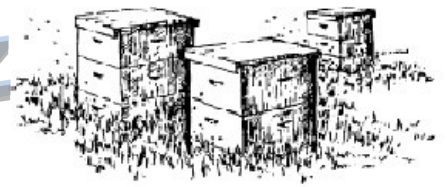




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



January, 2016

The January 12, 2016 and February 9, 2016 meetings of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, 4310 Hwy. 36, Rosenberg, Texas. Our meetings should return to the Fort Bend County "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center in March when renovations are complete.

Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Greg Pendley.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation. Our January and February meetings will be held in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** What are the bees up to this time of year?

**An A:** Winter bees are physiologically different from their summer sisters. Workers may live only a few weeks in spring and summer as they exhaust themselves foraging for nectar, pollen, water and material for propolis. Winter bees, on the other hand, have been found to live as long as a year!

As winter approaches, the colony responds to shorter days, cooler weather and reduced foraging resources. The queen slows her egg laying or may stop laying altogether. Colony numbers drop as drones are ejected and dying older workers aren't replaced. There will be fewer mouths to feed over the winter.

With cold weather, there is no activity at the hive entrance, but the bees are not just hibernating inside. When temperatures fall below 57°F, the bees begin to cluster together to stay warm. They remain active in the hive and the cluster grows loose or tight as temperatures rise and

fall. Honey bees are native to Western Europe and adapted to weather much colder than we ever see. When it is very cold, the cluster is small with many of the workers entering comb cells to form a tight group. The cluster is warmed by workers "shivering": flexing their strong flight muscles to generate heat. It is important that the hive is well ventilated in cold weather so that the moisture from all of this activity is not trapped inside to condense on the cold walls, robbing heat from the cluster. And an entrance reducer helps conserve heat and prevent mice from moving in for the winter.

The hive's "pantry" is the comb surrounding the brood nest that is filled with honey and pollen. Honey stored further away may not be accessible to the bees in very cold weather. Bees often move their honey and pollen stores to be near the cluster, backfilling brood comb. As the stores are consumed, the cluster moves upward to be near their remaining supply. Be sure to remove queen excluders that block the queen as the cluster moves up.

Elaborate winter protection for the hive is not necessary, especially with our mild winters. Lift the back of the hive from time to time to check the weight of remaining stores. Don't be fooled by lots of activity on a mild winter day. A colony can starve during a few days of cold wet weather if they are living "hand to mouth".

## November Meeting Notes

We had 48 members and guests sign in at our November meeting. Steve Mims opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. November 10 was Veteran's Day and President Daryl Scott recognized the veterans in our group. He then thanked Diane McConnon for her coordination of the refreshments during 2015 and called on new volunteers to step forward to handle the job in 2016.

Harrison Rogers of the Harris County Beekeepers was introduced as a new TBA Director. He will coordinate the local organizations working at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo.

Daryl's bee facts for the month highlighted the largest bee (1 1/2" long with a 2 1/2" wingspan!) and the smallest, *Perdita minima*, from the southwest USA (barely 1/16" long).

Wendy Chopin gave a progress report on the Mentoring Program and Rosie McCusker introduced her three Fulshear area mentees. There were a host of positive comments from mentors and mentees.

VP Nancy Hentschel invited three members to sit up front to field questions. Additional comments were added by members of the association from their own experiences. Topics discussed included mite treatments, hive configuration, swarming, hive inspection timing,

etc. etc.

Harrison Rogers discussed the Texas Master Beekeeper program, which started in May, 2015. The program includes four levels of testing and training: apprentice beekeeper, advanced beekeeper, master beekeeper and master craftsman beekeeper. Exams are given two times a year (spring and fall) and advancement is exam related. More details can be found at [www.masterbeekeeper.tamu.edu](http://www.masterbeekeeper.tamu.edu).

A variety of door prizes were donated for our last meeting of the year. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the winners.

Our November meeting featured a swap meet which was conducted both before and after the meeting agenda. Items presented ranged from a small honey extractor to novelty items like aprons and tee shirts. Beeswax, drum heaters, honey jars, frames, honey dispensers, books and candles were also available for sale or trade. The event was very popular and several members commented that we should conduct such events more often.

### Treasurer's Report

Our November, 2015 treasury balance is unchanged: \$2,682.49 (\$2,637.49 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$45.00 in cash to make change).

A financial summary and property inventory for 2015 is presented at right. The main highlights are the Mentoring Program activity plus the \$782.00 in donations received during the year.

### Election of Officers

The current slate of officers is willing to remain in office, but anyone interested in running for election in 2016 is urged to contact Gene deBons before the January meeting.

### Dues Are Due

Membership dues for the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association are \$5.00 for the calendar year. All member dues for 2016 are now due. Don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid at our January meeting.

### Volunteers Needed

Our Association provides coffee and lemonade and members volunteer to bring a snack or dessert to the monthly meetings. At our January meeting, volunteers are needed to sign up to provide refreshments for our 2016 meetings.

We'll also pass around a sign up sheet for the invocation at our monthly meetings plus a swarm call list that will be used to direct folks that contact our organization to members that capture swarms or do cutouts or those that want free bees. We'll also use it to find a home for bees trapped as a service to our communities.

#### Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2015 Financial Summary

<b>Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2015)</b>	<b>\$2,983.34</b>
<b>Income</b>	
member dues paid (146 at \$5.00)	\$730.00
donations	\$782.00
Mentoring Program income	\$300.00
extracting equipment income	<u>\$60.00</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,872.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
meeting door prizes and supplies	(\$97.50)
HLSR outreach flyers (cost share)	(\$45.00)
Super Decorating Contest	(\$96.57)
TBA dues	(\$50.00)
donation to USA Apimondia bid	(\$100.00)
Mentoring Program supplies	<u>(\$1,783.78)</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>(\$2,172.85)</u></b>
<b>Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2014)</b>	<b>\$2,682.49</b>

Note: In 2015 the Association collected (and disbursed) a total of \$984.91 for the group purchase of honey bottling containers. The collective purchase shipped to a single address saved our members about \$300.

#### Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2015 Property Inventory

<u>Description</u>	<u>Date Acquired</u>	<u>Initial Cost</u>	<u>Member Contact</u>
four framed beekeeping posters	various	unknown	Jeff McMullan
Learning Hive	8/28/2009	\$144.49	Jeff McMullan
red wagon	10/16/2009	\$45.98	Jeff McMullan
extracting equipment			Jim Lynch
extractor, stand, etc.	8/19/2011	\$583.33	
pin uncapper	11/8/2014	<u>\$15.15</u>	
		<u>\$598.48</u>	
solar wax melter	1/10/2012	donated	Nancy Hentschel
frame assembly gear	3/5/2012	\$157.88	Nancy Hentschel
outreach banners	11/7/2013	\$80.96	Jeff McMullan
public address system	6/21/2014	\$620.22	Jeff McMullan
17/18 remaining swarm traps	11/3/2014	\$132.66	Jeff McMullan
remaining Mentoring Program supplies:			Wendy Chopin
14/20 mentee ball caps		\$99.26	
7/10 mentor ball caps		\$49.63	
84/100 Beekeeper's Journals		\$605.64	
42/42 extra Journal fillers		\$45.78	
19/40 copies "The Beekeepers Handbook"		<u>\$348.27</u>	
		<u>\$1,148.58</u>	

#### TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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AgriLife Extension Service  
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Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aid or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281 342-3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.



# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



February, 2016

The February 9, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, 4310 Hwy. 36, Rosenberg, Texas. Our meetings should return to the Fort Bend County "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center in April when renovations are complete.

Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have a few empty spots on or sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Norman Harris who volunteered to bring salty treats and Donna O'Dea (something sweet) for our February meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Maureen McNight.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation. Our February and March meetings will be held in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** Why do bees make honey? It may sound like a silly question, but I get asked it all of the time. My usual smart reply is because they are *honey* bees. I really need a better answer.

**An A:** Beekeepers are asked that question all of the time and it is really a very significant query. In fact, a better question may well be "Why don't bees stop making honey?". If honey was only a food resource for winter survival, one would expect the colony to only gather an adequate supply. But they don't. If nectar resources are available, honey bees make honey so long as they have a place to put it. "Honey bound" colonies have used their comb to store honey to the detriment of raising brood.

Of course, beekeepers prefer bee stocks that make lots of the sweet stuff, but that doesn't explain the behavior of feral colonies. Honey bees were gathering all the nectar

that they could long before there were humans.

It is thought that the first insects recognizable as bees probably appeared on Earth about the same time as flowering plants, 146 to 74 million years ago. The oldest known fossil bee is thought to be around 96 to 74 million years old. Fossil evidence of "honey bees" doesn't exist, so it isn't possible to estimate when they first appeared on Earth. Scientists think that the first early humans appeared five to seven million years ago so we should appreciate the long head start that honey bees appear to have on us.

It is thought that honey bees first evolved in a tropical climate in the area of land that we now call Europe. Over the ages as the climate became cooler, bees adapted as cavity nesting colonial insects that were able to regulate the temperature of their home and store food when nectar was abundant.

Why don't bees stop making honey? Of course, adequate stores are very important to the colony's overwintering success. It is the excess that is used to nourish brood to build a workforce before nectar comes available in the spring. Honey bees have figured out that "some is good but more is better" applies to their reproductive success in the spring. Raising brood in

late winter/early spring has been compared to an "investment" made by the colony. If the bees get it right, they have a large work force ready to go in the spring. If they get it wrong and raise more mouths than they are able to feed before the first blooms of spring, they will deplete their stores of nectar and pollen and their survival is at stake. These remarkable insects have figured out that the way to deal with that huge risk is to continue making honey without limit.

## Special Meeting Program

At our January meeting, Vice President (and meeting program planner) Nancy Hentschel announced our intention to have a least one special program each year. Nancy plans for that special program to be at our February meeting.

JP The Beeman (Jeffery Armstrong) and Shawee (Bruce Scharwath) are beekeepers and video photographers from New Orleans. JP does amazing bee removals/cutouts while almost always finding the queen on the spot. Both have been keeping and rescuing bees for many years. Their informative and entertaining videos can be found at JPthebeeman on YouTube. We are happy to welcome them to our meeting. Be ready with questions about this completely different perspective on keeping bees.



## January Meeting Notes

The Fort Bend County “Bud” O’Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation so our February meeting was held next door in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. Confusion over the venue change seemed to have been minimal but we only had 46 members and guests sign in at the meeting. Since 60 new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues at the meeting, it’s apparent that many missed the sign in sheets. Please make sure to sign in at our meetings since attendance data is important to record our use of county facilities.

Greg Pendley opened our meeting with an invocation offering thanks for “hives that are full and stings that are few”. Greg then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance even though there wasn’t an American flag in Building B. We’ll get that straight in February. Note too that at this point it looks like our March meeting will be in Building B again.

As always, there is a whole lot to get done at our first meeting of the year. President Daryl Scott reminded everyone that our annual dues are \$5.00 and the January meeting is a great time to get them paid. There were lots of new faces at the meeting and Daryl welcomed our guests and new members. He also reminded everyone that there were sign up sheets for 2016 volunteers for snacks and offering our opening invocation. We also need a volunteer who can show up a little early to prepare coffee and lemonade.

Daryl next introduced Harrison Rogers, a Fort Bend member and newly appointed Area 5 Director for the Texas Beekeepers Association. He is the TBA representative for five area beekeeping groups. (There are 35 or so Texas beekeeper organizations affiliated with TBA.) Harrison suggested checking out the Texas Beekeepers web site (<http://texasbeekeepers.org>) for more information and beekeeper

resources. A principle focus of the TBA is promoting Texas honey. Unfortunately honey is the second most adulterated food (behind olive oil).

Harrison is organizing the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo honey bee exhibit this year. Volunteers are needed to provide bees for the two observation hives and work the honey bee exhibit. Shifts are 9:00 am - 3:00 pm and 3:00pm - 9:00 pm. It is a great opportunity for beekeepers to serve their community by educating the public about honey bees and beekeeping.

Daryl next updated the group on what beekeepers are up to. Spring is right around the corner, so we should be repairing equipment, ordering bees and supplies, and perhaps feeding our bees for a kick start into spring. If the temperature is over 60° or so, a quick inspection may be a good idea. Daryl offered his monthly fun facts ): bees have two pairs of wings (flies have one), bears prefer bee larvae over honey, and the color and flavor of honey depends on its floral source. (He found them on the Internet so they must be true.)

Our January program was a presentation on honey and human health by Sarah Ayala. Sara is a UT PhD candidate in agribusiness and “The Kiwi Importer”. She imports and distributes Manuka honey from New Zealand. Manuka is well known for its medicinal value in skin care and wound treatment.

Besides sweet food, humans have known of the medicinal value of honey for some 5,000 years. Today we find honey in skin care products and even bandages from CVS. The antibacterial benefit from honey is due to the presence of hydrogen peroxide (from enzymes), low pH (acidity) and very low moisture content. Sarah’s Manuka honey is laboratory tested and labeled with a measure of its antibacterial properties. A small jar retails for as much as \$60!!

An important piece of business for our January meeting was the elec-

tion of officers for the coming year. Gene deBons offered a nomination report. Each of the current officers agreed to serve another term. There were no other candidates or nominations from the floor. Albert Smaistrila moved that the nominations be closed and our officers reelected by proclamation. After a second by Craig Rench, the motion carried. Reelected were Daryl Scott (President), Nancy Hentschel (Vice President) and Jeff McMullan (Secretary-Treasurer). Congratulations.

Door prize winners in January included Margie Freed and Cynda deBons. They picked bars of handmade soap donated by Joey Tuttle (<http://www.fulshearsoaps.com>). Other winners were John Petter (a candle made and donated by Jack Richardson), Harrison Rogers (a mug donated by Sharon Moore), Tim Scott (yard eggs from Kenneth Nugent and Phillip McGaughey).

## Treasurer’s Report

Our January treasury balance was \$2,682.49. Since then we collected dues from 67 new and renewing members (\$335.00), enrolled two new mentoring program (\$60.00) and received \$20.00 in donations. We were also charged then reimbursed \$3.00 in banking fees. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,097.49 (\$3,052.49 in our checking account plus \$45.00 in cash.

**TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

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# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



March, 2016

The March 8, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Building D of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, 4310 Hwy. 36, Rosenberg, Texas. Our meetings should return to the Fort Bend County "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center on Band Rd. in April when renovations are complete.

Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have a few empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Steve Mims who volunteered to bring salty treats and Jennifer Escobedo (something sweet) for our March meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Steve Mims.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The renovations at the "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center are not yet finished. In January and February we met in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. In March we will meet in Building D "as in dog". It is two buildings over from Building B.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I'm a new beekeeper and am anxious to capture my first swarm. I also want to do a cutout at a friend's beach house. Ok?

**An A:** Ok?? Maybe, but maybe not. Capturing swarms is really pretty easy, but rescues and cutouts may be something else altogether. Our organization wants to foster safe, responsible, successful beekeeping. The lure of "freebees" is great, but novice beekeepers may not yet have the necessary skills to do swarms and cutouts safely, responsibly and successfully.

**Safely:** Swarms are usually pretty docile, but feral bees in an established colony may defend their home ferociously. Unless you've dealt with mean bees before, a cutout could become a real problem, even for people and pets some distance from the colony. You should

always expect and plan for mean, bad bees that will sting you through your protective gear and attack your veil in such numbers that you can't even see to complete the job. Be prepared and have a plan right up to how you will exterminate the bees if that is the last resort. Proceed cautiously and enlist the help of an experienced beekeeper or perhaps leave cutouts and rescues to others as you gain experience.

**Responsibly:** Capturing and bringing a feral colony into your bee yard is only part of the challenge. Focus on bee keeping since if they decide to leave they could relocate to someone's house, maybe yours. In our area, it is really bad advice to try to salvage honey and brood from a cutout. After such a huge disruption to the colony, the bees are unable to deal with small hive beetles. Maggots quickly infest the salvaged comb, causing the bees to abscond to who knows where. And every maggot can become an adult beetle to repeat the process again. A good plan is to give rescued bees a frame or two of capped brood (no bees) from another hive to get them quickly established in their new home.

**Successfully:** Captured feral swarms and colonies are "survivors", having adapted without human help. They are well suited to our climate, floral re-

sources and pests and disease. Hopefully, the bees will adapt to your hive quickly. Remember though that it is the old queen that leaves with the swarm. The colony may begin rearing her replacement soon and it is pretty common for new queens to not return from mating flights. Be on the lookout for queenlessness (probably not really a word, but we know what it means!). If you gave your new colony a brood frame with eggs or tiny larvae, the bees will be able to raise a new queen if the old one didn't make it to the new hive.

## Swap Time Again

For our November meeting, we encouraged members to bring along those beekeeping supplies that they want to sell, trade or give away. Of course you could do that at any meeting, but fall's cooler weather seemed like a great time to clean out the garage. Everyone thought we should do it more often.

March 13 is Daylight Savings Time "spring forward" day. We'll have an extra hour of daylight for our meeting in April to check out the stuff folks brought to the meeting. Members can make a deal and swap treasures out in the parking lot. If you have extra hive components or beekeeper gear, bring it along to our April 12 meeting to swap, sell or give away.

## **February Meeting Notes**

The Fort Bend County “Bud” O’Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation so our January and February meetings were held next door in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. Note that the March meeting will be in Building D, two buildings down. Hopefully in April we will be back at the Community Center. There was little confusion over the venue change; we had 64 members and guests sign in at the meeting. 26 new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues in February, bringing our roster total to 93!! Thanks to Norman Harris and Donna O’Dea for bringing treats.

Our meeting was opened with an invocation by Maureen McKnight followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. President Daryl Scott announced that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for snacks and our opening invocation. Daryl passed around honey bottle cap labels with the “produced by” wording required for small honey producers in Texas under the new law that went into effect on September 1. The Texas Beekeepers Association had the cards and labels printed. They are available, along with other items, on the TBA web site.

Harrison Rogers reminded everyone that there are still volunteer opportunities for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo honey bee exhibit this year. Volunteers are needed to provide bees for the two observation hives and work the honey bee exhibit. Shifts are 9:00 am - 3:00 pm and 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm. You can check on open shifts under the CALENDAR tab at <http://www.harriscountybeekeepers.org/>. Sign up by email at the CONTACT US tab.

Daryl’s monthly fun facts for February: honey bees fly about 55,000 miles gathering nectar to make one pound of honey; honey bees directly contribute \$8 to \$10 billion to the U.S. economy each year; it is estimated that there are 200,000 Amer-

ican beekeepers.

Next, Vice President Nancy Hentschel introduced our speakers for a special meeting program. JP The Beeman (Jeffery Armstrong) and Shawee (Bruce Scharwath) are beekeepers and video photographers whose work has a huge following on YouTube. JP is from Metairie (suburban New Orleans) and Shawee is from the small town of Paulina, La. (“Shawee” means raccoon in Cajun. He picked up that nickname because he had a pet ‘coon as a kid.) JP met Shawee through his postings on the internet.

JP is in the pest control business and started out by killing bees as his job. Some 25 years ago he wanted to learn more about these fascinating insects so he started keeping bees. He says he learned most of what he knows by making lots of mistakes along the way.

By show of hands JP learned that many at our meeting are just getting started with bees. He warned everyone that you can “get lost” watching bees do what bees do. He rates the experience as almost spiritual. Next came a long string of beekeeping tips and advice:

You should have at least two hives and make sure your hive location encourages bees to fly up and away to avoid conflicts.

Nucs make great “training wheels” for small colonies. Swarm traps work but a nuc with old comb in it (along with a few drops of lemongrass oil) is a whole lot better. If you are using a trap, check it often so it doesn’t become a “cutout”.

Use a red light when working with bees at night or in a dark attic. Use an infrared temperature gun from Harbor Freight to locate bees in a wall. After removing bees, always make the cavity uninhabitable by filling it completely with fiberglass insulation.

JP and Shawee use a “Colorado Bee Vacuum”. You can buy one on Amazon.com! They use Honey-B-Gone to run bees out of inaccessible plac-

es. It is sold to clear bees out of supers for harvest and it works great for other uses too.

Their bee jackets get really dirty doing removals. They like to spray them down with “Greased-Lightning” cleaner from the dollar store before washing with unscented detergent.

The helpful tips were almost endless and it was after 9:00 pm before our meeting ended. Many hung around afterwards to learn more.

Door prize winners in January included Rebecca Eicke: the book “A World Without Bees” donated by Michael Pawelek and a honey bee picture frame also donated by Michael Pawelek. Stephanie Kinghorn donated home made soap (won by Phillip McGaughey) and lip balm (won by Preston Pitts).

## **Treasurer’s Report**

Our February treasury balance was \$3097.49. Since then we collected dues from 26 new and renewing members (\$130.00). Expenses included \$50.00 for our association dues to the Texas Beekeepers Association, \$1,012.36 in expenses for our February meeting and \$291.67 for community outreach materials. The resulting treasury balance is \$1,873.46 consisting of \$45.00 in cash and our Wells Fargo posted balance of \$2,635.82, less \$812.36 in outstanding checks.

**TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
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*Boone Holladay*

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# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



April, 2016

The April 12, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have a few empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Dave Grimme who volunteered to bring salty treats and Jennifer Escobedo (something sweet) for our March meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Dave Grimme.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The renovations at the "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center are complete and we will be returning there for our April meeting.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I'm still confused. What are the rules for bottling and selling my honey?

**An A:** There continues to be a fair amount of confusion on this topic. It is best to go online and read what the Texas Department of State Health Services has to say (Google "Selling Honey in Texas").

The new "small honey producer" law that went into effect September 1, 2015 permits beekeepers to produce, package and sell their honey without any food safety requirements, even prohibiting requirements imposed by local health departments. Hives must be located in Texas and owned and managed by the beekeeper. Sales must be direct to the consumer (not for resale or use in products to be sold). Venues are restricted to the beekeeper's home, farmers' markets, roadside stands or at nonprofit fairs, festivals or events. There are specific labeling requirements and the product can only be honey or honey comb (no added ingredients). The "shiny object" in all of this is that

"small" is defined as less than 2,500 pounds of honey!

A "food manufacturer's license" is required if the "small producer" rules are not met. The main issue in meeting the licensing and inspection requirements is that foods cannot be handled or stored in any room used as living or sleeping quarters. "Selling Honey in Texas" discusses the details, including a series of frequently asked questions.

## Honey Container Order

Many of our members use containers purchased in bulk from bee supply houses or from Sailor Plastics:

(<http://www.sailorplastics.com/>).

The cost per container is substantially less with the large quantity (200 or more containers and lids in a single large box). Because of their large size, shipping on these individual big boxes is about \$40 each (almost equal to the value of the bottles inside). For the last couple of years we have been ordering honey containers as a group, saving considerably on shipping costs (last year's order was delivered for less than \$5.00 per box). Final cost savings depend on the size of the order.

To again take advantage of these savings, we will be placing a group order with Sailor Plastics. If you want in, you'll need to complete an order form and have it with you at the May meeting. We will have forms available at our April meet-

ing and plan to email copies to everyone in a week or two. You will need to visit Sailor's web site to select from the many choices of containers and lids that are available.

We will collect the forms at our May meeting and we plan to place the order as soon as we have forms and deposits in hand. A \$50.00 per box nonrefundable deposit is required, so make sure you get your order right. The deposit checks should be made out to Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. Be aware that lids must be ordered separately.

The Association's entire order will be shipped to Jeff McMullan's home in Sugar Land and orders must be picked up on the day it is delivered. The balance on your order will be due at pickup. If you change your mind or something, we will offer your order to others for the remaining unpaid balance. It is ok for members to get together to split a box, but one of them must place the order for the full box and lids.

## Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was \$1,873.46. Since then we collected \$5.00 in dues from 12 new and renewing members (\$60.00) plus \$75.00 for three more members enrolled in our mentoring program. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,008.46 consisting of \$45.00 in cash and our Wells Fargo posted balance of \$2,575.82 less a \$612.36 outstanding check.

## Swap Time Again

Daylight Savings Time went into effect March 13 so we have an extra hour of daylight for our April 12 meeting night. The plan is for another swap night for members to check out the stuff folks brought to the meeting. Members can make a deal and swap treasures out in the parking lot. If you have extra hive components or beekeeper gear, bring it along to our April 12 meeting to swap, sell or give away.

## March Meeting Notes

With the Fort Bend County “Bud” O’Shieles Community Center still undergoing renovation, we were again displaced to the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds for our March meeting. This time we met in Building D. It seemed that everyone managed to find the place ok. We had 54 members and guests sign in at the meeting. There were 6 first-timers and 12 new and renewing members that paid their 2016 dues in March. Our roster total now stands at 105!!

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott opened our meeting with an invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl next reminded everyone that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation. He also called for more volunteers to help with the honey bee exhibit at the NRG Center AGventure at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The rodeo continues through March 22 and more volunteers are always needed. Many of our members have helped out at the rodeo and everyone agreed that it was a fun time that goes by very quickly.

Daryl’s monthly fun facts for March: According to the National Honey Board, there were some 2.64 million hives in the U. S. in 2013. There were 115,000 - 125,000 beekeepers in the U. S., most with 25 or fewer hives. The top five honey producing states (in order) are North Dakota, Montana, South Da-

kota, Florida and California.

The “beekeeper’s calendar” for March includes swarm management techniques like reversing brood boxes, doing splits, etc. During winter it is likely that the bees have moved up in the hive stack as they feed on their stores. Returning the brood nest to the bottom discourages swarming: the bees think they need to finish growing the brood nest first.

Splits can be made using mated queens or queen cells. A queen cell from a hive that is preparing to swarm can be used to make a split, but always leave behind at least one queen cell in case the hive has already swarmed. Another option is the “walkaway split” where the queenless split raises their own queen. This requires eggs or brood less than one day old.

Boone Holladay, Wendy Chopin, Jeff McMullan and Milton Woods gave reports on their mentoring program progress. Jeff McMullan also demonstrated his latest gadget: the Nectar Detector for weighing hives.

Jeff Murray told the group about his plans to form the Texas Honey Trading Co. and asked for input on his idea to form a kind of beekeeper cooperative. Details to follow.

Door prize winners in March included Wendy Chopin who took home a special treat: a bottle of Jerzey Trybek’s hand crafted limoncello (see the related article). The winners were Craig Rench (a magnifying glass donated by Jeff McMullan), Glenda McGaughey (an entrance feeder donated by Gerard Howard) and Alan L’Roy and Gina Walker (beekeeper calendars donated by Jack Richardson). Christina Lopez won a bottle of lemon oil and a list of all its uses (Daryl Scott bought it accidentally while shopping for lemongrass oil). Daryl also donated a plastic water jug that was won by John Petter. It can be used to make a really handy swarm catcher using plans by Jeff McMullan. Jeff has used his swarm jug to capture swarms as high as 35 ft up.

## Limoncello

Limoncello is a citrus-based liqueur that is served well chilled. Association member Jerzey Trybek hand crafts his own limoncello sweetened with honey from his hives. He starts with the zest from 8-10 average lemons, or from 8 oranges, or from 5-6 grapefruits. Wash them with a brush and start zesting. He prefers stainless steel vegetable peelers as his zesting tool. Zest as thinly as possible – too much pith will introduce a more bitter taste.

Next he infuses 190 proof grain alcohol. For each liter of alcohol, Jerzey wants about 200 square inches of zest (measured and calculated using  $\pi$ ...high science). He pours alcohol over the zest and seals it in a jar with a tight lid. Within a week or so, the alcohol has dissolved oils and other goodies and the zest becomes dry and brittle. Next, Jerzey strains the yellow/orange infused alcohol. He then dilutes the citrus infusion to about 80 proof (store-bought limoncello is usually 60 proof). His proportions are water, infused alcohol, and honey in 5:4:1 parts by volume. He dissolves 100 ml of honey in 500 ml of warm, filtered and boiled water. After it cools, he adds 400 ml of the alcohol infusion. He lets the cello “mature” for a few days at room temperature before enjoying it well-chilled, straight from the freezer.

### **TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION**



Boone Holladay

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# Fort Bend Buzz



newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



May, 2016

The May 10, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have a few empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Steve Mims who volunteered to bring salty treats and Rosie McCusker (something sweet) for our May meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Steve Mims. Our May program will include an update on Texas honey bee law by Mary Reed, Apiary Inspector with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I'm kinda new at all this but it seems like my bees have gotten "mean". I've read up on it and it sounds like I need to requeen them. What do you think?

**An A:** Life is too short to spend much time dealing with mean bees. Sometimes a new queen from more gentle stock is absolutely necessary. Actually, a new queen from better stock may be a good idea even if the behavior problem can be explained.

We all know folks that are grumpy all the time. Others are never grumpy, but most of us get grumpy sometimes. Honey bees may fall in to any of these three categories. Even though Africanized bees made it to Fort Bend County years ago, there really aren't all that many really bad colonies and most of them are feral bees. Before deciding our managed hive falls in the "all the time" category, we probably should contemplate what would cause peaceful bees to become "pissy".

Aggressive behavior in bees is a defensive response to threats to their hive. While foraging bees are intent on the chores at hand and rarely sting, guard bees have an entirely different job. Our smoker serves to calm the colony and cover any alarm scents that guard bees

give off. Don't be surprised if your sweet bees react aggressively when you enter a hive without using your smoker. Duh.

New beekeepers often start out with a small swarm, a few frames of bees in a nuc or purchase a 3 lb. "package". There are about 12,000 bees in the package cage and it may seem like a whole lot of bees. But the hive will grow to a full colony of 60,000 or more and it can happen pretty fast. A queen can lay 1,500 or more eggs per day (an egg per minute!). There can be as many as 2,000 bees on a deep frame covered in workers on both sides. And some 4,000 more workers will soon emerge from a deep frame full of capped brood on both sides. It just makes sense that when colonies get big there are far more guard bees with more food and brood to protect. Perhaps "bad behavior" is just a whole lot more bees flying around than just a few short weeks ago. Larger colonies tend to be more aggressive than the smaller ones and a split may be a good idea to reduce the numbers and prevent swarming (a swarm of bees in search of a place to live often ends up badly for the bees and for people).

When bees react aggressively, for whatever reason, a true test is how far away they get before returning to the hive and how long they stay upset. Gentle bees may seem aggressive but they don't follow you for more than a few footsteps and

quickly calm down. Bad bees may attack for some distance and stay mad about things for quite a while. They may even attack people or pets some distance from the hive.

Honey bees seem to be particularly defensive when the weather is unsettled, a normal reaction when someone has removed the roof of their house with storm clouds threatening. What if your home was threatened by a loud machine throwing debris and giving off smokey fumes (your lawnmower or weedeater)? What if a skunk had been scratching around your front door all night long?

Requeening an aggressive hive can calm things down quickly, often in just a few days. It will require a new queen from desirable stock and a plan for finding and removing the old queen a day or so before she arrives. Sometimes really bad bees respond aggressively to the new queen so a careful introduction is a good idea.

## Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$2,008.46. Since then we collected \$5.00 in dues from 12 new and renewing members (\$60.00) plus \$75.00 for three more members enrolled in our mentoring program. We also received a donation of \$45.00. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,188.46, consisting of \$45.00 in cash and \$2,143.46 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

## **Boyd Edward Dawson** **10/15/1936 - 4/29/2016**

We are saddened to learn that our friend and fellow member, Boyd Dawson, 79, died suddenly last week. He was a long-time beekeeper and the Association will miss him and his insights into handling bees. He joined the club in 2003, but had attended meetings regularly for several years before that. Back then, a beekeeper meeting was ten or so members sitting around a table talking about honey bees and beekeeping. Boyd was always eager to tackle bee removal jobs that the others were not willing to attempt. He often reported afterwards that the job had been "easy" and he thanked us for the referrals.

Boyd was always willing to offer advice when we had questions and he would often help fellow beekeepers with difficult jobs. Boyd's honey could be found across the county, from Dozier's Barbeque in Fulshear to Brehm's on FM 359, Enchanted Gardens on FM 359 at FM 723, Fort Bend Feed in Rosenberg and Needville Feed Store. His son Glen plans to continue Boyd's beekeeping operations.

Boyd was a humble beekeeper and a true gentleman. In spite of his great general knowledge of bees and beekeeping, he did not put on airs. He was easy to talk to but reluctant to offer unsolicited advice. We will all miss Boyd's quiet demeanor at our meetings. He was a steady and confident influence on the club and on his beekeeping friends. May we all be a little more like Boyd in our dealings with our fellow beekeepers and with our friends and customers.

### **April Meeting Notes**

Renovations at the Fort Bend County "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center are essentially completed, so we returned to our usual venue in April. 55 members and guests signed in at the meeting and twelve new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues in April. There are

still quite a few members who haven't come up with five bucks for 2016. If your name on your newsletter envelope is in italics, you haven't paid your dues and this the last *Buzz* that you will receive.

Our April meeting included another "swap night". Few members actually showed up with surplus gear, so it will likely be some time before we declare another one. Of course anyone that wants to swap stuff is welcome to bring it to any meeting.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott introduced Dave Grimme who opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl again reminded everyone that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation.

Daryl's monthly fun facts for April came from the web site todayIfoundout.com. We all know that the "waggle dance" is how honey bees communicate where to find food or a new home. In a fascinating experiment, scientists located the only source of food for a honey bee colony on the far side of a mountain. The bees could not fly over the obstacle, but they communicated where the food was to be found as a direct path. They had never flown that route but somehow determined the correct angle relative to the sun to reach the food source. Fellow foragers could not fly over the mountain either but were still able to locate the food.

The "beekeeper's calendar" for early spring includes opening entrance reducers when we see congestion, supering hives and making splits.

Our program was a top to bottom hive stack review by VP Nancy Hentschel. The focus was keeping the names straight. Many of the names and terms we use were introduced along with the Langstroth hive in the 1800's. Common words in 1870 aren't in much use today.

We had a few donated door prizes but forgot to have a drawing! They will be back in May.

## **Honey Container Order**

For several years now we have been ordering honey containers as a group, saving considerably on shipping costs (last year's order was delivered for less than \$5.00 per carton of bottles compared to \$40.00 in shipping for a single box). If you want in on the savings, you'll need to complete an order form and have it with you at the May meeting. We've emailed out order forms and will have some forms available at the May meeting. You will need to visit Sailor's web site to select from the many choices of containers and lids that are available (be sure to state what color and style lid you want).

We will collect the forms at our May meeting and place the order right away. A \$50.00 per box non-refundable deposit is required, so make sure you get your order right. The deposit checks should be made out to Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. Be aware that lids must be ordered separately.

The Association's entire order will be shipped to Jeff McMullan's home in Sugar Land and orders must be picked up on the day it is delivered. The unpaid balance will be due at pickup. If you are unable to pick up your order or change your mind or something, we will offer your order to others for the remaining unpaid balance.

**TEXAS A&M**  
**AGRI LIFE**  
**EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

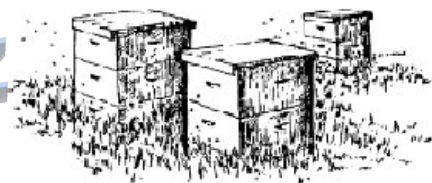
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# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



June, 2016

The June 14, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Sharon Moore who volunteered to bring salty treats and Jessica Boudreaux (something sweet) in June. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. We don't have a volunteer for our opening invocation, so if you can help with that, please contact President Daryl Scott. Our June program will include an update on Texas honey bee law by Mary Reed, Apiary Inspector with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service. Mary was originally scheduled for May but was able to postpone her presentation so we could explore Flow Hives before Sharon Moore and Doug Benson put them on their hives.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I harvested honey three weeks ago. I did 10 supers with the old fashioned crush and strain method. All of the honey done that way has crystallized on me: 15 gallons! I'm not really sure what caused it. What can I do with this honey? Should I just try to sell it as is?

**An A:** First off, crushing and straining probably had little to do with your honey crystallizing. Nonetheless, ten supers is a lot of honey to harvest that way and it is pretty wasteful.

Everyone seems to appreciate the effort required to make honey, the only human food produced by an insect. To make a pound of honey, bees have flown some 55,000 miles visiting two million flowers. The average worker contributes only about 1/12 teaspoon of honey in its lifetime.

What about the wax to make comb? It requires about six or eight pounds of honey to make a pound of beeswax, so a huge amount of effort will be needed to replace comb when we crush and strain to harvest honey. With top bar hives, crushing and straining is our only alternative. In fact, the invention of Langstroth hives as an alternative to straw

skeps and bee gums led to a 19th century boom in beekeeping because honey comb could be reused by the bees. Uncapping and extracting is much more efficient and, like most other beekeeper clubs, our organization owns harvest equipment for members to use. You can save your bees a ton of work if you use the club's equipment next time. We require a deposit to make sure the equipment is returned plus a \$20 fee.

Since it is a concentrated solution of various sugars, all honey is likely to crystallize. How long that takes depends on proportions from the various floral sources (or sugar water) and the temperature. If you stored three pails of honey in your nice cool kitchen, the conditions were right for crystallization. Warmer is better, but you can freeze honey and it just gets incredibly thick without crystallizing. Put it in the 'fridge though and it may well crystallize in a few hours. It is best to store honey pails in the garage or storage room so it stays relatively warm. It is less viscous too, so the bubbles and bits of stuff float to the top leaving crystal clear honey below.

What to do? Crystallized honey tastes fine but it is a lot like sweet tasting beach. Since this batch is prone to crystallize, you could make "creamed honey" using supplies that the bee supply folks sell, including

"seed" that you must mix in with a paint mixer on a cordless drill (<https://www.dadant.com/catalog/catalogsearch/result/?q=creamed>). Once you get going you can seed the next batch with some of your own creamed honey....or you can buy creamed honey at the grocery store and use it as seed. Most of the honey sold in Europe is creamed honey with a really fine texture that spreads like peanut butter. But you need to start with liquid honey.

How do you liquefy it? Some folks put it in the attic for a day or so, but wrestling a 60 pound pail of honey up a set of disappearing stairs presents a challenge. If you have a big enough ice chest, you can put the pail inside with a 60 watt incandescent light bulb and it will be liquefied in a few days. It is rumored that one of our members put a pail in a plastic bag (in case something leaked) and filled the jacuzzi tub with really hot water. It worked ok but his wife brings it up all the time in polite company.

Once it is liquid again, you can bottle it up. I suggest 2 lb squeeze bottles and tell whoever gets it to fill a cute honey dispenser for the kitchen table then store the rest in the freezer. When the dispenser is empty, very carefully microwave it just enough to be able to squeeze out a refill: ten seconds, wait 30 seconds,



check it, maybe ten more seconds, etc. Then quickly back in the freezer. Microwave energy makes stuff hot by exciting water molecules, and all the energy is going in to not much water. Blowing up a bottle of honey in the microwave is worse than a honey leak in the hot tub...and you'll be reminded of it for the rest of your life.

Speaking of blowing things up.....understand that when honey crystallizes, the moisture content of the remaining liquid goes up. It can ferment and explode the container....another good reason to store it in the garage in a plastic bag.

### **Honey Container Order**

Seventeen Association members took advantage of this year's group order of honey containers.

The numbers are incredible: The order totaled 36 huge boxes of containers shipped to a single address for \$10.09 per carton. Our members saved over \$1,000 in shipping costs this year. The order totaled 4,640 containers, enough to bottle 7,370 pounds of honey (over 600 gallons or 125 five gallon pails)!

Texas state law now permits beekeepers producing less than 2,500 pounds of honey to sell it (or give it away) without any food safety or inspection requirements. Nothing can be added to the honey and there are restrictions on when and where it can be sold. There are special labeling requirements as well. You can read the rules on the internet at <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/HS/htm/HS.437.htm>. It is important that beekeepers know and understand these rules. It is also important that we preserve and protect public perception of honey as a safe, wholesome food.

### **May Meeting Notes**

64 members and guests, including ten first-timers, signed in at our May meeting. Thirteen new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues in May. There are still quite a few folks who haven't come up with five bucks for their 2016 dues.

If this newsletter didn't come in the mail it is because you haven't paid your dues and have been dropped from the mailing list.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott introduced Steve Mims who opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl welcomed everyone and again reminded us that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation. He thanked Steve Mims and Rosie McCusker for volunteering to bring snacks for the meeting.

Daryl's monthly fun facts for May came from the stats published in the May edition of the American Bee Journal, including the fact that the 2015 U. S. honey crop was down 15%. The "beekeeper's calendar" for spring includes installing queen excluders (if you use them), making more splits, and getting ready for your harvest.

Jeff McMullan gave a quick status report on our honey container order and Jeff Murray updated us on [TexasHoneyTrading.com](http://TexasHoneyTrading.com).

The scheduled program for May was a presentation by Apiary Inspector Mary Reed. Mary was able to postpone her trip to Rosenberg so that we could learn more about Flow Hives™. Sharon Moore and Doug Benson brought their new Flow™ Supers for all to see and touch. We watched a YouTube video of the hive in action then discussed Sharon and Doug's plans to give it a try.

We had a door prize extravaganza in May since we forgot to have a drawing in April. Winners were too many to list; congratulations and thanks to the donors.

### **Visit to Hawk's Nest Farm**

As a follow up to our May meeting, Sharon Moore invited every one to a field day at her farm on May 22. Her bees were filling Flow Supers™ and there was lots of beekeeping equipment and gear to see, including club-owned equipment and out-

reach materials. Fresh made lemonade and special recipe honey cookies, prepared by Sharon's sister Catherine, a real treat.

Within a week Sharon was hard at work collecting her first gallon of Flow™ honey. The jar was full in five minutes.



### **Treasurer's Report**

Our May treasury balance was \$2,186.46. We collected dues from 13 new and renewing members (\$65.00) and received donations of \$96.05. We spent \$85.98 for flowers honoring Boyd Dawson (largely offset by a \$55.00 donation in memory of Boyd). We also spent \$8.97 for bottled water for the field day at Sharon Moore's, \$28.57 for coffee, cups, etc. for our meetings, and \$6.48 for a replacement tire for our red wagon. We collected and disbursed \$3,286.95 for our group honey container order. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,188.46, consisting of \$45.00 in cash and \$2,143.46 in our checking account.

### **TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

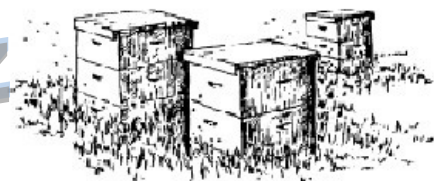
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# Fort Bend Buzz



newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



July, 2016

The July 12, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Arthur Reuter who volunteered to bring salty treats and Scott Eicke (something sweet) in July. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Greg Pendley will give an opening invocation and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and a great big A:

**Q:** We've seen the emails about bees in traps and would love to get in on some of these the opportunities but we are not sure how this works.

**An A:** Our Association's swarm trapping program is proving to be of real value to our community. Each swarm of bees lured into a trap may have settled into the wall of someone's home instead. Hundreds of dollars in removal costs are avoided and the bees are welcome additions to a beekeeper's beeyard.

In early spring last year we began lending bee traps to homeowners. The traps consist of a square fiber nursery pot attached with deck screws to a 16" x 16" square of plywood. A hanging loop of wire and a splash of lemongrass oil complete the setup. In early 2016 Extension Agent Boone Holladay prepared a press release to inform folks about the program. Quite a few traps are out and bees have been moving in.

Brandy Rader at the Extension office administers the program, lending traps to folks that are concerned about bee problems in the spring. Beekeepers are adept at removing swarms before the bees find a permanent home. But a swarm in nearby woods high up in a tree or in the back corner of the yard may not be

spotted. An undetected swarm may then move into a trap instead of some other cavity where they may conflict with people. Hopefully as soon as the bees move in, the homeowner notifies the Extension office. It is important to frequently check the trap to see if bees have moved in since it really upsets Kelly Morris for anyone to have to cut out an established hive from a trap. As soon as Brandy is notified of bees in a trap, an email alert goes out to find a member to pick up the trap and give the bees inside a suitable home.

We encourage the trap to be hung where it can be easily removed. It is best for it to be relocated after dark since forager bees will have all returned to the colony for the night. Usually there will be bees on the outside of the trap but they are easily chased inside with a few puffs from your smoker. Before smoking them in though, first check for "leaks" (sometimes the bees can get out where the pot has pulled away from the plywood back). The best clue is a cluster of bees on the outside of the trap near the "leak". A puff or two of smoke will get them to move back into the trap. A quick and easy way to tightly seal the hole is to use a hive tool or screw driver to stuff it shut with a small piece of steel wool (its rough texture will usually hold it in place quite well). Once any leaks are taken care of, it is time to finish sealing up the trap. Steel wool will

work on the trap entrances too, but there is another trick that works really well. Push a square plastic pail over the end of the pot to close off all of the holes that the bees have been using to get inside. Home Depot and Lowe's sometimes sell heavy chain by the foot from very sturdy black pails. If you spot an empty one in the store, they will usually let you have it. It is a perfect fit and the black color seems to lessen the number of bees that exit the trap while it is closed up with a bucket.

At this point you would have the trap sealed up and ready to be relocated. It is important to know that if the bees have been inside for a week or more, the trap may be pretty heavy and the new white comb inside can be very very fragile in hot summer weather. Always handle the trap by grasping the fiber pot. If you hold it by the plywood back, the pot may break loose and become a real problem to deal with after it falls to the ground. In handling and in transit always keep trap oriented as you found it with the "up" side up (to keep from collapsing any comb that may be inside).

When you get to the beeyard that night, place the trap where the hive will be located and open the entrances to prevent overheating. If you used a plastic pail, expect bees to be inside when you remove it from the trap.

You should plan on moving the bees into your hive the next morning. Move the trap aside and set your hive body on the bottom board with four or so frames to the outside (if you have old drawn comb it will save the bees a lot of work). Give the frames a few squirts of sugar syrup from a spray bottle as a powerful attractant. Gently lay the trap over on the plywood and remove the screws that are holding the pot in place. Carefully lift the pot off the plywood and check to see what things look like on the inside. Hopefully you'll find just a few small curtains of new white comb (if the bees are well established, you get to learn what ticks Kelly off). Slam the open pot down on top of the hive body to drop the bees in their new home. Remove the comb and brush the bees off into the hive. (Just discard the comb or, if you are curious, save the comb and study the brand new eggs and nectar in the cells with a magnifying glass.) Put the remainder of the frames in place and close things up for a week or so before checking to see how the bees are getting along. The bees get established really quickly if you can give them a frame of mostly capped brood (no bees) from another hive. Set the trap pot and plywood aside so that stragglers can find their way over to their new home. Later in the day, reassemble the trap and make plans to return it either where you got it or to the Extension office.

## **June Meeting Notes**

58 members and guests signed in at our June meeting. Seven new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues in May, bringing our roster total to 139 members.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott opened our meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl then welcomed everyone and again reminded us that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation. He thanked Sharon Moore and Jessica Boudreaux for volun-

teering to bring snacks for the meeting. First-timers in June included John and Shane Gillett who keep bees in Katy and potential new beekeepers James and Irene Morrison from Needville and Volkmar Voigt from Richmond.

Larry Hoehne from the Brazoria County Beekeepers Association announced the upcoming Brazoria Honey Expo on Thursday July 21. He also had raffle tickets available for a "live hive" and another for a calf.

Daryl referred to a recent American Bee Journal article "Why did my bees die?" from the Michigan State Extension as an interesting read. His monthly fun facts for June noted 2015 U.S. honey consumption of 543 million pounds, 71% of it imported. Texas beekeepers produced 8 million pounds while Texans consumed 41 million pounds. Daryl noted that the spring honey flow is about over and preparations for harvest should be in place. Also be on the lookout for signs of robbing, especially weak hives that may have swarmed.

As a followup to last month's *Buzz Q & A*, Gene deBons gave a short review of how he deals with "sugared" honey. He recrystallizes honey in an oven at 125 degrees. His best advice was to store honey in oven safe glass jars not five gallon pails!

Our program for June was a review of Texas beekeeping laws by Apiary Inspector Mary Reed. The Texas Apiary Inspection Service is part of Texas AgriLife Research and was founded by statute in 1909 in response to American Foulbrood disease. The current law is in the Texas Agriculture Code Chapter 131.

The principle focus of the Texas Apiary Inspection Service is the import and export of hives by migratory beekeepers. Inspectors issue health certificates for hives found to be free of American Foulbrood. Permits and fees are established by law. Mary noted that

bee removals are unregulated and pest control licensing is not required so long as pesticides are not used. Registration with TAIS is required however to move hives across county lines (beekeeper registration is free and voluntary). More details can be found at <http://txbeeinspection.tamu.edu/>. Information about the Texas Master Beekeeper Program can be found at <http://masterbeekeeper.tamu.edu/>.

Door prize winners in June included: Larry Hoehne (a fishing lure donated by Doug Rowell), Craig Rench (a honey bee poster donated by Marilyn Pawelek), Rebecca Eicke (Haly's Honey donated by Larry Hoehne), Jack Richardson (Beekeeping for Dummies donated by Daryl Scott), and Irene Morrison (honey donated by Gene deBons).

## **Treasurer's Report**

Our June treasury balance was reported incorrectly as \$2,188.46 due to an editing boo-boo. The correct balance was \$2,219.51. In the meantime, we collected \$25.00 for a new mentee plus dues from 7 new and renewing members (\$35.00) and a donation of \$20.00 for Gene deBons' help in capturing a swarm. We spent \$121.25 for a gray mobile cart to store supplies for our meetings. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,178.26, consisting of \$40.00 in cash and \$2,138.26 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

## **TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

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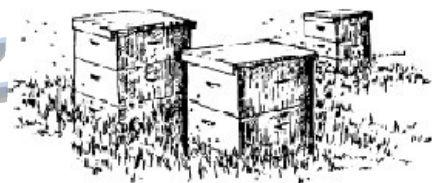
Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aid or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281 342-3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.





# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



August, 2016

The August 9, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Carol Gubbels who volunteered to bring salty treats and Glenda McGaughey (something sweet) in August. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Cindy Masengale will give an opening invocation and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I want to be a "safe, responsible, successful beekeeper". What are the most important things for me to be doing?

**An A:** Wow! That is a great question and "everything" isn't the answer that you are looking for. Probably the best way to address this is to try to define "safe", "responsible" and "successful", then describe the sort of things to do to achieve each end.

"Safe" would refer to both yourself (proper protective gear) and, more importantly, anyone else that may be impacted by your bees and beekeeping. Always remember that there are people that could have a fatal reaction to a single bee sting. A large number of stings can be fatal to anyone. Also remember that pets and livestock can be injured or killed by bees too. And fear of bees (and other stinging insects) is not uncommon, especially for moms and kids.

Your hive location should be discrete and chosen to minimize conflict with your daily activities as well as your neighbor's. It is best for hive entrances to encourage the bees to come and go "up and away" from people. For your personal safety, always "suit up" before opening a hive since hive behavior can be far different than it was the

last time you worked your bees. This is especially true as the colony numbers build and the availability of forage drops during summer. Always use your smoker to prevent things from getting out of hand and don't work bees when the weather is unsettled. If things start to get bad, stop and get away to try again later. Always have a plan for refuge if things get really really bad.

Always consider the safety of others when deciding to open a hive. If neighbors will be mowing their yard or hosting a kid's birthday party you shouldn't be working bees on the other side of the fence. Always remember that pets and livestock that are penned or chained cannot escape from attacking bees.

The most important aspects of being a responsible beekeeper are a thorough knowledge of honey bees and beekeeping, only keeping docile bees and managing the colony's natural instinct to swarm. Attend beekeeping club meetings, never miss an opportunity for a beekeeping class and subscribe to beekeeping magazines (reading each issue cover-to-cover).

Routine requeening in the spring with "sweet" stock helps a lot since young queens are less likely to swarm and bad bees aren't likely to become "sweet" on their own. Bees need a lot of water to drink as well as cool the hive in summer. Make sure that a water source is

available since you don't want the neighbor's koi pond, pool or hot tub to become the "go to" place for water. If that happens, the only way to change things is to force the bees to find a new place to get water by draining the pool.

In the spring when resources are plentiful, bees form new colonies by swarming: they "multiply by dividing". At other times bees may "abscond", leaving their home to escape overcrowding, pests, disease or an unsuitable nest site. In our area, it is common to see an uptick in swarms in late summer as the bees escape nest sites chosen in the spring that are now hotter than h\*1. If your bees swarm, it is your duty to capture them before they move into the wall of a neighbor's house. Of course you can't watch for swarms all of the time, so a swarm trap or two is a must. Scout bees find every potential nesting site in the area. It makes sense that a new home in close proximity to their old one is less desirable, so a green belt a few hundreds yards away is a better trapping site.

Part of understanding why you want to keep bees is to define "success". Every beekeeper falls into one of two categories: bees are your "pets" or your bees are "livestock". No matter how you choose to define your success, being safe and being responsible are key to continuing to enjoy bees and beekeeping.

## July Meeting Notes

59 members and guests signed in at our July meeting, including six first-timers. Thirteen new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues at the meeting, bringing our roster total to 152 members. New members added to the roster in July included Jeannie Bain, Larry R. Boecker, Clif and Gay Dickerson, Mark Gonzalez, Mike and Zach Huddleston, Margaret Kostka, Ed Lake, Marty McDowell, Emil Pampell and Ed Veiseh.

After 30 minutes of social time, Dave Grimme opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. VP Nancy Hentschel welcomed everyone and recognized the first-timers to our meeting. She reminded us that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation. Thanks Herman Hoot for getting coffee and lemonade ready for the meeting.

Our meeting program for July included three member presentations. First, Gene deBons updated us on illegal honey that continues to make its way to U. S. markets.

In 2015, 71% of U. S. honey consumption was imported. Imports from China have been banned because of extensive processing and contamination with antibiotics, etc. To get around the ban, Chinese honey is simply relabeled as coming from other countries. 195 drums of Chinese honey (labeled as coming from Vietnam) was recently seized in Chicago. In the lab the honey's floral source could be identified by studying pollen grains, so the crooks began microfiltering honey to remove traces of its origin.

"Chinese beekeepers aren't like us", says Gene, since Chinese honey is made in factories, not hives. With the view that gathering nectar is all the work that must be done by bees, Chinese beekeepers extract the nectar with a moisture content of 35%. Instead of water being removed in the hive, it goes to the factory for dehydration and filtering using res-

in beads. The resins work like a water softener to remove antibiotics and other chemicals as well as all traces of the honey's origin. The resulting "white honey" has no color or flavor and is used to dilute real honey (with its floral source intact) then exported to the U. S.

As a followup to the Q-A in our June newsletter, Jeff McMullan demonstrated how our swarm traps are used. The traps are simply a pulp nursery pot mounted on a piece of plywood and baited with lemongrass oil. It is hung up where bees have been a problem. Scout bees seeking a home are attracted to the trap and hopefully convince their swarm to move inside. At that point, the "bees in a trap" notice goes out. The responding beekeeper shows up at dusk and first checks to make sure that the trap doesn't "leak" where it mounts to the plywood. Bees will usually be clustered at their point of entry and steel wool and a hive tool are used to plug holes. There are four openings in the bottom of the pots intended for use as entrances. They can be sealed with steel wool as well or, better yet, a square plastic bucket. The trap should be closed up after dark with all the bees inside. A few puffs from a smoker will usually chase the last stragglers inside. When it is all sealed up, it is time to leave. Make sure to keep the trap oriented the way it is found to prevent collapsing any comb that is inside. It isn't a good idea to remove the bees inside a hive at night. You can just set the trap on top of (or beside) their new home. You should open the trap up right away to avoid over heating. Then the bees are ready to be moved into a hive, sooner is better since they are still building comb that is best discarded after the move because small hive beetles are likely to take advantage of the disruption.

The third topic for our meeting was a brief discussion of "safe beekeeping" by Nancy Hentschel. It is very important that problems with bad bees are remedied ASAP. Bees act mean for a whole lot of reasons

(queenlessness, overcrowding, Africanized traits, etc.). Nancy likened the potential problems to the situations that pilots train for. It is not just about bad weather, low fuel, navigation or mechanical problems, etc. It is about several of these things happening at once, like bad bees, the neighbor's lawn crew and pets confined in the back yard. Always expect the worst. Gene deBons added  $\text{CH}_3\text{COO}[\text{CH}_2]_4\text{CH}_3$  (amyl acetate). Don't snack on a banana on your way to the beeyard since bananas contain this organic compound and so does the honey bee alarm pheromone!

Sharon Moore reported that the moisture content of some of her flow hive honey was high (more to follow). It looks like she will need to check that the honey is capped.

Congratulations to our July door prize winners and thanks to the donors.

## Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$2,178.26. Since then we collected \$25.00 for a new mentee plus dues from 13 new and renewing members (\$65.00). Mike Jurek and Milton Woods scored a \$200.00 donation after removing bees from an old barn in Guy. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,468.26, consisting of \$40.00 in cash and \$2,428.26 in our checking account.

### TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



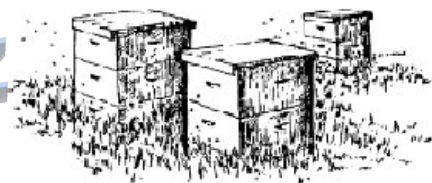
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# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



September, 2016

The September 13, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Milton Woods who volunteered to bring salty treats and Bethany Madrid (something sweet) in September. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. No one volunteered to give our opening invocation this month. If you can help with this, please see President Daryl Scott before the meeting.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** The Zika virus is big news and the mosquito control efforts that I see on TV look like bad news for honey bees. It is awful to have to choose between our bees as unintended bykill and human health (especially pregnant women and their unborn children!). How can our organization get out in front on this?

**An A:** Actually, Fort Bend County Health & Human Services has already contacted our organization for input into their planning efforts and mosquito control will be on our September meeting agenda. A key part of this planning is knowing the location of hives in Fort Bend County.

We all know that honey bees are really easy to kill. In fact, soapy water is quite effective in destroying bad bees.

The list of pesticide products that are toxic to bees is really long. Agricultural pesticides have come a long way from the first products that could kill people as well as bugs. Today many pests are controlled with insecticides that are very specifically targeted and are only used when losses would be unacceptable if the fields were left untreated. It is amazing to think that in our area farming practices, monitoring with pheromone traps

and the judicious use of pesticides has virtually eliminated the cotton boll weevil and all of the pesticide use that was needed for this damaging pest.

While many would see agricultural pesticides as demonic, a walk through a garden center or down the pesticide aisle at Lowe's or Home Depot can give another perspective. Will all of those products be used by homeowners as carefully and judiciously as farmers? What about misting systems on a timer that spritzes insecticide in the backyard to kill mosquitoes if they are there or not? And when all the beneficial insects like ladybugs, assassin bugs, wheelbugs, lacewings, etc. are dead, how much more back yard pesticides are then dosed out to kill aphids and caterpillars?

Unfortunately, it appears that protecting human health and honey bees are at opposing odds. The Zika virus is the latest villain in this drama (there are several tropical diseases that can be spread by mosquitoes). In fact, songbird populations in our area seem to be finally recovering from the West Nile Virus that showed up (from Egypt I guess) a few years ago.

The Zika virus is spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito (from Egypt too?). This mosquito is common along the Gulf Coast and transmits the virus after feeding on an infected person. *Aedes aegypti* actually did originate in Africa and over

thousands of years has adapted to a life of parasitizing humans. Its common name is the "yellow fever mosquito" and it is known to spread several human diseases.

The Zika virus is thought to have originated in monkeys in central Africa. It and other evil organisms have adapted to human victims as well as to this mosquito species as a way to spread about. A mosquito is far more than a "miniature flying syringe" buzzing about injecting infected blood into its victims.

When the yellow fever mosquito feeds on an infected human, the virus is able to grow and reproduce in the insect's stomach, forming a unique partnership. The virus has been successful since this particular mosquito has feeding habits that favor rapidly spreading disease. In most mosquito species, the females feed on blood in order to reproduce. After a blood meal from a single victim, the females go about laying eggs. *Aedes aegypti* is different: the female feeds on many people so disease is spread to multiple victims in its two to four week lifetime.

According to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control, only one in five Zika infected victims actually gets sick: malaise, fever, rash, muscle pain, conjunctivitis ("pinkeye"), etc. Symptoms appear within a few days (up to a week) after infection. Zika's link to tragic human birth defects was discovered in April (the virus attacks developing brain cells in the fetus).



Controlling the spread of disease by *Aedes aegypti* is an important public health issue. Strategies include using insect repellants and avoiding mosquito bites, eliminating standing water where mosquito larvae mature, and the application of pesticides. "Larvacides" include products that contain the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis* (or Bt). It is commonly used as a biological pesticide that infects and kills the larvae of specific insect species.

The "adulticides" kill the adult mosquitoes. The most desirable (though more costly) products are characterized by their rapid breakdown in the environment after doing their job on the mosquito menace. They are sprayed at night from trucks and have broken down to harmlessness overnight.

Honey bee pesticide toxicity is carefully studied. It varies with different colony stock and older bees are more susceptible. Foraging is the older bees' role, so their mortality is important to colony survival. Mosquito control pesticides are available with minimum honey bee mortality even when used properly.

Most beekeepers understand that they should maintain a safe distance from adjacent row crops or roadside ditches.

At our September meeting we will devote our program to a better understanding of what beekeepers can do to help minimize the impact of the battle with Zika on our hives.

### August Meeting Notes

45 members and guests signed in at our August meeting. A quick head count was a bigger number so it looks like its time for another reminder for everyone to sign in at the meeting so we have an accurate head count.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then thanked Herman Hoot for get-

ting the coffee set up for us and Carol Gubbels and Glenda McGaughey who brought treats for the meeting. We still have empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation.

With the Olympics underway in Brazil, Daryl looked for something interesting related to Rio, the Olympics, and honey or honey bees. The best he could do was an Australian rugby player named Nick Cummins whose nickname is "honey badger". He failed to make Australia's Olympic team. Oh well.

For his August "fun facts" Daryl reported on the Fairmont luxury hotel chain that has more than 40 apiaries and mason bee nests on hotel properties around the world, including 6 rooftop hives in Austin. The chain also features on property herb and vegetable gardens whose crops, along with honey, are used by the hotel chefs.

Daryl recognized that many of our members produce cotton honey from rural areas. Honey bees collect nectar from the pale yellow cotton flowers on the first day of their bloom. After one day, the flowers change to a pink color and no longer yield nectar. The bees then visit other "nectaries" on the cotton plant at the base of the flower as well as on the under side of the leaves. Cotton yields a lot of honey, but it is known to crystallize relatively quickly. The cotton bloom does not require a pollinator, but it has been reported that cotton fields frequented by honey bees yield additional crop value of \$108 per acre.

Daryl reviewed the late summer beekeeper's calendar which usually includes a dearth ahead of the goldenrod and ragweed bloom. To be on the safe side, each hive should have about 60 pounds of winter stores after the flow stops. You can estimate the honey amount by using 4.5 lbs for each full deep frame, 3.0 lbs for each full medium frame and 2.4 lbs for shallow frames. Some beekeepers do fall splits and requeening. Varroa treatment may be

in order after the last honey crop.

Jeff McMullan gave a quick walk-through of recent changes to [fortbendbeekeepers.org](http://fortbendbeekeepers.org), mostly aimed at helping people deal with bee problems. Web surfers seek out our web site expecting our organization or the Extension office to remove bees. While we are often able to capture swarms, bee removal from inside a wall is not on our menu. While discussing swarms, Jeff added that late summer often brings an uptick in swarm calls when bees abscond from nest sites selected in the spring that now prove to be just too hot. Speaking of hot, Nancy Hentschel and Jack Richardson advised everyone to get an early start in the beeyard and drink plenty of water!

Door prize winners in August included Jack Richardson (homemade grape jelly donated by Glenda McGaughey). Lilly Tanksley and Bill Windrow won mustang grape jelly made by the Reuter Family. Kyle Reuter scored a basil plant donated by Stephanie Kinghorn.

### Treasurer's Report

Our August treasury balance was \$2,468.26. Since then we collected \$25.00 for a new mentee plus dues from one new member (\$5.00). The resulting treasury balance is \$2,498.26, consisting of \$40.00 in cash and \$2,458.26 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

### **TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

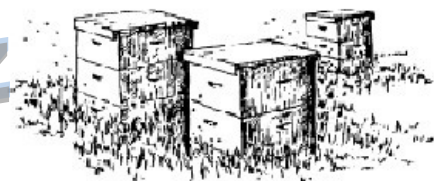
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# Fort Bend Buzz



newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



October, 2016

The October 11, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Alice Benson who volunteered to bring salty treats and Michael Pawelek (something sweet) in October. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. No one volunteered to give our opening invocation this month. If you can help with this, please see President Daryl Scott before the meeting.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I have a hive that appears to be queenless. There are no eggs in it and the hive seems weak and lethargic. With no eggs they can't re-queen. Would it be possible to introduce a queen cell to this hive and attempt to save it? If so, do you know where I could get a queen cell quick?

**An A:** In the fall, the honey bee colony is making preparations for winter. In our area, the goldenrod (all those yellow flowers) and ragweed (sneezing anyone?) are the last big sources for winter stores of honey and pollen. Colony numbers are at their peak and soon the queen will slow (or maybe even stop) her egg laying so there won't be so many mouths to feed over the winter. As you know, if she stops laying completely there will be no eggs or tiny larvae available should they need to rear an emergency replacement for their queen. Without your help, the colony will not survive.

Besides no eggs or brood, queenless colonies are often easily agitated and loud. "Weak and lethargic" doesn't fit this description very well, so the lack of brood may be poor winter preparations since an egg or one day brood are necessary should tragedy befall the queen.

Another careful search for the queen may well be in order. If you can't

find her, it doesn't necessarily mean that she is no longer around.

One option is to give the weak colony a frame of brood that includes eggs and tiny larvae (no bees). As the new workers emerge it boosts the colony population and if they need to raise a queen, they can and will.

From freshly laid egg to emerging queen takes 16 days. It would be late October before she would be making mating flights. In our area it is usually later in the year before drones are expelled so that should be ok, but mating flights are a dangerous time for new queens. Probably a third of them fall victim to predators, so if she has to make multiple mating flights, her survival chances drop dramatically.

Giving the colony a queen cell shortens the process by a couple of weeks and perhaps lowers the risk of late-season low drone numbers (and the need for multiple mating flights). If the colony is not in fact queenless, the old queen may or may not accept her replacement.

Introducing a mated, laying queen is probably a better option since there is no mating flight risk. If the colony is truly queenless, she should be readily accepted and things should work out just fine. Your hive's behavior is a bit questionable though. To make sure she has been accepted, you might want to manually release the new queen

after a few days in the hive (rather than allowing the bees to release her (by eating the queen candy plug).

Buying a new mated queen is also the opportunity to improve the stock in your bee yard. Members Steve Brackmann and Dennis Cox have been raising open mated daughters of a VSH mother queen that was instrumentally inseminated by Dr. John Harbo, renowned honey bee scientist who retired from the USDA honey bee lab. The VSH (varroa sensitive hygiene) trait can be very important if you aren't using routine varroa treatments. On top of that, these bees are most often very docile and a joy to keep.

As a last resort, you may need to combine this weak hive with another one, easily done by the "newspaper combine" method. After overwintering success, you can split the combined hive. You have all the same options for a queen (or queens) after making the split in a few months.

## Election Time

We plan an election of officers for 2017 at our November meeting. Please contact Gene deBons (home 281 341-7135, office 979 793-2900 or email [res-sol@consolidated.net](mailto:res-sol@consolidated.net)) for details if you can serve. Rest assured that nominees will not be required to produce their emails, tax returns or foundation records, nor will they get to nominate a U. S. Supreme Court Justice. Sorry.

## **Thanks**

Our organization gets many requests for programs about honey bees and beekeeping. At the top of the list is the honey bee exhibit at the Fort Bend County Fair AGtivity Barn, a much anticipated stop for school groups visiting the fair on weekdays. Beekeepers welcoming the kids at this year's five day run included Stephanie Kinghorn, Jeff McMullan, Volkmar Voigt, Yani Keo, Nancy Hentschel, Daryl Scott, Mike Jurek and Monica Siwiak. The Association adds its "thank you" to the hundreds received from school kids at the Fair.

## **September Meeting Notes**

40 members and guests signed in at our September meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. We expect volunteers to help with this role, but again we had no one willing to step up for this important part of our meeting.

Thanks to Daryl for getting coffee set up for us and to Milton Woods and Bethany Madrid who brought treats for the meeting.

For his September "fun facts" Daryl reported that a honey bee queen can lay 1,500 or more eggs per day, more than one per minute or perhaps over 1,000,000 in her lifetime!

Our meeting program was a presentation by David Olinger of the Fort Bend County Health & Human Services Department. In his role as Public Health Preparedness Coordinator, David is making plans should the Zika virus be found in Fort Bend County.

There are many government and private organizations, as well as individual homeowners, that spray insecticides to control mosquitos in the county. The Fort Bend County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for mosquito spraying in rural areas of the county. They use ultra low volume truck mounted

equipment. Anyone at any time can go to the county web site to click a link that shows the real time location and spray history of all County mosquito control equipment. The county mosquito control effort is not for nuisance mosquito calls. It is solely focused on preventing the spread of mosquito transmitted disease and spray decisions are based on trapping data. Mosquito traps are set out on Mondays and collected on Tuesdays. Captured mosquitos are sent to the Texas Department of State Health Services to determine if infected mosquitos are present. If test results are positive, truck mounted spraying is prescribed for three consecutive evenings, then retesting to determine if the control effort was successful.

By transmitting disease to humans, mosquitos cause more suffering than any other organism. In Fort Bend County, the principle mosquito born disease focus has been the West Nile Virus. This disease is endemic in birds, so it is always present in our area. Besides song birds, it infects both humans and horses. The County's quick disease outbreak detection and focused mosquito control have been effective in managing West Nile.

There are some 176 mosquito species in the U. S. The West Nile Virus is transmitted by the Culex mosquitos, so they have been the focus of insecticide spraying. Now, there is huge public health concern about the Zika virus and it's most devastating effect: severe human birth defects. It has spread widely from its origins in central Africa and mosquito born Zika virus infection has been recorded in Florida. It is transmitted by the Aedes mosquitos, a different mosquito species with different behavior than Culex. Aedes are more adapted to feeding on humans. Zika is spread from human to human, so it is more likely that Zika will be found in neighborhoods than rural areas. They are more active than Culex during the day. Like the Culex, the larvae develop in water, but Aedes lay eggs all about and they remain viable for

a year or more.

There have been 181 Zika cases in Texas, all travel related. The County is planning how it will deal with infected humans or mosquitos to prevent the spread of Zika.

Mosquito control insecticides are very toxic to honey bees and preventing honey bee losses is a key concern. If roadside spraying is ineffective, daytime aerial spraying will be the last resort. Aerial spraying requires approximately two weeks of planning, including detailed mapping (David provided forms for submitting hive locations). The plan must be approved by the County Judge and at least a three day notice must be given.

Thanks to the door prize donors; congratulations to the winners.

## **Hive Registration Reminder**

At our October meeting, David Olinger with the Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Department will give an update on their apiary registration program.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Our September treasury balance was \$2,498.26. We've collected dues from five new and renewing members (\$25.00) and spent \$15.38 on meeting supplies. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,507.88, consisting of \$40.00 in cash and \$2,467.88 in our checking account.

**TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

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# Fort Bend Buzz



newsletter of the  
**Fort Bend Beekeepers Association**



**November, 2016**

The November 8, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Tracey Grimme who volunteered to bring salty treats and Norman Harris (something sweet) in November. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Once again, no one volunteered to give our opening invocation this month. If you can help with this, please see President Daryl Scott before the meeting.

## **Ask a dozen beekeepers...**

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I want to be a beekeeper! My plan is to be ready for my bees in the spring and, in the meantime, I'm researching and reading all that I can. Can you help me with the rules or restrictions on keeping bees in my back yard?

**An A:** Welcome! Joining your local beekeeping association and attending meetings is a great way to get started. You will find that beekeepers love to offer up lots of advice as you are getting started. Most of it is an effort to avoid someone else making their mistakes, so you'll need to come up with your own!

As you know from your internet research, it is difficult to find any prohibitions, regulations or minimum requirements for hobby beekeeping. On the State level, permitting and inspection by the Texas Apiary Inspection Service is focused on pests and disease in commercial operations, mostly the movement of hives in to, out of, or around the state. While Fort Bend County has none, there are a few nearby jurisdictions with requirements for beekeepers. We understand that Bay City, Pasadena and Lake Jackson have beekeeping ordinances. Nonetheless, you may have contractual restrictions against backyard beekeeping: carefully read any neighborhood deed covenants that you may have. We are not aware of any

neighborhood's homeowner association that enforces any specific beekeeping restrictions and it is very unlikely that beekeeping is mentioned in the contract that you signed. Sometimes permitted "pets" are defined and barnyard animals (honey bees?) are often prohibited. In any case, you cannot be a nuisance so it is very important that you are a good neighbor by being a safe, responsible, successful beekeeper. Docile bees, a discrete hive location, aggressive swarm prevention and providing a continuous source of water are a few of the important responsibilities of the back yard beekeeper. "Don't ask, don't tell" is probably good advice.

A successful backyard hive may produce more than five gallons of honey each year. Requirements for what you do with your back yard honey can become a problem. You have options, but you need to be aware of what Texas food safety law has to say about all that.

Honey falls into a gray area. It is not termed a "raw agricultural product" like fruits or vegetables since it must be removed from the hive, extracted from the comb and bottled to be sold or given away. Texas has a "cottage food law" that permits the sale of home-prepared foods. There is a very specific list of "cottage foods"; honey isn't on it.

The Texas Department of State Health Services regulates honey entering our food supply through its

rules, permitting and inspection of "food manufacturing facilities".

In 2015, the Texas legislature rejected honey as a "cottage food" and exempted "small honey producers" from food safety law. Up to 2,500 lbs. of honey (200+ gallons!!) can be produced and sold without inspection or permitting so long as very detailed requirements are met. The law also prohibits local jurisdictions from regulating honey sales. The law reads "sells or distributes" so it would be wise (and not too difficult) to follow the requirements even if you give your honey away. Under Texas law, the honey must be produced by the beekeeper and must be "pure honey" that is "raw" (not defined) and has not been blended with anything. There are very specific labeling requirements, including the disclaimer "Bottled and packaged in a facility not inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services.". (The Texas Beekeepers Association sells a bottle top label with this disclaimer at low cost.) "Small producer" sales must be "directly to consumers at the beekeeper's home, a farmer's market, a farm stand, or a municipal, county, or nonprofit fair, festival, or event".

Food safety is an important public health concern and hobby beekeepers should obey the law. For all the gory details, read the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension publication EFN-047 "Selling Honey in Texas" available online or from the Extension office.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Our October treasury balance was \$2,507.88. We've collected dues from two new members (\$10.00) and spent \$36.79 on new batteries for our PA system and an extension cord for our meetings. In addition, Wells Fargo credited \$10.00 to our account from their 2010 - 2015 audit. It is not clear where this came from, but we thanked them of the donation. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,491.09, consisting of \$50.00 in cash for change and \$2,441.09 in our checking account.

## **October Meeting Notes**

The head count looked like 54, but we only had 48 members and guests signed in at our October meeting. We welcomed several first timers that are planning on getting bees in the spring.

After social time, Daryl Scott opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. We expect volunteers to help with this role, but again we had no one willing to step up for this important part of our meeting.

Daryl thanked Alice Benson and Michael Pawelek who brought treats for the meeting. For his October "fun facts" Daryl reported on the honey bee's incredibly developed sense of smell and eyesight.

As beekeepers we all know that a honey bee's antennae are far ahead of a human's nose. An interesting aspect of this is that each colony has its own unique odor that the bees use to identify their home as well as each other.

Honey bee eyesight is incredible as well. A human can process an image in 1/50th of a second. A bee can do it in 1/300th second, so a movie or a television image looks more like a "slide show" to a honey bee!

A honey bee has five organs on its head that we can refer to as "eyes". There are two large compound eyes, one on each side, plus three other light sensing "ocelli" on the

top of its head. The large eyes gather images of their surroundings. The ocelli are simple eyes used to navigate to and from the hive.

The structure of the honey bee's compound eye indicates that they perceive color in wavelengths from orange and yellow to blue to ultra-violet. Red color is invisible and probably seen as black. Ultraviolet light is not visible to humans but is bright at the center of many flowers to help guide bees to their blooms.

Like humans, bees recognize and remember patterns in their vision, important in finding forage and their way back to the hive. Honey bees have even been shown to recognize human faces! Maybe your bees recognize you!

Daryl also reminded us that this time of the year we should be well into our winter preparations, doing varroa treatments, assuring adequate honey stores and making preparations to repair or replace equipment over the winter. Members were also reminded of the Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Convention is being held in Belton, Tx. November 3-5. The registration deadline is very near.

Also coming up is the 2017 North American Beekeeping Conference and Tradeshow, a joint effort by the American Beekeeping Federation, the American Honey Producers Association and the Canadian Honey Council. This is a great opportunity to attend a world-class event being held in our backyard. The five day event features presentations, workshops and a vendor trade show.

Daryl's final announcement was a quick update on our mentoring program that is now into its second year.

Jack Richardson gave a quick look at his plans to "right size" his beekeeping efforts. He expects to have quite a few nucs and 10-frame hives available in the spring. He is also planning a honey container order if any one wants to share shipping costs. Finally he has more that 200 pounds of beeswax that he would

like to sell.

Gene deBons reported on honey market information gleaned from the recent American Bee Journal. The U. S. hive count was up 8% last year, but imports increased 60%! Some imported honey said to be from Viet Nam sold for only 73 cents per pound. It appears that "Chinese honey" is a manufactured product that relies little on bees.

Ian Hertl with the Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Department gave an update on Zika and beeyard registrations. They have recorded seven Zika cases in the County (all travel related). It appears that Zika vaccination research is progressing quickly and cooler weather will soon reduce mosquito numbers. Beeyard registrations are coming in and you can still register at the County website.

Again we have run out of room to announce our door prize winners. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the lucky winners.

## **Election Time**

November 8 is the long awaited election day! We plan an election of officers for 2017 at our November meeting. Please contact Gene deBons (home 281 341-7135, office 979 793-2900 or email [res-sol@consolidated.net](mailto:res-sol@consolidated.net)) for details if you can serve.

### **TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

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