

*Ithaca College Apiary*  
**NEWSLETTER**

June 21, 2021



**Updates of the Week:**

**First Honey Harvest! Come help us process the first 2021 honey from our hard working ladies in the Apiary!**

2pm Saturday, June 26

Please RSVP to [aarroyo1@ithaca.edu](mailto:aarroyo1@ithaca.edu) by Thursday, June 24 so we know how many people to expect :) You will get sticky, so wear working clothes!

Most of the Apiary hives are starting to recover from their recent brood break (temporary pause in egg laying after a swarm as the colony raises a new queen). We are seeing lots of new comb and evidence that the hives are either raising virgin queens currently, or have successfully done so and have new brood!

During our most recent inspection we performed several mite tests to check the populations of varroa mites in our apiary. Varroa mites are extremely dangerous to beehives when their population rises too fast before the winter, so keeping tabs on their status in the apiary is important. Jason was thrilled to find that we had practically no varroa mites in our hives! Some hives had one mite per 300 bees, but



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this is a manageable and quite reasonable number considering how huge a problem varroa is in beekeeping.

We are keeping one resource nuc for the first time this year. This is basically a miniature hive with only 5 frames that is used to provide resource frames to give other hives. Ours is doing quite well, and we are already using their frames to support our other colonies. This week we traded a frame of healthy brood from our nuc for a frame of drawn comb from a queenless hive. This way, the queenless hive can raise a young queen from the brood and eggs we gave them and our nuc will have an empty frame to fill that will distract them from swarming!



Three types of comb are seen in this image. The top is capped honey, processed by the bees. The middle is open honeycomb, ready to be filled with nectar or brood. The bottom band is of large drone comb, cells built specifically to raise male bees.

Unfortunately, we also found that one of our hives had a severe wax moth infestation. Their caterpillars are known as “wax worms” and will literally destroy the structure of the hive as they burrow through frames eating honey, bee bread and nectar. They are especially problematic when hives are weak, as they destroy resources and make cleaning impossible by leaving webbing in their path. The webbing protects them, and the bees cannot clean it off the wax rendering it unusable. This particular hive was severely infested and hopelessly queenless with laying workers. It will be humanely euthanized.

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This constant balance of wins and losses seems to be the modern standard of beekeeping. We just have to take the losses in stride and do our best to support the colonies we have.

### **Meet the Menagerie:**

June 17

For the last several weeks I have been furiously trying to identify a pair of nesting birds at the apiary. I am a passionate bird watcher, and while I normally consider myself fairly accurate with bird ID, these birds had me stumped. I first spotted them at the beginning of June, a pair of confident, curious brown birds with long tails and speckled bellies. They are about the size of a blue jay and built a squashed, cozy looking nest high in a crook of the overgrown bush. I immediately began to watch them, wondering what they could possibly be. Too big to be sparrows, too bold to be a thrush, I was completely confused. After getting a good look at the birds I went home a few days later and searched for “brown bird with long tail” and low and behold I found it!

The Apiary is now home to a nesting pair of Brown Thrashers! These beautiful birds are mimics, which explains why I could not separate out their song from the many surrounding Catbirds and Blue Jays. I am beyond excited to watch them raise a family and hope to get to know them better while I’m working!