



East Texas Beekeepers Association

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August Report by Dick Counts

We had another great crowd last month to hear Stanford Brantley share with us tips and techniques about trapping bees out of trees. I am always impressed when so many members faithfully attend our meetings and help support ETBA.

We are just heading into August but I did want to share advance information that we will again be supporting the ETBA booth at the East Texas State Fair. The fair runs September 25th to October 4th. At our September meeting, we will have a sign-up sheet and start building a schedule of members to operate the booth throughout the fair. If you have never participated, let me encourage you to join us. You will meet a lot of interesting people and talk to the them about bees. If you are a new beekeeper, we will pair you with some old hands who will show you how its done. It is always great fun.

Several Texas counties, including Smith County, have tested and decided on spraying herbicide rather than mowing to control roadside growth. This decision was apparently based on cost, with the county administrators citing significantly reduced costs to spray rather than mow. To my understanding, this decision is finalized and no longer up for consideration. As beekeepers, we did not support the use of herbicide but it appears we are going to reap the downsides of it. Expect to see little or no roadside forage for your bees and hope that they are not on the flowers when the sprayer comes by.

I would like to remind members that we support a scholarship program for young beginner beekeepers. The program is available for youth age 12-17. The scholarship covers a training class, one hive of bees, and basic beekeeping tools. The youth must provide their own protective gear. You can read more about this on our webpage at ETBA.info. Many of our scholarship students become long-term beekeepers and ETBA members. Please share this information with friends who may have a young person interested in becoming a beekeeper.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—John Stewart

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Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Lani
Lanchester

Directors-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley

Program Director — Matt Thomas

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

August 6

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 Isabella Crawford

HONEY QUEEN REPORT by *Lani Lanchester*



The Queen's Program is an important way our club promotes and protects the honey bee in our community, sharing knowledge about an insect dear to our hearts and important to our environment and industry. Over the next few months, the Queen's Program will be looking to form the 2016 Queen's Committee who will aid these young women in their efforts for our club and community. This committee will help mentor the Queen and Princess in public speaking, writing, engaging the media, and beekeeping. The committee also ensures proper chaperones attend events with our Queen or Princess. Fundraising keeps the program running. Expectations and encouragement from the committee keep the Royal Court running. If you would like to be on the 2016 committee or if you know someone you wish to nominate, please contact myself or Dick Counts.



Fighting Poverty with Honey Bees

Honey bees have stolen little pieces of my heart. While reading about projects involving these incredible creatures, I came across several amazing charities. These charities are combating poverty in countries all over the world through beekeeping. Fighting poverty with bees, how miraculous is that? So I just had to look further. In the end, I found three charities -- Bees for Development, Bees Abroad, and Heifer International.

Bees for Development is an international charity that works to educate people in impoverished areas about beekeeping to help them develop a self-sustaining means of making money. Bees for Development currently has projects in Uganda, Zanzibar, Kyrgyzstan, and Ethiopia. They not only provide learning material about beekeeping but also a beekeeping mentor who can be contacted through e-mail or post. They organize training to help new beekeepers get started. One of the most amazing services they provide is helping beekeepers learn how to market their honey and organizing trade to help beekeepers raise their incomes. Through these services, Bees for Development helps people develop their own self-sustaining business.

Bees Abroad is a small UK based charity devoted to fighting poverty through beekeeping throughout the world. Their experts study the environment of each location and the indigenous bees and how best to care for them in that climate. Once they have done this, they provide training and support by teaching locals to build hives, make protective clothing, and make equipment from local materials that are easily obtainable. They train new beekeepers to manage their bees, safely collect honey, and to handle and store the honey hygienically. Like Bees for Development, they also provide financial training to help beekeepers market their honey and put money aside to maintain their apiaries. Bees Abroad has projects in 13 countries and is growing. This is a charity that is truly devoting themselves to making the world a better place.

The final charity is Heifer International. Heifer International is an organization that helps people and families in need by providing them with a means to provide for themselves. They operate by the philosophy that you should teach a man to fish rather than just give him the fish. Through their work, they have touched the lives of people all around the world. They give families and individuals farm animals and teach them to care for them. More recently, they have added honey bees to their list. Heifer International devotes themselves to empowering women and helping them out of bad situations, and what better way to do that than with honey bees. This is another important charity that is improving the lives of thousands of people.

These are some bee-related charities that have attracted my attention. It gives me great joy to see people using this amazing insect to improve the lives of others. I hope organizations like these continue to grow and help those in need. If you are interested in getting involved, I would encourage you to visit their websites and like them on Facebook. This really does prove that bees make the world a better place. ~Willow

Bees for Development: <http://www.beesfordevelopment.org/what-we-do>

Bees Abroad: http://beesabroad.org.uk/?page_id=23

Heifer International: <http://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/animals-nutrition/honeybees-donation.html>



Keeping bee hives healthy is an important component of modern beekeeping. As humans have moved European honey bees around the world, the bees have come into contact with exotic diseases and parasites for which they had little resistance. Many of these pests have been accidentally imported into the U.S. and have spread rapidly across the country. Because beekeepers routinely transport colonies around the country each year, these maladies continue to circulate through honey bee populations. Modern beekeeping is challenging and has a steep initial learning curve. Some level of periodic losses should be expected. Beekeepers should always be vigilant about the condition of their colonies.

Varroa Mites are the one of the many enemies of the honey bee and beekeepers around the world. These external parasites feed on the blood of adult honey bees and reproduce on honey bee pupae. They can considerably weaken individual bees and often infect bees with viruses. Mites are spread to other colonies through drifting and robbing. Their high reproductive potential makes managing these mites a considerable challenge for beekeepers. Tracheal Mites are internal parasites of honey bees. They live and breed inside the tracheal tubes which insects use to breathe. Bad infestations can negatively impact colony health but because of their microscopic size, tracheal mites have been largely overlooked by most beekeepers. Increased selection pressure has improved the honey bees' natural resistance to this pest. Additionally, many of the current in-hive fumigants used against varroa mites also control tracheal mites.

The Small Hive Beetle, originally from sub-Saharan Africa, is an invasive pest of bee hives. These beetles inhabit almost all honey bee colonies in their native range, but they do little damage there and are rarely considered a serious hive pest. How this pest found its way into the U.S. is unknown but it was first discovered to be damaging honey bee colonies in Florida in 1998. It has since spread to more than 30 states, being particularly prevalent in the Southeast. The beetles have likely been transported with package bees and by migratory beekeepers but the adult beetles are strong fliers and are capable of traveling several miles at a time on their own.

Beetles are usually considered to be a secondary or opportunistic pest, only causing excessive damage after bee colonies have already become stressed or weakened by other factors. Infestations of beetles can put significant stress on bee colonies, which can be compounded by the stress of varroa mites and other conditions. If large populations of beetles are allowed to build up, even strong colonies can be overwhelmed in a short time. Honey bee colonies appear able to contend with fairly large populations of adult beetles with little effect. However, large beetle populations are able to lay enormous numbers of eggs. These eggs develop quickly and result in rapid destruction of unprotected combs in a short time. There is no established threshold number for small hive beetles, as their ability to devastate a bee colony is related to many factors of colony strength and overall health. By maintaining strong bee colonies and keeping adult beetle populations low, beekeepers can suppress the beetles' reproductive potential.

The Greater Wax Moth is another pest found in honey bee hives and causes significant damage to stored combs. The best defense against wax moths in the hive is to keep colonies strong and healthy. Once surplus combs are removed from a hive, they should be protected from wax moths until the first hard freeze of the fall season. Combs can be protected by fumigating them or storing them where they have plenty of sunlight and air circulation.

It is very important to check your hives regularly to see if you have any of these pests. If you have any of these problems, you should treat them in the proper way so you don't lose your beehive. ~Brittany

Good articles for new beekeepers

Brief articles covering a lot of basic beekeeping information:

<https://www.uky.edu/Ag/Entomology/ythfacts/4h/beekeep/basbeop.htm>

<http://outdoorplace.org/beekeeping/citybees.htm>

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/deciding-where-to-locate-your-bee-hives.html>

<http://www.honeybeesuite.com/water-collection/>

<https://bees4communities.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/spring-site-location-tips-for-your-beehive/>

<https://desertcreekhoney.com/bees-and-beekeeping/>



President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

As the hot, dry days of summer continue to be upon us, remember that our bees need food. If too much has been taken off the hives during your harvest and the flower nectar begins to slow down and fail, your bees might starve. That may particularly be the case if your hive is large and strong and there is suddenly not enough forage for them to support themselves. Keep an eye on their stores and feed them, if needed. Starvation in the winter when there is no forage at all is an easy thing to remember. But starvation in the summer may run a bit counterintuitive as we think of summer as a season with lots of growth. But as our lawn's lush green turns into faded crackly brown, so too the forage plants may dry up. Be aware!

Thus far, my top bar hive is thriving. I am still not sure if it is something I really want! They have drawn out over half of the bars, which is far more than any other hive has ever done. There are at least three full bars of honey and it is mighty tempting to take them and package them up for human consumption. These girls are doing so well that I need to seriously start thinking about building a bigger box as they will be out-growing this one before too long. I don't mind doing that but I have to admit I don't look forward to building the top bars!

This summer, the Big Sandy Water Company found out I am a bee keeper. They had three water meters in town with hives in them and asked me to take them out. That's easy pickings! But, once again, it was a learning process for me. Hayden and I both went to the water meters with nuc boxes that had closable entrances. We also brought along some queen "hair clips" to be able to confine the queen should we find her. In each case we removed the comb from the meter, found the queen – Hayden has gotten real good at it – stuck her in the hair clip and placed the comb, hairclip and whatever bees we could shake off the meter box top into the nuc. We then closed up the nuc and the water meter box and set the nuc on top, close to the meter entrance. The next evening we went back. All the bees were safely in the nuc. Sliding the nuc door closed, we took the hives home – all three of them. It was an easy catch. You might consider talking to your local water company about offering your services in removing water meter hives in your area. Bees love water meters! They are the right size cavity and the right size entrance.

I wish I could say it was a happy ending for all three of those hives. Remember I said it was a learning experience? None of those hives were particularly strong. What I neglected to do was provide a very small opening to the nucs. They needed an opening that was no larger than the tip of my pinkie so the bees could guard their entrance more effectively. Instead, I offered a ¾ inch hole. One hive was robbed out and absconded. Another was being robbed out and had become infested with hundreds of hive beetles and mostly absconded – except for the queen and 25 or so workers. The third hive is thriving. Live and learn. There will be more water meter hives in the future, I'm sure.

We had an odd swarming behavior in the apiary this week. I went outside mid-morning one day and heard the unmistakable noise of a swarm. They had centered on my small pecan tree and there were bees everywhere. It's one of the things I enjoy, standing in the middle of a throng of bees. Bees everywhere. It appeared they were trying to cluster high up in the tree. I took a quick walk around the yard to see if I could determine which hive swarmed but they all looked pretty normal. I went to get Graeme to tell him about it. By the time he came outside there was not a bee to be found! He looked over at his hives and there was one with the front fully covered in bees! And they were pouring into the hive. Within a minute or two, the front was completely clear. In the grass in front of the hive, Graeme found what seemed to be a weak, misshapen queen, one that could not fly but only walk. Thus far the hive has been stable and no one has left. It's got us mystified, but I am sure there is a reasonable explanation to it all.

So that's my month in beekeeping. What's been happening with you?





Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

It is August in Texas. It is hot and dry. The local weatherman likes to show how hot it is all over the state. But what do you expect? It is August in Texas. If you have lived here any length of time, you expect it to be hot and dry. Your bees also know it is hot and dry. They find little forage and feel the rising temperature inside the hive. Their temperament may change, becoming cranky and more aggressive. Be cautious when opening the hive, moving slowly and making use of your smoker. Be careful in your grounds maintenance because they may not tolerate mowers or weed eaters near the hive. You may see large numbers of bees collecting on the face of the hive, called "bearding" and thought to be a mechanism to move body heat out of the hive in the hottest parts of the day. Bees will need increasing amounts of water in these hot weeks. If you do not have a natural water source nearby, bees will search for the nearest one, and it may be your neighbor's swimming pool or fountain.

If you do not have a reliable natural water source, be sure to provide water for your bees in or near the apiary. You long-time ETBA members may remember Jesse Adams, my friend and mentor for many years. Jesse often came up with practical solutions to many beekeeping problems. He made a water source for his bees from a large plastic tub, a length of 2x6, and a piece of burlap sack. The burlap sack was wrapped around a 2x6 that was inserted into the container at an angle, one end on the bottom and one end on the edge, making a sloped ramp down to the water. The burlap acted like a wick and stayed moist several inches above the water line. The bees could land on the rough burlap and walk safely down to the wet area for water. He kept this in the shade near his hives and added water when the level got low. You can look on the Internet and find a variety of ways to ensure your bees have water. One thing to think about -- other animals may be attracted to your water source, especially raccoons at night. Be sure to check it daily and make sure it does not get dumped or evaporate.

I have received several calls from beekeepers reporting their hives overrun by Small Hive Beetles or Wax Moths. Our unusually wet spring may have created optimum conditions for beetles and moths to hatch a bumper crop. I am certainly hearing more reports of problems than usual. I am also concerned that the usually wet weather adversely effected the mating of queens. Hives that started the season well seem to be failing as the summer progresses. The queen may not have mated well enough to have a sufficient supply of sperm to keep producing brood. The hive may have started the spring well, maybe even produced a honey crop, but is now starting to fail. As the population decreases, the bees begin to lose the battle against beetles and moths. Once the beetle or moth is able to start laying eggs in the hive, the hatching larvae quickly create conditions that are intolerable to the bees. Eventually the bees will be forced to leave and the hive is ruined.

Be attentive to the activity at the landing board. If you notice a decline in the number of bees coming and going, your hive's population may be declining. Take a look inside and determine if you have a large enough population of bees to occupy all of the boxes. Check the brood pattern to see if the queen is still laying. Look for signs of beetle or moth larvae.

If you find slimed comb in the hive, disassemble the hive and wash the slimed comb with running water. Use a strong enough flow to remove the slime and fecal matter but not so much as to damage the wax. Wash the frames until all evidence of slime is gone. Check the ground for any white larvae and kill them so they will not burrow into the soil and pupate into adult beetles. Place the frames where bees can rob out any stored honey. After the bees clean the frames, put them in the freezer for a few days to kill any beetle adults, eggs or larvae that might be hiding the comb. If you need to remove them from the freezer for longer term storage, be sure to store them under ParaMoth crystals, known to beekeepers as ParaMoth.

Paramoth is sold at Wal-Mart in a blue canister (looks like a shorter Pringles can) under the brand name of Enos Ice Crystals (**do not buy Enoz Old Fashion Moth Balls**). Do not confuse this with regular moth balls which are made of Naphthalene, a chemical that is absorbed by the wax and will kill bees. Frames stored under ParaMoth need to be aired for a couple of days before being put back in a hive. Otherwise, the evaporating ParaMoth fumes may cause the bees to leave.



An easy way to store frames under ParaMoth is to place them in a hive body and stack them on several thicknesses of newspaper or a piece of cardboard. You can stack them up to ten high. On the top of every third box and also on the top box, place an 8x8 inch piece of paper and cover with a ¼ cup of ParaMoth crystals. Cover the stack with an Outer Cover. Taping or shrink wrapping the joints between the boxes helps keep the ParaMoth fumes from escaping so quickly. Check the crystals every few days until you get an idea how fast they are evaporating. Replace with fresh crystals before they all evaporate. Remember, the hotter it is the faster they evaporate.



The Got Questions? 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.



Bee Facts by Eddie Collins

It's hot but don't let that keep you away from your bees. Too many times, I have seen bees starve in August and September. Also, as the hot weather moves in, the queen will stop laying as much and the hive population will start to drop. As the hive population decreases, the mite population is at its peak. The mite-to-bee ratio becoming very unfavorable for your hive. By the time you notice resulting effects, it is often too late to do anything about it. So, by whatever means you prefer, it is time to test and treat for mites. If your method is "the survival of the fittest," then you are good to go and I or other bee suppliers will be happy to sell you bees to restock your hive next spring. Do your research or talk with some seasoned beekeepers. Choose how you plan to control Varroa Mites. If you use a chemical based treatment, be sure to follow the manufacture's directions.



This past month I actually caught a swarm! Yeah, I know what you are thinking, surely Eddie has caught a swarm before. Yes, I have but I really don't do much of this anymore. Lately, when I get the calls, I usually just give them Dick's phone number. The other day, I got a call from work asking me to get a swarm off one of the semi-truck trailers. It was fun grabbing a cardboard box and scooping the bees off of the underside of the trailer. No gloves, no veil, just me and nature and a couple of stings. All the spectators watched in awe. It was a good opportunity to answer a lot of questions and spread the bee word.

Bees and Bahia Grass

We had a lack of wildflower production in our area this year and I worried about my bees having trouble finding pollen and food sources. However, I have noticed my bees flying into their hives with heavily packed pollen on their legs. I had to wonder just where they were getting such an abundant amount of pollen. We don't have a large variety of plants for bees to pick from. We do have several Privet shrubs that line our fence by the highway but their flower source ended at the close of early spring and all our wildflowers have died off as well.

A couple of days ago, early in the morning before the sun heats up the day, I noticed the familiar sound of bees buzzing through my pasture. I thought it was a little peculiar for so many bees to be out early and foraging in an area where there wasn't a single flower in sight. However, our yard and the rest of our land is inhabited by Bahia grass with their long forked stems containing the seeds. Looking closer, I noticed bees landing on the stems that were filled with black seeds and every bee's pollen basket was filled with pollen. I thought, "Are our bees getting the pollen out from the Bahia grass seed?"

I did extra research on the Internet and some field work. Inside the spikelets that overlap in two rows on the forked Bahia stems are tiny flowers, containing feather-like stigmas and black stamens, which is where the bees were getting the pollen. The stigmas and the stamens can be seen dangling at the tips of the flowers. When rubbing these together, yellow pollen will indeed fall out. I also noticed that the bees would end their "hunt" sometime in the afternoon. They would be back the next morning when the grass flowers had replenished the pollen.



We have reconsidered mowing our pasture and keeping the Bahia stems for our bees after this discovery. Bahia is a fast growing source of pollen, and it is better resistant to drought weather than other grasses. ~Isabella Crawford