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# Perry Beekeeping/ApiaryProject

## *Discovering Life Lessons in Nature*

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## **A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A BEE KEEPER IN PERRY'S APIARY REENTRY PROJECT**

### Bee Blog

**Journal Entry— January 31, 2012**



The Perry Vocational Carpentry Class utilized the rough Cyprus lumber donated by Mr. Mack Flake of Chapin, SC. Students are building bee wood ware/hives. Made from Cyprus or Pine, each 10-frame hive body, or “super,” is 20” long, 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ ” wide, and 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ ” deep. Smaller nucleus hives called “nucs” for short, are 20” x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ” x 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ ” , and can hold 3 to 5 frames.



These hives will be used to add to Perry’s current Apiary. The goal is to double Perry’s apiary size from 12 to 24 this year.

In this partnership, donated lumber is used, carpentry class students learn valuable skills and techniques for wood working, and the Perry Apiary Reentry Project gets to expand its hives.



Once finished, the outside of all hive bodies are coated with either white or light pastel colored paint.

**Journal Entry— February 3, 2012**

## *In the Eye of the Swarm*

On February 3rd, I had the opportunity to go out to the Perry Apiary with my fellow peers, and instructors. This was supposed to be a simple feeding run. We had mixed some sugar water to pour into their feeders the day before. We did have a couple of hives that we were worried about though.

After making the long walk from the education building to the garden located behind Dorm 3, we passed through the security gates that led to our destination. I donned the protective gear that I had been provided with: a veil, jacket, and gloves. We had elected not to bring our smoker considering the temperature was only in the fifties.

We went through the *motions* of replenishing the feeders, being extra careful around hive number six, which had displayed unforgiving and super-aggressive tendencies. There was, however, one hive that, (upon further inspection), we realized that we were going to have to open up. Hive number nine had not consumed its food from the last two feedings, and the sugar water was infested with ants.

Because I was the only one properly dressed, I took the initiative, removing the outer cover and top feeder. The instructor, James Chitwood, removed the first frame from the far left of the hive body, and was rewarded with a small swarm of angry bees flitting threateningly about his head and hands. Their demeanor did not improve when he removed the second frame. At this point he instructed everyone except me to back away from the hive, and allowed me to finish the inspection.

Hive tool in hand, I proceeded to frame four, and attempted frame five, when the cluster broke. I found myself caught in a maelstrom of insectile fury. I had kicked in their door, wrecked the house, and let in a draft, and they were going to make sure I knew it. At this point, I was left with two choices: flail around in a panic as if I had just caught fire, or contemplate the finer virtues of stone work while becoming a statue. I elected the latter.

Taking a deep breath— “Chitwood, what do I do now?” I was instructed to calmly put everything back in place as I had found it. He would get no argument from me. I carried this task out to the letter, and walked away intact, and sting free. Thanks to the months of instruction I had gotten from Mr. Bell, and his assistants, I was prepared to handle this situation. *I* now knew that *I* was ready to advance in my studies.

I am currently an instructor in our CBU Bee Keeping class, and I am preparing to take a written certification test from Clemson University. One year from that date, and after a practical test, I will be a certified beekeeper. This is a field that has become not only an interest, but a passion for me. It is something that I can make into a career, and none of it would be possible without the people who have invested in me, and helped me to get to where I am today.

—Jason Sheahan, Program Participant



### **Journal Entry— March 8, 2012**



On March 8<sup>th</sup> 2012, we moved the split with the old queen out to the main apiary. We would later lose this hive, while the split would go on to be healthy, and productive.

A good look at the old queen in the hive that we split.



Notice the attendants that surround her. They will care for her for the duration of their lives. The Queen will live four to five years. During this time, she will never feed herself but be fed by her attendants.



A dusting of powdered sugar is a good organic preventative measure for varroa mites. The bees use their proboscis to clean the powdered sugar off of each other, in effect knocking any mites off their bodies.



*varroa mite*

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