



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 31 No. 3

March 3, 2016

March Report by Dick Counts

We had an amazing 135 members and visitors at the February meeting. Thank you for supporting our club.

For the past several months we have had several brand new visitors, some new beekeepers and some who want to become first time beekeepers. Last month, our president announced the ETBA Board was discussing ways to provide information needed by brand new beekeepers and soon-to-be beekeepers.

Beginning with our March meeting, we will offer a monthly breakout session covering basic beekeeping information. The breakout sessions will be conducted in a separate room during our regular club program. You will have the option of remaining in the Friendship Hall for the regular program or stepping out to the breakout session.

The breakout sessions will consist of three programs, one each month, then rotating as needed. The March session, entitled "So You want to be a Beekeeper", covers things you need to think about before acquiring bees, basic bee equipment and protective gear needed to get started, startup costs, and where and how to get equipment and bees.

The April session will cover biology and life cycle of honey bees, why a beekeeper needs to know this, and how to apply it in your beeyard. You will learn to recognize a successful, queen-right hive, capped brood and capped honey, and an overview of diseases and pests.

The final session in May will discuss hive inspections, how to do them, and how to interpret what you see.

We hope these breakout sessions will help our newest members and guests make a good start in their beekeeping adventure and prepare them to understand what they hear in our regular programs and discussions.

We are looking for volunteers to work with Stan Brantley and Les Jeske to be team teachers. We would like to have at least two instructors for each class. You can volunteer for one or all three. You do not have to be an expert — the presentations are PowerPoint shows and we will provide you a script. If you have questions, contact Dan Eudy at eudy48@gmail.com or see him at the March meeting.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—John Stewart

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Brenda Sheridan

Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Lani
Lanchester

Directors-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley

Program Director — Matt Thomas

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Next Meeting March 3

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

On the Web: etba.info
Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789



HONEY QUEEN REPORT by *Lani Lanchester*



I have been blessed to be a part of the ETBA Queen Program. Last year, I had the privilege to lead the program with Willow serving as Honey Queen and Brittany as Honey Princess. In 2016, as the Queen's Committee expanded the Royal Court to include an Ambassador, my heart was warmed by the opportunity to crown Brittany Miller 2016 ETBA Honey Queen and appoint Jacob Cole as the 2016 ETBA Beekeeping Ambassador.

The program has grown in quality this year with the help of the Royal Court Committee. Barbara Farguson is one member who has helped us develop a group calendar, training expectations, goals for the program, and has encouraged our Honey Queen and Beekeeping Ambassador in their efforts. I am pleased to report the ETBA Board has approved the recommendation of the Royal Court Committee to appoint Barbara Farguson to be the new Royal Court Committee Chairperson. I will continue to serve on the committee with these excellent beekeepers and help Barbara with her new role. At the next meeting, please thank Barbara for her dedication to ETBA and our Royal Court.



Using Essential Oils in Your Hive



Many beekeepers are dealing with hive beetles and varroa mites. There are many different ways to run these pests out of our hives. One way is by using essential oils. Essential oils are a natural way to help keep the hives healthy and free of hive beetles and mites. There are different ways to apply these products in the hives, such as adding a few drops of oil into your sugar syrup. Another way is to create a mixture of different oils then spray the mixture on the bees -- be sure that the oils are properly diluted before applying.

One of the most popular essential oils is thyme oil. The active ingredient in thyme oil is thymol. This compound assists in controlling the varroa mite. When the mite comes in contact with the thyme oil, it works by confusing the mite and blocking its pores. When the mite becomes confused, it falls through the screened bottom board and is unable to climb back into the hive. Spearmint oil is another oil that is threatening to the varroa mite. It causes a similar effect to the mite as the thyme oil by confusing it and getting it off track. Applying any mint oil should have the same effect as thyme and spearmint oil.

Here is a popular list of different oils that can be added to the food mixture: lavender, wintergreen, patchouli, citrus, tea tree oil and other mint oils. When adding oils to the sugar water, it helps with the health of the hive and reduces growth of mold. Usually when feeding the bees inside the hive with plastic baggies, after some time it begins to mold. Certain oils can slow the molding process. Some beekeepers also create a mixture with a low sugar content and essential oils when working in the hives. They use a mist of this in place of a smoker to calm bees.

When varroa mites come in contact with oils such as wintergreen, patchouli, and tea tree oil, they usually die within a few minutes. When varroa mites feed on larva which will contain essential oils, it interrupts their reproduction system. If the oils are strong enough, it will prevent the females from being able to lay more eggs. If the oils are low concentration, she will still be able to lay eggs, but the process is delayed and will slow mite growth, allowing bees to emerge before the mite grows to maturity. Also, when essential oils are fed through syrup, the essential oils will go through the nurse bee when feeding larval bee milk. Therefore female mites are threatened when mites try to attack the bee larva.

While essential oils kill and slow the beetles and varroa, they do not harm our honey bees. The only effects that will come from using these oils will be a healthier and happy hive. This will increase productivity in the hive because the bees will not be disturbed by these common pests. These oils are safe for both the owner and bees involved and will also make your hive smell good. Do some research before adding essential oils to your hive.

Here are a couple of links to start: www.wvu.edu/~agexten/varroa/varroa2.htm

www.honeybeesuite.com/essential-oils-and-honey-bee-health/

~Brittany

Gretchen Bee Ranch in Seguin, Texas.



Run by Mark and Thien Gretchen, the Bee Ranch sells different types of honey, pollen, wax, candles, and equipment. They also teach classes. My mom and I went to the Bee Ranch for a visit and a tour. We were accompanied by fellow beekeeper Kim Krueger. Upon arrival, Mark welcomed us and gave us the grand tour. First we saw his on-site apiary. He showed us the forage that was growing and told us about his plans for this spring and summer.

Next we went inside the shop. They had several pieces of equipment I had not seen before. One was the Ross Rounds equipment. For those of you that aren't familiar with Ross Rounds, they are specialized supers with special frames with circles cut out for the wax. When you harvest from this frame, you pop the circles out of the frame. This makes a round cut comb of honey. Another piece of equipment they had was their pollen trap, different than any I had seen before. Mark explained why he preferred the traps with the pollen collection from the back instead of the front or side. We also saw propolis traps and other harvesting equipment.

Mark had just received his oxalic acid diffuser. He showed us which hives he was going to treat as a trial. He was going to treat them all if the oxalic acid worked on the first hives that he tested. This encouraged us to order a diffuser for ourselves. I am excited to try it out this year.

Next we got to go into my favorite part, the honey/wax room. They had several different honeys from nine surrounding counties. Their shop offers many candle choices as well and jars of pollen. My favorite part was the honey tasting cart. They had all of their honeys on it, including their creamed honey. There were twelve different kinds of honey for tasting and I loved every single one. I was also interested in their candle making. They had a small shed where they store and pour their wax. Mark and Thien showed us all of their molds, filters, dipping containers and more. I enjoyed learning about their candle making operation and want to learn to make candles at our apiary.

One reason I enjoyed this trek so much was because my family and I are interested in starting many of these things ourselves. We recently started teaching bee classes at our house and we hope to get into candle making soon. If you are ever in the Seguin area, I highly recommend you visit Gretchen Bee Ranch, but keep in mind that they are only open to the public Wednesday and Saturday. ~Jacob



Meet Carolyn and Gerald Gibson

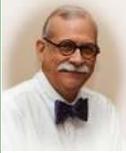
After 25 years of flying aircraft, Gerald and Carolyn Gibson started Dogwood Gardens Organic Farm between Edom and Ben Wheeler. Initially, they grew and sold medical herbs. They now grow wheatgrass and other products for the Texas organic market. At one time, they were the largest organic Basil growers in Texas, growing for Whole Foods. Carolyn would harvest Basil as the bees buzzed around her foraging nectar from the Basil flowers.



Gerald kept bees in the mid 70's, starting with one hive and working up to three hives in a few years. Unfortunately, his job required constant travel and did not allow enough time to tend the bees. His bee adventure dwindled back to a solitary hive. When they began their organic farm in 1991, they renewed their interest in bees. They now have four hives. Gerald maintains the bees while Carolyn uses the honey, propolis and beeswax in her herbal remedies.

Carolyn fell in love with herbs in the early 70's after attending a class at SMU in Dallas. She has been studying, making and using herbal remedies since then. She shares her passion writing books and teaching families about herbal remedies and how to make herbal medicine. As much as she depends on herbal remedies, Carolyn tries to stress that herbal remedies are not a religion and one should seek a medical professional when these remedies are not effective.

Carolyn has developed and teaches a class on herbs and herbal remedies. If you have an interest in participating in a class, see Carolyn at the March meeting for information upcoming herb classes. Or, you can contact her by email: carolyn gibson1951@gmail.com. Links: www.FamilyGuidetoHerbs.com www.Wheatgrassman.com



President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

Last month, I wrote about a hive thoroughly ensconced in a water meter in the woods. Just this week, I checked them out. I went to the hive box with a division board feeder and a gallon of scented sugar water. I did not bring a smoker – big mistake! All I did was lift the lid, remove the inner cover, take out the last frame, insert a feeder, and fill it. It could not have taken more than four minutes. By the time I was putting it back together, I was in the middle of a cloud of unpleasant bees. Good thing I had my trousers on as well! Since I had a similar experience a few weeks before, I was prepared and had parked the car about 500 feet away. Those stinkers followed me all the way to my car. Good thing it is in a remote part of the county and there were no people around. It took fully fifteen minutes for them to lose interest and leave. I hope their temperament gets better as the season draws on!

April is the meeting when we elect new officers who will guide ETBA during the coming year. It is not only your opportunity to help choose our leaders but also to become a nominee for a position. I encourage our newer, even newest, members to consider becoming a nominee. New perspectives and ideas help our club grow and help us meet the needs of new beekeepers. I have been President for several years and it is time for someone else with new ideas!

Our Board of Directors consists of nine members. Eight board members are elected annually. The Immediate Past President serves as the ninth board member to assist in the transition to a new governing Board.

Positions to be elected are:

Executive Director	Secretary	Programs Director
President	Treasurer	Director-at-Large
Vice President	Newsletter Editor	

The board positions require only a few administrative skills -- you don't have to be an expert in beekeeping. If you can stand in front of the club and MC a meeting, you can be President or VP. If you can type enough to make the minutes, you can be Secretary. If you can keep books, you can be a Treasurer. If you know anything about Word or Publisher, we can teach you how to make a newsletter.

The duties of each position are defined in our club By-Laws. Here is a plain English version of their duties:

President: Acts as MC at club meetings and board meetings, calls for meetings of the board when needed.

Vice President: Backup to the President, fills-in when the Presz can't be there.

Secretary: Takes notes, types minutes, sends minutes to webmaster for our web page, keeps folder of minutes.

Treasurer: Collects dues and other monies, makes bank deposits, keeps books, writes checks, keeps board informed of financial status.

Newsletter Editor: Prepares and distributes monthly newsletter, knows a little about Word or other publishing software, works with Treasurer to maintain ETBA membership and email lists. (ETBA provides software and printer, if needed. Dan Eudy promises to teach you anything you need to know!!!)

Programs Director: Plans programs for each meeting.

Director-at Large: No specifically assigned duties but serves as a representative of membership at board meetings. Traditionally, the Director-at-Large has represented ETBA at TBA Winter and Spring Delegate meetings.

Executive Director: Serves as ETBA liaison with our corporate sponsor Eastman, with local and state government, with local, state and national beekeeping organizations, and provides guidance to ETBA board.

It is a wonderful opportunity to become involved in the operation of our club. Doesn't matter if you are new to bees, there is an opportunity for you to help. Some of our current board members are willing to again be nominees in their position but we will also need some new people at other positions.

If you wish to be a nominee for a position, give your info to Treasurer John Holladay. If you have questions, talk with Dan Eudy, eudy48@gmail.com, phone 903-570-5735.



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

Look out! Keep your veil on tight. The new Bee Year is exploding out of the drab into the glorious colors of Spring. Almost overnight, the Bradford Pear went from barely blooming to almost white. Barring a late freeze, the world of the honey bee will be ready for the collection of nectar — perhaps a bit early this year.

One question often asked is, “When do I add supers?” In East Texas, old beekeepers will tell you to add supers when you see the native Wild Plum bloom. Wild Plum trees are the earliest blooming of native nectar-producing trees. They are intensely fragrant and a strong source of nectar. You see them as a small tree covered in white blossoms when you drive along country roads.



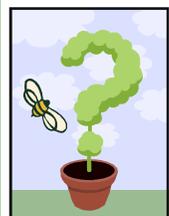
Before you add supers, double check for medication that you used in the hive during the fall and winter. Some medications must be removed before adding supers. Other types can be left in the hive. If you are not sure, check the manufacturer’s recommendations and take the appropriate action before adding the super.

With this early blooming, we will soon see swarming activity. If you are interested in capturing swarms, consider keeping a few essential items in your vehicle so you can be ready on a moment’s notice. You would need your veil, suit or jacket, gloves, a small brush, and a small pruning shear. You also need a transport container to hold the bees until you can get them to a hive. The simplest container could be a sturdy cardboard box with screened vent holes. The vent holes could be covered with screen wire or 1/8-inch hardware cloth. Tape all of the box’s seams to keep the bees inside. Carry a roll of duct tape to seal the lid – you do not want bees escaping in your vehicle. I have a wooden box made by a friend to specifications I developed from years of observing swarm behavior. It is light in weight, ventilated and “bee-proof” so I can carry it inside my truck cab with no leakage of bees. However you choose to transport the swarm, it is best to carry it in the air-conditioned vehicle to prevent overheating in the trunk or truck bed.

As March brings some warmer days, you should feel comfortable doing more thorough hive inspections. If you have not already done so, now is an excellent time to clean your bottom boards of cappings and hive trash that collected during the winter. Bottom boards covered with crud are excellent places for hive beetles to lay eggs. The least disruptive way to clean bottom boards is to start with a spare, clean bottom board. Lay the clean bottom board beside the hive. Separate the hive from its bottom board and place the hive on the clean bottom board. Clean the bottom board you just removed and repeat the process with the next hive. If the wire of your screened bottom board is covered with wax and propolis that is difficult to remove with your hive tool, melt the wax with the flame of a small propane torch and strike the bottom board against a solid object while the wax is hot. Most of it will fall off. Be careful not to apply too much heat and damage the bottom board or start a fire in your apiary.

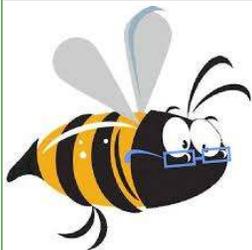
Don’t neglect propolis build-up on the frame’s ears. Some bees tend to create a lot of propolis and can glue the frames very tightly to the box. Keeping the frame ears and frame rest clean makes it easier to remove the frame next time. Keeping the build-up to a minimum allows you to push the frames together and gain a little space between the outside frames and the wall, preventing the bees from gluing the outside frame to the wall. Gently pry the frame loose from the box. Using your hive tool, scrape propolis from the frame ears and from the frame rest of the box. It is a good idea to do this every time you have to remove a frame.

This is also a good time to check your frames. Scrape excess propolis and burr comb from the top and bottom bars.



Catch the scrapings in a container and dispose of them outside your apiary. Do not throw them on the ground near the hives as they attract ants and hive beetles. Frames with poorly drawn or damaged comb can be moved to the outside positions. Severely damaged comb can be replaced with frames of empty drawn comb.

The Got Questions? Group will now meet in a larger room. The 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

This is a great time of the year to be involved in the wonderful world of beekeeping!!! Yeah, I know that one of the most important times in a beekeeper's year is the fall, but for me, it's NOW. The trees are blooming, the temperatures are getting warmer, and the bees are getting real busy. I am frantically building equipment, the bees are frantically bringing in resources, and the hives as a whole are waking up and exploding. Be sure and keep a close eye on your hives to make sure they have adequate resources of food, pollen, and hive space.

This past week, I noticed the redbud trees are starting to bloom. My bees seem to work these trees like crazy. I am not sure if they are getting pollen or nectar but the bees sure are all over them. One neat thing about a redbud tree is how it blooms — the blooms seem to come straight out of the bark. If you happen to be a redbud tree expert, please let me know the best type or the variety to plant around East Texas.



Splitting — I am getting a lot of calls and questions about splitting. Basically, the questions relate to "how to split" and "where to get a queen". The simple answer is: when splitting, just give the new split all the resources it needs — a hive, bees, pollen, honey, and a new queen. On the queen, you can let the split raise their own queen or you can introduce a new queen. I recommend introducing a new queen if you have one available or can purchase one. As for resources, here is what I put in my splits — two frames of capped brood, one frame with a lot of pollen on it, and one frame of honey. Note that each of these frames should be completely covered with bees. I make the split, then the following day I feed them and introduce a new queen (either in a cage or a queen cell). I will begin splitting all my hives on March 10th.

This year, I have decided to build and use a different type of beehive lid. I am still using the migratory lids but adding a 1 ½ inch rim on the underside of the lid. Adding the rim allows me to place pollen patties directly on top of the hive rather than having to split the brood boxes apart and put the patty in between. By having the rim, I can put the patties on top and still have the lid close tight against the hive. In the past, if the lid did not close, I had more trouble with robbing. This will save a lot on time installing the patties. And from past experience, the bees eat them in this location just as well as if I put them between the brood boxes. I may have to deal with a little burr comb but as long as I manage my hives correctly I don't believe this will be an issue.

Bee Trivia question for you. How many times has legendary ETBA member SS Brantley been on the cover of the Texas Beekeeper Association Journal? See you at the next meeting!

beeman@cncfarms.com

Don't forget to renew your ETBA Membership for 2016

See our Treasurer John Holladay at the meeting.

Renew online at our website ETBA.info

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

Individual \$10 Family \$20

To Renew TBA memberships, see Stan Brantley or Renew online at www.texasbeekeepers.org