



East Texas Beekeepers Association

August Report by Dick Counts

August 2, 2018

August is a transitional month for bees and beekeepers. The honey in your hive now is all you can expect to get this summer. It is hot and dry and there is very little natural forage available. Though the hot days may not make you feel like it, it is time to start preparing for fall and winter. Your bees will need a full super of stores for the winter. If they did not make much honey or if you extracted most of it; now is the time to start feeding sugar mixture to help the bees begin collecting stores. Your bees will also need access to a consistent water supply to deal with the hot days. Check your hives for beetles and mites. If you have extracted your honey, consider mite treatment, if needed. However, do not do treatments until you have finished extracting.

It is still not too late to make splits. If you do make a late split, feed both hives well. Locating mated queens is often difficult by this time of the year. If you know of a source for queens, please share that information at the August meeting.

I will be scheduling additional club extraction days. Please call me for an appointment. I will need to know how many frames you plan to extract. If you are a new beekeeper with first year hives, you may not have a big honey crop this season. However, even if you have only one or two frames to extract, give me a call and make an appointment. If you have not participated in a club extraction day before, look at last month's newsletter for detailed instructions about what you need to do.

Our club will again have its booth at the East Texas State Fair in September. The Fair is a great opportunity for us to talk about bees to hundreds of students and fair attendees. I will share additional information at the August meeting. We will start to build a schedule of volunteers to staff our booth.

Be ready to participate. It is always a great experience.

Also, be careful when wearing your suit and working bees — It is easy to become overheated in this hot weather. Drink plenty of fluids and pay attention to what your body is telling you.

President—Matt Thomas

Vice President—Eddie Collins

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Bridgette Thomasson

Ex. Director/Reporter—Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—tbd

Director-at-Large—Stan Brantley

Program Director — Joe Laws

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Newsletter Editor—Trish Wilson



Next Meeting
August 2nd

United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse
6:30 PM

TOP-BAR HIVES

If you read my article last month you will recall that while we were in Africa we had discovered that we should not be teaching the locals about the Langstroth hive. The main reason for this is because they already know how to build top-bar hives and seem comfortable with them. When we returned home we decided that we need to learn more about top-bar hives so that we can be better equipped to teach this style of beekeeping over there. I have been able to read a few books and learn some very good information. Prior to this trip, I really did not see the need to understand the differences between the two styles of hives, however now I realize there are many benefits to understanding this style whether you have one of these hives or not.



Top-Bar hives are a more natural style hive that has grown in popularity since the mid twentieth century. The key defining characteristic being the horizontal top-bars, from which the hive gets its name. The top-bar style hive has been around longer than the Langstroth, with the earliest record of removable top-bars dating back to the 1500's. The more recent top-bar style also features a horizontal body allowing easier access. Since the 1960's, top-bar hives have been rising in popularity because they are simple to build and are considered a natural approach to beekeeping.



The top-bar hive doesn't have frames or foundation; just bars. This allows the bees to build everything, but still allows the beekeeper to manage the bees. Since the bees build everything, it is considered a more natural style hive. For the most part all the management of the hive is the same as a Langstroth, or as similar as you want it to be. However, since there is no foundation under the wax, tilting the frame in many ways will break the wax. One other notable difference is that you can control the number of active frames by moving a following board. This allows the beekeeper to control the hive space.

There are many pros to keeping a top-bar hive. For new beekeepers, the biggest benefit is the start-up cost. While buying a top-bar hive might be expensive, it is easy and cheap to build one, and the bars are even easier. There is no need to buy extra boxes, an extractor, or even a bottom-board. Another benefit is the storage space required during winter. Since the bees build everything, and there are no extra boxes, you won't really have anything to store during the winter; you simply move the following board to diminish the hive size.

While there are some pros to top-bar hives, there cons as well. The biggest being the extracting process. Since the top-bar hives have no foundation on the frames, extracting with an extractor will not work. The way top-bar beekeepers extract is by crushing the comb, meaning that the entire honeycomb is destroyed in the process. Since the honeycomb is destroyed, the colony has to rebuild the comb on all the frames you extracted honey from. Wax is the most valuable resource, so many feel that this loss during extraction is too high a price to pay. While crushing the comb may seem bad, there are many other things you can do with the wax, like making candles. Having to crush the comb should not be the reason that you don't keep top-bar.



Ultimately, I had a wonderful time researching the article, and I plan to use all that I learned to teach people in Africa the next time I go. Top-bar hives are a more economical style hive perfect for the locals in Africa. While top-bar hives may have a difficult extraction process, they have many benefits as well. Overall top-bar hives are a great style of beekeeping, which I hope to implement in our bee yard also.



~ Peter

President's Letter *by Matt Thomas*



I hope each of you had a great bee season and pulled/extracted a barrel of honey! Honey season was decent this year. Some colonies produced 150 pounds and others 50. It averaged out to about 75 lbs. a colony. It sure was an improvement over last year which was too wet and production was low.

Some have inquired how colonies can produce so much honey. The answer is pretty easy but difficult to practice. There are basically three things you have to know to produce honey. Three simple rules to honey production that will take you from bucket to barrel. If you can manage to execute these three things you will have more Honey than you can give away; and it really doesn't matter if you have a few hives or numerous colonies.

This month's article I want to focus on the "first and golden rule of beekeeping". It is the easiest but most profound of the three rules. Every person who keeps bees must have young, good queens. If they are both good and young you will more than likely have great success. However, having good queens in your colonies is only one of the three elements needed. Unfortunately, you need more than just a great and young queen in the box. All three elements have to be followed in order for the colonies to flourish and for the bees to pack on the honey.

A good queen will out-perform an inferior but genetically superior queen every time. How do you know she's a good one? She produces a populace colony. You cannot do anything in beekeeping without a populace queen. Sometimes when I'm looking through my colonies I will think to myself, "She's a two-hundred pounder." Meaning, she will produce a hundred pounds the first year and hundred pounds the second year. She then will be replaced.

A young queen will out-perform an old and genetically superior queen every day of the week. Why? It's simple... a young queen lays more eggs than her older counterpart. In fact, the young queen will lay as many as hundreds of eggs more per day on average. A young, well mated and genetically superior queen is off the charts in production. Those are rare and, more importantly, need to be reproduced. If a colony cannot be split 5 ways in the spring, there is no need for grafting out of that queen. Bee breeders are looking for great genetic traits and high populations of bees. Remember, it is impossible to do anything without enormous populations. How a queen looks is not nearly as important as how she performs.

The healthiest bee hives I had this year were all run by young queens. They were all raised with an abundance of bees and food. The queen cells were really nice in size and produced some big abdomens. The queens that were superseded were inferior and were eliminated by the colony. Colonies recognize a good queen from a poor substitute and they will replace the "junk queens" themselves or the beekeeper recognizing the differences will do it.

How do you know it's a good queen? Laying pattern, disposition of her prodigy, stores of nectar and pollen, cleanliness of the colony and population are all signs the queen in the box is young, good and genetically superior. You can potentially have a great queen in the box but poor weather and resources hamper production. If you are in the middle of a honey flow, a good one, and your queen is not getting the job done it may be time to replace her. If you are doing spring build-up and feeding your bees and they just don't seem to be advancing at a rate you know they should be, it will be soon time to replace the queen once you have cells or another queen available.

Good and young queens are essential for production and over-wintering your bees. However, you can have the best queens in the world but be lacking in a couple other areas and your colonies just will not produce. It's not always about great or inferior queens, it is more probable that we may have inferior knowledge or have our bees in unsuitable yards. Stay tuned for next month's article when I talk about the "second element of the three in producing great bees and lots of honey".

Remember to keep plenty of water available for your hives to keep cool in the August heat.

Blessings,
~ Matt

Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley



August is a hot month in Texas. The way July ended makes it look like it may be hotter than usual. During this hottest period, there is not much for the hive to do except try to maintain its status and keep cool. Water is essential for the cooling process to be effective. If natural water sources are not available, you will need to provide a good clean watering place for your bees. If possible, have a couple of spots for the bees to visit. Try a little salt in one and a small amount of Clorox in the other. Watch the bees to determine if one mix is more desirable than the other.

Too much salt or Clorox and the bees may not visit either.

Double brood hives will probably have large beards of bees covering the outside of the hive or even hanging off the bottom board on a hot afternoon. This is not cause for alarm; it is just a normal bee activity in hot weather. Bees are moving outside of the hive to reduce the heat load caused by many thousands of bees inside the boxes. At the end of the day, the bees will move back inside - but tomorrow you'll probably see them bearding again.

Since many hives are placed in full sun to help reduce the Small Hive Beetle population, there are a couple of things you can do to reduce the heat build-up inside the hive.

Consider raising the front edge of the telescoping cover and sliding it back until the front edge the cover rests on the edge of the inner cover. This allows heated air to rise out of the hive. I would not suggest this for a weak hive because it does increase the area for robbers to get inside the hive.



If you use a migratory cover, consider placing two 2x2 or 2x4 on top of the hive and adding a piece of plywood or tin as a shade top. A piece 3-foot by 3-foot makes a nice shade cover for the hive. Place a concrete block or a couple of bricks on top of the plywood or tin to ensure that the wind does not blow it away. You can do this on hives with telescoping covers also. The shade board will help reduce the sun's heat on the hive.

Do not neglect in checking the queen and the brood nest. It is possible the top brood box has ten frames of honey and the bottom box is "honey bound". This is the term for "the field bees put nectar in every cell and the queen has no place to lay eggs". One solution is to pull and extract honey from the top box. When replacing the extracted frames, put them in the center of the bottom brood box and move other full frames from the bottom brood box into the top brood box. This will give the queen room to lay eggs.

What to do with your extracted supers? I am of the opinion that the hive that filled the supers should be given the opportunity to "lick them clean" by putting them back on the hive. After the bees have cleaned the frames, you can leave them on the hive or remove them for storage in a cool, dry area. If storing them off the hive, put several thickness of newspaper on the floor (or an old telescoping cover, upside down), and stack the dry supers. Place an 8x8 inch piece of paper on top of the third super and put two tablespoons of Paramoth crystals on the paper. Stack three more supers and repeat the paper/paramoth crystal. Do not stack over ten supers high. Start a second or third stack as needed. Place paper/paramoth crystals on top of the top super and cover with a telescoping cover. Seal the joints between supers with blue painters tape. Renew Paramoth crystals on the top super every two to four weeks, depending on how fast they evaporate. As they evaporate, the heavier-than-air vapors will filter down the stack and protect against wax moth invasion.

Paramoth purchased at Walmart is now in plastic bags as "balls" rather than "crystals". Be sure you are purchasing Paramoth (paradichlorobenzene) and not naphtha moth balls. **DO NOT USE NAPHTHA MOTH BALLS OR CRYSTALS.**

Continue to do a check for mites and treat as needed. Information shared at the TBA Summer Clinic in Conroe indicated that the failure of most queen-right hives is due to high mite populations. Do not under-estimate the damage that Varroa can do to your hives!



The Got Questions?

The group will be open 6:00-6:30 before the meeting. Join us if you are a new beekeeper or have some beekeeping questions. If you have not joined us before, ask someone to point you to the Got Questions? Room. We will try to help you find some answers.



The August Speaker is

Pierre Lau

See you there!
Joe Laws, Program Director



...from the Editor

**MAKE SURE YOU HAVE PLENTY OF
WATER RESOURCES FOR YOUR
HONEYBEES and OTHER POLLINATORS ..
It's HOT out there !!!!**



To the club and everyone who attended the July ETBA meeting that contributed Many thanks !!!!
This is a great opportunity to contribute, or if you would like to do more to make this a reality.

PLEASE send your tax-deductible donation to the address below : attn.: *Chris Doggett.

**Perhaps, if you'd like to, even include a little note letting them know that you are an ETBA member and that the Texas Honey Bee Education Association is appreciated for all they do for the honeybees, ecosystems and beekeepers alike :)*

Let's do more to raise awareness about the vital importance of bees .. It's so much more than just honey production!



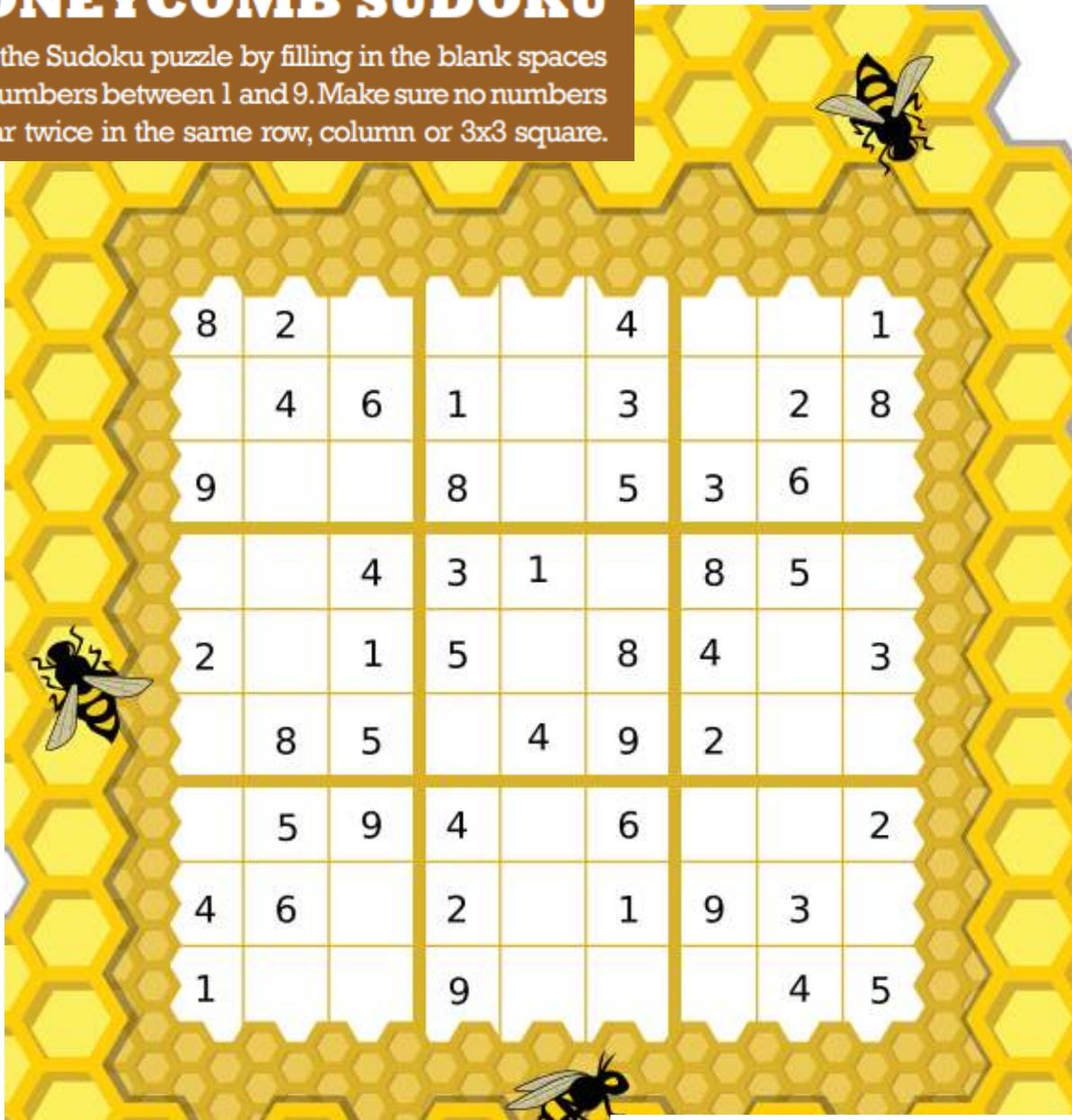
All Texas vehicle owners may obtain a specialty license plate from Texas DPS. The cost is an additional \$30 over your regular yearly vehicle registration fee. "Save the Bees!" plates should be available in mid-2019.

THBEA
400 CR 440
Thrall, TX 76578

- ◆ The Texas Honey Bee Education Association (THBEA) is an IRS recognized 501c 3 organization, so your donation may be tax-deductible.
- ◆ Encourage your local bee association, beekeepers and friends to donate too.
- ◆ If we all do a little, we will reach our goal. Please make donations payable to THBEA.
- ◆ Required deposit to proceed with manufacturing of the specialty license plates; \$8,000
- ◆ THBEA will receive \$22 per year for each plate sold or renewed
- ◆ Proceeds will be used to further THBEA's honey bee education and research.
- ◆ Deposit will be returned to THBEA and used for educational purposes when 800 plates are sold.

HONEYCOMB SUDOKU

Solve the Sudoku puzzle by filling in the blank spaces with numbers between 1 and 9. Make sure no numbers appear twice in the same row, column or 3x3 square.



		6			5		3
		9			6		
4						2	6
	9	4		7		3	5
7							4
		8	3	9	4	1	7
			7		3	8	
	2		1	6	9		
9	1			4			2

			3		5	6	
5		1		6			
	6				4		2
1					6		5
9	5	2	1		7		
4			5				1
		5				3	4
3		7	8		9		
				4	3	5	