Practical Beekeeping

Transferring colonies of Apis cerana to frame hives

Alejandro C Fajardo and Cleofas R Cervancia, University of Los Baños, Philippines

Following our article 'Simple ways to manage stingless bees' in *BfDJ67* we would like to advise on moving colonies of *Apis cerana*.

Here in the Philippines, wild colonies of the Asian honeybee *Apis cerana* are abundant. Colonies are found in hollow trunks and crevices. They also inhabit man-made structures including cupboards, ceilings, discarded tyres and pots. The transfer of colonies into hives makes management easier, allowing honey and pollen harvesting and crop pollination.

The transfer of wild colonies is not a new technology. However, to prevent absconding we modified the usual practice. First, we do not mount all the combs to the frames. We mount only selected brood combs and those that have a good number of sealed brood and other stages of development.

We found out that not having all the combs mounted on frames enables the bees to ensure the survival of the newly transferred brood. With all the combs well covered by bees, they are much less susceptible to wax moth infestation. Also, fewer combs mean that the bees can easily fix the damaged combs and clean debris from the hive.

Secondly, queens are caged for three days to prevent balling. This is when worker bees surround the queen in a 'ball' and kill her. We observed that the bees have the tendency to ball their queen after transferring, and also sometimes to abscond, which is to abandon the hive and their brood a few hours after being transferred. Caging the queen gives time for the colony to stabilise.

STEP 1 *Locate the nest*

STEP 3 *Clear the work area and install the swarm net*

STEP 2 *Prepare the following materials:*

- *Hive*
- *Smoker*
- *Bee veil*
- *Gloves*
- *Knife*
- *String*
- *Flashlight*
- *Swarm net*
- *Hive tool*
- *Queen Cage*

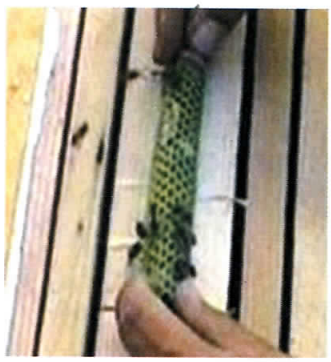
STEP 4
Smoke the nest entrance

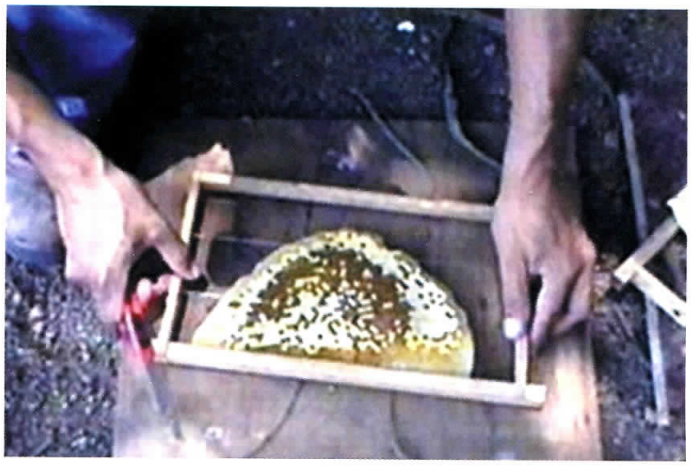
Widen the entrance to expose the combs

STEP 5 *Cut the combs one at a time*

STEP 6 *Shake the comb inside the swarm net. Set aside the comb on top of the inner cover*

STEP 7 *Catch the queen. Insert the cage in between the frames*





STEP 8 *Mount the comb on to the frame. Select only a few brood combs since not all the field bees are captured*

STEP 9 *Place the frames inside the hive in a sequence similar to that in the original nest*

STEP 10 *Insert a dummy-board between the wall and the first frame and a division board after the last frame*

STEP 11 *Scoop the remaining bees into the nest using your bare hands*

STEP 12 *Close the hive, leaving a small gap at the top for ventilation. Cover the entrance*

STEP 13 *Move the hive to the desired location. Feed the bees with equal amounts of sugar and water. Release the queen after three days*

STEP 14 *Monitor the colony once a week. Make sure that there are enough stores. Protect the colony from ants and other pests*

MORE ABOUT ASIAN BEES

8th Asian Apicultural Association Conference

20-24 March 2006, Perth, Australia
Further details kfewster@iinet.net.au

APIS CERANA IN LAOS

Horst Wendorf, DED, Vientiane

Beekeeping in Laos is with *Apis cerana* in log hives. For the first time here, our project started experimenting with *Apis cerana* and top-bar hives. The limited yields and high absconding rate are obstacles. The project has been promoting top-bar hives for many years but without much success. Another problem is how to catch swarms and how to occupy the hives with bees. Usually the rural people take their empty log hives to the fringe of the forest, where many hives become occupied during the bee season. After that they carry the hives back to the village and put them around the storehouses. The problem with this system is that most villages have expanded and little bee forage now remains. At harvest time, all combs are removed and if the queen has survived, the colonies fly back to the forest. It is strange that bees are only occupying the log hives this way. All other experiments, for example, using top-bars on the log hives, and creating 'shaken swarms', have failed. Swarm boxes are not occupied. We continue experimenting with different shapes, entrance holes, heights, baits and so on, and not a single suspended swarm box has been occupied by bees. Why? I have not found any literature regarding this issue and *Apis cerana*. However, we are continuing - thoughts anyone?

A new DVD by Horst Wendorf is reviewed on page 15

LOOK AHEAD LOOK AHEAD

BRAZIL: XVI Congresso Brasileiro de Apicultura (XVI Brazilian Apiculture Congress)
May 2006, CBA, Sergipe
Further details www.se.sebrae.com.br

BULGARIA: Apiculture - Pleven 2005
4-6 February 2005, Pleven
Further details partnersexpo@abv.bg

COLOMBIA: II Congresso Internacional de Propolis (II International Propolis Congress)
31 August - 2 September 2005, Santafe de Bogotá
Further details +57 82 66 9162

IRELAND: APIMONDIA International Apicultural Congress
21-26 August 2005, Dublin *Further details* page 16

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO: 4th Caribbean Beekeeping Congress
Trinidad 2005 *Further details* to be announced

UK: British Beekeepers' Spring Convention
16 April 2005, Stoneleigh Park
Further details www.bbka.org.uk

LEARN AHEAD LEARN AHEAD

Bees *for* **Development** arranges beekeeping study tours and visits world-wide that can last for a few days or for several months. Tailor made to suit requirement and budget. See below for contact address.

GERMANY: Apitherapy Congress, Expo and Course
1-6 April 2005, Passau
Further details www.apitherapy.com

IRELAND: Irish Beekeepers' Summer Course
25-30 July 2005, Gormanston
Further details eosbee@indigo.ie

USA: Organic Beekeeping Workshop
29-30 April, 2005, Chestnut Ridge, NY
Further details www.info@pfeiffercenter.org

If you want notice of your conference, workshop or meeting to be included here send details to **Bees** *for* **Development**, Troy, Monmouth, NP25 4AB, UK. E-mail info@beesfordevelopment.org