



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 29 No. 6

June 5, 2014

## *June Report* by Dick Counts

I am again pleased to share with you that we had 112 members and guests at our May meeting. Thanks to all that make the effort to be present.

The big news is TBA is having our summer clinic on June 7 in Aggieland. The meeting will be on-site at the Honeybee Research Lab on the Riverside Campus. Dr. Julianna Rangel will be the main speaker along with several other interesting and knowledgeable bee speakers. Please make plans to attend. Details will be available at our June ETBA meeting. The Summer Clinic runs from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. You can drive down and back in the same day so no overnight lodging is needed. A catered lunch is included with the registration fee. You will need to pre-register with Jimmie Oakley so he will know how much lunch to order. You can pre-register by email — [jimmie.oakley@gmail.com](mailto:jimmie.oakley@gmail.com).

The 2014 Beginners Beekeeping class is over. Seven scholarship students completed the course and have received their bees along with 35 other students. Many hives were made and sold this year. I still have equipment and bees for sale if you are in need.

Our Queen and Princess have been very busy presenting bees, beekeeping, and cooking with honey to the public and school kids. Please say a word of thanks to them. Your continued support is needed and appreciated.

All of our outdoor observation hives have been installed. This year I had some excellent help from Willow Lanchester and her family. THANKS!

As you know, the April 15 cold spell really set the bees back. I have had a few reports of honey being extracted but my hives do not have anywhere enough to even begin. I have had other reports of the honey ending up mostly in the top brood box and little in the super. Watch your supers and make sure the honey is capped before you try to extract. For those who plan to extract at my honey house, let me know if you have supers ready to extract. When we have enough people ready to extract, I will work with you to schedule some extraction dates.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Lanette Lanchester

Ex. Director and Reporter—  
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford  
Brantley, Larry Tarr

Program Director — Matt Thomas,  
Brenda Sheridan, Eddie Collins

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

**Next Meeting**  
**June 5**  
**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 Ginnie Jeske

## ***HONEY QUEEN REPORT*** by *Vi Bourns*



Time flies by so fast these days. It is already time to report on the passing month of May activities. The bee classes have been completed and most of the bees have found their way to new homes with excited beekeepers. You will be able to share with the Scholarship Students you supported at the next meeting as they receive their certificates for completing the course. Each year, Dick and I say they were the best students but the truth is that they are all special! "Thanks" to each person who has stuck it out all these years and still are happy beekeepers.

It has been a whirlwind for the Royal Court as you will read in their reports. They came through with flying colors. We even got Carrie's grandmother from Kentucky, Carolyn, involved in "Bullard's Barnyard Days", stamping the little hands with a washable ink image of bees. Lanie and I were busy trying to keep count and guide each group in and out of the tent while battling the strong winds. The weather did not allow us to take our observation hive that day.

The school estimated 700 children from PK to 3rd grade. The teachers kept count of children getting off the bus and then making sure no child was left behind when they loaded to leave. Children experienced the different animals, stagecoach rides pulled by large Draft Horses, horse rides, milking an artificial cow, and roping the heads of bulls tied to bales of hay.

Higgins Elementary fourth grade and several Eastman "Forrest Awareness Tours" in Longview were also large groups of all ages. Carrie, Willow, and their parents are always so accommodating in participating when a group asks them to speak. And a special "Thanks" to ETBA members who share so generously to help fund the Royal Court activities. Your contributions enable us to share information about the importance of the honey bee to literally thousands of people each year.



Hello everyone! Hope all is well and that you enjoyed Mothers Day and Memorial Day with your families. Willow and I have been very busy this past month, going to numerous schools, field day trips, and farm education day activities. On May 8th, Willow and I went to the Eastman Chemical Forrest Awareness Field Day in Longview. We set up a booth next to the observation hive. We gave several bee presentations together and were able to talk to 60 kids that day. We had hoped to talk to more, however the weather did not permit as we were rained out in the early afternoon.



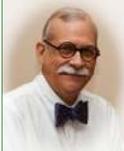
May 9th, I went to Higgins Elementary in Whitehouse where Willow, Mr. Counts, and I spoke to their entire 4th grade, which consisted of almost 350 children! Mr. Counts brought an observation hive for the kids. They were thrilled to be able to see the live bees.

On May 19th, I was back at Eastman for more field day presentations. Miss Vi and I talked to over 120 high school students and adults! We were there from 8:30 that morning till 2:30 that afternoon.

The very next day, May 20th, Miss Vi, Willow and I went to Bullard High School for their annual farm day. We were able to set up a tent and talk to their entire 2nd grade (around 700 kids total) about what to do when you get stung, among other bee related topics. In between groups, one of the teachers came to us holding a little girl's hand that had just gotten stung! She was such a trooper, didn't cry at all, and was the perfect example of how to take care of a bee sting!

It is truly amazing how willing and excited children and adults are to learn about the honeybee and all they do for us. In the past month alone, we have talked to an amazing total of 1,424 people! I am excited to see how many more we can reach in the future months. ~Carrie





## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

There is an old Maine adage that says, "If you can't learn from your mistakes, it's best not to make too many." I've had to remember that too many times. It came into play recently when my daughter Hayden and I responded to a swarm call. The homeowner told us it was a good sized swarm only six feet off the ground. Away we went for free bees.

When we arrived at the site, we found a swarm about the size of a basketball clinging to the end of a branch no more than five feet off the ground. We positioned the step ladder with nuc box on top and started to coordinate our capture. I was feeling confident. It was a swarm, therefore the bees should be docile. I had forgotten my boots and worn garden clogs – black with black socks. I shook the branch, the bees fell just as planned but about a third missed the box and fell to the ground. The instep on both my feet suddenly reminded me why I was ill prepared. Four bees on my left foot and two on my right let me know how unhappy they were. I quickly left Hayden to tend to the rest of the swarm.

Bees happily went into the box while I answered a plethora of questions from the homeowner. We knew the queen was in there! Finishing up and leaving only a few straggler bees behind, we happily headed home. But alas, by the time we got there, we realized that the swarm was way too large for the box we had brought. On the way home, the bees overheated and died. We were both sick over it.

I failed my hobby in two areas. I was unprepared with my personal protection and I was unprepared for the safety of my insect charges. What I need to do is bring two swarm boxes next time; a nuc and a full sized box. And I need to have either a swarm "jump kit" that I grab and go or have a check list so I don't forget anything.

Although it is still small, my top bar hive is doing well. The bees are drawing comb, the queen has been laying, and brood is hatching out. It is slow progress but it is getting established. When inspecting the bars, it is hard to resist turning them like I do the frames in my other hives. There will not be any harvest from these bees this year but perhaps next year.

Our meeting this month will focus on extracting – bring your wisdom and experience and be ready to share.



As schools are winding down their year, many are having educational field trips before the summer break begins. ETBA has been fortunate to be invited to several schools to teach about honey bees. Carrie and I have spoken to hundreds of school children about honeybees and pollination.

However, the thing I enjoyed the most was installing the observation hives with Mr. Counts. On May 5th, Mr. Counts took me to Eastman's Nature and Wildlife Habitat Center in Longview to learn how to install an observation hive. First, we cleaned and repaired any damage to the hive. Then we suited up and placed the frames of bees into the observation hive and the super above. Finally, we closed it up and swept the remaining bees near the entrance. I enjoyed it so much that I helped him install a second observation hive at the Mineola Nature Preserve.



The observation hives are a place where the general public may go to see and learn about the honey bee with no fear of being stung. These observation hives are located throughout East Texas: Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas Parks and Wildlife Nature Center in Tyler, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, East Texas Arboretum in Athens, Mineola Nature Preserve, Texas Agricultural Education and Heritage Center in Seguin, and Eastman's own Nature and Wildlife Habitat Center in Longview.

I am looking forward to visiting with you on June 5th in Whitehouse.

~Willow

## *Free Bees* by Martha Jeske

It's that time of year again. The summer sun is heating up, the buds are blooming, and the bees are swarming. My first year of beekeeping, I shied away from collecting swarms, thinking it was too involved for me to handle as a novice. Now, after having collected a few, I look forward to swarm calls as a chance for free bees. With a pair of garden clippers, a bucket, and a beehive, you can collect a swarm and expand your apiary in minutes.

Of course, the first step to collecting a swarm is finding one. If you're open to harvesting multiple swarms, talk with Mr. Counts or your local police or fire department about being put on a swarm call list. If you receive a swarm call, it is useful to check with the homeowner and make sure that they really have a swarm on their property. Last spring, my dad and I got a call from a man who found forty or fifty bees zooming around a water meter. We guessed those bees



were remnants from a swarm that had already moved on and, needless to say, we didn't jump on that call. Bring a ladder if the swarm is in a tree or tall bush. Otherwise, just bring a pair of loppers or garden clippers along with your regular bee tools, an empty hive, and a bucket.

Once you reach the swarm, look at the surroundings. If the bees are on a tree, check with the homeowner and see if you can cut the branch. You can use the ladder to reach the bees and gently cut the branch with one hand while holding the section with the bees in the other. At this point, you can either shake the bees over the frames of your spare hive body, or you can remove a few frames and place the branch down in the box. A few days later, take out



the branch and replace it with frames. If the bees are not in a tree or on a branch that you can cut, or are clustered around a building or wall, hold a five-gallon bucket under the swarm and carefully scoop or shake the bees into the bucket. Once you have collected most of them in the bucket, shake the bees into the hive body. If you forgot to bring an empty box, you can keep the bees in the bucket with a lid on, but only if there are holes or some type of ventilation in the bucket - several thousand bees can quickly heat up a bucket and suffocate! I learned that lesson the hard way last year, sealing the lid tightly on a swarm bucket. When I opened it up to dump the bees in their new box, I was shocked to see most of them lying limply on top of each other.

Once the majority of the bees are in the hive, close the entrance. The bees also like to cluster around lemongrass scent, so my dad and I like to pour four or five drops of lemongrass oil on a small strip of paper towel or burlap and set it on top of the frames in the hive body before closing it up. The Granary in Tyler sells it in small bottles that you can stash in your bee bag. If there is a large number of straggler bees, you may want to leave the hive in place overnight and come back early the next morning or after dark the next night to move the hive. Otherwise, you can immediately move the hive to your apiary. I usually feed new swarms with some 1:1 sugar syrup and keep the entrance reduced to about an inch for a few days to prevent robbing while the bees adjust to their new home. But you can do whatever is easiest and most effective for you. Now all that's left to do is enjoy your free hive and wait for the next swarm call!





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

There is no stored nectar in most of my hives. I should be seeing supers filing with capped honey and be thinking about extracting soon. Instead, when I look at my hives, I see one or two may have seven to the ten wax foundation medium frames drawn out enough to see wax when you look down at the top of the frames, but little capped honey. The second super on top with plastic foundation has no activity at all, they have not even drawn out the comb.

It does not look good for filling those supers this late in the season. Most of the blooming plants have come and gone - Privet Hedge, Prickly Ash, Crimson Clover, most of the Vetch and Bois D'Ark ( or bow dark tree as we say in East Texas) are done. Still to come, I hope, are Sumac and the stand- by in many places, the Chinese Tallow Tree. This week I did see a small patch of Arrowleaf Clover still blooming. A beekeeping friend has some hives on 70 acres of white clover and the bees have been working it very hard.

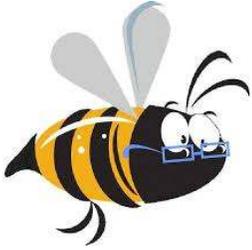
Apparently I am not the only one with no honey in the supers. Several beekeepers have reported little or no capped honey to date. Others have reported finding honey stored in the top brood box but little in the super. The Baton Rouge Bee Lab researchers are saying that the season is running two weeks late. I guess we will have to wait and see what happens by July before we know if we have honey to extract. As I am writing this article, we are headed in to a cool, wet week. We appreciate the rain but a week of cool, cloudy weather will not help the nectar gathering situation. If it rains for several days, the bees will sit inside the hive and eat the nectar already stored.

How do you tell how many bees are in your hive? Or do you even worry about the number? How do you know when to add another brood box or super? You may often hear that it is time to add another box when you have 8 to 10 frames of bees. What exactly does 8 to 10 frames of bees mean and how do you recognize it? If you have a screened bottom board, it is easy to judge how many frames of bees are in your hive. Remove the Outer and Inner covers and look straight down at the top bars of the frames. If you cannot see the ground between two frames, we would say that was a frame of bees. There are so many bees working on that frame that you cannot see thorough the gap to the ground. If you look down and see the ground, then do not count that frame as a frame of bees. If you can only see ground between the two outside frames, you have 8 frames of bees and it is time to add another box.

I have been getting reports from the Texas and Louisiana bee clubs about some problems with queens purchased from breeders and installed in local hives. Apparently, some purchased queens are being superseded rather quickly. The queens are accepted by the hive and begin to lay, some looking very productive. Then suddenly the queen is gone. The beekeeper is in a scramble to find a replacement queen. If you follow my column, you can probably guess what I am going to say next. If you have started some Nucs, you have immediate access to a replacement queen. I encourage you one more time to start some Nucs. Pull a couple frames with eggs and nurse bees (make sure you don't get the queen) and place them in a Nuc. You can make 2, 3 or 5 frame Nucs. If you do this in the next couple of weeks before the honey flow ends, there will still be plenty of drones in the hives for a queen to successfully mate.

There appears to have been a lot of swarming this spring. After struggling through the cold winter, bees seemed to expand rapidly when the blooms started to form. Good beekeepers try to manage their hives to prevent swarming but we are not always successful. It is tough to see half your hive gone just at the time you think they should be putting up honey for you! On the other hand, swarming season is the opportunity to capture bees and start some more hives. Another possibility is to hang swarm boxes, often called "bait hives", and try to entice swarming bees to move in. You can now purchase small time-release vials of synthetic pheromone to hang inside the bait hives. The vials can be ordered from the bee suppliers for just a couple bucks each. Swarms caught after the honey flow ends will need supplemental feeding of sugar syrup for the bees to draw out wax and start new brood. The old saying, "A swarm in July is not worth a fly" will be true if you do not feed the captured swarm. Also, remember to close the entrance down to only one bee width to prevent the new hive from being robbed.

The "Got Questions" room will still be open 6:00 – 6:30 before the meeting. If you are new to beekeeping or just have some beekeeping questions, join us in the Got Questions room before the meeting and we will try to help you find some answers.



## *Bee Facts* by Eddie Collins

What is the number one external influence on a beehive? After this Spring, I have to answer this question as “The Weather”. These past few months have been some of the most challenging I and my *apis mellifera* friends have faced together. Below are some categories in this area where we were both challenged these past few months. You’ll notice that a lot of them are actually related to each other and all lead back to the weather being unfavorable to the beehive. By unfavorable, I mean cold and rainy. Don’t get me wrong, I know we need the rain and I’m thankful for it. As a beekeeper, I prefer it to only rain at night and when the flowers are not blooming.

Queen acceptance. This goes for a queen cell and for a mated queen cage. In this area, I have found that if the weather is raining and cold then queen acceptance percentages are lower. I’m not sure if this is because of the queen not making it back or if the queen doesn’t adequately get mated and then rejected by the hive. I just know that the percentages are lower. My opinion is during these unfavorable weather conditions the hive has a lot of the older field bees inside and the hive temperament is worse. This in turn leads to the hive not accepting a new queen. Have you ever seen a hive “ball” a new queen?

Queen quality. If a queen doesn’t have good weather when it’s time for her mating flights, then she will not get properly mated. If the weather is bad enough then she may not take the flights at all. What happens then?

Hive build up. Over the past few months, we had some extended periods of cold or colder than normal weather. During these times the queen will slow down laying, drawing out frames will slow down or stop, nectar will stop coming in. All these ultimately lead to delays in a hive increasing in size.

Wax production / drawing out frames. Did you know that for bees to produce wax the temperature in the hive must be 91 to 97 degrees? The bees may keep the core of the hive this temp during cold periods but not on the outside frames where they are drawing out foundation. To produce the wax, the bees must also consume eight times the amount of honey as the mass of the wax they are producing. If it’s cold then little nectar is coming in so bees conserve resources and don’t produce wax.

Honey production. Bees are most active when temperatures are above 60 degrees. Cold weather can also kill blooms or greatly reduce the amount of nectar a flower produces. Rain can also wash the nectar from the blooms.

Temperament of a hive. Have you ever noticed that a hive can sometimes be real nice and sometime be mean? If weather conditions prevent a hive from working, the older field bees are stuck inside the hive. These are the bees that have the bad attitudes. It’s like the hive knows they are supposed to be working and if they can’t, then they are in a bad mood. Then along comes a beekeeper messing with the hive. The bees take their bad mood out on the beekeeper – see next bullet.

Temperament of a beekeeper. A mean hive is no fun to work and makes an unhappy beekeeper!



Willow Cleaning the Observation Hive



Lines of kids at Bullard Barnyard Days