

## How to Capture a Swarm

When my neighbor dropped in to say there was a big swarm of bees on a rock up by the canal I was happy to get some stuff and run up there to see if I could catch them. Little was I to know what a fun time I was about to have.

The swarm was on the other side of the canal. There was no water in the canal. The bank was steep and rocky. The swarm was on a big rock. It looked impossible to gather them in a bucket as I often do with a swarm hanging on a tree limb, so I decided I would take a hive over and see if I could get them to go in the hive. It took some doing to get up to them as the bank was pretty steep. I arranged a couple of smaller rocks so I would have something to set the hive on. I put the bottom board on the rocks and then a hive body on that. I proceeded to gather up the bees a handful at a time and put them on the combs. About then a bee managed to get under my veil and fly up in my face. So I took a quick walk away from the area up the canal, and as soon as I was a bit away from the bees I ripped off my veil and believe it or not I didn't get stung. So, veil in place again, its back to catching bees. Soon it became hard to get many more bees because they were in the crevices of the rock, so I put a top board on the hive and called it good for today as the sun had gone down and it was fast getting dark. My hope was that the bees would decide they wanted the hive and move into it.

Next morning I went up to check on the bees, and lo, they were all over on the rock again. So I did a rerun of yesterdays exercise in futility and put the bees in the hive again, one handful at a time, until I managed to make them mad and they started stinging my glove in earnest. One of the little stingers managed to find a weak spot in the glove and I got stung on the tip of the middle finger. Well, because I am quite allergic to bee venom, I had to go to the truck and get some Benadryl in me right now. Problem is that about 20 mad bees were persistent in following me to the truck. Finally I just opened the truck door and got in quickly and shut the door. Only two bees managed to follow me in. I opened the window a crack and they both found their way out. Now I could take off my veil and take some medicine. At this point, I decided to call it for now and go to the house and put some ice on the sting site.

Along about 4:30 P.M. I decided to go up again and see if the bees had went into the hive. To add to my problem, the water was now in the canal. Again they had deserted the box and were back on the rock. It was apparent that I had not been successful in getting the queen into the box. Some new strategy was needed. First I put on my veil then my coveralls so no bees could get under the veil, Then I put on my fishing boots, then I put on a new pair of gloves. I didn't want to use the ones that had been stung so many times as I guessed the odors would make the bees mad again.

About then my neighbor who had alerted me of the swarm came up on a four wheeler dragging a railroad tie to put across the canal to help me get over. The tie was not long enough to span the whole ditch, which was made with concrete and had sloping sides, so it lodged part way down into the canal.

I took the hive down off the bank and set it on the other side of the canal. As I was getting it down, it dawned on me that I should have nailed the box to the bottom board at first. It would have been something to get that hive down if it had been full of bees. About the second time I tried walking across the railroad tie, I decided it was just too shaky, so didn't try walking it again, but there after forded the canal. That tie did give me something to hold on to and set things on.

About here I was debating just giving up on this one, but it was such a nice big swarm. I wanted it

bad. So, with a 5 gallon bucket and an empty tin can, I climbed up the bank again. My plan was to use the tin can to scoop up the bees instead of my hand and see if they had any luck stinging the tin can. After scooping up a good bunch of bees and getting them in the bucket, I crossed over the canal and dumped them on top of the frames, then as they went into the box, I put the lid on. Then back to scooping bees up and putting them in the bucket. Oops, my foot slipped off what little niche I had holding me up there and down I went out of control, right into the water. I got my pants wet and filled one boot. So I climb up again and get what bees I had in the bucket and go dump them at the front of the hive. Since it was getting hard to catch any more bees with the tin can, I used my glove to get down along the base of the rock and pull out a few more bees. The second pass with that technique, of course they got mad and started stinging my glove again, and one penetrated the glove and hit my same finger again. Arrggguh! So off I go to the truck where my wife got me a dose of Benedryl.

As I was sizing up the situation, and wondering how to get the rest of those bees off the rock, I spied my smoker sitting in the back of the truck. Perhaps I could smoke them out? So, I fill a pocket with smoker fuel and build a fire then head for the rock. Ya, they didn't like that smoke and I smoked all along where they had been clustered, especially along the base of the rock where there was some small cavities. Those bees just poured out of their hiding places and began to cluster on top of the rock, so I scooped them up with the can and when I had a good bunch in the can took them across and dumped them at the entrance to the hive.

As I went back for more I noticed that the bees were running into the can. Yes! I must have had the queen in the can last trip or she was in there now, and now they can smell her in the can and that is where they will go. I didn't have many bees left on the rock now, so I smoked them good and most of them took to wing and flew toward the hive.

I don't know how many times I had crossed the canal and climbed up that bank, but I was getting tired, and the sun was about down, so I decided to go home and leave the bees to finish going into the hive, or what ever they decided to do, knowing full well you can't **make** a bee do anything.

Next day: Went up to the canal just before sundown and found the bees still in the box, so I put them in the truck and brought them home.

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Photos:







Credit for the photos goes to Beanie.