



## **Feral Bee Capture & Swarm Boxes**

# Objectives

- Discuss feral honey bees.
  - Risk vs Rewards
- Cut out overview
  - Challenges
- Discuss trapping methods.



Disclaimer – There is much anecdotal information in this type of class as it is a culmination of best practices.



# Feral Honey Bees

A feral honey bee hive is any hive not tended to by humans. *Apis mellifera* is domesticated – there are no wild honey bees in the Americas.

## Risks

vs.

## Rewards

- Communicable Disease
- Ambiguous Sources
- Pests
- Absconders
- Hazardous locations.
  - In toxic places.
  - In high places.
  - Protip: Don't break your neck.

- Chicks dig free bees.
- Local acclimated bees.
- Less chance of supercedure.
- Faster 'turn around' time than a package.
- Joy of the hunt.



# Swarms!

- They come in different sizes.
- Locations.
- Why would they set up there?
- They tend to like high up.
- Some have multiple queens.
- Mated vs virgin swarms.
- What do you need to catch them?
  - A way to get to them.
  - Something to put them in.
  - Patience.
  - Helps: Bait.





# Cut Outs In A Nutshell

A cutout is not a swarm. They are established colonies that are removed.

Things to consider...

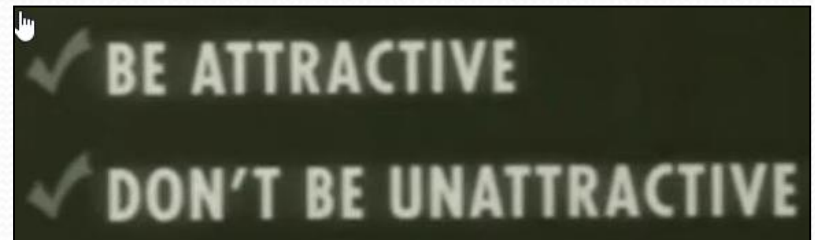
- Should I even be doing this?
  - Can I get to them with minimal destruction?
  - Opening the structure.
  - Making a mess.
  - Unintentionally killing queen.
  - Bees won't like it.
  - Beware foundationless frames.
- Do I have the gear and set up?
  - It's all in the prep – boxes, foundationless frames with rubber bands added, bait, ladder, tools, smoker, etc.
  - Watch some cut outs on YouTube. JPBeeman is a great resource.
  - Protip: Cordless sawzaw is a great tool to have.



# The Art of the Swarm Box

- Location, location, location.
  - Get permission or be smart.
  - 10' off the ground.
  - Stable.
  - Sun over shade.
- Space, space, space.
- Bees love where bees have been.
  - Old boxes/old comb.
  - Swarm sites.

Simple Rules:





# Bait

Why does it work? Good ol' Nasonov!

- That good ol' bee smell.
  - Old hives.
  - Old frames.
  - Old comb.
- Food never hurt!
  - Boardman Feeder
  - Some honey.
- Lemongrass Oil
  - A little dab will do ya'! A drop on top of 3 frames and a couple at entrance.
- Bait Products
  - Swarm Commander



**“But, I am not to be caught with such poor bait. I’m a big fish, I am.” –Maxim Gorky**



# Examples





# Construction & Transport Fundamentals

- Are you going with frames inside, or are you focused on letting them go wild in your box?
- Can you attach/detach this thing safely on a ladder?
- Is it level enough?
- Be able to seal it.
- Make it one piece.
- Will this thing survive high winds?
- Can bees overwinter in this thing?
- Proper material? Protip: Beware of rotten wood and consider 'patching' old hives before using them.
- How are you transporting them? Protip: Grab 'em at night and be careful where you store them during transport.





# Okay... When do I take them?

- If you see bees, it doesn't mean you have settlers. Observe dusk and at morning. Are they bringing pollen?
  - They could be scouts.
  - They could be robbers.
  - They could just be curious bees.
- Let them settle for 10 days. Less likely to abscond.
- Avoid midday. So many are out foraging.
- Avoid letting them overwinter. Try and check on the boxes at most every 20 days.
- A little smoke will coerce bearding bees in.



# Additional Tools

- Ratchet Straps - A good set of ratchet straps is priceless. You may use them rarely. I'd recommend one set for every hive you own in case of high winds or transport.
- A drill is useful. I screw closed my boxes and also use the drill to help hang them.
- A dolly can be helpful once you have the hive into something you can move. I've had hives deep in forests without great vehicle access. Save your back.
- A good nylon/poly rope to lower things down.
- A sturdy ladder and a friend to hold it. Protip: Make friends.
- A good suit is priceless. A single piece with a good pair of boots and gloves. Bees don't like you cutting into their hives, moving their hives, being shaken from branches, loud tools, being transported, and especially hate being bothered at night.



Questions?

