

Apis m. Esoteria 2

BEES or BOOKS

How do you raise honeybees and gather honey? By the books we have read, by the advice we are given, or do the bees tell us what to do? We all start out using lots of advice. We can understand what our friends tell us and we can ask questions. At the same time some of us like to read. Not to slight our friends and their advice, we don't tell them we are reading the "super book" on how to raise bees correctly. Then, whatever we learned, doesn't go as scheduled.

So, the bees really tell us how to help them raise themselves. Isn't that really our job as beekeepers. We are to help the bees live and gather honey for us. All the information we collect through all the sources is just back up data waiting to be used to enhance the bee colony.

A new beekeeper called the other day with the good news that she had a swarm in her yard. Well, she knew where it came from. Her number one best colony. It was a new hive this year. As she said, "It was a beautiful sight. Watching the bees swirl up into the air and go away." Whoa there! In the book that is not what is supposed to happen. We are supposed to manage to avoid swarming.

Well, sometimes we can't learn enough, fast enough to do everything we are supposed to. Even if we could do it correctly, things go awry.

The good news is: 1. The mentor (one of many) was called and 2. When she got home the swarm was still there. The beekeeper captured the swarm into a

plastic file box. The next day she borrowed a hive body, top and bottom, and transferred the colony into a hive. Momentary success!

Upon examining the colony that had swarmed, the book said there was no way this should have happened. There should have been another year to learn how to deal with this problem. The colony was created from a package with a new queen. The rules say queens don't swarm in their first year. The hive had only drawn out 7 frames of 10, so they had plenty of work to do with room to do it. There were also 2 honey supers on the hive. One $\frac{3}{4}$ full and one recently placed on the hive. The book says colonies won't swarm when there is room and plenty of work to do.

The swarm was a small one, maybe only a gallon of bees. The book says bees won't swarm until the population is crowded.

So, what did we learn here? The BEES will tell us what they want and we had better be ready to react.

The success was: a great job capturing the swarm and rehiving it. This beekeeper will probably keep extra equipment on hand or know where to borrow it as needed. "It was a little creepy moving the swarmed bees into the box with my hands. Only got stung three times". Oh, by the way, bees don't sting when they swarm, "The Book". Now she has another hive. Will honey be collected from the old or the new colony? Sourwood flow is less than a month away. The saga continues.

Well, No. the beekeeper did not collect any extra honey off either of the colonies involved in the swarm. The losing hive did not have enough foraging

bees to collect extra honey. They had to work overtime to feed the larvae that were left behind by the swarm queen. Then they worked to put up winter food. The swarm had to establish a new colony. Even though they had a few drawn frames to get established on, it took all the energy the swarm could muster to collect nectar, make honey for current food, and draw wax. You just hope a swarm can get settled in well enough to survive the winter. Many late summer swarms do not achieve this level of success in the mountains.