

Improving Survival Success Rates with Honeybee Colonies through Supportive Cohorts

Meeting #3 Catching and Hiving Swarms
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Catching and Hiving Swarms

Basics of Capturing Swarms and Swarm Traps

By Nathan Pears, YCBA President



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What is a swarm?

Wikipedia Definition

Swarming is a [honey bee](#) colony's natural means of [reproduction](#). In the process of swarming, a single colony splits into two or more distinct colonies.



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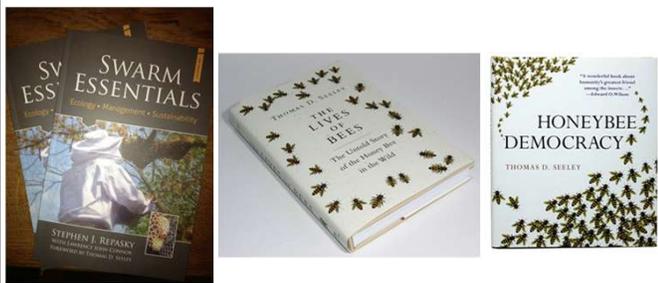
Agenda

- References
- Equipment
- Actively catching swarms
- Methods
- Installing a swarm
- Swarm traps
- Trap design
- Bait
- Location
- Hiving a trapped swarm



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Reference



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In General...



All you have to do is...

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The 1st Rule...

Exceptions



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Swarms In General...

- Consist of the current queen and a mix of workers
 - Prime swarm
 - Secondary/After-swarm
- Usually between 10a and 2p, April to July
- Often after rain
- Bivouac within 50yds of the parent hive
- Scout bees start looking for a new home
 - Hours to days



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Swarms



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Equipment

Things to put swarms in:

- Hive body/BB/lid
- Nuc
- Swarm trap
- Cardboard box
- Bucket
- Laundry bag*

Will depend on size of swarm

Tools you might need:

- Pruning shears
- Branch loppers
- Ladder(s)
- Hoe/rake
- Pole saw/pruner
- Pool skimmer pole
- Paint roller extension
- Duct tape or painters tape
- Tarp or sheet
- Ratchet strap/bungee cord(s)
- Spray bottle*
 - Water
 - Sugar solution

Beekeeping stuff you might need:

- Veil
- Jacket/suit
- Gloves
- Queen cage
- Bee brush
- Frame of drawn comb
- Additional frames
- Entrance reducer
- Hive tool
- Smoker*

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Actively Catching a Swarm

Some are easy to spot



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Actively Catching a Swarm

Some are not



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Actively Catching a Swarm

Size and location can change your method and tools needed



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Actively Catching a Swarm

And some, you just can't get

... well, you could try. You know, because...

FREE BEES!



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But First...

- **Keep it safe**
- **Is that your tree?**
- **You are a liaison to the community**



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Example #1



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Example #1



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Example #1



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Example #1



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Example #1



- In the end, they all went into the hive by evening.
- I did find the queen
- I moved the hive to its final location and kept them "locked up" for 48hrs

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Methods- Tarps

- Harder for the bees to make their way into the hive/box
- Queen can fall into the grass- hard to spot
- Cleanup is easy
- Easier to lose your tools



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Methods- Tarps



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Example #2



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Example #2



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Example #2

Gratuitous bee marching video

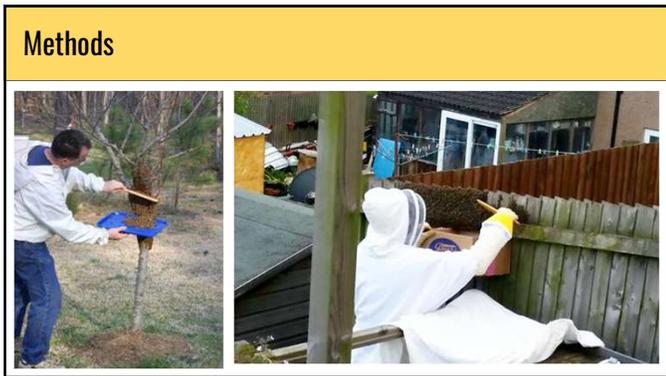


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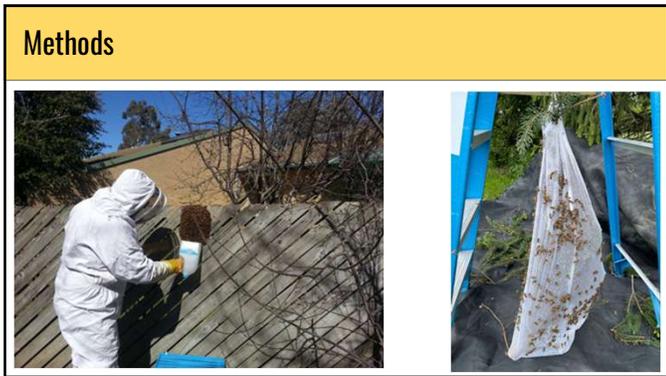
Methods



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Installing a Swarm



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Installing a Swarm

Already in hive box

- Put them in their final intended location
- Keep them locked up for 48hrs*
- Leave them alone
- Feed if necessary

In random box, bucket, bag, etc.

- Find them a home
 - Similar to installing a package
- Don't wait too long to hive them
- Do you have a caged queen?
- Keep them locked up for 48hrs*
- Leave them alone
- Feed if necessary



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Swarm Traps



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Swarm Traps



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Swarm Traps



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Trap Design

- ~40L in volume
- Entrance ~2 in² (1-5/8" dia)
- Entrance low on box
- Space behind entrance
- "Accent" opening location
- Keep the birds out
- Removable frames*
- Removable lid
- Mounting method



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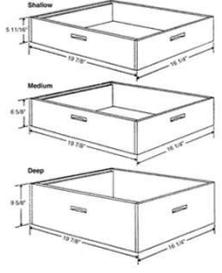
Trap Design

40L in volume



10 Frame Frame **8**

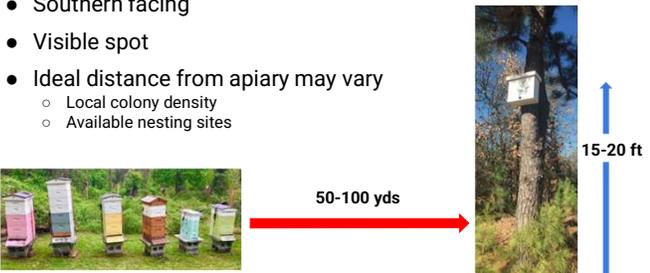
- **63%**
54%
- **74%**
62%



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Location

- Southern facing
- Visible spot
- Ideal distance from apiary may vary
 - Local colony density
 - Available nesting sites



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Trap Mounting



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Trap Mounting



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Bait- Swarm Lures



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Luring Swarms



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Hiving a Trapped Swarm

- In most cases, a trapped swarm is like an established colony
- Relocate 3+ miles from original location



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Hiving a Trapped Swarm

- Hive body swarm traps



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Hiving a Trapped Swarm

- Removable frame swarm traps



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Hiving a Trapped Swarm

- Empty cavity swarm traps



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We're Done!



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Questions?



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PHOTO OF THE WEEK, WHAT IS THIS?



Photo provided by: Michelle McWilliams

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Good nutrition – helps to build strong immunity
- Strong population – helps to lower stress loads
- Maintain sterile cleaning tools
- Reduce external stressors:
 - Maintain low varroa mite counts
 - Low moisture exposure
 - Minimize prolonged confinement
 - Minimize pesticide exposure
- No treatment for these viruses

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HAVE QUESTIONS:

Questions submitted through google forms.

<https://forms.gle/SoQGKsXbi4W7AHgC9>



Keystobees.com/blog



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NEXT MEETING 5/14/25

• **TOPIC – Why Colonies Swarm, Signs of Swarming, & How to Reduce Swarming**

• **RECORDED MEETING ACCESS**

• <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1B1fcQxLzWnRq6lyo9RX480hXtmfuXP2wiquEXMTglo/edit?usp=sharing>