



What's the **BUZZ** in Lower Westchester?

Recently there has been a lot of press about honeybees. *Apis mellifera* which is the scientific name for honeybees, have been having tremendous problems along with other pollinators. This has been a multifactorial problem involving pesticides, habitat loss, globalization, pathogens, changing

beekeeping practices, and malnutrition. The effect of these is often referred to as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD).

Four of the last six years beekeepers in the US have had over a 40% loss of colonies due to the above cited factors. Why does this matter? For beekeepers it is not a sustainable situation to replace 40% of your livestock every year. For the public, we are very dependent on honeybees for our food. Every third bite of food has had a honeybee involved in growing it. This applies to meat as well since the food for animals comes from plants that honeybees pollinate.

I have been keeping bees since 1996 starting in Minnesota and continuing in Yonkers, NY since 2002. In 2010 when NYC changed the law and allowed honeybees to be kept in NYC, I started keeping bees on the roof of the Osborne Association in the Bronx. In 2017, I formed a beekeeping club in Yonkers. We have about 30 members and about 12 beekeepers. We share stories about our bees, management practices and classes we take.

In late 2017, Andrus on Hudson senior care center asked me to help them install honeybees there. They raised the money



by donation to buy the bees and equipment. The day finally arrived when it was time to install the bees in their brand new homes. Fortuitously the children from the Little Leaf pre-K and the Hudson Lab K-12 were outdoors and observed the installation from a safe distance.

As I showed the students a honeycomb frame, one boy immediately pointed out the queen cell on the frame (see photo). He then pointed to the beebread in the cells on the frame. He explained how the bees bring in pollen and ferment it to make the beebread that the bees feed it to their larvae as a protein source. Often when I visit Andrus to tend the bees the children will stop by and ask questions.

In exchange for helping at Andrus, they have allowed our club to have a community apiary there. This has been very helpful for doing more advanced beekeeping such as moving splits and extra hives there. When we move hives we have to move less than two feet or more than 2 miles. Otherwise the field bees will return to the original location.

This year The Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers received a donation from the Hudson River Audubon Society for the preserve to start two hives. One of these is an indoor observation hive where visitors can watch the bees work in the hive through a clear plastic wall.

If you want to start keeping bees, I would suggest getting involved with a local bee keeping club. You can contact me at srijan@optonline.net about beekeeping in lower Westchester County. First, check your local ordinances about whether bees are regulated or prohibited in your town.

What if you understand the plight of the bees but don't want 60,000 bees per hive in your backyard? You can grow bee friendly forage in your yard. Check out http://www.honeybeelives.org/resources_3_3672251067.pdf for a list of bee friendly plants that grow in the northeast. Also a dog bowl filled with pea gravel and water makes a great watering station for bees.

I have to warn you though. If you start working with honeybees, they will get in your heart.

Give Bees a Chance!