

# Beekeepers capture hive in Holmes Beach

The bees were vacuumed into a hive and the comb, dripping with honey, was placed in a bucket.

By Pat Copeland  
SUN STAFF WRITER  
pcopeland@amisun.com

HOLMES BEACH – The buzz was in this Island city Saturday as three beekeepers descended on the yard of Michelle Wallen on 59th Street to capture a hive of bees high up in a Cuban laurel tree.

Kevin Lausman and his trainees, Dr. Ray Raitz and Gary Cox, assessed the situation while Wallen explained how the bees came to live in the tree.

“The hive has been there about a year,” Wallen said. “The bees were on the back of the house for about a month, then they disappeared.

“A couple of weeks later, I noticed a small lump in the tree, then it kept growing. In June they swarmed, but I don’t know where the swarm went.”

Wallen said she called several pest control companies, but they wanted to charge her hundreds of dollars to relocate the bees, and she didn’t want them killed. Then neighbor Gary Krauss came to the rescue.

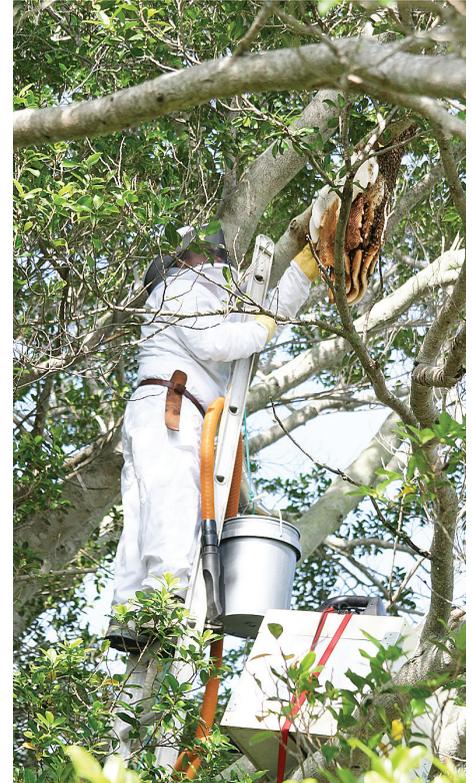
“I work for Sarasota Parks and Recreation Department, and I knew about Kevin and called him and he called Michelle,” Krauss said.

Lausman explained that they would quiet the bees with smoke and then vacuum them into a hive. Then they



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Above, the hive hangs from a branch in a Cuban laurel tree in the yard of Michelle Wallen in Holmes Beach. At right, after vacuuming the bees, Dr. Ray Raitz cuts off the comb, dripping with honey, and drops it into a bucket.



would cut off the honeycomb and put it in a frame.

The three suited up in bee suits, gloves and veils and prepared their equipment. Raitz climbed the ladder, while Cox held it steady and Lausman called up instructions.

As Raitz vacuumed the bees, then began to cut away the comb, the honey began to drip. He put the comb in a bucket, and lowered the hive and bucket. The operation went so smoothly that no one was stung.

While the trio was cleaning up and packing, Lausman explained how he began beekeeping.

“I have a friend who owns a pest control company and he started getting bee calls,” Lausman said. “I also was reading how bees are endangered because of colony collapse

disorder, which has killed half the bees in the United States in the past five years.”

He said the University of Florida, which has a Bee Research Center, began promoting backyard beekeepers because many vegetable crops, fruit and nut trees and flowers need bees for pollination.

“I stated learning beekeeping three years ago,” Lausman continued. “Then a couple of Master Gardeners started the Suncoast Beekeepers’ Association, which now has about 50 members from Venice to Palmetto.

“Ray and Gary are just getting into it. We do free bee removals and try to save the bees. A lot of pest control companies are scaring people about Africanized killer bees, but 90 percent of the bees are gentle European bees.”

Lausman said anyone who would like to learn beekeeping or has a hive that needs removed, can call him at 720-3619.



At left, Gary Krauss and Michelle Wallen watch the beekeepers work. At right, Kevin Lausman, dressed in his bee suit, veil and gloves, shows a piece of the honeycomb. A sign warns passersby to be cautious.

SUN PHOTOS/PAT COPELAND



## National Honeybee Awareness Day

The Suncoast Beekeepers’ Association has a host of activities planned for National Honeybee Awareness Day, Saturday, Aug. 21, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Bee Ridge Park, 4430 Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota.

There is free admission to this indoor, family event that will include an observation hive, a live demonstration of honey extracting, a virtual hive, classes on beekeeping and gardening, a display of plants for honey bees, honey tasting, a special kids’ activity area and talks with beekeepers.

For more information, go to [www.SuncoastBeekeepers.com](http://www.SuncoastBeekeepers.com)

