



January, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The January 14, 2020 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 sweet or salty snacks to enjoy. 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: Now that all the leaves have fallen, I see what looks like a swarm of bees in my pecan tree. But I think I can see honey comb. Are these honey bees?

An A: At this time of the year we get quite a few questions like this. Yes, those are honey bees. Weeks ago they likely clustered as a swarm but instead of moving on into a suitable site, they established their nest out in the open. The term often used to describe these colonies is an "aerial hive".

There are some 20,000 species of bees and most are not colonial insects. Those that are eusocial (living together in organized colonies and sharing their labors) can inhabit different sites as their nests. While many of our native bumble bees nest below ground, our Western honey bee is usually a cavity nester, whether in our managed hives or perhaps a hollow tree (or, worse yet, our soffit).

Honey bee colonies reproduce by "swarming" with about half of the bees leaving their nest site along with the existing queen to form a new colony. The bees that remain count on a new queen that soon emerges from her cocoon. She must successfully complete her mating flight(s) and return to the colony to continue its survival. Colony reproduction is risky for

both the old and the new colonies.

The swarm's mature queen is not a strong flier so a swarm usually gathers with her just a short distance from their old home. The cluster may remain in place several days as scout bees search out a new home. (The warmer weather and abundant resources of swarm season are just around the corner. Our members that capture swarms are preventing bees from moving into an undesirable nest site and becoming a pest control problem).

Research has shown that honey bees have clear preferences for a nest site. If one cannot be found, they sometimes just remain out in the open, building comb, raising brood, and storing resources. Honeybee Democracy by Thomas D. Seeley is a fascinating book that tells the story of how honey bees search out possible new nest sites and "debate" the merits of each one. They then make a collective decision. Unfortunately as the book comes to an end, the author gets a bit too "anthropomorphic" in assessing honey bee behavior. Such assessments are usually not what beekeepers are interested in.

Winter survival of aerial hives is perilous, even with our usually mild weather since forage is not available. The workers must keep any brood warm or it will die, so they generate heat by flexing their flight muscles. Aerial hives are at risk of consuming all of their honey stores just trying to stay warm.

Election of Officers

Officers for 2020 were elected at our November meeting. Jack Richardson announced that he is moving and unable to continue as President. Current officers Lynne Jones (Secretary-Treasurer) and Danessa Yaschuk (Vice President) agreed to continue their roles and were both nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations and both were re-elected by unanimous vote. For President, both Dan Jones and Nancy Hentschel were nominated, but declined. Craig Rench was nominated and seconded. He was elected by unanimous vote. Jeff McMullan consented to continue as our newsletter editor and was also confirmed by acclamation.

November Meeting Notes

We had 49 members and guests sign in at our November meeting. Please be sure to sign in since these sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting at 7:30 pm after 30 minutes of social time. He gave an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. There were eight first-time visitors. Each introduced themselves and related their interest in beekeeping.

Vice-President Danessa Yaschuk announced that several of our members attended the Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Convention in

November Meeting Notes (continued)

in San Antonio last weekend. Members with winning entries in the 2019 Texas Honey Show included Monica Siwiak (1st place dark/amber extracted honey, 2nd place candles and 2nd place creamed honey) and Danessa Yaschuk (1st place chunk honey). Monica Siwiak was named TBA Area 5 Director, replacing member Harrison Rogers who was limited to two terms.

The dates and locations for 2020 Summer Clinic and Annual Conference have been announced. Mark your calendar: Summer Clinic on June 20th in Denton and Annual Conference November 5- 7 in Allen. Both sites are just north of Dallas/Fort Worth.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones read several emails with requests for speakers and also one email from a Rosenberg property owner who is looking to have a beekeeper establish hives for Ag Valuation. She suggested checking out the products available at www.thehivebutler.com. If there is enough interest, we can do a group order for 10% off.

Gene DeBons read from an article by Dr. Richard C. Potter titled, "The Alarming Decline of the Bee Population in the United States." Its main points were the decline of bees and pollinating insects due to habitat loss, insecticides and fungicides and the need for contract pollination services to offset the loss of bees. The article was originally printed in the American Bee Journal in August 1949. Gene noted that, with a few updates, it could have been written in 2019, 70 years later.

"In the Bee Yard" for November and December was presented by Danessa. In addition, several members shared recent beekeeping adventures.

We closed with our door prize drawing for donated items .

Boll Weevil Eradication

A recent newspaper ad attracted some attention. It was a public notification that Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation personnel will be entering the cotton fields in our area beginning January 2. Beekeepers were asked to notify the Foundation of their hive locations in case weevils are detected and pesticide spraying will take place. (In fact, boll weevils have been declared "functionally eradicated" from more than a million acres of cotton across East Texas).

Cotton farmers in our area are assessed a \$2.00 per bale fee to fund this very successful program. It is amazing to think that a focused effort including farming practices, monitoring with pheromone traps and the judicious use of pesticides has virtually eliminated the cotton boll weevil (and all of the pesticide use that was needed to control this damaging agricultural pest).

If your hives are near cotton fields, you can report their location to: Patrick Burson at pburson@txbollweevil.org and Larry Smith at ls@txbollweevil.org. Include the address, county, gps location, and distance & direction from nearest city.

Treasurer's Report

Our October treasury balance was \$4,106.03. Since our last report we collected \$10.00 in dues and had expenses of \$604.04 for t-shirts, \$12.76 for website costs, and \$48.95 for a centerpiece for the TBA annual meeting. The resulting balance is \$3,450.28 (\$3,396.78 in our checking account plus \$53.50 in cash to make change). A financial summary and year-end property inventory for 2019 is presented below (we spent about \$22 less than we took in).

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2019 Financial Summary

Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2019) \$3,427.92

Income

member dues paid (154 at \$5.00)	\$770.00
donations	\$165.00
extractor use income	\$80.00
t-shirts	\$549.00
mentee fees	\$250.00

Total Income \$1,814.00

Expenses

The Beekeeper Handbook, qty 10	(\$237.50)
t-shirts	(\$604.04)
speaker expenses	(\$350.00)
donations	(\$148.95)
Texas Beekeepers Association dues	(\$50.00)
Photo/Hive Painting award ribbons	(\$86.85)
website expenses	(\$314.30)

Total Expenses (\$1,791.64)

Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2019) \$3,450.28

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2019 Property Inventory

<u>Description</u>	<u>Date Acquired</u>	<u>Initial Cost</u>	<u>Member Contact</u>
three framed beekeeping posters	various	unknown	Boone Holladay
Learning Hive	various	\$313.81	Jeff McMullan
red wagon	10/16/2009	\$45.98	Jeff McMullan
extracting equipment			Jim Lynch
extractor, stand, etc.	8/19/2011	\$583.33	
pin uncapper	11/8/2014	\$15.15	
honey refractometer	11/30/2016	<u>\$71.64</u>	
		\$654.97	
frame assembly jig	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
Mentoring Program supplies:			Lynne Jones
20 Beekeeper's Journals		\$144.20	
26 extra Journal fillers		\$28.34	
10 "The Beekeepers Handbook"		<u>\$237.50</u>	
		\$410.04	
gray cart for meetings	7/7/2016	\$121.25	Boone Holladay

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February, 2020

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The Tuesday February 11 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 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 and the sooner you join, the cheaper it is.

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).

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I really enjoyed my first beekeeper meeting, but it is hard to avoid being overwhelmed! Can you help me with the things a new beekeeper would benefit most from knowing?

An A: That is a truly loaded question, but we'll take a swing at it.

Our goal is safe, responsible, successful beekeepers. First (and it may be a bit controversial), a new beekeeper is most likely to be successful if their first hives are standard Langstroth boxes. There is lots of encomia on the internet, but experimenting with various hive designs is probably best left for experienced beekeepers. Bees do best on foundation, and some bees just don't take to plastic alternatives. We've seen nucs with five frames on milled beeswax foundation ignore five frames of plastic foundation when introduced to a ten frame box. Beeswax foundation is more likely to be accepted and crimped wire support is important. Cross-wiring wax super foundation prevents disasters in the extractor.

Choose your apiary location carefully since moving hives can be difficult. If the hive is moved only a short distance, the foragers will return to the old location and become hopelessly lost. Consider weed control and potential conflicts, es-

pecially with neighbors. From the get-go, make sure that your bees will have a source of water nearby.

Taller smokers hold more fuel and will burn longer and there is no known advantage to smaller ones. A self-igniting propane torch makes short work of smoker lighting and is really handy for burning off the black gunk that accumulates inside your smoker. Almost anything that burns slowly can be smoker fuel (buying fuel seems silly).

There are lots of beekeeping gadgets in bee supply catalogues. Most of them you really don't need. Before buying stuff, wait until you can really see the need. You're gonna need a hive tool though and it is a good idea to have a couple since they tend to get misplaced.

Good protective gear is important and you will most likely end up using a ventilated jacket. You'll be spending more money up front, but the cost of cheap veil and a helmet goes a long way toward the cost of a jacket and protection is far better. Dishwashing gloves do ok for beekeeping so long as they fit loosely (and they are easily washed with your bee jacket).

You should plan on using the club's harvest equipment. A honey gate from the bee supply catalogue turns a white five gallon (food grade) plastic pail from Lowe's or Home Depot into a bottling bucket. When installing the gate, soften the plastic bucket with a heat gun or your

torch so it doesn't crack when you install the gate.

There are lots of alternatives for dealing with mites. Doing nothing is akin to not vaccinating or treating your dog or cat for worms or fleas.

We hope this will be helpful in getting started as a beekeeper. There is certainly far more to learn and plenty of other opinions to listen to. When you ask a dozen beekeepers a question, expect fourteen answers.

HLSR, March 3 - 22

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo AGVENTURE in Hall A of NRG Center is a great opportunity for both adults and kids to learn about agriculture. Besides the livestock show entries, there are a wide variety of exhibits open to visitors from 9:00 am until 9:00 pm every day of the show.

One of the most popular AGVENTURE stops is the honey bee exhibit that includes two observation hives. Our club joins with other area clubs to show visitors the exhibit. During the day there are guided school groups while afternoons and weekends are busy with rodeo performance attendance.

It takes a lot of beekeepers to volunteer for the AGVENTURE honey bees. Don't miss the chance to sign up and take the opportunity to both learn and teach about honey bees and beekeeping. Entrance and parking are free for volunteers.

January Meeting Notes

We had 56 names on the sign-in sheets for our January 14 meeting. Once again our head count matched! Thanks to all for registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Craig Rench opened the meeting at 7:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance. First-time visitors were welcomed and invited to introduce themselves and share their interest in beekeeping.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk made announcements on the Central Texas Beekeepers Association's Beekeeping School on March 21st and of two events in April which will need club member volunteers: Sugar Land Earth Day Celebration on April 18th and Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' Nature Festival April 25th.

Harrison Rogers announced that Monica Siwiak is our new TBA area director and that Danessa is now on the Real Texas Honey Board of Directors. Harrison briefed us on the upcoming Rodeo exhibit. He will bring the sign-up sheet to the February meeting along with grounds passes. Additionally, he is offering his 5th Annual Beekeeping school which starts next month at Friendswood High School. Classes are Feb 6 through April 9, every Thursday evening from 7:00 – 9:00 at Friendswood High School. If interested in attending send him an email (brooksidebees@gmail.com) and he'll send you registration information.

Pete Konyndyk was in Germany recently and had the opportunity to visit with a couple of beekeepers. He enjoyed learning of things we do the same and sharing a few things that we do differently here in Texas. Germans find it important to know the type of flower nectar the honey is made from and this is included on their labels.

Gene DeBons shared an article from the American Bee Journal magazine about a Vermont bee-

keeper (Kirk Webster) who had started beekeeping in 1980. At that time, it was common practice to purchase queens every year from the South because they could be obtained early in the year. In 1985, tracheal mites became a problem which resulted in the disastrous loss of colonies. Kirk eventually learned by accident that nucs could be overwintered in the north, so queens reared later in the year would be useful the following season. He then found all the techniques he had "discovered" were developed and documented during the 1870-1890 period, including the raising of queens in the north and the technique of overwintering nucs in the north. Once again we learned that it pays to study history.

Danessa covered In the Beeyard for January and February.

Now: If you have not yet done so, order queens, nucs, or package bees. Check hives for sufficient food supplies. This can be done by lifting the back of the hive box. If it is light, further examination is needed. Always feed a hive that is in danger of starving with 2:1 sugar water since hives with small food reserves can quickly starve to death. In a mild winter you should find about one frame of brood and at least 3 deep frames of honey. You can inspect if the temperature is at least 60 degrees, the sun is out, and very little wind, but make sure to finish as quickly as possible. Order, assemble, inventory, and repair woodenware and supplies. Clean old frames and hive boxes to be used in the spring. Check hives for mites and treat as necessary before supering. Check stored frames for wax moth or mouse damage and add more paradichlorobenzene moth crystals if needed.

Get Ready: Check hives again in February for adequate food supplies, to verify a queen-right hive and to look for the presence of disease. Combine weak colonies with fewer than 2 frames of bees. Remove or enlarge entrance reducers near the end of the month. Do this sooner if the weather warms and

bee activity indicates congestion at the hive entrance. Treatment for varroa should be completed no later than February 1 to allow treatment time before the nectar flow. Follow product directions exactly for the amount to be used and the time to leave in place.

Craig led our main presentation which was a discussion of the pros and cons of nucs, packages, and swarms. The discussion panel was comprised of Gene DeBons, Steve Brackmann, and Rana Mehmood and each had good comments which should be helpful for those who are new to acquiring bees. There was great interest in swarms, the FBBA swarm catching list, and how to catch a swarm. (Our March meeting will focus on swarm catching, so be sure to attend if you want to learn more.)

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

Treasurer's Report

Our January treasury balance was \$3,450.28. Since our last report we collected \$240.00 in dues (48 new and renewing members) and \$25.00 for a mentoring program enrollment fee. The only expense was \$6.38 for the monthly website cost. The resulting balance is \$3,708.90 (\$3,658.90 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

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March, 2020

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The Tuesday March 10 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 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 and the sooner you join, the cheaper each month is.

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Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I need to move my hives. What do I need to know?

An **A:** As you suspected, there are a few things to know about moving bee hives. It's important not to lose (or leave behind) many bees. It's also important to make sure that the colony doesn't overheat. This is a good time of the year for moving hives since they will be getting significantly heavier in the coming weeks. Cool weather also makes it easier to confine all the bees inside and makes overheating less of a concern. If you use screened inner covers, you can remove the telescoping cover for the move.

Your new location should be in full sun with a nearby water source. Always plan for avoiding people or pets conflicting with guard bees. Bees really don't like mowers and weedeaters so controlling weeds is an important factor too. It is not a good idea to suit up and use this noisy equipment near your hives since the bees may stay stirred up for quite a while.

Prepare the new beeyard ahead of time. Make sure the area is well drained since any standing water or wet areas under beehives is an invitation to diseases, especially fungus like chalkbrood. You can use weed barrier cloth with mulch, gravel or like material. Crushed (or

"weathered") granite (without weed barrier cloth) is a good choice since it compacts and drains really well. Glyphosate herbicide (like Roundup) in a pump sprayer makes weed control a piece of cake (always mix and use it according to the label instructions).

A morning move in cold weather is a better option than waiting until foragers return at dusk then closing up the hive in the dark. But it doesn't need to be very hot for bees to be hanging around outside at night, requiring smoke to run them all inside and slowing down preparations for the move. A staple gun and perforated vinyl drywall corner (scissor-cut to size) is the easy way to seal hive entrances. Always be sure to check for "leaks"; they can usually be easily closed with masking tape. Use snug ratchet straps to make sure the hive stacks stays that way. They sell big hive staples for this, but hammering on the side of a bee hive just doesn't sound like a good idea.

It's said that bee hives should be moved less than three feet or more than three miles. This is relatively consistent with Langstroth's advice from 1853: "stocks...should be brought from a distance of at least two miles". The idea is to prevent foragers from returning to an empty hive stand. To encourage foragers to reorient to a new hive location, you can try leaving the hive closed up for a day then obstruct the entrance with a leafy branch that will

help foragers recognize that the hive has moved. Another option is to make a short move in small steps. To move across the yard, you can load the hive on a garden cart or wheelbarrow and move it a couple of feet every few days. Another option is to move the hive to an intermediate location for a week or so. For the two step move, you can load the hive on a utility trailer (there is really no need to unload them at their temporary home). If you ask around at a beekeeper meeting you can probably find a parking spot a few miles away. If you can, wait until dark to open the hive at their new location so the bees can get reoriented the next morning (do that at your final stop too).

The hive lifter in your bee supply catalogue is a wonderful gadget that allows two people to safely lift and move hives. If you ask around at a beekeeper meeting you can probably locate one to borrow. It works really really well. Always expect the hive to be top heavy, especially this time of the year as the bees have consumed their lower level stores.

You may find that the hive is just too heavy even for two people to move. It may be necessary to break it down and restack it after the move. Full supers can go in the freezer for extraction later, or maybe it should be split to prevent swarming.

HLSR, March 3 - 22

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo continues for about two more weeks. The AGVENTURE in Hall A of NRG Center has a wide variety of exhibits for both adults and kids to learn about agriculture. It is open to visitors from 9:00 am until 9:00 pm every day of the show.

One of the most popular AGVENTURE stops is the honey bee exhibit that includes two observation hives. Our club joins with other area clubs to host the exhibit. During the day there are guided school groups while afternoons and weekends are busy with rodeo performance attendance.

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February Meeting Notes

We had 50 names on the sign-in sheets for our February 11 meeting. Our head count was 53 so some of you didn't sign in! Thanks to all that did register at our meeting since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Craig Rench opened the meeting at 7:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance. First-time visitors were invited to introduce themselves and share their interest in beekeeping. Craig welcomed them all and encouraged them to continue attending our meetings.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones made several announcements: The Central Texas Beekeepers Association's Beekeeping School is set for March 21 in Brenham. Two events in April which will need club member volunteers: Sugar Land Earth Day Celebration on April 18 and Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' Nature Festival April 25.

Patty Griffin reminded everyone of her ZipNetBags which are designed to contain a NUC box and provide a safe way to transport your new

bees. If you would like to purchase any, contact her by email at info@zipnetbags.com.

Harrison Rogers briefed us on the upcoming Rodeo exhibit and brought the sign-up calendar along with parking passes for the volunteers. The exhibit is open March 3 - 22. Morning shifts are 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and evening shifts are 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm. It's not too late to volunteer. You can find the calendar online at: <http://www.harriscountybeekeepers.org/calendar.html> You can email Harrison at BrooksideBees@gmail.com to add your name as a volunteer. Be sure to include your phone number and "Fort Bend" club designation.

Gene DeBons shared some facts about wax moths (*Tinea mellonella*) from Langstroth's 1853 "On the Hive and the Honey Bee." The "bee moth" has a long history, being mentioned by Roman historian Virgil two thousand years ago. Langstroth quotes Swammerdam, who gave a full description of the moth and its larvae at the end of the 17th century. Langstroth mentions the demise of honey production in parts of the U.S. due to the introduction and proliferation of the moth. The moth lays a tiny egg, but once the small, innocent-looking worms get the upper hand, "all the fragrance of the honied dome is soon corrupted by their abominable stench. Everything beautiful and useful is ruthlessly destroyed; the hum of happy industry is stilled..." Wax worms are still a challenge for us today and it is instructive to see that it has been a problem for centuries.

Jeff McMullan presented our program topic in February: all the decisions beekeepers must make concerning their hive choices.

All bee hives must have removable frames that allow inspection for pests and disease. Bees in a Winnie the Pooh straw skep or an abandoned foot locker are not permitted! Allowable removable frame hives include various hive box designs along with top bar hives. The hive

boxes are almost all devised as an improvement to the Langstroth hive invented by the Rev. Lorenzo L. Langstroth (1810 - 1895). Despite the "improvements", the Langstroth hive remains the most popular bee hive configuration. Jeff's presentation was careful review of all the components in a Langstroth hive stack, focusing on decisions to be made from the hive stand and bottom board to the hive cover.

Following Jeff's presentation, the drawing was held for the donated door prizes.

Did you enjoy this newsletter? If so, you might enjoy reading previous newsletters as well. All of them, going back to January 2014, are posted on the FBBA website. Go to fortbendbeekeepers.org, then click on LINKS and the FBBA NEWSLETTERS. Many thanks to our webmaster, Ian Kjos, for keeping the website in ship-shape.

Treasurer's Report

Our February treasury balance was \$3,708.90. Since our last report we collected \$85.00 in dues (17 new and renewing members) and \$25.00 for a mentoring program enrollment fee. The only expense was \$6.38 for the monthly website cost. The resulting balance is \$3,812.52 (\$3,762.52 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

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April, 2020

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The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

In the midst of a public health emergency, the County has closed the Community Center and prohibited meetings of more than ten people, so there will be no April meeting. It is very likely that our May meeting will be cancelled as well. County offices and services are also limited, so our newsletter this month will have to be distributed electronically.

We should all be limiting contact with others as COVID-19 runs its course, especially those considered most susceptible to fatal outcomes. Limiting the spread of the virus is key to not overwhelming our health care system. Thoroughly wash your hands frequently, especially after being out in public. (Hand sanitizer may be hard to come by; you may be able to trade a bottle of honey or a few rolls of toilet paper to replenish your supply.) It is usually pretty easy to avoid public contact while working your hives and beekeeping is an "essential activity" since it is an "agricultural" pursuit. (A veil is not an acceptable substitute for a N95 mask.) It's a good time to be making repairs and assembling new equipment when you get tired of cowering in the closet, snacking or watching TV.

April meeting cancelled

State and local orders have forced the cancellation of our April 14 meeting. The May meeting is likely to be cancelled too.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: At our March meeting, "swarm management" was stressed as an important beekeeping task. It went by pretty fast. Can you give some more detailed instructions for us new guys?

An A: "Fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping" is the reason that our club exists. With so many members that are backyard beekeepers in neighborhoods, it is very important that our bees don't become a nuisance to our neighbors. We always stress the availability of a water source to keep our bees out of the hot tub next door. It is much more important though to manage the hives natural instinct to swarm and produce a new colony that may move in to a neighbor's house.

In our March meeting notes that follow, there is a short summary of swarm management techniques. In our Q-A we will try to elaborate on swarm prevention techniques.

Let's start with plan B (the ingrates swarmed anyway). Swarming usually occurs at midday in the spring when the weather is nice and resources (and drones) are plentiful. The swarm usually hangs around (pun intended) for a few days as the scout bees search for a new home. If we've had a few days of ugly weather, swarming dramatically increases when it clears. The old queen is not a strong flier, so the swarm usually lights near the colony they just left (you should always look around for the original colony of any swarm). Always look up in your beeyard for swarms congregated near your hives and have equipment ready if you should see one. If you can't deal with a swarm, get some help through fortbendbeekeepers.org.

Hang swarm traps near your beeyard (but not too close by since the new colony wants to "spread out"). Swarms usually move to their new digs in mid-afternoon (any stragglers will return to the hive).

If you notice a sudden drop in entrance activity or your hive's population, they may have swarmed. Queen cells along the bottom of frames are referred to as "swarm cells" and are a harbinger of swarming. Never destroy swarm cells since you will doom the colo-

ny if the old queen has already departed. Any hive that has swarmed may become queenless since mating flights are perilous.

If the bees have moved into somewhere like your neighbor's soffit, sometimes you can use Off! to get them to leave if they just moved in. Off! also works to discourage scout bees from selecting a new home (in your neighbor's soffit).

Plan A is always to prevent swarming, the honey bee's natural instinct to produce a new colony.

Fall requeening should help prevent swarming since the young queen is less likely to leave, especially if you have taken other swarm prevention measures. Requeening in the spring is less likely to help since new queens aren't readily available until swarm season is already upon us.

Over the winter months the brood nest moves upward in the hive as the bees consume their winter honey reserves. This leaves the bottom box empty since the colony is unlikely to move back down. This honey bee behavior is why it is a good idea to have two boxes for the brood nest. Moving the vacated box to above the brood nest in the stack serves to relieve over crowding and gives the queen lots of lay-

ing room. You can do the same thing by adding a second brood box; adding a super helps too.

Another trick is to swap positions of strong and weak hives that are close together. The strong hive loses foragers to the weak one (a good thing) and is discouraged from swarming.

Splitting a strong hive increases your hive count and discourages swarming. The split is just like a swarm, except you have control of the situation. In fact, a frame with swarm cells has a jump start toward a new queen.

Perhaps another option is a slatted rack from the bee supply catalogue. (\$20 or so) They are claimed to allow the queen to lay lower in the comb and while providing space for clustering at night to help with overcrowding.

March Meeting Notes

Our March sign in sheet had 53 in attendance; head count was 54. After 30 minutes of social time, President Craig Rench opened the meeting at 7:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

We had five first-time visitors that introduced themselves and shared their interest in beekeeping.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk announcements on the Central Texas Beekeepers Association's Beekeeping School on March 21 and of two events which will need volunteers: Sugar Land Earth Day Celebration on April 18 and Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' Nature Festival April 25. *(Each of these events have since been cancelled.)*

Gene DeBons discussed how the club's Swarm Call program works. Our website link, "HELP! I HAVE BEES", includes a Swarm Removal Request form to provide details. Gene then uses our Swarm Call List to find a beekeeper to respond. If you are on the list, you must be ready to go; have your beekeeper gear and, most importantly, an empty hive to put the swarm in. Swarms do not stick around long,

so getting a beekeeper to the swarm ASAP is important. If you don't answer or call back promptly, Gene calls someone else.

Danessa went over In the Bee-yard Now for March and April. Expect the major nectar flow to kick into gear. Swarms are more frequent in April. To prevent swarms, make sure the queen has empty cells to lay eggs. If you have a strong colony, you can split them in early April. This is also the month to receive queens and package bees. If you have new bees, feed them 1:1 sugar syrup until all frames have drawn comb, then add another brood box and continue to feed until that box is also full. Watch honey supers closely during April. If bees are working on 6-8 frames it will be time to add another super. Empty supers may be added either above or below full supers. Bees need plenty of room to make honey so that nectar does not get stored in the brood nest. 3 to 4 supers per hive is generally enough for a season.

Jeff McMullan's presentation on Catching Swarms was very informative. Swarming is a natural process - bees multiply by dividing. There are three types of swarms: Reproductive (the queen and about half the bees leave); Absconding (all the bees leave); and After-swarms (a newly hatched queen, usually still a virgin, leaves with about half the bees that remained after the original swarm). To prevent your hives from swarming there are three main techniques: Add boxes to prevent overcrowding, swap boxes (if the bottom brood box does not have brood, swap it with the brood box above it, and splits (which divides the bees before they decide to do it themselves).

Scout bees locate a site for the swarm's new home. Once the new site has been agreed upon, the entire swarm will take off for their new home, often within 48 hours of leaving their original hive.

If you have set up swarm traps,

swarm lures or an attractant (lemongrass oil) helps. Retrieve the swarm trap because they will build comb quickly.

Regardless of whether you are collecting a swarm from a trap or from a tree limb, you can spray them with a mixture of sugar-water and Honey-B-Healthy. A spray insect repellent, like Off!, sprayed on a rag can be used to encourage the bees to move. Any bees that are left behind will return home.

Put the swarm in a box with frames of foundation and frames of drawn comb if you have it. A frame of capped-brood will encourage them to stay in their new home. A queen excluder between the box and the bottom board, or an entrance queen excluder is recommended until the queen is laying. (Don't leave it on too long though because drones can't get through an excluder and dead ones will block the entrance.)

Following Jeff's presentation, the drawing was held for several donated door prizes.

Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was \$3,812.52. Since then we collected \$60.00 in dues (12 memberships). The only expense was \$6.49 for the monthly email cost. The resulting balance is \$3,866.03 (\$3,816.03 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

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May, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

In the midst of a public health emergency, the County has closed the Community Center and prohibited meetings of more than ten people, so there was no April meeting. County facilities remain closed to the public, so our May meeting has been cancelled as well.

May meeting cancelled

State and local orders require the cancellation of our May 12 meeting. At this time we are hopeful that our June meeting will be held as scheduled.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Every time I ask a question it seems like I'm learning some kind of "beekeeper's secret". Can we just put some of them in the newsletter?

A whole bunch of A's: "Fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping" is the reason that our club exists, so we don't have any secrets. But it may not always seem that way, especially for new beekeepers. This month we'll try to scour our brains for the tidbits that every beekeeper should know.

Probably the most bewildering thing new beekeepers encounter is the "lingo". There is a good reason that so many beekeeping terms seem to be so foreign. Langstroth's discovery of "beespace" and the invention of removable frame hives ushered in widespread beekeeping in the late 1800's. No longer did you have to destroy a hive to harvest honey from a straw skep or bee gum (oops...lingo rears its head). Actually, the mysterious beekeeper lingo is remnant of 19th century vocabulary. For example, "super" shows up from its meaning "superior to" (i.e. a supercedure

cell) or "above" (i.e. the honey super).

Complete metamorphosis in insects is no mystery; we all understand where butterflies come from. The life cycle from egg to larva to pupa to adult is well known for each of the honey bee castes (worker, drone and queen). Each caste starts with an egg that hatches in three days. The larva is fed for six days before it is capped to pupate inside the cell. The quickest adult to emerge is the queen (16 days total from egg laying). A worker emerges in 21 days; a drone in 24. A meaningful hive inspection requires an understanding of this life cycle and brood development. Honey bee brood development and brood pattern tell a lot about what is going on in the hive. At hatching, the larvae is very small. Over six days it grows to fill the bottom of the cell until it is ready to be capped. Be alert while inspecting frames for emerging brood in the hive. It is fascinating to watch a baby worker chew its way out, knowing the queen laid an egg 21 days ago.

Pop quiz: if you split a hive today and expect them to raise their own queen, when would she emerge?

The answer is from 12 to 16 days. Queens are reared from larvae that is at least a day old. If they start feeding a day old larva, she would emerge in 12 more days; if they start with a recently laid fertilized egg, it will be the full 16 days before she emerges. It may take a week or more for her to complete her mating

flight(s) and begin laying eggs, so long as she does not fall victim to a lizard, spider, dragonfly, etc. Mating flights are perilous and a young queen that failed to return is the usual reason that hives become queenless after swarming.

Varroa mites reproduce in capped brood. Drone pupae are more robust and have a longer development time. Drone brood is often exposed as frames are removed for inspection. It should be examined for mahogany colored mites as a measure of the hives mite infestation.

The Darwinian view of chemical-free beekeeping is that only the fittest survive. Unfortunately when a colony fails, varroa mites don't die. They just hop on robbers for a ride to another hive. You wouldn't want your dog or cat to be infested with fleas, ticks and worms. Why not treat for varroa?

Most of the various subspecies of honey bee are native to Europe, separated from one another by high mountains. They've all been hybridized to the point that there probably are no true "Italian bees" in Italy. Honey bees are originally woodland creatures, so the smell of smoke triggers action since the woods may be on fire. Anticipating the loss of their home, honey bees engorge on honey expecting their next meal to be days away if their home is destroyed. Ancient humans learned how to use smoke to calm honey bees with a full belly. Another important aspect is that honey bees use scent to communi-

cate and smoke-filled air covers any alarm signals that may be released. If you do get stung, remove the stinger quickly by scraping it off. Give the area a few quick puffs of smoke to hide the alarm scent to prevent more stings.

The ubiquitous smoker and beekeeper PPE may seem mysterious (everybody knows what PPE means nowadays). The beekeeper's smoker is an ingenious device. Its invention is attributed to Moses Quinby in 1873. Almost anything that burns slowly can be used for fuel, whether it's leaves, dry grass, wood shavings, burlap or an old tee shirt (buying smoker fuel seems silly). When it is standing upright, the smoker drafts naturally and keeps the fuel burning slowly. A few quick pumps on the bellows deliver puffs of cool calming smoke to the hive. When you're done in the beeyard, you can extinguish the fire with a stopper or just lay the smoker on its side to shut off the draft of air. Leftover fuel can be relit next time.

Always light your smoker before opening a hive in case the situation threatens to get out of hand. A propane torch makes short work of getting your smoker lit and can be used to burn off the soot that accumulates. Another trick: wax and propolis on your hive tool wipes off easily after heating it for a few seconds with your torch.

While a simple veil and helmet may suffice, you may well be money ahead in buying a quality ventilated bee jacket in the first place. Gloves aren't always needed since bees seldom sting you on the hands. Rubber gloves (like dishwashing gloves) afford a better sense of touch than heavier leather gloves.

Hive boxes will last a whole lot longer when primed and painted with a couple of coats of premium house paint. Mistinted latex house paint is often available at a bargain price if you aren't too persnickety about the color. Caulk all cracks before painting and always paint the top and bottom of each side to pre-

vent rotting. Stain and varnish may look nice at first, but in a few years it will be peeling off and ugly. Never pry at the corners with your hive tool when separating boxes since it can damage the box and lead to rotten wood. Replacing rotten hive components is a real pain.

Hives do best in full sun since the bees don't care and pests hate it. A brick on top will keep your hive cover from blowing off in high wind. You can put a plastic campaign sign under the brick in summer to make cooling the hive a little easier for the bees. When selecting a site for your hive, consider the flight path of foraging bees and avoid conflict by encouraging them to go up and away.

The choice of foundation for your Langstroth hive is perplexing. In fact you don't need foundation at all (at the risk the bees deciding to build comb crossways in the box). Foundation can be of milled beeswax or various plastic designs. The milled beeswax should be "crimp wired", which means it has wire support. This support is very important if the honey will be extracted. The embossed plastic foundation is available in black, yellow and white. The black is generally preferred because it makes seeing eggs down in the cells easier (it's dark in the hive and bees don't care about what color it is). Not all bees take well to plastic foundation. It is much easier for the beekeeper to work with though.

We've run out of room so we'll have to tell you about the secret handshake some other time.

April Meeting Notes

County facilities were closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so our April meeting was cancelled.

If we have your email address, you should have received a link to our April newsletter. All newsletters going back to January, 2014 are available on the FBBA website: www.fortbendbeekeepers.org.

Dues are due

Our dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2020 there is a sad bee on your address label. You can pay your dues at our June meeting or mail a check to:

Fort Bend Beekeepers
Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer
19747 Coppervine Lane
Houston, TX 77084

It's gotta be true...

'cause I read it on the internet.

Some recent honey bee advice seen on the internet has inspired an occasional feature for our newsletter.

It seems that someone posted on a neighborhood web site that she had a swarm of bees in her yard. A helpful neighbor posted that she shouldn't be worried, they'll soon be gone. At this time of the year they are just migrating through on their way back north for the summer.

Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$3,866.03. We've had no income since then. Expenses were \$6.49 for the monthly email cost and \$37.99 for our domain name renewal. The resulting balance is \$3,821.55 (\$3,771.55 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash).

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

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June, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

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The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

In the midst of the continuing COVID-19 public health emergency, the Community Center remains closed. There was no May meeting and our regular June 9 meeting has been cancelled as well. For details of our planned Zoom online meeting, see the announcement below. Hopefully our meeting can return to normal in July.

June meeting is online

State and local orders require the cancellation of our regular June 9 meeting. Instead we will be hosting at Zoom online: Tuesday, June 9 at 7:30 pm. The login is at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86519722122> Meeting ID: 865 1972 2122.

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 865 1972 2122. An email with instructions and "clickable" links will go out ahead of the meeting.

Our program topic will be 'Basic Hive Inspections' by James and Chari Elam with Bluebonnet Beekeeping and Texas Bee Supply. The Elam's are past leaders in the Montgomery County Beekeepers Association and past board members of Texas Beekeepers Association as well as members of the American Beekeeping Federation. We will have time at the beginning and end of the presentation for announcements and questions.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I'm still pretty new at beekeeping and have tried my hand at capturing swarms a time or two. I can't seem to get them to stay. Help!

A: You've discovered that while it is often relatively easy to get bees in a box, it may be difficult to get them to stay. Dealing with swarms is an important beekeeping skill that is all about managing the bee's natural

instinct to reproduce by swarming. Eggs, larvae and pupae result in more adult bees, but producing a new colony requires the old queen and a contingent of bees to leave the hive to establish the new colony.

It is a big setback if your hive loses half its bees. Most importantly, your existing hive's new queen will emerge a few days after the colony swarms and if she doesn't survive her mating flight(s) the colony is doomed to slowly dwindle and fail. This happens often and is a frequent cause of hive failure during the summer. Hive beetles and wax moths just take advantage of the situation, and robbing happens when a weakened colony is unable to defend its stores. Good beekeeping means being on top of things before the maggots, waxworms, frass and the robbers show up.

Swarming happens when resources are plentiful and hive population is high. Be on the lookout for queen cells along the bottom of frames near the entrance. They are sometimes called "swarm cells" since they often portend a coming swarm. It is usually a bad idea to destroy swarm cells since the bees may have already swarmed or they might go ahead and swarm anyway, leaving your hive queenless. Using a queen excluder to try to stop swarming is not likely to be successful and it causes major congestion by trapping drones in the hive.

Probably the best way to discourage swarms is to split your hives. You

can put bees and frames with swarm cells in a nuc along with drawn out frames with honey and/or pollen. It's a good idea to relocate the split several miles away for a week or so to avoid losing bees back to the original hive. The bees that remain there seem to think the colony has already swarmed and they just weren't included. New queens in your swarm-cell nuc usually emerge in just a few days. If your split was successful, you should find eggs and larvae from a mated queen in a couple of weeks. If you don't, give them another week before getting them a mated queen or doing a "newspaper combine" to put the bees back in your hive. If you really don't want or need another hive, another beekeeper may even pay you for them.

You are not likely to spot every swarm leaving your bee yard. They will eventually move in somewhere and hopefully it isn't your neighbor's second story soffit.

Swarm traps are an important beekeeper tool to prevent that from happening. Use a splash of lemongrass oil to attract swarm scouts. The trap shouldn't be placed too near the beeyard since swarming's purpose is to make a new colony and the bees prefer less competition by being some distance away from its source hive. Check the swarm trap often since you don't want it to become a permanent home.

As you have found, capturing a swarm is a piece of cake if they are

readily accessible. If they are just too high up, you might try leaving them a swarm trap (or hive) to move in to.

Swarm catches at 20+ feet up can be made using a plastic pail or a plastic water jug (with the bottom cut out) and a wooden pole or joint of heavy-walled PVC pipe. Check out the video link at the bottom of the **HELP! I HAVE BEES** page on our web site to see how easy that can be.

Now to the part about getting the swarm to stay. Most importantly the bees need to be satisfied with their new home which usually means that it is big enough. Only small swarms should go in nucs. Frames with drawn comb are far better than just foundation, and milled beeswax foundation is far more attractive to the bees than plastic. A frame of capped brood (no bees) is strong encouragement for the bees to stay with little to do besides keeping the brood warm awaiting a big boost in their numbers from emerging workers. It is not uncommon for new swarms to start raising a new queen right away if there are eggs or tiny larvae on the brood frame. A frame with honey and pollen is helpful too, encouraging the swarm queen to get busy laying eggs since brood rearing resources are already available.

A captured swarm should be relocated several miles away. This leaves scout bees behind so they cannot lead the swarm elsewhere (they eventually go back to their original hive). You can move the hive back to your beeyard at night after a week or so.

Sometimes a queen excluder on top of the bottom board is used to keep the swarm's queen inside. This isn't usually a good plan except maybe for the first few days since (again) it causes congestion and traps drones inside. They gather on the excluder trying to get outside. Small swarms are often "afterswarms" with a virgin queens. The excluder prevents her from getting out to mate.

Community Service

Our web site and swarm call list are the cornerstones of an important community service of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. Whenever one of our members responds to a swarm call, it results in avoiding bees becoming someone's significant pest control problem.

Gene deBons fields help requests that come in to our web site. It is always a struggle because people really know very little about honey bees (some contacts are about wasps or hornets). Generally speaking, we only refer swarms (not cutouts) to members that have asked to be on our call list (and only if the bees have not been sprayed with insecticide). Here is some feedback we recently received:

"We would like to appreciate Mr. Tom McCusker and Fort Bend Beekeepers Association for helping us out!

Mr. Tom arrived promptly and took out the bees with utmost care. We were fascinated to see these little creatures of nature whom we feared being so calm in his presence even when they were being removed.

We appreciate his time and effort in coming forward to help us at the needed time. My family had a great lesson on Nature and these fascinating creatures from him. My boys and I were thrilled to listen to his stories.

We are happy that the bees have a new home. Thank you Mr. Tom!"

The donations in each month's treasurer's report are from grateful neighbors. They are a big part of funding our club's activities.

Good Luck Pecos Jack

Long-time member and past President Jack Richards has moved to new digs near Caddo Lake in Jefferson, Texas. He sold his home in Sugar Land and regrettably his eclectic surroundings built up over many years will become the site of someone's new home. His cell phone number isn't changing.

May Meeting Notes

Our May meeting was cancelled because County facilities are closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Be sure to log in to ZOOM IN JUNE.

Dues are due

Our dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2020 there is a sad bee on your address label and you're about to be scrubbed off the Buzz mailing list. It's a hassle writing and mailing a \$5.00 check so if you wish to remain a member (and pay your dues at the next meeting), send an email to info@fortbendbeekeepers.org. Lynne has even agreed to accept a \$10 check so you can pre-pay for 2021. (she won't accept more than one year in advance!) Mail your check to:

Fort Bend Beekeepers
Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer
19747 Coppervine Lane
Houston, TX 77084

Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was \$3,821.55. Since our last report we collected \$150.00 in donations and \$5.00 in dues. The only expense was \$6.49 for our monthly email cost. The resulting balance is \$3,970.06 (\$3,920.06 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

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July, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

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The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

In the midst of the continuing COVID-19 public health emergency, the Community Center remains closed. There was no May or June meeting and our regular July 14 meeting has been cancelled as well. For details of our planned Zoom online meeting, see the announcement below. Hopefully our meeting can return to normal soon.

July meeting is online

Because of the COVID-19 threat our June meeting was held online. We'll be "virtual" again this month, including a program on varroa:

Tuesday, July 14 at 7:30 pm

login: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VFdXJXUT09)
pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUD
Zvd0VFdXJXUT09

Meeting ID: 243 630 5183

Password: 690069

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 2436305183.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting.

Last month we also offered an alternative to our meeting "social time" and had 24 beekeepers log in to our "beescussion" on the day after our June meeting. Our next "beescussion" will again be on the day after our meeting, Wednesday July 15, at 7:30 pm. You will be receiving an email invite.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I'm going to need your help again with requeening a hot hive!

A: A report on the successful requeening of two hot hives may guide others on how to proceed with this important beekeeping task. Both requeenings (if that is even a word) were successful. Our first

requeening a year or two ago took only a couple of minutes, including time to suit up and light the smoker. This week it was far different than last time. It was not two minutes, but two days of combat.

It seems common for bees that are out in the country to need requeening when (not if) they get hot. Feral country bees have survived by defending themselves from predators and other bees intent on robbing their stores. Requeening hot hives is sometimes no big deal or it may be a determined battle of wills.

It is hard to understand why once docile colonies become vicious. Perhaps it is simple arithmetic: Only a small portion of a hive's population are guard bees, but a tiny fraction of a bazillion bees is a lot of angry stingers intent on protecting their home. And once they get riled up, they have waves of reinforcements to repel the intruder. "Genetics" are often blamed but it has been observed many times that a requeened hot hive often becomes gentle in just a few days. The queen's pheromones regulate the colony and the new matriarch seems to settle things quite a bit just by virtue of her calming presence. You don't have to wait weeks for the individual monsters to die.

A few years ago your bad bees were about 100 yards from the driveway. Nonetheless, I was met by angry bumps as soon as I arrived. We suited up inside and got the smoker going in the garage. (Smoke sometimes makes finding a

queen more difficult because it disrupts hive activity, but it is necessary in this situation). We gave them a few puffs at the entrance and under the cover, but it seemed to really just get them riled up. Before opening the hive we had a short discussion about the queen's most likely location and our plan to find her. We set aside the two supers on an inverted top cover. It is most likely that the queen would be near the brood nest and it is a good idea to keep at least a few of the bees out of the fray. We studied the brood nest frames and decided to pull one from the middle with the most angry faces looking back at us. I watched carefully as you raised the selected frame. It had only emerged a few inches when I spotted our quarry, squished her and dropped her carcass back into the hive. The hive was back in a stack in only a few seconds, mission accomplished. The colony was successfully requeened and in a couple of days they had settled down.

We were probably a little over confident this week. The hive was much closer to the driveway and again the bees greeted me with head bumps as soon as I arrived. The hive had about as many bees as you ever get in one stack of boxes. The hive was a single deep and four medium supers that had been robbed the week before. A fume board and Bee Quick made the honey harvest relatively easy for you. We suited up and started out like we did before, setting the supers aside without removing the cover, leaving at

least some of the bees trapped away inside. The brood nest was in two of the medium supers and we carefully examined twenty frames and the inside walls without finding the queen. The bees were reacting violently so we decided to split the hive so there would be fewer bees to deal with at a time. Each split got a super with brood. One got the deep box and the other got two supers. (The bees were well on their way to refilling the frames with water-clear country cotton nectar.) Each split was carefully examined twice without finding the queen. (There were plenty of eggs, so it was reasonable to expect to find her somewhere!) At that point it was time to retreat to try again the next day.

I took a Benadryl and headed home still in my bee jacket. I'd been stung each time my veil touched my face along with numerous attacks through by jeans and up my pants legs!?!

You fared better in your bee suit, heavy boots and new leather gloves. I was not so lucky with just a bee jacket and gloves. The next morning I had bib overalls over my jeans, leather boots with rubber bands around my pants legs, leather gloves and a freshly washed (unstung) bee jacket.

We thought the queen was most likely in the split at the original hive's location. Opening their cover for a puff of smoke seemed to start WWII all over again so we retreated to the other split. It was far more docile (often the case when they are queenright), but it seemed that many of the bees had returned to their old hive a 100 yards away. Frame by frame, no queen. Not on the sides anywhere either.

It was the same story at the other split (except for the docile part), so we brushed all of the bees out of the deep box (pretty much just drawn comb) then set it on the bottom board with queen excluders above and below. The restacked hive got a fume board (with Bee Quick) on

top. As we were cooling off, the bees got "sieved" from above and below into the hive body. When we returned to battle, all we saw were drones and a few workers on the top excluder. But five or six of the workers were in a tiny cluster. On closer examination WE FOUND HER! She was actually stuck trying to squeeze through the grid. She was a little small, but not small enough to escape into the deep. After pulling her out of the excluder, she made two attempts to fly away, landing in the grass nearby. We managed to find her both times and after the second escape she got pinched and dropped down into the hive so everyone inside would know of her demise. They got a new mated queen the next afternoon and settled down in just a few days.

June Meeting Notes

Our June 9 meeting was a virtual one using Zoom with 32 joining in. President Craig Rench opened the online meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed those who had logged in.

We know that not being able to meet in person has made things difficult for our newer beekeepers. VP Danessa Yaschuk announced that we are going to host our first "beescussion" using Zoom tomorrow (June 10) at 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm. If you have a question about bees or just want to chit-chat about beekeeping, plan to join us again online. You will be receiving an email invite with a link.

If you see a Sad Bee on your newsletter address label, it means you have not yet paid your 2020 dues. You can let us know if you want to remain on the roster with an email to info@fortbendbeekeepers.org.

Danessa then introduced our guest speakers, James and Chari Elam, past leaders in the Montgomery County Beekeepers Association and the Texas Beekeepers Association as well as members of the American Beekeeping Federation. Their presentation included a short video of a hive inspection then a careful review of why and how to do hive

inspections.

Winners of door prizes donated by Bee Man Dan Jones were Keith Mattheessen (a pocket hive tool) and Trevor Gartin (miniature smoker key chain).

Twenty beekeepers logged in to our "beescussion" on June 10. We had great questions and (of course) lots of answers, even sharing photos!

Good Luck Pecos Jack again

The smell checker failed to catch that Jack Richardson's last name was misspelled last month. If you missed it, Jack has moved to Jefferson, Texas. He has some new wooden ware in storage in Sugar Land and plans to offer it for sale.

Treasurer's Report

Our June treasury balance was \$3,970.06. Since then we collected \$150.00 in donations and \$85.00 in dues (including \$20.00 prepaid 2021 dues). Expenses last month totalled \$580.74. They included: \$25.10 return shipping for warranty repair of our PA system, \$159.80 for a Zoom annual subscription, \$105.53 for SurveyMonkey service, \$50.00 for club dues to the Texas Beekeepers Association, \$233.82 annual website cost and \$6.49 monthly email cost. The resulting balance is \$3,624.32 (\$3,574.32 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

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August, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

We were last able to meet in person on February 11 and the Community Center remains closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. It is impossible to predict when we will be able to meet in person again. For details of our planned Zoom online meeting, see the announcement below. Hopefully our meetings can return to normal soon.

August meeting is online

Because of the continuing (and seemingly never ending) COVID-19 threat, our August meeting will again be online:

Tues., Aug. 11, 7:30 - 9:00 pm

login: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83123303567?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83123303567?pwd=b2FJa2FMbHI0QzgvTEloZElJzdG1Td09)
pwd=b2FJa2FMbHI0QzgvTEloZElJzdG1Td09

Meeting ID: 831 2330 3567

Passcode: 187002

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 831 2330 3567, Passcode: 187002.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting.

As a followup to last month's program on the varroa mite, our meeting topic for August will be varroa mite sampling, treatment thresholds, and treatment.

Our "beescussion" on the day after our July meeting was a success so we'll do it again in August: Wed. August 12, at 7:30 pm. You will be receiving an email invite.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: How much is it gonna cost me to get started as a beekeeper?

An A: This question is often asked and it requires coming up with what needs to be on the shopping list then figure out how much one should spend on each item.

Since our County Judge still has us in lockdown, we probably should go ahead and work on the answer. (It's called a lockdown because no one knows how to spell kwaranteen.)

We'll divide our list into three categories. First is protective gear, tools and beekeeper equipment. Hive components will be next, then the colony of bees itself (they may even be free).

It is usually not a good idea to buy a "starter kit". You don't really save much money and you are likely to be disappointed with what shows up in a few days. If you buy quality protective gear, tools, etc. and your new adventure doesn't work out, you can sell it to a fledgling beekeeper.

Your protective gear should be more than just a veil and some gloves. You won't regret spending up to \$140 or so on a good quality ventilated jacket (all of these costs include sales tax but figure on free shipping). It is probably a good idea to buy beekeeper leather gloves (\$20) but dishwashing gloves from the grocery store are usually adequate.

You'll need a hive tool (\$10) and a beekeeper's brush (\$8). An extra hive tool is a good idea since they have a way of disappearing. The "paint scraper" style is a must-have and one with a frame lifter hook is a good addition. Buy a bee brush with yellow plastic bristles since bees sometimes take offense to the

odor of natural bristles.

You should expect to spend about \$50 on a quality stainless steel American-made smoker with heat guards. The larger version costs about the same and it holds more fuel so it stays lit longer. You also should probably get an entrance reducer (\$2 or just make one). You'll need a feeder, but a ziplock bag from the kitchen works ok.

It is always recommended that you have two hives so that you can easily compare colony performance and have options when problems arise. It's a good idea to double the dollars below...

You should be able to come up with bricks, cinder blocks or landscape timbers to set the hive on (\$0). The recommended 10 frame Langstroth stack starts with a ventilated bottom board (\$25). A solid bottom board is preferred by some members and costs a few bucks less but the bees will appreciate a screened bottom. Mites that lose their grip fall outside of the hive and the hive is easier for the bees to cool in summer (hives should be in full sun). It is also less work for them to keep the hive tidy.

Beekeepers are usually pretty handy so unassembled boxes and frames are recommended. Assemble the boxes using deck screws or the nails provided. Always use quality wood glue on the box joints, being careful that you keep things square and tight. Once you have the boxes assembled, carefully caulk any cracks then prime and paint all sur-

faces not in contact with the bees. You need to figure on spending about \$25 at Home Depot (so long as you can find suitable mistinted top quality house paint). Primer and at least two coats of paint will help assure a long life. A little trim roller makes painting really easy. Hives that are stained and varnished to look cute don't hold up in Texas sun.

Plastic foundation is easier for the beekeeper to use, but not all colonies take well to it. Wired wax foundation (with hook in a wedge top frame) is usually best.

An unassembled select grade brood (or deep) box with frames and foundation for each hive will cost about \$50. A medium super is about the same cost. Some members use all medium boxes in their stack, but it adds \$50 to the cost since it takes two mediums for the brood nest.

Before you decide to just make your own boxes, you need to look at the price/grade/availability of lumber and how much of it ends up as sawdust and cutoff (you're not going to find what you are looking for at Lowe's). Buying unassembled boxes is cheaper and far better quality. Plywood or particle board is a bad idea.

A standard 10-frame telescoping cover and inner cover will be about \$50 to complete our hive stack.

Lots of our members get bees for free by capturing a swarm. If you don't feel ready for that, we are lucky that we can buy bees and queens nearby. Laying mated queens are about \$35. Three pound packages with a caged mated queen with unrelated workers is about \$200. An established four or five frame nuc ("nucleous" colony) with a laying queen is about \$300 and most likely to get established easily.

Now, hold on to your wallet, here comes the bottom line. The total for protective gear, tools and equipment is about \$350. Hive components for a deep + medium stack add up to \$175 and we need two of them (another \$350). A nuc of bees

will cost \$300 and we need two (\$600) but we may get lucky with a swarm. (There goes your COVID-19 stimulus check.)

To help recoup your cost with honey sales, the club owns a harvesting setup that you can use at low cost, saving you \$700.

Spring is the best time to get bees, but now is a great time to be getting ready. To soften the shock, you can put some of this stuff on your Christmas or birthday wish list.

Your actual mileage will vary.

July Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened the ZOOM meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed the 26 members who had logged in.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk made several announcements:

Last month we had our first Bee-scussions Zoom meeting. This was a separate virtual meeting, the evening after the June meeting. It was very informal and we talked about what's happening with our bees. Questions made for good discussions.

If you have a sad bee on your newsletter address label, it means you have not paid your 2020 dues! Please send an email to info@fortbendbeekeepers.org to let us know you want to remain a member and stay on our newsletter mailing list.

Robert Armstrong is urgently looking for a location to place his one hive for 3-4 months. If you can provide a temporary home, please check the Zoom onscreen "Chat" for his contact information.

Danessa then introduced Harrison Rogers with a program on varroa mites, a devastating hive pest. Harrison is a club member who keeps about a dozen hives in the Pearland area.

Varroa destructor is a parasite to larva and adult bees and a vector of diseases. Varroa feed on the "fat body" of the bee which decreases their weight and weakens them. It is

important to monitor and treat for varroa.

Door prizes donated by Bee Man Dan Jones were won by Clayton Wrzesinski (a bee brush) and April Koury (a beekeeper key chain).

It's gotta be true...

'cause I read it on the internet (and this time we really hope that it is).

Chinese doctors have reported that a beekeeper group in Hubei province ("the epicentre of COVID-19 in China") had conducted a survey that found that of 5,115 beekeepers, none had developed COVID-19 symptoms. The doctors then surveyed 121 apitherapists and their patients with the same findings (including several with direct exposure to the virus). Immune system reaction to bee stings is well known and perhaps tolerance of bee stings is a good thing when someone is exposed to the corona virus. Further study is proposed.

Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,624.32. Since our last report we collected \$60.00 in dues and the only expense was \$12.99 email costs. In addition, the bank made a two cent check posting error that is not worth pursuing. The resulting balance is \$3,671.31 (\$3,621.31 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
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September, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

We were last able to meet in person on March 10 and the Community Center remains closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. It is impossible to predict when we will be able to meet in person again. For details of our planned Zoom online meeting, see the announcement below. Hopefully our meetings can return to normal soon.

September meeting is online

Because of the continuing (and seemingly never ending) COVID-19 threat, our September meeting will again be online:

Tues., Sept. 8, 7:30 - 9:00 pm

login: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VFdXJXUT09)

pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VFdXJXUT09

Meeting ID: 243 630 5183

Passcode: 690069

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 243 630 5183, Passcode: 690069.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting.

Our program for September will be "My Top Ten Beekeeping Tips and Tricks" by Jeff McMullan. His list is a fun survey of time saving and helpful pointers for all beekeepers.

We'll again be having a "beescussion" on the day after our September meeting. You will be receiving an email invite.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: When should I start feeding my bees?

An A: In our area we see two principle nectar flows. Early in the year, Chinese tallow and spring wildflowers usually yield a surplus honey crop. A spring favorite for many beekeepers is horsemint (or

beebalm) that usually blooms from May through July.

For many beekeepers, especially those with hives in rural areas, the spring crop was pretty light. Rain gauge data revealed the likely cause. Rainfall in February (3.10") and April (3.58") was near their average of about 3 1/4". March however was significantly short with only 1.03" of rain at this crucial time for nectar production. There was rain on 21 days in March, but few rainfall events over 0.01". Only 2 days saw rainfall over 0.10".

Whenever rainfall comes up short it seems that it is "spotty" with some areas doing ok while the rest were dusty dry. There may be benefit in not keeping all your hives in one place to avoid some drought risk!

The good news is that we had above average rainfall in July (6.94", 4.36" is average) and August (4.73", 4.14" is average). It is reasonable to expect a better honey crop for the fall. In late summer and early fall, we are accustomed to pastures full of goldenrod and fence rows of ragweed for our second big flow. Horsemint that's getting good rain may bloom until October.

Once you've harvested honey, you should make sure that your hives go into winter with adequate stores. Every week or so you should lift the back of the hive to check its weight while you are keeping an eye on entrance activity. It is hard to predict nectar flow so you should

be prepared to start feeding when it looks like it is needed. If your hives seem to be getting light, start feeding. Bees prefer real nectar, so they may not take the syrup right away. In our area, bees seem to be able to find nectar right up to the first freeze (especially in neighborhoods), but winter stores should be ready before then. Feeding before it is really needed may encourage late season brood production when you'd rather see the population dwindling down for overwintering.

White granulated sugar mixed 2:1 in water (most easily measured by volume) is fed in fall so the bees can quickly get it capped. It is not necessary to boil the syrup, but boiling does help by killing any yeast or bacteria and deters spoilage.

You can "open" feed bees using chicken waterers with rocks in the tray to prevent drowning. Of course open feeding benefits all the neighborhood bees and can cause quite the commotion when there is no nectar flow. Entrance feeders (like glass jar Boardman feeders and others) are easy to check as the syrup disappears. When setting it in place, always invert the feeder away from hive entrance to prevent spillage which may encourage robbing or ants. It is usually a good idea to restrict the entrance to a smaller opening away from the feeder. Another option is a hive-cover that has a hole for a Boardman feeder on top of the hive.

Feeding inside the hive avoids rob-

bing and keeps the syrup warmer as winter approaches, allowing the bees to continue feeding when the weather is cool (remember what that is?). Boardman feeders and others can be set on top of the frames inside an empty box. A really really easy alternative is a Ziploc bag filled with syrup and placed on the frames. A dozen or so pinholes (or a couple of razor cuts) allow the bees to get to the syrup.

You can also buy feeders to stack on top of the hive under the cover. Be very careful that bees cannot get to syrup from ventilation openings in the cover because thousands of them will get inside and drown.

Division board (or frame) feeders fit in the brood box in place of frames. Use hardware cloth ladders or floats to minimize drowning. (It sometimes seems like feeding bees is a murderous undertaking.)

Even if you treated for mites before supering, you should probably treat again in cooler weather after your honey harvest. You really want a low mite population for your overwintering bees.

August Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened our ZOOM meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed the 26 who had logged in (the same as in July).

Secretary-Treasurer, Lynne Jones asked everyone to type their names into the Chat to ensure she gets everyone counted for Attendance. She quickly showed those who might not be familiar with ZOOM how to find the Chat screen.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk made several announcements:

The in-person Texas Beekeepers Association's Fall Convention has been cancelled. Instead, an online virtual conference is planned. This will allow everyone to still have access to the great programs that you would find at the convention, all while still being safely at home.

Last month we had our second "beescussions" ZOOM meeting. This

was a separate meeting, the evening after the monthly meeting. Our "beescussions" are intended to be like our meeting social time, an informal get-together to talk about what's happening with our bees. You will be receiving an email invitation that includes a clickable link.

We want to update our website using photos taken by our members. We are seeking photos of honey bees, swarms, honey, or anything related to beekeeping. This is not a contest and there is no compensation if your photo is used. The photos used will include the photographer's name. A permission form must be completed and returned granting permission to use the photo. If you'd like to contribute a photo or two, the permission form will be included in the email with the "beescussions" meeting link.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker, Harrison Rogers. Harrison lives in the Pearland area. He and his wife Mary keep about a dozen hives in their back yard. He is a Texas Master Beekeeper and past area director of the Texas Beekeepers Association. He now serves as a board member of Real Texas Honey and as Vice President of Harris County Beekeepers Association. Harrison coordinates the honey bee exhibit at the Houston rodeo every year.

Harrison presented Part II on Varroa Mites, focusing on sampling, treatment threshold infestation levels and treatment options.

The two methods of sampling are the alcohol wash and the powdered sugar shake. Of the two, the alcohol wash is more accurate. Both start by collecting $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of bees from brood nest frames, being very careful to not include the queen. This is, on average, 300 bees. Once you have completed the wash or the shake, count the number of mites found. Divide that number by 300 (or the actual number of bees in the sample). Then multiply by 100 to obtain a percentage. For example, if you found 6 varroa mites: $6 \div 300 = 0.02 \times 100 = 2\%$.

Is that number good or bad? An acceptable varroa level during peak colony population would not be okay when the colony is dormant. The Honey Bee Health Coalition has a Varroa Management Tool that can help you decide what treatment is your best option based on your personal preferences and mite infestation level (<https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroatool/>).

There are chemical and non-chemical options for mite treatment. Chemical options include synthetic pesticides, essential oils, or organic acids. IMPORTANT: Chemical controls have temperature and honey super limitations to consider.

Lynne then conducted the door prize drawing. Rose Delgado and Harrison Rogers won smoker key chains donated by Bee Man Dan Jones.

After reminding everyone of the "beescussions" virtual meeting, Craig thanked everyone for attending, and closed the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Last month's treasury balance was \$3,671.31. Since then we collected \$35.00 in dues (including \$15.00 for 2021). Our only expense was \$12.99 email costs. The resulting balance is \$3,693.32 (\$3,608.32 in our checking account, \$35.00 pending deposit and \$50.00 in cash).

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October, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

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The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

We were last able to meet in person on March 10 and the Community Center remains closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. It is impossible to predict when we will be able to meet in person again. For details of our planned Zoom online meeting, see the announcement below. Hopefully our meetings can return to normal soon.

October meeting is online

Because of the continuing (and seemingly never ending) COVID-19 threat, our October meeting will again be online:

Tues., Oct. 13, 7:30 - 9:00 pm

login: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VFdXJXUT09)

pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VFdXJXUT09

Meeting ID: 243 630 5183

Passcode: 690069

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 243 630 5183, Passcode: 690069.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting.

Our program topic for October will be "Prepping Hives for Winter" presented by Chris Moore, owner of Moore's Honey Farm in Kountze, Tx.

We'll again be having a "beescussion" this month. It will be on October 22. You will be receiving an email invitation.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Help....I need a pep talk!

An A: As you've learned, beekeeping ain't always easy. In fact, most new beekeepers throw in the towel in a couple of years. That is why our club's purpose is "fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping". As you have

learned, the "successful" part is probably the hardest one.

A failed hive can become an awful mess. Hive beetle maggots cause any honey to ferment, stink and sometimes get runny enough to spill out the entrance. Wax moth larvae (wax worms) fill the hive with poop and webbing that is pretty easy to clean up, but they also burrow into the frames and boxes. Sometimes they are beyond repair.

Any beekeeper facing such messes needs a pep talk. Some want to just pile up the hive and set fire to it to kill the maggots and wax worms. It is a chore, but most of the time the box and frames can be salvaged and prepared for a fresh start.

Successful beekeeping demands diligence and knowledge. Only the strongest hives will survive over the long term. Any that fail must be identified before the woodenware destruction begins. Queenless hives, often the result of swarming, should be identified and requeened right away. Expecting them to raise a new queen before the colony collapses is not usually a good idea. Weak hives should be combined with stronger ones (they can be split back to two hives later).

You can do this! You must be a diligent observer. You have to control varroa mites (doing nothing is a recipe for disaster). Swarming is your enemy; it often results in your best hive becoming queenless. Failure is inevitable (not to mention a potential pest control problem). Hang in there, focus on success!

September Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened our Zoom meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed the 33 who had logged in.

Secretary-Treasurer, Lynne Jones asked everyone to type their names into the Chat to ensure she gets everyone counted for attendance.

Next, VP Danessa Yaschuk made several announcements:

The Texas Beekeepers Association's Fall Convention has been cancelled. Instead of meeting in person in November, plans are being made for an online virtual conference. This will allow everyone to still have access to the wonderful speakers and beekeeping education you would find at the convention, all while still being in the comfort of your own homes. We will share more details when available.

Our next Bee-scussions meeting will be on September 9 from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm. The virtual meeting is an online substitute for our social time: an informal get-together to talk about what's happening with our bees. It's a perfect opportunity for someone to ask a question or describe a problem. Even if you don't have a problem, you'll enjoy the online fellowship of your fellow beekeepers. You will receive an email with an invite and a Zoom link following our meeting.

We were reminded that the Association is seeking photos of honey bees, swarms, honey, or anything related to beekeeping from our members to update our website.

This is not a contest and there is no compensation if your photo is used, but credit will be given to the photographer on the photo. A permission form must be completed and returned granting FBBA permission to use the photo. If you'd like to contribute a photo or two, the permission form will be included in the email with the Bee-scussions meeting link.

We continue to receive requests for beekeeper help with property tax agricultural use exemption. If that is something you are interested in, contact one of the officers. We were also contacted by someone seeking employment as a beekeeper.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker. If you've been a member of FBBA any length of time, Jeff McMullan needs no introduction. For those of you who are newer members Jeff is a long-time beekeeper and club member. He was our past Secretary-Treasurer and has been editing our monthly newsletter (Fort Bend Buzz) for many years. He has 24 or so hives at his pecan orchard south of Cinco Ranch. He wholesales his bottled Real Texas Honey to be sold at area hardware stores. Jeff holds a Master Beekeeper certificate from the University of Montana School of Extended and Lifelong Learning. He has given many presentations for our club and other area organizations and has taught many beekeeping classes.

For our September meeting topic, Jeff shared his Top Ten Beekeeping Tips & Tricks:

10. Soy lecithin is an emulsifier that disperses essential oils in (preferably) cold water.

9. A small trim roller makes painting hives fast and easy. They also are great for applying beeswax to plastic foundation. A crock pot from the thrift store works wonderfully as a dedicated wax melter.

8. A propane torch with auto ignition is the ticket for lighting your smoker. It also works well for

burning out the black gunk when the smoker needs cleaning.

7. The club has a frame jig that you can borrow for assembling frames. An electric or pneumatic brad nailer speeds this process up a lot.

6. Moving hives is easy. If you have a short distance to go, relocate a hive across the yard by putting it on a cart or wagon and moving three feet each day until you reach your destination. Ratchet straps without hooks ("lashing straps") are the best for securing the hive stack. Bee supply companies sell them, but they are also available online. A regular cam buckle lashing strap (not ratcheting) isn't a good alternative. Straight-handled two man hive carriers work really well. Dry-wall vinyl corner bead is an effective and inexpensive way to close up the hive. Cut the 10-ft strip into 17" pieces for the ride home from Home Depot or Lowes. Trim to length with scissors and staple into place.

There were two 6's but no one noticed: N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide (DEET) is the active ingredient in insect repellents. It works for mosquitoes and bees as well. Bees don't like the smell and by spraying some on a paper towel or rag you can chase the bees to where you want them to go. It's really great after you've captured a swarm. Spray it on the limb and the bees won't be going back there. It can also be sprayed on a structure to deter swarm scout bees.

5. A clear plastic 5-gallon water jug (with the bottom cut off) on a pole is great for catching swarms.

4. A ventilated bee jacket or suit is a must in our heat.

3. The Perfect Pocket Hive Tool™, is Jeff's "invention" that is very popular with beekeepers.

2. Avoiding crystallized honey is NBD (no big deal). Store honey in the freezer to avoid crystallization.

1. Salvaged plastic signs have a zillion uses in the bee yard. Use for shade on the hive cover. Apply pe-

troleum jelly or spray with Pam and slide under the screen bottom board, leave for a day; varroa mites will stick and the count will show you when there's a major problem. When storing frames of drawn comb with paradichlorobenzene crystals, use plastic signs to make temporary bottoms and covers. Make a homemade fume board.

Lagniappe: A roll of blue painter tape in your inspection gear comes in handy for many uses. Plan B for bad bees is a professional all-purpose hose end sprayer and soapy water.

Lynne then conducted the door prize drawings. Bee Man Dan Jones donated a frame grip (won by John McConnon) and two Beekeeper Key Chains (won by Steve Brackmann and Laura Parnell). Jeff McMullan donated a Perfect Pocket Hive Tool™ (won by Volkmar Voight). Craig reminded everyone of the Bee-scussions meeting on Sept. 9, thanked everyone for attending, and closed the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Last month's treasury balance was \$3,693.32. Since then we collected \$25.00 in dues (including \$10.00 for 2021). Our only expense was \$12.99 in monthly email costs. The resulting balance is \$3,705.33 (\$3,655.33 in our checking account and \$50.00 in cash for change).

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

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November, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

We were last able to meet in person on March 10 and the Community Center remains closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. It is impossible to predict when we will be able to meet in person again. For details of our planned Zoom online meeting, see the announcement below. Hopefully our meetings can return to normal soon.

November meeting is online

Because of the continuing (and seemingly never ending) COVID-19 threat, our November meeting will again be online:

Tues., Nov. 10, 7:30 - 9:00 pm

login: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VFdXJXUT09)

pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VFdXJXUT09

Meeting ID: 243 630 5183

Passcode: 690069

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 243 630 5183, Passcode: 690069.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting.

Our program for November will be presented by VP Danessa Yaschuk and Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones. They will cover how to make infused honey and creamed honey as well as gift ideas using honey and beeswax.

We have tentative plans for a "beescussion" again this month. You will be receiving an email invitation.

Election Time

Just when you thought it was finally over, you have another vote to cast. It is time to elect club officers for 2021. Our current officers (Craig Rench, President; Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President; and Lynne Jones, Secretary Treasurer) are willing to continue in their positions.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I can't wait for 2020 to end! It has been awful. Since November would be our last in-person meeting (and newsletter) of the year, how about some more hints on what a beekeeper should be doing over the next couple of months.

An A: Aside from hiding out from COVID-19, you may find that you have more to do than you were expecting and it seems like advice on winter preparations is coming out of the woodwork. Chris Moore's ZOOM program last month was very informative and here are a few more tips (some worth repeating):

It is important that overwintering colonies have a low mite load since varroa transmit disease and can lead to overwintering loss. If you have neglected this chore, one last mite treatment may be in order.

Since we'll probably see a few more warm days, we need to get one last hive inspection done. The warmer it is, the better, since eggs and young larvae are very susceptible to chilling. 70° is better than 60° and if it's going to be in the 50°'s it would probably be better to wait. No matter the temperature, you should make it quick. If need be, set aside boxes to get access to the brood nest. Don't be surprised if there don't seem to be as many bees as before. If it was cool overnight, many of the bees may still be

clustered together in the brood nest keeping their brood warm. And the colony will be trimming down to over winter. After a few puffs of smoke, pull a frame from the middle of the brood nest. Give it a quick look, expecting to see brood and perhaps a bit of honey and pollen (and maybe even the queen). You might want to check an outside frame for honey before restacking the hive. Uncap some honey away from the brood nest to get the bees to move it closer to the cluster.

You should probably wrap up by lifting the rear of the hive to get an idea of its weight (and honey stores). A quick lift every few weeks is good.

October Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened the ZOOM meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed those who had logged in.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk made several announcements:

Please type your name or names using the ZOOM "Chat" feature, so we can ensure everyone's name is on the attendance sheet.

Texas Bee Supply is having the Grand Opening of their Dayton store on October 24th. They have several speakers scheduled and good door prize drawings.

The Texas Beekeepers Association's Fall Convention has been cancelled. Instead there will be a 2020 Virtual Beekeeping Event on November 7th. For more info and to register, go to TBA's website:

texasbeekeepers.org, click on Events, then Virtual Beekeeping Event.

Our Bee-scussions meeting is NOT tomorrow. It will be next week on Thursday, October 22nd from 7:30 to 8:30. The meeting is an informal get-together to talk about what's happening with our bees and a perfect opportunity for someone to ask a question or describe a problem. Even if you don't have a problem, you'll enjoy the fellowship of your fellow beekeepers. We hope you will join us. You will receive an email invite and a Zoom link a day or two before the meeting.

Danessa then introduced Chris Moore, our guest speaker. Moore Honey Farm is owned and operated by the Moore family. Built from the ground up, they have 2500 colonies in Southeast Texas from Houston to Beaumont. Their honey is available at numerous stores in the Beaumont and Pasadena area, as well as on their website. Chris has held several leadership positions with the Texas Beekeepers Association and is currently on the Board of Directors for the Texas Honey Bee Education Association.

Chris' topic was preparing for winter, focusing on hive management, food reserves, pests (varroa mites and small hive beetles) and viruses and diseases.

Hive Management: remove queen excluders, reduce entrances, use a solid bottom board or put the insert on a screened bottom. Knock the hive size down to a deep or two deeps; you don't want them to have more space than they can keep warm and police.

Food Reserves: feed 50/50 syrup for three weeks in a row; 70/30 for colonies that are light. Honey in the super is like food in the deep freeze in the garage; honey near the brood nest is food in the pantry. Bees don't want to go to the deep freeze in the garage. To encourage them to keep the outside frames full of honey, on a warm day, uncapped some of the honey in their super and they

will move it closer to the cluster. Hive top feeders are good because you can see if they need to be re-filled at a glance. If the bees aren't taking the syrup, it means the hive needs to be inspected.

Beekeepers that send hives to pollenate almonds need to boost populations in the fall and feed pollen supplements also. Powder is good, but more difficult for commercial guys to feed. Put a shim on with patties so the bees can access all sides because patties are fertile breeding ground for small hive beetles. It's much better to feed smaller and more frequently. Chris likes Ultra-bee and Spirulina (an algae) patties.

Pests: Normally, small hive beetles aren't enough of a problem for a colony that you need to take any action, but when making splits the colony is weaker and vulnerable to the SHB. They use Dixie Dynamex H700 towel cut into quarters, in the corners under the lid to entangle the pests. Fold the towel in half and staple it down. The beetles like to crawl inside and they get stuck. For varroa, Chris recommends following the recommendations of the Honey Bee Health Coalition's publication and videos. The natural controls are not as effective as miticides. Whatever you use, get the varroa count down before winter.

Viruses and Diseases: Most of the viruses and diseases are related to heavy varroa mite load, so keeping varroa low is the best way to keep bees healthy.

Once winter is here, a single deep hive needs a minimum of two solid frames of honey. If you have a double-deep and the bottom box is empty, remove it completely.

The lowest temperature to open the hive is 45° - 55° and you want to get in and out quickly. Every three weeks or so on a warm day, go in and uncapped some of the honey furthest from the cluster/brood nest so they'll move it closer.

In January, if they are bringing in pollen you need to check regularly and feed 1:1 if they are light. They

go through stores (and feed) fast if they are raising brood.

Lynne then conducted the Door Prize drawings. Bee Man Dan Jones donated a Yellow Hive Tool (won by Keith Mattheessen) and a Smoker Key Chain (won by Danessa Yaschuk). Jeff McMullan donated a Perfect Pocket Hive Tool™ (won by Gerald Verran).

Craig reminded everyone of the "beescussions" meeting on October 22nd, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Condolences

Margaret Smaistrila, wife of past president Albert Smaistrila, passed away peacefully at home on Saturday, October 24, 2020. Margaret and Albert were married 61 years and were long time members of the club. Sons Ray and Ron are Association members as well. Please keep Albert and the family in your thoughts and prayers.

Treasurer's Report

Last month's treasury balance was \$3,705.33. Since then we collected \$20.00 in dues (including \$10.00 for 2021). Our expenses were \$12.99 in monthly email costs and a \$50.00 gift card for our October speaker. The resulting balance is \$3,662.34 (\$3,612.34 reconciled balance in our checking account and \$50.00 in cash for change).

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