

East Texas Beekeepers Association



April 2024

April Report by Jim Biles

One of the great things about beekeeping is the almost universal curiosity the general population has about all things honey bees! For all of you new beekeepers, you just need to mention that you're a beekeeper and the conversation is off and running. If you'll make a point to learn all you can about honey bees, you can sprinkle your conversations with lots of interesting bee facts. In the meantime, here's some trivia that can help stimulate discussion.

- Honey bees are the only insect that produces food consumed by humans.
- Bees must travel approximately 55,000 miles to collect enough nectar to make 1 lb of honey.
- The honey bee is the official insect of Maine.
- In ancient Egypt, people paid their taxes with honey.
- A honey bee has 170 odorant receptors to detect bee pheromones and find nectar. Their sense of smell is 50 times more powerful than a dog!

Incidentally, during a total eclipse, honey bees generally slow down their flights. During the period of totality, there is almost no flying taking place. Their behavior is much like darkness at the end of a day, but resumes as the eclipse passes.



You've probably seen photos posted by professional queen producers, where every graft successfully makes a queen. Here's a photo that shows how the rest of us do it! I was fortunate to produce about 30 queens on this frame from 45 grafts. This is not a great percentage, but works for hobbyists and sideliners. If you haven't tried queen rearing, I encourage you to give it a try. This is one of the most rewarding skills you can learn in beekeeping.

As a reminder, we have an open forum Q&A at 6 pm before all of our ETBA meetings. You may not have questions, but there's a lot to learn from the questions others ask and the topical discussions we have. There is nothing too simple or complex for us to discuss!

I look forward to seeing you at the April meeting!

President—Connie Collins
Vice-President—Joe Laws
Exec. Director/Reporter— Jim Biles
Treasurer—Jennifer Palmer
Secretary—Tish Kennedy
Member-at-Large—Jamie Crain
Program Director — Christina Williams
Newsletter Editor—Jenifer Babyak
Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson



Next Meeting

April 4th

Whitehouse Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse

6:30 PM

On the Web:
www.etba.info

FYI by Christina Williams

The January Program...

Our speaker for April is

Carolyn Gibson

She is an Author, Herbalist, and grower of pollinator plants. She is a contributing writer to the TBA and presents at the state conventions.

Her presentation will be

Healing with Propolis

Come learn how to make Propolis and Honey first aid spray and propolis tincture, oil, and salve.

She will be bringing books, remedies, and plants for sale.

If you have any questions, requests of something you would like covered, or products, you may email her at

carolyngibson1951@gmail.com

Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard

by Stan Brantley



Spring 2024 is here no matter what the date on the calendar indicates. Swarms are issuing forth and waiting for you to take them home to your apiary. You should begin to see white wax on the edges of the top bar in your hives. This is being produced by young bees because the red clover, vetch, hedges, wildflowers and blooming trees are providing nectar and pollen beyond what is needed to feed the young larvae.

When you see the white wax, it is time to add a queen excluder and at least one super. Ideally, that super would have drawn out comb ready for the bees to use.

If you start with new foundation in the super, do not add the queen excluder until the bees are beginning to draw the new foundation. When you are ready to add the queen excluder, open the hive and vigorously smoke the super. This will drive the queen back down into the brood box if she has already moved up into the super. Now install the queen excluder. Check the super in another three or four days to make sure that the queen did not stay and start laying.

When all is well and the queen is where you want her to be, you should see worker bees drawing comb in the super and filling the cells with nectar. It is time to add another super when the bees have drawn six to eight frames. The bees tend to draw the inner frames first, often leaving the outside frames undrawn. Before you add another super, move the outside frames into the center of the box to encourage the bees to finish drawing them. When it is time to extract, you should have all of the frames in that super full of honey.

Beekeepers starting packages this season must feed the new hives to have any chance of producing honey this first year. Feed a 2:1 sugar water mixture. Stop feeding when the package bees have drawn out eight of the ten frames. Nucs should also be fed unless there is a strong nectar flow in progress when you get the nuc. Feed 2:1 sugar water until the bees draw out three of the five frames of foundation you added to the hive.

If you have a strong hive that you want to divide, pull two frames of brood, a frame of honey and a frame of pollen. Make sure the queen is not on any of the frames you pulled. Place these frames in a nuc box and add two frames of drawn comb, if available or two frames of foundation if you have no drawn comb. If you have a queen, add her to the nuc box by using a queen cage. You can do the same if you have queen cells almost ready to emerge. Close the entrance for a 24-hour period. After 24 hours, open the entrance just enough so one or two bees at a time can exit. As the capped brood hatches and begins to exit the hive, they will orient to the location of the split rather than to their original hive.

If you did not have a queen or queen cell and are letting the nuc create their own queen, do not look into the split for 21 days. Then you hope to find a young queen laying good brood patterns. You cannot rush this new queen process and must allow time for nature to work.

For beekeepers new to the Ark-La-Tex area, our nectar flow normally begins when the Wild Plum trees bloom and is usually finished by the 4th of July. Honey production is heaviest during the early part of the season, tapering to finish as we get into the hotter weather of June. Keep brood space available for the queen to discourage swarming and keep super space available for the workers to store nectar. If you are a new beekeeper with limited equipment, extract supers as soon as they are full and then return them to the hive to be refilled while the flow is heavy.

I have said this before but -- Don't count your honey until it is in the jar! However, you can make an estimate of how much honey to expect, assuming you have a good forage season. A medium depth frame, nicely drawn out and fully capped, will usually yield three pounds of honey when extracted. This rule of thumb will give you a good estimate of how much honey you will have in your honey harvest.



Got Questions?

Question & answer group will meet from 6:00-6:30 before the meeting. Join us if you are a new beekeeper or just have beekeeping questions? We'll try to get you some answers!

Connie Collins - ETBA President



Dear Beekeepers:

Spring is here! This is our busiest season, so I hope you will understand my note to you being short and sweet this month. I look forward to seeing you all at the bee meeting in April, to hear all of your spring comings and goings. I also hope to see you at our beekeeping class on April 6th. Happy Spring, and may all your hives make lots of honey this year. Here is a list of the beekeeping events in our area.

Beekeeping Events:

Texas Beekeepers Association Summer Clinic:

Courtyard Marriott at Allen Event Center

Saturday, June 15th

8am – 5pm

Allen, TX

\$110 for TBA Members

\$135 for Non-Members

Join the fun early at the Friday night meet 'n great

Register now at: texasbeekeepers.org

Wind Dragon Farms - Soap Making Class:

Saturday, April 13th, 2024

566 County Road 4103,

Jacksonville, TX

Contact Garrik Peters – (903) 571-8386

“You’ll bring some of the supplies. I will walk you through the soap making process and you will leave with a loaf of your very own, handmade soap. A loaf is about 12 bars.” A supply list will be posted to the Wind Dragon Farms Facebook event.

Local Beekeeper Club’s Meeting Dates:

Rusk County Beekeepers

October 19th, 2023 6:30PM

Rusk County Extension Office

Conference Room, 113 E Fordall Street, Henderson, TX

For more information, contact Christine Grover at 410-917-6113

Chris.grover@earthlink.net

Jacksonville Area Beekeepers

Third Monday of the month 6PM

Jacksonville First United Methodist Church-1031 TX-456 Loop, Jacksonville, TX 75766

Longview Beekeepers

First Tuesday of each month. 6 PM

Texas AgriLife Extension Office 405 E. Marshall St. Longview, TX 75601

Marshall Beekeepers

Second Thursday of each month. 5:30 PM

Cumberland Presbyterian Church 501 Indian Springs Dr. Marshall, TX 75672

Hopkins County Beekeepers

Third Thursday of each month. 6:30 PM

Hopkins County AgriLife Building 1200 West Houston, St. Sulphur Springs, TX 75483

Lamar County

First Thursday of each month. 6:30 PM

Lamar County Fairgrounds 570 E. Center St. Paris, TX 75460

Wood County Beekeepers

First Tuesday of each month. 7 PM Winnsboro Civic Center Hope LN Winnsboro, TX 75494

Caddo Trace Beekeepers

Second Mondays of each month. 7 PM

Titus County AgriLife Extension Building

North East Texas Bee Association

Second Monday of each month. 5:45 PM

Canton Baptist Church 303 South Athens St. Canton, TX 75103

Kaufman Area Beekeepers

Second Tuesday of each month. 6:30 PM 208 S.

Houston Street Kaufman, TX 75142

Henderson County Beekeepers Association

Third Thursday of each month. 6:30PM

Faith Fellowship Church 5330 Highway 175 Athens, TX 75752

Hunt County Beekeepers Association

Second Tuesday of each month. 6:30PM

American Legion Post 17 4509 Moulton St. Greenville, TX 75401

Joe Laws – Vice President

Since I first got my bees, (in 2015) I have considered myself a beekeeper. I check my hives, manage for swarms, treat for mites, and harvest and sell honey. Some years are better than others and some locations produce more honey than others. The main reason for keeping at least 12 hives is my Agricultural Exemption, but I also want to produce honey. Up until Snowmagedon my hives produced 150-200 pounds of honey each year. After that my production decreased to around 80 pounds, then heat and drought in 2022 pushed my production down to about 50 pounds. All this time I was still being a beekeeper- doing splits, feeding, mite treatments, hive checks and everything I knew to do for my bees. I gave away splits, set up a second yard. My hives looked healthy, they just didn't produce honey. I live in a very forested area, but I do have many nectar producing plants. The weather, with that once in a lifetime snow event followed by dry extremely hot summers with very little rain after April just limited production. I was still doing the right thing, just poor honey results. My hive losses were about 25-30%, which is below the national average. After good rains in the late summer (early Fall) of 2022, mite treatments right on time I had a good Fall flow. My hives were full of bees and honey going into winter. 2023 was going to be my comeback year. In March 2023 my hives were busting at the seams. Splits resulted in 25 good hives. Good rains in March and early April ... then the heat and drought and more heat we had last summer. Every rainstorm went south of north of me. By late June my harvest was 35 pounds, mostly left over Fall honey. I was devastated. It was so hot and miserable checking bees, I lost all interest. I didn't feed, I didn't treat for mites. I could see when I drove by my hives that I was slowly losing them. By the time I got back into bees I did my treatments in mid-November. I started feeding and got motivated again. My 25 hives were reduced to 8, over a 60% loss. I am now building back, working to get back up to 15 healthy hives.

The moral? If you give up and don't do the work of a beekeeper, especially in the tough times, you will have unacceptable losses. You can not control the weather, but you can have your bees healthy and ready for the challenges that will come.

Tish Kennedy - Secretary

Early in my beekeeping adventure, I encountered the most interesting pollen I had ever seen. I had always assumed that all pollen was yellow. You know, we see our vehicles, roofs and outdoor furniture covered in it every spring.

Well, boy was I wrong. Pollen comes in a rainbow of colors, even black and white!

The pollen that caught my eye was RED, bright, beautiful red. So, I asked around and did some research. Turns out, that pollen comes from a plant called Henbit.

Henbit is in the mint family and is labeled, by most, as a weed. Known also as Henbit Deadnettle, this spring plant is actually a very nutritious and abundant wild edible. Not to mention a great source of early pollen and nectar for bees and other pollinators.

Historically used as chicken fodder today, many people are adding this underrated wild edible into their diet. All above ground parts of Henbit, the stems, leaves, and flowers are edible. Despite being in the mint family, it tastes nothing like mint. Most people describe it as having a sweet and slightly peppery flavor. Depending on who you ask, some say it tastes almost like kale or celery. It is low in calories and rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Henbit has been used in herbal remedies to reduce fever, induce sweating and treat joint pain.

Always use caution when using any herbal remedies, too much can cause a laxative effect. And when foraging for wild edibles, always make sure you know how to identify your plants as some wild edibles have poisonous mimics.

So, just by being curious about the pollen my bees were bringing in, I found a beautiful little plant that not only gifts pollinators with beautiful red pollen and nectar, it also gifts us with edible wild nutrition.

Pollen Chart

made by 



Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) Flowers | Source: Masaki Ikeda/Wikimedia Commons



...from the Treasurer, Jennifer Palmer

HELLO, my fellow beekeepers,

I hope all are doing well and the bees are looking good. I am going to be very positive about the bees and the weather this year. It has been a great start for the season. We just need to maintain your bees and make sure all are learning. The people I have helped this year have given me some positive notes. No matter what you do this year in the bee yard probably will not work next year. Every year is a learning step and a challenge. This is why keeping bees is so great and frustrating. THERE IS NO BOOK THAT GOES PLAY-BY-PLAY.

Good notes:

Plant more

Meet people

Be Flexible

Have fun

Jennifer Palmer

ELZNER FARMS

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LOCAL HONEY - BEES - AG EXEMPTION

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**ALL ETBA MEMBERS RECEIVE A
10% DISCOUNT ON ALL
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