

Summertime honey extraction, Traditional Japanese beekeeping, *Apis cerana japonica*.

Today we feature a honey extraction from a very strong colony of native Japanese honeybees. We will remove some boxes from this traditional Japanese beehive, also known as a pile box hive, for honey extraction.

Mostly during summertime, there is no honey to extract since the bees consume the honey stored during the winter season. Newly captured colonies from the spring also do not have a surplus of honey that can be harvested in the summer. However, this colony is very strong, standing at already six boxes high. The lower boxes are used to raise the brood and the top boxes store honey. We will remove the top box for honey extraction. First start by removing the side panel of wood that protects the hive from the Sun. Next, the duckboard is unscrewed then loosens the wax stuck to the duckboard with a putty knife. Inside the hive, we can hear the bees. It sounds like they are shimmering, shaking their bodies in unison to ward off any attackers.

Removing the box

Normally a colony full of honey is usually less aggressive. Use a blower to remove the bees in the top box. In addition, a wire to cut the remaining comb stuck to the duckboard. As suspected, the top box is full of honey. This indicates that there are plenty of nectar resources. Since the colony is large, we will remove two top boxes. After blowing the bees downwards, we use the putty knife to loosen the sides of the box first, just like with the duckboard. Next, use the wire to cut the comb. The box full of honeycombs is placed in a plastic container. The colour of the honey depends on the nectar sources.

Inspecting the hive

The darkening of the comb in the centre is due to the comb first being used to raise brood before being used to store honey.

We then repeats the same steps to remove the second box. The duckboard is screwed back down to the top of the hive and the lid is put back into place. We then take a device called a hive lifter. Since Japanese honeybee colonies prefer to build. Honeycombs downwards, boxes need to be added to the bottom, not top of the hive. The colony is so large that it has extended the comb beyond the bottom box into the hive stand. Several queen cells indicate the colony will swarm very soon

Adding the boxes

We will add two empty boxes to the Colony. Normally there is a wire crossbar to support the comb, but since the colony has already extended the comb beyond the current bottom box, the wire crossbars were removed to accommodate the comb. The final box added will contain the wire crossbars. It is not easy to add empty boxes because there are so many bees, and the comb is sticking out.

The blower is used to remove the bees. Makes some small adjustments to make sure that the boxes line up. Now put the roof back on, blows away the bees on the side of the hive and finally reattaches the sunshade.