



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 31 No. 4

April 7, 2016

## *April Report by Dick Counts*

Thank you for joining us at our March meeting. We had 131 members and guests present.

For the first time, we offered a breakout session for new beekeepers. Forty-one new and novice beekeepers participated in the breakout session that talked about what you need to know to get started in bees.

For the April meeting, Les Jeske will present Session 2 of our New Beekeeper Orientation with a breakout presentation about the biology and life cycle of bees. Les will be focusing on why you need to know this and what it means when you are out in your apiary looking at hives.

April is also the month we elect new club officers. We have at least one nominee for each position except for Program Director. We do need someone to volunteer to help plan the programs for our monthly meetings. The Program Director does not have to make the presentation, just plan and schedule programs for the year. Toss your name into the ring — we will make sure you get lots of help.

Someone commented that April is an unusual month to elect officers. Let me share a little club history about how that came to be. In the mid-to-late 80s, ETBA was a small club meeting in Canton. We had formed the club and selected the first officers one fall. When their terms expired the next November, we did not have enough people at the November meeting to hold an election. It seems that most of the men had gone deer hunting! So we decided to hold the elections in April when there was no hunting season open. As so it remains until today!

I do need to remind you to renew your memberships for 2016. After the April meeting, we will be cleaning up our membership list and mailing list for 2016. If you have not renewed your membership, you will drop off the newsletter and email list. It is not that we don't want you to hear from us, but ETBA is not only a bee club but also a legal 501 C(3) non-profit corporation. We have some legal responsibilities to keep our membership lists current. Your name on our membership roll is important, especially when we are lobbying the county commissioners or the state legislature about actions important to bees and beekeepers. So don't forget to renew.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—John Stewart

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Brenda Sheridan

Ex. Director and Reporter—  
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Barbara  
Ferguson

Directors-at-Large—Stanford  
Brantley

Program Director — Matt Thomas

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

## Next Meeting April 7

United Methodist Church  
405 West Main in Whitehouse  
6:45 PM

On the Web: [etba.info](http://etba.info)  
Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789

Photo by Isabella Crawford

## ***HONEY QUEEN REPORT*** by *Barbara Farguson*



We are already into the second quarter of 2016! Time has a way of staying ahead of us, doesn't it? As a group, our club has always supported our youth programs. We also have some amazing sponsors whom continue to support our youth and club mission. It warms our hearts to have this group of people who care about supporting the next generation and teaching them that their actions do matter and that do they have the power to change the future.

Our Queen and Ambassador program is funded by contributions from club members and outside parties, by fundraising activities within the club, and, in part, by your annual dues. This funding covers travel expenses, cooking demos, teaching tools, and other supplies and expenses incurred with educating the public.

We have several fundraising events planned starting in May. We want to make our fundraising events enjoyable and give you, our supporters, value for your donations. We appreciate each of you and cannot thank you enough.

If you have a group that would like to hear our Queen or Ambassador, please contact Barbara Farguson. I have set up a new email account specifically for the Royal Court program. Please use this new email address to contact us: ETBAroyalcourt@gmail.com



### ***Have You Heard about the BEEcosystem?***

A fun, new and interesting way to keep bees! The Beecosystem is an indoor/outdoor hive. It is basically an observation hive for a house, apartment, restaurant, or museum. It can also be placed on the outside of a house, shop, or even a wood post. It is perfectly safe for the bees. They have access to the outdoors through tubing connected to the windows and the hive would hang on the wall like a picture frame. If the hive is outside, it would have normal opening like traditional hive.

The BEEcosystem is designed like a top-bar hive where the bees build their honeycomb naturally and downward. The system is small enough to manage and large enough to harvest honey comb. It is a foundationless hive so this makes it easier to remove the honeycomb. You can add additional boxes to the wall to create more space for the honey bees just like you would with a traditional hive. The boxes are in the shape of a hexagon, allowing them to fit together on the wall. A small vent on the side provides air for ventilation. There is also an opening at the top, a place where a mason jar can fit for giving food or water to the bees when necessary. When this opening is not being used with a feeder, it acts as another source of ventilation.

The hive has a small drawer underneath the bottom board so it can easily be cleaned. While doing this, the bees will still be safely inside their hive.

"Like many organisms, honeybees use sunlight to regulate their natural day-night cycles. This means that artificial (human) lighting, whether indoor or outdoor, has the potential to confuse bees about what time of day it is. Existing observation hives typically suggest piling blankets over the hive viewing window at night, or offer bulky quilt covers. Interestingly, though, because honeybees' color vision is shifted toward the violet side of the visible light spectrum, bees can actually see some colors of natural light that we humans would call "ultraviolet"—but this also means that bees don't see as much red light as humans, maxing out at ~600nm light wavelength, versus the human eye's 700nm perceivable maximum!"

This physiological fun-fact was used to create a semi-transparent filtering plexiglass nighttime viewing cover, which simply attaches magnetically over top of the regular daytime clear plexiglass window. After dark, place the cover over your hive viewing window you'll see your honeybees (tinted red), but they won't see you.



**Continued on Page 3**

Continued From Page 2

This is a fun way to enjoy watching the bees and also to have a better understanding about the honey bee and what they do inside their hive. It can show the process of how they build their colony and how they make honey comb. It would give people the opportunity to learn and discover things about bees by seeing the different jobs the bees do and how fast the queen lays her eggs, also allowing viewers to watch the bees hatch from the cells. This could be a fun and interesting way for a family to keep bees and share it with others too afraid to get near the hives. ~Brittany



Linda Pelham found this on Twitter



From the Internet

The Internet is a treasure trove of information about bees. Spend a little time surfing bee-related web sites and you can learn almost everything you wanted to know about bees and beekeeping. Some of what you read will be true and some will not. Use your best judgement in making that determination.

ETBA members sometimes share with me what they see on the Internet. If we have newsletter space and the web site appears reasonable, we pass the links on to you.

Richard Eubanks sent a link to an interesting website called Honeypedia. It is filled with a lot of interesting information about honey and some beautiful photographs. I judged it worth looking at but do give a couple of disclaimers. First, the site is from Bulgaria and tells you on its home page that it was translated from the Bulgarian language and that its facts may not be appropriate for honey grown in other parts of the world. At times, the translation is even a bit humorous.

Second, some of the pages talk about the medicinal effects of honey, presenting honey as capable of solving many medial problems, including diabetes. The USA medical community would not support some of these claims. Nonetheless, it is enjoyable reading a different culture's view of the medicinal effects of honey, just don't try them without your doctor's consent.

Here is the link: <http://honeypedia.info/>

Some of the notable topics include:

- \* *Honey ingredients, a comprehensive list.*
- \* *Honey is a bioactive product. What does it mean?*
- \* *Chapped lips? Did you try to smear them with honey? If you refrain from licking them, they will recover soon.*
- \* *Elbows can be treated with honey with no less success. To be specific, elbows with rough chapped skin.*

Sound interesting? Give it a read.

Richard Eubanks is a regular attendee at ETBA meetings. He and Steve Douglas make the drive almost every month all the way from Paris, Texas!



## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

The bee season for 2016 is upon us at last. At the Longview meeting recently, there were already people who had captured swarms. So be on the lookout for your free bees. And be on the lookout that your hives have enough room so they do not swarm. There are people who are of the opinion that bees will often swarm whether or not they have enough room. It is just their instinct to keep their numbers propagated. It is often thought that second year queens are more prone to swarming behavior.

My top bar hive is humming right along. I will look at it today and see how full the box is. It is a half size hive and is probably nigh unto completely full (Editor's note: for East Texans, that means almost full). Which, of course means that they will swarm to make room for themselves. I am not too concerned about swarming as I have this hive as a sort of novelty for myself. If they swarm, I will have a new queen. And, if I make an additional box soon enough, I may be able to start another hive if I split it before they swarm. We will see what I have time for.

The hive I have been coaxing out of a water meter has not been very cooperative. The frames I provided to them have not been drawn out, but I suspect it is because the wax coating on them was either old, dust covered or too thin. Yesterday, I paid them a visit – with a smoker – and took a look at their progress. Seeing that they were no closer to abandoning the water meter box, I swapped out six undrawn out frames for six drawn frames. I will go back in a week and see if the queen has been cooperative and come up to lay eggs in the new found expansion space. I have to admit, the bees behavior yesterday was much nicer than the last time I poked around in their house. They almost did not seem to mind me being there. But I did learn to not go without a smoker. It made the job much easier!

At our next meeting, we will be electing new club officers. Some of our current officers have indicated a desire to serve for another year. I have enjoyed being your President but it is my time to step aside for someone with fresh ideas. As such, this will most likely, be my last column. I have served for five years, writing a column a month. That means you have been able to read of my beekeeping adventures and misadventures about 60 times! I thank you all for the opportunity that you have given me and your warm outpouring of support.

The club is growing and does need help with volunteers. I am pleased to see the New Beekeeper Orientation breakout sessions that started last month. New beekeeper training is something I encourage the club to focus on. Someone else could volunteer to build and maintain an ETBA Facebook page. Having a club is a great resource but it cannot function all on its own. Successful clubs need people who are willing to volunteer time and resources. Won't you volunteer? As the club grows, the needs grow with it. Become an active member!

### **A Request from ETBA member Dr. Karl Steddom**

Most of you remember the first time you got into a bee hive. For many of you, that is what got you hooked. My first time was at the annual Beginners Beekeeping School in Brenham. The bee lab at Texas A&M brought a number of hives to the fair grounds and took groups out to demonstrate a hive inspection. Having been hooked by that hands-on experience, I wrote a grant proposal to the Rosa May Griffin Foundation to get hives at the Kilgore College Demonstration Farm. We got our first bee hive last spring and of course our students are curious. Thanks to this grant we currently have three bee suits so we can take a couple of students at a time to inspect the hive.

All of the labs for our ag classes are at the farm so many of our ag students get an opportunity some time during the semester. Unfortunately, we only take biology students out to the farm a couple of times each semester so very few of them get to experience this. We would like to be able to have a whole class observe the hive at one time but need more suits. The Brenham Bee School had a collection of old suits and gloves that they used for their inspections. They were stained and had duct tape over some holes but they worked for their purposes. A collection like this would be great for Kilgore College. But we would appreciate any suit or gloves, old, new, clean, dirty, as long as it is functional.

As the new bee year is kicking into high gear, some of you have probably bought some new suits recently. If you would like to donate, you can either bring suits and gloves, new or old, to a meeting or contact me by email at [ksteddom@kilgore.edu](mailto:ksteddom@kilgore.edu) or call me at 903-253-8450. Thanks for your support.

Dr. Karl Steddom, Kilgore College Agriculture and Biology Instructor



## *Practical Experiences in the Beeyard* by Stan Brantley

The rains came to East Texas and the high water followed. Then the temperatures hit 85 and the swarms issued forth. Anytime there are several consecutive days of inclement weather, be assured the cooped up bees are going to swarm out as soon as they decide the weather is warm and stable. I am already hearing reports of large numbers of swarms in March, including at least one from my own hives.

Crowding in the brood nest will easily generate swarm tendencies. Moving frames of capped brood from a strong hive to a weaker hive may reduce the urge to swarm in the strong hive. Replace with frames of drawn comb to give the queen more room to lay.

If you have queens or even package bees on order and expect delivery in the next few weeks, now is the time to develop a plan of action upon delivery. If you are going to make a split or a Nuc by pulling frames from another hive and adding a new queen, DO NOT shake the bees off the frames you pull from the other hive. Examine them carefully and make sure the queen is not on those frames but leave the bees. If you see the old hive's queen, gently brush her off into the old hive. Place the frames and bees in your split or Nuc and add the newly purchased queen. Try to select frames with already capped brood. The capped brood will soon hatch and leave space for the queen to lay. If you really want to give the new split or Nuc a boost, shake the bees off a couple more frames to increase the split or Nuc's population. Again, make sure you don't transfer the queen.

Think of these new splits or Nucs as your children. A good mother wants to feed her children so they can grow and develop. Feed these new hives sugar syrup so they can rapidly grow and develop. Bees require a lot of carbohydrates to make wax and draw out new foundation. Your goal is to ensure that they have an abundance of carbohydrates readily available right inside the hive so they do not have to expend time and energy foraging for nectar just to produce wax. Check to make sure your bees are properly drawing the foundation and not hanging "pancakes" of comb from the edge of the topbar, which sometimes can happen with new plasticcell foundation.

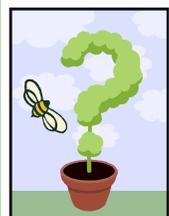


Place entrance reducers in newly made splits and older colonies whose bee population is too low to prevent robbing. Strong established hives can have their entrances wide open as soon as a good nectar flow is available.



April is the beginning of what I call the "look up season". Develop the habit of looking for swarms hanging in trees surrounding your apiary. However, be aware that not all swarms settle high in a tree. Swarms can also settle in low branches, bushes or even on the ground. In town, they may even settle on an automobile, often causing a lot of excitement. As I mentioned last month, keep swarm catching gear in your vehicle and be ready to act.

Some swarms may contain one or more virgin queens. You may see golf ball sized clumps of bees hanging on the side of a hive box or the edge of the Telescoping Cover. Queens that fall to the ground will be surrounded by balls of workers. Gently inspect all clumps of bees on the ground to see if queen is inside. If you find a queen in a clump of bees, try to re-introduce her into the hive. Observe the actions of the worker bees to see if they accept the queen or if they begin to "ball" her. The balling action could mean the bees are trying to protect her or trying to kill her. Continued observation should let you determine their intent. If the bees in the ball are agitated and aggressive, perhaps even dragging her by the wings as if they were trying to pull her wings off, they are trying to kill the queen. You may want to remove her and try again another day or in another hive. If the bees around the queen are calm and appear to be grooming or stoking her, they are probably going to accept her as the hives' new queen.



The Got Questions? group will now meet in a larger room. The room will be open 6:00-6:30 before the meeting. Join us if you are a new beekeeper or have some beekeeping questions. We will try to help you find some answers. Weather permitting the drive from Jefferson, I will be happy to join you.



### *Bee Facts by Eddie Collins*

I am sitting here thinking how much the weather impacts beekeeping and my involvement in working with these amazing insects. Given all the warm temperatures, the flowers started out blooming with a bang this year. Down in the Crocket area, some of the April blooming hedge starting blooming during the third week of March. Along with the early bloom, the bees took off like crazy, enjoying the early nectar flow. It always amazes me how quickly a beehive can draw out foundation when they have enough bees and a nectar flow. I am never “not excited” about pulling up a newly drawn frame and seeing that fresh white comb being drawn out. This time of the year the sight is a lot of times accompanied by newly laid white eggs all across the frame. A lot of times, the queen doesn’t even wait for the wax cells to be completely drawn out.



If you add to this picture a queen that you raised, this just all combines to be an amazing beekeeping sight and feeling. Then along comes this colder weather and everything comes to a stop! The colder weather may be great for the beekeeper when he is out there doing all that beekeeping manual labor stuff but for the bee colony, it really puts a halt to production. And the nectar flow pretty much comes to a halt.

Another aspect to the weather effecting beekeeping is the impact to the metamorphosis of the honey bees from egg laying to hatching. Colder temperatures can slow down the laying of eggs, the hatching of an egg, and the hatching of a queen by one or two days. To most beekeepers, this variation goes by unnoticed. But to a beekeeper splitting bees or raising queens, it can really alter a schedule. If you are all setup to graft some queens on day 4, it may actually be day 5 when you get a chance. If you were planning on your queens to hatch on day 15, it may end up being day 16 or day 17.

Get out there and check on your bees. A lot of hives came out of the winter with a bang and more than likely should already have honey supers on them. When you raise your lid and you seeing a lot of new white comb on top of and in-between the top of the frames, then this is a very good indication that the bees are bringing in nectar and looking for a place to store it.

One more side note on beekeeping. As your beekeeping adventure grows past a couple of hives, more than a few pieces of equipment, and more than one location, don’t forget to let you family know what beekeeping equipment is yours and where you have your bees located. Just in case.

See you at the next meeting! I will have medium (\$11.50) and deep (\$13) unassembled boxes for sale. I will also have some used deep boxes with new deep frames for sale (\$30).

[beeman@cncfarms.com](mailto:beeman@cncfarms.com)

### **Don't forget to renew your ETBA Membership for 2016**

See our Treasurer John Holladay at the meeting.

Renew online at our website [ETBA.info](http://ETBA.info)

Mail a check to ETBA, PO Box, 9662, Tyler, TX 75711-9662.

Individual \$10      Family \$20

To Renew TBA memberships, see Stan Brantley or Renew online at [www.texasbeekeepers.org](http://www.texasbeekeepers.org)