

DRAFT How to Catch Swarms BEFORE They Leave Your Apiary DRAFT

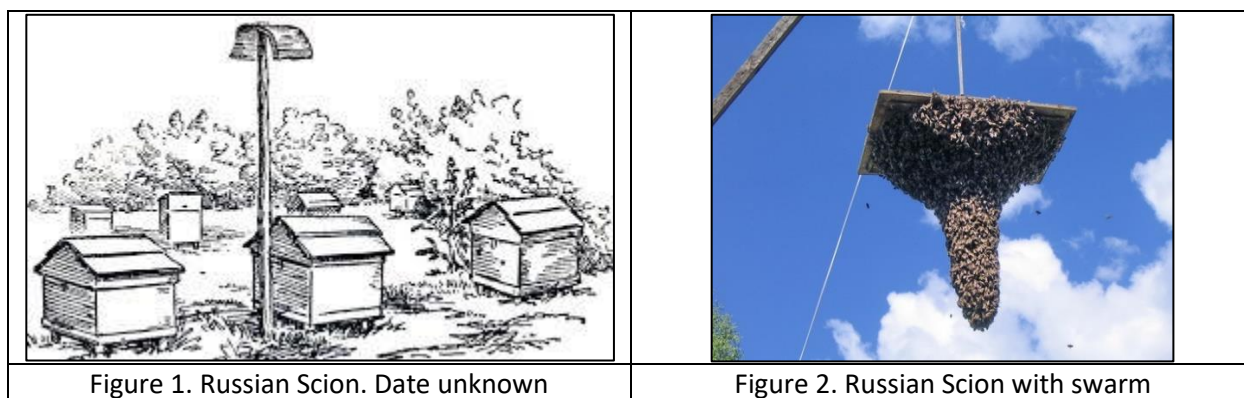
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You know the routine: the swarm departs the hive, lands on a nearby branch – high out of reach, hangs out there for a few hours, and then flies away to start a new colony. That swarm of honey makers, worth maybe a couple hundred bucks, is gone forever. Too bad for you, or is it?

One option, not discussed further here, is to put up swarm traps, designed to tempt swarms to take up residence (Seeley, 1989). These work – sometimes, but wouldn't it be better if you could catch your swarms *before* they left your apiary? It turns out that some beekeepers, in some parts of the world, have been doing this for centuries. How? They use a device called the “Russian Scion”. Figures 1 & 2.



The spot where swarms land just after leaving the hive is called the *bivouac* site. And *scion* is the Russian word for stick or post. The Russian Scion provides an ideal bivouac site for bees and beekeepers:

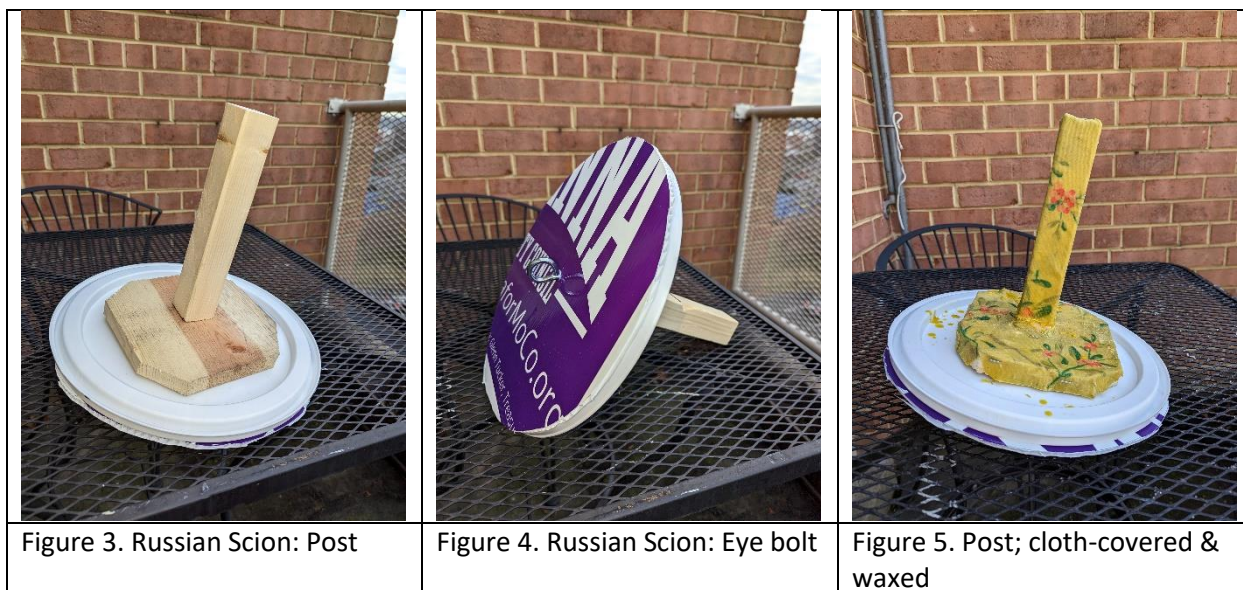
1. It is extremely attractive to swarms, more so than any other nearby bivouac site, and
2. It is easy to retrieve swarms from, once they have settled on the Scion.

You can make a Russian Scion easily from a bucket and some scrap lumber using a drill and a hand saw. While various designs can be found on the web, the version presented here is economical, easy to make, and ideal for transporting swarms..

Some background:

- Research reports on swarm preferences regarding bivouac sites? Sorry, there aren't any.
- Research reports on Russian Scions? Sorry, there aren't any of these, either.
- Internet reports, in Russian, on Russian scions? Yes! With pictures? Yes!
 - One is [here](#), and more are in the references.
- Internet reports, in English, on Russian scions? Yes! With pictures? Yes!
 - One is [here](#), and more are in the references.

How to make a Russian Scion



Materials

- A 5-gallon plastic bucket, with lid – the sort of lid that is easily removed*.
- A short piece of board, about 1" x 6"
- A short piece of 2" x 2"
- Some metal window screen, duct tape, and some old cloth
- A scrap political sign made of Coroplast, a corrugated plastic material.
- An eye bolt, a carabiner, and a length of rope; 50 ft. of 1/8" nylon Paracord is a good choice.
- Beeswax, propolis, & swarm lure

Tools

- Hand saw
- Cordless drill
- Knife
- Scissors
- Heavy duty stapler

Construction procedure; self-evident from the photos

1. **Cut** the Coroplast sign material to cove the bucket lid– it will keep rain and debris from accumulating atop the lid.
2. **Cut** the board to fit inside the bucket lid – to keep the bucket lid from sagging.
3. **Cut** a length of 2" x 2" 3 or 4 inches shorter than the depth of the bucket.
4. **Drill** a hole slightly smaller than the threads of the eye bolt through the centers of the Coroplast circle, the bucket cover, the board, and into one end of the 2" x 2" stick.
5. **Bolt** these items together in the sequence mentioned. See Figures 3 & 4.
6. **Cover** the 2" x 2" with cloth, stapled in place.

7. **Saturate** the cloth with beeswax and swarm lure. Figure 5.
Note: The cloth may be dipped into molten beeswax, then wrapped around the 2" x 2" while the wax is still soft and tacked into place. See Figure 5.
OR Paint all the wood with a solution of propolis
8. **Cut** 1 or 2 holes, about 3" x 6", in the side of the bucket for ventilation
9. **Cover** these holes with window screen, fasten the screen in place using duct tape. Figure 6.



Figure 6. Russian Scion: Bucket with vent

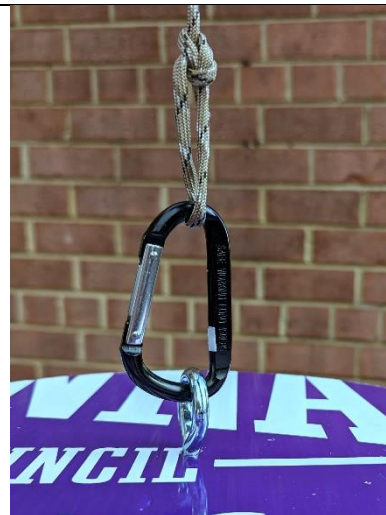


Figure 7. Carabiner & line



Figure 8. Russian Scion in place.

Installation procedure (self-evident from the photos)

1. In your apiary, note where swarms tend to bivouac. Try to hang Russian Scions near these places, or between the hives and these places.
2. Ideally, you will be able to throw a rope over a tree branch, attach one end of the rope to the Russian Scion (Figure 7), haul it up into place, and tie off the other end of the rope (Figure 8). You may have to improvise.
3. When a swarm lands on the Scion, lower the swarm into the vented bucket, and take it to another apiary, at least two miles away, and install it into a new hive in the usual manner.

Acknowledgement: I could not have completed this project without the help of several beekeeping buddies Trina, Sarah, Nansy, and Gail. Thanks to all of you for your respective contributions.

* If your lid has locking tabs, modify them to make the lid easily removable: cut off half the tabs and reduce the size of the remaining tabs.

References

In English:

Brief PowerPoint: http://www.susquehannabeekeepers.com/pdfs/Swarm_Seducer.pdf

Lots of detail here: <https://theprospectofbees.wordpress.com/tag/russian-scion/>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdWMJdjeVc4>

Throwing knot: <https://youtube.com/shorts/tzStxb5v-mo?feature=share>

Seeley, T. 1989. Bait Hives for Honey Bees.

<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/2653/Bait%20Hives%20for%20Honey%20Bees.pdf>

In Russian

Site with several photos: https://vk.com/pchulik?w=wall-49828668_257

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwZ4VxJhaZI>

Includes a slight accident: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXmZftYv1LY>

Google search term for "Russian Scion" in Russian, is "Привой и роевня"