper. This is my second year with the RDBC and my first attempt ever at website administration. Be patient with me!



KB



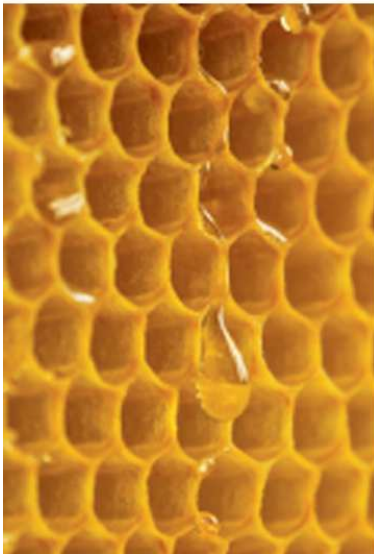
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I have been interested in beekeeping since I saw my first hive as a child in Hudson,



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## Geoff's Corner

*Have questions and need information about beekeeping in Saskatchewan?*

*Do you want to become a registered Beekeeper in our Province?*


*Contact Saskatchewan's Provincial Apiarist:*

Geoff Wilson (306.953.2304)


Email: [geoff.wilson@gov.sk.ca](mailto:geoff.wilson@gov.sk.ca)



## Honey Today

 Wholesale Honey was averaged at \$4.02/lb during July 2012.

 Retail Honey was averaged at \$5.67/lb during July 2012.

 Bulk Honey was averaged at \$1.67/lb during April 2012.

*Statistics taken from the National Honey Board*



## About Our Club...

The Regina and District Bee Club has been active in the City of Regina for over fifty years as a cooperative for ordering honey bees and as a network for education and information on beekeeping.

It is a priority to inform members about current issues in the beekeeping industry to ensure that a proactive role is taken with all industry issues such as bee diseases, mites and pesticides.

The Regina and District Bee Club participates in the Agri-Ed Show Case at Canadian Western Agribition. The focus is to educate children from Grades 4-6 about agriculture and food. Club members volunteer their time to speak about the

bees and beekeeping to well in excess of 10,000 visitors each year.

The Regina and District Bee Club in partnership with the Saskatchewan Beekeepers Association profile the bee keeping industry as a whole in the Trade Show area in order to:

- Promote and sell products of the hive;
- Inform visitors about the industry and its role in the Saskatchewan economy; and
- Develop a relationship with other Saskatchewan agriculture producers.

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Our next Newsletter will be early May. Deadline for submissions is April 27, 2012.

## Membership Benefits:

- A cooperative for ordering bees;
- At the annual meeting, guest speakers are invited to give presentations on current issues;
- Communication of industry issues to enable members to have a voice in provincial decision making;
- Hold "Field Days" to enable members to learn about beekeeping best practice methods; and
- Information and support system for fellow beekeepers.

