

Greetings Nature-Lovers!

On Saturday, July 16, after two weeks of arduous work around the house, we decided to take a break, drive to Salamanca, have a bite to eat, and visit Allegany State Park, before attending the annual Pow Wow in town.

A brief visit to the Park would also allow us an opportunity to check on the honeybee house we installed at the butterfly meadow three months ago.

With summer well-underway, we hoped the bees might perhaps have discovered the house, although we didn't get our hopes too high, as we knew it sometimes takes years for wild bees to establish a new colony in one of our houses.

We arrived at the meadow, and found milkweed blooming in profusion.

The bee house was barely visible on the large white pine looming over the meadow...



...but the milkweed was at its peak.



Considering the difficult winter the monarchs were forced to endure
in Mexico this year,
it was heartening to see several of these increasingly
scarce beauties enjoying the flowers.





Fritillary butterflies also feasted on the milkweed...



...and, of course, the honeybees were working the field.



This one sampled the birdfoot trefoil.



We nervously made our way across the meadow to the old white
pine,
hoping to see bees coming and going in and out of the house.

And,

to our delight...

...sure enough...

the house had been discovered by the bees!

Notice them at the entrance holes.





We gazed up for a few moments and enjoyed the sight of
honeybees going in and out of the holes,
and wondered how many generations of bees would regard this
new shelter as their home.

We were also glad to see the house had been a success so early in
the summer.

Now we felt confident that the bees would have enough time to
build their hive
and store sufficient honey to get them through the winter.

Sometimes, when bees move to a new location too late in the
season,
they are unable to collect and store enough honey to survive the
long cold months,
and the colony starves.

But then...

...just as we bid them 'farewell' and turned to go...

...we began to hear...

...the faint sound of...

humming...!

and it was getting **louder...**

and **louder!**

...until we were surrounded by **thousands** of swarming
bees,

...making their way to our house...no, ***their house!***



We couldn't believe our eyes (and ears)...!!

Incredibly, we had arrived at the exact time the bees were in the
process of leaving their former home
(wherever it was)
and relocating to the house we provided for them!

We then realized that the few bees we had seen moments earlier,
must have been the scouts, who had led the colony to their new
home.

The remaining photos were taken over a period of about 20-
minutes,
during which time, the swarm gradually came to rest in and
around the house.













We soon noticed that the bees were avoiding one of the panels.

It was to the right of the entrance panel - and it was the side facing
directly toward the sun!



We could only wonder if this behavior had some navigational significance for the colony.

You can see this perplexing phenomenon as the bees coalesce around the outside of the house.













Slowly, as the swarm settled in and around the house, the humming subsided.







Here is a photo of the rear panels.



...And the front, showing the empty panel...



As we departed for the festivities in town,
we marveled at the bees and what we had just witnessed.

When we installed the house in April,
we never imagined actually 'beeing' there at the very moment the
bees decided to move in!

But after all...
seeing is bee-leaving!



The End