

Reverie
By: Nancy Avolese
(Non fiction)



*To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee.
And revery.*

Emily Dickinson

The very first time I set foot on my 2 ½ acres, which was almost 15 years ago, I can remember hearing the buzzing of bees. There was an old Bartlett pear tree to the front of the house and it attracted **yellow jackets** by the hundreds. The noise was loud and foreshadowing, almost like a distant thunder, and they would often travel to the back porch where my friends and I would gather - to annoy and ruin an otherwise enjoyable evening. So, the pear tree had to go, and along with it went the yellow jacket problem. Although I still have yellow jackets on the farm, eating other small insects and sometimes doing a little pollinating, they aren't as aggressive in smaller numbers and we have learned to live together, more specifically, I have learned to steer clear of them.

Later during renovations to the barn, I learned a lot about **carpenter bees**, much to my chagrin. I filled their holes and painted over them, but they would return the next year and drill new holes, weakening the structure of the wood. It seems an unending struggle between us until I read about their pollinating abilities. Now I use a bee house that they may choose to enter and drown, a possible pleasant death in orange soda, but I don't try to eradicate them completely. I have again, learned to live with them buzzing around the barn and garden, not fearing a sting or any aggressive moves from them (at least from the boys).

Then, about four years ago, a huge nest of angry (are there any other kind?) **hornets or paper wasps** quickly built their new home on my second- floor eave. I had just finished painting the house the year before and their large gray nest stood out on my bright white clapboards like an impending bomb. Let's just say I managed to remove their nest with less than thirty or so stings and a huge life lesson. Apparently, I am not allergic!

Then there was the summer that I thought I just had to become a **honey bee** keeper! I signed up for a class and wanted to buy hives and queens and have honey whenever I wanted it. I envisioned a road-side stand with my clover honey selling like hot cakes. I read three books on the care of bees.....and.....well let's just say it never came to fruition after I learned about their swarming

tendencies. I also had a long conversation with an older neighbor who told me that people get rid of their bee hives for the same reason they got them – honey!

By planting my gardens with foxglove, hydrangeas, mountain mint, bee balm, clovers, asters, honeysuckle, zinnias, cosmos, echinacea, bleeding hearts, and others, I have found true companions in the **mason, bumblebees, and honey bees** that often tend the gardens along side of me. I've learned to cultivate a home for them, building a mason bee house from some invasive bamboo that was on the property, making sure they have shallow watering spots, laying bee skeps on the ground, and leaving dead trees by the entrance of the woodlands. I've stopped using any chemicals or



herbicides in my yard. I've planted a small fruit orchard. I have raised-bed vegetable gardens that they help tend every year and a large collection of perennial and annual herbs.

I've also learned that it takes yellow jackets, carpenter bees, and hornets and wasps to nurture the ecosystem that my small farm has become. We each have our place and our work to be done along with the bats, frogs, turtles, and Gartner snakes that sometimes slither past me when I least expect it.



The birds sing, the bees buzz, and I know that all is right within my tiny world.



Photos taken at Lone Wolf Farm on 5/14/2018.