

The Frustrating Day in the Life of a Swarm Collector.

I was rung at 9.30 am about a swarm just down the road from me, about 5 ft off the ground

I usually ask people to send me a picture but as it was nearby I hot footed down with just a skep to find this large swarm in an apple tree.



I positioned a white sheet on the ground below and they fell into the skep quite easily and I left them upturned on the sheet for the strays to assemble inside, but because of the size I was concerned that they might abscond.



Therefore I returned with a nucleus and dropped them in, positioning them in the shade. I rotated the disc so that the queen excluder covered the entrance reasoning that if the queen can't escape they should all still be there when I return at dusk when all the flying bees had returned.



Or so I thought!

Unknown to me in rotating the disc so that the queen excluder section was covering the entrance, it had loosened the screw slightly.

Enough it turned out for the queen to squeeze underneath, so when I returned at 9.30 pm, all the bees were covering the front and partway round the sides of the nucleus with none inside!!

So what to do as I couldn't load them into the car? The only recourse was to knock them back onto the sheet, cover them with the skep and hurriedly wrap them in the sheet, all in the half dark.

Next morning, 90% of them were still wrapped in the skep but I was left to deal with the escapees who were all over the inside of the car. One thing is certain it's impossible to capture flying bees, so all I could do was drive with all the windows & tailgate open and hope to suck most of them out!!

The next problem was what to do with the captured bees that may or may not have a queen? So at the moment they are in a hive at my apiary with a queen excluder underneath the brood box, waiting for me to discover whether I have evidence of a laying queen.

Beekeeping is so much fun – isn't it?

John Farrow June 2020