



East Texas Beekeepers Association

February 1, 2018

February Report by Dick Counts

We kicked off the 2018 bee year with 87 members and guests at our January meeting. Thank you for your support and participation. I found it interesting that our February and March meetings both fall on the first day of the month, an unusual occurrence two months in a row. Not sure if that holds any special significance but hope to see you at both meetings.

Let me encourage you to inspect your hives on the first warm day you can. January's very cold weather will have caused our bees to use more of their stores to keep warm. Make sure they have enough food left in the hive to carry through until the spring blooming period begins. If the stores are low, you can give them some supplemental syrup. This inspection will also let you know if you have any die-outs and need to order replacement bees.

If you have not already done so, now is the time to get your apiary and equipment ready for the new bee season. It is a good time to clean your bee-yard of weeds and debris. Inspect and repair any hive stands. Determine where you plan to locate any new hives and have their spot ready to sit a hive on. It is also your last chance to clean old boxes or build and paint new ones. If you need boxes, talk with Eddie or me. Through our bulk purchasing, we will have quality boxes cheaper than you can purchase them from suppliers.

Also talk to us if you need bees. Do not wait too long to place your orders for bees. We do not yet know what the supply and demand will be. You do not want to wait too late and not be able to find any bees for sale. Orders placed now will be for April delivery.

Our 2018 Beginners Beekeeping Class kicked off January 13. The class had 17 students, including two scholarship students. We were delayed a week from our original proposed start date of January 6. Our February class is scheduled for Saturday the 10th.

President—Matt Thomas

Vice President—Eddie Collins

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Bridgette Thomasson

Ex. Director and Reporter—Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—vacant

Director-at-Large—Stan Brantley

Program Director — Joe Laws

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Newsletter Editor—Trish Wilson



Next Meeting *February 1st*

United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse

6:30 PM

On the Web: etba.info

Since we are in the beginning of the new year, I decided to write my article on an important part of beekeeping that many of us sometimes forget about: **Record Keeping**. If you're a hobby beekeeper with only two or three hives, keeping records is not quite as important, however, everyone really should be keeping records as a means of evaluation and being pro-active. Keeping records is easy, affordable, and will make you a better beekeeper. This year, my family and I will start keeping records, along with the monthly mite counts.



Record keeping is easy, depending on how in-depth you want to go. The first thing that you are going to want to do is, mark and identify each hive; this will allow you to keep track of each individual hive much easier. Then, you need a record book for the multitude of records and notations that you want to keep. A record book (journal), can be anything from a spiral bound notebook, to a three ring binder. Keep in mind that you will want to choose something that you can organize and refer back to.

Now you are ready to keep records. Before you start, it is important to know what to include into an entry.



There are **five main things** that are important to include in record keeping.

1. What is the **brood pattern**? Knowing the brood pattern will tell you how good the Queen is. A good brood pattern will fill a large part of the frame without many spotty areas void of brood.
2. What is the general **population**? Approximately how many frames do the bees take up? Knowing the general population of your hive will allow you to know when you need to add new boxes.
3. Where is the **Queen**? Knowing the location of the Queen will let you know if the hive is queen-right. You don't only have to find the Queen, but if you can see three day old eggs, then that will tell you if you have a Queen in the hive as well.
4. Does your hive have **too much drone brood**? Too much drone brood might mean you have a faulty Queen or you have a laying worker.
5. Does your hive have **any kind of disease or pests**? Knowing how to identify different pests and diseases is an important part of beekeeping. Being able to identify Foul brood, Small Hive Beetles, Varroa mites, or any other infestations or diseases and the treatment you used, if any, are important to include in an entry.

** Dates / seasons of each entry can be quite useful as well.

By keeping track of each hive through record keeping you are able to keep track of things which will allow you to be able to start predicting variables. Keeping records will make you a better beekeeper because it will cause you to start paying better attention as you do a hive inspection. It will create a routine that you exercise when you go into a hive, which in turn will make you better at diagnosing what your hive is going through.

Now that you know how to keep records for your hives it should be easy to set a record book. An easy way to remember things after your hive inspections, is to keep a video recorder while you are inspecting. This will allow you to point things out that you might forget later. Record keeping will make all of us better beekeepers, so let's make 2018 the year we all get serious about this!

~ Peter

In preparation of Spring time Bee-Scapes.

(A recap of the 2016 article on bee & pollinator friendly plants that can be used in your bee-scape).

Bee Friendly Plants by Janelle Cole

Native Plants that are preferred by honey bees;

Goldenrod
 Foxglove
 Lemonbalm
 Liatris
 Rosemary
 Vitex
 Blackeyed Susan
 Lavender
 Yarrow
 Columbine
 Borage
 Basil
 Lupine
 Carolina Jasmine
 Huckleberry
 Aster
 Obedient Plant
 Salvias
 Esperanza
 Coreopsis



A few other plants:

Annuals— Alyssum, Aster, Cosmos, Marigold, Pentas, Sunflower, Verbena, Zinnia

Perennials—Butterfly Weed, Goldenrod, Lantana, Mexican Petunia, Milkweed, Mistflower, Phlox, Purple Coneflower, Salvias, Tickseed, Yarrow

Trees & Shrubs— Ash, Azalea, Butterfly Bush (especially Purple Knight), Buttonbush, Elm, Glossy Abellia, Toothache Tree, Willow, Peach, Plum, Hackberry, Redbud

Host Plants for Butterflies;

Tiger Swallowtail -
 Green Ash
 Magnolia
 Mexican Plum
 Cottonwood
Black Swallowtail -
 Fennel
 Dill
 Rue
 Parsley
 Queen Anne's Lace
Gulf Fritillary -
 Passion Vines
Texas -
 Shrimp Plant
 Mexican Petunia
Snout Butterfly -
 Hackberry
Painted Lady -
 Calendula
 Yarrow
 Sunflower
 Borage
 Hollyhock
Pipevine -
 Dutchman's Pipevine
Buckeye -
 Senna
 Clover
 Other Legumes

Hope you see a few on here that you want to add to your current landscape. Remember, to really encourage the bees to visit often stagger your blooming season, and plant at least a 3 ft section of the same flowering plant. Try to avoid reds, and choose purple, yellow or white flowering plants.

Lastly, if it does not survive, do not fret, try again!!

President's Letter *by Matt Thomas*

Well...The bee season has begun. We had our first bee class last Saturday and worked a couple of bee yards. We fed, did some hive inspections, problem solving, talked about cluster size and evaluated our queens. Some colonies, to my surprise, had not come to the top of the box in all the cold weather but, rather, had a few frames of brood in the bottom boxes. The season is starting right. I make a prediction that we will have an excellent year in both colony strength and floral availability.



Last year was a struggling time for honey production and build-up leading to the summer. Kicking the bee boxes doesn't help in production. I think our cold spells and abundant moisture this winter are really going to help spring and summer honey production. The bees clustered superbly this year because we had a better than average fall flow. Translated-the bees went into winter with a large cluster of bees. The colonies had plenty of nectar and pollen to keep the queens laying. Fall saved our bees.

The average honey production for a strong two deep colony is about 60 pounds. Last season I probably made about that. The season before that the number climbed to about 85 pounds. Some colonies did over 100 pounds. The bee hives were strong with young productive queens. Having prolific bees is only one aspect of having a great season of bees and honey production.



Yard location becomes, in addition, to management of queens and colonies, the most important factor of healthy bees. It's all about the health of the colony. You can have the best bees in the world but if they are in a junk bee yard they will not stay that way. Bee yards rich in nutrition and resources are poised to not only produce large volumes of honey, but have the healthiest bees imaginable. Good queens, great management, and superior bee yards are the triangle of production.

I was visiting a beekeeper friend this past summer who had bought my grandfather's operation when he retired. Many of the bee yards were also handed over to the new owners. My friend said, "When we want to get our bees healthy after a tough year we move them to those bee yards." All things are not equal-not queens, not management ability, and certainly, and most importantly, not bee yards. If you are truly interested in strong bees and large production find a good bee yard. Of course the real issue with most beekeepers is moving them. Convenience, tax benefits, getting overtly stung are a few discouragers in moving bees. Take some drives in the Spring around your area and look for some potential good sites. Keep driving around during the entire season. Some locations will be better early spring spots but offer nothing much for Fall. You want yards that provide resources for the entire season. The bees will be healthier with all the resources available to them.



We can talk about what to look for in selecting good bee yards in a later conversation or article. Beekeepers are scouts, managers, meteorologists, beetle smashers, skunk deterrents, floral experts and raccoon discouragers. Lol.

If you need some bees and queens this season I will have some available. You can contact me at thomasm11@georgefox.edu or call me at 903-279-7903.

Hope you have a great start to your bee season.

See you February 1st at our bee meeting.

Grace and Peace,

~ Matt

*Love and care for
your
honeybees!*



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley



East Texas has enjoyed relatively mild winter weather for the past couple of years. However, as I write this on January 16, Global Warming is not evident in my neck of the woods. I look out the window at a couple inches of snow on my bee hives. Some of you may be seeing more than that! We have now had two arctic fronts with night temperatures into the low teens and two to three days of sub-freezing daytime temps. The impact of this severe extended cold weather on our hives and on the hives of bee suppliers is not yet known. We have the possibility of seeing higher than usual winter losses and a lower availability of replacement bees.

Yesterday, January 15, before the cold front arrived, the temperature was in the high forties and the bees were flying. For you newer beekeepers, this is the time of the year that a strong hive really enjoys robbing a weaker hive. While the stronger hive has enough bees to send out foragers, the weaker hive may still be clustered trying to keep warm and not guarding the entrance. This creates the perfect opportunity for foraging bees to enter the hive and steal all of the stores. You can help minimize robbing by keeping the entrance reducer closed to the smallest opening.

Condensation inside the hive is another concern during these cold periods. Just as your breath condenses in the air on a cold day, the bee cluster produces moisture that rises and can condense on the bottom of the Inner Cover or Outer Cover and drip back onto the cluster. Raising one end of the Outer Cover with a small stick or strip of wood can allow the excess moisture to escape and reduce internal condensation.

Small Hive Beetle activity is generally at its lowest during the colder part of the year. However, beetles are still present inside the hive. I recently opened several of my hives to see what was happening inside. I found the bees in their winter cluster and not moving about the hive. I also did not see any beetles crawling on the topbars. Not wanting to disturb the cluster, I did not pull any frames or look deeper into the hive. However, I did see evidence of recent beetle activity. I had placed some pieces of Swiffer Unscented Sheets and some Brawny Dine-a Max towels in the hives to see if they could trap any beetles. The bees had propolized the sheets to the top bars and there were numerous beetles trapped in the filaments. Despite the cold weather, there are active beetles in your hives. If you are feeding pollen patties, use only a slice off the patty, about the size that your bees can consume in a week. Beetles like to get under the patties that remain in the hive for a long period and lay eggs. I have mentioned this before but for our new beekeepers I will mention it again – you don't have to pull the paper off a pollen patty. The bees will eat the patty and either leave the paper or chew it into small pieces and carry it out of the hive.



February is a time of transition for your bees. We are facing several more weeks of cold weather but your bees know that spring is coming. By mid-to-late January, Elm trees will start to bloom. The sudden availability of Elm pollen will trigger the hive to move into spring expansion cycle. The early blooming Wild Plum will start being seen in the woods and roadsides by mid-February. Henbit and dandelion will start popping up in yards and fields. As your hive shifts into its spring expansion, they will consume stored food faster. Make sure they do not run short of stores. Hives can actually starve in the time between the urge for expansion starts and the natural pollen becomes available to sustain the increased activity. Check your hives for stores and feed as needed. Place the supplemental food so it sits partially over the bee escape hole in the Inner Cover. This will locate it as close to the cluster as possible. In cold weather, bees may not break cluster to get to food placed too far away.

The next few weeks are your last chance to ready woodenware for spring activity. If you have not finished this task, give it some priority and have your boxes and frames ready for use by the end of February. If you are buying or building some new brood frames, consider using black plastic foundation in your brood frames. The queen's eggs are very small and about the same color as wax. You will find them much easier to see against the darker background of a black foundation.



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.

Please pay your 2018 Annual Dues: Individual ETBA Club Membership \$25.00, Family \$45.00

F.Y.I. *by Joe Laws*



The February Speaker is

Cameron Crane;

Area #6 Director - Board of Directors, Texas Beekeepers Association and Secretary, Liberty County Beekeepers.

Cameron started beekeeping in 2011 and is currently working on his Texas Master Beekeeper. He is Secretary and a founding member of Liberty County Beekeepers. This is Cameron's 4th year as a Texas beekeepers Director. Honey and hive products are sold under Crane Meadows. Cameron and Ron Bentley ventured into mead making with Mystik Oak Mead in 2015, they are organizers and are proud sponsors of the Gulf Coast Mead Festival.

See you there!

Joe Laws, Program Director



...from the Editor

In accordance with an article that our Vice-President and experienced beekeeper; Eddie Collins wrote at this time last year, these are some of the things to expect/prepare for in February for you and your honeybees.

“Some of the large trees like the native Oaks and Elms are blooming, the temperatures are getting warmer, and the bees are getting real busy get ready for splitting, the bees are right on the verge of frantically bringing in resources, and the hives as a whole are waking up and exploding. This increased activity usually happens between February 1st and March 1st, so “bee” ready! Be sure and keep a close eye on your hives to make sure they have adequate resources – feed, pollen, and hive space.”



beeman@cncfarms.com

“Bee-ing Like-minded”

Do you have news you would like to share with
the club members?

Are you looking to purchase or sell honey, equipment,
bees, volunteer, etc?

Have a question or idea you thought of after the meeting?

Send a *detailed email to: **Trish.etba@gmail.com**

If it is of interest & room allows, I may be able to include it
in the following month's newsletter.

*It has to be Honeybee related and include your contact info.