



A Bee-utifull New Year

A glorious breath of warmth invited our hives out of winter cluster on a blessed New Year's Day. The sight of bee poop in the snow and flights coming forth from the hives are true gifts to a beekeeper. There was joy in the air.

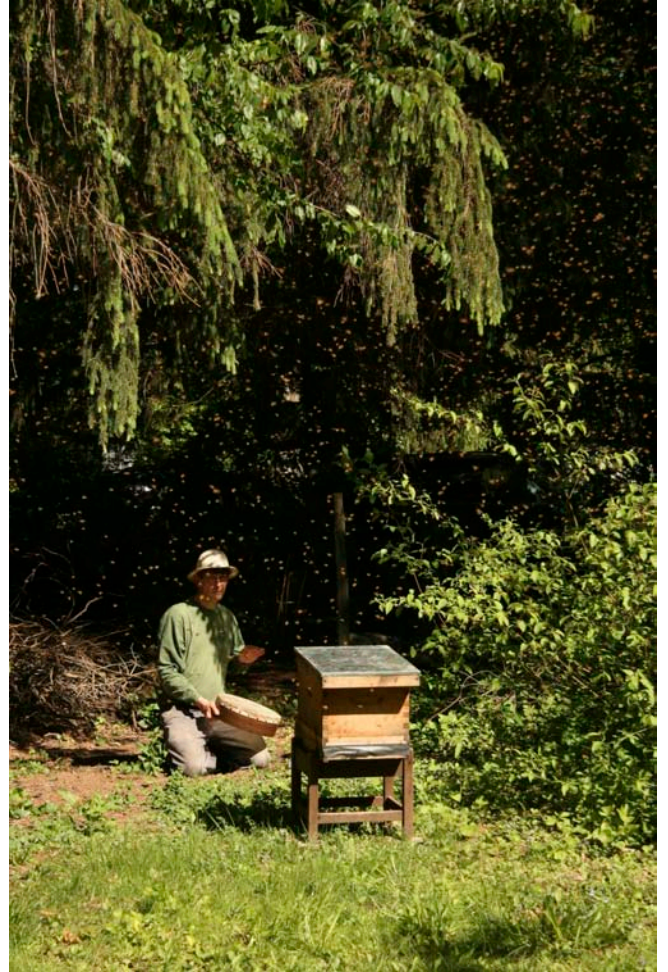
The phone rang, and the emails poured in, as fellow beekeepers and students shared their elating experience of the day. Surely, a life-affirming way to bring in the year.

The extreme Arctic temperatures, rarely seen in these parts, have quieted but hopefully not silenced the hives in the apiary. Sleepless nights, and questioning, are part of this beekeeper's winter. Spring feels too far off.



A row of hives in our apiary. From right: Spikenard Top Bar Hive, with additional ten frame super; tar-paper wrapped standard hive; tree-trunk hive with super on top; five-frame nuc with a Minnesota Hygienic Queen.

Every year of beekeeping brings wisdom and strength, along with the joys and pains. In my own experience, there is nothing that can compare with the sound and feel of a hive, thus I except the vicissitudes that come with it.



Chris drumming a swarm in the HoneybeeLives Apiary.

The adrenaline of the new beekeeper is eventually replaced by an indescribable knowing. If you embrace this experience with knowledge and love, it quells the initial anxiety and expands your world with myriad expressions of life.

This journey expands with outside observations and inward contemplations. It is a beautiful experience to share.

Winter Organic Beekeeping classes:

Rosendale - February 19 & 20 or March 5 & 6

Brooklyn - February 5 & 6

See details later in newsletter or on our website

A Year of Transformation and Growth

2010 brought many changes to the HoneybeeLives Apairy. We decided to open up the property to more sun for the pure life-force it brings, since Honeybees, Honeybee plants and Beekeepers do better in the sun.

In anticipation of this transition of the land, we asked Skye Taylor, a Shamanic Priestess, to come the previous autumn to bless the trees and thank them for their service. A Native American offering of tobacco was sprinkled about the roots that were to be torn out.

In spring, this area of scruff trees along the south and west of the property were pulled out, transforming the energy and opening up the sky to the sun and the stars.



Ed Vanders starting the burn pile from the tree clearing.

The scruff trees aren't missed. However, while we were looking the other way, weeds we have never seen before, and some we have, surfaced and populated the land. We should have borrowed Billiam's goats!

Another, unexpected, transition came with our first Bear hit in late May on Plains Road. We have had to install electric fencing to protect our bees and our equipment.



NYC legalizes beekeeping once again

On March 16th, 2010, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene voted to change the health code (which had been in place since 1999), removing the classification of honeybees as wild and venomous insects.



A public hearing had been held in February, where statements both verbal and written were presented to the advisory board. Grai was one of the beekeepers testifying to the value of honeybees, and their place in our urban lives.

The public and political campaign to legalize beekeeping again in the five boroughs was joyously successful.



Chris working a hive near Tompkins Square.

Good Forage Needed

Honeybees need a wide range of good forage, for both pollen and nectar. Every growing season, and every neighborhood, can offer honeybees a panoply of nutritional elements that can encourage a healthy population of bees and humans.



One of the great things about this is, we humans can experience joy and satisfaction in the process of nurturing the honeybees, with the choices we make in our plantings.

The main nectar flow in most areas of the Northeast is in May and June, when there is usually an abundance of forage available. Then, there are the critical times of early spring and late autumn that pose particular challenges and rewards for the health of the colony.

Early spring plants and trees are valuable for the pollen readily available to feed the young, as the colony builds up from winter losses and approaches the main nectar flow. Autumn forage is incredibly valuable as the strength of the over-wintering bees, and their pantry stores in the hive, have an enormous impact on their survivability into spring.



Some good late-Summer / early-Autumn sources are the simple, white flowered **Garlic Chives** (pictured above), and the beautiful, woody shrub **Blue Mist Spirea *Caryopteris*** (pictured at left). This spirea invites myriad pollinators all partaking from the many clusters of blue flowers. Both these plants do reseed, so if this is a concern clip blossoms in late fall. These are both good for urban plantings, as is **Sweet Autumn Clematis** (pictured below), a delicate white flowering vine that must be trellised or trained up a wall.



NYC has some great trees for many seasons (depending on the neighborhood) however most forage sources are finished by early September, since the city doesn't have Golden Rod or Asters.

This dearth of Autumn forage, accentuated by the extended urban foraging season, should be taken very seriously since bees may end up finding sources you wish they hadn't. In November, the New York Times reported that numerous Brooklyn beekeepers had a ghastly, red sticky substance in their hives instead of the desired "nectar of the gods." Turns out the bees had foraged the detritus from a local maraschino cherry factory!



Ozier Muhammad/The New York Times

David Selig of Red Hook, Brooklyn, a restaurant owner and amateur beekeeper, was disappointed that instead of honey his bees had produced a red concoction more reminiscent of cough syrup.

Queen of the Sun

Director Taggart Siegel (right) and Producer Jon Betz have made a remarkable film in [Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us?](#)



This is a profound, alternative look at the global bee crisis, taking us on a journey through the catastrophic disappearance of bees and the mysterious world of the beehive. This engaging and ultimately uplifting film weaves an unusual and dramatic story of the heartfelt struggles of biodynamic beekeepers, scientists and philosophers from around the world including Michael Pollan, Gunther Hauk and Vandana Shiva. Together they reveal both the problems and the solutions in renewing a culture in balance with nature.



In 1923, Rudolf Steiner, a scientist, philosopher & social innovator, predicted that in 80 to 100 years honeybees would collapse. His prediction has come true with Colony Collapse Disorder where bees are disappearing in mass numbers from their hives with no clear explanation.

On a pilgrimage around the world, 10,000 years of beekeeping is unveiled, highlighting how our historic and sacred relationship with bees has been lost due to highly mechanized industrial practices.

(Text above taken from "Queen of the Sun" press material.)

Queen of the Sun : A personal note: On a torrential spring day, almost two years ago, Taggart and Jon came to the HoneybeeLives Apiary to interview Chris for Queen of the Sun. We sat on the back porch talking for four hours about the state of the world and the honeybees, and sharing our experiences and philosophies.

The rain prohibited them from shooting any footage that day, and their production schedule and flight back to the West Coast precluded their return.

It would have been wonderful to have had Chris' inspiring insights included in their marvelous film, however we are blessed to have been even a small part of helping Taggart and Jon with their work.

Check out their website, and see this film where ever you can.

<http://www.queenofthesun.com>



BBG's Bee Centennial and the Solar One Film Festival

HoneybeeLives participated in two fun public events in NYC this year.

The Brooklyn Botanic Gardens celebrated their centennial year in 2010 with a number of public events. On June 12, they hosted a Bee-Centennial Celebration. We had fun with the masses that passed thru.



Solar One Film Festival, an outdoor venue powered by solar energy along the East River, invited us to participate in a panel discussion and tabling event to accompany their screening of “Vanishing of the Bees.”



An image of Gunther Hauk in his apiary can be seen at the riverside, solar-powered screening of “Vanishing” with our table in foreground.

Beekeeping Adventure on Vieques, PR

HoneybeeLives was invited last winter to help set up a honeybee cooperative on Isla de Vieques, off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico.

This is the island that the US Navy used for bombing training for many decades, until they up and left in 2003 under enormous public pressure. The remaining local economy of the island is depressed, except for an expanding tourist industry, driven by the still remote reaches of the island and the draw of the amazing Bioluminescent Bay.

This sounds idyllic until realizing that the island is home to “Africanized” bees with very aggressive behavior. Hmmmm... well there seemed no other way to get Chris to go on vacation unless it had to do with bees. So, we packed beekeeping gear and snorkels and headed for the airport.



They are certainly not our warm and fuzzy bees. I did the photographing and note taking, as Chris worked with Jorge and Cynthia on hives and extractions to populate more hives that could bring a honey harvest. I learned to retreat to a distance once the head butting became too intense, and just stand still until the bees got tired.



There were approximately nine different massive colonies in this abandoned house in the downtown area of Isabel Segunda, the main town. I see this as one big, colorful bee hive!

The island is a vibrant place for honeybee forage, with a year round supply. The honey we saw was a deep, rich color. The cooperative will harness the natural resources

of the island and support the locals, who can sell their honey to the tourists.



From left: Cynthia Nicholson, Chris Harp, Grai Rice (Pres of UCBA), local beekeeper Jorge and Richard Ronconi (Pres of Catskill Bee Club) taken at Jorge's apiary moments before the Mayor of Vieques, and the entire city council came to discuss the use of municipal land for the bee coop.

The center of the island is where the general population lives, and where we encountered the aggressive bees, that may have emanated from a defunct beekeeper's hives. The West end of the island is where the Navy barracks now stand empty, and the East end is where the actual bombing took place.



The Vieques Historical Society asked our group to extract a colony from a rusty, abandoned train engine, a center piece of the tour at the West-end ruins of a sugar plantation. What we found there were the sweetest, gentlest bees. They were small, industrious and careless about our presence. We convinced them to highlight them on the tours instead of removing them.

If they can put up swarm boxes in the west, and bring those gentle genetics to the middle, they may be able to have a positive influence on the dominant aggressive behavior, making it easier to be a beekeeper in Vieques.

During our extended San Juan Airport layover on the return, I strolled the arrival ramp packed with cars, as a way to escape the air conditioning. I was thoroughly inspired by the sight of honeybees foraging on the white trailing flowers along the cement embankment, separating the traffic from the walkway.

Honeybees at the airport! What a joyous sight, and a positive message that commercial endeavors can still embrace a healthy environment.

Unfortunately, no vacation plans this year!

HoneybeeLives Winter Beekeeping Classes

We encourage beginners to take both days of the winter classes to obtain a broad understanding of the responsibilities and challenges entailed in this undertaking. These classes can be taken on one weekend, or divided into Saturday one weekend and Sunday another weekend. The Sunday class will be helpful to beginning and experienced beekeepers.

Pre-registration is required and pre-payment is requested. Go to www.HoneybeeLives.org for a full description of the classes. To register: email HoneybeeLives @yahoo.com or call #845-255-6113.

WINTER CLASS SCHEDULE

Rosendale, NY

(Hudson Valley)

Sustainable Living Resource Center

Saturday, February 19 10am – 6pm

**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:
Planning a New Hive for Spring**

Sunday, February 20 10am – 6pm

Understanding and Caring for Your Honeybees

Saturday, March 5 10am – 6pm

**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:
Planning a New Hive for Spring**

Sunday, March 6 10am – 6pm

Understanding and Caring for Your Honeybees

A Rosendale class day is \$95 per person, or \$175 for a full weekend.

Brooklyn, NY

The Commons

Saturday, February 5 10am – 6pm

**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:
Planning a New Hive for Spring**

Sunday, February 6 10am – 6pm

Understanding and Caring for Your Honeybees

The Brooklyn class is \$200 for the full weekend.

Chestnut Ridge, NY

(Rockland County)

The Pfeiffer Center

April 23 and 24th

Two-day class

**Organic Beekeeping: Principles and Practices
With Chris Harp, Ross Conrad and Mac Mead**

Please visit www.PfeifferCenter.org for more info on these last two classes, and to register for the PC classes. Their telephone # 845-352-5020 - ext 20



Photo by Matt Petricone for Roll Magazine

We are blessed to be beekeepers.

Thank you for your interest and support of honeybees, and for being a part of our blessings.

Grai St. Clair Rice and Christopher Harp

HoneybeeLives
New Paltz and NYC