

Swarm traps



“A swarm in May is worth a bale of hay. A swarm in June is worth a silver spoon.
A swarm in July isn’t worth a fly.”

In Newfoundland, in general, swarm season starts with the dandelion blossom.

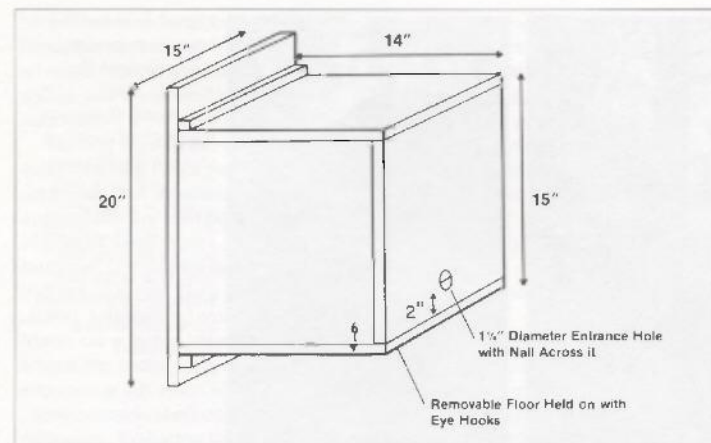
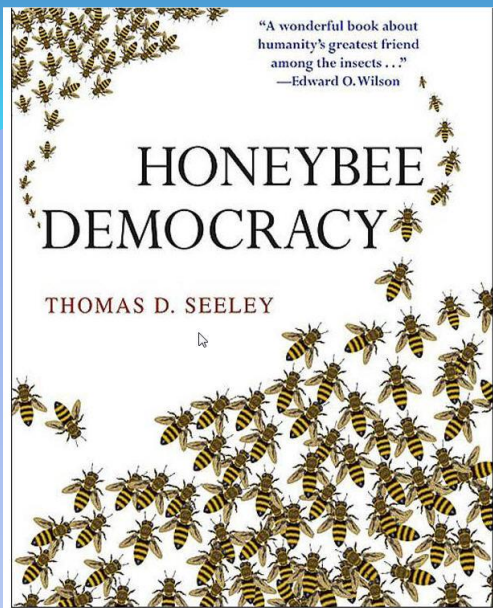


Figure 3. Most of the experimental bait hives were 15-inch (38-cm) cubes made of 5/8-inch (1.6-cm) plywood. We found that the shape of the bait hive is not a major factor but the volume is quite important to honey bee swarms. Our data suggest that a sturdy box about the size of a standard 10-frame Langstroth super is satisfactory.

Bait Hives for Honey Bees, by Seeley, Morse & Nowogrodzki

I base my trap design on research by Tom Seeley and colleagues. Table 3.1 is from *Honeybee Democracy*. The main component is a Langstroth deep which is 42.75 litres in size. Add a bottom board with entrance and an outer cover.

Thanks to Jeff Harris for the lemon grass advice.

TABLE 3.1

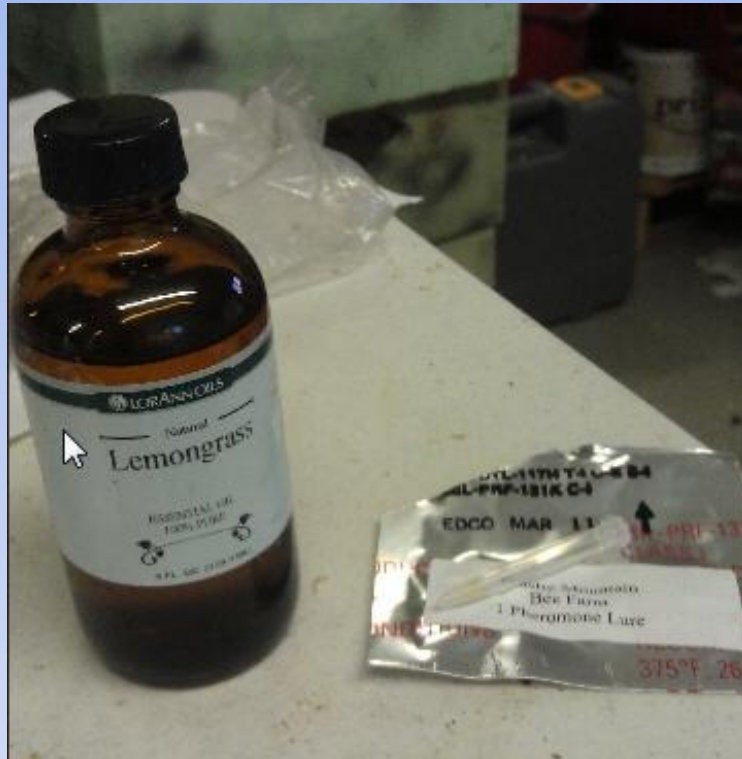
Nest-site properties for which honeybees do or do not show preferences, based on nest-box occupations by swarms.

Property	Preference	Function
Size of entrance	12.5 > 75 cm ²	Colony defense and thermoregulation
Direction of entrance	South > north facing	Colony thermoregulation
Height of entrance	5 > 1 m	Colony defense
Position of entrance	Bottom > top of cavity	Colony thermoregulation
Shape of entrance	Circle = vertical slit	None
Volume of cavity	10 < 40 > 100 liters	Storage space for honey and colony thermoregulation
Combs in cavity	With > without	Economy in nest construction
Shape of cavity	Cubical = tall	None
Dryness of cavity	Wet = dry	Bees can waterproof a leaky cavity
Draftiness of cavity	Drafty = tight	Bees can caulk cracks and holes

A > B, denotes A is preferred to B; A = B denotes no preference between A and B.



This swarm occupied this trap a short time before the photo was taken, abt. 10:00 am, August 14, 2017.



- Bate the trap with a lure (e.g., lemongrass oil), 3 drops on a ball of cotton, and place this in a small ziplock bag. Pin the bag to the inner back wall of the trap. Replenish the oil every three weeks.
- rub propolis and old beeswax over the inside of the trap.
- insert a frame of old drawn comb
- or insert 10 frames with starter strips



I place my traps about 12 feet off the ground, in a tree with some shading, facing South. **Remember, ladder/fall safety is very important!**



I caught a swarm, 8-9 June, 2017. Mike Paterson helped me get it down.



We're opening the lid of the swarm trap to inspect the swarm.



Thousands of honey bees in the trap, drawing comb on the inside of the cover.



Getting the comb off the inside of the cover is difficult. The queen is in there somewhere! I removed and secured the comb in empty frames using large rubber bands. Given the difficulty of this operation, I decided to try 10 frames with starter strips at the start of the 2019 season. This worked! I caught one swarm in a trap that season and they drew comb rapidly from the starter strips and not the inside of the trap cover. Of course, now I have 10 frames of foundation-less comb which requires careful handling.



Ten frames with starter strips, “cemented” into the top bars using beeswax.



Swarm bees draw comb extremely quickly! I recommend transferring swarms to single deep hives ASAP!



Two of my swarm traps, one with a frame with a starter strip.



I discovered a squirrel nest in this trap in the fall. Needless-to-day, it would not have attracted any swarms. Traps should be inspected routinely for squirrels, wasps, and other unwanted guests.



Squirrels made a larger doorway for their nest. I have now screwed sheet metal protection around the entrances. Inspect frequently! Replenish lemongrass oil every 3 weeks.



I watched a swarm fly off in the wrong direction, where it established a nest in this old birch tree. The feral colony died there over the winter. They ignored one of my swarm traps....because it had a wasp nest in it. Honey bees and wasps don't get along!