



STAHLMAN

BEEKEEPING NOTES

FOR 2025

Published by Dana Stahlman Raleigh, North Carolina

Published free as a public service to anyone interested in honeybees. Email me to be added to my mailing list. stahlmanapiaries@aol.com

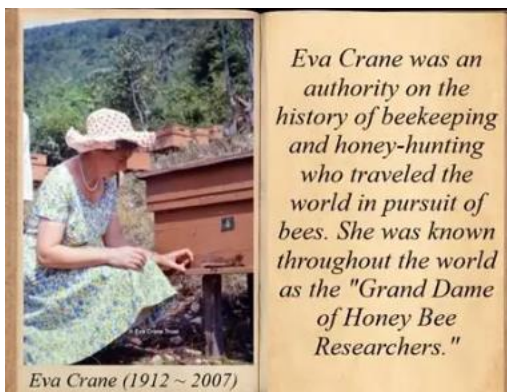
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The beginning of winter

Hopefully your bees are healthy and have food to face the next 60 to 90 days.

I am often asked what I do during the winter season. As far as my bees are concerned, the answer is very little except a quick walk around the hives to make sure everything looks okay.

That does not mean I am inactive as far as honey bees are concerned. I have already been working on putting new wax foundation in frames for this coming season. Although I have seen a number of winters, I still find bee books to read. Some of them just reinforce thoughts and ideas I have. Then my inquisitive mind looks for information that builds on what I need to know.



Eva Crane was an authority on the history of beekeeping and honey-hunting who traveled the world in pursuit of bees. She was known throughout the world as the "Grand Dame of Honey Bee Researchers."

Eva Crane (1912 ~ 2007)

The history of beekeeping and individuals keeping bees has always been an interest. I never heard of Eva Crane before the mid 1980's when she spoke at a bee meeting in Columbus, Ohio. Although I never met her, I started buying some of the books she wrote (some-what expensive I might add). If you are young, it might pay to collect many of the bee books currently available from authors such as Kim

Flottum, Tom Seeley, Dewey Caron, Larry Conner, Roger Morse, Ross Conrad, and a host of others. Old bee books out of publication especially if signed become more valuable. A good example is 50 Years Among the Bees by C.C. Miller. A copy of his 1st edition (published in 1911) in fair condition today sells

for well over \$200.00. A signed first edition recently sold for \$600.00. Those older bee books of the 1700's, 1800's, and some from the early 1900's are priced out of reach for most of us. But reprints are available for many of them. I love reading old bee books. My copy of Miller's first edition is worn and somewhat intact but the cover shows wear. It is still valued at over \$100.00 or more. And let me say, it gets the wear and tear because I pick this particular copy up every winter and read it **because Miller wrote about beekeeping management – things that need reviewing every now and then.**

I am going to share a short piece here that C.C. Miller wrote. I am not sure if you listen to bees during the winter, but it might be something you try. I am not suggesting you put your ear down to the ventilation opening in the inner cover but if bees are alive, they sometimes make very little noise. If one puts a hand over that ventilation opening in the inner cover, some heat should be felt which would indicate the bees are alive.

Miller overwintered his bees in his cellar. He wrote, ***"I think it was 50 or 60 degrees outside, and not far from that in the cellar. The bees were quite noisy when the cellar was opened, and I listened closely for the quieting down. It didn't come. On the contrary, the noise increased to a roar that could be heard some distance from the cellar, and the bees were running all over the hives, some of them hanging out in great clusters as if getting ready to swarm. As nearly as I now remember, I did not go to bed till I could recognize a little subsiding, and in the morning the bees were back in their hives as quiet as mice"***.

The cellar Miller described ***"was a room in which light does not shine directly where the bees were kept. When the bees are exposed to light they became more active."*** The door to the cellar was evidently left open at times providing an abundance of good air which Miller considered very important.

Thus, if any of you are considering keeping bees in an enclosed building to protect them from the weather, remember that light from windows can cause a natural reaction for bees to fly. Foul air must be removed from the area where bees are kept. You may be amused as Miller describes his method of inspecting bees in the cellar. He had a kerosene hand-lamp as a dark-lantern making little light except in one direction. ***"Holding the lamp in my left hand, I look in to see whether any live bees are in sight. Often I see the cluster near the front of the hive. Oftener at the center or back part of the hive, the bees looking as if dead, so still are they; but in a few seconds some one will be seen to stir."***

He follows up the description of the hives by discussing how the floor must be swept frequently of dead bees. He writes, ***"One winter, when the bees were confined 124 days, the dead bees for each colony amounted to four-fifths of a quart or three-fifths of a pound, which made about 2,130 bees for each colony."***

Thus, we can also expect a number of bees to die naturally during the winter season. If you are interested in finding out how many bees die in your hives over winter – set up a tray to catch dead bees. I was in a bee yard of a friend not long ago and saw this on the ground. **This was before winter arrived.**

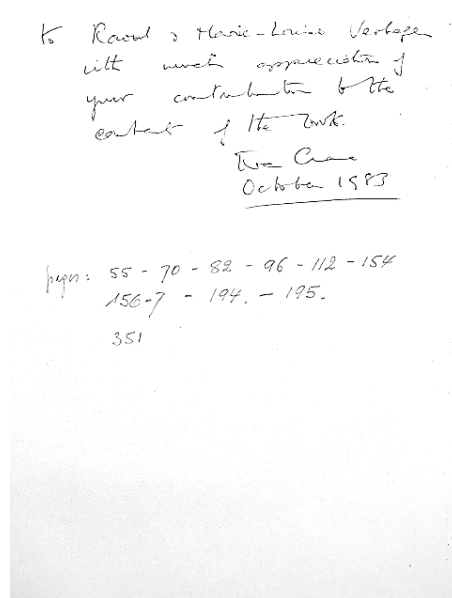
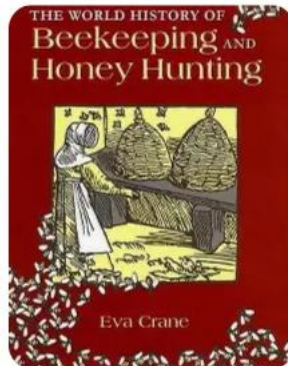
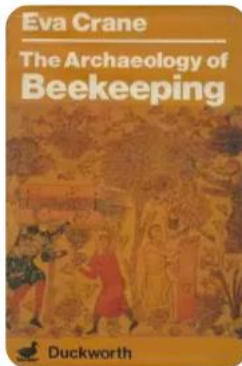


The die-off of bees continues all winter long. The number of bees dying is greater as spring approaches.



This photo was taken mid-November. Note the dead bees on the ground under the hive entrance.

Back to Eva Crane:



I own these two books and I have found so much in them about honeybees and information not contained in current bee books.

A signed page in The Archaeology of Beekeeping I own is shown here. I found this book in a Columbus book store maybe 30 years ago for \$25.00. A quick check on the internet turned up a copy of this book a few days ago for sale. Now about \$350.00 and no signature.

The best deals may be your local used book store. Often family members of beekeepers have no idea of the value of bee books. Even books published in the last 50 years have most likely more value than what they sold for new.

Large numbers of used books are sold on-line by a number of major book dealers. Ebay has a very large selection of bee books. Be careful because a number of

books offered may be poorly described. One I bought called The History of Bees by Maja Lunde turned out to be a novel. A little about beekeeping but really a story of a family – nothing about Beekeeping history such as would be found in the books below. The final chapter in that book describes a life without honey bees.



The archaeology of beekeeping Hardcover – January 1, 1983


by Eva Crane (Author)

5.0 ★★★★★ 8 ratings

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If this topic is of interest to you, I can share more about collecting bee books.