



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 29 No. 8

August 7, 2014

August Report by Dick Counts

We had 81 members and guests at the July 3rd meeting. That is a pretty good attendance for a meeting on the beginning of the Fourth of July weekend. Several of our regular attendees were traveling with family and unable to join us. We did have a good meeting with our Gizmos and Gadgets program. "Thank You" to those who brought their interesting items and shared them with the group. I always see something new at this meeting each year. We also had a good discussion period, the kind of information sharing that is helpful to many people.

I am hearing reports of mixed results in honey production this year. The prolonged cool weather in early spring seems to have delayed honey production for many members. Few people had much honey to extract in June. However, the good rainfall through June and July appears to have extended the honey season, allowing bees in many areas to fill the honey supers. In spite of the slow start, some of my yards have produced more honey than I usually harvest. I still see green fields and some flowers blooming even in late July. The weatherman is now forecasting another unusually cool period the last week of July with possibilities of rain. We may be heading into August unusually wet. I feel sure the East Texas heat will catch us during August but I definitely enjoyed June and July.

The East Texas Fair will be September 18-28. ETBA will again have a booth. Our Queen and Princess will participate in the educational days when a couple of thousand school children visit our booth on guided tours. At the August meeting, we will start building a schedule of people to staff the booth. Look at your calendar and plan to be a part of the team. We will be able to sell honey and honey products again this year. More information about pricing will be available at the September meeting. The Fair has also purchased a skep-like bee hive kit made from wooden 2x4s. They have asked ETBA to assemble the kit a few days before the Fair opens. We will be asking for a team of volunteers to assemble the hive. Once assembled, the Fair will store the hive for use in subsequent years.

I held two club extraction days during July. We will plan to have another in August. At the August meeting, we can talk about how many members need to extract and plan a date.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Lanette Lanchester

Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley, Larry Tarr

Program Director — Matt Thomas
Brenda Sheridan, Eddie Collins

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Next Meeting
August 7

United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse
6:45 PM
On the Web: etba.info
Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789

Photo by Brenda Sheridan

HONEY QUEEN REPORT by Vi Bourns



What is next for the Royal Court? They will be working the bee booth at the East Texas State Fair along with many of you, doing cooking with honey demonstrations at the Dallas State Fair, and representing you at the TBA Convention in November. It will be lots of work and preparation also but fun as they interact with others in the bee business. Thank you again for your love and support as they educate about the importance of the honey bee and the benefits of products from the hive.

Princess Willow, Judy Giles and Lani have been working together on a PowerPoint presentation about their experience removing honey bees from a building with Jon Aerts. In the process, they used a bee vac he built. Jon can't be at the meeting due to medical problems but he will be with us in spirit. Please remember Jon in your prayers.



A 17th century French philosopher once stated, "The height of cleverness is to be able to conceal it." Scientists have been studying honey bees for hundreds of years and are only beginning to discover how complex and intelligent they are. Look at the specialized features of the worker bee anatomy. They have super sensitive compound eyes that enable them to position themselves off of the sun, even when it is overcast. Their antennae have 170 odorant receptors, which help them differentiate between hundreds of flower varieties. They also use their antennae to judge their flight speed. The honey bees' legs have specialized grooves in them to help them clean their antennae. The proboscis, or tongue, is designed for reaching into the bottom of flowers to drink the nectar and to exchange food. The hair covering their body is not only to make them cute and fluffy but has the purpose of collecting and distributing pollen. Scientists have also discovered that bees have the ability of facial recognition. We have come to realize that bees use the same method of facial recognition as humans. Both we and the bees use a technique called "configural processing", piecing together the components of a face, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth to form a recognizable pattern. They have generally found that bees will remember specific human faces, such as the people that feed them, but not a person they see walk past once. So the next time you think that your bees are happy to see you, you are probably right. Another instance when bees are found to remember faces is when a specific person is assaulting the hive. This is why bees seem to target a specific person when they feel threatened. I think this makes God laugh.

One last weird fact about bees, they are itty-bitty math nerds. In one study, scientists placed the only food source on the other side of a mountain that the bees could not fly over. The scientists observed the bees flying across the mountain at angles relative to them. They were amazed to see the bees flying a route they had never flown before, a route they would have had to figure out in their head. Another study showed that the bees could learn to predict patterns. This was observed when scientists began moving the bees' food source 50 yards every day to attempt to confuse the bees. The first day it took several minutes for the bees to find the food. The following days, the bees became faster and faster at finding the food source, until one day when the scientists moved the food and the bees were already there waiting for them. If only I could get these tiny math nerds to do my math for me!



As more discoveries are made, we come to realize how these intricate creatures are infinitely more intelligent than we believed. I think that these fantastically, amazing honey bees will provide mind-boggling mysteries for years to come. ~Willow

Bees Outsmart Scientists." [Creation Moments](http://www.creationmoments.com/radio/transcripts/bees-outsmart-scientists) www.creationmoments.com/radio/transcripts/bees-outsmart-scientists

Dadant & Sons. [The Hive and the Honey Bee](#). Hamilton, Illinois: Dadant & Sons, 1975

Dyer, Adrian G. and Tibbetts, Elizabeth A. "Insects Recognize Faces Using Processing Mechanism Similar to That of Humans." [Scientific American](#) Volume 309, Issue 6. December 2013

Hooper, Ted. [Guide to Bees and Honey](#). Hampshire, England. 1976

Hiskey, Daven. "Honey Bees Know the World is Round and Can Calculate Angles." [Today I Found Out](#). 31 May 2010
www.todayifoundout.com/?s=bee+know+the+world+is+round&x=0&y=0



President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

This has been a reasonably good month for beekeeping in our household. Three weeks ago, we extracted about 12 gallons of honey from our three producing hives. We are all pleased with that. It was interesting to see the different honey colors in various supers and frames. There were a few frames whose honey tasted like toasted marshmallow and we tried the best we could to segregate it from the rest.

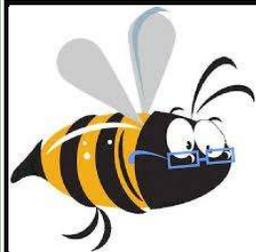
We knew a young man of 13 who has had a longstanding interest in beekeeping. He was invited to our extraction party. We suited him up, took him through a few hives and had him help empty the supers of bees and bring them to the "honey house", uncap, and extract. We ran the gamut with him. After sending him home with a full honey bear that he had extracted, he said, "This is the most fun I've ever had. I can't wait to become a beekeeper." Ah, it felt rewarding to usher him into the mysteries! Who knows what impact this experience will have on him? Don't miss out on opportunities to let other people enter into your world of bees.

The queen I purchased at last month's meeting became the newly appointed of the third iteration of my top bar hive. She was duly released and accepted even though I simply laid her cage down on the bottom of the hive. She has capped brood and stores a plenty and seems to be

doing well. Ants have been a problem with this hive so I had to devise a way to keep them out. I attached four long screws to the bottom of the Top Bar Hive and set them in shallow dishes filled with diatomaceous earth. Problem solved, the ants won't cross that stuff. But it does need to be refreshed after a rain. I just hope that these girls can get up enough steam and stores to survive the winter.

Our Texas Honey Queen Hayden went to speak at the Concho Valley Beekeepers in San Angelo. Since it is in an area of Texas Joanne and I had never visited, we thought it would be a good idea to join her. We were graciously accommodated by Mark Hedley of Spiral Horn Apiary in Rochelle. We received a private tour of his operation and learned some new things. He has been using the Palmer Method of sustainable beekeeping. When I returned home, I looked that up and it looks interesting. Something new to learn! Google "beekeeping Palmer Method"

The sense of well-being that I have with my bees needs to be carefully checked. The summer dearth is just around the corner and can wreak havoc on the girls. I'll need to watch their food supplies, feed when needed, and guard against robbing and parasite losses. Meantime, I'll enjoy the little insects that allow me to barge into their lives now and then.



Bee Facts by Eddie Collins

This has been a strange and challenging year for the plants and the bees. It is now August and I just now have my bottler full of honey. Now that the weather has turned off hot, don't forget about your bees. They still need your attention to make sure they have water, food, and help with fending off the mites. You may only be dreaming about the fall weather but what's going on with your bees right now greatly impacts how they go into the fall and winter and how they look early next Spring.

Here are questions I received over the last month and my responses:

Apiary location -- full sun, part shade, full shade?

Full sun is best. In this area humidity, mold and mildew is tough. In the sun, the bees can better regulate the hive moisture and temperature. My hives in the full sun always have less hive beetles. I have no data on how sun vs shade impacts honey production but by the time it gets above 90, honey production in this part of Texas is normally just about over.

Hive entrance orientation -- south, southeast, southwest?

Does not matter. A lot of people say otherwise but they never seem to have any data to back it up. It is normally just what they have always heard. My hives are on 4-way pallets so I always have two entrances pointing in one direction and two in the other. In some yards, I have pallets oriented 90 degrees from each other, therefore I have entrances

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***Bee Facts* —Continued from Page 3**

facing all four directions. Honey production is the same across all hives. I recommend the beekeeper put the entrance in a direction that works best for the layout of the beeyard. Think of things like mowing and flight pattern. It may matter a small bit on the hive entrances that get the first sun but it's insignificant, especially if the hive is in full sun.

Feeding -- 1-1 sugar syrup, 2-1 sugar syrup?

Too many beekeepers get hung up on this. Just feed 2-1 syrup or some mixture close to it. Commercial beekeepers feed 55% all year long. A popular theory is that you feed a lighter syrup in the spring to mimic nectar being brought in. I don't buy into this. Just be sure and feed them when they need to be fed. This can be for nuc build up or to keep the hive from starving or to build up winter stores.

Feeding -- pollen substitute directly above brood nest? How much?

I don't really know. One thing to do is check to see if they actually need it before feeding it. Do they already have a lot of pollen in the hive? If they are raising brood or you are trying to get them to raise brood, then they will need more pollen or pollen substitute. I prefer to feed them pollen by moving frames of pollen from a pollen plugged hive or from a dead-out to the hive that needs it. If you do feed pollen substitute above the brood nest, be very careful to watch for beetles, especially in the summer. Beetles love to hide and lay eggs under the pollen patties.

Pest control -- Apivar strips for Varroa Mite, Honey-B-Healthy, Grease Patties?

Whatever you use, be sure and check for mites before you treat, then check again after you treat. I also recommend you treat twice, if not 3 times a year. I have used Apivar strips in the past (8 years ago) and they worked well. For a small beekeeper, this seems to be the easiest method. Some ETBA members had good results with Apiguard in the last couple of seasons. I do not believe in the powdered sugar method. Several studies in the last two years have shown no overall decline in varroa counts after powdered sugar dusting. You can go the "organic" natural route if that is what works for you. Just be sure it works. I don't like putting chemicals in my hives either but I would prefer to treat with chemicals rather than to let my bees die!

Handling -- minimal, no more than once each week and then get in and out quickly.

Enjoy your bees. Just work them gently. The way you work them can disrupt them a little or a lot. If you want to go in every week, then go in the hive every week. The only time I recommend you stay out of them is the 21 day period after a queen cell hatches. This is a critical time for the queen to hatch, get mated, and be accepted by the hive. The two weeks following this 21 days is also a time to be cautious. During this time, I've seen hives "ball" a queen. This is also true for a hive after you introduce a new queen. Give the hive time to accept her before doing an inspection.

Queen excluder between bottom board and brood chamber?

The only time I have ever done this is during the hiving of a swarm. In all my nucs, I have been very successful introducing a new queen either from a cell or from a cage and not using a queen excluder on top of the bottom board. From my experience, I don't see a need to do it. Save the money and buy more bees.

Hive color -- flat white or use any light color that reflects sun light?

It really doesn't matter.

Temporary shade -- slats placed on top of hive to provide temporary shade during August and September?

See comment about full sun above. The one thing you can do is to prop the lid open with small stick or set the back top cleat on the hive rim. Be careful propping the lid open on small hives and do not create an opening big enough for moths, beetles or robber bees. Note that a small hive will not be generating a lot of heat.

Provide water source -- natural or artificial?

If you live close to neighbors or there is not a natural water source available, then provide one. You will be amazed at how much water a hive uses during the hot weather.

See you at the August meeting!



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

This time of the year, beekeepers are thinking about extracting honey. After extracting, there is always the question about what to do with the freshly extracted supers. Please don't just set them aside and think, "I can get them back on the hives in a few days." Wax moths and small hive beetles are very opportunistic and will be attracted to the scent of the unattended supers, viewing them as the finest hotel accommodations a beekeeper could provide. The best solution is to return the supers to the hive and let the hive bees clean up the residual honey that remains in the cells. We call these "wet" supers. To minimize robbing, return the supers to the hives late in the evening. The hive full of bees will collect and move most of the honey to other cells before morning.

If you are not going to return the supers to the hive, put them out in the yard to let the neighborhood bees have a "clean-up day" and collect the honey. Be sure to stack the supers in a crisscross pattern or stand them on the side (long side vertical) so the bees can move between the frames. Place them in an open area away from people traffic. You will have a large number of bees flying in and out as they rob the honey off the frames. A couple of other things to think about – ants will also be attracted to the honey. If you have fire ants around, you may want to keep the supers off the ground to help keep the ants away. Also, there is usually some bits of beeswax left on the ground underneath the supers. This is not a problem in the yard but may be a concern if you set the supers on the walk or driveway. Placing a drop cloth or cardboard under the supers will prevent the wax from sticking to the concrete and make clean-up easier. If the bees do not finish cleaning the supers during the day, you may wish to pull them into a secured area at night. Many of the night varmints like coons and possums will be attracted to the frames. When your supers are clean, be sure to run them through freezer to kill any beetle or moth eggs or larvae before storing.

Someone asked if swarm traps should be taken down for the summer. There is nothing wrong with leaving swarm traps out through the end of September. Check them occasionally to make sure that wasps or other insects have not taken up residence.

Here are some interesting observations about different types of foundation in a hive. I caught a swarm July 16 and put it in a 10-frame deep. In the box, frames 1-4 were new Dadant wooden frames with plasticell foundation that I had painted with extra melted beeswax from last season's cappings. Number 5 frame was a Pierco plastic frame that was full of crystallized honey. Number 6-10 were new Dadant wooden frames with plasticell foundation, just like they come from the factory with no additional wax painted on. I did a hive inspection one week later on July 23. Since I was curious how the bees would respond to the differing types of frames used in the box, I was very careful in making the inspection. I used only a minimal amount of smoke and was very slow and careful in handling frames. The bees remained calm and were not moving about nervously in the hive. Frames 1-4, the Dadant plasticell frames with the extra coating of beeswax, showed a lot of activity. Frame 1 was almost completely drawn on the outside and fully drawn and 75% full of pollen on the inside. Frames 2-4 were fully drawn and contained eggs, larva and pupa. The number 5 Pierco plastic frame had been cleaned of the crystallized honey and was 75% full of nectar. Frames 6-10, the new, unused plasticell frames, showed little activity. Frames 6 and 7 had a spot drawn spot in the middle top of the foundation, about the size of my three fingers in length and width. The center of this area was fully drawn and had some nectar in the cells. The cells away from the center were less drawn, tapering to nothing at the edges. Frames 8, 9 and 10 were untouched and had only a couple dozen bees crawling on them.

I don't claim this to be a scientific study but I am intrigued with the observations. Several years ago, in one of the bee publications, I read a letter from a beekeeper who routinely brushed his new plasticell frames with melted capping wax, claiming it enticed the bees to begin drawing comb quicker. I doubt that the thickness of the additional wax is the reason the frames are more attractive to the bees. Rather, I tend to think that the extra coating of melted capping wax gives the new frames a more attractive odor, making them smell more like a beehive rather than the human and mechanical smells picked up in the production process. Based on what I saw here, whenever possible, I am going to give my new plasticell frames a brushing of melted capping wax.

The "Got Questions" room will be open 6:00 – 6:30 before the meeting. If you are new to beekeeping or just have some beekeeping questions, join us in the Got Questions room before the meeting and we will try to help you find some answers. Starting in August, we will be meeting in a larger room. Come through the double doors on the far side of our meeting room and follow the signs in the hall to our new Got Questions room. Jimmy Lanham and Eddie Collins will be joining us as their schedule allows.

2014 Scholarship Student Bailie Livingston

Bailie Livingston, one of our 2014 Scholarship Students, successfully completed the beginner beekeeping training this spring. In the class, she learned about bees, how to manage them, and how to build hive bodies and frames. At graduation, she took home one hive. Her dad also purchased a hive so the Livingston beeyard has two functioning hives.



Bailie has already had an opportunity to share her new-found knowledge about bees with others. She is a member of the Gregg County Junior Master Gardener Club. Their club held a meeting at Bailie's home and she gave a presentation about bees and beekeeping.



Bailie and her dad recently pulled supers from their hives and extracted at Mr. Counts house. From their two new-this-year hives, they extracted eight gallons of honey.

2014 Scholarship Student Gabe Sullens

Gabe Sullens was one of our 2014 Scholarship Students. He recently wrote a "ThankYou " note to ETBA:

Thank you for the opportunity for letting me be a beekeeper.

I enjoy helping bees and enjoy the honey. I was amazed when I got 10 gallons of honey out of three shallow supers!.

Some bees attacked me when I was getting my suit on.

I caught a swarm and it was gone the next day. But I was glad for the learning experience. I am going to get some more hives by catching swarms out of trees.

I hope it is successful.

Gabe

ETBA Member Christy Kapuschat's
Bee on Globe Thistle
Webster, NY



Christy Kapuschat keeps bees in Webster, NY. Her apiary is named Grannie's Honey Haven, after a deceased beloved cousin from Needville, Texas.

Originally from Odessa, Christy has been living in New York for many years. Her daughter lives in Dallas and owns property in Linden. On a recent visit to Linden, Christy spent a day discussing bees with Stan Brantley.

After losing her hives to winter die-off, Christy started two from nucs this spring, ordered from different parts of the country. It will be interesting to see how the two hives progress, especially through the winter.

