

Honey Letter 2012

Although the weather was very difficult for many people this year with the drought and extreme heat, these conditions were excellent for bees. We started the year with an over wintered hive and bought two additional packages of bees from the apiary we started with in the 1980's from York, Georgia. Though the name of the company has been changed, they have the same phone number and the same lovely lady answers the phone. We had the two packages started and the over wintered colony going, when one day, as I drove home, I noticed a swarm of bees hanging from a tree next to the overwintered colony. At first I thought it was an old shirt of Tom's hanging from the tree, but closer inspection revealed it to be a swarm.



A swarm is an exciting event for a beekeeper because it is an opportunity to capitalize on the bees' own effort to reproduce itself. I called Tom who quickly put together the makings of a new hive and I put on my bee suit. I simply cut the branch that the swarm was hanging from and walked over about a yard to the open, new hive and gently dropped it in.



We therefore recaptured the swarm of bees cast from our over wintered hive and started a fourth hive in one fell swoop.

On July 21st we harvested a little over two full supers of honey for 80 honey bears.

Riders on property near ours had been noticing a “wild” hive of bees that had been in a double trunked hollow tree that split open in a storm. We walked there with my mother, Edna, and niece, Beatrice over Thanksgiving.



We used a flange of hive insulation and plywood to fashion a cover for the hive which was facing the prevailing northwest winds. If they have enough honey stores for the winter, they should survive. These bees are not truly wild, more like feral, since they most likely came from a swarm cast by a beekeeper's hive. Bees are not a native species.

Bees were introduced from Europe to the colonies in 1622. As the bees spread west, likewise their pollination allowed the spread of white clover and other European grasses that made the environs more hospitable to the livestock brought by the settlers. The bees were encouraged to swarm and spread outwards from Jamestown. It took honeybees nearly two hundred years to cross the United States.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
Lyse, Tom, Aubrey and Beau