



Honey Letter 2013



We had four hives when the winter started and by spring it became clear that the two hives started the preceding summer did not have enough time to get up and running on their own. The other two hives did very well and both hives were harvested in July, yielding 146 bears or ten gallons of honey. We left them alone for the rest of the summer and fall.

Unfortunately, the hive that had cast the swarm last summer was very weak in the beginning of December and we doubt it will survive the winter. It sounds like there are very few bees present, so most likely it has succumbed to colony collapse disorder. The feral hive in the hollow tree, that we tried to save, also did not survive the winter. Two for five. You have to be tough to be a beekeeper in Iowa!

There are 350 beekeepers in Iowa and the 30,000 hives produce 2 million pounds of honey per year, pollinating crops which value 150 million dollars a year. That is an average of 66 pounds per hive.

We have three new ducks in residence on our farm. It started out with Beau, Aubrey and Tom finding a fuzzy little duckling stranded near second base at the Cattle Yard Ball Field at 8:00 one night. Since there were no ducks around nor even any vegetation that ducks could be hiding in, they concluded that he had been abandoned. They brought him home and he was named Crackerjack. We learned that ducks do not like to live alone, so we bought two more fuzzy ducklings at Orscheln's, named Peanut and Popcorn.



Crackerjack and Peanut turned out to be drakes, while

Popcorn is a hen. They are very friendly and run alongside their fence line next to our cars when we come or go from the property.

Though they all look like mallards, only Crackerjack is able to fly. He is small and sleek while the other two are big and hefty like little refrigerators. Crackerjack flies around our house and barn and down to the river and back. He even flies after my car and I have seen him almost three miles from our house, following our car one morning on my way into Iowa City. He always returns home. While he is flying, Peanut and Popcorn quack loudly at him. We are not sure if Peanut and Popcorn are saying "Stop that—it's dangerous!" or "Go for it Crackerjack!" We had thought when we purchased the two companion ducks that all three would fly away in the fall, but that was apparently naïve. It is looking like we have three ducks for the duration! We do not know where this adventure is going, but it has been fun. Maybe we will have some duck eggs to try next summer? Or maybe some more baby ducklings?



We hope you all have a **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!** Lyse, Tom, Aubrey and Beau

