Pollination and honey production

BY DAN MAUGHAN
I have been a beekeeper for 5 years

I started with a single hive which I enjoyed very much. I didn’t know it at the time but it was weak and sickly. It did not give me honey. I was afraid of the bees and not knowing better neglected them.

I joined LCBA my second year and took the apprentice class. I purchased 22 packages and collected swarms all summer. By the end of summer I had 39 colonies. I made about 15 gallons of honey.

My third year saw my hives increase to 72. Fifty seven lived to spring and I shipped 56 to California. I made 130 gallons of honey.

I rebuilt all my colonies my fourth year and built up to 121 colonies. By fall I was down to 105 colonies because of the dearth and fall die off. By spring I had 85 nice big colonies that I shipped to California. I made 75 gallons of honey and took the journeyman class.

Last summer I split my hives early and often. I made 250 gallons of honey while splitting most of my hives at least twice. I now have 182 hives.
This was a big swarm

This is a picture of the largest swarm I have caught. Before it filled the brown box hive it hung about 6 feet down and was about 2 foot wide and a good foot deep. The swarm did have more than one queen as I saw two. The swarm filled all 8 boxes. Swarms like these helped me build up my bee numbers quickly during my third year of beekeeping.
So I shipped my bees to California two years ago

But they got stolen!

The thieves were likely Russian-Ukrainians and we had to try and identify our equipment in their beehive chop shop.
And then I rebuilt my apiary.

My boxes and frames are now branded with my name.
I decided last year to follow the bees to the field

This is the bee tarp I bought for interstate travel

It keeps the bees contained while traveling
So we loaded the bees
More loading pictures
California here we come

We had no trouble with the agricultural inspection
We drove to Turlock, 750 miles away

MY BEES SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE PARKING LOT

LOOK AT ALL THE BEE TRUCKS
The next morning we put the bees in the field.

MY BROKER PLACING THE HIVES

MY BROKER AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER
The orchard

JUAN, MY BROKER PLACING MORE HIVES

AN ALMOND TREE UP CLOSE
Here is the farmer who needs the pollination

I think his name was Jim, although it could have been John. All the same, he was nice and very happy to see good hives in his orchard this year.
Juan keeps an area book and here is my page
Treating and feeding bees is critical

MY FRIEND TONY HELPING ME
Mann Lake in Woodland, Ca
The inside of Mann Lake
We shipped from California to eastern Washington

A field with 1000 hives

• My 80 hives
Then on to Yakima to pollinate apples and cherries
This area is just northwest of Yakima
Finally they came home in May

The bees made some very nice honey this year.
I helped take care of Tony and Chichos hives.

Here we are taking off honey.

Tony and Chicho have worked for my dad for several years now, but they sideline bees to supplement their income.
Splits

I made about 200 splits this year. Some of my hives died, having re-queened poorly. Others were sold. Others didn’t re-queen after loosing their queen to age, disease, swarming, or splits. So by August 1st I had about 220 hives. Most of these were strong but some were weak and died as fall approached. By October 1st had 190 strong hives.
My wife had anaphylactic shock

In early August my wife was stung dozens of times.
It almost killed her.
She spent 2 days in the hospital recovering.
She says “stay in the bees Dan.”
Bee stings can also be very expensive.
I moved the bees back to eastern Washington while my wife was recovering.
We placed the bees on a buckwheat field

This allows the bees to build up before winter

They also make a late crop of honey
Treating my hives for mites and diseases.
Finally we brought the bees home for winter
Here are 100 of my hives out in the barn

They will remain here until they go back to almonds in California.
Thank You

The bees are now home where I can get them ready for winter, and almonds in the spring.