January, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

Our plan is for the January 11, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers to be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Of course COVID-19 can throw a monkey wrench into almost anything these days, so stay informed. 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 for 2022 paid at our January meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: 2021 was horrible! How about some New Year's resolutions that will help us be better beekeepers and make 2022 a great year?

An **A:** It is an understatement that 2021 has been hard on all of us. We have lost so many good friends, partners, and family. There has been significant cultural and political unrest and division. We have dealt with COVID-19 and quarantines. We have dealt with supply chain shutdowns and soaring prices on just about everything. Oh, and don't forget our frigid visit from winter storm Uri last February.

The half-life of New Year's resolutions is probably a week or less. That means that after a week, only half are still around, a fourth after two weeks and an eighth after three. By the end of January, often little remains of our best-intentioned plans for the new year. Nonetheless, lets consider a few resolutions for 2022 (we need to at least give it a try):

"I resolve to not let COVID-19 turn me into a hermit." It sometimes seems that this pandemic had sapped all the joy out of 2021. The new year offers a fresh start. Continue to make every effort to get your day to day life back to where it was before the pandemic BS. Get vaccinated and boosted. The fact is, avoiding infection is just a bit more than common sense and thinking about how you'll deal with this disease. It's like permanent flu season on steroids. Quarantine yourself if you have been exposed, but realize that you can avoid infection without hiding under the bed.

"I resolve to plan ahead for my beekeeping chores in 2022." There are lots of things that we know that we'll have to deal with, so planning ahead requires little ESP. Are you ready for late-winter feeding? Prepared for swarms (from your bee yard or elsewhere)? Traps ready to go up? Equipment assembled and painted, ready for splits (or swarms) and supering? If you plan requeening, are the new queens on order? You really don't have to plan a whole year in advance, just stay a month or so ahead of what is likely to be coming. It will help relieve any stress you may be feeling as a beekeeper.

"I resolve to increase my knowledge of honey bees and beekeeping." Going to beekeeper meetings is an easy start, but don't expect to learn everything by chit chatting with beekeepers. Instead use what you hear at meetings to guide more learning. Find reliable sources of information on the internet. Buy and read one of the many thick reference books about keeping bees. "The Hive and the Honey Bee" can become a daily resource. Dig deeper to increase your fundamental knowledge and be willing to share what you have learned.

Last but not least: "I resolve to make new friends and lend a hand to new beekeepers." New beekeepers show up at our meetings looking for help getting started with bees. I'm sure that many of them are overwhelmed, especially by the strange vocabulary of beekeeping (a lot of it originated in the mid-1800's with the advent of removable frame hives.) New beekeepers need a lot of help with our lingo!

Election of Officers

Officers for 2022 were elected at our November meeting. The following candidates were nominated, seconded, and elected: Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer; Danessa Yaschuk, Vice-President, and Craig Rench, President. Jeff McMullan consented to continue as our newsletter editor and was also confirmed by acclamation.

November Meeting Notes

We had 30 members and guests attend our in-person November meeting. Others joined the meeting on Zoom.

Good food and fellowship was enjoyed by everyone prior to the start of the meeting. Then President Craig Rench opened the meeting and officially greeted everyone around 7:30 or so.

Gene DeBons gave a quick review of the book, A Journey Through Texas: A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier, by Frederick Law Olmsted, published in 1857. The book is an account of the tour of Texas and Louisiana by Frederick and his brother John, which began in the winter of 1853 and ended in

November Meeting Notes (continued)

the spring of 1854. He describes Texas and its people as they were just prior to the Civil War. The book is considered one of the best accounts of the American West ever published and has been republished numerous times. Hard-copy reprints can be purchased at a reasonable cost, but it is also available for Kindle from amazon for $6.49 or with a goodreads.com membership it can be downloaded for 99 cents. The original book has been scanned and can be read online for free at: https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth2407/m1/.

Danessa showed photos of the Centerpiece created from the bee-related items donated by our members. The Centerpiece was donated to the Texas Beekeepers Association for auction at the November Convention which took place the previous weekend in Galveston. Then, she and Harrison Rogers spoke briefly about Real Texas Honey™ a non-profit organization that promotes honey 100% produced by honey bees in Texas. If you are interested in becoming a member of Real Texas Honey, you can learn more and submit an application on the website: realtexashoney.com.

The presentation for the meeting was a video recording of an October 5th webinar hosted by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Dr. Samuel Ramsey gives a presentation on his experience as a bee researcher working in the Asian Giant Hornet's native range in Thailand. Though the Asian Giant Hornets (aka Murder Hornets) are currently no threat to Texas bees (they have only been found in Washington State), their behavior is common for hornets (and wasps) and very interesting. Dr. Ramsey said, "…there are multiple hornets that do what they do, they do it the best and are the most feared for it…." (A sincere apology to those who attended via Zoom. It was not realized until almost to the end of the video that there was no audio.) The video, with audio, is available on YouTube. https://youtu.be/nSs_-vTEHpQ?t=85 or go to youtube and search for "Beekeeping and Vespa mandarinia II Ramsey".

Craig thanked October Smith, Manager of Long Acres Ranch, for allowing us to meet there while our "home" at the O'Shieles Community Center in Rosenberg was unavailable. Danessa then presented a gift of appreciation to October.

As the meeting closed, Danessa and Lynne conducted the drawing for donated door prizes.

Treasurer's Report

Our reported November treasury balance was $3,601.96. We've had no income since our last report. Expenses for the month totalled $38.97 ($12.99 monthly website costs for November and December and $12.99 for annual domain registration). The resulting balance is $3,562.99 ($3,512.99 in our checking account plus $50.00 in cash to make change). A financial summary and year-end property inventory for 2021 are presented at right. We spent $60.38 more than we took in during the year.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association
2021 Financial Summary

Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2021)		**$3,636.36**
Income		
2021 dues paid (94 at $5.00)	$470.00	
2022 dues prepaid (14 at $5.00)	$70.00	
donations	$340.00	
mentee fees	$25.00	
Total Income		**$905.00**
Expenses		
website expenses	$523.72	
Texas Beekeepers Association dues	$50.00	
Zoom subscription	$159.80	
speaker expenses	$50.00	
TBA Annual Meeting centerpiece	$31.86	
Wes Carew memorial donation	$100.00	
TAMU Weaver endowment	$50.00	
Total Expenses		**$965.38**
Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2020)		**$3,575.98**

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association
December 31, 2021 Property Inventory

Description	Date Acquired	Initial Cost	Member Contact
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	$71.64	
		$654.97	
frame assembly gear	3/5/2012	$157.88	Nancy Hentschel
25 frame assembly jig	5/8/2018	donation	Lynne Jones
outreach exhibits			
banners	11/7/2013	$80.96	Jeff McMullan
posters and easels	2/8/2016	$193.30	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
19 Beekeeper's Journals		$136.99	
56 extra Journal fillers		$61.04	
8 "The Beekeepers Handbook"		$190.00	
		$388.03	
gray cart for meetings	7/7/2016	$121.25	Boone Holladay

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Texas A&M
AgriLife Extension Service
Fort Bend County
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Rosenberg, TX 77471

Boone Holladay

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February, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

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Our plan is for the February 8, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers to be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Of course COVID-19 hasn't gone away, so stay informed in case plans change. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are now $10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep a ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at our February meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our February meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., Feb. 8, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

To attend online:

login: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09

Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183

Passcode: 275853

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting. As usual, we plan to start the meeting at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers…

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

Q: I want to rear a few queens for splits in a few weeks. Where do I start?

An **A:** It is far less trouble to just buy proven mated queens for your splits so that you improve the overall quality of the hives in your beeyard. The best advice is probably to place an order with a queen breeder. But if you want to raise your own queens, selecting a queen mother is the critical first step. Honey production, vigorous brood rearing and docile nature are considerations, but probably the most important measure is low varroa mite infestation. A hive that has survived for several years while meeting your other criteria may be a good choice, but sampling for varroa is advised. You should expect very low (or zero) mites in the hive from your mother queen.

The easiest way to get new queens is to allow your hive to get crowded and prepare to swarm. "Swarm cells" are usually found along the bottom of frames near the entrance. Keep a close watch on things and when the cells are capped they can be carefully removed and given to a new queenless nuc to emerge and make their mating flight(s).

Rather than collecting "swarm cells", you can make a "walkaway split", allowing the queenless colony from the split to raise their own queen. Or,. you can introduce very tiny larvae (less than one day after hatching) into a queenless "starter hive". Anxious queenless workers will quickly begin rearing new queens. You place the tiny larvae in "cell cups" in a "cell cup holder" (pictured in bee supply catalogues). The larvae can be "grafted" into the queen cups by scooping them out of their brood cell using a small spatula-like grafting tool. You need to be sure to get as much royal jelly as you can as you scoop up the tiny worm-like baby larva. Very sharp eyes (or a magnifying lens), adequate lighting and a steady hand are necessary. A damp cloth cover helps prevent the larvae from drying out as you do this delicate grafting work.

When raising queens, the "starter" (queenless) colony may begin queen rearing with quite a few larvae, but would soon focus their attention on a much smaller number, maybe as few as just two or three. For that reason, the cell cup holder is usually moved into a strong queenright "finisher" colony after about 24 hours in the starter hive. The queenright bees are anxious to raise a number of new queens for future colonies. They can mature dozens of new queens.

As an alternative to separate starter and finisher hives, you may want to read up on using a "Cloake Board". It incorporates a queen excluder, hive entrance and a removable tray. It is used to manipulate a single hive as first a "starter" and then "finisher".

As an alternative to grafting, you can use various queen rearing cage systems where you confine the queen so that she lays eggs in cell cup holders. In a day or so you may have 100 or more eggs, so you can open the cage to release the queen. In three days the eggs will hatch and workers will feed the tiny larvae. You select the best looking ones to go in your cell cup holder to be introduced to a queenless starter colony. The queen rearing cage systems relieve you of the delicate grafting work (and potential injury to the larvae) and you don't have to worry about using larvae that is too

old since you know when the queen was laying.

An adult queen will emerge 15 1/2 days after egg laying. Beware that the first queen to emerge may kill her sisters, so a day or two before emergence is expected, you must prepare an appropriate number of queenless mating nucs to receive the queen cells. The new queens will need to mate with 12 or more drones. If she survives her mating flight(s), you can expect to have new brood in a couple of weeks.

HLSR

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is on schedule for a three week run: February 28 - March 20. Of course COVID-19 could always screw things up, so stay informed. Last year it was first postponed and then cancelled altogether.

The AGVENTURE exhibits in the NRG Center are open daily from 9:00 am until 9:00 pm to welcome school groups and rodeo visitors to the livestock show. It features a wide variety of exhibits, from watching baby chicks hatching to a petting zoo and pony rides. One of the most popular AGVENTURE attractions is the honey bee exhibit.

Volunteers from our four local beekeeping groups (Fort Bend, Brazoria, Harris and Houston) enjoy telling rodeo visitors all about honey bees and beekeeping. The observation hive is almost always surrounded by a crowd. The HLSR honeybees are almost symbolic for us as an ambitious start for a new year with our bees.

At our February meeting, Harrison Rogers of the Harris County Beekeepers will be working on a sign-up calendar to staff the exhibit. Members are encouraged to volunteer and lend a hand.

January Meeting Notes

Craig Rench, President, opened our January 11 meeting by welcoming members and guests. Attendance was 17 in person. The attendance via Zoom was 8.

First, Gene DeBons gave a review of the book *A Tour on the Prairies* by Washington Irving. You are probably familiar with Irving's short stories, *Rip Van Winkel* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,* but he also wrote biographies and histories. In 1832, Irving accompanied a surveying group led by Henry Leavitt Ellsworth, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. *A Tour* is Irving's account of this 10-week journey into the wild frontier and Indian Territory of what is now the state of Oklahoma. His book was well received when published in 1835 and gives vivid descriptions of the landscape, animals, weather, food, and encounters with Native Americans. Many consider his book to be the basis of our conception of the "early American West."

One question beekeepers are often asked is, "What can I plant to help SAVE THE BEES!?" Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President introduced our guest speaker, Mark Morgenstern with Morning Star Prairie Plants (in Damon). Mark told us a little about Morning Star Prairie Plants and what type of beneficial plants we can plant for our native bees and pollinators.

Mark began his presentation by explaining why Texas Native Plants aren't just to be appreciated for their natural beauty. Native Plants are adapted to our weather and soil and can survive extreme conditions. Once established, natives require less effort to maintain and don't need fertilizer or chemicals. Natives provide resources for wildlife: food, shelter, and nesting materials. Native plants help to prevent erosion due to their deeper root systems. If your idea of native flowers was limited to Black-Eyed Susan, Daisies and Winecups, Mark dispelled that notion by sharing 24 native flowers and 3 native ornamental grasses with a wide range of sizes, shapes, and colors (white, yellow, blue, purple, red and pink) all of which are beneficial to pollinators .

Following the presentation, Craig made the motion to raise club dues to $10 per calendar year. The motion was seconded by Margaret Wrzesinski, among several others. The vote was conducted with votes cast by hand-raising for those in favor and for those opposed; all votes were in favor.

The door prize drawings were conducted by Craig and Lynne Jones, Sec-Treas. Due to the large number of door prizes donated, including several from Texas Bee Supply, everyone in attendance who wanted a door prize, took one home.

Craig then introduced Margaret Wrzesinski, our new Mentoring Program Coordinator. Margaret asked for anyone who is interested in being a Mentor or having a mentor, to please see her after the meeting or to get her contact information to discuss the program later.

Treasurer's Report

Our January treasury balance was $3,562.99. We've collected $100.00 in dues and $25.00 in mentoring fees since our last report. Expenses for the month totalled $145.15 ($12.99 monthly website costs, $50.00 speaker expense, $35.00 meeting room cost, $28.15 for a projector adapter and $19.01 for refreshment supplies). The resulting balance is $3,542.84 ($3,492.84 in our checking account plus $50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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March, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

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The March 8, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Of course COVID-19 hasn't gone away, so stay informed in case plans change. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are now $10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep a ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at our March meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our March meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., Mar. 8, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

To attend online:

login: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09

Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183

Passcode: 275853

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting. As usual, we plan to start the meeting at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers…

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

Q: I'm getting ready to become a beekeeper in a few weeks. I bought an unassembled hive and could use a few tips in getting it all put together?

An **A:** It is best to go at this with the plan for a hive that will last forever. You could just nail stuff together and call it good, but your hive is going to have to take all that Texas weather can throw at it. Bare wood will soon look pretty rough and begin to rot.

It is best if all exposed wooden surfaces get a top quality paint job, starting with a bit of wood filler in any visible cracks. Don't paint inside the boxes, but you should paint all sides of the bottom board. A trim roller (and a 1" brush to get in the handholds) makes short work of your painting, especially for the top and bottom edges. You can hang the boxes from 2x6's, setting the box on a small wooden block so you can paint all sides at once:

Start with a good (meaning expensive) exterior primer and follow up with at least two coats (three is even better) of quality house paint. You can often find a bargain in miscolored paint. Lighter colors are better, but the color is really not that important. Hives are most often painted white (like most houses) to help reflect hot summer sun (hives do best in full sun: bees don't care and pests like hive beetles and wax moths hate it).

Before assembling the box, it is good (but not critical) to start by priming inside the "fingers" that will fit together. When dry, assemble the boxes with a generous quantity of top quality carpenter's glue suitable for exterior use. Some folks prefer to use deck screws in place of the galvanized nails provided with the box. After assembling the boxes, clean up the excess glue with a wet cloth, inside and out. At this point it is a good idea to use a carpenter's square or tee square to make sure that the box sides are at right angles. If you ended up with a parallelogram, it is easy enough to get it straight before the glue sets by holding the box on a side edge on the driveway and pushing down to get it to 90 degrees.

Bees are incredibly sensitive to smell, so you should give the paint several days to fully dry. You can assemble your frames during this time.

Langstroth frames consist of a top piece, a bottom piece, and two sides. The sides determine the frame's overall height for deep, medium or shallow boxes and are designed to provide "bee space" between the frames. The bottom piece can be slotted or divided into two strips to accept the foundation. The top piece can be slotted or have a removable wedge to secure the foundation in place.

Foundation can be of plastic or milled beeswax (with or without reinforcing wire). Bees seem to prefer the milled beeswax while beekeepers like plastic for its ease of use. It is a good idea to give plastic foundation a generous beeswax coating no matter what the vendor says. For milled wax foundation, crimped reinforcing wire is a must except for very thin foundation used for comb honey. If the frame is to be used for honey, cross

wire reinforcement will prevent the comb from coming apart in the extractor.

HLSR

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is off and running for its three week run: February 28 - March 20. The AGVENTURE exhibits in the NRG Center are open daily from 9:00 am until 9:00 pm to welcome school groups and rodeo visitors to the livestock show. It features a wide variety of exhibits, from watching baby chicks hatching to a petting zoo and pony rides. One of the most popular AGVENTURE attractions is the honey bee exhibit.

Volunteers from our four local beekeeping groups (Fort Bend, Brazoria, Harris and Houston) enjoy telling rodeo visitors all about honey bees and beekeeping. The observation hive is almost always surrounded by a crowd. The HLSR honeybees are almost symbolic for us as an ambitious start for a new year with our bees.

Members are encouraged to volunteer and lend a hand. The schedule is under the "calendar" on the Harris County Beekeepers Association web site (https://harriscountybeekeepers.org).

February Meeting Notes

In person attendance at our February 8 meeting was 34. Zoom attendees were not counted, but it was around 10 or so. After a slight delay with technology setup, Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Several people attending for the first time introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Margaret Wrzesinski spoke briefly about the Mentoring Program and the planned FBBA Library.

Jim Orr and Harrison Rogers of the Harris County Beekeepers Association's spoke about the volunteer opportunity at the AGVENTURE bee booth at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. They explained the exhibit and expectations for beekeeper volunteers. Most importantly you don't have to know everything!

Gene DeBons, Coordinator of our **Help! I Have Bees** program explained to everyone that the program is an important free service we offer to the community. By collecting a swarm, the beekeeper is probably preventing a colony of bees from moving into the walls of someone's house, or their storage building, or into their barbeque pit. When someone spots a swarm, they often go to the internet seeking help. They can report the swarm using the online form on our website. The form is then emailed to Gene. Last year, he received about 260 emails. The form asks for the basic information on the location of the swarm and for a description of its size and how high above the ground it is. Gene uses the list of members who have volunteered to capture swarms to find a nearby member that is available to collect the swarm.

Swarms don't hang around long, and anyone on the Swarm Call List needs to be prepared with their suit and equipment to capture the swarm. You also need to answer your phone when he calls. If you don't answer or return Gene's call within a few minutes, he has to move on to the next person on the list.

Our Swarm Call List starts over every year. If you want to be on this year's list, send an email to info@FortBendBeekeepers.org to request the Swarm Call List form.

The main presentation was given by Jeff McMullan, our Newsletter Editor and author of the Ask a Dozen Beekeepers… column. If you have a question, ask Jeff. He'll research an answer and might even use it for the next month's newsletter. Jeff's presentation was on honey bee swarm behavior and how to go about catching and keeping them.

With everything in beekeeping, Be Safe. Wear your protective gear. Most swarms aren't defensive, but that doesn't mean the bees never sting. Make sure you work safely if using a ladder. Free bees aren't free if you hurt yourself.

Honey bees swarm for one of two basic reasons. Reproductive swarms leave an established colony to form a new one. Absconding swarms are leaving a nest site that has become unsuitable. Absconding swarms are pretty common in our area in late summer because they have chosen a nest site that just gets too hot.

The door prize drawings were conducted by Craig and Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer. Thank you to all who donated and congratulations to all the lucky winners.

The meeting was then adjourned. Thanks to everyone who helped with straightening up the chairs, throwing away trash, and getting everything out to vehicles; we were able to exit the building a few minutes ahead of our 9:00 pm deadline.

Treasurer's Report

Our February treasury balance was $3,542.84. Since our last report, we collected $180 in dues (18 at $10.00) and $25 for mentoring program registration. The only expense was $12.99 for email service. The resulting balance is $3,734.85 ($3,684.85 in the checking account, plus $50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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April, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

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The April 12, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. COVID-19 hasn't gone away, so stay informed in case plans must be changed. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep an extra ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at the meeting. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our April meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., Apr. 12, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

To attend online:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

As usual, we plan to start the meeting at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers…

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

Q: I'm getting ready to become a beekeeper in a few weeks. Somehow I figured that it involved little more than getting hives and bees. I'm working on getting my hives assembled and painted, but it looks like there is more to beekeeping tools and protective gear than I thought.

An **A:** As you have discovered, a few minutes on the internet or with a beekeeping catalogue reveals a dizzying array of options for the new beekeeper. Whatever your plans, it is usually not a good idea to buy a "beginner" setup for several reasons. Your beekeeper gear may well last longer than your new hobby and quality stuff is easily sold if you later discover problems with beekeeping chores, sting allergies, worried neighbors, etc.

The basic tools for the new beekeeper includes a hive tool (a couple of them is better), a bee brush and a smoker. These will set you back about $100. You can order online, but local sources are available. You can request a list of local suppliers from info@fortbendbeekeepers.org.

A "paint scraper" hive tool is kinda standard, but tools with a hooked frame lifter are really handy. A couple of hive tools is always recommended because they have a tendency to disappear just when you need them most. Bright colors help find them in the grass, but the most common disappearing act is when they fall down between the frames. (Buzzing bees seem to make it impossible to hear the sound of a hive tool hitting the bottom board.) The pocket sized version is perhaps easier to keep up with when checking your hives. A handy feature of the pocket hive tool is the end shaped like a flag since it can be used to perfectly set the distance to drop in another frame.

A bee brush is used to get bees out of the way, usually off the frames so you can inspect the comb for brood, honey, nectar or pollen. It is important to know that the girls are seldom upset by plastic bristles. On the other hand, natural bristles made of hair can sometimes cause a commotion so it is probably better to stick to the plastic ones.

A smoker almost identifies the beekeeper. Bees are woodland creatures, so puffs of cool smoke makes them think the woods are on fire. They engorge on honey and prepare to flee if the flames appear. A belly full of honey makes them lethargic while the smoke covers any alarm scents in the air. Smokers come in a couple of sizes with wooden or plastic bellows. Those with a wire guard to protect from burns are best. Plastic bellows can be damaged by heat and wooden bellows are more traditional. A larger smoker holds more fuel so it burns longer. Avoid buying a cheesy cheap Chinese smoker.

Protective gear in not where to skimp on $$, except for gloves. Rubber dishwashing gloves from the grocery store work great so long as they are not too tight to your skin. Get the largest size available for a loose fit to avoid stings through your gloves. When it comes time to wash your bee jacket, you can throw the gloves in the washer too.

Protective clothing can range from a head-to-toe suit ($150 or so) to a simple helmet and veil (about $50). The cost of a bee jacket falls in the middle. Besides taking a while to put on, you will find a full suit to be pretty hot during the summer when layered over your clothes. You will appreciate a ventilated jacket with a "fencing" hood in August! And Velcro leg straps to keep stragglers from crawling up your pants leg.

March Meeting Notes

In person attendance at our March 8 meeting was 30. Zoom attendees were not counted, but it was around 7 or so.

Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Three people attending for the first time introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Gene DeBons spoke fondly of Charter Member Ted Kopycinski and of Ted's mentoring. Ted would often say, "Beekeepers are smarter than the average person." Gene often thinks about that comment. Beekeepers are always curious and driven to learn more about bees, their behavior, about wax and how they make it, about honey, about the colony and how it reproduces, about the queen, the queen's pheromones, where the foragers are finding pollen, and what trees and flowers we might plant for honey bee forage.

Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President, reminded everyone of the Central Texas Beekeeper School on March 26th and Craig encouraged anyone who is able, to volunteer at the Houston Rodeo AgVenture Booth.

Next, Lynne Jones discussed robbing and robbing screens. Robber bees are simply forager bees, but instead of collecting nectar from flowers, they are stealing honey and nectar from other hives. Once a robbing frenzy starts, unless the resident bees can defend and stop the robbers (or the beekeeper intervenes), the robbing will not end until the honey is completely robbed out. The signs of robbing are: a big increase of activity at the entrance with bees flying in a zigzag pattern, then darting in; bees fighting at the entrance; dead bees on the ground in front of the hive; bees trying to get into the hive at cracks and seams; and bits of wax debris on the landing board. Some of the techniques used to stop robbing include: reducing the entrance to 1 or 2 bee width or shutting it completely; covering the hive with a wet sheet; turning on the sprinkler to 'make it rain'; moving the hive; propping a piece of plywood across the front of the hive, and installing a robbing screen. Robbing screens can be purchased from bee supply stores or easily made using #8 hardware cloth (do an online search for "DIY robbing screen"). There are numerous styles, but the principle is the same: the robbers are attracted to the hive entrance, where the smell of honey is the strongest, but they cannot get into the hive because it is blocked with screen; while resident bees simply come and go using the screen's opening, which is further away from the scent of honey. Robbing screens are the cure to robbing, but they are also the prevention to robbing and are advised for use during dearths, but they can be used year-round.

Margaret and Clay Wrzesinski are regular sellers at the Missouri City Farmer's Market. Margaret gave a fantastic presentation of what to expect and how to prepare for selling at a farmer's market. You don't have to have buckets and buckets of honey to start selling. Farmer's markets are always looking for honey sellers and you can sign up for as many or as few dates as you want. You need to have a "business persona" – this is your company name, website, business cards and social media accounts. Use your own photos on your website, not images you find online which might be copywritten. You need to bring cash to make change, but most pay with credit card or other electronic payment. PayPal and Cash app goes straight to your bank account, so you might consider opening an account for this, separate from your regular banking account. You will need to go to the Texas Dept. of State Health Services website to read the requirements if the market requires a Food Handlers certificate. Some markets also require insurance. Get with the Market Manager in advance to confirm the market's requirements. When you prepare for the market day, have a list of everything you plan to take and pack your vehicle the day before since you have to be at the market an hour before opening. Inventory all the product you are bringing and re-inventory after you get back home. Careful notes will give you a good idea of when you are making your better sales. Consider other items you can sell like candles, honey dippers, honey straws, bee pollen. Prepare for bees checking out your table, especially if you have samples. Be prepared to clean up sticky product. The weather can be challenging: hot, cold, rainy, windy. You will need a good canopy with weights and tables with stretchable table covers (they don't blow in the wind and you can put all your boxes underneath). Displays often blow over. All the items on the table need to be heavy or weighted down.

Before we adjourned, drawings for donated door prizes were conducted by Craig and Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer. Thank you to the donors and congratulations to the winners.

Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was $3,734.85. Since our last report, we collected $90 in dues (9 at $10.00) and $25 for mentoring program registration. The expenses were $259.90 for mentoring books and $12.99 for email service. The resulting balance is $3,576.96 ($3,526.96 in our Wells Fargo checking account, plus $50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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May, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The May 10, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. COVID-19 hasn't gone away, so stay informed in case plans must be changed. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep an extra ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at the meeting. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our May meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., May 10, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

To attend online:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

As usual, we plan to start the meeting 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: Everything about bees and beekeeping is "api" this and "api" that. What's the deal?

An **A:** "Api" relates to the Latin word for honey bee: apis.

The European (or western) honey bee (Apis melliferra) is the most common of the 12 or so species of honey bee. These fascinating colonial insects have adapted the ability to collect nectar from flowers and turn it into honey to be stored for future consumption. Without this transformation to honey, the nectar would ferment and spoil. Once it is honey, it will keep almost indefinitely.

Honey bees are one of the very few domesticated insects, having long been nurtured for the honey and beeswax the hive produces. Honey bees are native to Western Europe, but arrived in the New World with the first European settlers. They quickly adapted to their new home and wild colonies are found almost throughout the continent.

The honey bee is eusocial which means they live in colonies with a single fertile female (the "queen") and as many as 60,000 or more non-fertile female workers. The workers produce beeswax and build comb, care for the eggs and brood, gather nectar to produce honey, and defend the colony. The colony also includes a couple of hundred male bees or "drones". Drones develop from unfertilized eggs (not uncommon in the insect world) and their only role is that of mating partners for newly emerged queens. Drones leave the colony every day and gather in a "drone congregation area" to attract virgin queens. Mating takes place in flight. The new queen may make several mating flights and mate with as many as a dozen or more drones before returning to the hive. She has a special organ called a spermatheca to store semen and will likely never again leave the hive after mating, using the stored sperm to fertilize thousand of her eggs (as many as 1,500 or so a day during peak season). The queen can live as long as eight years, but she will be replaced as her store of sperm is depleted and she begins laying unfertilized eggs. After mating, the drones fall to the ground and die. As winter approaches, any drones still in the colony are ejected from the hive and die since they are no longer needed.

Carl Linnaeus (1707 - 1778) was a Swedish naturalist and physician who is known as the "father of modern taxonomy". He developed the binomial (two-part) Latinized nomenclature for naming organisms. "Apis melliferra", for the European (or western) honey bee, was one of his first namings. "Apis" means honey bee, while "melliferra" can be translated as "honey-bearing". Linnaeus recognized that honey bees "bear" nectar and make honey, but declined to change the name. Oh well.

Since much of the English language is derived from Latin, "api" seems to show up every time honey bees are mentioned.

April Meeting Notes

Attendance at our April meeting was 33 in person and 6 on Zoom. Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Those attending for the first time introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Gene DeBons gave a book review of Tales of Old Time Texas and a bit of biography of its author, J. Frank Dobie. Dobie was born in 1888 and had a long career as both an educator and a writer. In 1932, UT named Dobie the first full professor not to possess a Ph.D. He was an outspoken liberal, which

eventually resulted in his dismissal from UT in 1947. As a writer, Dobie is known as a folklorist. Published in 1955, Tales of Old Time Texas is a collection of 28 of his short stories. One chapter called, "Honey in the Rock," includes several stories about early Texas bee lore including historic bee hunters who claimed they could see a bee "over a mile away!" The bee hunter flourished at a time when a meal was "composed of dried venison sopped in honey." The chapter includes several tales of prodigious quantities of honey in Texas caves and the schemes people came up with to retrieve it. Dobie died on September 18, 1964 at the age of 75, just four days after being awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President, made several announcements on upcoming events and of two groups requesting a beekeeper to give presentations.

We then had a brief Show & Tell that included:

Two types of queen introduction frames and a push in queen introduction cage.

A plastic bottom board from Arizona-based Apimaye. It is manufactured in Turkey by Yildirim Plastik.

Their principle product is insulated plastic hives, but their bottom board can be used with regular woodware. It has a built in pollen trap or you can put diatomaceous earth in the tray for small hive beetles.

Here is the rundown on diatomaceous earth (DE). It is the fossilized remains of tiny marine organisms called diatoms. It is used as a non-toxic pesticide that absorbs the oils and fats from an insect's body. The insect soon dries out and dies. DE's particles are sharp-edged and are likened to broken glass, inflicting many cuts in the insect's cuticle between skeletal plates. It remains effective as long as it is kept dry and undisturbed. Be aware that DE insecticide is scented to attract roaches.

A couple of pop-up mesh laundry hampers which can be used for capturing swarms.

A heavy-duty strap/hook to put on a tree to hang a swarm trap.

Danessa then introduced our speaker, beekeeper Steve Brackmann, owner of Bear Creek Apiaries in Alvin.

Steve has been a beekeeper for over 25 years, getting his start doing structural removals. He began his queen breeding operation 10 years ago and is a participant in the Polline 2.2 program which is selecting for hygienic behavior. Last year Bear Creek Apiaries produced 1,500 queen bees for sale and 500 for their own operation.

Steve recommends requeening when the queen is not laying as much brood as the other hives you have, for example if there are only three frames of brood, but the other hives have six or seven frames. Also if the brood pattern is spotty or the brood is not a nice shiny white, which can be sign of a viral disease. Another reason to requeen is if your colony is aggressive (overly defensive). When re-queening an aggressive hive, be certain that the old queen is gone then place the new queen in a push in cage over empty cells where she can lay (which will help with acceptance). For introducing a queen directly from the queen cage, Steve prefers to put a spacer (Imrie shim) on the box and place the queen cage on top of the frames. If you receive your caged queen and can't put her into the hive right away, you need to keep her in a place that is in the dark and cool (but not cold) and give her a drop of water three or four times a day. If it is going to be more than a few days, you can "bank" queens. There are a couple of ways to do this. In a queenless colony, you can simply put as many caged queens as you want on top of the frames using a spacer shim. In a queen-right colony, you need to have the queen below a queen excluder and a frame or two of open brood above the queen excluder. The nurse bees taking care of the open brood will also take care of the caged queens, again placed on top of the frames using a spacer shim. Because the resident queen is below the queen excluder, she cannot get up to the caged queens. Steve does not recommend banking a queen more than five days because the longer she goes without laying, increases the possibility that she might not start laying again. Rather than banking, instead you can grab a frame of brood from another colony, stick it in a nuc box with some drawn comb and let her start laying in the nuc box. Once she is laying there, you can just take her on the frame with her open brood and introduce her to another colony by sticking the frame straight into the hive.

The meeting was adjourned after the door prize drawings.

Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was $3,576.96. Since our last report, we collected $110.00 in dues and $50.00 for mentoring program registration. Our expenses were $14.05 for a 3-outlet power adapter, $681.96 for a new LCD projector, $42.99 for Network Solutions' annual web domain name renewal, $9.95 for honey.com printed materials, and $12.99 for our email subscription. The resulting balance is $2,975.02 ($2,925.02 in the checking account, plus $50.00 in cash to make change).

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June, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The June 14, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. It doesn't seem like COVID-19 will ever go away, so stay informed in case plans must be changed. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep an extra ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at the meeting. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our June meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., June 14, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

To attend online:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

As usual, we plan to start the meeting at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers…

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

Q: I'm kind of new at this. I've managed to get two swarms into boxes, but they were gone in a few days. Why won't they stay? What do I need to do differently?

An **A:** A colony swarms for many reasons. A "reproductive" swarm includes the old queen as they set out to establish an additional colony. "Absconding" swarms include the whole colony that has abandoned a nest site that has become unsuitable or perhaps too small. It is pretty common in our area to have late summer swarms because a nest site chosen in the spring is now too hot as summer advances.

Scout bees lead the swarm to their new home. In the meantime, the colony clusters near their old nest while the scouts investigate every possible nest site within a mile or more. When a new site has been selected by the scout bees, they lead the swarm to its new home despite your efforts. Evidence suggests that it is the same bees that scout for forage that set out to find a new nest site for the colony.

If the new home you provided is near where the swarm clustered, the scouts have continued their search. Despite your efforts, they may convince the colony that they have found a better place for them to live. Because of this, it is usually a good idea to move a captured swarm a couple of miles away for a few days. It is best to close up the hive at night when all the bees are inside. If many are clustered on the outside, a few puffs from your smoker will get them all inside. Once the bees seem settled, you can close them up at night then move them back to your beeyard.

Your goal should be to provide a new home that the colony would never want to leave. At the very least, it should have wax foundation so that can start comb construction right away. If you insist on using plastic foundation, slop on a heavy coating of fresh beeswax. Old drawn comb is even better than new foundation. The darker it is, the more the bees seem to like it. Comb from another hive with capped brood (but no bees) is better yet. Empty comb is probably better than comb with eggs and uncapped larvae since there is little work for the new colony to do caring for capped brood before the hive population begins to increase substantially. There are about 3,500 cells on each side of a brood frame. Recall the honey bee life cycle: eggs hatch in about 3 days, larvae is capped after 7 more days, and the adult worker emerges 21 days after the egg was laid. So, for example, if both sides of a deep frame is 2/3 covered with capped brood it means that more that 4,600 new workers will soon emerge (2 x 3,500 x 2 / 3= 4,667). All of the new workers will have emerged after spending 13 days as capped brood.

Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was $2,975.02. Since that report, we collected $50 in dues and $100 for mentoring program registrations. Expenses were $314.94 for a 6-channel mixer with a protection plan and accessories; $25.96 for a wireless presenter remote; $19.47 for 4-port USB hub; $151.01 for a wireless microphone system; $161.29 for a multimedia speaker for PC; $689.47 for a wheeled storage cabinet; $37.88 for a one pedestal sign holder; $29.66 for five flat storage trays; $30.30 for six acrylic sign holders; and $12.99 for the May Squarespace email subscription. The resulting balance is $1,652.05 ($1,602.05 in our Wells Fargo checking account, plus $50.00 in cash if needed to make change).

May Meeting Notes

Attendance at our May 10 meeting was 37 in person and 7 online "Zoomers".

Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone, including six people attending for their first time. They were each asked to introduce themselves and tell the group where they were in their beekeeping adventure. They all received a hardy welcome.

Gene DeBons, coordinator for our swarm calls, spoke briefly on swarm calls. Swarm calls sometimes come in to County Animal Control or the AgriLife Extension office, buy they usually come from "Help! I have bees! our web page (www.fortbendbeekeepers.org). Members that have volunteered for Gene's swarm call list need to be ready-to-go and able to respond within 30 minutes, if you accept a swarm call.

Margaret Wrzesinski, Mentoring Program Coordinator, called for more mentors! Currently there are more mentees in need of a mentor than there are mentors. Mentors aren't expected to have all the answers, they just need to have a year or two experience to help new beekeepers get started.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones reminded everyone of BuzzFest at BeeWeaver on Saturday, May 28, and the Texas Beekeepers Association Summer Clinic on Saturday, June 25, in Conroe.

Our scheduled presentation was to be given by Danessa Yaschuk on Simple Splits. Unfortunately, she had to be home with a sick kid, so Craig stepped up to give the presen-tation in her absence.

A split is the best way to deal with an impending swarm. Some of the signs that a colony might be preparing to swarm are: a lot of bearding on the front of the hive; the colony has lots of drones; the brood nest is being backfilled with nectar; and (the most obvious sign): queen cells, usually along the bottom of the frames. Besides swarm prevention, a beekeeper might want to split their hives to: create more colonies; control mites by breaking the brood cycle; sell nucs; and raise queens.

Types of Splits	Positives	Negatives
Walkaway	Don't need to find the Queen	Must wait a month before looking for fresh eggs in 'new' colony.
Overnight	Don't need to find the Queen	Requires a Queen Excluder Two days to complete
Vertical	Can be done earlier in the year Can be done after swarm cells are present (must find queen) Can be undone easily	Requires a Double-Screen Board Must find the Queen
Swarm Control	Circumvents the imminent swarming by making an artificial swarm.	Must find the Queen
Cut-down	The original colony will produce a greater amount of comb and honey. Neither the original nor the new colony will be able swarm in the near future.	Must find the Queen
Shook Swarm	Don't need to find the Queen	Requires a Queen Excluder Requires a Feeder Requires a Deep box in addition to those used for the original and new hive.
Mississippi	Divides a 2-Deep colony into four Nucs.	Requires four Nuc set-ups.
Taranov	Don't need to find the queen Can be done after swarm cells are present Circumvents the imminent swarming by making an artificial swarm.	Requires a Taranov Board Takes 2-3 hours to complete

There are requirements for a successful split:

Use overwintered colonies. A brand-new colony from a nucleus hive or package, does not have the resources needed for a successful split.

Use strong colonies. It is common sense that the larger the colony, the better your chance of success.

Need a queen. Either provide a queen or it must be able to produce a queen.

Honey and pollen resources and day old larvae or eggs. If you want the bees to produce a queen they must start with very young larvae.

Unmated queens need drones. If drones aren't mature and flying, the queen won't be mated.

Imitate normal nest structure. The brood nest of a split must imitate normal nest structure; worker brood in the center, drone brood on the outer edges of the worker brood, pollen on both sides of the nest, honey on both sides of the pollen.

Protection. Reduced the entrance or install a robbing screen.

FEED! FEED! FEED! Feeding will help stimulate the growth of the colony, but you must make sure that it does not cause robbing. If you spill syrup at the hive entrance, wash it up!

After the hive is split, the foragers will return to the hive box in the original location. The other box will not have many foragers until the house bees 'graduate' to foraging.

Following the presentation, Jeff McMullan answered numerous questions from members. After which, the door prize drawings were conducted. Thank you to all who donated and congratulations to all the lucky winners. The meeting was then adjourned.

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July, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The July 12, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our July meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., July 12, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Online login instructions remain the same:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

We plan to start the meeting at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers…

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

Q: I need some advice on moving a couple of hives.

An **A:** Honey bees have an incredible "GPS" instinct that they use to locate their hive and nectar sources. It is thought that they use the polarized light in the sky to guide their travel and a "figure 8" dance to inform others. Foragers that are full and ready to return to the hive orient themselves by flying upward in a spiral then head home in a "beeline". This behavior makes it easy to locate bee hives. Foragers can be lured to a saucer with a puddle of honey and then followed on their return to the hive. It may be easier to just relocate the saucer a hundred yards or so perpendicular to the first flight path and locate the hive at the intersection of the two flight paths. (Google Earth is a perfect tool for this!)

Because of the bee's amazing directional instincts, you should move hives just a few feet or several miles. If the new site is close by, just a few feet away, the bees can figure it out. If moved a few miles, departing bees realize what you are up to and reorient themselves before leaving the hive. Any bees that are away from the hive when you move it will find themselves hopelessly lost. To avoid leaving foraging workers behind, it is best to move hives after dark (with everyone inside) and several miles away. Any bees clustered outside can be easily chased in with a few puffs from your smoker before closing up the hive. If it is your objective to just move across the back yard, you should make the move in short steps (three or four feet) or make an intermediate stop that is much further away. Give them two weeks or so to fully adjust to the new site, then you can make the final move.

It is important to prepare well for a move. The hive must be secure! Close off any "leaks" with painter's tape and use a ratchet strap to keep the hive stacked for the trip. An 8 ft strap is plenty long enough for anything you expect to be able to pick up. Sometimes you can find a ratcheting lashing strap that you can cut to your desired length, but usually you are stuck with a tie-down that has hooks on its ends. The ratchet is important to keep things really snug.

Vinyl corner bead (for sheetrock) is great for closing the entrance. It comes in 10 ft. lengths for less than $4.00 from Home Depot or Lowe's. Out in the parking lot you can use kitchen shears to cut a ten-footer into seven 17" long pieces to fit in the back seat. A Langstroth hive is 16" wide so you'll need to trim it to length then use a staple gun to secure it in place for the move.

Bee supply houses sell a hive carrier, but it is not cheap so you might just ask around for one to borrow. It is made of steel conduit and hinged in the middle with tabs that fit into the box handholds. They make one for one person to use but a beehive is far too heavy for that, so you'll need the one for two people (and another beekeeper to help you). After securely strapping the hive stack and closing the entrance, you are ready to go.

Treasurer's Report

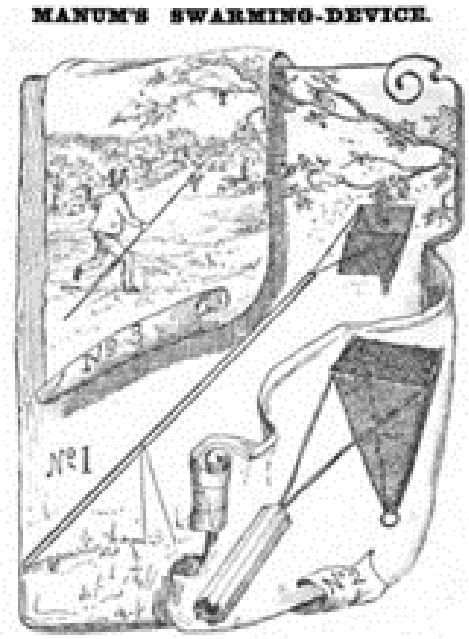
Our June balance was $1,652.05. Since our last report, we collected $210.00 in dues, $25.00 for mentoring program registration, and $105.00 in donations. Expenses were $159.80 for Zoom annual fee, $58.50 for ten flat storage trays, $233.82 for Squarespace annual website fee, $12.99 for the June Squarespace fee, and a $100 memorial donation to the Nevin Weaver endowment fund in memory of Albert Smaistrla. The balance is $1,426.94 ($1,376.94 in the checking account, plus $50.00 in cash).

June Meeting Notes

Attendance at our June 14 meeting was 37 in person and 7 online "Zoomers".

Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone. First time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Gene DeBons shared a 1905 A.I. Root Catalog he acquired recently. It was interesting how little basic beekeeping supplies have changed in the past 117 years. As you would guess, the price for familiar items has changed quite a bit. Today's common DIY bucket on a pole for swarm-catching, could take a lesson from the Manum's Swarming-Device.



Margaret Wrzesinski, Mentoring Program Coordinator, spoke briefly on the items she brought for the Mentoring Table, which included waxing plastic foundation and a solar wax melter.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk reminded everyone of the upcoming Texas Beekeepers Association Summer Clinic and then introduced our speaker Jeff McMullan.

Jeff's presentation, "Honeybee Pests and Diseases", focused on Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM is best described as using the LEAST TOXIC MEANS to control IDENTIFIED PESTS that are causing or likely to cause SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE.

The key to managing pests and diseases is to have a strong and healthy hive through beekeeping practices, genetic selection, and when necessary, pesticides and antibiotics. Though an individual beekeeper can work at improving the genetics of their hives by choosing the best hive for splits or rearing queens, the professional queen breeders typically do a better job of observing desirable traits and producing queens, often from instrumentally inseminated queen mothers.

Options for dealing with a weak colony are treating with pesticides/antibiotics, feeding (syrup and/or pollen substitute), providing capped brood from another hive, combining it with another hive, requeening, or eliminating the colony (or just allowing it to fail).

Tracheal mites are microscopic and live exclusively in the trachea of bees. Though they decimated the beekeeping industry when they first became established in the mid-80s, lines of bees were developed that are resistant to tracheal mites and they are no longer the issue that they once were.

Varroa mites appeared in the US less than ten years later and continue to be the most serious threat to our hives. Varroa are the animal kingdom's biggest external parasite (in relation to their host). The development of the Varroa Sensitive Hygiene (VSH) trait in honey bees is ongoing in the queen breeding industry. Bees with this trait remove brood infected by varroa in from the hive, limiting varroa reproduction.

Varroa feed on pupa and adult bees. This weakens the bees, but the more serious effect is the spread of diseases in the hive. Varroa spread the deformed wing virus, which results in bees crippled by crinkled, deformed wings.

Beekeeping practices that can help control varroa mites include screened bottom boards, small cell foundation, requeening (for a brood break), powdered sugar roll and drone brood trapping. In-hive controls include drone brood trapping, sugar dusting, and pesticides (hard and soft).

Wax moth larvae (wax worms) feed on comb and stored pollen, create webbing and leave feces in brood comb. They are usually only a problem in a weak hive or where the hive is too big for the bee population (perhaps due to swarming). They also infest improperly stored comb.

Small hive beetle larva foul the honey with their feces. In a bad infestation, the honey will be "slimed" by fermentation. The colony will often abscond when the infestation reaches that point. There are traps that can be inserted between the tops of frames with oil or diatomaceous earth in the trap to kill the beetles. Checkmite and GuardStar are pesticides labeled to treat small hive beetles.

After a few questions, the door prize drawings were conducted. Thank you to all who donated and congratulations to the winners. The meeting was then adjourned.

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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August, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The August 9, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors and new members are always welcome (membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year). We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our monthly meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., August 9, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Online login instructions remain the same:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

We plan to start the meeting 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: Can you walk me through the introduction of a new queen?

An **A:** Introducing a new queen is an important beekeeping skill and every beekeeper, sooner or later, will have this task to do.

The most important thing is to not try to requeen a queenright colony. Duh!?! If she is still around, the old queen must be disposed of. It is ok to introduce a queen cell, but the new virgin queen will have to emerge safely and make a successful mating flight. The best alternative is to use a proven mated queen in a cage that protects her as the colony decides to accept her.

Of course a colony can become queenless for any number of reasons. The queen may have just died or have been killed by the colony because she is unsuited to their future survival (for example, she may be laying poorly because of her age, an exhausted semen supply, etc.). "Supercedure cells" are the colony's preparation for their new queen.

The bees know when their queen must be replaced, but the most common cause of queenlessness (if that is even a word) is that a predator has prevented the large slow-flying virgin queen from returning from her mating flight(s). She may have been the victim of a dragonfly, toad, green lizard, F-150, or who knows. To raise a new queen, the colony must start heavily feeding a worker larva within a day or so of its egg hatching. Without the beekeepers help, the colony is doomed if an egg or very young larva is not available for them to give it another try.

Once the colony has determined that they need to raise a new queen, the most perilous part is her mating flight. The bees nurture several of their female worker larvae with lots of highly nutritious food. The large peanut-shaped cell with the potential queen inside is capped to pupate nine days after the fertile egg was laid (the queen deposits infertile eggs to develop into male drones; fertile eggs can become a worker or queen depending on how they are cared for).

The adult queen emerges from her capped cell 16 days after the egg was laid. It has been observed that a replacement queen is usually raised in the middle of a brood frame that is in the middle of the hive brood nest. "Swarm cells" are usually at the bottom of a frame near the entrance, being raised to replace the old queen after she leaves the colony with a swarm. She usually emerges a few day after the hive has swarmed.

Evidence of queenlessness is usually a dwindling amount of capped brood. With experience a beekeeper can recognize queenless colony behavior, the most significant being loud angry buzzing.

A day or two after the colony has lost its queen (or she was removed) all of the old queen's scent is gone and it is time to introduce a new queen . When you buy a queen she comes in a cage where she is safely protected from her new subjects. When you first get her, introduce yourself by giving her a drop of water with your fingertip.

It is usually best to keep the new queen in her cage so she is safe while the colony gets accustomed to her scent. If there are workers in the cage with the queen they should be released, then place the cage in the center of the brood nest between frame. Be sure to leave easy unobstructed access for her to be fed through the screen. Let the bees eat the candy plug that has her confined. You can push an unfolded paper clip or a small nail through the plug to ease the process.

July Meeting Notes

Attendance at our July 12 meeting was 33 in person plus 4 "Zoomers".

President Craig Rench opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Two first time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Harrison Rogers demonstrated the many uses of plastic political signs (corroplast board) in beekeeping. Hew brought a stack of them to the meeting for anyone who cared to take some. Harrison also brought along an antique skep that was given to him. Before the introduction of our familiar white boxes, bees were kept in "skeps". Skeps were basically upside-down baskets made in a variety of ways including woven cane and coils of straw made into rope. Sticks were wedged inside to give the bees a way to suspend their comb. Harrison's antique skep was a garage sale find made with woven wicker and then plastered with mud.

Gene DeBons shared early knowledge of wax moths by reading from "Langstroth on the Hive and the Honey Bee", first published in 1853. At that time, wax moths were called bee moths and the larvae were called wax worms. It had been noted that bee moths seemed to be attracted to queenless hives and a queenless hive is especially susceptible to being overcome by wax worms.

Last year the Texas legislature revised the Texas Farm Animal Liability Act that protects owners of livestock (including managed bee colonies) from liability. The law includes specific wording for signage that is required. Lynne Jones announced that the club is making a group purchase of 12" x 8" aluminum Texas Farm Animal Liability Act Chapter 87 warning signs. Members wanting to purchase can do so for $10 each. Order forms were passed out.

Margaret Wrzesinski, Mentoring Program Coordinator, encouraged anyone who wants to participate in the Mentoring Program to see her for an application. She also invited anyone who has questions or needs advice for a problem they are having, to come to the Mentoring Table during social time (7:00-7:30).

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk announced some upcoming events including the Brazoria Beekeepers' annual Honey Expo at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds in Angleton on July 18th and three events on September 24th: Brazos Valley Beekeeper's Association's beekeeping school in Bryan followed by Beeweaver's INFUZZED event and a Honey Cookoff 30 minutes away in Navasota.

September is National Honey Month and you can sample delicious new honey infusions at the INFUZZED event. Beeweaver explores new flavors and ideas using honey all year long then picks the very best to share at this annual event. There will be educational workshops on honey infusions and beeswax products.

The Honey Cook Off is the sweetest cook off in Texas! You will be able to taste and judge main dishes, side dishes, and desserts, all sweetened with golden goodness, honey!

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker, Ryan Giesecke (pronounced Geese-uh-kee), who joined us remotely via Zoom. Ryan owns and operates G-Bar Naturals, an educationally-centered homestead project located in East Dallas. He offers a variety of homegrown products and learning opportunities, as well as performing bee-friendly removals of honey bees and bumble bees as "Honey Bee Relocation Services". Ryan is past president of Trinity Valley Beekeepers Association in Dallas, past president of Metro Beekeepers Association in Fort Worth, a Texas Master Beekeeper, and has taught classes on bees and beekeeping at area colleges. Ryan's presentation, "Fights About Mites", was both entertaining and very informative. Ryan first covered a bit of background about varroa mites: their life cycle, the diseases they vector, and the ways varroa mites spread from hive to hive (absconding, swarming, drifting, drone movement, flower hopping and robbing). The presentation then covered all the aspects of how varroa mites became a problem and how different approaches to beekeeping have helped or hindered in the fight against the mites.

After a few questions, door prizes were awarded. Thank you to those who donated door prizes and congratulations to the winners.

Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was $1,426.94. Since our last report, we collected $80.00 in dues, $25.00 for Mentoring Program registration, $230.00 for member purchases of warning signs, and $65.00 in donations. July expenses were $7.46 for paper goods, $12.18 for duplicate keys, $61.67 for a web camera and tripod, $8.65 for name tag labels, $50.00 for speaker honorarim, $357.76 for FALA warning signs, and $12.99 for our email subscription. The resulting balance is $1,316.23 ($1,266.23 in the checking account, plus $50.00 in cash).

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September, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of each month (except December). The September 13, 2022 meeting will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors and new members are always welcome (membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year). We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our monthly meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., Sept. 13, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Online login instructions remain the same:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

We plan to start the meeting 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: Why are my bees hanging around my neighbor's hot tub? For that matter, are they even my bees?

An **A:** You (and your neighbor) are probably beyond "because they are thirsty", even though that is certainly a large part of the answer. Why don't they just go somewhere else?

There is a quick answer to your second question, so let's start there. It will be fun to dust bees at your neighbor's hot tub with powdered sugar and then watch your hive entrance. It's not all that important, but if white bees don't show up, it is obvious that there is another colony nearby that has found this water source. And just because white bees do show up at your hive, it doesn't mean only your bees are getting water next door. In any case, you're the beekeeper and will be expected to have an answer (or find one) for your neighbor.

Foragers don't just return home with nectar; they also bring in water to quench their hive mates. But beyond just being thirsty, honey bees use water to regulate the temperature of the hive (by evaporation), to nurture baby bees, and to dilute stored honey for consumption. They may get nutrients from water as well.

Having a reliable source of water is very important to the honey bee colony. You will discover that what looks almost gross to you makes a fine water source to a honey bee. Mud, algae and other junk doesn't bother a honey bee in the least.

As beekeepers it is important that we understand that once bees begin using a water source, it becomes "where we go to get water". They'll continue watering in the same place so long as it remains available.

Bees around a hot tub are really little cause for concern since the number of bees is usually few and they are seldom aggressive so long as they are left alone. Nonetheless, watering bees can become the beginning of conflict in a neighborhood. The only way to end the watering visits is to deny the source.

In deciding where to locate a hive, the first question needs to be "where will they go to get water?". If a natural source of water isn't nearby, it is important that it is provided for them. A birdbath in the backyard works just fine, but you need to make sure that it always has water. Filling it with gravel or marbles reduces drowning. If you have a sprinkler system for the yard, you can often locate the bird bath so the sprinkler keeps it (or some other water source) topped off.

You will have a little work to do to get bees (wherever they come from) to go somewhere else for water. First you must identify or provide a different source, then you must convince the bees to go there instead. Sometimes that can be hard to do. Emptying a birdbath or fixing a dripping faucet is easy enough (once the bees start going elsewhere, you can put water back in the birdbath). If the bees are using the neighbor's hot tub or koi pond, you'll need to cover it with a blue tarp for a few days while the bees find another water source.

Large chicken waterers from the feed store work well for watering bees if you take a couple of precautions. When it comes to water, honey bees seem to have a suicide wish: without prevention, hundreds will drown trying to get a drink. You'll need to put a circle of hardware cloth in the jug outlet or they will get inside and drown when the jug runs low. Marbles or gravel in the water tray is necessary to prevent drowning.

When it is hot as it is now, your

bees will use a lot of water trying to keep it from getting too hot inside the hive.

Afternoon shade is a blessing. Hives do best when out in the open because hive pests prefer shade. When it too hot (like right now!), some beekeepers use a popup shelter to protect their hives for a few weeks waiting for cooler weather. Metal hive covers get incredibly hot in the sun! Placing a corrugated plastic sign on top of the hive will make a huge difference. Be sure to put a brick on top or it will blow away in the first afternoon storm.

August Meeting Notes

Attendance at our August 9 meeting was 30 in person. No Zoom meeting was conducted.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Two first time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Margaret Wrzesinski, Mentoring Program Coordinator let everyone know the Mentoring Table was set up with information and displays for Varroa Mite treatments.

Danessa then announced some upcoming events. There will be three events on September 24th: BVBA's Beekeeping School in Bryan and Beeweavers INFUZZED event and Honey Cookoff in Navasota. Danessa asked that everyone mark there calendars on October 8th when we will have an Outreach Activity at Enchanted Gardens from 9am-noon. Members will be needed to staff our table.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker, Steve Jimenez, with Hives for Heroes. As a Marine, Steve served in Operation Enduring Freedom, leaving the military in 2011. With a desire to help his fellow veterans, in 2018, Steve founded Hives for Heroes, a non-profit service organization focusing on honey bee conservation and veterans transitioning from military service.

The Hives for Heroes motto is "Save Bees, Save Vets." When Steve left the military, the transition to civilian life was a struggle for him at times. There is a sense of a "loss of mission" and not much of a support system. He says his story is not unique. When he was introduced to beekeeping, he realized it can help to provide a healthy transition and started Hives for Heroes. Beekeeping can help with PTSD and the program provides a sense of purpose and connection with other beekeepers in a positive activity. The organization has grown from the Houston area, to the entire U.S. and is now expanding into Australia and the U.K.

The program is set up for each first-year veteran, or "NewBEE", in the program to be assigned to a mentor. The only cost to the veteran is the bee suit/jacket and gloves. The mentor needs to have three years of successful beekeeping experience, but does not need to be a veteran. The veteran assists the mentor at the mentor's apiary for one year. At the end of the year, the mentor provides a split or hive to the veteran, who now becomes a "WorkerBee." The second-year WorkerBees are networked together and work in one of the community apiaries. At the third-year, the veteran becomes a mentor to a NewBEE.

The program is available to veterans from any era and the program is opening to first responders as well. The biggest need of the program is more mentors. There are other ways to volunteer or support though. They need volunteers to help things like marketing and staffing their booth at events. The website has a tab to sign up as a NewBEE, Mentor, or Volunteer. There is also a Donate tab and they are a 501(c)3 nonprofit.

Hives for Heroes is Partnering with both beekeeping organizations, beekeeping supply companies, and major Corporations in various ways. They can provide apiary management for individuals and businesses, including hives for 1-d-1 agricultural valuation. They have an apiary at TechnipFMC and the veterans who work there take care of the apiary. They do agreements with restaurants, breweries, etc. to set up hive or to provide honey. They also participate in many community events to foster learning and bee education.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Steve took questions from our members and then the door prize drawings were conducted by Danessa and Lynne. Thank you to those who donated door prizes and congrats to those who won.

Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was $1,426.94. Since our last report, we collected $80.00 in dues, $25.00 for Mentoring Program registration, $230.00 for member purchases of warning signs, and $65.00 in donations. July expenses were $7.46 for paper goods, $12.18 for duplicate keys, $61.67 for a web camera and tripod, $8.65 for name tag labels, $50.00 for speaker honorarim, $357.76 for FALA warning signs, and $12.99 for our email subscription. The resulting balance is $1,316.23 ($1,266.23 in the checking account, plus $50.00 in cash).

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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October, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of each month (except December). The October 11, 2022 meeting will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors and new members are always welcome (membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year). We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our monthly meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., October 11, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Online login instructions remain the same:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers…

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

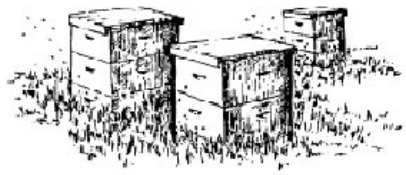
Q: I'm puzzled by people offering up their property for my hives. Somehow they always seem to know exactly how many hives I need to put there. What's the deal?

An **A:** It is hard not to ask "where've you been?". It is all about reducing their property taxes. Property (or "ad valorem") taxes are based on the property's value. The Latin term "ad valorem" directly translates to "according to value". Depending on its location, there can be any number of taxing authorities: county government, local government, levee districts, emergency services, etc. etc. Each taxing authority sets its own tax rate. Property taxes typically total to about 2% of the property's value per year. You may own your property, but you are "paying rent" in the form of ad valorem taxes.

Property value for tax purposes is not set by the taxing authorities themselves. Imagine how complicated things would get if they did! Central Appraisal Districts were created to set property value for tax purposes. It sounds very logical: the taxing authority creates a budget and their tax rate is simply their budget divided by the total value to the property they are authorized to tax. (Of course nothing remains simple in the hands of the knuckleheads in Austin or city hall.)

It makes sense that property value is its worth in a free market, largely influenced by its location, improvements, and use. Laws protect people from being "taxed off their property" as market values generally increase. In addition, there are various property tax exemptions in place for homeowners, property in agricultural use, etc. The "homestead exemption" limits taxes on your home and property in agricultural use is appraised for tax purposes at its value in agricultural production (even if it is in the Galleria).

"Beekeeping" use is a relatively new tax-advantaged property use. The Texas legislature passed (and the governor signed) a law that establishes "beekeeping" as an agricultural use. It was intended to benefit migratory beekeepers, many of whom overwinter their hives in Texas. Property in Texas benefits from the lower taxable value even if the bees are in California to pollenate almonds.



September Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Two first time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed. Gene DeBons spoke on the novel, The Keeper of the Bees, by Gene Stratton-Porter, published in 1925. The novel was published posthumously after Mrs. Stratton-Porter died in an auto accident at age 61. The novel's main character is a wounded WWI serviceman who escapes from a military hospital and finds himself entrusted with the care of an apiary in California. (The novel is available as a free pdf download at: https://bibleandbookcenter.com/ & search for "The Keeper of the Bees". Additionally, it was adapted to film in 1947 and is available on youtube.)

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk reminded everyone of three events taking place on September 24th: BVBA's Beekeeping School in Bryan and Beeweavers INFUZZED event and Honey Cookoff in Navasota. She also asked for everyone to mark their calendars October 8th when we will have an Outreach Ac-

tivity at Enchanted Forest from 9am -noon. Members will be needed to staff our table.

Danessa announced that new webmaster Dayna Druke is in the process of updating and improving our website. The monthly newsletters, which hadn't been uploaded in two years are caught up. If you find Jeff McMullan's "Ask a Dozen Beekeepers" column educational, you should check out some of the past issues. On the website click on LINKS, and then FBBA NEWSLETTERS. Dayna's next action item is to update the FOR SALE tab. If you sell local honey and hive products, bees and queens, or beekeeping supplies, and would like your contact information listed on the website, please complete the form and turn it in to Lynne Jones, Sec-Treasurer.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker, Chris Moore, of Moore Honey Farm. Chris has been a commercial beekeeper since 1999 and maintains about 2,500 colonies in 5 southeast Texas counties. Chris is a past-president of the Texas Beekeepers Association, and has held several other TBA leadership positions as well. His passion for promoting pure and local honey led to the formation of the Real Texas Honey organization, which promotes honey that is 100% produced by honey bees in Texas.

Chris shared some statistics on colony losses in Texas. Almost all of our colony losses are colonies that have been weakened or killed by varroa mites. Chris discussed three different mite treatment options: Treatment Free, Natural Organic, and Miticides. Regardless of your mite management style you need to check for mites. Chris recommended the Honey Bee Health Coalition's website for information about varroa mites, how to do mite counts, and all of our treatment options. When it comes to feeding, some beekeepers pull all the frames of honey from the hive and then feed the bees; whereas other beekeepers leave a box of honey on the hive for the bees. You can tell if a hive needs to be fed from the frames with brood – if there isn't any honey near the brood, they need to be fed. If there is a lot of stored pollen (several frames full) it probably indicates that the queen is not laying enough, and so the pollen is being stored excessively rather than being fed to larvae. If you are keeping your bees in a single deep configuration over winter, there should be 2 to 4 frames of brood, with two frames of honey on each side of the brood frames, and 1 or 2 empty frames for the outermost frames on both sides. In a double deep with honey super(s) configuration, it is important to keep the hive in the smallest configuration possible for the colony's size and to go into the hive every three weeks or so and uncap a frame of honey. Chris compared honey in a super to food in your deep freeze. It's there, but you don't much like to get food out of it, compared to the food in your pantry. By uncapping honey in the super, the bees will then take it down to the brood frames where it will be used. It is recommended to feed heavy syrup at this time of year (2 parts sugar to 1 part water). For beekeepers with five or so hives, Chris recommends a mason jar with a nipple feeder inserted directly into the cover because you can see how much has been consumed without opening the hive. For a commercial operation though, he uses division board feeders. Chris commented that in the past, a queen bee could be productive for 4 to 5 years, but now commercial beekeepers requeen every year. He explained that systemic pesticides are incorporated into plants and though the chemicals do not outright kill bees, they do lead to queen failure (it is thought that they affect her stored semen).

Pollen is the bees' protein source. Pollen supplements are available as powder and patties. Unless you are sending bees to the California almond orchards, you probably don't need to feed pollen at this time of year. Be careful when feeding pollen patties because small hive beetles will lay eggs in them.
Chris recommends the following for info about disease and pests:
- 2016 Honey Bee Diseases & Pests. A companion to Beekeeping in Northern Climates. A free pdf download is available at https://beelab.umn.edu/manuals.
- "What's Wrong with My Hive?", an article by Rob Snyder with photo examples of diseases. https://beeinformed.org/2012/11/01/whats-wrong-with-my-hive/.
- Honey Bee Health Coaliton has three pdf downloads available at https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/ Click on the "Resources" tab.

Lynne then conducted the door prize drawings.

Treasurer's Report

Our August treasury balance was $1,316.23. Since our last report, we collected $50.00 in member dues and received a $60.00 donation. Our August expenses were $33.07 for items for a TBA annual meeting table centerpiece, $225.00 for a FBBA banner, a $100.00 speaker honorarium, and $12.99 for our email subscription. The resulting balance is $1,055.17 ($1,005.17 Wells Fargo checking account balance plus $50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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November, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of each month (except December). The November 8, 2022 meeting (our last meeting of 2022) will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors and new members are always welcome (membership dues are $10.00 for the calendar year). We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our November monthly meeting will be both online and in person at the O'Shieles Community Center:

Tues., Nov. 8, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Online login instructions remain the same:

login: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYmJDNG1EK1UrUT09**

Meeting ID: **856 2263 5183**

Passcode: **275853**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

We 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: Suddenly my peaceful backyard hive has gotten real "pissy"!

An **A:** There is not going to be one simple answer to this problem. A bad disposition often has to do with the hive being queenless, but lots of other things could be going on.

You can't always find the queen. Besides short tempers, the best evidence of queenlessness is queen cells among the brood. The peanut shaped queen cell is larger than the other brood cells. Queen cells in the middle of a brood cell usually indicates a queenless colony raising a new queen. Several queen cells along the bottom of a brood frame are often referred to as "swarm cells", an indication of an impending swarm.

The honey bee life cycle from egg to adult is 16 days for a queen, 21 days for a worker, and 24 days for the drones. All fertilized eggs will develop into females (drone bees, the males, develop from unfertilized eggs laid by the queen). When the colony decides to richly nourish a larvae from a fertilized egg, it develops into a queen, reaching adulthood much more quickly.

A hive that has lost its queen must raise a new one right away from a very young larva. Without a laying queen, the colony numbers can dwindle quickly and after a few days there are no new larvae young enough to eventually become a queen.

Other than a bad attitude, the first thing you may notice with a queenless colony is noisy buzzing that is much louder than normal when you remove the cover. It sometimes even sounds like an aggressive warning.

Another cause for aggressive behavior is predators pestering the colony, usually skunks that feed on both adults bees and larvae at night, often leaving scratch marks on the hive entrance. Skunk problems can usually be solved by raising the hive a few inches so that the pest's tender belly is more exposed to the hive's defenders.

Of course some bee colonies are just more aggressive than others. This is often attributed to Africanized queens whose offspring are prone to bad behavior. Requeening with more docile stock is usually a quick solution if other factors aren't the cause of the problem.

October Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened the October 11, 2022 meeting and greeted everyone. Attendance was 31 in person. There were no "zoomers". There were four first time attendees plus our guest speaker. Each introduced themselves and were welcomed. Gene DeBons then shared an article from the October 9th Fort Bend Herald newspaper about Michael "Cody" Moore's appointment as the justice of the peace for the newly established Precinct 2, Place 2 Justice of the Peace Court. What caught Gene's eye was the continued page of the article titled, "MOORE: Beekeeper turned attorney sworn in as new JP". The article says Moore was a commercial beekeeper and bee remover, but when colony collapse disorder put him out of business in 2007, he decided to change professions rather than re-build his apiary. He got an associate degree from Wharton County Junior College, went on to the University of Houston for his bachelors and then got his law degree from the U of H Law Center. He primarily practiced family, property, and small business law. Gene checked his old club records and found Moore was a member of our club from 2003 to at least 2008. Gene says, "The lesson is, if beekeeping doesn't work out for you,

you have other avenues you can take."

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk thanked David and Tracey Grimme and Troy, Barbara, and Nicole Esquivel for staffing our outreach booth at Enchanted Forest's event on October 8. There was a very good turnout.

Danessa reminded everyone of the Texas Beekeepers Association's Annual Convention coming up. It will be in Temple, Texas on November 3rd thru 5th. There are three keynote speakers: Dr. Samuel Ramsey, Dr. Cameron Jack, and Kamon Reynolds.

Our club's annual elections will be held at the November meeting. If you want to run for any of the officer positions, please send an email to info@fortbendbeekeepers.org and nominations can also be made at the November meeting. Danessa reminded everyone that we do not meet in December.

Lynne Jones, Secretary Treasurer mentioned the email update she sent out on Sunday which had information about Evelyn Smith, an Eagle Scout candidate who is making Mason Bee boxes for her Eagle Project. These boxes will be donated to our club and Lynne passed around envelopes for anyone who wanted to make a donation towards the lumber for the project.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker. Taylor Powell started her career with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service in March of 2020 as Apiary Inspector I. In June, she was promoted to the position of Chief Apiary Inspector. Taylor's presentation covered both TAIS's purpose and what services TAIS provides, as well as the Texas laws that apply to honey bees and beekeeping. The mission of the Texas Apiary Inspection Service is to safeguard the honey bee industry of Texas through the application of science-based regulations, educational opportunities and open communication with the industry. There are only three employees to cover all of Texas: Taylor; Bill Baxter, Asst. Chief Apiary Inspector, and Hannah Blackburn, Apiary Inspector. The original purpose of the agency formed in 1910 was the suppression of American Foulbrood (AFB), a fatal bacterial disease spread by spores that can remain viable over 50 years. Significant events the industry has dealt with since then have been tracheal mites (since 1984); varroa mites (1987); Africanized honey bees (1990); colony collapse disorder (2006); and Northern (Asian) Giant Hornet (2019/2020).

One of the agency's primary functions is to inspect hives for the purpose of import/export permits. They also will come if a beekeeper requests an inspection. The authority they operate under is the Agricultural Code Title 6, Subtitle A, Chapter 131 Bees and Honey and Texas Administrative Code Title 4, Part 4, Chapter 71 Bees. They regulate the movement of bees through the state by permits and certify the health of bees for sale and for transport. They do not regulate pesticide use, make rules for county ag valuation, nor do they make or enforce local ordinances. The permits they issue are: Import, Export, Intrastate, and Queen Certificates. Bee removals are not regulated by TAIS; however, to do bee removals without a structural pest control license, per the Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 1951, the bee remover must be registered with the TAIS. It the remover is transporting bees across county lines, then the Intrastate permit is required as well. The Apiary Registration is free and voluntary. One reason for registration is that if AFB is found in your area you will be notified. An Equipment Brand Registraton is $10.00. State regulation says your equipment has to be clearly marked with your name and address or with your brand number. If your hives are stolen and are marked with your brand, it increases the odds of getting them back to you. The State defines an "apiary" as a place where six or more colonies of bees or nuclei of hives are kept. The rule does not apply to you with five or fewer colonies in any one location.) TAIS also serves in research by providing sampling and diagnostic labs; in education by providing programs, workshops, training, mentoring, and educational materials; and as a resource providing beekeeping management practices, state and local resources, and pollinator plantings.
Check out some of the TAIS resources on their website: www.txbeeinspection.tamu.edu They also have a facebook page that you can follow.

The meeting was adjourned after Craig and Lynne conducted the door prize drawings.

Treasurer's Report

Our October treasury balance was $1,055.17. Since our last report, we collected $30.00 in membership dues. Our expenses were a $100.00 donation to the Texas Master Beekeeper Program in lieu of our September speaker's honorarium and $12.99 for our email subscription. The resulting balance is $972.18 ($922.18 reconciled balance in our Wells Fargo checking account balance plus $50.00 in cash to make change).