

# Hunting Wild Honey Around Seattle

**Seattle Architect Finds Rare Sport in Tracking Bees to Their Hives in the Forest—Unique System Employed to Locate the Delicious Sweets Drawn From the Richest Wild Flowers**

**W**ILD HONEY, the native Indian long has contended, is a natural foe of ailing livers and the like. The white man, on the other hand, although admitting to certain salubrious qualities of the sweet, is not an enthusiastic about its supposed potency as a remedy. Medical science, he points out, is not to be denied; and medical science finds but a small place for honey in its process of physical repair.

That was the situation when Fred Stephen, a Seattle architect, who would rather stalk a bee than golf or hunt or fish, set his mind at work on the subject.

"The trouble is," he said, "we take the Indian's word too literally. The remedial measure comes more through the physical exercise taken by a person on a honey hunt than through eating the honey."

"Climbing over logs, bending over, skipping here and there and all the time breathing pure air will drive away any ailment," he said, "caused primarily by physical lethargy, and will reduce any waist line. Golf may be effective, but honey hunting has it beaten."

It is not for any such reason, however, Mr. Stephen admits, that honey hunting, a pastime as old as Asia, where the bee is said to have originated, has sprung to the fore in the Northwest. Rather, it is because of an apparent increase in the number of bee colonies.

Bees colonize where food is the most plentiful. This is in the logged-off and burned over areas, which, year by year, become larger and more numerous as the logger swings his ax. In these cremated ruins of what was left of a great forest there grows in profusion the fragrant wild fire flower, the nectar of which is highly esteemed by the bees.

From these flowers the bees lay in great stocks of honey during the summer. With the arrival of autumn every well-organized bee colony is supposed to have stored enough food to last through the winter. But even so, the industrious little workers are ever ready to do a little more. That is the opportunity of the honey hunter.

Honey hunting is a thoroughly systematic process. The would-be hunter who straggles about the woods expecting to follow a bee to his colony when he sees him buzzing from flower to flower will be much disappointed. Finding honey is a more painstaking, if less fatiguing, procedure than that.

Mr. Stephen, who has had considerable success in hunting honey in Washington woods, gives some valuable pointers for the novice:

"The best time to find honey caches is in the early fall, when the flowers have gone, but when it

is not yet so cold that the bees will not venture from their homes.

A honey hunter should do his scouting during the summer, when the bees are out in greatest number, in order to find vicinities inhabited by bees.

He should practice his eye in discerning objects in the woods so that he is not so likely to lose a bee when trailing one.

The best time to start a hunt is about noon and preferably on a warm day.

All the essentials for a produc-



Fred B. Stephen, Seattle architect, who finds hunting wild honey great sport.

in a position in an upright tree or stump, too high to be reached by ordinary means, it is best to fell the tree, however, the hunt may as well be given up as lost, as a heavy crash to the ground will smash the honey with splintered wood and earth, making it inedible. This is a situation, however, that rests with the hunter.

Some have been known to climb tall trees after the manner of high climbers in logging camps, and thus procure the honey.

At the first blow of the axe some of the bees will leave their home to investigate the cause of the disturbance. Angered, they will make free use of their stingers,

largely, that will die slowly of starvation if one does not kill them.

"Bees, by the way, permit no ailing members among them. Humans build hospitals to care for the sick, asylums for the mentally deficient and homes for the indigent, but when a bee shows signs of losing his usefulness to his community his fellows take him to the door of their home and thrust him out."

Sulphur smoke is held to be the best method of putting an end to the bees.

Contrary to the popular belief, there are no so-called "tame" or "wild" bees. There is "wild" and "tame" honey, but bees are all alike, whether they live in a hollow tree



Cutting into a tree to get out the honey. The man with the ax is O. G. Hatch.

the honey hunter to wait that long. Just a few bees are enough to establish for the hunter a line to the colony."

When the line of flight of the bees has been determined the hunter moves forward along the line, his box of the syrup replenished, if the bees have made off with much of it. If the line is well established he may move ahead for as much as a quarter of a mile, but if in doubt, sometimes only a few yards. He must be careful not to stray from the bees' line. If he does the bees will have difficulty in finding the bait or may lose it altogether. The bees ever will return to the box for more syrup if

After taking as much of the syrup as he can carry the bee will go back to his colony. On the next trip he will bring with him two other bees. Invariably, Mr. Stephen says, each bee will bring with him two more bees on his second trip until a veritable army of the little workers is busy toting the syrup to the colony.

"I have seen them crowd about the bait box and on it until there were so many that they had difficulty in working," said Mr. Stephen. "But it is not necessary for

the honey hunter to wait that long. Just a few bees are enough to establish for the hunter a line to the colony."

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Here is shown the outfit used to bait the bees in order to trace the location of their hive in some tree. Syrup or honey is spread, which the bees find and soon form a line overing it to their home.

But when they find that their efforts are fruitless to drive away the enemy they will return to their store to take as much honey in their bodies as they can carry. It is the instinct to prepare against a calamity.

When stuffed with honey they do not sting, but crawl about—swarm—and await developments. Then the hunter may throw off his net and gloves and work unobscured.

After having chopped his way into the honey store he can remove it in chunks and place it in pails or other receptacles he has provided for the purpose.

Then, the humane thing to do is to kill the bees, for they will die shortly anyway, having been deprived of their food.

"Fearless? Oh, not so much as it seems," said Mr. Stephen. "Bees only live about six weeks during the summer season and those that have stored the greater part of the honey for winter use never will survive to feed on it, anyway. They merely stored it for the future generation. Bees live about six months during their dormant season. It is these bees,

in the woods or in a hive at an apiary. The characteristics, physical and in habits, are the same. But the honey procured from the hollow tree will be tasty with age, as with old wine, and will be from wild flowers, whose perfume is sweetest.

"That makes it a lot different from the honey one usually gets at the grocery store and is the motive behind the hunt," said Mr. Stephen.

"Persons who do not desire to go to the woods every time they wish a supply of honey may take with them a bee trap, similar to a fly trap, catch some bees and start a hive in their back yard."

## Frog Farming.

From his backyard frog ranch near Oshtemo, Wis., Emil Neuenfeldt ships 2,000,000 frogs legs a year. The frogs are kept in concrete trenches fifty feet long and six feet wide, in which are refrigerated pipes and running water. The cold water makes the frogs hibernate and silences the frog chorus. When an order is received the required number is scooped from a trench and the frogs are placed in a tank of water charged with electricity. This kills the frogs, straightens out their legs and makes amputation easy.



The hive in the tree after the honey has been removed.

it is on their line of flight to their colony.

"Sometimes I have found a cache within 30 minutes after setting out the jar," Mr. Stephen said, "but, on the other hand, I have been as long as two days in the effort."

Ordinarily bees will smell the syrup if it is within two miles of their home, but rarely if it is any further away. For this reason a knowledge of the proximity of a bee colony is vital to the hunter.

When, after a series of moves along the line of flight, the tree

or log in which the bees have made their home has been ascertained, the work of procuring the honey begins.

Experienced hunters usually scorn the use of gloves or of netting to cover the unprotected parts of their bodies from the bees' stings, but do not recommend to the beginner this lack of regard for the anger of the disturbed workers.

Donning these means of protection, the hunter begins to chop into the tree or log in which the honey is stored. If the honey is located

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