



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 30 No. 3

March 5, 2015

March Report by Dick Counts

We had a nice crowd of 102 members and guests at our February meeting. Johnny and Deanne Cox gave an informative presentation about their beekeeping operation. This month, Eddie Collins will be our featured speaker.

In the past couple of weeks, we have seen what we thought was an early spring coming to East Texas. The elms were in full bloom. Wild plum was starting to show in the fields. The red bud trees were starting to have buds. Bees were flying on the warm days and bringing in lots of pollen. The kind of things that make beekeepers feel good. But this is still February in East Texas. As I write this article, everything in the Chapel Hill area is covered in sleet and freezing rain. The weather man says it may be about thirty hours before we get above freezing again and then only barely. And possibly another icy episode in a couple more days! The kind of things that make beekeepers feel bad.

I have had several calls from worried new beekeepers asking how this is going to effect our bees. If it stays cold long enough, you will probably lose some of the new brood. When the weather warms again, you may even see bees bring the dead larvae out of the hive. However, as long as the hive has some stored food, it should survive. The queen will start laying again as soon as it warms. We have a few more weeks of possible cold weather before spring actually comes to stay. Try to be patient and let nature take her course. Bring your questions to the March 5th meeting and we will talk about them.

I am sad to share with you the passing of Paul Jackson, long time beekeeper and friend. Paul was the Chief Entomologist and Apiary Inspector at Texas A&M for twenty-six years before retiring in 2013. Paul had the opportunity to see many changes in the beekeeping industry during his career and was personally involved in many activities, including laying laid the foundation for the honey bee education program now available through A&M.

At our February meeting, we announced the change in our Honey Queen Coordinator from Vi Bourns to Lani Lanchester. Lani will now be heading our Honey Queen and Princess program. Brenda Sheridan will be assuming Lani's previous role as Secretary. President Gus presented a plaque commemorating Vi's service and we all shared her favorite dessert of ice cream, thanks to hefty donation of ice cream by Brookshires.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Brenda Sheridan

Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Lani
Lanchester

Directors-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley, Larry Tarr

Program Director — Matt Thomas
Brenda Sheridan, Eddie Collins

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Next Meeting
March 5

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 Ginnie Jeske

HONEY QUEEN REPORT by *Lani Lanchester*



My family and I moved to East Texas in the fall of 2010. That first month, we attended the East Texas State Fair and met a remarkable, friendly group of beekeepers. They gave us honey sticks and encouraged Laurel and Willow to find the queen bee in the observation hive. Two years later, the East Texas Beekeepers Association had become my favorite thing in Texas. Miss Vi and many others welcomed us into the club. Willow received a colony of bees through the scholarship program and we have all become beekeepers.

In 2014, Willow became the ETBA Honey Princess. I was graced with the opportunity to become friends with Miss Vi and Mr. Counts. It is truly remarkable all they do for the club and the rare gift they offer these girls through the ETBA Queen Program. The girls not only represent the club but they develop a voice to be heard. Miss Vi took the time to get to know Willow and encourage her to develop her art work as part of that voice. This week, she is entering a painting in an Art Exhibit at UT Tyler. Just think of Hayden, she has taken her voice all over Texas and now will be reaching throughout the United States as the 2015 American Honey Princess.

I am honored to serve as the Honey Queen Chair for ETBA. Thank you, Miss Vi, for all you have taught me. I am thrilled to be working with Willow and Brittney this year. They are enthusiastic and full of aspirations. I will repeat what Miss Vi said in the last newsletter: "It is not just about our Queen and Princess — everyone in ETBA is important to the Honey Queen program!"



This month, I visited the Texas A&M Bee Lab with my family. We privately toured the facility and took part in the 2015 Winter Delegates meeting. While we were visiting, I interviewed the Texas Chief Apiary Inspector Mark Dykes about some of the projects they are working on in 2015. The most exciting project from the bee lab this year is the Texas Master Beekeeper Program.

The Master Beekeeper Program originally started in North Carolina. It was adopted and modified by Georgia, then Florida, and now it has made its way to Texas. The Texas Master Beekeeper Program (headed by Lance Wilson) is designed as a self-driven, self-disciplined college level course. It is intended not only to teach and train beekeepers but also to develop ambassadors to the non-beekeeping world.

If you are interested in getting started with the Master Beekeeper Program, there are some minimal requirements and the next testing date is fast approaching. There is no lower age limit for the program although it is suggested that some of the reading material may be too advanced for those younger than 12. Those wishing to begin must have been a beekeeper for at least one year and currently possess a hive. There are four levels of the program: Apprentice, Advanced, Master Beekeeper, and Master Craftsman. Each level progresses with an increasing amount of difficulty. To achieve the level of Apprentice, the beekeeper must have read the required reading material and pass a written test, a beekeeping tool identification test, and a practical exam showing their proficiency in going through a hive. If you want to get started, register now! The next testing date is March 27th and there are only a limited number of slots left.

The test costs \$50.00, which goes right back into the program. There will be two testing dates each year, one in the spring and one in the fall. If you cannot make it this spring, I would encourage you to take it this fall (the fall testing date is yet to be announced).

Register here <http://masterbeekeeper.tamu.edu/2015-spring-exam-registration/>



Willow with Mark Dykes, Juliana Rangel and the Bee Lab staff.

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Mark Dykes showed me an preliminary design of a patch for the program. When you pass your initial Apprentice exam with a score of at least 70%, you earn a beautiful Master Beekeeper of Texas Patch embroidered with bluebonnets and bees. As you proceed through each level, you receive a stripe to accompany the patch. Brittney and I will post the picture of this patch on our Facebook page when it is finalized later this week. I am looking forward to a time when our club is full of these beautiful patches!

I am excited to see how this program develops and am pleased to be working on getting started myself. I hope that I can answer any questions you might have if you are interested in getting involved. Here is a link to a PowerPoint presentation about the program produced by Lance Wilson:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByozRzhaAQWJSFRlanlV1VwUmxftZzkV2hwYk9IU1BrWXIB/view?usp=sharing>

~Willow



There are many ways we can use social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to show and share our honey bee information. These media outlets are driven by the users, not the creators. It is like an online hang-out place for friends and family. This form of media has become more popular and accessible than paper or television media.

I connect with my family and friends through Facebook by posting pictures of some of my activities. Willow and I hope that we will reach out to other beekeepers and the public to help show others what we do. Following social media guidelines developed by TBA, we created a Facebook page for the ETBA Honey Queen Program. Mrs. Lanchester will be our Facebook page manager and ensure that all content is approved and appropriate. Our initial goal was to attain 100 likes, meaning that at least 100 people read our Facebook page and took the time to respond or enter a comment.

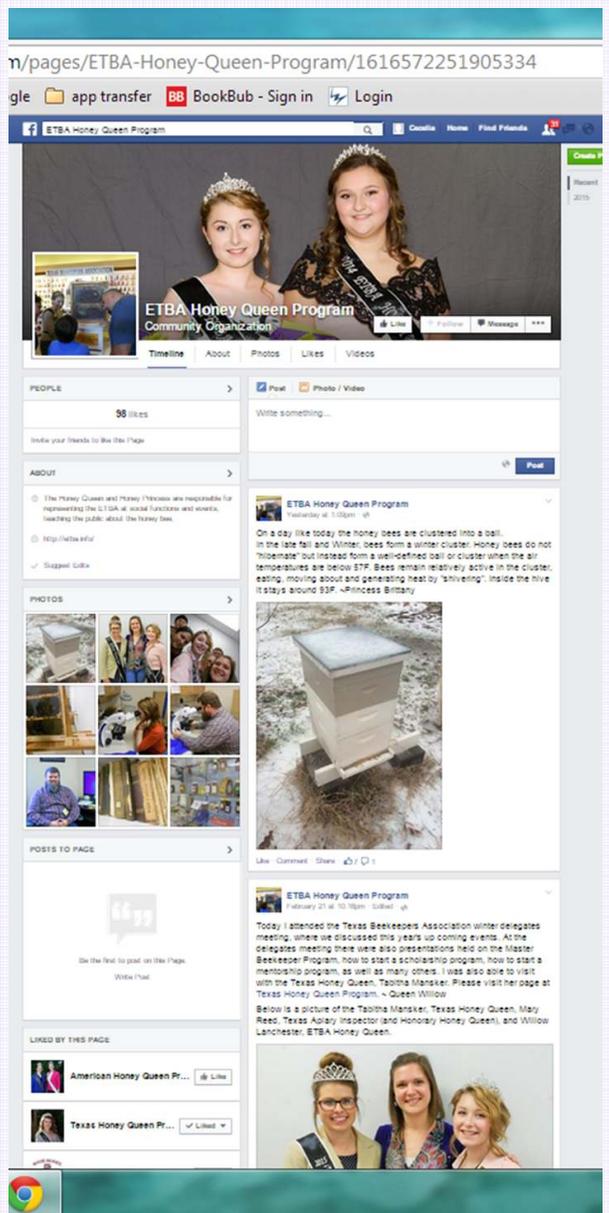
Willow and I will have the opportunity to go to Meetings, Fairs, and Festivals and we now have the ability to share those events on Facebook. We will post pictures and videos to show what we are doing, and share our honey recipes and interesting bee facts with our family and friends. We will also be posting upcoming events to give others the opportunity to come hear us speak.

I want to invite all of the club members to view and to "like" our Facebook page. You can invite your family and friends to "like" our



page as well so we can share our information with them. Everyone is welcome to "like" or leave a comment on our posts, pictures and articles. Find our page by going to Facebook and searching for "ETBA Honey Queen Program." Our page has already reached 94 likes as of today. We can use your help and the help of your family and friends to reach our next goal of 200 responses.

~ Brittney





President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

Have you looked at your bees lately? There are a number of ways you could do that. I have yet to open hives and take a look at what is going on inside. I know there have been ample warm days to have done so, but one thing has just led to another. Perhaps next week on the next warm day. However, I do make a point to watch the entrances of the hives with regularity – especially on warm days. And all my hives show a lot of activity. The entrance reducers are still on the hives and the bees are scrambling all over each other to get in and out. They are bringing in a goodly amount of pollen. That pollen and left over stores from the winter should translate to the queen laying brood. Outside, the hives look good. I'll see in a week or so what that translates to on the inside. So, if like me, you have not made time to check inside your hives, make sure you observe what is happening at the entrance. Lots of activity should translate to a good strong hive. Little activity will probably mean a weak hive that needs attention sooner than later in order to salvage it before it gets overrun by the wax moths.

The storage of drawn frames has always been a problem for me as a hobby beekeeper. Have you had the same problem? A commercial bee keeper usually has a large air tight frame storage room. The room is pumped full of a toxic gas that protects but does not permeate the wax on the frames. When needed, the gas readily dissipates and the frames are ready for use. Unfortunately, this option is not available for most of us. The only thing we can use is ParaMoth, paradichlorobenzene flakes, good old moth crystals. The problem I have with this approach is two-fold. First, the chemical that comprises the flakes does permeate the wax slightly and needs to be thoroughly aired out of the frames before use. Not doing so will kill your bees.

The second concern is cost, or perhaps I should say, the continuing cost. It is so warm in East Texas when I use the crystals for moth prevention, they only last a short time. They dissipate quickly because of the heat and need to be replenished frequently in order to stay effective. That continuing cost is almost prohibitive. And woe betide if you wait too long and the wax moths find the unprotected comb! I have often wished there were a more reasonable alternative.

I think I may have found an alternative and I will try it this year – that is if I can get it. While researching another aspect of beekeeping, I ran across a product called "Certan" also know as "B401" and "XenTari." As far as I can tell, it is not sold by any United States bee supplier but it is available from Canadian and European suppliers as well as on Amazon.com. It is a strain of bacillus thuringiensis, known as BT, that is specific for the wax moth. The strain is subsp Aizawai. You can't use the BT found at Lowes and Home Depot because that is not the right strain. This product needs one application per use and is entirely non-toxic to bees and people. The reviews I have read have been very positive. I do not know why it is not available in America but other countries have been using it for a while. Commercial beekeepers will find it expensive but it is entirely affordable to the hobbyist.

Judging from my email inbox and the references online, the Flow Hive from Australia is creating quite a sensation in the beekeeping world. The product launch is due on Monday, February 23, so watch for it. They have a Facebook page and it has been shared countless times. The basic premise is that you do not need to remove the frames to extract the honey. Through a patented process, you turn a few screws and the honey comes pouring out into your quart jars at the back of the hive. There is even a video clip of someone applying fresh honey to their pancakes at the back of the hive. The system does require a modified hive body and their special frames, so I expect cost to be a factor. It may turn out to be the "next big thing" in beekeeping but I would fancy that it will be just a passing novelty. But who knows, perhaps 10 years from now we'll wonder how they did it in the old days because we'll all be using this new system — but I doubt it. Thanks to ETBA members Gerald Gipson and Steve Douglas for sharing this information to be included in the newsletter.

Note the photo on our front page by Ginnie Jeske. This is not the first photo that Ginnie has shared with us. Her remarkable photos have not only been on our front page but also have been in several TBA Journal publications, including the full-page cover art. She has also won first and second place ribbons on her entries at the East Texas Fair for the past two years. Ginnie will be acting as our roving photographer and providing many front-page photos appropriate for the month of publication.



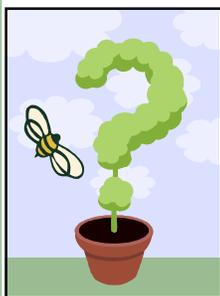
Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

I keep getting the same story over and over again. "I checked my hives two weeks ago and they looked good. Today there were no bees in the hive." My first question is usually, "Did you check for mites?" and the answer is usually, "Well, No." For many years we did not worry too much about mites. However, the more I read and the more presentations I hear, the more concern I see about the detrimental and even deadly effect of mites on a hive. Part of the problem is that you cannot just look into the hive and see the severity of a mite infestation. The exception to that statement may be extremely severe infestations where you see adult mites running around on the frames – and that is not a good thing to find in your hive. You have to do some kind of mite drop count to determine the severity of the infestation. It is worth your time to study about mites, to learn to do drop counts or sugar roll counts, and to learn how and when to treat your hives.

Recently another concern I have heard repeatedly expressed is, "I saw bees clustered on the frames but they were all dead." This situation may be related to the cyclic warm and cold weather we have experienced early this spring. The early warm days and blooming trees have caused bees to swing in to the brood laying process. The queen responds by laying eggs on the warm days. With the next cold spell, the hive bees are focused on protecting the new brood. The bees will attempt to cover the new brood and keep it from becoming chilled and dying during the cold night. If the cold spell lasts for two or three days and temperatures drop near or below freezing, the hive bees can literally starve rather than move off the brood to find food. If the hive's stores are not located near the cluster of brood, the attendant bees may die and then the unprotected brood may die.

We talk often about feeding our bees with sugar syrup. Most hobbyist beekeepers make the sugar syrup at home and carry it to the apiary. This works well for a small number of hives. As the number of hives increase, the task of mixing sugar syrup can grow to be a major endeavor. When we read about or hear discussions with larger scale beekeepers, most of them are feeding corn syrup, or High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) to be more correct. The use of HFCS is driven by economy of scale. It is less expensive than sugar per unit of caloric output. You can buy it in lots from gallons to tanker-truck loads, carry it around the beeyard in 300 gallon trailers, and pump it directly from the tank into the hive's feeders. HFCS differs from regular corn syrup that you buy in the grocery to make a pecan pie. It is made by treating corn syrup with an enzyme that converts some of the sugars from glucose to fructose. The resulting HFCS is known by the ratio of fructose to glucose. The three basic mixtures are HFCS 42 (42% fructose, the result of the initial enzyme treatment), HFCS 90 (a 90% fructose version made by a second level conversion of additional glucose to fructose), and HFCS 55 (a blend of the 42% and 90%). All three are about 76% sugar and 24% water. Most beekeepers use HFCS 55. Used straight from the tank, it is called "thick syrup". Diluted with 25-30% water, it is called "thin syrup". HFCS can be purchased from Dadant in Paris. They advertise it by large lots in their catalog. However, you can take your container to the Paris store and have it filled while you wait. It is always a good idea to call ahead before making the drive to Paris, just to make sure they have some on hand. The Internet has many articles about HFCS. You can find bonafide indisputable proof that it is either wonderful stuff or deadly poison, for both people and for bees. Read about it with discretion and draw your own conclusions.

As a new beekeeper, you will have to decide what type and size of hives you will use, 10-frame, 8-frame, TopBar. Wax foundation or plastic foundation. Be aware that hive boxes and frames can vary slightly among manufacturers. Boxes made by one manufacturer may not sit well on boxes made by another. Frames from one manufacturer may not fit well in boxes from another. You can be assured of getting the best fit by purchasing all of your hive components from the same manufacturer. Consider the ease and the cost of acquiring the brand you select because you may be tied to it for a long time. When looking at used equipment, ask who manufactured it, or bring one of your boxes and test the fit. If you are going to mix differing brands, try to check with some old timers in the bee club for advice about compatibility of the brands.



I was asked if it was possible to stack Nuc boxes, just as you stack regular hive bodies. The answer is "Yes, but make sure to anchor them well." Nuc boxes are narrow and the stack can easily get top heavy and topple over.

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.



Bee Facts by Eddie Collins

Over the past month I've been asked a lot of questions about how many and what size boxes to use on a hive. This is one of those beekeeping questions without an absolute answer. After you've been a beekeeper for a couple of years, you will be able to determine the answer that best meets your needs. Basically, this means the answer is — you can use whatever size and number of boxes that works for your situation. What I use, because it works well for me, is two Deep brood boxes and one or more Mediums for honey supers. Here is why:

Using two Deeps gives me a lot of options for splitting the hive into two separate Deeps or moving resources from one hive to another. Basically, it is just a standardization to make my process easier. For example, if I used one Deep and one Medium and I wanted to take brood from a Medium in one hive but the other hive's cluster was in the Deep, then it would be a harder to accomplish.

Normally there will be plenty of room in the two Deeps for a feeder, brood, pollen, and honey. This makes it easier for me to work my bees and overwinter my bees. There's just room enough for everything.

By using two Deeps, I don't have to use a queen excluder. Most of the time the queen will stay below the arch of honey in the top of the top brood box.

My supers are Mediums. If I also had Mediums for brood boxes, then it would be harder for me to take an equipment inventory and keep up with what is what.

With both brood boxes being Deeps, the division board feeders I use can be put in either or both boxes.

I use Medium honey supers. Deeps will hold more honey but that translates into being real, real heavy. I have also heard reports that you get more brood layed in the supers if they are Deeps rather than Mediums.

I use 10-frame equipment — just seems to be the norm around East Texas.

I run nine frames in my bottom brood box and eight frames and a feeder in my top brood box. I keep the feeder in there all year long. I run nine frames in my supers. One thing to point out when drawing out your frames, put as many in there as you can and push them all together. After they are drawn, you can remove frames down to the number you want to keep in the box.

Things to think about. Does the color of your hive boxes impact the hive? For example do darker colors keep the bees warmer and is this a good or bad thing? Will bees fill warmer supers faster or slower? I do know that a lot of times the bees seem to fill the frames in the supers on the side that gets the most sun. Also, we know that hives in direct sunlight have less trouble with the beetles. Based on this, would darker colors keep the hives a little hotter so this in turn would help with beetle control? But a hotter hive will lead to more bees having to gather water and work harder to ventilate so is the tradeoff worth it? Hmmm — just things to think about and possibly do some test on.

Man does information travel fast these days. I've seen the new honey "spigot" device in several emails and Internet discussions. <http://www.honeyflow.com/video> You can find all the details in the FAQ section of the link but basically this is a hive that has a mechanism with pre-molded frames that allow harvesting the honey without having to remove the frames from the hive! I'm not yet sold on this but it sure would be neat to see one in action and see exactly how it works, especially if the bees would uncap and refill the cells. Maybe a couple of ETBA members would purchase a Flow Hive and report in future newsletter articles about the experiment!

At the March meeting, I will again have deep and medium boxes for sale. These are unassembled Shastina Millwork boxes with the new improved top finger-joint. Deeps — \$13.00, Mediums — \$11.50

Don't forget to renew your ETBA Membership for 2015

Individual \$10

See our Treasurer John Holladay at the meeting.

Family \$20

Renew online at our website ETBA.info

Mail a check to ETBA, PO Box, 9662, Tyler, TX 75711-9662.