

Traditional Japanese honey harvest. *Apis cerana japonica*

Traditional beekeeping involves keeping native Japanese honey bees typically in a frameless pile box hive. First, we need some tools to use for the box removal like a large plastic container, a blower, a wire, hive tool and a screwdriver for the box removal.

A pile box hive is frameless so a wire is used to cut the comb between the boxes. A screwdriver is needed to remove the screws holding down the duckboard on top of the hive and to secure the new duckboard down after extraction. The first thing to do is to remove the rope securing down the roof of the hive. These boards attach to the side of the hive provides some much needed shade to the colony since it can get quite hot, then remove the box. A tip for getting the bees to move down to the lower boxes is tapping the top of the hive gently. The duckboard is secured to the hive at each corner and needs to be unscrewed. The bees have built honeycomb attached to the duck board.

Detaching the box

We use the hive tool to detach it, first starts with the ends of the slats carefully loosening each one after loosening the ends, it's easier to slide the hive tool under the duck board. If the duck board is lifted before it is properly detached from the honeycomb, there is a chance that the honeycomb below will become damaged. After freeing the outer edge of the duck board with the hive tool, the wire can be inserted under the duck board to finish cutting the honeycomb attached to it. The smell of the freshly cut honeycomb attracts the honeybees.

More procedure

To get them to move run the blower in between the sections of honeycomb to remove as many bees as possible. A bit more topping on the sides of the top box creates vibration that encourages the bees to move downward. Next, remove the top box by first inserting the hive tool at the corner, this makes it easier to loosen it. Just like with the duckboard removal, slide the hive tool horizontally around the full perimeter of the box. Now that the edges of the comb have been cut with the hive tool. The remaining attached comb can be cut with the wire. As you cut the comb with the wire, continue to slide the hive tool along with it.

After detaching

Now prepare the large plastic container. There is a wire stand inside the plastic container to set the wooden box containing the comb. That way the honey drips down to the bottom of the plastic container instead of making the wooden box sticky. A box of honeycomb weighs around five kilograms. Freshly cut honeycomb draw the attention of some bees hence quickly place the lid over the box. It's important to leave enough honey for the bees to avoid over harvesting.

Closing

The previous duck board is covered in beeswax, so we will attach the clean one to the top of the hive. We slowly slides the duckboard into place from the side. This

helps to avoid accidentally crushing any bees. Now that the duck board has been slid into place, it can be secured with some screws. The darker section of honey is the honey that was stored from last winter and the lighter coloured honey is from the spring. Different flowers bloom throughout the year and the different nectar collected contributes to the variation in honey colour.