



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 31 No. 6

June 2, 2016

June Report by Dick Counts

When I think things cannot get any better, it gets better again! Interest in bees and beekeeping continues to grow. Last month we had 164 members and guests at our May meeting. Thank you for your continued support of our organization.

With so many new members and visitors, it is hard to learn everybody's name and their bee story. Be sure that you look around and introduce yourself to people that you do not know. You experienced beekeepers have a lot of knowledge and guidance to offer our new and novice beekeepers. To our newer members, let me encourage you to do a couple of things. First, if you have questions, walk right up to one of the other members and ask them your question. You may get an answer or you may find they are just as new as you. Then both of you can ask someone else! Please, don't sit there with unanswered questions. We want this club to be a point of information sharing. Secondly, become involved. Offer your skills, knowledge and muscle to President Matt. Everyone can play a role — you can set up chairs, help with after-meeting cleanup, learn to operate the PA system, count heads for our Secretary, or even give a presentation!

I still have bees and bee equipment for sale. If you have ordered bees and not picked them up, contact me or see me at the meeting and arrange to get your bees. If you are looking for bees or equipment, contact me before the meeting, if possible. If not, see me there.

If we have enough interest, I can try to locate some more bees from other sources. Please see me at the meeting if you would like to get on the list for bees in case I can find them.

June 18 is the TBA Summer Clinic in Conroe. TBA has done a great job developing the Summer Clinic into a well organized event with information available to help beekeepers of all skill levels. You can drive down and back in the same day or book a room overnight. See the TBA website for registration and hotel information: www.texasbeekeepers.org.

President—Matt Thomas

Vice President—Eddie Collins

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Barbara Farguson

Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Barbara
Farguson

Director-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley

Program Director — Joe Laws

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Next Meeting June 2

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

On the Web: etba.info

Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789

Photo by Isabella Crawford

HONEY QUEEN REPORT by *Barbara Ferguson*



I want to thank each and every one of you for your support with our Queen and Ambassador Program fundraiser in May. You raised \$2,347.00, WOW!! The true value of the program that evening was in the fellowship that occurred and the affirmation of moral support which waved across the room. All contributions are important, whether made through financial, volunteer, and other methods. The success of our efforts is the result of those members and friends who have contributed to our club's mission to educate the public about the honeybee and our role in protecting it from extinction.

While educating the public on the benefits of buying local honey, we are often asked how to find a local beekeeper. If you will be selling your honey and hive products and would like your contact information distributed to individuals in your area, please email me at etbaroyalcourt@gmail.com, giving your contact info and permission to distribute to those looking to us to provide local beekeeper information while we are out presenting to civic organizations and the public.

I look forward to seeing each of you at the June meeting and learning the names of our fellow members and guest.



Last month, I visited Mark Hedley, a commercial beekeeper in Rochelle, Texas. He had invited me out to his operation and my family and I decided that I would visit him with my father and brother in early May. While we were there, we were able to help him with some of his hives and learned a lot about the commercial side of beekeeping. I also learned very valuable life lessons, for instance, plan your work-work your plan, be efficient, and love what you do. One thing he said stuck with me: plan your work, work your plan. I remembered this so well because of his honey room. He has all of the toys: uncapping machine, two twenty-frame extractors, a bottling machine, etc. The crazy thing was that he had installed all of that before he owned a single hive. He was committed at that point. Even if something happened to his hives, or if beekeeping wasn't for him, he had invested a lot of money into this experiment. Luckily for him, he loves it and he has expanded to over 400 hives.



Another thing I learned was efficiency. We helped him put a second deep and mite strips in about 120 hives. We couldn't take our time looking at each and every hive if we wanted to finish that day. We worked hard and we worked fast. It only took us around 2 to 3 hours to do the task because we worked efficiently. He said that it would have taken him two days to do alone what we did as a team in a few hours. That is how commercial beekeepers work. As a hobby beekeeper, I am used to being able to spend as much time as I want per hive. But when there are 120 hives, you have about a minute per hive.

And lastly, I learned that I should love what I do. We could see how much Mr. Hedley loved what he did all of the time. He knew all of the names of the flowers and he was very enthusiastic about his work. I hope that when I get a job, I love it as much as he does. He showed me that nothing is worth doing every day unless you enjoy it. What he does is exhausting, yet he loves every second of it.

I learned a tremendous amount from him during our short stay. I especially valued learning about the commercial side of beekeeping. Previously, I had little knowledge about the day to day operations of a commercial beekeeper. I had assumed that they did what a hobby beekeeper would do, only with 400-600 hives. They care for their hives completely differently, trying to give them the best amount of care in the shortest amount of time. These lessons will help me to succeed in life and encourage me to instill these values in youth in the future. ~Jacob



Moth Trap by Barbara Ferguson

Moth Traps can be a big help in a moth management plan because of their safety in helping to provide additional control without fear of hive product contamination. I wanted to share with you a simple DIY Wax Moth Trap Mix recipe I received from Ken Davis in Inola, Oklahoma. It has worked well for me.

Use a 2 liter empty clear plastic soda bottle. Do not use a colored bottle; the moths will be able to find their way out of a colored bottle. For one soda bottle, add 1 cup of 1:1 sugar syrup, 1 cup of Apple Cider vinegar, 1 complete banana peel. Mix contents then top off with approximately 2-1/2 cups of water or until bottle is half full. Cut a hole the size of a quarter or smaller on the shoulder of the soda bottle. Put the top back on the bottle, add wire or string around the neck under the cap for hanging and put the "moth trap" in your apiary. I drive a metal T-post approximately 15' to 25' from my hives and attach the bottle with wire positioning any remaining label that may be on the bottle up against the T-post.

I'm going to pass along the same warning Ken gave to me, word for word,



"WARNING! If you let this mix evaporate down to ¼ of the bottle, it turns MUCH SWEETER! The bees will dive into this bottle and pile up, and thus die!! Consider yourself FOREWARNED! This recipe is very effective in attracting moths and green beetles. It will require periodic emptying and replenishing. Be sure to keep your traps topped off with a little bit of water, but never go over half the bottle in volume. NEVER let this evaporate to the bottom quarter of the bottle. If so, it will TURN TO SYRUP and the bees LOVE IT. But they too, cannot find their way back out of the bottle. Not good. Therefore, watch your bottles closely. Bees have no interest in these bottles, UNTIL they get too low."



A similar recipe was posted in the September 2010 BEE CULTURE magazine but I have had very good luck with Ken's recipe and have not tried the recipe from BEE CULTURE.

I hope this will help any of you having issues with wax moths in your apiary.

Interesting Links

Differences in Raw and Processed Honey: An interesting article filled with some good information and some miss-information. Rather long article with a very long list of comments attached to the end.
<http://permaculturenews.org/2014/02/08/shocking-differences-raw-honey-processed-golden-honey-found-grocery-retailers/>

Chicago Homeland Security seizes 60 tons of illegal honey <https://www.dadant.com/news/chicago-homeland-security-investigators-seize-nearly-60-tons-of-honey-illegally-imported>

Honey Haven — a collection of bee and honey related news articles. <http://www.honeybeehaven.org/latest-news>



President's Letter *by Matt Thomas*

We had a great meeting for the month of April. Stanford Brantley put on a good program detailing how to inspect a hive. We also had a live auction that raised over two thousand dollars for the Queen/Ambassador program. A special "Thanks" for all who donated and purchased to help support our young people.

On May 7th, some members of the club headed to College Station for queen rearing training. We learned a lot and had some pretty rich conversation on beekeeping and queen rearing. There will be other training opportunities available this summer in Conroe, Texas. If you are new to beekeeping, this would be of some benefit to you. We will let you know about the dates.

This month, I want to share with you about, in my judgment, the worst problem in keeping bees,. Varoa Mites, Small Hive Beetles, Nosema, and the Moth are all great contenders for most irritating to the beekeeper. The greatest enemy of the beekeeper, however, is patience, or the lack thereof. I started raising a few queens this year to supply my own beekeeping needs. It has been a fun journey but I had to patiently wait on the calendar. Those queens have to hatch, mate and then start laying. It takes nearly a calendar month for you to see the results of queen rearing. I want more out of my bees – sooner! I want them to get stronger and put on more honey yesterday. I have to wait patiently for that white comb to emerge under the lid. I have to wait on those virgins to get mated and start laying. Before that, I have to wait at least five days after the graft to check and see if bees pulled the cells out.

Whether its queen rearing, spring build-up, comb drawing, splitting or honey production, you are in a waiting pattern. A beekeeper has to check their colonies and "Just Wait!!!" I am not suggesting you should wait to treat if your bees have mite or beetle issues. Beyond those issues, it all becomes a waiting game. We also have to wait on the flowers to release their nectar. That means the temperature has to rise. It is just starting to warm up and your bees should be expanding rapidly. Those magical days of a strong honey flow are upon us. The waiting game is over. What you and I have waited and prepared for since January is now coming to fruition. Strong colonies, strong honey flow, white blocked out comb, and a strained back after lifting that super off the hive is what most beekeepers live for. By our next meeting we should be hearing reports of apiaries flowing with honey. The "Just Wait" is over!

We may have just one more wait before we start thinking about treating and wintering our bees. We have to wait to pull and extract our honey. All the preparation, colony build-up, time and attention is rewarded with that moment your honey begins flowing out of the extractor. Your wait is just a little longer! Not to rob you of your joy but there is a little more work required following extraction that needs our attention. Those bees still need to be stewarded if you want them to survive the winter.

Before I conclude this article, let me take a moment and spotlight one of our club's best drones. I was thinking about Dan Eudy recently when I was out in the bee yard. Dan had a bad reaction to a sting two years ago and, subsequently, had to give up keeping bees. I bought a lot of his boxes that already had drawn comb. When I was out in the bee yard, I looked up and saw one of those super's. I pried the lid for an "impatient peek", and, to my pleasure, found Dan's super nearly full of honey.

Words are really inadequate to express the club's appreciation for you, Dan. Dan has been the editor for our newsletter for many years and helped our club become what it is today. He has personally advised me and others in numerous ways to help guide the club. Dan is passing the torch as newsletter editor to another member. We love you Dan and thank you for helping to make ETBA the club it is today. You're not allowed to edit this out!



Emma and Noah in their new bee suits



Emma helping in the beeyard



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

June will be the start of honey extraction for most East Texas beekeepers. If you have strong hives and large amounts of Privet Hedge blooming nearby, you may have collected honey from the privet. According to the Beekeepers Bible, the most undesirable honey is – you guessed it—Privet Hedge honey. I was surprised. The Privet honey I have tasted was good. I would have thought the strong and bitter honey from Buckwheat or Goldenrod would have been listed as the most undesirable.

In planning for your honey extraction, make sure the frames are 80-90 per cent capped before you extract the honey from them. Uncapped cells of honey will have moisture content at levels that will cause the honey to ferment in storage. Moisture content of 23 % or above will cause honey to ferment. Bees circulate air over the cells causing the moisture in the honey to evaporate. They will not cap cells of honey until they have reduced the moisture content to the 17-18% level. Properly capped honey is safe to extract and store indefinitely.

If your frames are not almost completely capped and you just can't wait, you can use the "shake test" to determine if it is OK to extract. Hold the frame by each end bar, with the top bar pointing down. Give the frame a couple of hard downward shakes. If the honey "rains" out when you give the hard shake, it is too wet and should not be extracted. Place it back in the hive and let the bees continue to reduce the water content. If no honey shakes out, it is generally safe to extract and bottle.

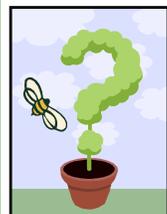
Many bee club members do not own an extractor. One of the perks of ETBA membership is the invitation to use Dick Counts' honey house to extract your honey. Dick schedules "Extraction Days" where you show up at the appointed time with your frames and extract at his facilities using his large radial extractor. Radial extractors are designed to remove honey from both sides of the frame at the same time. They are quick, effective and can be rather expensive.

Many hobbyist beekeepers have their own smaller extractor, often a hand-cranked two- or four-frame Tangential Extractor. Tangential extractors are smaller and much more affordable but extract only one side of the frame at a time. Remember to load a tangential extractor so the bottom bar leads into the direction of the spin. Why does it matter? When bees build comb, the cells are tilted about 13 degrees toward the top bar. Think of it as a slight upward tilt to keep the nectar from spilling out of the cell. In the tangential extractor, if your frames lead with the bottom bar, you are spinning the honey out of downward-tilted cells.

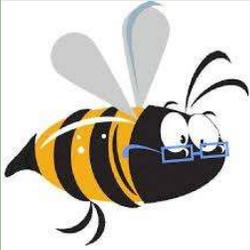
Nucs can be started in June but will need to be fed in order to produce enough bees and comb to thrive. If you are going to let them raise their own queens, you need to be aware of the availability of drones. This late in the season, hives will not be producing as many drones. In order to be properly mated, the virgin queen will need enough drones in the area to join her mating flight. Studies now indicate that a queen can mate with up to 40 drones during the mating flight. Check the hives in the immediate area to see if there is a good population of drones available. What you see in your hives is a reasonable representation of other hives in your area. If you see at minimum around a 100 drones per hive, there are probably enough drones in the area to mate your virgin queen. If you see very few drones in the hives, the probability of successful mating is reduced. You may need to consider trying to obtain a mated queen to install in your Nuc.

The Texas Beekeepers Association Summer Clinic is Saturday, June 18 in Conroe, Texas. Over 600 people attended last year's Summer Clinic. This year's featured speaker is Ross Conrad. Ross is a monthly contributor to the American Bee Journal and author of books and articles on beekeeping, including "Natural Beekeeping: Organic Approaches to Modern Apiculture". There will also be numerous breakout sessions covering a variety of beekeeping issues. Some of the interesting breakout topics include Splits for Beginners, Honey Bee Nutrition and Feeding Basics, Queen Finding and

Rearing Techniques, and Effect of In-Hive Miticides on Queens. Come and join us, we will be inside an air conditioned facility! For more information and registration forms, see the TBA website: <http://texasbeekeepers.org/summer-clinic-2016/>



The Got Questions? 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

As we start to get closer to the end of the honey flow, you as a “keeper of the bees” have a decision to make. Will you treat your bees for mites or not? As far as treating, have you chosen to use a formal Integrated Pest Management (IPM) method or will you go straight to treating with chemicals? This is a decision you will have to make. I can’t tell you what to do but I do highly encourage you to do something. Do your research and make the best informed decision based on your goals. I will tell you that the majority of the commercial beekeepers go the routine chemical route. They use a little part of IPM by, at certain times checking for mites, then, based on the findings, treat an additional time, but overall they treat based on the bee season calendar. For example, one of the times they treat is right after pulling the honey supers.

So what is this IPM thing? This concept of pest management seeks to control pests using a variety of strategies that are safe, effective, economical, and lead to a sustainable level of control. For example, in beekeeping it is doing things like using screen bottom boards, mite resistant queens, drone comb, encouraging swarming, and manipulating the hive to make it go through a period of broodlessness.

To me, IPM is a phrase that came along real strong over the past few years as the population of hobby beekeepers has exploded. It is not a new practice. Internet research shows IPM has been around since at least the 1950’s. I don’t believe it is a bad practice but it is not just something you can say you do: “I practice IPM”. You have to learn it, do it, and live it. If you don’t do all three, then your bees will suffer and die. Note that an IPM method is more than just deciding what to do after you remove the supers. It is not something you can do after you notice mite damage. If you wait until you notice damage, then by this time it just may be too late for your bees to recover. If you go this route, do your homework and stick to it.

Has anybody out there purchased and used one of the new Flow Hives?. (<http://www.honeyflow.com/>) I know that we have at least one ETBA member with a flow hive. If so, we would really like to hear from you. How did it work out? How durable is it? After you “extracted” the honey, did the bees uncap and refill the frames? Would you buy another one or recommend somebody else buy one? How easy is it to work the hive, to remove and examine the frames and bees? If you have a flow hive, talk to our Program Director Joe Laws and work out a time to tell the club about your experiences, whether they be good or bad!

beeman@cncfarms.com



The Beekeeper’s Bible is as much an ultimate guide to the practical essentials of beekeeping as it is a beautiful almanac to be read from cover to cover. Part history book, part handbook, and part cookbook, this illustrated tome covers every facet of the ancient hobby of beekeeping, from how to manage hives

safely to harvesting one’s own honey, and ideas for how to use honey and beeswax. Detailed instructions for making candles, furniture polish, beauty products, nearly 100 honey-themed recipes are included. Fully illustrated with how-to photography and unique etchings.

Available from Amazon and other on-line book sellers for around \$27.

June Program

Our June speaker should be very interesting and informative. Her name is Amanda Cowan and she has worked with bees for 25 years. She breeds her own queens for mite and disease resistance as well as for being calm enough to not need to use smoke.

Amanda has bees in Troop, Texas during the winter and spring, and summers her bees in Southern Missouri. She has a Facebook page that some of you may follow (East Texas Bees) as well as a web page. She considers herself a teacher and mentor to new beekeepers and also sells bees.

See you there!

Joe Laws, Program Director