

from nectar to honey

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saratoga
PLAN

Preserving Land and Nature

SARATOGA PLAN 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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HONEYBEES ARE THE
ONLY INSECTS THAT MAKE
FOOD FOR HUMANS.
THEY ALSO DIRECTLY POLLINATE
1/3 OF THE NATION'S FRUITS &
VEGETABLES, AND INDIRECTLY
POLLINATE 70% OF THE
NATIONAL FOOD SUPPLY.



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In 2014, Saratoga PLAN worked industriously with landowners, local municipalities, businesses, county government, volunteers, and other nonprofit organizations to draw out the foundation of our framework. It is these collaborative partnerships that have reinforced PLAN's ability to achieve greater levels of quality conservation in the years ahead.

As an organization dedicated to the highest standards, we invested in and earned our status as an Accredited Land Trust. We refreshed the way we communicate to provide easy access to PLAN with updates to our branding, website, educational programs, and public preserve kiosks. Working with landowners and municipalities, PLAN prepared and submitted grant applications to the state for farmland protection funds. This collaboration resulted in two exciting opportunities to conserve over 500 acres of critical working farmland.

As a Board of Directors, we look forward to the year ahead working alongside all community partners to build the foundations and create the connections that conserve the vital natural resources that support Saratoga County's long-term economic health and quality of life for current and future generations.



JOHN MUNTER, CHAIR



FORAGING THE FIELDS

conserving working farmland

300 bees crisscross over 8,000 acres, visit 2 million flowers and fly 55,000 miles to produce one pound of honey! Their foraging behavior is a testament to the level of effort it takes to produce something so delicious and pure and life-sustaining. Most people are unaware of the level of effort required to conserve working lands, a sweet creation of another kind.

Making a permanent decision to conserve land can take years of research and reflection until the time is right for a farm business or farm family. It is that confidential, behind-the-scenes, years-in-the-making preparation that helps land trusts earn the “trust” part of their name with farmers. Like the honeybee colony, teamwork from the landowner, land trust, and local community, sharing a mutual belief in the outcome, is essential to conserve working land.

Conserving farmland is about more than restricting fertile tillable fields with conservation easements so that they will always be available to produce food and fiber. It is about knowing the hardworking people who work the land, maintain the equipment and computers, keep livestock and crops healthy, run the business, cope with the weather, manage employees, interact with customers, and take tremendous risks to keep us fed and warm. It is about knowing their families’ stories and how their operation is a reflection of their ancestors’ decisions and luck and the inclinations of their descendants. It is about helping them stay profitable and motivated so that we have a safe and secure local supply of nourishment and a



landscape that sustains our air, water, wildlife, economy, and rural communities and lifestyles.

Over the course of 2014, Saratoga PLAN made progress in earning that trust by assisting owners of farmland with:

- * understanding their conservation options
- * re-establishing the county's Farmland and Open Space Fund in its 2015 budget
- * successfully applying for grants from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to conserve 260 acres of the William H. Buckley Farm in Ballston and 265 acres of the Cocozzo family land in Stillwater that is worked by the Welcome Stock and Koval dairy farms
- * surveying the agricultural community for their needs and preferred communication methods
- * hosting a workshop with the American Farmland Trust on leasing farmland
- * helping launch an online matching service, called Hudson Valley Farmland Finder, for landowners seeking farmers to lease or purchase their land and farmers seeking farmland to expand or begin new operations

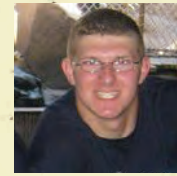
* demonstrating to municipalities the benefits of establishing private market driven Transfer of Development Rights programs, which the towns of Ballston and Stillwater have chosen to pursue

* participating in the farmland protection plans in the towns of Moreau and Milton

* introducing thousands of area families to farming at Sundae on the Farm, the county fair, and the Buckley Farm pig roast and opening celebration

* featuring crops produced by over 50 local farms at the Feast of the Fields and other PLAN events throughout the year

Like the honeybee colony, all of this effort is paying off with a life-nourishing harvest of farmland conservation. Saratoga PLAN is fielding calls from Saratoga County landowners at the rate of 1-2 per week. And half of those calls are from owners of farmland. We will be building on this momentum in the coming year with more peer-to-peer conversations about conservation options and projects, trainings and informational materials, in-person consultations and grant applications, and technical assistance.



INTERN DANIEL DUNN,

a graduate student at Cornell University, chose Saratoga PLAN for a school project aimed at supporting the agricultural community in Saratoga County. Building on his background in communications and psychology, Mr. Dunn, who grew up in the Town of Stillwater, participated in numerous agricultural outreach events this past summer and canvassed area farmers and asked them what challenges they face, what topics they would like more information on, and how they prefer to receive information. What he found is that, of the farmland owners he surveyed, the vast majority wished to keep their land in agriculture as a tribute to their family heritage but fewer than half have a succession plan for their land. The majority felt pressures from development, taxes and land prices, were unfamiliar with farmland conservation plans in their towns, felt the conservation process is too complicated, and wanted more direct and personal communications from land trust staff with information that highlights detailed examples of local farmland conservation projects that have been completed.

Saratoga PLAN was awarded grants in 2014 from the NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets to purchase development rights on the **Buckley Farm** (top) on Ballston Lake and **Cocozzo land** (left) adjacent to the Saratoga National Battlefield and the Old Champlain Canalway. The state grants, totaling \$1.8M, will be matched by over \$430,000 in private funds and \$22,000 in municipal dollars to conserve 525 more acres of fertile, productive farmland in Saratoga County. The projects are expected to take two years to complete.

THE STEWARDSHIP BUZZ


the ins and outs of stewardship

When Saratoga PLAN acquires a new property or easement, we are making a promise that this land will remain conserved forever. This is what stewardship is all about. Today, PLAN actively stewards a conservation portfolio made up of 28 fee-owned properties, 27 conservation easements, and 2 management agreements that add up to over 3,600 acres of protected lands with more than 23 miles of trails.

Caring for these lands takes a lot of hard work, a lot of time, and a lot of help from many dedicated supporters. Volunteers are the heart and soul of Saratoga PLAN, and the volunteer land stewards dramatically magnify our stewardship capabilities. Much like the worker bees that guard the beehive, land stewards ensure that the conservation values of each protected property are upheld for present and future generations.

Throughout the past year, PLAN's stewardship program continued to bloom thanks to the planning efforts of the stewardship committee, the hard work of our land stewards, and the generous contributions from local volunteer workgroups. It truly takes a dedicated colony to make land conservation happen, from office work to work on the trails, from our financial supporters to our stewards, each and every contribution made today ripples down the timeline so that these lands can continue to be sustained tomorrow.

Just as the hive is more than just a collection of honeycomb for the bees, PLAN's stewardship portfolio is more than just a collection of conserved lands. These special places are everlasting legacies entrusted to our stewardship team for safeguarding. Each property has a story, a history, and a purpose; together they form a network of healthy, sustainable lands that allow our communities to flourish.



BEEES KNOW QUITE A BIT ABOUT GOOD STEWARDSHIP. ONCE THE WORKER BEE HAS REACHED PEAK STRENGTH AND ENERGY, SHE IS READY TO PROTECT AND DEFEND THE BEEHIVE.



STEWARDSHIP:
AN ETHIC THAT EMBODIES
THE RESPONSIBLE PLANNING
AND MANAGEMENT
OF RESOURCES.

A COLONY FOR CONSERVATION volunteer worker bees come together to care for PLAN preserves

Several of our public preserves saw improvements in 2014 thanks to local community groups and volunteers:

- * Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge #161 and Wilton Cub Scout Pack #16 partnered on a project to build and install two new benches and a few dozen birdhouses at the **Rowland Hollow Creek Preserve** located in Saratoga Springs
- * Eagle Scout candidate William Sorel built and installed several benches, mile marker signs, and directional signs along the **Bog Meadow Trail** located in Saratoga Springs as part of his Eagle Scout project
- * PLAN held two workdays with groups from the Healthy Living Market & Café and Girl Scout Troop #3086 at the **Rowland Hollow**

Creek Preserve and Coldbrook Preserve in Northumberland. Volunteers assisted PLAN staff with tending native plantings, trail re-routing, and debris cleanup

- * The **LeVine** and **Hennig Preserves** in the Town of Providence continued to be stewarded by PLAN's outstanding Monday stewards group. At LeVine, four additional trails were added, a historic cellar hole and well were cleared for public viewing, and a celebratory re-opening event was held in honor of the LeVine family and the hard work that went into upgrading the site. Both Hennig and LeVine also saw two new water crossings added to the trail systems to ensure the safety of all preserve visitors
- * Every kiosk at each of PLAN's public preserves was updated with new information and maps this past year thanks to PLAN's stewardship staff and interns Andrew Gillcrist and Greg Redling

To the many busy bees that allow our hive to thrive: Thank you!



THE A C'S OF LETTERBOXING: IMPROVING PLAN'S PASSPORT PROGRAM

Each of PLAN's preserves has a letterbox hidden somewhere that gives every type of adventurer an exciting opportunity to explore our preserves and have fun while doing so. This past year each letterbox was hidden in a new location for explorers to find thanks to the hard work of our stewardship team and volunteer J'Mae Shemroske. Moving forward, letterboxing will now be a seasonal activity that will run from Easter to Thanksgiving. Look for the new boxes and clues this spring!

BEES FLAP THEIR WINGS
AS FAST AS 11,000 TIMES PER
SECOND! (THAT MEANS THEIR
WINGS WORK ALMOST AS HARD
AS OUR VOLUNTEERS DO!)

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ORIENTATION FLIGHT

experiencing the land that sustains us

Before a honeybee becomes a forager, it takes many orientation flights from different viewpoints to experience and understand the local landscape. During each season, on the land and in the water, Saratoga PLAN provided the next generation of stewards opportunities to become oriented, energized and connected with the farms, woods, waters and trails of Saratoga County.

PLAN's public programs are truly a transformative experience. We hope you'll join us on an orientation flight soon!



PLAN's annual **Peaks to Creeks** outing series took participants to the top of Hadley Mountain and to the waters of the Upper Hudson River.

Volunteer, Linda Eastman, led photographers on a macro-journey of learning and capturing the interesting, beautiful and intricate aspects of nature.

Since 2005, PLAN's annual **Feast of the Fields** fundraiser has honored our communities' conservation heroes while the area's premiere chefs create culinary masterpieces using local farm ingredients. Thanks to the many who participated, the 2014 Feast raised over \$50,000 for land conservation in Saratoga County.

Volunteer educator J'Mae Shemroske created magical moments for youngsters to build homes for woodland beings at the Galway Preserve and Orra Phelps Preserve.





WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE, NEW YORK STATE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM, THE COMMUNITY/LAND PRESERVATION AND PLANNING FUND OF THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR THE GREATER CAPITAL REGION, THE PCLB FOUNDATION, PAST AND PRESENT BOARD MEMBERS, AND OUR MANY VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR TENACIOUS AND HARD WORK OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS; ENABLING US TO ACHIEVE THIS MARK OF DISTINCTION IN 2014.



PLAN'S PROPOLIS

strengthening internal practices and procedures

Bees create a reddish-brown glue, called propolis, to strengthen the hive. Similarly, PLAN has been reviewing and improving our internal practices and procedures, updating our records, and adopting and implementing a comprehensive set of policies over the past several years. Through this we have been working to build and maintain a stronger organization, laying the foundation to sustain our operation, serve the local community as an effective champion and caretaker of its critical land resources, uphold our land holding responsibilities for the long haul, and safeguard the land through the generations.

In 2014, PLAN submitted extensive documentation and applied for

accreditation to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. After a rigorous, year-long review processes, we are pleased to announce that on December 17, 2014, PLAN was awarded accreditation by the Commission, one of only 285 of the 1,700 land trusts from across the country that has been awarded accreditation since the fall of 2008.

This recognition was the culmination of many years of striving for and upholding the highest standards of excellence in order to best serve the conservation needs of the Saratoga County region. "Through accreditation, land trusts conduct important planning and make their operations more efficient and strategic," said Land Trust Accreditation Commission Executive Director Tammara Van Ryn. "Accredited organizations have engaged and trained citizen conservation leaders and improved systems for ensuring that their conservation work is permanent. Accreditation provides the public with an assurance that, at the time of accreditation, land trusts meet high standards for quality and that the results of their conservation work are permanent."

DANCING BEES

choreographing
PLAN's communi-
cations

Beyond the five senses, honey bees have additional communication aids at their disposal. These methods are choreographic and chemical. Honey bee pheromones hold the colony together, and their precise dances share news essential to the whole of the colony.

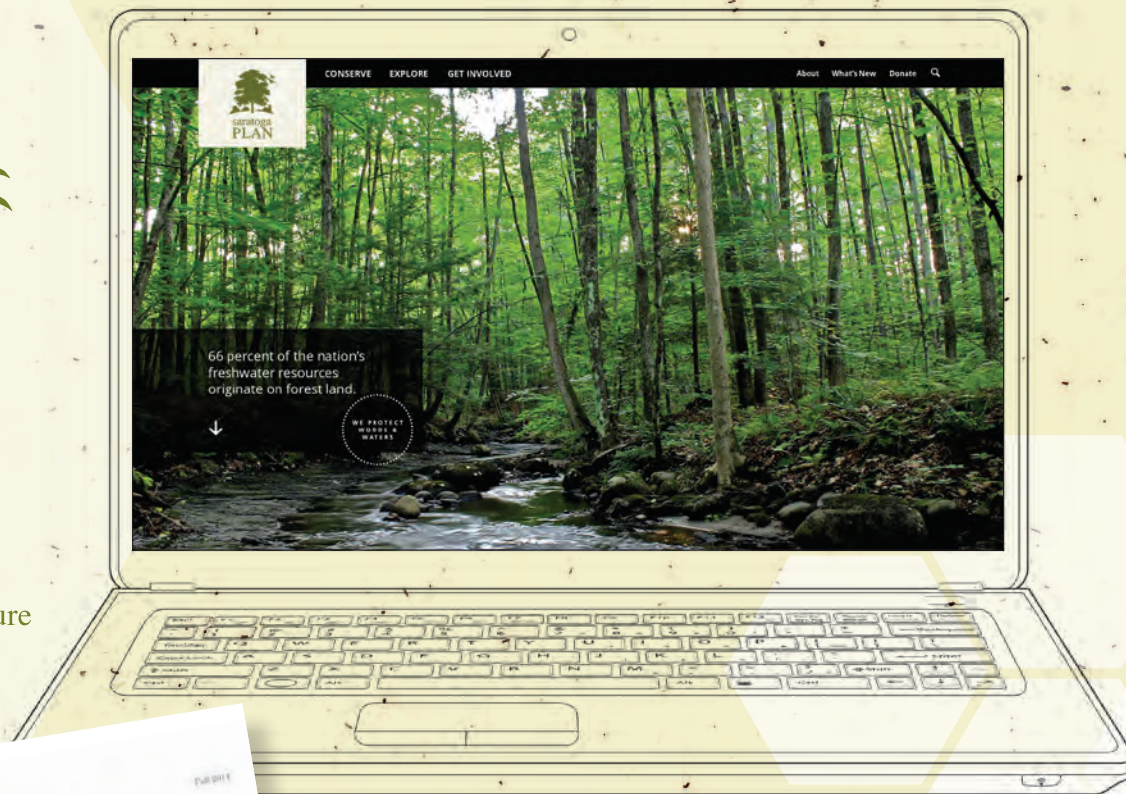
Over the course of 2014, PLAN has carefully choreographed the way we communicate. We refreshed our colors and reformatted publications to put out helpful, transparent information that is readily recognizable and understood. With the help of volunteers and interns, we revised and posted preserve history, trail maps, and letter box clues at each public nature preserve.

WORKER BEES HAVE
TWO DANCES, THE ROUND
DANCE AND WIGGLE DANCE.
THESE TELL OTHER BEES THE
DISTANCE AND DIRECTION TO
FIND A GOOD SOURCE
OF FOOD.



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The website also went through a redesign!

With an easy to navigate structure, visitors of PLAN's new website will now have conservation information, news & events, volunteer opportunities, photo submissions, and ways to explore Saratoga County right at their fingertips. (coming soon)

HONEY'S FORMULA TO LAST FOREVER

looking to the future of conservation

Honey contains all of the vital life substances necessary to sustain the honeybee colony—nourishment, water, even beauty. Saratoga PLAN's work sustains life, too, providing clean air, pure water, food, wildlife habitat, pest and flood control, climate amelioration, outdoor spaces for recreation, and community-building. Like the honeybee colony, we have what we need and are ready to work cooperatively together to make honey. Saratoga PLAN has achieved national accreditation, which means our systems and practices meet the highest standards. We have analyzed the landscape of the county and identified areas to focus on in the near and more distant future. State and county funding for farmland and open space conservation has been restored post-recession. Landowners are knocking on our door at a steady pace and partnering organizations and municipalities recognize PLAN as an effective and energetic force

and convener. We have a loyal base of supporters and a board of directors ready to tackle the next level of financial sustainability. A trusted, productive and professional staff of four serves as our hive's "propolis," gluing together dozens of partners, 250 volunteers, and 600+ financial backers.

So what is the honey going to look like in the coming years? Saratoga PLAN will continue to work toward the goal of working with public and private partners, to collectively conserve 10,000 acres by 2024. Hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders will be using the "alternative Northway" from Moreau to Mechanicville and the Champlain Canalway Trail will be linked together from Waterford to Northumberland. The Palmertown Conservation Area will consist of a wooded landscape providing unfragmented wildlife habitat, protecting water resources, and sustaining an economic mix of working forests and outdoor recreational tourism on a patchwork of private and publicly owned land. Fertile farms from Moreau to Charlton will be conserved to feed future generations.

We anticipate that there will be more creative funding and conservation strategies. When Transfer of Development Rights programs take hold, development will start helping to pay for conservation and communities will be able to achieve their goals with fewer public dollars. With private investors, PLAN will create a revolving land fund that can be used to acquire properties, conserve what is needed, and then sell them, protections in place, to recoup the investment and replenish the fund for the next land project.

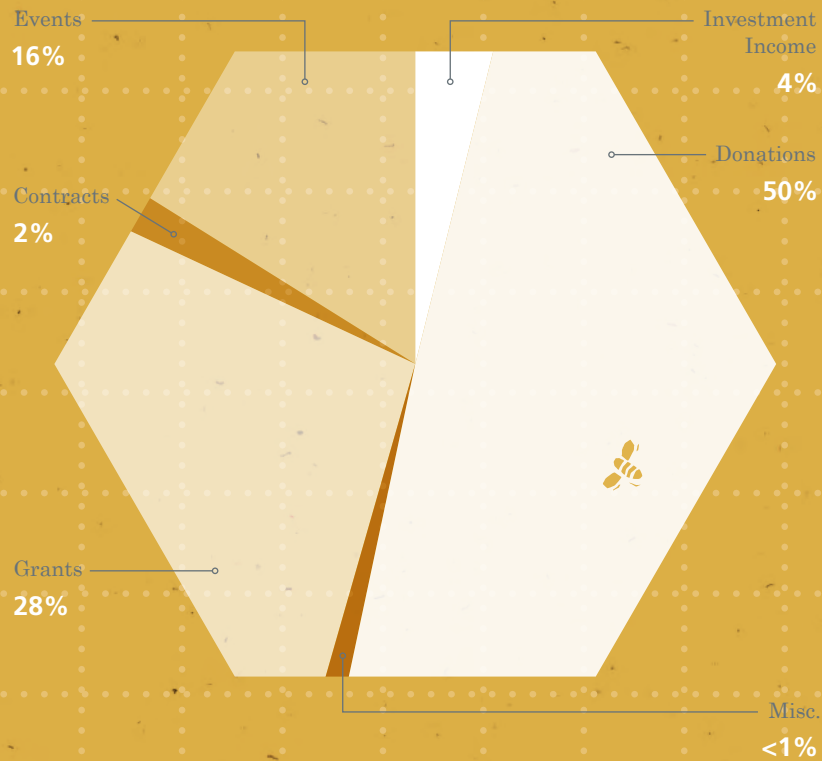
Another promising tactic on the horizon is community-managed outdoor places. We have been increasingly impressed by the magnifying power of the wonderful, committed volunteers throughout Saratoga County and the many and diverse ways they find to contribute. The enduring dependability, talents and skills they offer have proven that volunteers, with a bit of coordination, resources, and structure from the host organization can—and will—manage public outdoor places. All of PLAN's 10 preserves with public access have been developed and are being

maintained by volunteer stewards. In the coming years, PLAN will be building on that model of community-managed places. Expect community-managed forest sites and community-managed farms, community-managed parks, and more community management of trails in the coming years. **In short, the hive will be a-buzzin'!**

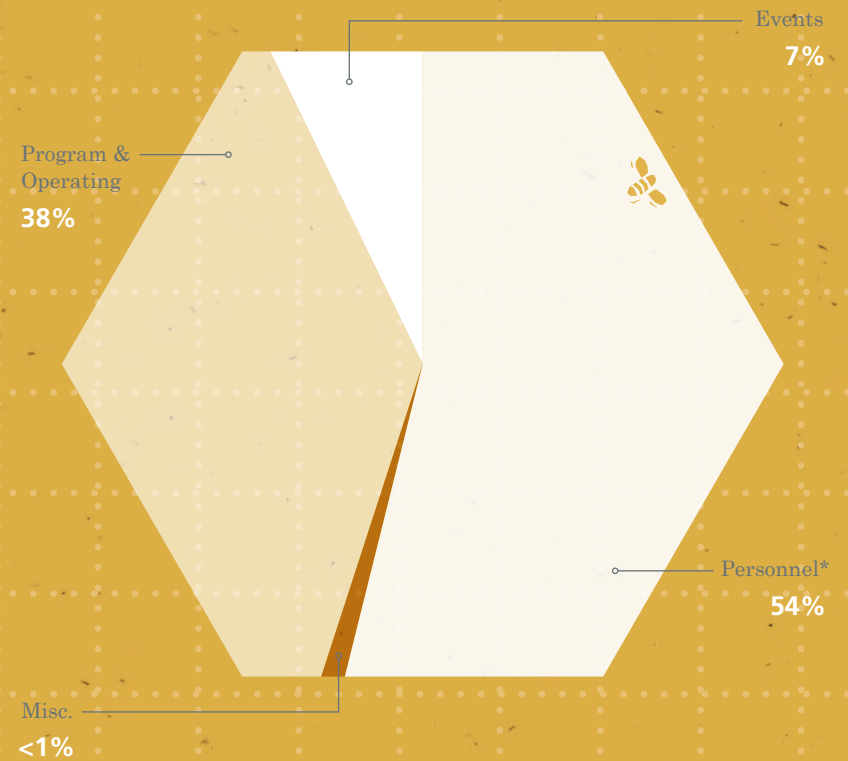


2014 financial report

TOTAL REVENUE \$392,215



TOTAL EXPENSES \$443,446



*Program: 89%; Fundraising & Administrative: 11%

Notes: Saratoga PLAN's fiscal year runs from January 1 through December 31. This financial summary is derived from unaudited 2014 books. 2014 revenues of \$47,000 are contributions and grants designated for 2015 projects. Saratoga PLAN is a not-for-profit 501©3 organization and a NYS registered charity. Complete audited financial statements are available from the NYS Dept. of Law Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

thank you!

FOUNDATIONS

Alfred Z. Solomon Charitable Trust
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Common Cent\$ NY
Community/Land Preservation and Planning Fund
Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region
Dockstader Charitable Trust
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RBC Blue Water Project
The PCLB Foundation, Inc.
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GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program
NYS Conservation Partnership Program
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

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colony.
one honey bee
colony can
produce 40–100
pounds of honey
per year, with
each worker bee
contributing
1/12 of a
teaspoon in
its lifetime.



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