



East Texas Beekeepers Association

June Report by Jim Biles

June 3, 2021

We're moving into a window where, if you've done your work as a beekeeper and the bees cooperate, you'll be extracting honey. This is my favorite time of the year. There's almost nothing more satisfying than seeing honey in the jar that was produced by your bees!

I extracted my first 2021 honey the second week of May. This is a very unusual season. In late March, I was concerned about having a minimal nectar flow this spring. It now appears that while much of the early blooms were late (think clover, vetch, privet hedge), they've had staying power through a cool, wet spring. Other wildflowers that come along behind are already starting to bloom such that we may be experiencing an overlap of blooms like we haven't seen in a while.

This is a good time to pay close attention to your honey build up. It may be growing faster than you expect. Make sure you have ample super space as the honey stores grow. A weekly inspection is a good idea. It's also a good time to make sure you're prepared for honey extraction. Do you have storage containers? How about bottles and labels? If you are new to beekeeping, Dick Counts will be assisting again this year with those who don't yet have extraction equipment. This needs to be arranged in advance with Dick. See me if you need Dick's contact information.

You are probably aware that we're putting an observation hive at the Tyler Rose Garden. This will be completed in mid-June with a formal dedication later in the month (stay tuned for details if you'd like to attend, it may happen on June 26th). I'd like to say a special thank you to several ETBA members who have made this possible. Dick Counts helped plan the project and did much of the hive construction. Scott Ratcliff brought his considerable carpentry expertise to bear at a critical point in the hive installation. Megan Elzner and Tish Kennedy worked with the Rose Garden to plan and deliver signage and publicity. Great work folks!



~ Jim Biles; Executive Director

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Next Meeting
June 3rd

~
United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse
6:45 PM
On the Web:
www.etba.info

Club President ~ Melissa Maeker



June is here!

Remember that the honey flow is a relatively short time-period that will end by mid-July at the latest for East Texas. Watch your hives and be prepared to add supers as needed. Currently, the wildflowers are thriving as East Texas has been blessed plentiful rain. As it dries up, the bees will have less blooms to visit and the honey flow will end.

Honey is usually considered ready to extract when the bees have capped around 80% of the frame. If they are slow to cap, it is an indication that the "honey" may have too much moisture. Remember that honey should have less than 18.6% water content to avoid fermentation. You can buy a refractometer from the bee supply stores (or Amazon). The price ranges from \$80 to more than \$400 to measure water content. A less technical method is to take the frame and shake it hard once (horizontal to surface). If the honey/nectar comes out easily, it is not cured honey.

If you are a member of our club, Dick Counts graciously offers his extracting equipment for your use. There are rules (and since he owns the equipment, that is his right). This is a great deal for new beekeepers as you can delay buying your own equipment which is several hundred to thousands of dollars of investment.

1. He only allows medium frames (no deeps).
2. You need to set up an appointment to come and extract. Ideally, you should bring some helpers (at least 2) to assist.
3. Bring enough food-grade (usually white) 5-gallon buckets (available at Lowes, Walmart, etc.). Do not bring jars as you cannot bottle at his honey house. Also bring something to hold your wet wax-cappings OR consider donating some or all to Dick for his help. You want to wait a day or 2 to bottle anyway to make sure all the air bubbles have floated to the top so you can skim them off. Bubbles are not aesthetically pleasing in your honey jar.
4. Bring supers (without bees please). Back up to his shop and quickly unload your supers into his honey house. The idea is to avoid getting his bees in the robbing mood resulting in lots of stings. Wash out the back of your truck to make sure no honey is left behind.
5. Dick directs the work. He usually likes to work the heated knife and uncap the frames. He has wet rags to clean up any honey spills (walking it all over the floor ends up with a sticky mess). Make sure you watch for drippings and quickly wipe them up.
6. Help Dick clean up and then quickly load supers and honey and depart.



God Bless! Melissa Maeker



The June Program.....



Our June speaker is the 2021 American Honey Princess, Virginia Allen. She will be giving a presentation on cooking with honey. Virginia started beekeeping in 2014 through the Collin County Hobby Beekeepers Association Youth Scholarship Program and is currently working toward a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership from University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Among her many interests, she especially likes to go rock climbing and backpacking with her family, volunteer at her church, and is an active leader in the local Fire Explorers program.

We look forward to hearing having her at the meeting!

See you there!
Meagan, Program Director



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We offer pure, raw, local honey & bees to our surrounding communities.

~ Meagan and Isaac Elzner ~



On Thursday, May 20th, I received a text message and an email from one of our members. She has a business in Palestine and recorded and photographed a honeybee swarm high above her flower garden in front of her office. She watched the swarm for some time before they had finally settled on one of her plants. Being a beekeeper for a time herself, she reached out for assistance in safely removing the hive so that the city wouldn't come destroy them or a customer get hurt. She doesn't have any hives right now, but wanted to do the right thing for the bees.

She was connected with one of our members and they didn't hesitate in helping her. They arrived shortly after and were able to safely and quickly remove the swarm. It was a really nice healthy swarm, and since they had settled close to the ground, I imagine it was a lot easier to find the queen and move the hive to a hive box for relocating.

She didn't mention to me who had come out to help, but she was ever so grateful to have the bees saved without an incident.

I too am grateful that we have such amazing beekeepers who are willing to step up when a fellow bee lover needs help.



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley



Hopefully the spring nectar will still be available in sufficient quantities for the bees to collect and store in your hive's supers. Some of the calls I am receiving indicate the humming bird feeders are already being visited by hundreds of bees looking for something to eat. This does not usually happen until the birds are on their autumn trip to the wintering location in South America and may be indicative of a shortage of natural nectar. Most stores carrying hummingbird feeders have two types available. By reading the label, you will find that some have "bee guards" and some do not.

The bee guard will not allow the bee's short tongue to reach the feed inside and she soon goes away. Without a guard, the bee can reach the food, fill up and return to the hive to spread information about the free lunch. Several of the hummingbird manufacturers provide "bee guards" in separate packages that can be installed on your feeder. Amazon has several listed on their website. I checked at a couple local retail stores but did not find any in stock.

Having said all of that makes me wonder about available nectar. In a normal year, nectar is still available during most of June in quantities that will allow the excess to be stored in the super. Sumac and Horsemint may still be producing sufficient nectar since they are later blooming plants.

You will probably need to check your super often to determine if you have anything to harvest. If there is honey stored in the double deep brood boxes, I suggest that you definitely **DO NOT EXTRACT** brood nest frames of honey. This is the food for the bees in the hive and not for the "sometime manager" of the hive, i.e., the beekeeper. Many bees starve because of the actions of their greedy owners who rob the brood nest honey.

If you have fully capped frames of honey in the super, you can begin to harvest in June. Harvesting should be done in dry and warm weather. This ensures the honey will not absorb moisture from the air as it would on a cloudy or rainy day. Normally, you should extract those frames that are at least $\frac{3}{4}$ capped. In the event you have frames that are not sufficiently capped, you can test to see if the honey is ready to be extracted by turning the frame over, with the top bar toward the ground, and giving the frame a sharp shake downward. If the honey does not shake out when you give the frame that sharp downward shake, it should be dry enough to extract. If the honey "rains" out, return the frame to the super because the honey has too much moisture in it and will probably ferment if extracted and bottled. It will not take a very large quantity of "too moist" honey to ferment your entire extraction.

There are several ways to remove the bees from supers so you can collect frames for extraction. Smoke the bees from supers. Brush the bees off each frame and place the frame in bee-proof container. Use a "bee-escape board" beneath the super, requiring at least two trips to the apiary. Use a fume board. My favorite is to use a leaf blower to quickly blow all the bees from the frames of a full super. Place the super on the ground or on top of another hive, with the super standing on its short side so the frames do not collapse on each other. Direct the leaf blower air stream from the top bars toward the bottom bars so the bees will be easily blown out. Frames that are fully capped will have fewer bees in the super so the job should be quick and easy.

The severe cold spell of February has killed or severely damaged Tallow trees in East Texas. In my area around Jefferson, a few trees have very small new sprouts coming off the tree trunk about three feet above the ground but no other spring growth. Many trees are showing no growth at all. Honey production is going to be drastically effected in this area for some time to come. USDA is studying releasing a non-native beetle and moth as a control of Chinese Tallow as it is considered an invasive species. Beekeepers across the state have been protesting this proposal. Coupled with the effects of this freeze, we do not know the future of Tallow as a bee forage source in Texas.

We see on the local and national news about the rapid increase in the price of lumber products and the effect on the cost of home building. I suspect we may see a future impact on the cost of our woodenware. You may wish to order needed supplies before prices increase.



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.



Hello Beekeepers!

This time of the year begins the significant shift from spring to summer for us here in CNC Honey Farms, and I am sure it has for you as well. We certainly have gotten a lot of rain recently. While all this rain is great, it can be hard on our honey flow. In your apiaries, honey supers should be on or going on soon, and we all hope that the great freeze of this year will not hinder our bees from making a decent honey crop.

While our honey supers are already on our local bees, we are now beginning the great haul of supers down to our bees in Beaumont, TX. We still haven't learned the full effect the freeze had on the tallow trees in the gulf coast area. However, the tallow trees around here did not fare well during that freeze. Nevertheless, we are still hopeful about the honey harvest from Beaumont. We have successfully moved our bees there and are now placing supers on them. So far, we have only gotten stuck once, but I am sure there will be more as the ground is very saturated there.

If you have never worked bees in the humid Texas heat Beaumont offers, I cannot say that I recommend it. However, after a hard day's work there, you will never find food more delicious tasting, water so satisfying, or a nap quite as deep anywhere else. Also, while working there, I wonder why we do not have a national holiday for Willis Carrier and Frederick Jones. They both largely contributed to the development of the air-conditioners we have today. Soon we will be joining a sizeable migratory beekeeper in Beaumont to help him pull honey and load bees for North Dakota, and I will be sharing my adventures there with you. Last year was very thrilling with the discovery of a giant rattlesnake under a pallet of bees. Remember to be careful around your hives, as snakes tend to nestle under them.

As most of our customers have picked up their bees, I also wanted to answer a few of the most common questions I am getting to help others. **Q:** Should I keep feeding my bees? **A:** If you are putting a new box that is just foundation on your hive, yes, definitely. The bees will need lots of resources to draw out the comb on the frames. **Q:** The bees are clumping up on the side of my box. Is this normal? **A:** Yes, this is called bearding, and they do this to cool off in warmer weather. **Q:** I see a few dead bees outside of my hive. Is this ok? **A:** Yes, a few dead bees is completely fine as they are probably just removing any dead bees from the hive. Another thing I would encourage new beekeepers to do is to study the different types of bees in their hive. There is the worker, the drone, and the Queen. It can be intimidating looking through your hive if you do not understand some of the basics. For example, you see a dead drone, and you possibly think this large bee is the Queen. Also, familiarize yourself with newly laid eggs and young larvae. It can be challenging for new beekeepers to find the Queen, but if you can find freshly laid eggs, you know things are probably ok in your hive. Also, it is essential to find a mentor beekeeper. While I am asking new beekeepers to find one, I am also asking that more experienced beekeepers help out those new to keeping bees. This year's new beekeepers have their hives now and need to know that we have been where they are. Help them learn that it is ok to try different things out and find what works for them as a beekeeper.

I hope everyone is ready for the hot summer months because I can sure tell that they are on their way here! As an added note in closing, I encourage everyone to go and check out the new observation hive at the Tyler Rose Gardens during its grand opening on June 26th. The club has put forth a lot of effort to make this happen with the Boy Scouts and The City of Tyler. Have a great month, everyone!



I had an email sent to me that I would like to share with you. Sadly, it is a heart wrenching article but important in helping beekeepers and others to be aware.

UPS Kills Bees, Again!

<https://boston.cbslocal.com/2021/05/20/i-team-million-dead-bees-ups-truck-shipping-facility-shrewsbury/>

Dear Colleagues:

My personal beef is that UPS Shreveport did the same to me, story below if you want to read.

SUGGESTION:

If you, too, experienced UPS delaying a bee order beyond the scheduled delivery, contact Mann Lake immediately.

I assume they consider suing UPS and may be happy to collect cases that support that this is a bigger issue. Mann Lake probably has to compensate customers and may have to take up a loan to finance the compensation and the legal costs, even if they win a settlement.



I-Team: More Than A Million Bees Left In Truck For Weeks At Shipping Facility

More than a million bees were left on a hot UPS truck for weeks. By the time a beekeeper was called, most of them were dead. WBZ-TV's Cheryl Fiandaca reports.

boston.cbslocal.com

If we ourselves encounter a lowly attitude of our local UPS station, we probably have no leverage to do anything ourselves. We have every interest for UPS and competitors to straighten out their business and to deliver.

I share the disappointment of all the bee keepers who hoped to get their packages now, when cold snap and rain decimated their bee yards. I am happy to help so that UPS (and their competitors) may respect its customers reasonably.

PERSONAL ACCOUNT:

I had a queen shipped via UPS from Draper's Super Bee Apiaries, Inc., June 22, 2018. The package was shipped evening of Wednesday 7/20 "overnight" at extra fee, to arrive on Friday, and had a big, orange sticker from UPS to be delivered on weekends. UPS tracking scheduled Friday delivery, so I waited at home all day to catch it - till Friday evening. I could see that the queen had arrived at the UPS facility in Shreveport! UPS then rescheduled the delivery to Saturday 23, and I waited again all day....till evening.

Even on Sunday UPS tracking insisted that it would be delivered on Saturday past. I contacted UPS customer support: no help. The phone number connected me with somebody with a heavy Indian accent (possibly an international call center in Asia), who repeated that I should check the tracking record (d'oh). Eventually she dug into her database: the queen was at the UPS station in Shreveport, inside a truck container. I asked whether I could pick the queen up from the center: not until the container is opened and processed; time unknown. Never did I get the chance to contact UPS Shreveport directly. The lady refused or was unable to call UPS Shreveport from her end. I had no chance to do anything!

On Sunday night, delivery was rescheduled from Saturday to Monday (what does that tell me about their tracking?). No surprise: the queen did not arrive on Monday, either. Tuesday she arrived. Almost a week after being sent. She died in the two days following. However, because the bee was still alive upon delivery, UPS refused to compensate.

AFTERMATH

Of course, in my case the financial loss never warranted to pursue the instance. The sadness was that, because I had only one hive then, and that was an emergency order (where do you find queens in June!), the loss of my entire hive was the actual loss.

The irony is that this instance triggered me to get more hives and join this club, to go "real" with my bees, again. Understandably, I avoid UPS now; burnt once...

To you all a buzzy flow season,
Matyas Buzgo