



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

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August 8, 2013

## *August Report by Dick Counts*

I believe we had 93 present for our July meeting. Many attendees commented on how much they learned from our Gizmos and Gadgets program. Beekeepers are an inventive group and often create some interesting devices to make life easier in the bee yard. Next time we have a Gizmos and Gadgets program, be sure you don't miss it and bring your own gizmo or gadget to share.

We are asking you more experienced beekeepers to join our mentoring outreach. Face to face instruction by example in the beeyard is the best way to teach and the best way to learn. Sharing your experience and helping beginners develop their knowledge and skills lays the groundwork for beekeeping's future.

We have extracted several times for a lot of beekeepers and will probably do it one more time this summer. If you need to harvest your honey, see me at this meeting. There are still some bottles available and some wooden ware. If you need some, let me know before you order from a supplier. I may be able to save you some shipping costs.

It may just be August on the calendar but it is time to think about how you will handle your hives this fall and winter. We begin each meeting with a question and answer session. If you have questions about what you need to be doing now to prepare for winter, share them in the Q&A period.

For our August program, will talk about making SPLITS -- dividing one hive to make two. We will talk about techniques, timing, potential problems, and how to care for the two new hives.

Don't forget – again for August we will meet on the second Thursday, **August 8**. The church will be using our room on the 1<sup>st</sup>. We will return to our normal schedule in September. Be sure to share this information with your beekeeping friends . We do not want people to make the drive to Tyler on the wrong Thursday and be disappointed.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—Tammy Lenamond

Secretary—Lanette Lanchester

Ex. Director and Reporter—  
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford  
Brantley, Randy Bobo

Program Directors — Joe  
Mekalip, Gus Wolf

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

**Next Meeting**  
**August 8**  
**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 Ginnie Jeske

## *HONEY QUEEN REPORT* by Vi Bourns



I was thumbing through some old copies of *The American Bee Journal* and came across an article about tips on cultivating honey sales to recoup some of your expenses. Sounds pretty good, huh? None of us can afford to spend our hard earned cash indefinitely without trying to earn a little to defer expenses. Besides, it is more fun to show off what you have been doing and see the surprised look on the faces of people you meet. People get excited when they find out you are a beekeeper and start asking lots of questions, like have you ever been stung, aren't you afraid, how can you work out in the summer heat, and, of course, are the bees still dying and why? The conversation will eventually get around to your honey and why it costs more than honey in the local grocery stores. That is where your job of education begins. Have your answers ready and tell them the benefits of local honey to our health, the medical research going on, and the addition of honey in many of the foods we buy.

It will be an incentive to work hard, take care of your investment, and keep you interested in your new hobby of beekeeping. First, you need to choose a name for your apiary or honey farm, find a plastic or glass bottle you like, and design an attractive label that fits your personality. That is the fun part!

Remember to start out small and work your way up so your inventory and expenses are manageable and you have a reasonable customer base. It would be wise to consult someone who already has experience. As with any investment, it would be good to keep your earnings and expenses separate. That will take a little discipline on your part. Now, where can you get customers who don't already buy from a friend or another beekeeper in your club? Start out with your neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family. Word of mouth will quickly get around if you have a quality product, and you are on your way to productivity. Good luck!



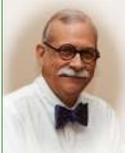
Hello Beekeepers! Continuing last month's article about the different ways that honey bees come in contact with neonicotinoids, I am writing this month about studies linking neonics to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). I've spent hours researching the topic and decided to mainly concentrate on three studies.

In a study released in 2012, a Harvard scientist, a sixth-generation beekeeper, and a retired scientist/entrepreneur collaborated to test the effects of extremely small doses of neonic pesticides on honey bees. During the spring of 2010, they set up twenty hives at four locations, feeding all of the hives high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), mimicking a common commercial beekeeping practice. Sixteen of the hives were fed HFCS that was treated with different levels of imidacloprid, a commonly used neonic. The remaining four hives (the control in the experiment) were fed untreated syrup. After twelve weeks, all twenty hives (treated and untreated) were alive, although the bees treated with the highest dose of imidacloprid appeared weaker. However, by week 23, things had changed drastically. Fifteen of the sixteen hives (a staggering 94 percent) that were treated with imidacloprid underwent classic CCD. The adult bees vanished, leaving the empty hives with a few remaining young bees. The hive receiving the largest dose of imidacloprid was the first to leave. Interestingly, the four untreated hives were still healthy. The lead author of the study, Chensheng (Alex) Lu, a professor at Harvard said, "It doesn't take much to eventually kill the bees...an incredibly small amount (20 parts per billion) of imidacloprid was enough to lead to Colony Collapse Disorder within six months".

Two other studies were published in the highly respected journal *Science*. In the first study, British scientists exposed wild bumblebees to field-realistic levels of neonics by raising them on a diet of pollen, some of which contained imidacloprid. They then "allowed them to develop naturally under field conditions." The results: "treated colonies had a significantly reduced growth rate and suffered 85% reduction in production of new queens." Bumblebee queens are the most important bees in their colony, since they establish new colonies after winter when all the other bees die.

In the second study, French researchers equipped honey bees with tiny microchips so they could track their movement. They fed some of the bees sucrose treated with thiamethoxan, a commonly used neonic. Then, they let the bees loose to go foraging. Exposed bees were two to three times less likely to return than the unexposed bees. This study proves that neonics affect the bees homing ability, causing the bees to get lost rather than return home. One of the study's authors, Mickael Henry of the French National Institute for Agricultural Research

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## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

Are you a fan of puzzles? Crosswords, Sodoku, Wordy Gurdy, Alphabet Jumble and the Daily Cryptogram appear in many daily papers. Most of them can be fun, mentally stimulating and also educational. The crossword is one I gravitate to and I've learned many new words as a result. One I never was able to do is the Cryptogram. You know the one where they substitute one letter for another. It looks like a bunch of garbled text, but by looking at word and letter patterns and making a few guesses you can allegedly decode the message: "Bzrlw pnjz NahkdrIt" as "Drink your Ovaltine." My brother-in-law could just look at them and rattle off the answer! I would give up after a few frustrating minutes. One thing I do know, the more you do these puzzles, the easier they eventually become.

And, yes, bees and the beehive are the same. They are a puzzles waiting to be decoded from what you see and observe. Some of the things are easy to see and are self evident. Others are confusing, and still others are subtle and easy to miss. There is quite a bit to learn, isn't there? So where do you learn it all? How do you keep learning? There are many means available to you.

Come out to the meetings when you can. It's a great place to ask your questions and hear answers from more than just one beekeeper. You'll get a variety of input. It is also a place to meet people from your area that also keep bees. You can network and make friends that you can contact for help. You will learn who the "old timers" are in the club, the ones that have been keeping bees for what seems like forever. They will be happy to answer your questions. While you are at the meeting, check the video lending library. We have dozens of videos on all aspects of beekeeping available for you to borrow for free, including a complete 14-hour course on beekeeping from Ohio State University.

Visit our website, ETBA.info. Look on the right side of the page, in yellow, "Enter Our Forum." It is a forum where you can ask questions, seek advice, buy things, and see what other beekeepers are up to and talking about. It is a valuable resource – use it! Being a member of the club also gives you access to the membership roster. It lists the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of all our members. Print the list (it's currently eleven pages) and you can instantly find other beekeepers close to you that you can contact.

Start your own beekeeping library. Buy books on bees and read them. If you have gone through Mr. Counts' class you, no doubt, have "The Beekeeper's Handbook." If you don't have it, get a copy, it is indispensable. "Beekeeping for Dummies" is another good resource. Look for them on Amazon.com, buy a used copy from an Amazon dealer for up to 80% off the retail price. If you can't afford the books, see if your local library will get them from another library for you. Better yet, ask the library to add it to their collection. Books by Dr. Larry Conner from Wicwas Press are also an excellent resource. The Dadant classic "The Hive and the Honey Bee" although expensive, is an excellent tool. I found my copy at a Goodwill for \$1.99!

Speaking of Amazon, were you aware that they have FREE books available for download? They are books for their proprietary Kindle electronic book, but you can download a virtual Kindle device for your computer and or smart phone. Then you can have books available at your fingertips. Electronic books behave just like real books. You can highlight text and find it back, dog ear pages, and they automatically synchronize the books on all your devices. "Mysteries of Beekeeping Explained", "The Healthy Bee Hive", "Bee Hunting", "Langstroth on the Hive and the Honey Bee" are all free Kindle titles. Many more titles are available for sale.

And, almost lastly, there are an almost unlimited amount of resources available on the internet. Youtube.com has HUNDREDS of videos on all aspects of beekeeping. Most are well done, some are done by people like you and me. Other beekeeping clubs have websites, too. Almost all of them have resources available for your enlightenment. Just do an internet search for "beekeepers" or "Texas Beekeepers", or the State name of your choice and Beekeepers. One of my personal favorites it the "Northwest New Jersey Beekeepers." There is also a plethora of blogs that people keep on their beekeeping experiences. You can interact with them by leaving comments and asking questions. Then there are the websites of the Bee Supply companies, Dadant, Brushy Mountain, Walter Kelley (who has a very good free monthly newsletter at Kellybees.com), just to mention a few. All have resources and most have informative newsletters that you can subscribe to for free.



## Small Hive Beetles

Have you ever had trouble with small hive beetles? My first summer of beekeeping, three years ago, I met these pesky creatures for the first time. I only had two hives that summer, – my scholarship hive and my dad’s hive, which I was taking care of since he didn’t have a bee suit then. One day around May, I opened the hives and saw two or three little black beetles scurrying around in the hive. I recognized them from *A Beekeeper’s Handbook*, the text book that we scholarship students had read. I still remember being shocked to find them in my own hives. Naively, I thought it would take a couple years for the beetles to find my apiary and scope it out for invasion. I called Mr. Counts and Ms. Vi and we examined the hives together a week later, but didn’t find any beetles. Three weeks after that, I saw the beetles again; and three weeks after that, I came back and found my dad’s hive, previously the stronger of the two, completely empty. Since then, I have talked with other beekeepers and did some experimenting to find out the best way to handle small hive beetles in my apiary.



There really is no set threshold number for determining when beetles move from intruders to threats. I like to address the issue if I find more than two or three beetles in a hive. Since beetles like to hide in dark spaces of the hive, as soon as you open the inner cover and let light into the hive, the beetles disappear. They run to the corners of the hive, the bottom of the hive, or even the insides of the cells to escape the light. As a result, seeing three or four beetles in a hive could mean you actually have three or four dozen present. Left uncontrolled, these beetles will mate and lay eggs, which will hatch into honey- and wax-destroying larvae that eventually drop into the ground to pupate before returning to the hive. They can grow to be such a nuisance that the entire hive decides to abscond and start fresh somewhere else.

I’ve tried three methods to control these little black terrors. First, I keep my hives located in direct sun whenever possible. As mentioned earlier, beetles don’t like light. The more you give the hive, the better. Also, I’ve experimented with sliding a cafeteria-style tray underneath the hive and then filling it with about a quarter inch of vegetable oil. Since I use screened bottom boards, the beetles would fall through the screens and drown in the oil. Unfortunately, there was a gap on the back of the hive, between the bottom of the hive and the lip of the tray. The curious honey bees would find their way into the gap and drown along with the beetles. For every dozen dead beetles, I found nearly one hundred dead bees! A few months later, Mr. Randy Bobo brought a different kind of trap, called a Beetle Blaster, to one of our meetings and gave me a few. This trap consists of a clear plastic tray with black slats on top, spaced too close for bees to fall through, but just right for beetles. You fill the tray with vegetable oil, and then set the trap between two frames in one of your hives. The beetles are attracted to the black and as they walk over the trap, they fall in and drown. The traps are inexpensive enough (Dadant sells them for \$1.59 each) that once one is full of beetles, you can throw it away and replace it with a new one. I’ve had great luck with them.



Since I started controlling my small hive beetle populations, I haven’t lost a single hive to these pesky creatures. Hopefully, my methods for handling these pests give you some guidelines to experiment with. As with most things in beekeeping, talk with other beekeepers, experiment, and find what works best for you. ~Martha

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in Avignon, said: “We were quite surprised by the magnitude of the effect”.

If you are not yet convinced that neonics are a culprit in Colony Collapse Disorder, then I encourage you to look up the “Beyond Pesticides” website, on which I counted thirty-six studies and articles pertaining to honey bees and pesticides: ( See <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/pollinators/research.php>)

Have a wonderful month! ~Hayden



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

July and August in East Texas are typically hot and dry. Most nectar producing blooms are finished though Crepe Myrtle and Mimosa may be still blooming. Vitex may continue blooming into Fall. The honey flow is over and little honey is likely to be produced until the Fall Goldenrod blooms. Much of East Texas received an unusually good rain during the middle of July. This rain certainly made the world turn green again but probably will not cause a significant late bloom of nectar producing plants. By now, your bees have either made a honey crop, have stayed alive, or are slowly starving to death. As a new beekeeper, it is time to put into practice the information that you learned in "bee school", off the Internet, from books and magazines, or listening to discussions at bee club meetings. You must evaluate what you see in your apiary and decide what to do for your bees over the next hot and dry month. What is their situation with food? With water? With their ability to protect the hive?

Lift the back of your hive and note how it feels. Remember how it felt when you first brought home that new hive that had only a few frames of bees and very little honey stores? If your hive feels that way when you lift it now, it may be in need of supplemental feeding. Open the hive and see what is inside. This time of the year, bees can be cranky and it is always a good idea to properly let them know you are coming into their hive. Lift one corner of the outer cover and give the bees a good shot of smoke, then lower the lid for a minute or two to let them calm down.

Look into the brood chamber. You should see the white cappings of stored honey across the tops of most of the brood frames. If the cells are not capped, you may see them filled with a shiny liquid of uncured nectar. Below the honey and nectar, there should be a band of pollen, varying in color from yellow, orange, red, green, even dark colors. This shows that there is food in the brood chamber.

Under the rows of pollen and extending all the way to the bottom of the frame, you should see cells of brood. The caps on brood cells are not white but are usually light brown in color, though sometimes they may even be a darker brown. If you cannot tell the difference between capped honey and capped brood, it is time to do a little research on the Internet or contact an experienced beekeeper and let them help you learn to distinguish the differing cells. It is important to be able to recognize brood cells so you will know that you have a healthy and laying queen.

If you don't find any honey in the brood nest, you probably will not find much brood either. The bees need food (honey and pollen) in the brood nest to raise the baby bees. Start feeding 2-to-1 sugar syrup and keep feeding until the hive feels heavy again or until you look inside and see syrup or honey stored in the brood nest.

Bees need a lot of water during this hot period. Be sure that a fresh water source is nearby. They use the water to cool the internal hive temperature by fanning their wings and evaporating the water. Bees will also gather on the outside of the hive to help reduce the internal temperature by moving some of heat producing bodies outside. This is called bearding and is a natural phenomenon -- don't be worried when you see bees gathered on the outside of the hive on a hot day.

Entrance reducers should be on the hives. It is a good idea to have them installed with the small entrance open. The smaller the entrance, the better the bees are able to defend the hive against not only robber bees but also against hive beetles, moths and other threats like yellow jackets. If you do not have an entrance reducer, you can place a board across the entrance, leaving only about a three quarters of an inch open on one edge.

It is a good practice to have one or two beetle traps in each hive box to help control hive beetles. Check the traps each time you are in the hive. A few beetles in the trap is not cause for alarm, beetles are always present in a hive. If you see large numbers of dead beetles in the traps or see a sudden increase in the numbers in the traps, contact an experienced beekeeper for assistance. Beetles can quickly take over a weakened hive. The best defense against beetles (or moths) is to keep your hive well fed, well populated, and its entrance reduced

I will be unable to attend the August meeting due to schedule conflicts. Royce Pelham will meet you in the Got Questions? room 6:00 to 6:30 before the meeting. So, if you are new to beekeeping or just "Got Questions?" about beekeeping issues, come early and we will try to help you find some answers. Look for Royce in the classroom just inside the double doors on the far side of the Friendship Hall. Join us 6:00 to 6:30 with your beekeeping questions.



## *The Bee Gardener by Bobby Howell*

A few months ago when we started this series of honey bee gardening columns, our professed goal was to find sources of nectar and pollen that would help us cut back our dependence on sugar and corn syrups and put to rest the belief that summer time and early fall in our region would always show a dearth of what the bees must have to thrive. We are not there, yet, but we seem to be making huge progress.

Ray Marshall of near Ringgold in Northwest Louisiana, may be on to something that we have suggested might be a great honey bee plant and source of nectar and pollen as the Dog Days of Summer pile up.

Marshall is a veteran and excellent beekeeper who strives to manage his bees the natural way. He took to heart our suggestion that Japanese Buckwheat is a good forage plant and planted a one-acre plot in early June. The seeds germinated in three days, the plants started blooming in three weeks after the seeds were sown, and by the fourth week the blossom branches were waist high



The bees went right to work on the buckwheat.

Just how well the project will eventually do remains to be seen. So far, things look good. "The bees are working the buckwheat from about 9 a.m. to 1 or 2 p.m.," Marshall said. "But what kind of honey crop I will have remains to be seen." As most have heard, buckwheat honey tends to have a strong odor, strong taste and the honey is dark. So, there seems to be some side effects. "It (the nectar and pollen) does have a strong smell," Marshall said. "Another thing is that the bees seem to want to get in a foul mood after working on the buckwheat. If you have buckwheat, you want to be careful when working the hives", he said.

Since buckwheat honey is dark, very dark, Marshall didn't plant his buckwheat until after he harvested his spring crop of honey. "Most of my customers prefer dark honey anyway," Marshall said. "But I waited anyway, since I believe that any honey with 25 percent from buckwheat is considered buckwheat honey no matter how dark it might be." Another thing to keep in mind is that deer like to browse the patches. Thus, several of Marshall's neighbors are talking about planting buckwheat for their cattle.

Buckwheat seed seems to be readily available in most seed stores now and costs differ, but don't buy it if it costs much more than a dollar per pound. Generally, it can be purchased in 50-pound bags for \$50 per bag. Of course, it can be bought in smaller lots, packets, etc., which is all that most of us would need anyway. Remember, we are not here to boost the bigger beekeepers but it doesn't hurt to help them get on the right track. Stay tuned for more on the buckwheat situation.

I still maintain that we can plant Earlybird 50 Niger and have a forging source just as quick and the honey will be lighter and not as strong as the buckwheat. The thing with the Niger, though, is that it needs to be drilled when planted to be most effective. Buckwheat can be sown with spreaders and does not need to be drilled.

In the latest issue of the Texas State Beekeepers Association newsletter, the very knowledgeable writer about honey plants touched on the use of catmint. I agree with her. It is a great plant. Last year, I secured three scraggly plants in March, set them out and they went crazy. They overwintered easily and started blooming in late March. Each plant has grown into an area about five feet wide. Blooms all of the time and, yes, the honey bees love it.

Until next time, BeeJay.