

Upper Peninsula Beekeeping Conference – March 28, 2020

Speaker bios

Isaac Behrens began beekeeping by apprenticing for a year under Kirk Webster, a commercial beekeeper in the Champlain Valley of Vermont. Since then, Isaac has been spending his spare time building equipment and splitting colonies to grow his apiary in Skandia. In 2019, Isaac began offering mated queens for sale, bred from his overwintered Skandia bees. Isaac and his wife, Hannah Rae, live and work on Cloverland Farm in Skandia.

Tim Bennett: We have said it before & will say it again: “What qualifies us most to teach honeybee keeping is the fact that, if it can be done the wrong way then we have already been there & done that.” So why should you? 😊

We’ve spent more than two decades helping others through the ‘learning curve’. Our educating passion continues to be fueled by all of the new ‘wanna-bee’ beekeepers that continue to show up each year. Two of life’s absolutes.....”Nothing new under the sun”, yet “learning never goes out of style”!

Kathie Bennett: As a wife and helpmeet of 38 years and mother of 9, now on a full working farm, we began our journey early making healthier choices, one at a time, enhancing the wellbeing of our own growing family; from what we put in our bodies to what we put on our skin. For over 20 of those years we have delighted helping others learn the art of beekeeping as well as providing candles for those who enjoy burning the healthier choice of beeswax candles in their own homes.

Read more about the Bennetts at: www.turtlebeefarms.com

Janet Ekstrum has been a District Wildlife Biologist for the Rapid River/Manistique District, Hiawatha National Forest for the past 19 years. She specializes in habitat enhancement and protection of rare and listed wildlife species with an emphasis on pollinators, Kirtland’s warbler and Great Lakes Piping Plover. She co-authored the Monarch Butterfly Conservation Strategy for the Eastern Region of the Forest Service and has conducted native bee surveys for the past three years on the West Zone of the Hiawatha NF. Janet received a Bachelor of Science in Zoology from Ohio University and Wildlife and Fisheries Management Certificates from Hocking College. She has worked on all three Michigan National Forests and the White River NF in Colorado.

Ana Heck joined Michigan State University in January 2019 as a Research Technologist to support pollinator education initiatives, honey bee research, and implementation of policies to protect pollinators. Heck learned how to keep bees in Nicaragua while apprenticing on a teaching farm and working with a women's beekeeping cooperative from 2011 through 2013. She began working with the University of Minnesota Bee Squad in 2014, where she managed apiaries, provided hands-on and classroom training to beekeepers, and managed Bee Squad outreach and Extension programs. Heck holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Spanish from Creighton University and a Master’s degree in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Adam Ingrao is the Veteran’s Liaison for Michigan State University Extension and an Agricultural Entomologist. He holds a BS in Agriculture and Environmental Plant Science from California Polytechnic State University, a PhD in Entomology from Michigan State University, and is a former National Science Foundation Fellow. His expertise is in beneficial insects in agroecosystems and he is nationally recognized for his beekeeping education program for military veterans called Heroes to Hives. He and his wife also own and operate Bee Wise Farms LLC.

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Kevin and Lauri LaBumbard started keeping bees in 2012. They have kept between two and seven hives (depending on how many swarm and how many are captured!) in any given summer. Their bee yard is in Skandia, MI, in the center of the Upper Peninsula. Both recently retired (foresters), they hope to expand their apiary slightly, and possibly start a second bee yard at Kevin's camp near Rapid River. They have learned a lot from other beekeepers in the Superior Beekeeping Club and continue to learn from their bees each summer.

Michelle Landis has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and used to work with adjudicated, abused, and neglected youth. She has been interested in homestead-type activities for a number of years. She cooks most of her family's meals from scratch, making use of products from their garden, ducks, and bees. Honey is mighty nice, but the rewards of keeping bees don't stop there. Michelle enjoys making many homemade items from the products of the hive, such as honey, wax, and propolis.

Michelle has kept bees for about seven years and has been the "Bee Gal" for the Superior Beekeeping Club for almost as long. She currently serves as President for the club and looks forward to seeing the club expand and be able to offer many educational opportunities in the future.

Dr. Meghan Milbrath began working bees with her father as a child over 20 years ago, and now owns and manages The Sand Hill Apiary, a small livestock and queen rearing operation in Munith, Michigan. She studied biology at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, and received degrees in public health from Tulane University and the University of Michigan, where she focused on environmental health sciences and disease transmission risk. Meghan worked as a postdoctoral research associate under Zachary Huang at Michigan State University, studying nosema disease, and is currently an academic specialist at MSU, where she does honey bee and pollinator research and extension and is the coordinator of the Michigan Pollinator Initiative.

Meghan is active in multiple beekeeping organizations, writes for multiple beekeeping journals, and speaks about bees all over the country. She currently runs the Northern Bee Network, a directory and resource site dedicated to supporting queen producers, and she is passionate about keeping and promoting healthy bees.

Read more about Dr. Milbrath at <https://msutoday.msu.edu/360/2015/meghan-milbrath-honeybees-and-pollinators/> and <http://www.sandhillbees.com/>

David Payant has lived for 60 years in Marquette, MI. After spending 40 years in the law business he began keeping bees eight years ago. David and his wife Susan operate a small honey business called "Nodding Trillium Apiary". Last year their bees made over 100(!) gallons of pure gold. David has raised queen bees calling them "Superior Snow Queens". He has taught courses on raising queens using the Nicot method, Beekeeping 201 (Dare to Manage Your Bees), mite management, and swarm catching. For several years, Susan and Dave were the "Bee Busters", catching swarms in the Marquette area. David currently keeps 17 +/- hives in North Dickinson County behind a nasty electric bear fence. Susan has 3 hives in Marquette Township.

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Abby Petersen is a Biological Science Technician in Botany with the U.S. Forest Service. Working out of the Munising Ranger District of the Hiawatha National Forest for the past 3 years, her projects have focused on invasive species control and removal, restoring pollinator habitat, and working with partner organizations to better the forest we all call home. Abby also hosts a variety of educational programs throughout the year, helping youth to connect with the environment and plants through hands-on activities. Graduating from Northern Michigan University in 2017 with a degree in Environmental Studies and Sustainability, she uses her training in public policy and biology to bridge the gap between the public and the land stewards to better the environment and make connections with the land.

The “Old-Timers”

Joel Lantz has been a beekeeper for over 30 years. Starting in downstate Michigan, then here in the Marquette area of the UP for the last 10-plus years. His focus has been on educating anyone that will listen about bees and their part in our world. (Joel is past-president and founder of the Superior Beekeeping Club.) He enjoys raising bees, enjoys his Hive House, and his many bee and family activities. Joel maintains a website, “UP Michigan Bees”, available at www.upbees.weebly.com.

Bernie Driggs is a member of the Northwoods Beekeepers. He and his wife, Sharon, have kept bees since the 1970s and have kept bees in two states, four counties, and six locations. Bernie has been featured on a number of episodes of *Discovering*, discussing beekeeping methods in the U.P. (<http://906outdoors.com/Discovering.shtml>; episodes 342, 350, 354, 360, 366, 368)

Les McBean began beekeeping in the spring of 1987; he purchased 150 colonies of bees from a local beekeeper and began his White Birch Apiary of Bruce Crossing, Michigan. After maintaining as many as 400 colonies Les, currently semi-retired, keeps 30 colonies. His signature White Birch Apiary Birdsfoot Trefoil honey is only available in a few select locations.

Tom Nebel has been an active beekeeper for over 40 years. What he doesn't know about bees probably is not worth knowing. He continues to practice his art and has been generous in mentoring beekeepers, new and “old”. Tom currently has about 30 hives – down from his peak of over 300.

Dave Wiitanen is a long-time beekeeper and president of the Copper Country Beekeepers Club. Dave keeps more than 100 hives and sells his honey around the Upper Peninsula.

Dave Payant and Isaac Behrens (who is not really an old-timer!) have their own bios, listed previously.