



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 29 No. 3

March 6, 2014

## *March Report by Dick Counts*

The Latest, Biggest, Bestest, Mostest news – we had 125 members and guests at our February meeting! It makes an old beekeeper feel good to see such a response. Thanks for your participation in making ETBA successful.

Several of us attended the TBA Winter Delegates meeting in Salado on February 15. The overall attendance was a little disappointing. There were only 32 people present. I encourage you to attend the Delegates Meetings if you can. It is a good opportunity to learn about the concerns facing beekeepers from a state, regulatory, and legislative perspective.

The next TBA function will be the upcoming 2014 Summer Clinic, held at the Honey Bee Research Lab on the Texas A&M Riverside Campus. The Summer Clinic is always on a Saturday. It is close enough that you can drive down and back the same day. Last summer's clinic at Rogers, Texas was a interesting and informative event. Plan to attend this summer and see the research facility that beekeepers like you and me worked so hard to support and fund.

The TBA Annual Convention will be held this fall in Houston. More information will be available in a few months.

Our 2014 beekeepers class is in full swing. We have total of 44 students, including seven Scholarship Students. Since starting the class in January, we have worked in the shop building boxes on some pretty cold Saturdays. This week, we are collecting completed deep boxes and preparing to deliver them to our bee suppliers to start our hives. In a few weeks, the hives will come back to us, ready to go home with excited new beekeepers. In the interim, we will be finishing our supers, tops and bottoms.

After such a cold and difficult winter, it is good to see some early signs of spring. When driving about, I see the white blooms of the Wild Plums, particularly down in the river bottoms. When you see the white blooms appear, do you know what that means for your bees? And what it means for You? Are your boxes ready, have you fed some 1 to 1 sugar water? Is your new stand ready for your new hives? This is our time of the year, get with it. We will be talking about it at the March meeting.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—Tammy Lenamond

Secretary—Lanette Lanchester

Ex. Director and Reporter—  
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford  
Brantley, Randy Bobo

Program Directors — Joe  
Mekalip, Gus Wolf

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Next Meeting

# March 6

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

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



Do you wonder what is going on with the Queen program? Let me share with you an update so you can see how much our Royal Court is in demand.

We are finalizing our 2014 public information brochures and will soon deliver them to the printer. An announcement of our Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> coronation ceremony has been provided to Chris Doggett, Editor of the TBA Journal for publication in the next Journal release.

Willow and her family attended the Delegates meeting in Salado, along with Stan Brantley, Dick and me. Willow was introduced as our 2014 Honey Princess and had an opportunity to share her bio with the audience. She did an outstanding job, speaking with poise and confidence in front of an audience of people whom she had never met. She has also written an informative report about the meeting for this edition of the newsletter.

Willow is being mentored to do public presentations. She is learning to use our ETBA PowerPoint slide show and will assist me in presentations for adult and children's groups.

Carrie and I are corresponding by email and cell phone as she is in Kentucky with her family. We will miss her at our March meeting. She will join us in the public education programs after returning from Kentucky. Carrie has been participating in education about the honey bee since she was eight years old. She loves cooking, especially with honey and I am told she will run everyone out of HER kitchen because they distract her creativity.

We have already begun to present programs for our 2014 year. A friend of Martha invited her to educate home schooled children at Calvary Baptist Church. Willow joined her and they did a joint presentation. We have numerous speaking requests coming in and I have already scheduled presentations for some schools and churches, The Discovery Science Center, Henderson County Livestock Show, Athens Organic Spring Open House, Caldwell Zoo Earth Day, and several presentations to all age children with the Texas Forestry Service at Eastman. Our Queen and Princess will also help Dick and I clean the ETBA observation hives and install new bees, getting them ready for the summer season.



On Saturday, February 15th, my family and I attended the 2014 TBA Winter Delegates Meeting at the Stagecoach Inn, Salado, Texas. I had the pleasure of meeting and visiting with queens and princesses, past and present. Connecting with many long time beekeepers from all over the state was exciting and inspirational.

At the delegates meeting, I learned about the many different activities and programs in which the TBA is involved. Our delegate, Dick Counts, spoke about ETBA's success and what other clubs could do to grow their clubs, specifically youth programs. Chris Doggett, TBA Publications Director, gave a report on the TBA Journal and the new free one year memberships for first year beekeepers. TBA Webmaster Mark Hedley updated us on the renovations to the TBA website. The first edition is due out in mid-March. It will have new content, honey locator, swarm locator, and an on-line membership module. The delegates' main project this year is updating the regulations that affect the Texas beekeeper. The intent is to eliminate outdated regulations and develop new standardization regulations.

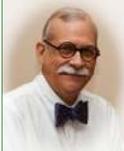
Two new local club Honey Princesses were introduced to TBA. Hope Pettibon was introduced as Collin County Honey Princess and Ms. Vi Bourns introduced me as the 2014 ETBA Honey Princess. I was able to tell a little bit about myself and was able to do so without stuttering! Hayden Wolf, TBA Honey Queen, and Shannon LaGrave, TBA Honey Princess, spoke about their goals for the coming year.

The Winter Delegates Meeting and other events like it are great places to go to stay up to date with the events, projects, and programs that affect beekeepers around the state. The 2014 Summer Clinic will be held at the Janice and John G. Thomas Honey Bee Facility at Texas A&M University Riverside Campus.



**2013 and 2014 ETBA Royal Court**

~Willow



## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

Spring came with a vengeance, didn't it? I almost can't stand it when days are this lovely! My sinuses certainly can't stand it. Ever since moving to East Texas six years ago, I've been blessed with what must be a spring pollen-induced sinus infection. It's bad news for me but good news for the bees!

About two weeks after our last meeting, my bees stopped coming to the chick-pea flour feeders that I had made for them. They had been hauling the flour away by the pollen basket full. But now they ignore it. That means there is sufficient natural pollen available for them to harvest. And there should be; the elms have been blooming, the cedars are full, dandelions are yellow, daffodils are up, Bradford pears are flowered and the Texas Plums are full of blooms. Now that natural pollen is available, the bees will abandon anything unnatural. We can learn a lesson from them, can't we?

Check the front of your hives. You should see plenty of bees coming in with their little baskets of various colored pollen. And since protein is now available and you have been providing a carbohydrate source if they were running low on honey, then the queen will be laying eggs as she knows that the hive can support the rearing of young.



I checked my hives this past weekend, although I was not really feeling up to it and the smoke was not what my sinuses needed. I guess I should have used vinegar spray! Each hive had a good healthy brood pattern developing, young bees hatching out, and I even saw a fair amount of capped Drone brood. That heralds the close arrival of swarming season.

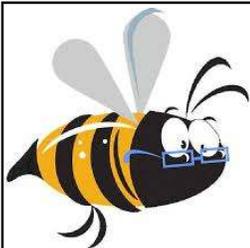
Second year queens seem to be more prone to swarming so prepare ahead to make swarming a non-option for your hives. Make sure that the queen has plenty of room to lay eggs. Also, make sure that the bees, in their zeal to fill frames with pollen, nectar and syrup, don't fill every nook and cranny and leave the queen with no place to lay. That is a sure recipe for swarming. Pull full frames of food and place them in another box in the hive and provide some empty frames for your royal highness. Or add the frames to another hive that could use the new found bounty. But make sure there is room for "young'uns."

In some cases, probably more than anyone would care to admit, swarming can't be prevented. It is, after all, part of a bee's natural instinct and the means whereby they propagate in the wild. So, if your hives do swarm, provide nice homes for them to find, far enough from your apiary, but not too far. Put out some swarm traps baited with old frames and copious amounts of lemongrass oil. When bees swarm, they tend to first cluster somewhere within about a hundred yards of the issuing hive. From there, they will send out scouts to find their next home. Make it easy to find! You may not get them, but it will be better than doing nothing at all. You may get fortunate and have an unrelated swarm find your homes. That happened to me twice last year.

Be proactive, do something – remember beekeeping is not an armchair hobby! By the way, Randy Oliver has a step by step method for raising survivor queens, pictures included – all in this month's American Bee Journal. He makes it look easy, and perhaps it is!

Many of you know that Stan Brantley arrives early at our meeting and makes himself available for an informal question and answer session. When you get to Stan's article on page 5 of this newsletter, you will see that he had more sage advice to share this month than our editor could fit on his page. In the spirit of beekeepers helping beekeepers, I am allowing Mr. Brantley to place his tag line at the end of my page. Speaking proudly on the behalf of Stan Brantley, just let me say:

The "Got Questions" room will 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 a migratory beekeeper and why do a lot of them “migrate” to East Texas? A simple definition of a migratory beekeeper is a person who transports bees to different areas to take advantage of weather, multiple honey crops, and pollination contracts. The term is also normally associated with beekeepers who make their living from the bees. A lot of these beekeepers actually move their families along with the bees. Two of the reasons they migrate here in the fall is for the warmer climate and for the pollen our trees create during the end of winter/early spring period. The warmer weather is nice but pollen is actually just as if not more important. Pollen is used as a protein source necessary during brood-rearing. Without pollen, the hive would not be able to come out of the winter cluster and start raising all the bees needed to bring in the nectar from the spring flowers.

Given you live in the great area of East Texas, you have the pollen but what else can you do to help your bees? This time of year a lot of beekeepers start feeding the bees sugar syrup or corn syrup to kick start the queen into thinking nectar is coming in and it is time to start laying. A lot of this feeding is actually needed because the bees are expanding at such a fast rate and quickly eat up all their stored food. I get a lot of questions about what concentration of sugar to water to feed the bees. The answer you find most of the time is to use a 1 sugar to 1 water mixture at this time of the year because it more closely simulates nectar. My answer is to just feed them and don't worry too much about whether you are using 1:1 or 2:1. If I need to feed, no matter what time of the year, I just feed 2:1. It is more important to feed your bees and make sure they have enough stores to survive the winter and expand in the spring than to get hung up on what sugar concentrate you are feeding.

So, you have the pollen and the feed, and now the queen is laying somewhere around 2,000 eggs a day. As you can imagine, the hive population will explode. As all this is happening, you have to make sure they don't run out of space. Make sure the queen has a few empty frames for laying. One good way to do this and to also help out your weaker hives is to swap frames of brood with empty frames. Just remember to put the empty frames on the outside of the brood nest. You can then take the frames of brood and really boost up those weaker hives.

See you at the next meeting. It's about time for Dick and I to have our annual debate on should you or should you not rotate your brood boxes.

**If you have not renewed your ETBA membership for 2014,  
now is a good time to do so.**

**After the March meeting, we will be cleaning up our membership and mailing lists for 2014. Members who have not renewed will be removed from the mailing lists and will no longer receive the ETBA newsletter.**

**Individual \$10      Family \$20**

**Three ways to renew:    Online at [www.etba.info](http://www.etba.info),  
Pay Tammy at the ETBA meeting,  
Mail to ETBA, PO Box 9662, Tyler, TX 75711-9662**



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

March is the month you have to be ready if you expect to make a honey crop in this area. It has been a difficult winter with the ups and downs on temperatures, ice and snow, freezing weather and howling winds for several days in a row -- and then suddenly 70 degrees on President's Day!

March can also be a most disappointing time of the year. You have been stuck inside for many cold days, read all last year's bee supply catalogs, magazines and journals, and watched a bunch of YouTube videos. Finally, you get a day warm enough to open and inspect your hives. Your heart drops to your shoe when you find only two or three hives in your apiary showing activity. You puff the smoker and pop the top and can't believe your eyes. There is a super full of honey and in the brood box sits a queen, a bit of capped brood, and about 30 bees. There are no other bees, dead or alive. What in the world happened? I have heard this story repeated several times this winter.

Unfortunately, in beekeeping there are often no easy answers. Did the queen have a good brood pattern in September and October? Was she starting to fail so too few winter bees were hatched to survive the winter? Did the hive go into winter carrying too large of a Varroa Mite load? Is there evidence of other disease in the hive? Were the stores in areas that could be easily reached by the bees during the coldest days? Were the hives exposed to the strong winds during the severe cold fronts?

Is it possible to catch that remaining queen and see if she can start a new hive? I would have to say "possible but difficult". A queen must be kept warm and must have attendants to feed her. You could try pulling two frames, one being the frame that the queen is on and the other a frame with honey and pollen. Place these two frames in a 5-frame nuc box. Place these frames against one wall and add an additional frame of un-drawn foundation to the inside of the second frame. The frame of foundation acts as insulation to help keep the second frame of drawn comb warm and to shield it from Small Hive Beetles. Add the remaining bees from the hive. If the queen survives and begins to lay, add drawn comb or foundation as needed.

I am sometimes asked what to do with an aggressive hive? Some bees are genetically aggressive and will remain so until they are successfully requeened and breed a new generation of more gentle bees. Other bees may respond less aggressively if dealt with more properly. Try this approach to working an aggressive hive. First, give several puffs of smoke into the front entrance, then lift the Outer Cover enough to send a few puffs through the hole in the Inner Cover. Lower the Outer Cover and wait for a minute or more for the smoke to calm the bees. Gently remove the Outer Cover. Lift one end of the Inner Cover and gently puff additional smoke lightly over the tops of the frames. Again, wait a minute for the smoke to work. This approach often triggers the bees to begin feeding heavily and become less aggressive. If this was successful, continue with your hive inspection with gentle and slow movements, trying not to jerk or bang on the frames. Also, try not to drop a frame back into the hive. A beekeeper (whom I will not name) once described to me the excitement that followed losing his grip and dropping a frame into an open hive. Caution -- you can overdo smoking a hive. Do not fill a hive with smoke. A few puffs here and there are sufficient.

If your hive remains uncomfortably aggressive after trying this approach, consult with some of your senior beekeepers. Don't keep fighting a hive that is uncomfortable and possibly even dangerous to work. Requeening may be necessary.

As I write this article in the last week of February, we are headed into another cold front promising several days in the 50s and nights at or below freezing. However, the preceding warm week has Wild Plum and Maple in bloom, even some early blooms on Redbud trees. As soon as it warms again after this front, bees will be ready to burst in to spring mode. We as beekeepers need to be ready. If you have not already done so, remove any pesticide, miticides or other medicines from your hive. Continue to feed 1-to-1 syrup if the bees will take it. If you are not seeing pollen being brought in by the foragers, feeding a small amount of pollen supplement is still OK. However, be aware that warming temperatures will bring an increase in beetle activity. Remove pollen supplements when it becomes warm and you see pollen being brought in. Watch the traffic at the front entrance. If you see congestion due to the entrance reducer (which should be at the smallest opening over the winter), turn the reducer to the larger opening. I do not suggest removing the entrance reducer until the spring flow is in full effect, probably around the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. Make sure you have honey supers ready to add. If your supers have drawn comb stored under Paramoth, remember that you will need to let the frames air for a couple days before placing them on the hive.

## 2014 ETBA Royal Court



**Carrie Lenamond  
Honey Queen**



Carrie Lenamond, 17 years old, is the daughter Mike and Tammy Lenamond of Wills Point, Texas. They live on a twenty acre farm doing organic gardening and caring for horses, cows, goats, chickens, a dog who thinks he is a goat, and, of course, the honey bees.

Carrie took her first beekeeping class in Collin County at eight years of age. She also has nine years hands on experience keeping bees with her two older sisters, Kellie and Bekah, both former ETBA Honey Queens.

Carrie is active in her local church, singing in the choir and helping with young children. She loves gardening, creating new recipes in the kitchen from main entrees to vegetables, sauces for salads, and desserts with honey from their hives. She plays in a softball league, enjoys leather crafting, and helps care for three younger siblings. Her future goals include a degree in architecture and interior design.

Carrie is an excellent speaker about the honey bee and her love for them shows when she is educating the public about their fascinating lives.



**Willow Lanchester  
Honey Princess**

Willow Lanchester is the daughter of Ryan and Lani Lanchester. She is a high school Freshman and is home educated along with her younger sister.

She began beekeeping in 2013 after receiving a Youth Beekeeping Scholarship from the East Texas Beekeepers Association. Beekeeping has become a family project.

In addition to beekeeping, Willow is a Cadet in the Civil Air Patrol, participating in search and rescue, aviation, leadership, and community service. She is a founding member of the Red Cross Youth Club in Tyler. Her leadership responsibilities include serving as club secretary, Fire Safety Chairperson, and Disaster Preparedness Team Puppeteer.

Willow is also a budding artist using pencil, pastels, and water colors. At home, she enjoys reading, cooking, beekeeping, her art work, and spending time with her family.

