

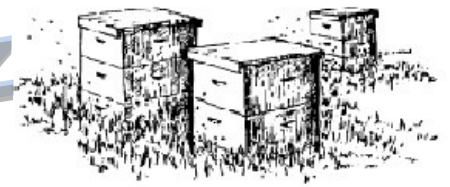


Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

promoting safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



January, 2018

The January 9, 2018 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, so don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid at our January meeting. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Members are welcome to bring snacks since no one volunteered for January. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I'm anxious to get started as a beekeeper. What hive components do I need (beekeeping supply catalogues and web sites are overwhelming!).

An A: You will have to settle for a "Reader's Digest" answer, but hopefully you will be able to make good decisions based on our answer. It just discusses the makeup of a hive stack. A smoker, protective gear, tools and gadgets are part of getting started too. New beekeepers often make choices getting started that are essentially wasting money. "Beginner kits" aren't a good idea. New beekeepers should read books (don't rely on internet posts), join a beekeeper club, meet other beekeepers and go to a beekeeping class to learn about getting started.

The basic decision is whether to keep bees in Langstroth hives or to start out with another less common hive design. Langstroth hives (named for their inventor) are by far the most common hive design and are the best way to get started. Despite what you read on the internet, success is most likely with this long proven setup.

A Langstroth hive is a stack of "boxes" without tops or bottoms (the stack's top and bottom are separate components). A box full of honey can weigh up to 100 lbs., so

the hive needs to be on a sturdy stand that is not too tall because there will be some heavy lifting to do. Langstroth boxes are made in three sizes (different heights): the shorter ones weight less (duh!).

The hive "bottom board" rests on the hive stand. A screened bottom board is preferred so that pests and junk that falls from the hive end up on the ground outside the hive. In our mild climate, the screened floor bottom can be open year around.

Atop the bottom board is the first hive box, usually where the colony's brood nest is expected to be. Inside are removable "frames" with "foundation" to guide the bees in their comb construction. Langstroth hive components are either 8 or 10 frames wide (a weight/stability consideration). A tall box (a "hive body" or "deep") is often used for the bottom "brood box" since it is not expected to be moved about in the stack and is big enough for most colonies (booming hives may need two "deeps" for the brood nest).

"Medium" or "shallow" "supers" are added to the hive stack to hold the honey crop ("superimposed" on the hive stack). Sometimes a grid-like "queen excluder" is used to keep the larger queen (and her brood) confined below the honey stores. The boxes for honey are usually of a smaller size since they will become heavily laden. One good option to consider is to use all smaller size ("medium") boxes so

that the frames can be moved about in the hive stack.

There are choices to be made about frames/foundation. Wooden frames are the usual choice, often bought unassembled. Foundation can be of wax (with reinforcing wire) or various plastic designs. Wax foundation is usually best for the beginner since bees sometimes don't take to plastic (even when heavily coated with beeswax). But the plastic foundation is a whole lot quicker to use since it just "pops" into the frame and it can be easily cleaned of old comb for reuse.

The hive will need a cover to keep out the rain. A "telescoping cover" is the preferred choice, but it requires an inner cover too since the bees may attach it to the top box. A "migratory cover" is just a flat board on top of the hive that allows them to be placed side by side on pallets and easily moved about.

Your hive stack should be carefully primed and painted with quality house paint. Caulk is recommended for any cracks that remain after assembly. Bees seem to prefer it if you don't paint the inside of the boxes (simplifies the painting job).

November Meeting Notes

We had 41 members and guests sign in at our November meeting. A head count revealed that at least 12 folks didn't sign the roster. Please sign in! These sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities.

In the absence of the other officers, Secretary-Treasurer Jeff McMullan called the meeting to order. Our first topic was reports of big small hive beetle numbers. There was speculation that the Hurricane Harvey flooding had something to do with it: colonies lost to the flood were invaded by beetles resulting in a hive beetle population boom.

Jack Richardson attended the Texas Beekeepers Association annual conference. He reported that the agenda was full of valuable topics. He also recognized member Monica Siwiak's first place win in the creamed honey competition and Harrison Roger's taking the Thomas Award for service to the TBA. Jack confessed to perhaps having too much money since he won the auction for TBA President Chris Moore's retired smoker. It was definitely ready to be replaced and Jack added it to his collection of beekeeper stuff that admittedly should be tossed!

The November program topic was beeswax processing by Gene deBons. Gene reviewed the biologic origin and uses of beeswax since ancient times. It is the basic construction material for the honey bee hive, a complex mixture of components produced by 4 pairs of glands on the worker's abdomen. Purest wax is white, but it can be shades of yellow to brown depending on contaminants and how it is processed. Cappings wax is the least contaminated and should be handled separately from old comb or scrapings. Propolis in wax should be avoided since the resins contaminate the product. Processing in iron, zinc (galvanized), brass or copper can cause the wax to darken. Beeswax can be rendered in the club's solar melter or in hot water. Gene's preferred method is one of his laboratory ovens set at 170° F. He mixes the molten wax with an equal volume of boiling water and allows it to cool slowly and harden. Crud that settles on the water surface is scraped off and discarded. The process can be repeated if need be. Stored beeswax can develop a powdery substance on the surface that can be easily wiped away with a cloth.

Following his presentation, Gene announced candidates and directed the election of officers for 2018 (see below).

Election of Officers

Officers for 2018 were elected at our November meeting. Gene deBons announced our declared candidates: Jack Richardson for President (nominated by Kelly Morris, seconded by Michael McLean) and Chelsea Murray for Vice President (nominated by Jeff McMullan, seconded by Jack Richardson). There were no other nominations and both were elected by acclamation. After outgoing Secretary-Treasurer Jeff McMullan agreed to continue as our newsletter editor, Lynne Jones was nominated by her son Dan and seconded by Jeff McMullan as Secretary-Treasurer. Lynne was elected unanimously. Jack thanked the members for their vote, his first stint as an officer after being a member for 25+ years. He looks forward to the coming year and hopes to get lots of help in his new role.

Congratulations to our new leadership team and thanks to the outgoing officers for their service.

Treasurer's Report

Our November treasury balance was \$3,197.99. We had no transactions since then so our balance is unchanged, consisting of \$3,142.99 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

A financial summary and year-end property inventory for 2016 is presented below.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2017 Financial Summary	
Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2017)	\$2,373.82
Income	
member dues paid (171 at \$5.00)	\$855.00
donations	\$440.00
extractor use income	\$60.00
Total Income	\$1,355.00
Expenses	
meeting supplies	(\$34.95)
speaker expenses	(\$290.00)
Texas Beekeepers Assn. dues	(\$50.00)
new web site platform	(\$155.88)
Total Expenses	(\$530.83)
Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2017)	\$3,197.99

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2017 Property Inventory			
<u>Description</u>	<u>Date Acquired</u>	<u>Initial Cost</u>	<u>Member Contact</u>
four framed beekeeping posters	various	unknown	Boone Holladay
Learning Hive	8/28/2009	\$144.49	Jeff McMullan
additional frame photos	2/25/2016	\$98.37	Jeff McMullan
additional hive body/btm bd	11/20/2016	<u>\$70.95</u>	Jeff McMullan
		\$313.81	
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	\$15.15	
honey refractometer	11/30/2016	<u>\$71.64</u>	
		\$654.97	
solar wax melter	1/10/2012	donated	Nancy Hentschel
frame assembly gear	3/5/2012	\$157.88	Nancy Hentschel
outreach exhibits			
banners	11/7/2013	\$80.96	Jeff McMullan
posters and easels	2/8/2016	<u>\$193.30</u>	Jeff McMullan
		\$274.26	
public address system	6/21/2014	\$620.22	Lynne Jones
7/18 remaining swarm traps	11/3/2014	\$54.62	Boone Holladay
remaining Mentoring Program supplies:			Daryl Scott
2/20 mentee ball caps		\$14.18	
2/10 mentor ball caps		\$14.18	
68/100 Beekeeper's Journals		\$490.28	
37/42 extra Journal fillers		\$40.33	
4/40 copies "The Beekeepers Handbook"		<u>\$73.32</u>	
		\$632.29	
gray cart for meetings	7/7/2016	\$121.25	Boone Holladay

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February, 2018

The February 13, 2018 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, so don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Margaret Wrzesinski who volunteered to bring salty treats and Glenda McGaughey (something sweet) for our February meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Even if you are new to our newsletter, you probably already know that if you ask a dozen beekeepers a question, you need to expect at least 14 answers! Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A or two:

Q: I'm a relatively new beekeeper and it looks like I've lost a couple of hives over the winter. What are my options for replacements (I'm already in to this for more than I had intended to spend!)?

An A: Beekeeping is almost addictive and we all probably spend more than we expected to. You could elect to just not replace your losses, but there will likely be some next year too, so "doing nothing" about your deadouts won't prove to be a long term answer for you.

It is important to learn from your experience this winter. Colonies that went into winter weakened by varroa mites can dwindle to the point of being unable to maintain necessary warmth. Our winters are usually mild and long periods of really cold weather are uncommon. Nonetheless, weak colonies may not survive, especially if they go into winter with inadequate stores of honey. The really bad news is that if any unguarded honey remains when the colony fails, it will attract robbers on the first mild day. Varroa mites wait in the empty hive for a robbing worker to come by, then hop aboard to go infest another colony. Not good for your beeyard.

The colony must have adequate stores of honey for winter survival. It is the beekeepers job to make sure that they do. A minimum of 30 lbs. of honey (a full medium super or six full deep frames) is usually adequate in our area.

There is very little nectar forage available in the weeks between the first frost and spring's first blooms. It is usually recommended that we not open hives before March 1 but it is a good idea to lift the rear of the hive from time to time to get a sense of its weight as the bees consume their stores (honey provides the energy to flex flight muscles to generate heat and keep their home warm). Fisher's Nectar Detector is a clever tool for weighing hives if your credit card is getting itchy.

A starved colony of bees is a sad sight. The undeniable evidence is dead workers with their heads down inside cells to get to the last remaining honey. Other dead bees will have fallen down on the bottom board.

You can save yourself some trouble and \$\$ if you salvage the frames in your empty hives before wax worms or small hive beetles trash the place (unless you suspect the colony was diseased). A few days in the freezer will kill any pests or eggs on the comb.

Now, how to go about replacing the losses? Costs for bees can vary a lot, but the most expensive options are to buy a complete hive or a "nuc" (nucleus hive) with a laying

queen and four or five frames of bees and brood. They may cost \$300 or more each. A "package" is usually 3 lbs of bees (about 10,000 workers) and a caged, mated, unrelated queen (maybe \$175).

"Splitting" one of your existing hives is far less expensive. A new queen for the queenless half of the split will cost about \$35. Or both halves can be requeened if you want to improve your stock. Sometimes there are queen cells available (maybe \$10). The virgin queen will emerge in a few days and must successfully complete mating flights before beginning to lay eggs. Or you can do a "walkaway split" where the queenless half raises their own queen from a day-old larva. The split will usually have several queen cells that you can use in other splits.

Splitting hives takes a bit of planning, but is not difficult. Success is most likely when the splits can be moved away since returning workers will want to go back to the original location of the hive. Another beeyard that is several miles distant solves this problem. After a week or so in the new location, the splits can come home. A less desirable solution is to observe the splits and reverse locations when drifting is apparent.

The cheapest replacement colony is a captured swarm. It isn't difficult, but if you get word that a swarm is available, you should get there right away since the bees may locate a new home before you show up.

January Meeting Notes

We had 43 members and guests that signed in at our January meeting, but the head count looked more like 56. Be sure that you register at the back table at our meetings since the sign in sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities. 2018 dues are due and Lynne Jones and Albert Smaistrila were busy collecting five dollar bills before the meeting.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson called the meeting to order, giving an opening invocation and leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jack recognized and welcomed visitors to our meeting. We had four new members join in February: Dayna Druke, Susan Garner, Buff Hildreth, and Fernando Martinez

At the beginning of our meeting, Stephanie Kinghorn presented the Texas DAR Conservation Award to Jeff McMullan. Jeff was her beekeeping mentor and she had nominated him in recognition of all of his volunteering efforts.

Gene deBons has been researching the history and origins of the Fort Bend Beekeepers. He discovered a letter dated June 26, 1978 from County Extension Agent Bouche Mickey that listed 40 or so members, including 21 "charter members". The Association's first President was John A. Riley (1909 - 1989). He sold honey in drums to the Federal government. With our humid weather, he sometimes had difficulty achieving their 18½% maximum moisture content specification and wrote of a honey drying room he set up to dry his honey. The club's first Vice President was Ted Kopycinski (1913 - 2008). Gene said that he was "blessed to know them" and learned a lot from their obituaries.

President Jack Richardson announced that he had begun his 52nd year as a beekeeper in April. This is his first time as a club officer and he led an open forum on what he hopes we can do in 2018. He began

with a "Pot of Gold Award" presented to Michael McLean and Albert Smaistrila for their efforts to successfully keep bees and earn a few bucks in the process (but hardly a "pot of gold").

We all know that beekeeping is not always easy and Jack sees mentoring new beekeepers as an important step in achieving our goal of "fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping". The club's formal mentoring program has been neglected and he hopes to get some help getting it back on track.

Setting meeting agendas is another important job. He hopes that members will join in with "show and tell" at our meetings. No special preparation is necessary, just be there and be ready to "show and tell" about tips, tricks, tools, gadgets, gizmos or whatever.

Jack polled the group for meeting topics. Demonstrations for new beekeepers were suggested. There was also interest in producing candles and making soap and cosmetics from beeswax. Small scale queen rearing, capturing swarms, and swarm traps were also suggested.

Jack plans to reinstate the "what's happening in the beeyard now" topic to our meetings. In January he suggested that we should be getting equipment ready for spring and leave the hives alone for a few more weeks.

Member Harrison Rogers is also our District Director for the Texas Beekeepers Association (he's Vice President of the Harris County Beekeepers as well). He reported on the successful beekeeping school held in Austin on January 27. He also reminded everyone that he will be signing up volunteers for the honey bee exhibit at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo AGVENTURE. It runs February 27 through March 18.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones reminded every one that dues are due and volunteers are needed to bring snacks for the meeting.

Door prize winners in February

were Carson Bryant (a honey sign donated by Jack Richardson) and Annette Gonzales (a frame lifter donated by Dan Jones).

DAR Conservation Award

Stephanie Kinghorn can't make it to many of our meetings because they conflict with her Daughters of the American Revolution chapter meetings. Several months back she decided that her beekeeping mentor, Jeff McMullan, should be nominated for the DAR state organization's Conservation Award. Dedicated to the preservation of natural resources, this award recognizes outstanding achievement in environmental awareness. Armed with recommendations by our own Nancy Hentschel and Gene deBons, Vince Mannino, Fort Bend County's Extension Director, and Master Naturalist Karl Baumgartner, Stephanie cited not just one thing that Jeff has done but everything he has done. At our January meeting, Stephanie presented the award to Jeff in recognition of all of his volunteering efforts over many years.

Treasurer's Report

Our January treasury balance was \$3,197.99. At our January meeting we collected \$235.00 in dues (47 new and renewing members). The resulting balance is \$3,432.99 consisting of \$3,377.99 in our checking account plus \$55.00 in cash.

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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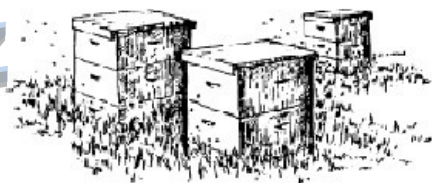


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March, 2018

The March 13, 2018 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Albert Smith who volunteered to bring salty treats and Margaret Wrzesinski (something sweet) for our March meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Swarm season is here and I'm worried about my back yard hive swarming. I don't want bees in my house, or worse yet, my neighbor's house. What should I do to prevent swarming?

An **A:** Honey bee colonies swarm to create new colonies (reproductive swarms) or to abandon an unsuitable nest site (absconding swarms). Spring swarms are usually reproductive swarms. Swarming later in the year is often to escape pests (or pest treatments), disease or a nest site that just gets too hot in late summer.

Swarm management is an important part of being a responsible beekeeper. Whole books have been written on honey bee swarms, so our newsletter is hardly long enough to address all the details of swarm management. Instead, we'll list and describe a few options for you to research on your own.

Reproductive swarms are how honey bees create new colonies. They happen in the spring when resources are plentiful (many believe that colonies actually start swarm preparations in the fall as they accumulate honey and pollen for spring buildup). Be aware, though, that an entire colony will vacate their home at almost any time of the year. In our area, late summer swarms are often due to the colony having cho-

sen a home in the spring that is too hot when August rolls around. "Absconding" swarms are sometimes really large.

To manage the natural swarming process we have to convince the bees to stay (or that it is not yet time to leave). One simple practice is to rearrange your hive boxes in early spring. Over the winter the bees have moved upward in the hive as they consumed their honey stores. Moving the vacated boxes of empty comb up to the top of the hive stack fools the bees into thinking that there is still work to be done refilling the empty comb before it is time to swarm. Supering the stack with properly stored drawn comb also assures that the bees find plenty of room for stores.

An over-crowded hive is a good indicator of an impending swarm especially if you see queen cells along the bottom of comb. They are referred to as "swarm cells" since swarming is now imminent. Some beekeepers destroy these cells in an effort to stop swarming, but if the bees have already swarmed you will leave the colony without a queen. Not good. Swarm cells can easily be removed and used to rescue queenless colonies or for splits, but leave a couple behind in case the hive has swarmed. Capped swarm cells are a certain warning that swarming is only days away (or the swarm has already left).

Splitting a hive in the spring serves the same purpose for the bees as a

reproductive swarm. Splits are not difficult to do and are almost always successful when they include a new queen. If you really don't want or need an additional hive, one of your fellow beekeepers would probably welcome it.

The "Demaree Method", "nectar management", "Checker-boarding", and the "Snelgrove Method" are other hive manipulations intended to convince the bees that it is not time to swarm.

Regardless of whatever swarm prevention steps you take, it is important to have a backup plan. Should one of your hives swarm, it is a good idea to offer them a place to live (better than in the soffit of someone's house). A vacant hive in your bee yard, especially with drawn comb and a few drops of lemongrass oil, can entice swarming bees to stay next door (or maybe catch a swarm that is passing through). Swarm traps are another good option. It is certain that the scouts will find the empty hive or trap and it is better if it is some distance away from the hive. Check traps often so the bees can be moved into a hive quickly.

And your last line of defense is having equipment available and the ability to hive a wayward swarm.

Dues Are Due

Check out the address label on this newsletter. If your name is in *italics*, you need to get your \$5.00 2018 dues paid at our March meeting.

February Meeting Notes

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones was busy collecting dues at the back table at our February meeting. A total of 31 paid their dues for 2018, including seven new members who joined our association.

For probably the first time ever, our head count and sign-in register came up with the same number: 63 members and guests at our February meeting! Be sure that you register at the back table at our meetings since the sign in sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson called the meeting to order and gave an opening invocation. Following the Pledge of Allegiance led by Gene deBons, Jack recognized 11 first time visitors at our meeting. Each was warmly welcomed after telling us of their plans as a beekeeper (most were brand new to beekeeping).

Lynne Jones asked for volunteers willing to bring snacks for our meetings. Her plan is to contact the list of volunteers ahead of each meeting to see who plans to attend and would be able to bring snacks for us to enjoy. Lynne also noted that there were registration folders available for members wishing to help with our mentoring program.

With spring just around the corner, beekeepers should be getting busy. Darrel Scott reviewed the beekeeping calendar for January, February and March based on info from the Montgomery County Beekeepers web site (www.mocobees.com). It's important to have your hives and equipment ready to go. Any varroa treatments need to be finished before installing supers.

Darrell also brought in his list of fun bee facts, focusing this month on bee stings. Honey bee venom is different from that of wasps and ants. Only workers sting, drones don't and queens (usually) won't. In 2006 11 U. S. deaths were attributed to bee stings compared to

90 due to lightning.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is scheduled for February 27 - March 18. Volunteers for the rodeo's AGVENTURE honey bee exhibit are coordinated by the Harris County Beekeepers Association. Harris County's David Pineda and Harrison Rogers brought in their volunteer signup sheet, or you can volunteer online at the Harris County web site (<http://www.harriscountybeekeepers.org/>).

Gene deBons next gave us a historical look back gleaned from his 1855 edition of Langstroth's The Hive and the Honey Bee, contemporaneous with the battles at the Alamo and San Jacinto. Langstroth had not yet invented his removable frame hive, so there were instructions for making a straw skep. Then, as now, beekeepers were urged to be gentle and only use slow deliberate motions when working with bees.

Jerry Griffin confessed to sometimes having more money than sense when it comes to keeping bees. He brought in his Bee Cool Ventilator, a patented solar powered fan (www.beecoolventilators.com). Increased honey production is supposed to result from the bees having less work to ventilate the hive. It is also claimed to help with pests and disease.

Since we were hearing confessions, Sharon Moore offered hers as well. She brought in her FlowTM Hive super. This device got started seeking crowd source funding of \$750,000. Before the dust settled, more than \$12 million had been raised (Sharon included). The bees store nectar and produce honey in special plastic frames. At harvest time, a large "key" is inserted to open the cells and the honey drains out of the hive.

Ian Kjos brought in a screened bottom board he makes and has available for sale. He makes and sells other woodenware as well. His correct phone number is (713) 657-9707. Ian also passed out infor-

mation on Getting the Most from your Queen Castle.

Jack Richardson finished up our potpourri of "show and tell" by demonstrating various Langstroth hive components.

Our meeting concluded with a drawing for various donated door prizes.

Beekeeping School

The Central Texas' 10th Annual Beekeeper School is March 17th in Brenham. Registration on or before the 12th is \$65, after the 12th it will be \$90. <http://centraltexasbeekeepers.org>.

Letgo

We've all seen the silly Letgo commercials on TV. It's been decided that we need a Letgo table in the back of the room each month for those getting over a case of "more money than sense." If you have beekeeper stuff that needs to find a new home, it may be time to Letgo.

Treasurer's Report

Our February treasury balance was \$3,432.99. At our February meeting we collected \$155.00 in dues (31 new and renewing members). The resulting balance is \$3,587.99 consisting of \$3,532.99 in our checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

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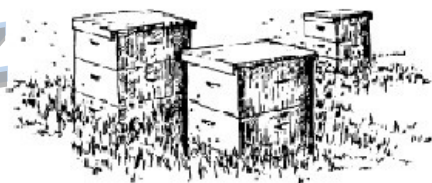


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April, 2018

The April 10, 2018 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Daryl and Toni Scott and John Petter and Vina Burns who volunteered to bring salty treats for our April meeting. Peg Turrentine and David and Cee Cee Parker volunteered something sweet. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

In Memorium

Elton Reynolds, a long time member of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Assn., passed away on Thursday, March 15. He had served as President for many years. Elton was 98 years old and a great friend and mentor to many of our beekeeper friends. Beekeeping has been described as a gentle craft and Elton fit the bill perfectly. He is missed.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Last month's question was about swarm prevention and it prompted questions about capturing wayward swarms. What steps should be taken to be successful when capturing swarms?

An A: This is a great question because you can get dozens of answers from just one beekeeper!

It is important to understand that a swarm is looking for a new home and it can happen quickly. In minutes a swarm of bees on a tree limb can become a major problem in the wall of someone's house. Immediate response to a swarm call may still be too late.

Safe, responsible, successful beekeeping is our goal, so let's answer your question in three steps:

Swarms can usually be easily and safely captured. Most often swarms are very docile and can be hived with minimal commotion. Nonetheless, wear your protective gear

because bad bees can be bad even in swarms. The objective is to get the colony to move into your box and the key is their ability to communicate by scent. Don't light your smoker since smoke interferes with their being able to smell.

Swarms don't always present themselves on some easily accessible spot, so the "safety" challenge is not falling out of a tree or off a ladder. Remember that the swarm is looking for a suitable home and will investigate potential nest sites for some distance. Rather than risk a fall, sometimes the best option is to just leave a box nearby with drawn comb and a few drops of lemongrass oil. Just let the bees move in on their own. A swarm trap is another option. If it is a recent swarm, you can rest assured that the scouts will find your offering and with a little luck will just set up residence. Our web site (www.fortbendbeekeepers.org) has links to a couple of swarm capture videos, including one showing how a jug on a pole can be used while safely on the ground.

Capturing swarms brings with it the responsibility to be sure that the colony stays where you put them. If you bring a swarm home and they abscond, they need to move in with you, not the neighbors.

There are many steps that you can take to encourage the bees to stay. You should leave the colony closed up overnight to get accustomed to their new home. After dark you can offer them sugar syrup in an en-

trance feeder (bees can't see the color red, so a red flashlight should be used so they don't come out looking for a fight). Another idea is to use a queen excluder to prevent the queen from leaving. Remember that you have trapped the drones too so it should only stay in place for a day or two (and expect to find dead drones on it). The queen excluder is not a sure thing since the scouts may still be looking for a better home. They may just wait for the excluder to be removed.

Success in capturing swarms comes in two steps: getting them in a box and then having them stay and flourish. It is best to put the swarm in a hive from the get go. Youtube videos showing swarms in plastic bags, nets or garbage cans did not likely end successfully. One of our website videos shows a swarm marching into a box placed on the ground. There is a view that when the bees move in on their own they are more likely to stay. Sometimes a swarm ends up on the ground because the queen has difficulty flying (old-timers call it a "pancake" swarm for obvious reasons). Offering up a hive entrance on the ground near the "pancake" is usually all it takes to capture them. Or you can snip off the branch and then shake the bees to the ground in front of your nuc. It is fun to lay on your belly and watch for the queen to march in. Sometimes she is among the first to go in, but often she will be one of the last.

A key part of the swarm catcher's tool kit is a can of insect repellent like Off! A swarm capture will go most quickly when a squirt of Off! prevents them from going back up in the tree. You can also use paper towels or a rag sprayed with insect repellent to maneuver the swarm to a more accessible spot. Off! is also very effective in discouraging scout bees that are investigating your home as a potential nest site. (But don't spray it on bees!)

Dues Are Due

Check out the address label on this newsletter. If your name is in *italics*, you need to get your \$5.00 2018 dues paid at our April meeting.

March Meeting Notes

Be sure that you register at the back table at our meetings since the sign in sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities. We had 58 register at our March 13, 2018 meeting. Three tries at a head count came up with 55, 59 and 58... close, pretty close, or perfect.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson called the meeting to order and gave an opening invocation. Albert Smaistrila then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jack next welcomed four visitors. He announced that if a mentor is wanted there are sign-up sheets available (additional mentors are still needed). The cost for mentees is \$25.00. A copy of The Beekeepers Handbook and a Beekeeper's Log book is provided (to both mentors and mentees). A subscription to the American Bee Journal is required, so you might as well subscribe. New beekeepers were also encouraged to go ahead and purchase protective gear. A ventilated suit or jacket is best. However, wearing a veil and double pants, double sweat shirt, double socks with boots and gloves will work.

Jack reported that his bees are doing

really well and he saw the first swarm cells of the year. Be ready to start supering-up!

Jack announced that we will have a beekeeper picnic in May. First we will visit two bee yards, then have our picnic. More details will be announced at our May meeting. We will also plan a couple of field trips: perhaps to the TBA summer meeting, the TBA annual meeting, Buzz Fest in Navasota, or the Louisiana Beekeepers meeting.

Gene DeBons brought everyone's attention to the March 2018 edition of the American Bee Journal. The USDA is planning to introduce a non-native flea beetle to eradicate the invasive Chinese Tallow trees. This will be very detrimental to honey bees and beekeepers. Bees love the nectar of Chinese Tallow trees and hundreds of thousands of migratory hives are moved to the Gulf Coast every year for pollen and spring build up on the Chinese Tallows.

Vice President Chelsea Murray announced upcoming events:

March 17: CTBA Beekeeping School in Brenham

April 14: Sugar Land Earth Day

May 26: Bee Weaver's Buzz Fest

June 30: TBA Summer Clinic in Conroe

Chelsea then presented "Top Beekeeping Tips for Spring", starting out with making sure that your equipment is ready. You should be taking swarm prevention measures and be prepared to capture swarms. (As always, be sure to drink plenty of water and take breaks while working your bees.) And it may seem early, but you should be planning ahead for harvest time. Order bottles, caps and labels. The club has extracting equipment that you can use. We hold a \$500 deposit check and charge \$20 to pay for repair and replacement. It is important that you return everything and have it clean and ready to go for the next member that will be using it.

Jeff Murray reported on three beeyard upgrades in Fairchilds, Sugar Land, and Booth, Texas.

Steve Hutchinson has 16 established hives and will give mentees first dibs to buy them.

Jack Richardson will bring some swarm traps for sale on the letgo table in April.

Thank you to Margaret Wrzesinski for retyping and providing single sheet copies of the MCBA Month-by-Month Beekeeping tasks.

As has become customary, our meeting concluded with a drawing for various donated door prizes.

Time to letgo

Prompted by the silly commercials on TV, we set up a *letgo* table in the back of the room at our March meeting. It seemed to be a real hit, so if you have beekeeper stuff that needs to find a new home, it may be time to *letgo*.

Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was \$3,587.99. Since our last report we collected \$60 in extractor use fees, \$90 membership dues, a \$25 mentee enrollment, and a \$5.00 donation. The resulting balance is \$3,767.99, consisting of \$3,712.99 in our checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

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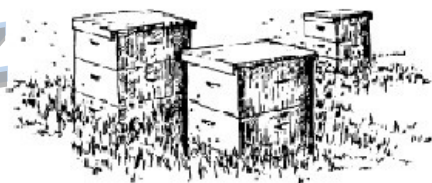


Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



May, 2018

The May 8, 2018 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Peter Moser who volunteered to bring salty treats and Wendy Chopin and Benny and Verosa Philipp (something sweet) for our May meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

One more thing....

With all of our discussion of swarm management, one of our members made a suggestion that must be added to the list. When buying a queen for a backyard hive, have her "clipped", snipping off a wing to make her unable to fly. The colony can decide to swarm, but she won't get far and the pile of bees will be right in front of the hive instead of in the wall of a house somewhere. Offer them a nuc (with drawn comb and lemongrass oil if you have some) and they'll all just march inside. If you really don't want another hive, someone at our next meeting will be glad to take it.

Keep a close eye on your hive for a couple of weeks to make sure they were successful raising a new queen. Of course she will be capable of flight, but if you replace her, have the new queen clipped (unless you want to clip her yourself).

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I can't seem to get my smoker lit, or, should I say, stay lit. There must be a trick.

An A: Ancient people knew that smoke from smoldering fire could be used to calm a honey bee colony so they could rob their honey. Honey bees are woodland creatures and the smell of smoke fools them into thinking the woods are on fire. They gorge on honey and prepare

to evacuate the flames. A full tummy discourages aggressive behavior and the smoke masks the scent of any alarm pheromones in the air.

A smoker is the ubiquitous symbol of beekeeping. Its invention is credited to Moses Quinby in 1875. It is cleverly designed with an entrance below a grate and the smoldering fuel. It allows entry of only enough air to keep the fuel burning by drafting air up and out the "snout". Then, with a few puffs of the bellows, air is blown into the can and a cloud of smoke is created. The fuel may last several hours as it burns frugally awaiting the next puff.

Almost anything that burns relatively slowly can be used as smoker fuel. Remember though that pine straw, pine shavings, dry grass or leaves make pretty pungent smoke. You don't need to asphyxiate yourself, so experiment around for a fuel that isn't unpleasant to you. Try sweetgum balls, clean rags or different wood shavings for example. Roadside cotton picked up down toward Needville makes pretty good smoker fuel. Or you can buy fuel (usually paper pulp or compressed cotton) from the beekeeping supply folks.

Nowadays smokers are made of stainless steel, but they can be found made of (rusted) galvanized steel or even copper. If you are shopping for a smoker, consider the larger sizes since they hold more fuel (and therefore burn longer). Fashion a stopper out of a cork or a corncob or stick or whatever to smother the fire

when you are finished in the backyard. Relight the remaining fuel next time. A smoker gets hot, so make sure there are adequate guards to prevent burns. A sturdy ring on the snout is a real plus.

Now, to the A. The best way to light a smoker is to fill it about a 1/4 full with good dry fuel. A propane torch can reach down inside to ignite the fuel (the kind that lights by pulling a trigger is well worth the extra bucks). If using matches or a butane lighter, place the fuel (or a small ball of newspaper) within their reach. Shake it to the bottom when lit. Use the bellows to stoke the flames and when it seems to be burning well, upright the smoker and fill it with more fuel. Adding fuel above the fire helps give cool smoke without sparks or flames. Close the snout and puff the bellows a few times and you should be in business.

Always light your smoker before going into a bee hive. Follow a few puffs at the entrance (and the guard bees) with a few more under the cover. You should give the smoke a minute or so to work its magic before opening up the hive.

With use, soot builds up in your smoker. If you bought a propane torch to light it, you can also use it to clean up the mess. Use your torch to ignite the soot, burning with a lazy yellow flame. It leaves behind white ash that is easily brushed away. Don't forget to clean the top rim and inside the snout so it opens and closes easily.



Dues Are Due

Check out the address label on this newsletter. If you see a sad bee, it means you haven't paid your \$5.00 dues for 2018. It also means that you will be dropped from the mailing list and this is your last **Buzz**. You can pay your dues at our May meeting or mail them to Fort Bend Beekeepers Assn., c/o Lynne Jones, 19747 Coppervine, Houston, TX 77084.

April Meeting Notes

We had 60 members and guests sign in at our April meeting. Several attempts at a head count came in between 58 and 62, so the registration was pretty accurate. Good! Always be sure that you register at the back table at our meetings since the sign in sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson called the meeting to order and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack recognized four first time visitors to our meeting. Each was warmly welcomed after telling us of their plans as a beekeeper (most were brand new to beekeeping).

Gene deBons presented an overview of the history of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. Records from June, 1978 list 65 members, including 21 charter members of the group. Almost every area of the county was represented, plus Houston and Rockport. Officers of the club over the last 30 years were characterized by long terms of service. Gene was Secretary-Treasurer for 15 years from 1993 until 2008.

Recently departed member Elton Reynolds served as Association President for 23 years, 1983 -1989 and 1993 - 2008. He was born in Beasley and graduated from high school there. He was predeceased by his first wife of 33 years, Eleanor. He is survived by his loving wife of 43 years, Helen. Elton

served in the European theater during WW II and after the war owned a radiator shop in Rosenberg. He joined Allied Concrete in 1961 and retired as Vice President in 1979. After retiring, Elton was introduced to beekeeping and our Association by member Ted Kopycinski. He was very active for many years. Gene shared a series of photos of Elton's activities plus a few stories and lessons he learned under Elton's tutelage. Elton was an excellent teacher and example for children, patient with all and attentive to everyone.

Following Gene's presentation, Jack Richardson reported on mentoring activities at his beeyard the previous weekend, announced plans for a beeyard picnic on May 12 and carpooling to the B. Weaver Buzzfest in Navasota on May 26 and the TBA Summer Clinic on June 12 in Conroe. Jack also showed a swarm trap and reported on his swarm trapping activities.

Nancy Hentschel could use a hand talking about bees at the Sugar Land Earth Day event on April 14.

Next, Harrison Rogers, Association member and Area 5 Director for the Texas Beekeepers Association, gave an overview of the State organization and its role in helping beekeeping and beekeepers. TBA is an IRS 501(c)(7) nonprofit organization. This is a "social club" status, exempt from federal income taxes. There are plans being made to reincorporate as a 501(c)(5), nonprofit agricultural organization. Each year the TBA holds a summer clinic and an annual convention focused on learning opportunities for beekeepers. They represent Texas beekeepers in Austin, promote the Texas Honey Queen program and the Texas Master Beekeeper program. They also support the TAMU apiculture program and the honey bee lab. Individuals may join TBA and benefit from event discounts and receive the bi-monthly TBA Journal. Association membership is also available to gain TBA support for club programs, etc.

The TBA also includes subsidiary organizations. The Texas Honey Bee Education Association is a 501 (c)(3) educational and charitable nonprofit organization that supports such activities as the Honey Queen program and Hurricane Harvey Relief. Real Texas Honey™ is another TBA program that promotes Texas honey as a premium product.

Our meeting concluded with a customary drawing for various donated door prizes.

Time to *letgo*

Don't miss the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or, if you have stuff that needs a new home, it may be time to *letgo*.

Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$3,767.99. Since our last report we collected \$100 in donations, \$80 in dues, and \$250 in mentee enrollments. We spent \$149.33 for flowers for Elton Reynold's funeral service, \$11.72 for batteries for our PA system and \$428.40 for twenty copies of the The Beekeepers Handbook for our mentoring program. The resulting balance is \$3,608.54, consisting of \$3,553.54 in our checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

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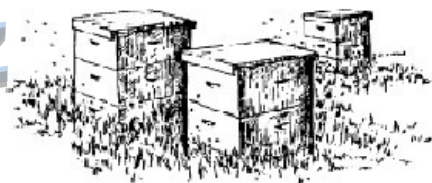


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June, 2018

The June 12, 2018 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shields 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Tim Oppermann who volunteered to bring salty treats and Linda Casey (something sweet) for our June meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or, if you have stuff that needs a new home, it may be time to *letgo* of a few of your beekeeping treasures.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I need guidance before starting hive inspections!!

An **A:** Hive inspections are when we put our skill and knowledge as beekeepers to the test. Day to day we should observe entrance activity and be on the lookout for changes, but that doesn't go very far toward a complete understanding of what is going on, so we will need to look inside.

Inspecting a beehive should be done routinely, but remember that you are disturbing the hive and it may take a day or so for them to get back to their normal routine. For beginners (or new hives), an inspection every week or two during spring and summer is ok. Inspecting more often is unnecessary and disruptive to the hive. It is likely that you will squish a few bees and there is always the possibility of injuring the queen.

After the hive is first set up or re-queened, it is important to check on things within a week or so. Have the bees settled in ok? Is the queen out of her cage? Is new comb under construction? Are there unusual smells? Future inspections should focus on the queen and brood (along with stored resources and evidence of pest and disease). Is there a healthy vibrant brood pattern of eggs and open and capped

brood? Evidence of her activity is good, but can you find the queen? A queenless colony is incapable of maintaining its work force. As unreplaced workers die, the hive is poorly protected and can soon fall victim to robbing, sliming by small hive beetles or waxworms.

The most common cause of queenlessness and colony failure is failure of a new queen to survive mating flights after a colony has swarmed. This is a fragile time for your bees. Evidence of swarming is a sharp drop in colony numbers, sometimes with the presence of "swarm cells", a number of queen cells along the bottom of frames near the entrance. The new queen will emerge in a day or two after the colony has swarmed. Don't destroy swarm cells since the old queen may have already departed.

What about stored resources of pollen (bee bread), nectar and capped honey? Pollen is usually stored around the perimeter of the brood nest. It provides the protein source for brood rearing, so it is good to see a copious supply. This is especially true going in to winter since it is critical to an early start to brood rearing in a few months. The overwintering supply of honey is very important especially in very cold weather. Besides basic sustenance, honey provides the energy to keep the nest warm when it is cold outside. In times of plenty, be on the lookout for nectar in the brood

nest leaving the queen few cells for egg laying. Add a honey super!

It is important to prepare for the job at hand. Have your smoker going and your bee brush and hive tool ready, along with a frame rest and frame grip if you use them.

Don your protective gear, it is time to get started. It is very important that you use smooth steady gentle motions as you inspect the hive. Start with a few puffs of smoke at the entrance to calm the guard bees. Next blow smoke under the outer cover. At this point, it's best to wait a minute or two as the smoke takes effect. Next, if you have a telescoping cover, remove it and set it on the ground upside-down. Puff a little more smoke and give it a minute or two. Use your hive tool to gently pry up the inner cover (if you use one) and remove it. Scrape off any wax or propolis on the inner cover (or migratory cover) and set it aside, leaning it on the hive near the entrance so stragglers can easily go back inside. Likewise, you should remove any cross comb and burr comb you encounter during your inspection. Have a bucket handy to remove it from the beeyard to avoid encouraging robbers. You can set the bucket out later, away from the hive(s) for the bees to recover any honey you've removed.

Pry loose any honey supers with your hive tool. As you remove boxes, set them on top of the inner cover at 90° to avoid crushing bees.

(Avoid prying at the corners and damaging your boxes since it leads to rotten wood.) Heavy supers contain lots of honey! You can check to see if it is capped and ready for harvest as they are returned to the hive stack.

The principle objective is to examine the brood nest, so before removing a box, check a frame in the middle for signs of brood. If you have reached the brood nest, you can begin your frame by frame inspection. As you proceed, let the bee's behavior guide your smoker use (too much smoke causes the bees to run around, making it difficult to spot the queen). Carefully pry a frame free using your hive tool and hold it up in the sunlight for inspection. A magnifying glass can help old eyes.

The order that you remove frames for inspection is not all that important, so long as they (and the hive stack) are returned in the order and orientation they were in. One good approach is to remove an outside frame and set it aside, leaning on the hive or in a frame rest. That way you can return frames to the hive without squishing too many bees. When you are finished, pushing the frames over to one side makes the next inspection easier, but you can even up the spacing between frames if you want to.

As you reassemble the hive stack, put the boxes back in the order and oriented the way that you found them. Once the box is in place on the hive stack, you can start to examine individual frames. Use smoke or your bee brush to get bees out of the way as you put the boxes on the stack. You can also clear bees by sliding or turning the box into place.

Your memory is not as good as you might think it is, so the most important part of your inspection is to record your observations in your bee notebook or journal. Jim and Chari Elam have a great inspection record sheet on their web site: www.bluebonnetbeekeeping.com/educational.

May Meeting Notes

We had 53 members and guests sign in at our May meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. He recognized "first timers", including nine who joined the Association in May.

VP Chelsea Murray made several announcements, including beeyard visits and a picnic on Saturday; Buzz Fest 2018 at Bee Weaver in Navasota on May 26th; TBA Summer Clinic in Conroe on June 30; Brazoria County Beekeepers Honey Expo in Angleton on July 21, and a Painted Hive Contest and Bee Photography Contest planned for our September meeting

Jack had more detail on the picnic. The group will meet at Buc-ees in Greatwood at 10:00 am Saturday. After the first bee yard visit, we'll proceed to Michael McLean's bee yard to tour his apiary and enjoy a fajita picnic. The Association will provide bottled water. A sign-up sheet was passed around for other items.

Sharon Moore gave us a review of The Bees: A Novel by Laline Paull. It is the anthropomorphic story of Flora 717, a honey bee worker.

The Mentoring groups were given an opportunity to report on their activities, followed by a brief discussion on the topic bottom boards.

Ian Kjos announced that he is taking orders for various wood-ware. Dan Jones announced he is re-homing cut-out colonies. For \$150, members can provide him with their empty hive, he will establish the colony, and contact when it's ready to be picked up. Jack Richardson announced that he also has bees for sale.

Chelsea gave a presentation on rendering beeswax. Don't use an open flame: use a double-boiler to melt the comb (any cookware you use will be a mess so use old pots from the thrift store). Pour the melted wax and gunk through a paint filter or cheesecloth. Then put the melt-

ed wax in a pot with water. When it cools, the wax will float to the top and form a cake. Break the wax into chunks and re-melt and filter again. A small crockpot and paintbrush or roller can be used to apply wax to the foundation. A solar wax melter can be made from a styrofoam cooler, cheese cloth, and glass top. You can also buy a solar wax melter. Or you can borrow the club's solar wax melter.

Our meeting concluded with a customary drawing for various donated door prizes. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the winners.

Silent Auction

You might want to hit the ATM machine before our meeting. Gene deBons has offered to sell some beekeeping gear that belonged to Elton Reynolds, who recently passed away. He'll do it with a silent action at our meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was \$3,608.54. Since our last report we collected \$115 in donations, \$70 in dues, and \$125 in mentee enrollments. We spent \$77.59 for refreshment items and paid our \$50.00 Association dues to the Texas Beekeepers Association. The resulting balance is \$3,790.95, consisting of \$3,735.95 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

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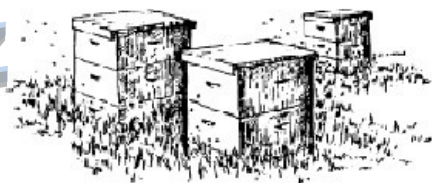


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July, 2018

The July 10, 2018 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. The main topic in July will be a presentation by Kellie Jensen about the queen rearing initiative of the Brazoria County Beekeepers. 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Mike Jurek who volunteered to bring salty treats and Annette Gonzales and Steve Martin (something sweet) for our July meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home, .

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I harvested more honey than I know what to do with! The rules for selling it seem confusing. Can you help?

An A: First of all, the *Buzz* doesn't give legal advice. With that being said, here is a shot at helping to understand what you need to know about selling your honey. You will still need to research specific requirements.

It is important to understand that Texas' requirements aren't regulations or rules written by bureaucrats in Austin. Their rulesmaking process is pretty detailed, starting with a law (sometimes called "enabling legislation") that gives government agencies the power to write rules that carry the force of law. The rulesmaking process progresses step-by-step and requires that all public comments are addressed before they are final. Needless to say, Agency rulesmaking takes a while.

The folks prowling the back rooms in Austin see agency rulesmaking as being tedious and in their way. Instead, they contrive poorly written laws: passed by both houses of uninformed legislators and signed by the governor. The only "public comment" is what goes on in the "smoke filled rooms"! It is sadly

true that "if you aren't at the table you risk being on the menu".

I think that most would agree that food safety rules are a good idea, especially in today's world. Besides human blunders, deliberate acts can contaminate our food supply, sickening or killing lots of people. The safety of our food supply is addressed at all levels of government. County and city inspectors check the kitchen at Whataburger, the state licenses and inspects food production facilities, and the Federal government writes rules, performs inspections and maintains a system to quickly identify the source of contaminated foods. It is almost incredible how quickly the source is identified when someone is sickened at a salad bar or Chipotle.

Texas' Department of State Health Services licenses and inspects food manufacturing facilities with two significant exceptions. (Local government and Washington do as well). In 2011 the legislature passed and Governor Perry signed Texas' "Cottage Food Law" that allows the sale of a specific list (in the law!) of low-risk foods produced in home kitchens. There are basic food safety requirements along with restrictions that in essence serve to protect licensed facilities from competition that has no compliance cost.

There is another category of foods referred to as "raw agricultural products". Honey isn't on that list either.

In 2015, the Texas Beekeepers Association sold the Texas legislature a "Small Honey Producer" law (or "exemption law") that eliminates even the most basic food sanitation requirements for honey and includes a "shiny object": SMALL < 2,500 lbs per year. (that is 200+ gallons, 40+ five gallon pails, or the crop from 35 or so hives). Distracted by SMALL you may overlook all of the other requirements for the source, labeling and the actual sale of honey. In fact, the law reads "sells or distributes" so it would seem to apply even if you just give your honey away to family and friends. The law applies only to pure honey (no additives or flavorings) and labeling must contain the following wording: "Bottled or packaged in a facility not inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services." The Texas Beekeepers Association sells labels that don't comply with this very specific requirement. What a mess!! It is no doubt true that even the things that government does best, it doesn't do very well. This seems to be especially true when legislators are involved.

So you are really on your own on how to sell your honey. It is unlikely that you are of the scale needed to justify building and licensing a

“food manufacturing facility”. The fact is, though, it is not all that difficult and the TDSHS is very helpful in getting it done at minimum cost. If you wish to remain SMALL, there are significant restrictions, most significantly being that you cannot sell honey on the internet or for resale or use in producing other food products. It has to be your honey, from your Texas hives, and sold (or given away?) directly to the consumer by you at your home, at a (defined) roadside stand, farmer’s market or at a nonprofit event.

Since you are on your own here, you should read the TDSHS guidance on licensing and inspection on their website (search for “honey” at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/>). It is creepy that you won’t be finding anything about being SMALL on the TDSHS website probably because of the “exemption”. Our website at <https://www.fortbendbeekeepers.org/state-of-texas-resources/> has some other light reading to help you figure all this out. Kids long ago figured out that it is sometimes easier to beg forgiveness than to ask permission.

June Meeting Notes

We had 72 members and guests sign in at our June meeting. The head count came up with the same number. Amazing! Thanks for signing in.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. He recognized and welcomed four “first timers”.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones reminded all of the upcoming TBA Summer Clinic on June 30th in Conroe. There will be presentations for every level of beekeeper and the registration is discounted if you are a TBA member. All new members who joined this year have first year free memberships to TBA. The registration fee is higher if you pay at the door.

Jack Richardson reported on the tours at Kate Osborn’s and Michael

McLean’s beeyards and the picnic that followed. Jack also spoke of the TBA Annual meeting which will be held in Temple in November.

Larry Hoehne reminded everyone of the Brazoria County Beekeepers Association’s annual Honey Expo at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds in Angleton on July 21, 11 am - 5 pm.

Planning is underway for our Painted Hive Contest and Bee Photography Contest at the September meeting. Rules for entries will be available at the July meeting.

Long time officer and member Elton Reynold passed away in March and Gene DeBons conducted a silent auction of some of his beekeeping equipment. He donated a home-made smoker to Jack’s smoker “Wall of Smoke” exhibit. Gene also announced that our website had six swarm removal requests on Memorial Day. Gene provides contact info for swarm captures as well as for members who do paid removals.

VP Chelsea Murray gave a presentation on the club’s honey harvest equipment that is available for members to use. You must pay a \$20 fee and a deposit or check which will be returned to you when the equipment is turned in properly cleaned and ready for the next member. An easy way to get most of the honey cleaned off is to leave it out for the bees to take care of, but don’t leave it near your hives because it could start robbing. Also be careful with how deep the honey is because bees drown easily.

You will need food grade buckets for your honey (available at Walmart, Home Depot or Lowe’s). Installing a honey gate on the bucket is very handy. The gate is flat and the buckets are curved; if you tighten the inside nut too tightly, you can get cracks in the bucket. Jeff McMullan recommended heating the side of the bucket with a heat gun or hair dryer to make it flexible for the gate installation. We have a strainer to catch debris in the honey when it comes out of the extractor.

Member Jeff Murray offers extrac-

tion service (The Texas Honey Trading Company). He demonstrated his extraction trailer outside after the meeting. You need to have your supers ready for him and he will buy all the honey from you, or you can pay for the extraction service, or something in the middle. A minimum of one full super is preferred. He might offer an Extraction Day where he sets up the trailer and you can schedule a time to bring your frames for extraction.

Nando’s Honey in Rosharon is selling nucs for \$165, 832 699-1960.

Our meeting closed with the customary drawings for donated door prizes. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to the donors.

After the meeting, the silent auction was settled up and those who wished to take a look at the Texas Honey Trading Company extraction trailer did so.

Treasurer’s Report

Our June treasury balance was \$3,790.95. Since our last report we collected \$30 in donations, \$60 in dues, and \$25 in mentee enrollments. We spent \$65.35 for ribbons for the upcoming super painting contest and paid \$298.38 in web site costs. The resulting balance is \$3,542.22, consisting of \$3,487.22 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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Fort Bend Buzz

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Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

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August, 2018

The August 14, 2018 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. The main topics in August will be the spring/summer season and preparing for fall. 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Michael Booth who volunteered to bring salty treats and Bob and Nancy Hentschel and Marsha Ho Sang (something sweet) for our August meeting. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home. It's looking like there will be a real pile back there this month!

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Does the Association's swarm call list refer members to do removals (not just swarms)?

An **A:** We get lots of different inquiries about honey bees. Many calls originate from our web site (fortbendbeekeepers.org) or contact information on the TBA web site (texasbeekeepers.org). Animal Control and other government agencies often refer bee calls to our club. Some pest control companies do as well since they prefer dealing with ants or cockroaches.

It is important to distinguish between "beekeeping" problems and pest control problems. Capturing swarms (clusters of bees in search of a new home, usually in the spring) is usually within the scope of skills of even novice beekeepers since they are usually docile and anxious to move in to a new home when one is offered. The most significant hazard in capturing swarms happens when a ladder gets involved. A five gallon pail or water jug (with its bottom cut out) mounted on a pole allows swarm capture safely from *terra firma*. Another powerful trick is to use insect repellent (like *Off!*) to discourage bees from returning to their cluster. It can be sprayed on a paper towel and placed high up using the same pole.

We often get calls about established colonies living in the walls of a house or some old building, cavities in trees, old BBQ pits, water meter boxes, green cable and power company pedestals, etc. etc. We don't refer these problems to our members since we can't assess member skill levels and potential problems. Instead we suggest an internet search for "bee removal" and encourage people to call providers of this service, hopefully with the appropriate skills, insurance coverage, etc. It is important that people understand that, "dead or alive", bees must be removed and that 2/3 of the bees aren't out flying around. Caulking up the hole is not a good idea since they usually find another way in and out.

Often people have stocked up on "Wasp Killer" but can't seem to kill the bees. Insecticide foggers actually work very well with bees, but dead bees smell worse than dead rats in the wall.

This month's **Q and an A** is a great opportunity to share a few stories about bee calls we have received. Several years ago a Fort Bend homeowner called a "bee remover" to take away a hive that had been abandoned by her son in the back yard. He agreed to a "freebie" since he planned to keep the hive. She ended up calling our Association for help when the hive got fumbled off his refrigerator dolly in

her back yard. Really bad bees (the actual reason she wanted them gone) had the whole neighborhood in lockdown. The "bee guy" called her from his truck to say "they are way too mean for me!". Of course he took what he could: the hive cover, inner cover, bottom board and hive stand. The club scored a generous donation when a couple of our members managed to remove (and requeen) the fiery white boxes.

In recent weeks, we got a call from a homeowner who wanted advice after a pest control provider killed the bees in her attic. He fell through the ceiling when he went up to clean up dead bees. Apparently he was going to send a sheet rock guy out to repair her home. "Doesn't he still need to clean up the dead bees and comb?"

Another hazard of working in attics is the heat. Another homeowner recently had the same question after the bee remover ended up laid out on her floor from the heat.

In the past we have gotten calls about plastic bags full of dead bees. People were trying to figure out how you get bees in a plastic bag and we usually told them that they probably had been poisoned. Last week a Katy homeowner called: she found a clear plastic bag full of live bees in her back yard. It appears that someone caught a swarm in a bag then pitched it over the fence into her back yard. Go figure.

July Meeting Notes

We had 60 members and guests sign in at our July meeting. Once again a near miracle: the head count came up with the same number. Amazing! Thanks for signing in. (Our sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.)

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack welcomed nine visitors and asked them to introduce themselves. Some are beginning to explore beekeeping while others are keeping bees already. Jack then gave a quick rundown on the club, our mentoring program, and the fun *letgo* table in the back of the room.

Apparently some members had not yet received their July newsletter. Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones took a show of hands; it was only a few. We mail the newsletter out so that it shows up just before the meeting (a not so subtle reminder). Perhaps the delivery problems in July was due to the Independence Day the week before.

Gene DeBons brought a Vitex plant for "show & tell". It is a great honey plant for our area. It can grow about 20 feet tall and blooms all summer. Jack added that bottlebrush is also good but not cold-hardy and Chinese Raintree is good but invasive.

Gene also showed the upgrade he made to his smoker. He has added a coffee can liner as a false bottom to protect the smoker bottom and also keep the smoker body from getting so hot. The false bottom can be replaced as needed. He also keeps a rag handy to plug the spout when he is ready to put the smoker out. Good starters are tissue paper, wax soaked newspaper and WD-40. Good fuels for smoke are burlap, cedar bark, and green grass. If you have a torch, you can re-light the smoker by applying the flame to the outside of the smoker.

Chelsea provided details on the Hive Painting Contest and Photo Contest which will be held at the September meeting. The contests are open to club members and their immediate

family members. A flyer will be available at the August meeting (see the details below). The hive boxes and photos must be at the meeting by 7:30 pm. Ribbons for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in each contest will be awarded in accordance with the club member vote results.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association
Hive Painting and Photo Contest Rules

1. Hive box and/or photos must be present, in-person at the September 11, 2018 FBBA Meeting.
2. Contest is open to FBBA members and their immediate family.
3. Hive boxes must be painted by the entrant. Photos must have been taken by the entrant.

Hive Painting Specifics

1. You only have to paint a hive box (any size). You do not have to include a top or bottom.
2. 3 winners will be voted on by club members present at the meeting. There will be ribbons awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Winning hive boxes will be featured on the club Facebook page and website.
3. Entries are the property of the entrant. The club will not keep any of the hive boxes.

Photo Entry Specifics

1. The theme will be "Our Glorious Honey Bee." Photos should include some element of honey bee behavior, science, history, or any aspect of beekeeping that contains a honey bee in the photo.
2. Entries must be no larger than 8"x10"
3. 3 winners will be voted on by club members present at the meeting. There will be ribbons awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Winning photos will be featured on the club Facebook page and website.

Chelsea also spoke about the Texas Beekeepers Association Summer Clinic which she and several other members attended. It was a fun and informative event. The keynote speaker, Dr. Jamie Ellis of the University of Florida, gave a very good opening presentation as well as several seminars. All of his presentations are based on his publications, which are available online. Lynne Jones will send everyone an email with links to his publications.

Kellie Jenson with the Brazoria County Beekeepers Association gave a presentation on their Queen Bee Initiative program. Their program's goal is to learn about rearing queens and study results on which stock seems to do best in our area. They are working to develop queens that have good traits for longevity, temperament, hygiene, brood production and honey production. The QBI bee yard is near Alvin and available only to members of BCBA. Members raise queens using various techniques and equipment. They also do mentoring at the QBI yard. Members of the Youth Program are each assigned a hive to be responsible for

and after a year, the hive becomes theirs. At present, there are 36 queens in the yard. None of the hives are treated. Last year, six hives were lost to varroa mites.

BCBA membership is \$20/year per family. The club meets on the second Monday at the Brazoria County AgriLife Extension Building in Angleton. The doors open at 6:00 pm and the meeting starts at 6:45 pm.

Kellie also spoke briefly on the upcoming Honey Expo which is a fun and educational event and free to the public. It will be at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds in Angleton on July 21, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm.

Several members of our Association also belong to the Brazoria club. We like to say that Brazoria's roots are in Fort Bend, having "swarmed" a few years back.

Our meeting closed with the customary drawings for donated door prizes. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to the donors.

Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,542.22. Since our last report we collected \$40 in dues, and \$50 in mentoring enrollments. There were no expenses since our last report, so the resulting balance is \$3,632.22, consisting of \$3,577.22 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

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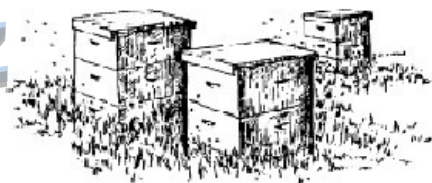


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September, 2018

The September 11, 2018 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. The main agenda item in September is judging entries in our hive painting and photo contests. 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home. We had a real pile back there in August!

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I want someone to keep bees on my property so that I can lower my property taxes. Can you help me with this?

An A: We'll assume that you have been reading about the "beekeeping" exemption after discovering that property taxes on rural property can be really high. If you need more information, the Texas Beekeepers Association web site (<https://texasbeekeepers.org/>) has links for you. You are encouraged to talk to your appraisal district as well.

This answer will go beyond the mechanics of this exemption and it may seem to be a little controversial:

Property taxes are "ad valorem", Latin meaning "based on value": taxes are assessed annually as a percentage of the taxable value of the property (typically about 2% in our area). The state of Texas does not have any property taxes, but the Texas legislature authorizes taxing authorities like county government, school districts, utility districts (e. g. water and sewage treatment) or various districts serving some specific purpose (emergency services, flood control, etc.). The legislature is also prone to affording special tax breaks here and there. Have you signed up for your homestead exemption? Are you now over 65?

The tax rate (or "millage") usually changes little from year to year, but tax collections go up as the total of appraised values in the county increase due to inflation and growth. Your tax bill goes up while politicians rave about holding the line on taxes (the tax rate or millage).

Taxable value is set by county appraisal districts that are independent of the taxing authorities. A citizen board (Appraisal Review Board or ARB) settles disagreements over taxable value between the appraisal district and the property owner. Your tax payment is collected by the tax assessor-collector, but the actual property tax rates are set by the local taxing unit and assessed based on appraised value.

Property taxes are like telling a kid to "go ask your mother": one party doles out preferential treatment, one party determines the taxable value of your property, another sets the tax rate, and a third one sends the bill and collects your money (or forecloses on your property). Do you begin to feel waltzed around the dance floor?

It is important to understand that this is "zero sum": if your taxes are lower, someone else picks up the shortfall. It may even be you with the taxes on your home. The system struggles to be fair and equitable since if your property is of similar value as your neighbor's, you should be paying the same in prop-

erty taxes. It is clearly evident that the system is flawed since your annual appraisal shows up in the mailbox along with various offers to protest your property's taxable value for you (for a cut of the tax savings).

The "beekeeping" exemption is unlike other open space appraised value since "beekeeping" is an activity. (And beekeepers know how difficult that can be.) "Ranching" is an activity, "pasture land" valuation for property taxes is not. Ditto for "farming" and "cropland". If this exemption is granted and the activity (beekeeping) fails, five years of rollback taxes come due since an "exemption" is actually an IOU for any taxes not paid over the previous five years. The bill comes due when the property loses its exemption. Further, property cannot return to the lower valuation for five years.

The numbers can be scary. The tax bill at market value on 10 acres (valued at say \$500,000) would be \$10,000 per year. "Beekeeping" reduces the tax bill to \$264. That is \$9,736 less to pay for schools, roads, public safety, flood control, etc. Rollback taxes would be $5 \times \$9,736 = \$48,630$.

If your intent is to pursue the "beekeeping" exemption you had best do your homework and plan to engage in this "activity" since if it fails (or the beekeeper just goes away) you would be on the hook for tens of thousands in rollback taxes.

August Meeting Notes

We had 56 members and guests sign in at our August meeting (oops...we forgot to do a head count to verify the sign-in sheets). Thanks for signing in. (Our sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.)

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack welcomed seven visitors and asked them to introduce themselves. Jack then gave a quick rundown on the club, our mentoring program, and the fun *letgo* table in the back of the room.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones spoke about the Brazos Valley Beekeeper Association's Beekeeping School coming up in September in College Station. It is a well-run event with sessions for all experience levels. Our club was provided with a free registration to the school to use as a door prize tonight. It can only be claimed by a club member. Lynne also passed out the rules for our September contests (see below):

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association Hive Painting and Photo Contest Rules

1. Hive box and/or photos must be present, in-person at the September 11, 2018 FBBA Meeting.
2. Contest is open to FBBA members and their immediate family.
3. Hive boxes must be painted by the entrant. Photos must have been taken by the entrant.

Hive Painting Specifics

1. You only have to paint a hive box (any size). You do not have to include a top or bottom.
2. 3 winners will be voted on by club members present at the meeting. There will be ribbons awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Winning hive boxes will be featured on the club Facebook page and website.
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1. The theme will be "Our Glorious Honey Bee." Photos should include some element of honey bee behavior, science, history, or any aspect of beekeeping that contains a honey bee in the photo.
2. Entries must be no larger than 8"x10"
3. 3 winners will be voted on by club members present at the meeting. There will be ribbons awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Winning photos will be featured on the club Facebook page and website.

Next, Jack opened the floor for discussion of any topics of interest. James Caraway mentioned that he has used The Fat Beeman's fogging recipe for varroa mite treatment ("Don The Fat Bee Man" Kuchenmeister has been keeping bees for over 50 years and has a popular YouTube channel). Jeff McMullan discussed foggers that use oxalic acid

and were recently labeled for varroa treatments.

Varroa are present in virtually all hives, either feeding on adult bees ("phoretic" mites) or reproducing on pupae in capped cells. Any mite control requires two treatments to kill those that were protected under capped brood from the first one.

Varroa infestation can be determined several ways. Mite drop through with a screened bottom board onto a count board covered with oil (cooking spray works good). The number of mites you count after 24 hours is a relative measure of mite presence. The "powdered sugar roll" using 1/2 cup of bees (some 300 bees) gives a more quantitative measure of the percent infestation. The most accurate method is an alcohol (or soap) wash. It kills the bees so they can be counted and an accurate measure determined. A sample greater than 3% is cause for concern and mite treatment is in order.

Varroa prefer drone brood because it takes longer to emerge and drone pupae are more hardy than the smaller worker brood. Often drone pupae in capped cells are broken open when you are inspecting your hive. Always inspect them for mahogany-colored varroa. Opening a few drone brood cells for inspection is probably a good idea too.

Lynne Jones commented that the Honey Bee Health Coalition had just published an updated "Tools for Varroa Management Guide". The guide goes over varroa counts and treatment options. <https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroa/>.

Ian Kjos spoke about a swarm he collected in April. The colony is very healthy, seems resistant to beetles and has been very good honey producer. Ian is on our Swarm List and when it was reported to the club, the info was relayed to him.

Laura Parnell shared details of an interesting experience she had recently. A swarm of bees nearby all took flight and began to travel to

their newly-chosen location. She said it was a buzzing cloud of bees moving like a horizontal tornado.

Ed Veiseh had an ongoing problem with bees that kept coming to a front porch, so he finally put a swarm trap there and they quickly moved inside.

Michael McLean humorously pointed out that catching swarms and keeping swarms are two different stories.

Swarms have built hives under the parent hive's bottom board, in barbecue pits, and sometimes in very unsuitable locations (too hot come July, too small, etc.)

Thanks to the donors and congrats to the winners of our door prize drawings. Ed Veiseh was the winner of the BVBA School free registration.

Treasurer's Report

The treasury balance reported last month was \$3,632.22. The total is correct but the reported amounts in checking and cash (for change) should have been \$3,572.22 and \$60.00 (a \$5.00 boo-boo). Since our August report we collected \$30 in dues and spent \$149.87 on seven copies of The Beekeepers Handbook for our mentoring program. The resulting balance is \$3,512.35, consisting of \$3,452.35 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$60.00 in cash to make change.

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October, 2018

The October 9, 2018 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. Dues are a real bargain, but since there is no meeting in December, they get to be more expensive (by the meeting) as the year goes on. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I've had bees for a couple of years now: two Langstroth hives in the back yard. Everyone advised me that I need two hives in order to compare and contrast colonies as well as having far more beekeeping options. So far so good. The hives are much alike except one keeps everything all stuck together with propolis. It almost takes a crowbar to pull frames. What can I do?

An A: This is a great question because it touches on both beekeeping practices and honey bee biology and behavior.

In the 1800's, Rev. L. L. Langstroth (inventor of your hive design) observed that even though natural comb is usually not straight (hanging more like curtains) the distance between the combs was consistent (actually this had been observed by ancient Egyptians). Langstroth determined that the open space between combs was 1/4" to 3/8" and named it "beespace", intended for use as passageways in the hive. Smaller openings were sealed with propolis while comb filled the larger ones. Most significantly, Langstroth put his observations to practical use: "beespace" formed the basis for making removable frame hives that revolutionized beekeeping. Removable frames allowed the beekeeper to carefully

and completely inspect the combs, easily move standardized frames between hives, and harvest honey (and return the comb) without destroying the hive.

In your problem hive, the bees have an exaggerated propensity for dealing with gaps less than 1/4". You probably figured out that using nine frames in a ten frame box would be a really bad idea for them. In fact, you should use your hive tool as a lever to jam the frames to one side in order to tightly close any gap between the frame side bars.

As you have observed, not all bees have this trait. In fact, over many years breeders have selected stocks for their limited and judicious use of propolis. Our *Apis mellifera* (the Western or European honey bee) is native to western Europe. There are several subspecies that were once confined by natural barriers. These species have been hybridized a zillion different ways by humans so pure subspecies are unlikely. Reality is that honey bees are mutts, impossible to trace to their European origins. Bee breeders often claim "Italian" or "Carnolian" stock based pretty much on only their color or temperament. In fact, hives of once popular Caucasian bee stock (with lots of other good traits but prone to propolize everything) are essentially nonexistent. Requeening with different stock should help with your problem since breeders

see excess propolis to be detrimental.

Propolis is an important construction material for honey bees, usually made from plant resins. When resins are in short supply, they have been known to gather old propolis, road tar, drying or soft paint, caulking, and other similar material. Bees are not known to alter the material in any way. Today, medical claims for propolis are common, but it is apparent that it can be almost anything found suitable by the bees. It hardly passes any "smell test" (does it make sense?) since road tar or soft paint doesn't seem too medicinal. Rather than extolling propolis, plant resins should be identified and evaluated.

Besides chinking cracks, bees use propolis to protect and water proof the hive's walls and sometimes use it to entomb objects in the hive that are too big for them to remove. A creepy discovery in a hive is an entombed mouse. It is too big to remove so the workers strip the fur and coat the carcass with propolis to control the odor of rotting rodent.

Long ago humans did use propolis for medicinal purposes. They also made varnish by dissolving it in alcohol. There are claims that Stradivarius' revered violins are coated with propolis varnish. Of course, that says very little since the hive was a stop on the way and the resinous source is unknown.

September Meeting Notes

We had 45 members and guests sign in at our September meeting. The head count was 46 so someone didn't sign in. Thanks to those that did. (Our sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.)

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Next, Sharon Moore informed everyone of two charitable programs that provide livestock and supplies in economically disadvantaged countries. Your donation to Heifer International and/or World Vision can provide a beehive.

Gene DeBons read from the 1871 edition of Langstroth's Hive and the Honey-Bee regarding the anger of bees. The sting of the bee is painful, and for some it is dangerous. Langstroth believed bees seemed to prefer to sting those who are most affected and wondered if secretions attracted the bees. He found bees to be disturbed by the peculiar odor of some persons (regardless of cleanliness), breath from human lungs and sweaty horses. Even back in the 1860s, honey bees had been known to kill horses and cows, well before the Africanized Honey Bee showed up in the Americas.

Jeff Murray gave a Mead 101 presentation. With an abundance of honey, making mead is an option for beekeepers. Mead is an agricultural wine made from water, honey, and yeast. Mead does not have to be sweet, nor does it have to taste like honey. Mead is easy to make, but making good mead is hard. The more honey in the recipe, the higher the alcohol content will be. Typically, recipes call for about 1.5 pounds of honey to a gallon of water. Fruits and spices can be added during or after fermentation depending on how distinguishable you want the flavor to be. As a home mead maker, you can make 200 gallons per year, per adult in the household which can be



Hive Painting Contest Winners:

- 1st Sylvia* (center)
- 2nd Danessa Yaschuk (left)
- 3rd Annabelle* and Avery* (right)
- * last names were lost in the shuffle

consumed or given as gifts, but cannot be sold without a license (which is very hard to get). The Texas Mead Fest is in Seguin on October 27th.

We then held the viewing and judging for the Hive Painting and Photo contests. There were seven hives and 22 photos entered.

While votes were being tabulated (everyone was a judge), Jeff McMullan gave a quick presentation on the swarm traps that the Association makes available to the public. Brandy Rader at the AgriLife Extension Service keeps up with where the traps are. When bees move into a trap, she lets us know so that one of our members can recover the trap and bring the bees to their beeyard to put in a hive. If you are interested in one of these colonies, you should add your name to the "Swarm List" in the back of the room at our meeting. It is best to collect the trap at dusk so all the bees are inside and no stragglers get left behind. Bees can't see the color red, so a red headlamp is helpful (Harbor Freight). First you should check for "leaks" and close them up; pieces of steel wool work good. A few puffs from your smoker will get them all inside then close them up with a plastic bucket. The next morning you can introduce them to their new home. It is usually not a good idea to try to salvage any comb. Giving them a frame of brood from another hive usually assures that they stay around.



Photography Contest Winners:

- 1st Jerzy Trybek (right)
- 2nd Herman Hoot (left)
- 3rd Danessa Yaschuk (center)

We also watched a Honey Bee Heath Coalition video on Varroa Mites. Managing mites is crucial to being a successful beekeeper. Not treating does not result in varroa resistant bees.

Thanks to the donors and congrats to the winners of our door prize drawings at the end of the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

The treasury balance reported last month was \$3,512.35. Since our last report we collected \$5.00 in dues, \$60.00 for the use of our extractor and \$65.00 in donations. There were no expenses, so the resulting balance is \$3,642.35, consisting of \$3,592.35 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating. 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.

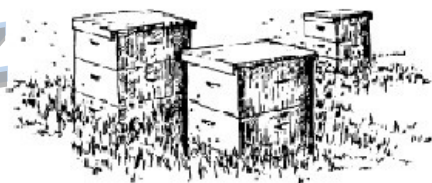


Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



November, 2018

The November 13, 2018 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. Dues are a real bargain if you join early in the year. There is no meeting in December, so joining in December is no bargain, but it does get you on the mailing list for our January newsletter.

As this will be our last meeting for 2018, the club will be providing deli food trays from Copious Deli, 939 3rd St. in historic Rosenberg (832 847-4808). We will enjoy an hour of delicious food and fellowship with one another from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The meeting and election of officers will take place immediately afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Honey stores are obviously important for winter survival. How much is enough?

An **A:** With honey stores for overwintering bee hives, more is obviously better. It is food when none is available. In addition, honey bees keep their hive warm by flexing the flight muscles in their thorax. This requires a lot of energy that they get from consuming stored honey. Bees store honey to meet this need but it is also very important that they have adequate resources remaining as spring nears. In late winter, brood rearing goes into high gear to build the work force that will soon be needed to visit new spring blooms. This requires stores of honey as well as pollen ("bee bread") to nourish the growing larvae. A hive's ability to have a full force of foragers that is ready to go when the spring flowers bloom is one of the honey bee's most fascinating traits. The timing is critical: too early and there will be too many mouths to feed, too late and a significant portion of the nectar flow will be missed.

We are fortunate that our winters are usually mild and a nectar source may be available almost year around, especially for backyard

bees scouting landscape plantings. Mild winters also make it easier to keep the hive warm. We've all seen that beautiful mid-winter day with clear skies, temperature in the 60's and feverish activity at the hive's entrance. We know that spring is still far off, but our bees are able to replenish some of their honey supply while those in more northern areas will remain confined inside the hive for many more weeks.

In our area, 25 or 30 pounds of honey stores is usually ample to survive the winter and later nourish new brood ahead of the spring nectar flow. There should also be pollen stores in the brood nest.

Here are some numbers you can use to help with your decision making:

each full shallow frame holds about 2.4 lb. of honey

each full medium frame holds about 3.0 lb. of honey

each full deep frame holds about 4.5 lb. of honey

So, for example, a full 10 frame medium holds 30 pounds of honey which should be adequate for our typical winter. A full shallow may prove inadequate, but usually there are a couple of deep frames of honey in the brood box giving a total store of about 33 lb.

These are simply rules of thumb since there are many variables that

impact the colony's need for food. Is the winter cluster the size of a grapefruit or does it nearly fill a deep brood chamber with many more mouths to feed? Is the winter abnormally harsh or mild? Are there long stretches of rainy, wet cold weather that shut down supplemental winter foraging? It is a good idea to lift the back of your hives every week or so to confirm a heavy supply of honey to make it through the remaining winter. The beekeeper needs to be observant and prepared to feed the colony if winter stores run short.

Small hive beetles add another dimension to this question. More is better may not be such a good idea after all. A colony "boiling over with bees" will harass these pests and prevent the female beetles from laying eggs. Too many frames of honey may leave some of it unguarded and subject to being "slimed" by small hive beetle larvae. Some beekeepers opt for minimum honey stores and lots of bees in the overwintering colony.

It is important to keep an eye on your hives as winter progresses, especially if the weather increases needs or limits winter foraging. It is easy to lift the rear of the hive to heft for honey stores that remain. A limited honey supply means that winter feeding is necessary, a topic for the January *Buzz*.

October Meeting Notes

We had 39 members and guests sign in at our September meeting. The head count was 40 so someone must have forgotten to sign in. Thanks to those that did. Our sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed everyone and introduced our guests.

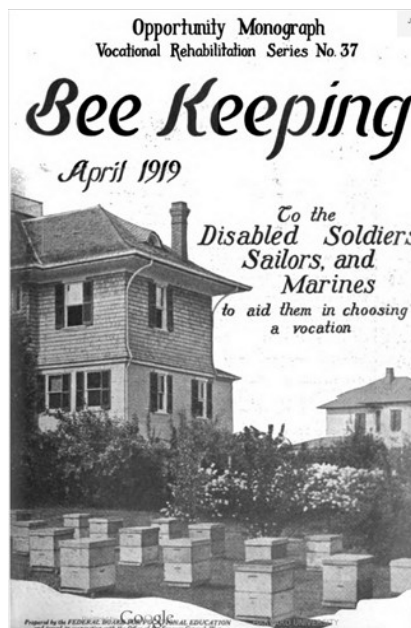
Ian Kjos demonstrated the ventilated inner covers and screened bottom boards he has made. He has them available for sale at the *letgo* table.

Late summer is goldenrod season, but frequent rains seem to have slowed the bloom. Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones asked if anyone has goldenrod honey for sale. If you do, please get with her for contact info of a gentleman who is looking for dark and strong-flavored honey.

Enchanted Nurseries & Landscapes has requested a speaker on beekeeping in May for their Enchanted Gardens and Enchanted Forest locations. See Lynne Jones if you are interested.

The Texas Beekeepers Association annual convention is in November in Temple. It is a fun and informative event with vendors, presentations, contests, and an auction.

Gene DeBons gave us a history lesson on a government program for disabled WWI veterans. Physical labor was prevalent at that time. A healthy, unskilled worker earned about \$1.50 for a workday of ten or more hours. The Federal Board for Vocational Education provided tuition, books, and tools of the trade for returning veterans. While in the program, the government paid the disabled vet at least \$65/month. Booklets, called Opportunity Monographs, presented information on occupations in various industries and were available to the veteran to "aid them in choosing a vocation". There were



44 booklets in the series; Series No. 37 was Bee Keeping. Several prominent beekeepers of the time, including C.P. Dadant and A.I. Root, were involved in setting up the program. If you are interested in reading the Opportunity Monographs, the entire series is available at: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100331641>.

For today's veteran, HivesforHeroes.com is a local 501(c)3 nonprofit organization empowering veterans through beekeeping. Kenneth Coleman, a Houston resident and head of Uncommon Bees, founded Hives for Heroes in November, 2017. Volunteer help is always welcome.

Jack Richardson then led an open forum. One member expressed concern because his hive is full of bees and there are a lot of them clustered on the outside of the hive. When a colony begins to outgrow its available space, swarming may occur. Though swarming is usually a spring and summer preoccupation of bees, it can occur in the fall also. One way to try to prevent swarming is for the beekeeper to split the colony. One way to easily do this is to remove "extra" frames with capped queen cells along with some frames of bees and resources, and establish them in a new hive. Virgin queens don't always make it back from mating flights, so be prepared to

"unsplit" them. Drones are becoming scarce at this time of the year and multiple mating flights increase the risk.

Vice President Chelsea Murray reminded everyone that the election of officers for 2019 will be held at the November meeting. Jack and Chelsea will not be running for re-election as president and vice-president. Lynne indicated she is willing to run again for secretary. If you are interested in running for any of the positions, please contact Chelsea or Gene deBons or indicate your willingness to be nominated prior to the start of the November meeting.

As the October meeting closed, our customary door prize drawings were held for donated items, which included woodware, a smoker, an internal feeder, and a honeybee garden stepping stone. Thank you to those who donated the prizes and congratulations to the lucky winners.

Treasurer's Report

The treasury balance reported last month was \$3,642.35. Since our last report we collected \$10.00 in dues and a \$5.00 donation. There were no expenses since last month's report, so the resulting balance is \$3,657.35, consisting of \$3,607.35 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

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