

East Texas Beekeepers Association



February 2022

February Report by Jim Biles

Occasionally I like to look up from my beehives and see what's going on around the world of beekeeping. Last year we had a lot of conversation about the "murder hornet". I was particularly interested in this because the first nest was discovered about a mile from where my cousin lives in northern Washington, near the Canadian border. After all was said (which was a lot!), I've concluded that this is not an issue we need to be concerned about in the near term.

There's another issue I've had my eyes on for several years, which is related to almond pollination. First off, why do I care about this? I don't send hives to California to pollinate almonds. Here's why.....over 75% of U.S. managed bee colonies are in the almond groves during bloom for pollination. The revenue stream for commercial beekeepers is in the ballpark of \$100 million/year. And while academia provides much of the research for beekeeping in general, many of the practices I use were first developed by commercial beekeepers, much of the time from trial and error. Many of the laws that are favorable to beekeepers were heavily funded and/or lobbied by commercial beekeepers. The fight against honey fraud (adulteration, primarily) has the clout of commercial beekeepers. In short, to a large extent our well being as beekeepers is thanks to commercial beekeeping. Several years ago I heard about an initiative driven by almond growers to develop a self-pollinating almond tree. At the time, there was consternation that this signaled the end of honey bee almond pollination. Turns out that this is not nearly as easy as it sounds. The cycle time for testing new tree breeds is not short (think decades, not years). A big challenge is keeping the characteristics of good almonds while changing only the pollination. To date, the most promising tree (identified as "Independence") is producing a bland almond. Research demonstrates that while somewhat self-pollinating, this variety still can see 40% improvement in production if honey bees assist in the pollination. And during this period of research, the almond groves continue to multiply, putting pressure on already thin supplies of honey bees. Self-pollinating trees are just not able to reduce demand for pollinators at this point.

Current thinking is that we may never see a day when honey bees are not needed in the almond groves. In the foreseeable future, self-pollinating almonds may help balance supply and demand of bees. It's unlikely that this will have much of a negative impact on commercial beekeepers.

Last month I made a few comments about feeding pollen to your bees this time of the year. If you're interested in getting more information about the emerging science on pollen feeding, there's a very good series of articles at <https://scientificbeekeeping.com/>. Randy Oliver is a biologist/entomologist by training and has been beekeeping for 55 years. He understands research and the scientific method. Better yet, he has a great talent for taking complicated science and putting it in terms the average person can understand. If you get a chance, check it out!

Next month – World honey market, fraud, and dumping

President—Connie Collins
Vice-President—Joe Laws
Exec. Director/Reporter— Jim Biles
Treasurer—Jennifer Palmer
Secretary—Tish Kennedy
Member-at-Large—Matt Thomas
Program Director — Meagan Elzner
Newsletter Editor—Jenifer Babyak
Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson



Next Meeting

February 3rd

United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse

6:30 PM

On the Web:
www.etba.info

FYI *by Meagan Elzner*



The February Program...

This month our meeting will require a bit of participation!

We are going to do a show and tell beekeeping gadgets meeting.

So bring your favorite or unique beekeeping inventions/gadgets/items you use a lot and we can all mingle around the tables and learn about them.

It can be anything from a queen clip to a hive body to beeswax beauty molds to a cool swarm removal device you may have invented.

It will be fun to see what others have to show!

I look forward to seeing what everyone brings!

See you there!



ELZNER FARMS, LLC ~ WE SELL BEES!
New Summerfield, Texas
www.elznerfarms.com or elznerfarms@gmail.com
We offer pure, raw, local honey & bees to our surrounding communities.

~ Meagan and Isaac Elzner ~



Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard

by Stan Brantley



We will have to wait and see if the December weather pattern repeats in January or not. If January has as many up and down temperatures as December, it should certainly be taken advantage of by the beekeeper because the honey bee has definitely made the most of the situation. (Editor's note: Because of some family travel activities in mid-January, Mr. Brantley wrote this article on January 9. As his article is being prepared for publishing in the latter part of the month, we are heading into our longest and coldest period of this winter to date.)

During the December holiday season, here in my Ark La Tex area, I was able to spend part of each day before Christmas in our local club apiary.

That was really a joy but also an eye-opener. I spent part of that time trying to save a high-dollar queen purchased in August. She was in a hive consisting of eight frames of mostly open pollen and two frames of brood. Using a Snelgrove board, I placed this brood chamber on top of a strong hive. I opened one of the Snelgrove board's door just enough to provide space for one or two bees to enter at a time. The next morning, I checked to see how things were going. As you might expect, there were robber bees removing the stored honey. I immediately closed the door to stop the robbing activity. The following day, I moved that brood box with its queen and about two frames of bees and placed it on top of a different hive in the apiary. This time, I used a Queen Excluder between the hives rather than the Snelgrove board to separate the two hives. When I checked on the day following, the queen seemed to be doing well and was joined by many bees from the bottom hive.

The hive under the Snelgrove board appeared to be in the process of being robbed out also even though the entrance had earlier been reduced to about two inches. The hive next door, about twenty inches away, appeared as if was included in the robbing activity even though its entrance was also only two inches wide. Using steel wool, I further restricted the entrance of both hives to make the bees have to work to get into the entrance. There was no fighting between bees but they were beginning to stack up on the steel wool and the face of the hive. I was still unsure of the situation as the amount of bees continued to increase. These two hives were sitting on two eight-foot sections of utility poles. As the number of bees continued to grow at each hive, a column of bees about six abreast, being unable to enter the western hive, began crawling along the utility poles to the eastern hive. Upon arrival, they mingled with east hive bees without fighting. I finally concluded all these bees were foragers and possibly some orienting bees or others taking cleansing flights in the eighty degree weather and did in fact belong in these hives. So, I removed some of the steel wool from the entrances and all soon grew much quieter at the doors.

During all of this activity, an adult hive beetle flew in and landed on the front corner of the east hive. I reached over and smashed it and it stuck to the hive. Earlier, I noticed a Grand-daddy Long Legs crawling on the side of the hive near the back. I became interested in the bee activity and was surprised to look up and see the spider had removed the smashed hive beetle from the hive, had it in her mouth, and was headed to the back of the hive. I guess the moral of the story is: Smash a hive beetle and feed a spider!

With the wild swings in temperatures, we need to be aware that queens will begin to lay more eggs during the warm days. This brood will need to be fed and stores of pollen, bee bread and nectar will soon be gone. Supplies of food in the hive must be maintained to prevent the bees from starving during the next cold spell. If the weather permits, open the hive and inspect for food stores. If needed, consider feeding 2-to-1 sugar syrup. If the hive appears to be low on stored pollen, you can feed a small amount of a pollen patty or dry protein supplement. The supplemental food needs to be readily accessible to the cluster. When frames of brood are present and there is a cold snap, the bees will attempt to keep the brood warm and may starve or freeze in the cluster if food is not readily available.



Got Questions?

*Question & answer group will meet from 6:00-6:30 before the meeting.
Join us if you are a new beekeeper or just have beekeeping questions?
We'll try to get you some answers!*

Matt Thomas - Member at Large

Happy Spring and stay ahead of them!

There is nothing more rewarding in beekeeping than smoking a colony, pulling out a hive tool, popping that lid off and evaluating an enormous cluster hanging from the lid to the bottom box. Feeders are going on, resources are being shared, frames are getting manipulated, classes are being taught. We are now in spring prep for what may be a great spring.

We have had a couple months off from active bee work and have been working on equipment and planning spring splits and queen rearing. Busy has started and spring has begun.

Do you know what your job is as a beekeeper? Manage colonies to health and population control. We may have other goals, but the main goal is to manage bees for their own health and perpetuation.

A thought and true concern for people who have bees coming out of winter into spring is keeping them in the box. Meaning...how can I keep them from swarming? If half the colony walks out and flies off in March or April we have lost the ability to make more colonies or produce a good crop of honey.

The one golden rule for parenting is to anticipate and stay ahead of the kiddos. Failure to anticipate the nature of these little treasures can be painful for them and us. Taking the same approach of anticipation and expectation with your bees will lead to some rewarding benefits for the bees and you. MY dad always says, 'you have to stay ahead of the bees.' Knowing what they are capable of, when they are capable of it, and how to manage them for success will save them and you.

When I teach bee classes to hungry beekeepers I want them to experience the unbridled joy of their good management. I always try to teach what these little wonders are capable of and best stewardship practices to make sure the bees are healthy and populated.

We were cracking lids the other day in class and monitoring cluster size and how much honey the bees had in each colony. After going through a few I realized the colonies needed feed. I'm trying to stay ahead of them because spring is in the air. It won't be long before these clusters of bees will become extremely populated. I've got to stay ahead of them. If I get behind them they will certainly leave the colony.

Happy Spring....Stay ahead of them. -Matt

Connie Collins - ETBA President

Happy February, Beekeepers!

It is that time of year again! The beginning of not only the year but the bee season too! I feel this year will be challenging as 2022 looks to be a continuation of 2020 and 2021. With that in mind, I think about all the help I have received as a beekeeper. Not only me, but I do not know a single beekeeper that has not needed help at any point in their time as a hobbyist or their career working bees. No matter how much support is required, beekeepers are great about helping each other out in times of need.

Helping each other out is something I learned early on in the beekeeping world. If a beekeeper calls you at the last minute because they need help unloading a truck, they have gotten stuck in a bee field with a flatbed full of bees, or all their help bailed on them for splitting bees, you go, and you help. Maybe it's a new beekeeper who has never extracted honey, or they need you to go through their hive with them and answer questions. If you can, ask how you can help. Why? Not only because it is the right thing to do, but sooner or later, you may have a situation where a helping hand could make all the difference.

I recall when I was in college and had caught a day that I could sleep in later than usual. Dad was working bees and had gone to a field before sunrise that day. The forklift became buried in some deep mud. It had to be dug out by hand, but he had no shovels with him. Who did he call? Yup that would be me. At the time, I will not lie; I was not overjoyed to track down my father and bring him shovels. I did, though. Now I understand his need after I have gotten trucks stuck so deep that I thought we'd never get home. I am so thankful he is there to dig me out of the mess I am in, and I am glad I brought him those shovels.

I write my article discussing this because as we head into this new year full of continued unknowns, I urge all of you to help out when you are asked. We have a great group of new scholarship students this year that will need mentors, new beekeepers that will need guidance, and old-timers that might need a hand. It is easy to say that you don't like how so and so keeps bees, or how you don't agree with this or that, but you too will need help one day. This year has already been a challenge, and I have received more help than I could ever imagine. I am very grateful. At the end of the day, we love bees and the art of beekeeping, and I hope we can all help one another. God bless and see you at the next meeting in February.



HONEY FARMS
WHITEHOUSE, TEXAS

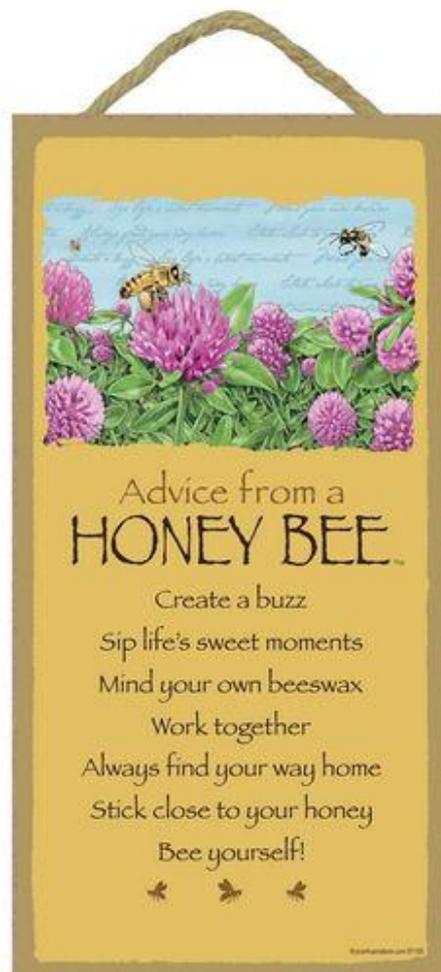
FOR SALE: NUCS - HONEYBEES

Available for pick up mid-April.
Whitehouse & Crockett
Orders available starting January 1st, 2021
Gift Certificates on sale now!
Contact Connie Collins (903) 316-6335 Connie@cncfarms.com



...from the Editor - Jenifer Babyak

We will be starting a **Classified Section** of the newsletter beginning with the next edition (March). It will appear at the end of the newsletter. (See next page - I put Connie's card and Meagan's card out there as examples.) There will be **NO charge** for placing an ad. Ads need to be business card size, 3.5" wide x 2" high (one ad per person) in .pdf, .png or .jpg format. Ads do **NOT** have to be fancy business cards. Ads need to be "bee" related such as for bee related classes, bee related items for sale, looking for bee related items, etc. Please send your completed ad to jenifer@babyak.org by the 25th of the month for inclusion in the next month's newsletter. For example, ads received by February 25th will be included in the March



Classified Ads

NUCS AND FULL HIVES



HONEY FARMS

CONNIE COLLINS
(903) 316 - 6335
CONNIE@CNCFARMS.COM
WWW.CNCFARMS.COM

WHITEHOUSE, TEXAS

LOCAL HONEY
QUEENS - CANDLES
NUCS - POLLINATION

ELZNER FARMS

1080 JENNINGS RD. JACKSONVILLE, TX 75766

LOCAL HONEY - BEES - AG EXEMPTION

WWW.ELZNERFARMS.COM
ELZNERFARMS@GMAIL.COM



MEAGAN ELZNER
BEEKEEPER/OWNER
618.410.6239

ISAAC ELZNER
BEEKEEPER/OWNER
713.504.3635