



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 31 No. 2

February 4, 2016

## *February Report by Dick Counts*

We certainly started 2016 with a bang – 157 members and guests at our January meeting! I continue to be amazed at the growing interest in bees and beekeeping.

If you are an early arriver at our meeting, please take a few minutes and help pull out and set up the folding chairs. We seem to be finding ourselves pulling out the chairs after the meeting is underway. Let's try to be proactive and have the chairs available as people arrive.

ETBA has focused on providing public education through our Queen Program and providing beekeeping experiences for young people through our Youth Scholarship Program. We believe our youth are the future of beekeeping. The starting point for many of our young beekeepers has been our Youth Scholarship Program. Over the years, we have seen many of our scholarship students become active members in ETBA, some moving through our Queen Program to be state and even national representatives, and some moving into adulthood as commercial beekeepers.

The Youth Scholarship Program is funded by our club. We provide each student with a beginner beekeeping training class, a set of basic beekeeping tools, and one hive of bees. Each student must purchase their own protective gear. The cost runs around \$450 to \$500 per student. Funds come from our ETBA budget, which consist of yearly membership dues, fund raisers and donations. ETBA does not have many expenses so most of our funds are used to support the Queen Program and the Youth Scholarship Program.

For 2016, we have twelve Scholarship Students, the most we have ever had. That means it will be the most expense we have ever had for our scholarship program. Any special donation to the scholarship program would be appreciated. Any donations would help, be it a one-time big one or smaller monthly donations. Please give any donations to our Treasurer, John "Doc" Holladay and let him know they are for the scholarship program.

At the February meeting, we will talk about early spring increases and splits. That is what should be beginning to happen in our new bee year. Come join us.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—John Stewart

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Brenda Sheridan

Ex. Director and Reporter—  
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Lani  
Lanchester

Directors-at-Large—Stanford  
Brantley

Program Director — Matt Thomas

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

# Next Meeting

## Feb. 4

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 Isabella Crawford

## ***HONEY QUEEN REPORT*** by *Lani Lanchester*



The year is off to a fantastic start! Another Texan is serving as the American Honey Queen. Congratulations Tabitha Mansker. While here in Texas, former American Honey Princess, Texas Honey Queen, East Texas Honey Queen, and two-time East Texas Honey Princess Hayden Wolf has begun college, but not without lending a hand to the East Texas Honey Queen and Beekeeping Ambassador programs. Two weeks ago, Hayden joined our training day, offering her experience on how to represent our club, teach the public about honey bees, and even how to speak to the press.

Just in time too. My phone and email are buzzing with requests for Queen Brittany and Ambassador Jacob to teach about honeybees. This is going to be a fantastic year! If you have an event that you would like to request Brittany or Jacob, please contact Lani Lanchester at lanilanchester@hotmail.com. Like us on Face Book ETBA Honey Queen Program and ETBA Ambassador Program.



### ***Spring is Coming!***

It's that time of year again! We are headed into spring. As new beekeepers, you may have realized it is a busy time of year. There are several different projects that are suggested we should be doing. We should be feeding our bees and building boxes and frames. Some of us are getting ready to start our garden and trying to figure out what to plant in the garden. But as a result of all of our hard work, at the end of summer we get to enjoy some fresh honey!



As we are headed into spring, our queen's production of egg laying is going to increase by the thousands. February is still too early for the flowers and trees to bloom, so it is our job to make sure they have enough food in their hive as the new bees arrive. The more bees, the more food. There is a variety of things that we can feed our honey bees, such as sugar syrup, pollen substitutes and last year's honey. Thicker sugar syrup will help the bees dehydrate it faster and this way they can store more food. You can also feed your bees pollen patties.

It is important to make sure they have enough room for the queen to lay eggs. You might want to make sure you have the right equipment such as enough brood boxes and honey supers, tools, etc. You will want to make sure you have enough boxes and frames to last you all summer. As egg production and honey flow start increasing, it is important to make sure your bee hives have room to grow. You need room for the queen to lay eggs and room for the bees to store honey and pollen.

Gardening can be a lot of fun. My family grows a garden each year and we enjoy seeing our garden expand from planting new fruits and vegetables. Having a garden can change the way your honey tastes. Last year my dad and I planted over 20 sunflowers and we noticed a different taste in our honey. It can help your bees to have a constant food source nearby. Having honey bees near your garden will also help the production of your garden. Since my family has started beekeeping, I have noticed how much more our garden has produced than in the past. Even though beekeeping keeps you busy at times, there is no other hobby quite like it! ~Brittany



### ***Honey Bees & Pollination : How Important Are They?***

Honey bees are declining. Since the 1940s, this decline has increased exponentially. "What does this mean?" you might ask. Bees pollinate most of our food; up to 1\3 of our total food is courtesy of the wonderful honey bee.<sup>1</sup> Without bees, many of the luxuries that we enjoy would not be as common. Honey would not even exist, as honey bees are the only producers. Since they also pollinate most of the clover, alfalfa, and grain that goes to the cows, sheep, and goats, they help put meat and milk on the table. Many things we have come to love are directly or indirectly affected by honey bee pollination.

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Pollination is necessary for nearly all plants to produce seeds. Pollination is the process of pollen from the male flower being brought into contact with the female carpal. From the begonias in your front yard to the apple trees in the orchard, all plants need to be pollinated. While many plants are self-pollinating, more of them are not. Thankfully, we have the honey bee. The honey bees are members of a large family that is one of the main pollinators. From the bumble bee, the stingless bee, the carpenter and green bees, there are many helpful members of the bee family. Another, bigger family that bees are a part of is called the pollinators. This family includes many different varieties of pollinators including bees, butterflies, some flies, wasps, bats, and even birds. These pollinators pollinate everything from cotton to cucumbers to alfalfa. Bees are the leaders of the pollinator family though. Bees are responsible for 100% of the almond crop in the United States, and over ninety percent of most fruits, like plums, oranges, and apples, and much more.<sup>2</sup> This is a huge percentage of the total food of the world. Our world would be much bleaker without honey bees and the rest of the pollinator family.

Bees are the foremost pollinator of the world.<sup>3</sup> Google reports that they inhabit every continent except Antarctica, and there are many different species of the bee.<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons they are so helpful to plants as pollinators is their organization. Instead of the hive just sending individual scout bees out to pollinate whatever they can find, several scout bees go out to find a patch of flowers. When they locate a 3 foot by 3 foot square, they return, and tell the hive where the flowers are located, so that they can pollinate the flowers. Another way they eliminate cross pollination is that the forager bee is flower selective, meaning she will only pollinate apple flowers if the first thing she pollinates is an apple flower. Between these two particular methods, honey bees are able to eliminate a lot of cross pollination and help make sure that each flower gets the pollen it needs. It is said that without bees, we would not survive more than four years. It is also said that bees are responsible for 80% of the pollination in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The most depressing statistic says that the total number of managed colonies has dropped from five million hives in the 1940s, to 2.5 million today.<sup>6</sup> What has happened to cause the numbers to drop that fast? One factor could be the fact that almost all of the crops produced in the United States are sprayed with potent chemicals if they are not engineered to hold that very chemical inside of the seeds.<sup>7</sup> One of these chemicals, called neonicotinoids (neonics for short), affect the bees sense of direction, resulting in the bee getting lost, and dying outside of the hive.<sup>8</sup> We should be worried that we depend so much on bees yet do so little to preserve them. In Europe, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has declared one pesticide, clothianidin, unfit for use, but in the United States, this chemical is sprayed on a third of our total farm land, a whopping 143 million acres. There were also two more chemicals, imidacloprid, and thiamethoxam, that are still sprayed heavily in the United States, but are banned in Europe.<sup>9</sup> ~Jacob Cole

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Source Documents

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1. Breyer, Melissa. "What Christmas Dinner without Bees Would Look like." Tree Hugger. Narrative Content Group, 10 Dec. 2015. Web. 05 Jan. 2016.
2. Flottum, Kim. *The Backyard Beekeeper's Honey Handbook: A Guide to Creating, Harvesting, and Cooking with Natural Honeys*. 3rd ed. Beverly, MA: Quayside Pub. Group, 2014. Print. p.77-78
3. "Natural Resources Conservation Service." *Insects & Pollinators*. Natural Resource Conservation Service, n.d. Web. 08 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/plantsanimals/pollinate/>>.
4. "Google." Google. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.google.com/>>.
5. Breyer, Melissa. "What Christmas Dinner without Bees Would Look like." Tree Hugger. Narrative Content Group, 10 Dec. 2015. Web. 05 Jan. 2016.
6. Ibid
7. Boyers, Bruce. "GMOs and Pesticides-What Concerns Scientists." OC Digital. N.p., 31 Aug. 2011. Web. 08 Jan. 2016. <<http://organicconnectmag.com/project/gmos-and-pesticides-what-concerns-scientists/>>.
8. Connor, Steve. "Pesticides Linked to Mass Bee Deaths Also Affect Other Friendly Organisms including Birds and Fish." *The Independent*. Independent Digital News and Media, 23 June 2014. Web. 08 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/pesticides-linked-to-mass-bee-deaths-also-affect-other-friendly-organisms-including-birds-and-fish-9557959.html>>.
9. Sarrich, Christina. "List of Foods We Will Lose If We Don't Save the Bee." *Honey Love*. N.p., 15 Aug. 2013. Web. 6 Jan. 2016. <<http://honeylove.org/list-of-food/>>.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid



## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

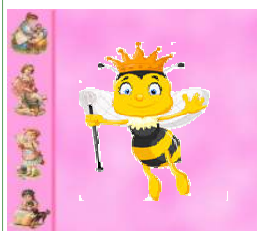
We like to heat at least part of our house with a free-standing wood stove. We've done it for years, about twenty-six to be exact. Our home in New Jersey was small enough (1,000 square feet) that the bulk of the winter heat came from the wood stove we had there. Down here in Texas, our home is a bit larger and the stove takes care of heating one end of the house and takes the chill out of the other half. In all those years, I never had to buy wood and was able to scavenge enough throughout the year to suit our purposes during the next winter. Having wooded acreage down here plus access to my neighbors woods ensures that we will never be in want of fuel for our stove. However, we did come close to running out this past week and it necessitated a quick trip with a chain saw to a seasoned fallen oak to get enough to finish riding out the winter.



Your bees might be in the same situation right now. We have had our share of cold and the bees have been consuming their stores to keep warm and alive. But do they have enough? Although there is pollen available for them this time of year, their food stores might be running low – there are no nectar producing flowers blooming now that I know of. That means they are depending on you to supply their fuel because they can't get it themselves.

I have two small hives that require feeding. All the others feel like they still have plenty stores. I have a nuc I retrieved from a water meter and my top bar hive. The nuc has a mason jar feeder on the top and almost as fast as I put a jar of syrup on it they will empty it. It takes them about two days to put it away. The top bar hive, on the other hand, does not seem to be too interested in the syrup. They still appear to be doing well as there is activity on warm days. But the feeder jar is still  $\frac{3}{4}$  full two weeks after I install it. I thought perhaps that the holes in the feeder top were too small and not letting the liquid drip out. But I took the jar out and put it on top of the nuc and it was emptied in a couple of days. So it is a wait-and-see game to find out if the TBH will survive the winter. I will keep making the syrup available to them although I wish I could figure out why they are loathe to take that food!

On one of the next warm days, I will have a challenge to undertake. The local water company has a hive in a meter. I had been told about it a while ago but was unable to locate it as it was in a wooded area. One of the representatives recently flagged it for me and I have gone to survey it. The meter box sits on top of the ground and appears to be stove in on one side. There are plenty of bees going in and out so the hive is still vital. But all the brush around it will make it a not-so-easy removal. I figure I'll need to take loppers, pruning shears, and a saw just to get close enough to be able to manipulate it. I am hoping to be able to just take the whole meter box and bring it home – after I find the queen. It should be interesting – and I can use the extra hive. Since when can any of us have too many bees?



Life has sort of returned to normal in our household now that Hayden is all done with her ABF Honey Princess responsibilities. She finished her last expense report, submitted it, and that was it. This past November, she turned 20 and we realized that, all told, she has been involved as a Queen or Princess in local, state and national levels for  $\frac{1}{4}$  of her life – 5 years. Thank you to all who supported and encouraged her as she held each one of these positions. It is an experience that she will never forget – and the scrap books that she made along the way will preserve all her favorite memories.

In closing, I would like to remind everyone that it is time to renew your ETBA membership for 2016. Our memberships run from January to December. If you join in October, November or December, we do grandfather you in for the next full year. You can renew your membership at the meeting with our Treasurer, Doc Holladay. If you are not at the meeting, you can renew online at our website, [www.ETBA.info](http://www.ETBA.info). Or you can mail a check to ETBA, PO Box 9662, Tyler, TX 75711-9662. Make checks payable to ETBA and mark them as Membership Renewal.

TBA members can renew their state memberships online at the TBA website [www.texasbeekeepers.org](http://www.texasbeekeepers.org) or see Stan Brantley at our meetings.



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

February is the “get busy” month for beekeepers. We had enough nice days in December and January to examine our hives and make sure honey, pollen and bee bread stores were adequate. Bee Bread is a cell of pollen with honey on top of the pollen. As the weather continues to warm and the days get longer, the queen will increase her laying and expand the brood nest. Large amounts of honey, pollen and bee bread will be used to produce the young spring bees.

February can be a tricky month because we can have some of our coldest weather and some nice, warm days. If you want to inspect the hive, catch one of the nicer days. Do not open the hive on cold, wet or windy days because of the danger of chilling the brood nest. If it is at least 60 degrees, dry and no wind, you can open the hive and do inspections. However, work quickly and do not keep the hive open for long periods. If you remove a frame and see the queen or brood, return it to hive quickly.

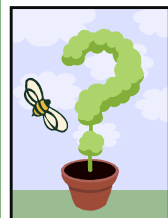
If you are concerned about the stores in a hive, do not hesitate to feed. Hives need access to both carbohydrates (honey or sugar syrup) and pollen (natural pollen or pollen substitutes like patties or powders). Carbohydrates allow the bees to generate the heat needed to survive cold and pollen is needed for the new brood. If you robbed honey from a hive this summer, be sure to watch the available honey stores and feed syrup if needed. As long as we have cold nights, make sure there are at least a few frames of honey or syrup in the hive. A hive can go through a lot of honey or syrup in a prolonged cold spell.

If you are concerned about pollen stores, you can feed with a pollen substitute. I would not suggest laying a full patty in the hive. Cut off a third or fourth of the patty and place it on the top bars or on the inner cover. Your goal is to add only the amount of patty that the bees can eat in about a week. Different hives will consume patties at different rates so there is no absolute formula. You will develop a feel by observing each hive. We do not want to leave a large piece of patty in the hive for a long period because the hive beetles like to lay eggs under the patty. Even though beetles are less active in cold weather, they still remain in the hive.

Just one final comment about pollen patties. Experienced beekeepers give advice like “add a piece of pollen patty” and assume that a novice beekeeper will know how to do that. If you have never used pollen patties, they are a gooey substance sandwiched between two pieces of paper. The typical size is about 4 inches wide and 8 to 10 inches long and 3/8 inch thick. Just use a knife to cut off a piece the size you want and lay it on the top bars or on the inner cover, with the paper still adhered to the gooey insides. The bees eat the pollen substitute and remove the paper from hive. If they leave it there, you can remove the paper next time you are in the hive. It never occurred to me that someone would try to peel the paper off until a first-time patty user commented about how hard it was trying to pull the paper off that sticky stuff!

When doing inspections, you may see drone cells hanging off the bottoms of frames. When you remove a frame or separate two brood boxes, you will usually break open these large drone cells. This is normal and nothing to be concerned about. Drones are only about 10-15% of the hive population. Unless something is terribly wrong, the hive will produce plenty of drones. You need not worry about breaking open those cells.

If you do break open some drone cells, look for varroa mites on the larvae and pupae. Varroa prefer to lay eggs on drone larva because they have a longer period of pupation. The longer time in the cell gives the varroa mite a better chance at reproducing before the drone hatches. The mites often are readily visible on the white drone larva. One part of Integrated Pest Management for control of varroa includes placing a frame of drone-sized foundation in the hive, then removing and freezing it after the drone brood are capped, hopefully reducing the number of mites that will hatch inside the hive.



The Got Questions? Group will now meet in a larger room. The 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. Weather permitting the drive from Jefferson, I will be happy to join you.





## *Bee Facts* by Eddie Collins

Have you ever wondered why honey crystallizes? Also referred to as “going to sugar”, pure “local” honey will crystallize over time. It is a natural process. The time it takes all depends on the percentage of how much sugar, water, and pollen is in the honey and the temperature at which the honey is stored. Most of my local honey begins to crystalize when the temperature starts to drop toward the end of November. My lighter color honey always seems to crystalize quicker than the darker honey. To melt or un-crystalize it, I have to heat it -- but I don't heat it any hotter than the bees do in the hive.

Sometimes my customers ask me why their honey crystalizes so quickly. I explain that it all has to do with timing and temperature. For example, if I bottled the honey one month ago and let's just say it would crystalize a month later. Then if you bought it a month ago, you would have a month before it crystalized. However, if you bought it two weeks later, you would only have two weeks before it crystalized. I also instruct people to not put the honey in the refrigerator. Another thing you can do is just to Eat It Faster!

In our area, if you buy any “local” honey and it doesn't crystalize, then either it's not local or the honey has been heated so hot and filtered so fine to remove all the pollen out of the honey. The pollen in the honey is actually the “impurities” on which crystals grow. Just don't tell your customers that there are “impurities” in your honey. The pollen in honey adds to its flavor and its health benefits. Heating and filtration are the reasons most of the honey on the grocery store shelves never crystalizes.

A few interesting facts around all this. Tupelo honey never crystalizes. Canola honey will crystallize in 1 to 2 weeks after the bees put it in the comb. Creamed honey is honey that has been caused to crystallize into very tiny crystals.

Even though it may crystalize, the honey has not “gone bad” and can be used as a granular honey or can be heated to dissolve the sugar crystals. A simple way to re-liquefy the honey is to make sure the lid is on tight and run it through

the dishwasher. Or on hot days, you can leave it on the dash of your car. A double boiler also works - just don't get the honey warmer than 130 degrees. Please don't use a microwave because it will heat too hot, too fast and unevenly and could leave a burnt flavor. Also, please don't put honey in the refrigerator because it will make it crystalize even faster.

If you Google “heating honey” on the Internet, you may find some websites that claim heating honey turns it into a toxic substance. Some of these sites even claim that putting honey in your warm cup of coffee or tea makes it toxic. These claims are based on a holistic healing concept called Ayurveda and have no scientific proof.

As you check on your bees this time of the year, take the time to clean off the bottom boards. It is also a good time to remove any boxes the bees are not in and perform any needed maintenance. Just remember to put the boxes back on because soon the colony will start to explode with activity, and if all goes as planned, will be needing the extra space.

At the February meeting I'll have unassembled mediums (\$11.50) and deeps (\$13) for sale.



Linda Pelham found this package of Manuka Honey bandages at a local CVS Pharmacy, pack of eight for \$10.89. Manuka Honey from New Zealand is known as the most antibiotic of all honeys.