

Capturing a feral colony

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This procedure was undertaken by Glyn Davies and Denis Bilkey at Ide near Exeter

The following is a sequence of photographs showing a feral colony being hived:

1 - The feral colony.

Left to their own devices, bees will build their comb in any opportune place. In the absence of a hollow tree trunk, these bees have fixed their comb to some branches in a tree. Some twigs have grown through the comb making extraction more difficult.



2. Gentle smoking to move the bees up without creating panic.

The gentle smoke is to drive the bees slowly upwards to create a hand hold. The object is to keep as many bees on the comb as possible and to keep the queen calm too. We don't want them to fly off in agitation!

3 - Gently cutting the comb .

The left hand supports the comb during the cut. The knife cuts to within a couple of cm of the end of the comb then the last portion is gently broken using both hands. The object at all times is to avoid any jerks or shakes which would make the bees fly off the comb.





4 - Cutting the comb to size .

Notice the strings laid underneath the frame and comb. Here the excess is being removed from the comb to allow it to fit snugly in place within the frame. It is important to use jute or hessian string rather than nylon, as the bees can tidy this up later.

5 - Tied comb in position .

The bees can take over from here. In quite a short space of time they will fix the comb with wax, after which time the strings can be removed. If left, the bees would eventually chew through the string and remove it themselves.



Voilà - This colony can now be managed by the beekeeper in the usual way.