



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 28 No. 2

February 7, 2013

## *February Report by Dick Counts*

We had 92 members and guests at our January meeting, including some of our scholarship students and their parents. Let me encourage you again to wear your name tag and introduce yourself to our visitors and welcome them to ETBA.

We are just now heading into February but Spring is just around the corner. You should be checking your hives to make sure that the bees have plenty of food for the cold days in February. Start watching for early flower and tree bloomings. We usually see the Wild Plum start blooming later in February. This will be a sign that the queen is increasing her laying. Make sure she has plenty of room in the brood chambers.

Our 2013 Beginners Beekeeping class got underway in January. This year's class has 35 students, including eight scholarship students. They are a diverse group, a mix of guys and gals age 9 to 71. It is good to see such an interest in learning about bees and beekeeping.

Providing information to the public is a large part of ETBA's mission. We are already receiving requests from clubs and schools for presentations about the Honey Bee. It looks like 2013 will be a busy year for our Royal Court. These young ladies do a very good job representing ETBA and the Honey Bee to the public. They are an asset to our club.

Our February speaker will be Mike Rappazzo. Mike will share some of his experiences working with a commercial beekeeper in the Frankston area.

After Mike's presentation, we will have our Spring Auction/Raffle. The auction will include a box full of garden tools donated by Crossroads School. The school donated the garden tools for our auction in appreciation for a presentation made by Bekah Lenamond this past November!

Mark your calendars for our March meeting. Our special guest speaker will be Dr. Juliana Rangel, the new professor of apiculture at the Texas A&M Honey Bee Facility. Dr. Rangel has a Ph.D from Cornell University and has post-doc work at North Carolina State University. She will share with us about her background and her plans for the Research Lab.

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Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

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Brantley, Randy Bobo

Program Directors — Joe  
Mekalip, Gus Wolf

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

**February 7**  
**United Methodist Church**  
**405 West Main in Whitehouse**  
**6:45 PM**

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

## *HONEY QUEEN REPORT* by Vi Bourns



We are making good progress in preparing for the coming year. Hayden and Martha tested several new recipes for their brochures. They all sounded so good we had a hard time choosing one to use. I imagine you will get a chance to try most of them in the coming months. The brochures are at the printer and could be ready by the coming meeting. The announcement of the 2013 ETBA Royal Court, their bio's, and pictures have been sent to the editor of the TBA Journal, so look for them in the next issue.

Their schedule for February includes attending the Winter Delegates Meeting in Salado on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Hayden will also present "All About The Honey Bee" to a group of gardeners in Kilgore on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Lindale High School Science Club has invited Martha to do a presentation on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Our "Cooking With Honey" cookbooks are in and now available to club members for \$13.00 each. We have already sold five cases plus a few more; so thank the directors for urging me to reorder.

I will be unable to be with you on the 7<sup>th</sup> and have asked Linda Pelham to represent me. Due to the special program by Mike Rappazzo and the Auction/Raffle, our presentation will be brief. Linda will introduce Hayden and Martha, and they will tell you about the special treat they made just for you. Please read their articles in the newsletter, they always have something interesting from their research. Have a wonderful meeting and I'll see you in March.



Hello beekeepers. This month's article is on honey bee bites. For the past few years, I have corrected my mom for saying, "He bit me!" when one of my bees would sting her. I would follow by saying "No mom, it's a she, and honey bees don't bite, they sting!"

Well, it turns out that my mom was partly right. Honey bees do bite, though they don't bite humans. Honey bees use their tiny mandibles to bite insects and mites that are too small for them to sting, such as wax moth larvae and varroa mites. Some recent studies have shown that when the bees bite their victim, they release a snake-like venom containing a natural anesthetic that paralyzes the victim. The bees are then able to carry the paralyzed victim out of the hive.

More research has shown that the anesthetic in the venom, known as 2-heptanone (2-H), has great potential for use in human medicine and could lead to the production of a natural, low toxicity local anesthetic for humans and animals. 2-H is a natural compound that's found in other insects and also in many foods. It has a similar mode of action to Lidocaine, the most commonly used local anesthetic, but has a lower toxicity than other conventional anesthetics. Vita (Europe) Ltd, the UK-based honey bee health specialist, has already patented the compound for use as a local anesthetic and is seeking pharmaceutical partners to develop it further.

This new data was discovered by a team of researchers from both Greek and French organizations who worked in collaboration with Vita (Europe) Ltd. Dr. Alexandros Papachristoforou, from the University of Thessaloniki in Greece, who led the team, said "It's amazing that this second line of honey bee defense has gone undetected for so long. Beekeepers will be surprised by our discovery and it is likely to cause a radical rethink of some long-held beliefs. It will probably stimulate honey bee research in many new directions."

The Technical Director of Vita, Dr. Max Watkins, also said they are very excited about the finding and that "the discovery of a highly effective natural anesthetic with huge potential will be of great interest to the pharmaceutical industry eager to develop better local anesthetics."

Well, it turns out that the honey bees are even more useful to us than just for making honey and pollinating our crops and plants. I find it amazing how complex these tiny little insects are, and how much they can benefit us, in spite of their size. The more things I learn about the honey bee, the more I marvel at what a wonderful God we have to create such an amazing insect! I'll see you at the next meeting!

~Hayden





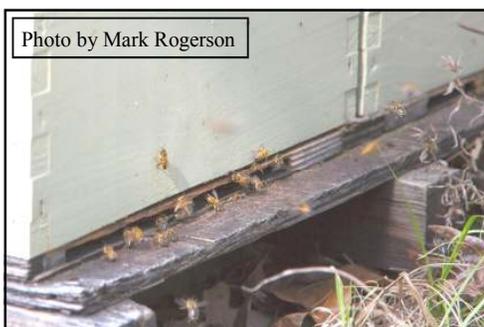
## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

I've got a big swarm of bees," she said. The call came on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> early in the afternoon. "There's a lot of them, do you want them?" "They are making a really loud buzzing noise." Who could resist an offer for free bees? But it was in Pickton, about an hour away, and it was the last thing I needed with the "honey-do" list I had for that Saturday. All the questions I asked pointed to a large swarm in a tree. I was itching to go, but it would be the only thing I would do that afternoon. Still, something didn't make sense. I asked if she could email me a picture so I would know what to expect. She could do better, "How about a movie?" "That would be great!" About twenty minutes later, a short 55 second clip arrived in my email. I was anxious to open it up and see my potential prize. Well, I watched it and thought, "Surely this is the wrong clip. " I didn't see any bees. So I watched it again and there, 10 or so seconds from the end was a bee hovering over a small flower on a branch. I watched a third time, now knowing what I was looking for. There they were, bees all over the flowers. I quickly called back, said that I did get the video, and it was very helpful. I had one more question. "What kind of tree is that?" "Japanese Elm," came the reply.

Then everything made sense. She didn't have a swarm. She had an Elm tree in full blossom and a tree full of protein starved bees gathering pollen. Remember, the Elm trees bloom this time of year. She told me how the same thing happened last year, and yes, the tree was full of bees and is there any way to get them in a box and make a hive? A little over-the-phone- bee-school was in order. When I explained what was happening, she was a little disappointed. But she did say that they had a Jasmine plant tower in the garden that had a hollow space in the center and it was certain the bees had their hive in there. If she got a smoker and blew a lot of smoke in there would they all come out and go into a bee box? A little more education was in order. I was sure glad that I didn't make the long drive just to find some foraging bees!



All to point out that there is quite a bit of misunderstanding and misinformation about bees out there. One of the club's purposes is to educate the public about bees. We seem to be doing that best through our Queen program and the public outreach of our Royal Court presentations. Be sure to support the program any way you can. On the snack table there is always a "bee basket" for donations to the Queen Program. See Vi Bourns if you can help.



My three hives seem to be doing well. I fed them twice during the past six weeks. On warm days there is quite a bit of activity on the landing boards and they are bringing in pollen. I had left some old comb out on a board close to the house and would fill it now and then with syrup to open feed. The bees sure loved it. They also seemed to be enjoying a piece of protein patty I left out for them. I was surprised, though, that even after the really cold days and nights we had, there were wax moths on the piece of open comb at night. They are still around and do not appear to be adversely affected by the cold. Pesky critters.

It's getting close to jumping out of the starting gate for the 2013 season. Make sure your bees are well fed both syrup and protein so that the egg laying and brood rearing can start as soon as possible – it may, in some cases already be underway. There are only a few weeks left to get everything ready! Take advantage of these next few weeks to finish up any work on woodenware. Clean your queen excluders. Make sure your supers and frames are ready to go on as soon as the spring flow starts. Bee ready. Spring is on the way.

The TBA Winter Delegates meeting is Saturday, February 16 at the Stage Coach Inn in Salado. Everyone is invited. If you are interested, see Dick Counts or Vi Bourns at the meeting.

## February is Auction/Raffle Month



Hello, fellow beekeepers! It's hard to believe that spring is around the corner, but it's coming quickly! Usually around this time of year, my dad and I start feeding our hives pollen patties to jump start brood production. At our January meeting, we talked about the different types of patties available and methods for feeding them. During this discussion, the idea of using fermented pollen patties came up. Since I hadn't heard about this type of patty before, I decided to do a little research on the subject.

What makes a fermented patty different than others? To answer that, we first need to look at how bees use pollen. Pollen in a hive is either eaten by nurse bees to stimulate the production of royal jelly or used as the main ingredient in bee bread, a substance fed to all worker and drone larva older than 3 days. Bees make this "bread" by mixing pollen and nectar together with microorganisms that come from the bees' honey stomachs. These microorganisms make bee bread more digestible for the bees and also allow it to keep in cells for up to 2 years without going bad. Fermented pollen patties contain similar microorganisms so that the patties are, supposedly, easier to digest and convert to bee bread than regular patties. In a study conducted by Jerry Hayes (author of the Classroom section in the American Beekeeping Journal) and Dr. Amanda Ellis, hives fed either fermented pollen patties or fresh pollen weighed the same after consuming multiple batches of the food. Thus, while fermented patties aren't necessarily better for your bees than fresh pollen, they *may* be better than regular patties.



Hopefully this information has given you something to think about - I know it makes me curious to try fermented patties in some of my hives! I look forward to seeing you at the February meeting! ~Martha

## *Bits of Pollen*

Editor's Note: From time to time, members share with me clippings, articles, Internet references, pictures, and other bits of information that would be interesting to beekeepers. Occasionally, I find ways to insert some of them into the newsletter if space is available. Since we really do not have a newsletter column designated for this purpose, I decided to create one. I started to call it "Odds and Ends". But this is a beekeepers newsletter, so let's call it "Bits of Pollen". If you run across bits of pollen in your reading and would like to share them with the rest of ETBA, email them to me at eudy48@gmail.com or bring them to the next meeting. I will collect them and publish a "Bit of Pollen" column when space is available.

A couple months ago, Honey Princess Martha Jeske wrote an article about apitherapy, the use of bee venom in medical treatment. The discount store Sams Club publishes a magazine called Healthy Living. Here is a quote from their May/June 2012 issue: *Bee Your Best—What's the hottest, strangest new beauty ingredient — **Bee Venom.** "Apitherapy" creams contain bee-created honey, wax, organic oils, and the venom from thousands of bee stingers. The venom is purported to stimulate collagen growth and cell renewal, but there's no clinical evidence yet to support this.* The article did not say if you could buy apitherapy creams at Sam's Club, but you might look in the beauty aisle next time you are there.

Scientists at Indiana's Purdue University are studying the genes that help honey bees defend against varroa. Some bees have a genetic trait called "varroa sensitivity hygiene" that allows them to sense when varroa are on the grubs in the capped brood cells. These bees sense the presence of immature varroa, uncap the cell, and remove the pupa, disrupting the mite's reproduction cycle. The research team hopes to identify the chromosomes involved so they can be bred into other bees.

The January 2013 edition of Bee Culture Magazine has an article by James Tew (page 30) about dealing with a sudden hive collapse due to a heavy varroa infestation. It is an interesting article with some thought-provoking ideas. In the concluding paragraphs, Mr. Tew lists his plans to prevent this in the future. One of his action items is to start dating and rotating frames. We are seeing more and more articles advocating not reusing drawn comb after so many years. Everybody seems to have their own idea of how many years, ranging from yearly by some commercial pollinators whose hives live in the heavily sprayed orchards to 5 years from some local beekeepers. Dating your frames gives you the means to know how long they have been in use. Write the date on the top bar with a permanent marker.



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

Congratulations to Miss Caroline Adams, recently crowned as the 2013 American Beekeeping Federation Honey Queen. You may remember Miss Adams from her outstanding presentation at our July meeting. She shared with us an interesting and informative discussion of her real-life experiences in keeping her own bees. Congratulations Caroline, another great queen from the Adams line!

As I write this article in the third week of January, it is a little hard to think of Spring being “right around the corner.” Weather-wise, we could still be facing some of the coldest winter-like days during late January and February. However, for a hive in East Texas, February is a time for bees to begin transitioning out of their winter pattern and start preparing for Spring.

Look for a warmer afternoon and do a quick inspection of the brood chamber. Even in early February, you should see small teacup-sized patches of capped brood in the center of the brood chamber. By late February, you should see the brood patches on several frames. The brood patches should be solid with few empty cells in the patch. If you see a lot of empty cells inside the brood patch, be suspect of that queen. Also, be aware that the queen is still light enough to fly. Be cautious when holding a frame outside the hive and don't let her fly away. If you do see her fly way, put the frame back into the hive and then leave the top off for 10-15 minutes. If you are lucky, she will return to the familiar smells of the hive.

Wintering bees will move throughout the hive feeding on available stores. By late February/early March, they are often in the top brood chamber of a two-brood-box hive. As the queen begins to lay and fills the empty cells in the top brood chamber, she may think she is running out of room. Most feel that she will prefer to move up rather than down to the lower brood box. Some beekeepers feel this is a good time to “reverse the brood chambers”, in other words, remove the bottom brood box, set the top brood box on the bottom board, and then set the old “bottom “ brood box on top. The queen now has plenty of room to expand upward in the “new” top brood box. Relieving the brood congestion and providing this additional room for laying may also delay the hives desire to swarm.

Another February task is to clean the bottom board of the accumulated trash, wax cappings and beetle carcasses that have fallen from the hive. A clean bottom board is less inviting to hive beetles “looking for a home.” An extra bottom board makes this task easier. Set the entire hive to the side and place the clean extra bottom board where you want the hive to stay. Pry the bottom board from the hive and set the hive back in place on the clean, extra bottom board. You can now scrape and clean the bottom board that you just removed. After cleaning, it becomes your clean, extra bottom board and you repeat the process with the next hive. This process minimizes the amount of time that the hive is off its bottom board. A word of caution -- don't scrape the bottom boards onto the ground around the hives. Scrape them into a suitable container and dispose of the scrapings away from the apiary. Screened bottom boards collect less trash than solid bottom boards but may still need cleaning around the edges where the wire is fastened.

While you are in the hives, be sure to check for stores. Over the next few weeks, activity in the hive will turn more and more to brood rearing. However, we are still several weeks away from the first major blooming of nectar producing flowers and consistently warm days to allow continuous foraging. The colony will continue to be dependent on its internal stores to provide the energy and nutrients for early brood rearing. If stores become exhausted and the bees cannot find enough forage, they may began uncapping larvae and eating them as a short-term solution. If the hive feels light or the frames look low on stored honey, feed with 2-to-1 sugar syrup. Your goal with this feeding is to ensure that the hive has enough food to prosper until the natural food sources become consistently available. Be careful of over feeding and allowing the bees to store more sugar syrup than they can use or you may see it again in the form of crystalized honey at extraction time.

If you need queens this spring and have not yet ordered them, you may be too late. If you find that you cannot get local queens, consider looking for sources in Georgia, Alabama or Florida. If you order queens from outside sources, please share that information with ETBA. Perhaps the club could develop a list of sources and how well their bees performed in our East Texas environment. Email that information to our newsletter editor at [eudy48@gmail.com](mailto:eudy48@gmail.com)

Got Questions? I will be at the meeting early. Look for me 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.



## Feeding Bees in a Commercial Apiary *by Mike Rappaazo*

At the last meeting, I mentioned I was able to start working for a commercial beekeeper. He is from Central South Dakota but winters almost a thousand hives in East Texas from late fall through May. We fed bees once in December and once again mid-January. This last feeding was particularly challenging due to freezing rain and ice. We had to take temperature into consideration before we fed. It is not advisable to feed in freezing temperatures. When the bees fly out to "GREET" you, they will freeze to death! When it is in the high 30s or low 40s, the bees will not freeze to death, they just like to clump on your back to stay warm.

Due to the freezing temps, we ended up spending some quality time on the couch or in one of the lazy boys most of the days that we were staying at the bee yards. However, we were able to get out and feed a day and a half out of the three days we were scheduled to feed. Despite having to wait for the temperature to warm up enough to start feeding each day, we were able to get all but one yard fed.

This beekeeper feeds his hives with syrup (HFCS Type 55:High Fructose Corn Syrup) and a homemade Mega Bee patty. A tanker load of syrup was delivered back in early December. We transferred all 50,000 pounds of the syrup (a gallon of this syrup weighs around 11.4-11.6 lbs depending on the outside temperature) into 330 gallon totes. We mixed the patty ourselves using Megabee powder and HFCS at a rate of around a 50lb of Megabee to 5 gallons of syrup. The consistency is like peanut butter or bread dough, depending on the batch.



At each of the nine beeyards, there are approximately 96 colonies. We worked in teams with one person taking off lids and the other person pumping one gallon of syrup into each division board feeder. To pump the syrup, we used a gas powered pump that pulled syrup out of the 330 gallon tote. Then, using a hive tool, we would place a glob (a baseball to softball sized depending on the hive) on top of the frames. After all of the hives were fed and closed back up, we headed to the next yard and repeated the process. We were able to completely feed a yard of 96 hives in about one hour.



Despite the bee's persistence, we didn't get stung too bad. Rule of thumb: wet and cold bees aren't happy campers! I was definitely thankful that I took extra measures to be "bee proof"! Duck tape, boots, coveralls, bee jacket, you get the picture. Both times I was there to feed, I got stung on the front of the neck on top of my Adam's apple! And both times, it was after I had taken my veil off. Another rule of thumb: When in doubt leave your veil on!

So far it has been a great experience and I would recommend to anyone to work with a commercial beekeeper if you have the opportunity.

### Excerpt from the November 2002 American Bee Journal

#### Using Powdered Sugar for Varroa Control

Take 4 lbs. of powdered sugar and mix in 8 ounces of pure garlic powder, no salt in these mixtures for control of mites. This mixture will treat 18 to 20 brood boxes. (This is a 1 to 8 ratio. For heavier infestations you can go as high as a 1 to 6 ratio.)

If you have two brood boxes or more, take off all the hive bodies and supers down to the bottom brood box.

Take about 2 ounces of the mixture in the palm of your hand and sprinkle it on top of the frames, bees and all, making them white.

Set the #2 brood box back on top of your #1 brood box and repeat the procedure.

Many of you have asked if this mixture will kill foulbrood spores. I do not know the answer. When I find a disease in my bees, I burn them immediately. Then I know that I have neutralized the situation. It is by far better for me to do this rather than chance infecting my healthy colonies.

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Written by long-time ETBA member Jesse Adams ,  
New Boston, Texas.