

by **JAMIE ELLIS**

Gahan Endowed Associate Professor of Entomology
Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab
Dept of Entomology and Nematology
University of Florida

jdellis@ufl.edu

www.ufhoneybee.com

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Now That You Are a Beekeeper...

The basic fundamentals of beekeeping are similar everywhere I go. Sure, the beekeepers are different, sometimes quite different. However, *Apis mellifera* (the western honey bee we all keep) has a reasonably similar biology everywhere it is found. Correspondingly, management strategies often differ in size and scope, but usually are aimed at accomplishing the same thing: producing strong, healthy, productive colonies.

Similarly, the “experience” of beekeeping is somewhat uniform for most beekeepers. By this I mean that most of us will experience some of the same events while we keep bees. I was thinking about this in some detail as I prepared to write another article for my column. I came to the conclusion that it would be fun to write a “Now that you are a beekeeper...” article in which I could reflect on some of these shared experiences. I hope you enjoy.

1) You are going to get stung if you spend any amount of time working with honey bees (Figure 1). The general public, for the most part, has an aversion to bee stings. People will go to great lengths to avoid getting stung. We all know this to be true. I know, also, that a lot of new beekeepers don the bee suit, gloves, bee veil, etc., all with the hope that they will never have to experience the sharp pain of a bee sting. I became a beekeeper when I was 12. I was interested in becoming a beekeeper as early as 8. However, beekeeping does not run in my family. Thus, my parents (members of the general public) were reluctant to get me a bee hive because they were worried about me getting stung. I remember when I finally got my first hive. It was a fantastic experience. I got them at the end of the week and was scheduled to work them for the first

time Sunday evening, after church. All I had to do was feed them; but somehow, I managed to get stung *through* a glove during my first visit to my first colony. I was happy to have it over and also happy that it was not nearly as bad as I thought it would be (much like the realization that a shot is not all that bad once you actually have it). I remember going back to my mom (my



Figure 1. You will get stung.
Photograph: Mike Bentley.

dad had been working the colony with me) afterward and, with great pride, announcing that I had been stung. My mom panicked and said, “You did not tell me that you were going to get stung.” I replied, as any curt, 12-year-old boy would: “Mom, beekeepers get stung, it is just the way it is.” That is my message to you. You are a beekeeper. You will get stung. If you keep bees for any length of time, you may even be stung a lot. I have been stung tens-of-thousands of times. I will tell you what I was told about stings: stings build character. We all could use a bit more character.

2) Your smoker will go out while working a colony, usually at the worst possible time (Figure 2). Smoker lighting is an art, a simple one, but an art nonetheless. I have been lighting smokers for 27 years so it is a bit second nature to me at this point. However, I remember, with not-so-great-fondness, many of the times that my smoker failed to stay lit while working a colony. The key to smoker lighting is remembering that fire needs two things to flourish: fuel and oxygen. Most beekeepers get the fuel part right, packing their smokers tight with fuel. However, many fail miserably with the oxygen part, this because they over-pack the smoker too soon in the lighting process, essentially smothering the fire. An



Figure 2. Your smoker will go out when you most need it. Photograph: Amanda Ellis.

improperly lit smoker is doomed to go out when you are working your meanest colony. You do not really want that to happen.

3) People are going to call you crazy when they find out you are a beekeeper, usually behind your back, but sometimes to your face. News flash: they are right. Think about it. Most humans on the planet are scared senseless of stinging insects, almost to the point of amusement to those of us who have conquered that fear. Not beekeepers though; we are fearless and jump straight into a beekeeping hobby, craft, or job that many would consider among the scariest things they could do. That makes us different, at least a little. A commercial that once played on TV reminds me of beekeepers. In that commercial, a city was on fire, being bombed to rubble, etc. The city's citizens were running from that city in shock, fear, and disarray. Enter the U.S. military.



Figure 3. Your bees will visit your neighbor's birdbath. Photograph: Jamie Ellis.

These soldiers were running against the grain, going right into the heat to attempt to address the seemingly hopeless situation. That is our craft. We are the military personnel in this analogy. While the rest of the world runs from bees, we run right into the heart of the storm...and we even enjoy doing it. Does that make us crazy? Your friends and neighbors will think that it does.

4) Someone will complain about your bees. Honey bee colonies have a remarkable foraging radius. A single honey bee can fly 2 – 5 miles (3.2 – 8 km) from its nest. As you know, the area of a circle can be calculated with the formula πr^2 . This means that a honey bee colony is capable of foraging

in an area that is 12.6 – 78.5 miles² (32.2 – 201 km²). I did all of that math to convince you that your bees are going to be all up in your neighbors' business, and then some. Your bees will be collecting water from every swimming pool, birdbath (Figure 3), and leaky faucet in the neighborhood. They may be visiting the local school's trash cans full of empty soda cans in fall. They may be at the fairgrounds, collecting sugar from the funnel cake booth. Worse yet, they may sting your neighbors when they are cutting their grass nearby. They may sting that little yelper your neighbor calls a dog. They may even sting your spouse, your kids, or your pets. At some point, someone, somewhere, will complain about your bees. It is part of being a beekeeper. The funny thing is that sometimes, a person only needs to know the bees are there before they complain, whether or not the bees are being a pest. Some people are complainers by nature. Get ready. ☺

5) You are going to want to be around other beekeepers (Figure 4). There is this interesting myth that floats around the beekeeping industry. The myth goes something like this: "Beekeepers are solitary individuals; they like to be alone." I speak at beekeeper meetings all around the world and I can suggest that this statement is patently false. Beekeepers like to be around other like-minded individuals. So, it is ok if you get the urge to go to beekeeper meetings, both large and small. It is ok if you join beekeeper chat rooms, list serves, etc. You will want to be around other beekeepers. Some will disagree and say that commercial beekeepers would much rather be alone. Perhaps they like to work alone, but they do not like to be alone. Test this by shadowing a commercial beekeeper for one day. Their phones ring non-stop, with all of the calls being placed by other commercial beekeepers who want to chat about the latest



Figure 4. You are going to want to be around other beekeepers. Photograph: University of Florida.

treatments, the best forage sites, the price of honey, where in California they will put their bees, etc. It generally is true that humans are social creatures. Beekeepers, like the bees they keep, are the same.

6) Another beekeeper will tell you to do something to your bees that is flat out crazy. This point naturally follows the preceding one. One of the few drawbacks of hanging around other people is that sometimes they give you bad advice, advice that you may be compelled to follow. The internet is full of bad beekeeping advice, as can be books, list serves, and even others (sometimes myself included). It is not always possible to distinguish between bad and good advice. Sometimes, we get bad advice from people we otherwise feel are reliable, as many beginner beekeepers with mentors can attest. I can provide a personal example of this. I attribute much of what I learned initially about beekeeping to my mentor. I did everything he told me to do, EVERYTHING. He told me one time that I can collect swarms by shooting into the swarm with a shotgun. His reasoning went something like this. When swarming, a queen is first to land on a tree limb and all of the other bees coalesce around her. In his scenario, the queen would be closest to the limb, toward the top of the swarm. He said that if I ever saw this, I should shoot the swarm with a 12-gauge shotgun set on full choke (which means the resulting shot will make a small or concentrated pattern), aiming at the part of the swarm where the queen is most likely to be. That way, I would kill the queen and the swarm would return to its colony, without me losing the bees. As a 12-year-old, new beekeeper, I thought this was sage advice, especially as a 12-year-old boy who liked to shoot things. Thus, when I saw my first swarm, I confidently marched to my grandfather's house, grabbed his 12 gauge, returned to the swarm, loaded the gun, and proceeded to shoot the swarm... three times in fact. Why three times? After each time I shot the swarm, the swarm fell from the tree limb, regained its composure, and re-formed on the limb from which it fell. When this happened, I assumed I shot the wrong spot, thus missing the queen. I shot the swarm again, only to have the same thing happen. I shot that swarm three times before it donned on me that this was not working and that it likely never would. Sometimes you get bad advice. Do not panic when you act on this advice, only to find out later that it was crazy advice from the start. Just make a point to do better next time. [As a follow-up to my swarm shooting story: I since have been able to use a shotgun to recover swarms. I do not shoot the swarm. Rather, I shoot the limb on which the swarm has settled. When a swarm is high in a tree, you can shoot the limb on which it is settled and it, often, will re-form on the limb below it. Then, you shoot that limb. You can use this technique to "walk" your swarm down the tree until you can reach it. Did I just give you bad advice? It is up to you to decide. ☺]

7) You will employ a management strategy on your bees that will not work. Have you ever heard someone say "this works for me; I do not know why it does not work for you?" At some point, you are going to employ a common management strategy that will not give you the desired result. You may feed a colony that is weak, hoping to save it, only to have it die. You may apply a *Varroa* treatment that fails to give the desired result. You may super your colonies appropriately, only to have the bees not fill them with honey. Any number of things can happen. Most of the common management techniques we use as beekeepers *usually* work; this does not mean they *always* work. What is the lesson here? Keep trying and/or adopt a different strategy.

8) You will spend money on beekeeping, sometimes a lot of money. Beekeeping can be an expensive hobby or full time job. Hives cost money. Bees cost money. Bee suits cost money. Medications cost money. Extraction equipment costs money. Queens cost money. I could go on and on. The point is that this is not a craft for the financially faint-of-heart. It takes money to keep bees strong, healthy, and happy. It takes *more* money to keep *more* bees strong, healthy and happy. You may have discovered already that beekeeping is addictive. Along with the desire for more bees comes the need for more equipment, thus increasing the cost. All that said, I like to think that spending money on bees is making an investment in our *own* happiness and health, not to mention the health of our environment and planet. The same is not true for all hobbies or jobs.

9) Some of your colonies will fail to make honey. One of the things that saddens me most is the new beekeeper who thought that bees make honey all the time, and copious amounts of it to boot, only to find out that they do not. The idea that you can put a colony of bees in your yard and the bees jar the honey themselves, delivering it to your

front door is a fantasy. Sometimes a colony fails to make honey. This could be for any number of reasons. Perhaps they were not healthy. Maybe the area is not a good honey production area (like where I live). Maybe they swarmed right before the honey flow. Perhaps there was a cold snap right when the buds opened, killing the buds. I once believed that bees could make honey everywhere they were placed and that they would do it every year. I now know that not to be the case.

10) Your colony(ies) will swarm. Swarming is colony-level reproduction. It is not a honey bee colony's goal in life to make a strong colony. Instead, honey bee colonies desire to make more colonies via the process we call swarming. As you are fully aware, reproduction is among the strongest drives in organisms. Thus, your colony wants to swarm more than it wants to do almost anything else. In fact, I would argue that nearly everything a colony does the rest of the year is preparation for issuing a swarm the following spring. Of course, there are many ways to "control" swarming. Yet, most of the methods are management heavy. Even then, the occasional colony will find a way to swarm. I am telling you this so that you will not be dismayed when (1) you knew you should control swarming, (2) you worked very hard to do it, and (3) a swarm flies over your head when you are out cutting grass (which happened to me a few years ago). Colonies want to reproduce; they want to swarm. They go to great lengths to make it happen. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the bees will win.

11) You will kill a queen (Figure 5). All beekeepers are aware that colonies should be worked slowly and methodically, both in an attempt to keep the bees calm and to limit damage to the bees or their nest. Working colonies slowly and with purpose also minimizes the chance that you will damage the queen. Despite this, queens occasionally drop from the frame onto the ground dur-



Figure 5. You are going to kill a queen. Photograph: Mike Bentley.

ing hive inspection, get squished when you reassemble the hive, or get “rolled,” the latter being a beekeeper term that describes a queen being damaged when taking out a frame from or replacing it into the hive. I have killed or lost my share of queens over the years. Do not panic when this happens to you. Colonies are pretty good at fixing the messes we create for them.

12) You will need to feed your bees (Figure 6). Ok, so I suspect that this comment will ruffle some feathers. I know there are the purists among us who say that feeding bees is not necessary and that we should always leave enough honey behind for the bees. I agree with parts of that statement. I agree that we *should not have* to feed our bees. In a perfect world, all of the places we put our bees will overflow with nectar, so much in fact that the bees will make plenty of honey for themselves and even more for us. I also agree that we should leave enough honey behind for the bees, given that honey is the fuel that keeps the colony going. All that said, the world is not a perfect place and sometimes colonies starve. I submit to you “Exhibit A” in my defense of the preceding statement: my own apiary. I live in an area where nectar trickles, usually two times a year. My bees forage on wild cherry in February and March. In the best years, they can produce about a medium super’s worth of honey. The honey is not table grade (i.e. you would not want to put it on a biscuit) so I leave it for the bees. That super barely gets them to August, which is when Spanish needle blooms. As with wild cherry, the bees produce a low quality honey from Spanish needle, and about another medium super’s worth. This gets them to the following February, when wild cherry blooms again. Twice since I have lived in Florida, the wild cherry bloomed on time in late February, only to be followed by a few nights of freezing temperatures that killed all of the blooms. My bees made nothing



Figure 6. You will have to feed your bees, at least at some point. Photograph: Jamie Ellis.

in spring. I had to feed them to get them to make it to fall, when Spanish needle provided what they needed to survive winter. I share this long story to note that feeding bees is something all beekeepers have to do at some point. We are working with a living creature, often at densities that are not natural (i.e. a lot of colonies kept in the same place), in an environment where they are not native. Sometimes, we just have to feed them.

13) Extracted honey gets everywhere, EVERYWHERE. Honey is fun to produce. Some of my favorite childhood memories come from my time in my grandfather’s dairy barn, extracting the honey that my bees (and I) worked so hard to create. Carelessness during this process will teach you that it only takes a little bit of spilt honey to coat nearly everything in the room.

14) You will break a jar of honey. I thought this shared beekeeper experience follows the preceding one nicely. Honey bees make honey. Honey needs to be extracted. Extracted honey needs to be bottled. Some jars are made of glass. People drop glass honey jars. Do you see the logical progression? Of course, breaking a jar of honey is the same as throwing money out of the window. However, it is inevitable. Just remember: there is no use in crying over spilt milk, err, I mean honey.

15) You are going to lose your hive tool (Figure 7). Hive tools, to me, are the single most important tool that a beekeeper owns. The typical beekeeper will find himself/herself using hive tools to do things that they never imaged doing with the tool. Years ago, my wife wrote an article for the *American Bee Journal* about the various uses of a hive tool. I forget now how many uses she noted, but it certainly illustrates the point that they are indispensable to the beekeeper, almost like a third arm. They are so important to the beekeeper that every beekeeper should own more than one hive tool. Why? It is simple: beekeepers lose hive tools. Hive tools are small, inconspicuous, and super easy to lose. I am fortunate enough to still have (and use) the same hive tool I bought as a 12-year-old. That makes me the only beekeeper I know keeping bees longer than 5 years to still have the same hive tool. I jokingly point out to my team at my lab that hive tools are the item I have to purchase most since so many of them lose the tools so often. I also jokingly think that future archeologists are going to be able to identify nearly every apiary site ever used by beekeepers in the 20th and 21st centuries. Why? Because there will be a hive tool or six left in the ground nearly everywhere bees have been kept. Hive tools are cheap. Buy lots of them. You will need them.

16) You are the person in your sphere of influence who will get all of the swarm calls. Beekeeping was not particularly popular when I was growing up, certainly not as popular as it is today. In fact, I grew up in an area generally devoid of beekeepers. I did not know any other beekeepers after my mentor died when I was 13. As a result of

this, I was the resident “bee expert”. Being a beekeeper is something that everyone quickly seems to know. Rumors of your involvement with bees will spread like wildfire. Along with that fame comes the burden that everyone will call upon you when they have bees in their chimney, in their walls, a swarm in their garden, etc. You will have to decide early on if you plan to offer bee removal services for your friends and neighbors. I happen to have great memories of providing this service for friends-of-the-family when I was a kid. However, providing that service is not for everyone. I will try to entice you into providing it by noting that bee removal specialists are a lot like what the public thinks superman is. There is a perilous situation (or perceived perilous by the public) – a swarm of bees. There are the scared victims (the homeowners). There is the unassuming member of the public who happens to be a beekeeper (you). But wait! The unassuming beekeeper goes into his/her truck an ordinary man/woman (much like Clark Kent goes into the phone booth) and comes out fully clothed in a bee suit (much like Superman). With an air of confidence, the beekeeper goes directly to the problem, making quick work of the colony (hopefully, in a manner in which the bees are spared), and eliciting accolades from the adoring public. The beekeeper in this short story is you. Are you up to the task?

17) Someone is going to want you to be their mentor. Occasionally, you will discover that there is someone out there who is just as strange as you are. That person, upon finding out you are a beekeeper, will want you to teach them the ancient techniques used in the craft. They want to be a beekeeper, and they want you to be the one who teaches them. This person may come to you because they want their garden pollinated. They may come to you because they heard bees are dying and they want to help. For whatever reason, they have chosen you



Figure 7. You will lose your hive tool. Photograph: Jamie Ellis.

to impart beekeeping-related knowledge on them. I owe a lot to those who have mentored me. I try to pay it forward by helping others. I think one of the best things we can do as beekeepers is ensure another generation of people interested in the welfare and culture of honey bees. Try being a mentor. You might just like it. I will note that being a mentor comes with a fair warning: your mentee(s) will want a lot of your time.

18) Someone is going to want your bees to pollinate their garden, fruit trees, or crops (Figure 8). A lot, maybe most, beekeepers get into the craft for the purposes of honey production. This does not mean most colonies are used to produce honey (in fact, they are not – most are used for crop pollination). Instead, most beekeepers are hobbyists/sideliners and most of these individuals keep bees for the purpose of honey production. Even still, your friends, family, and neighbors will discover that you have bees and want you to bring your bees to their place to provide pollination services for their plants. This same thing happened to me when I was young. A local pharmacist grew blueberries on his property and he wanted my bees to be placed near his plants so that they would be pollinated adequately. I provided him 1-2 colonies each year at \$40 a colony. I enjoyed doing this, but it is not for everyone. It behooves all beekeepers to have at least a remedial knowledge of crop pollination given that most beekeepers will be asked to use their bees to provide pollination services.

19) People are going to give you A LOT of bee paraphernalia (Figure 9). This WILL happen. People will discover that you are a beekeeper quickly. They, then, will “think of you” when they see a towel that has hexagons on it, a soap that has honey infused into it, a crystal bee pollinating a crystal flower, or a t-shirt that has a bee on it. Heck, someone even gave my wife a pair of panties that had images of bees all over it – just because they knew I was a beekeeper. One of the things that I discovered when I became a beekeeper is that bees, hexagons, honey pots, etc. are used EVERYWHERE, on all types of common goods, trinkets, etc. You men might even know that some urinals have an image of a honey bee on it, toward the bottom. The idea is that this spot represents the place which, when hit, produces the least amount of splatter – go figure. The reason I share all of this is that people will think of you a lot when they see all the items out there that have bees on them, ALL OF THE ITEMS. To make life more interesting, they will not only think about you when they see this stuff, they will *purchase* it for you and expect you to use it. Of course, I am overwhelmed by the generosity of others. It gives me hope that all people have at least some good in them, waiting to be expressed. That said, I was not ready for the onslaught of bee paraphernalia that has found its way into my life just because I am a beekeeper. I do not save a lot of this paraphernalia. Quite frankly, you would be hard pressed to know I was a bee-



Figure 8. You will be asked to provide bees to pollinate someone’s garden or fruit trees. Photograph: University of Florida.

keeper if you walked into my house, unless, I guess, you rummaged through my wife’s underwear drawer.

20) Your bee library is going to grow (Figure 10). As if I have to tell you, honey bees are fascinating and, correspondingly, are featured prominently in books and other sources of literature. When I first became a beekeeper, I could not own enough bee books. In fact, even today I want to own more, much to the chagrin of my wife. All beekeepers I know soon discover that their bee libraries grow continuously, despite agreements with their spouse to slow the growth. I happen to think that this is ok. Humans should be life-long learners. Why not allow your library to expand as your hunger for bee knowledge grows?

21) You are going to want more colonies (Figure 11). I always tell beekeepers that they should start with at least three colonies. I do this for a few simple reasons. First, having a few colonies helps you know when a certain colony is underperforming. You do not seem to notice this when you have only one. Second, you can use the resources of the other colonies to help the struggling colony. It takes me quite an effort to talk people into starting with three colonies. However, it takes considerably more effort to talk them into stopping there once they have them. Many people who become beekeepers simply cannot have enough bees. I like this trait in an individual, but it comes with a few potential drawbacks. First, the beekeeper may



Figure 9. You will be given more bee-themed paraphernalia than you can handle. Photograph: Jamie Ellis.

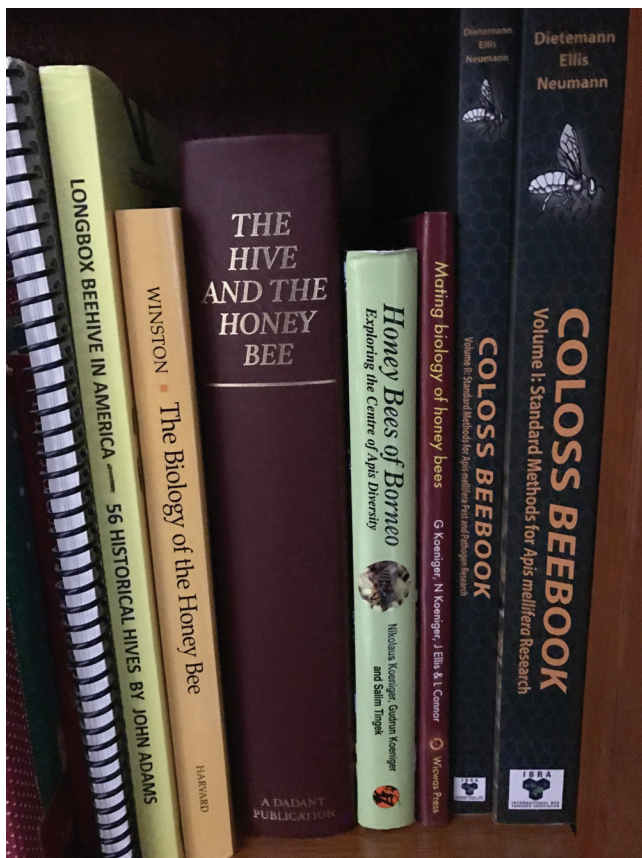


Figure 10.
Your bee library
will expand.
Photograph:
Jamie Ellis.

expand faster than the resources, both time and financial, become available to manage the bees. Second, the beekeeper may get “burned out” with the new craft. Thus, I teach people to start with three, work with them for one-to-two years, and then make a planned, deliberate expansion of their operation. This hunger for more bees is not unique to hobbyists. Many commercial beekeepers have seen their operations grow significantly, especially in recent years.

Having bees makes one want more bees. This, in and of itself, is ok. However, one should plan for the growth prudently, otherwise you might find yourself being “stung” in the end.

22) You are going to become a renaissance man/woman. Successful beekeepers are usually well-rounded individuals. They are botanists, meteorologists, bee veterinarians, carpenters, food processors, accountants, behaviorists, ecologists, and environmental-

ists, all among other types of professionals. Seasoned beekeepers find themselves knowing a little about a lot of fields. For example, beekeepers discover gadget-making skills they did not know they had. Beekeepers tend to develop remarkable problem-solving skills. It becomes an art when these skills translate into gadgets that help make the craft easier, more enjoyable, and the bees healthier. I must get a zillion (well, maybe that is an overestimate) emails a year from beekeepers telling me about the latest gadget they have invented that will save the beekeeping industry. Beekeepers become skilled botanists, knowing when certain plants come into bloom, how much nectar and pollen they produce, what weather conditions favor their growth, etc. Beekeepers, literally, are bee veterinarians. They observe signs of disease in colonies, have to diagnose what they see, and then prescribe and apply a remedy to the hive. Beekeepers become arm-chair politicians given that they have to know the rules governing beekeeping in their area or because they end up lobbying for the craft they enjoy. I, honestly, cannot think of another profession that involves, nay demands, such a well-rounded skill set as that of beekeeping. This is part of what makes beekeeping so special.

23) You are going to be the “go-to” individual for local, regional, and possibly even national press. Bees have featured prominently in the media ever since I started beekeeping 27 years ago. This prominence escalated to an all-time high the past decade. The news media cannot seem to publish enough reports about bees. This, of course, can be a good thing. It draws attention to our craft, helps people realize the importance of bees, etc. However, it also puts us, as beekeepers, in the limelight, where many of us do not want (or sometimes need) to be. As a beekeeper, you will find yourself being solicited for quotes in your local paper, regional nightly news show, etc. Sometimes, like in my case, the requests are overwhelming. I hate to be cynical, but much of what I say to reporters is presented in a manner inconsistent with my intent, which I suppose is what people mean when they say “taken out of context.” Thus, I feel that I have not enjoyed being used in this capacity. I have told a lot of people recently that “fake news” was not born in the months leading up to the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. Instead, it started in fall of 2006, when “colony collapse disorder” (or CCD) was born and we were told cell phones were killing honey bees. It has taken a death spiral ever sense. The good news is that many of the local papers, TV news shows, and radio stations just want to report on the importance of bees. Be prepared to be deemed the local expert. Represent the industry, and the bees, well.

24) Some of your colonies will die. I feel like this one is necessary to include in my list of shared beekeeper experiences because of the common myth that bee colonies can live indefinitely as long as we manage them appropriately. To kill that myth,



Figure 11. You will want more bees. **Photograph:** University of Florida.

I need to remind you that honey bees and the colonies they form are living organisms and that all things that live eventually die. Honey bees are no exception. Many-a-new beekeeper purchases his/her bees early in the year, only for the entire colony to die over the course of the season. This can be disheartening. I remember vividly the first colony I had that I thought was going to die. It was somewhat gut-wrenching at the time, almost like losing a pet. I had to explain to my parents and my grandfather why I thought the colony was declining, what I might be able to do to save it, etc. It is easy to let the death of a colony get you down. However, I tell beekeepers that death, even colony death, is a normal part of life. All beekeepers will experience this with a colony if they work bees long enough. You might be interested to hear that over the last decade, U.S. beekeepers have experienced *gross* colony loss rates that average just under 30% per year. This means that the average beekeeper will lose nearly one-in-three colonies they manage every year. We all lose colonies. This should make us read more, study more, and work harder to minimize these losses over time.

25) Beekeeping will make you happy. With this statement, I do not mean that beekeeping will fulfill you in the way that coming to the correct conclusion of a spiritual search will. Instead, I mean that beekeeping will be an enjoyable endeavor for you. Most former beekeepers I know who quit keeping bees either do so because their loss rates are too high, the hobby is too expensive, or because keeping bees is a lot of work. However, the vast majority of beekeepers look past this and find significant enjoyment in the craft that people have been practicing, in some form, for thousands of year. Twenty-seven years later, I still get excited about opening the lids of my hives, the idea of making honey with my bees, and watching them fly to and from their hives. I still like writing about bees, talking about bees, and thinking about bees. My bees have opened many doors for me throughout the years. They will do the same for you. I think that you will find this a very pleasant experience, if you let it. I am sure many of you will point out that you know plenty of grumpy beekeepers, as do I. The key is, though, that their demeanor almost always changes when they are working their bees. Bees have a way of doing that. So, enjoy working your colonies. Appreciate this most unique craft. Find satisfaction in the experiences that are common to all beekeepers.

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