



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 29 No. 5

May 1, 2014

May Report by Dick Counts

We had 113 members and guests at the April meeting. Once again, we had a surprising number of first time visitors, people new to bees or wanting to get started in bees. Let me encourage you to introduce yourself to our visitors and offer the benefit of your beekeeping experiences. It is a good feeling to help someone get started in beekeeping.

At the April meeting, we elected a new slate of club officers for the 2014 year. I just wanted to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to our new officers for agreeing to serve as our guides. Let me encourage you to also offer your support. As we move through the coming year, look for ways you can help, be it giving a program, setting up the PA, or helping the meeting run smoothly. One thing we do need are a few people to volunteer to arrive a bit early and set up a few folding chairs, then put them away after we finish. We also need a few people to volunteer to help with the cleanup after meeting is over. If you can help with these tasks, see President Gus or Programs Director Matt Thomas at the meeting.

It looks like spring is finally here after a long winter that just did not want to go away. Since our last meeting the blackberries have bloomed and the fields are full of wildflowers. Hives that survived the winter seem to be building up well as the flowers start to bloom. We did miss the benefit of the early blooming trees like wild plum and pear because the late freezes damaged the blooms. It is too early to know if this will make an impact on our honey crop. I do see nectar being stored in supers now. If the weather cooperates and we have some rains in May and June, we still have a good chance of producing a good honey crop.

Our 2014 Beginner Beekeeping class is now history. Bees were delivered to students in the last week of April. The hives looked good and healthy, already four to six frames of bees and lots of brood. Overall, our class of 37 students took home about 70 hives of bees.

Don't forget the TBA Summer Clinic coming up in June. It is a great opportunity to meet beekeepers from all across the state and learn what is happening outside East Texas.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Lanette Lanchester

Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley, Larry Tarr

Program Director — Matt Thomas,
Brenda Sheridan, Eddie Collins

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Next Meeting
May 1
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 *Vi Bourns*



Watching bees work is like observing a miracle, one that has occurred without any help from us every day since the first flower sprang forth in the Garden of Eden. Have you looked in your hives and experienced the miracle of new life? Have you watched as the baby bee breaks through the wax and emerges first with her antennae from the cell and finally comes out wet as a baby chick but dries in seconds? Did you know she then turns right around to assume the duty of cleaning her home? She is doing exactly what she was created to do and advances to other duties as she matures, the same way we do. She gives her all for the good of the hive until her work on earth is finished.

Will there be bees and honey in our next life? I would not be surprised. If there is one thing that gets good press reviews in the Bible, it is bees and honey. Honey is mentioned at least 60 times from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. Honey is praised in most passages. The land of Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey. Manna fed the Israelites in the wilderness was "white and tasted like wafers of honey." John the Baptist ate locusts and honey as his diet. Even King Solomon compared pleasant words to the honey comb, calling them "sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."

In today's society, scientists are discovering the benefits of honey in the medical field in place of traditional medicines and treatments. We see honey advertised for allergy relief, incorporated in cereal, candy, cough drops, sauces, and recipes.

When Dick and I were removing bees from structures, I was always pleasantly surprised when tasting a warm, soft piece of honeycomb filled with the golden sweetness. I still enjoy the extracting process as he cuts the wax off with the hot knife and I can eat as much as I like. That is one of the joys of beekeeping!

Beekeeping is a delightful adventure and one that keeps most of us on the edge of our seat to current events in the field. So take time to taste your own honey, even if you only have a frame of two to extract. Then you will be as hooked as the rest of us.



I got my first swarm! I will get to that later, though. So far, Spring seems to be proving fairly busy. The flowers are blooming and are making both bees and beekeepers very happy. I know we have all been busy celebrating the resurrection of our Lord, as well as other holidays this month.

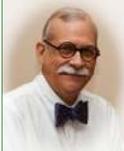
On Saturday April 19th, I was able to participate in the Caldwell Zoo's Earth Day celebration. Miss Vi, my mother and I had a table with an observation hive in a shady spot near the rhinos. We spoke to many children, adults, and whole families about bees. It was an amazing experience watching the bees spark the curiosity of every one who came by. The Zoo staff was also very supportive and also very interested in the bees.



When we arrived on Saturday morning, the Zookeepers were very excited to see us and told us about a swarm on the property. They asked Miss Vi and Mr. Counts what they should do. Both told the Zoo staff that I could capture it. After we finished the Earth Day events, they took us back to the swarm. They were gentle bees and were easily swept into the box. It was hilarious to see the group of Zookeepers gathering around taking pictures and videos.

As we all know, in East Texas, Spring is often short lived and Summer is soon to follow. As we all prepare for the Summer heat, I hope you enjoy the beautiful weather as we hunt for swarms. Love you all and hope you enjoy your Spring.

~Willow



President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

After five years of beekeeping, I have somehow managed to assemble quite an array of bee related stuff.

I have an ever growing library of books and materials. On my want list are the four books about beekeeping and honey by Eva Crane. If you have a copy of "The Archeology of Beekeeping", "A Book of Honey", "Bees and Beekeeping" or "The World History of Beekeeping and Honey Hunting" that you want to donate, I'd be much obliged. The oldest was only published about 25 years ago, but be forewarned, not one of those titles sells for less than \$200 today! Even Kindle editions are close to that price. If you see one at a garage sale or book sale – get it!

I have also acquired a moderate collection of various wooden ware. It got to where I had no idea what I really had. So on a Saturday a few weeks ago, I unloaded the shed and took stock of what was inside. I had a few surprises. Mud hornets had built nests in and on almost everything and I had fewer top covers than I thought. I am also in sore need of new frames. Now that I have a written list of my inventory, I can keep track of what I can and can not do. It is a relief to know and not to guess. I'll be placing an order soon to balance out my inventory.

A week and a half ago, royalty visited my house. I had notified the Federal authorities the royalty would be coming and that they might want to make a special trip to accompany them to my home. And they did. On a Thursday morning about a week and a half ago, the Post Office brought the mail to my home a little earlier than usual. They delivered three new queens.

Two days later, Hayden and I made some splits to our existing hives and introduced the new queens. I wish I could say that all went well but such was not the case. Because of the cold snap, one nuc must have lost a fair number of bees and all the brood died, leaving a nervous queen that flew off as we were examining the frame. I don't know if she found her way back to the hive again. They will have more bees added to them to hopefully get them off and running.

Another queen was doing well and laying eggs.

The third queen had been introduced to a hive that had a failing queen – lots of bees, honey and pollen but not much brood. We found the old queen, sent her to the guillotine, and introduced a new one. Never again did we find that new queen, but we did find about six queen cells in the upper brood box – not really a good sign. It was just as well because there was one other nuc where we tried to introduce a virgin queen but she got stuck in the melted candy and died. We took a frame with queen cells and added it to that now queenless nuc. Are you following this?

So now it is wait and see for another week to find out what we have! Meanwhile – as I was writing this – I had a swarm call at the Alert Academy right next door to me. They are my neighbor but the swarm was still two miles away. Got it! Brought it home! It's about twice the size of a grapefruit. In the process of carrying the nuc containing the swarm from my truck to the yard, I somehow got stung by a dead bee that had been crushed between the top cover and the box. I'll try to put the swarm into a top bar hive tomorrow. And with that a new adventure will begin!

Eva Crane June 12, 1919 to September 6, 2007

Excerpt from obituary published in *The Guardian*, September, 2007:

Eva Crane, who has died aged 95, was, for half a century, a towering figure in the world of apiculture, her appetite for the subject whetted by a wedding present of a box containing a colony of bees. She abandoned the field of nuclear physics, travelled the world to share her beekeeping knowledge and was founder, and for 35 years director, of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA).

Between 1950 and 1990, Eva's pursuit of all things related to bees took her to more than 60 countries and resulted in a number of discoveries. These, along with her ability to put together clues and then report her findings lucidly, have made her work - more than 180 publications in all - inspirational.

Links: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/oct/05/guardianobituaries.obituaries>
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/16/world/europe/16crane.html>

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

ART THOMAS

Art Thomas was born to a beekeeping family. His father and grandfather both kept bees in Northern California. He started beekeeping when he was a little boy and eventually made it his livelihood.

He has kept bees in California, Nevada, North Dakota, and Alberta, Canada. Art is a past president of the California's Bee Breeder's Association and served on the California Beekeepers Board. He brings decades of experience and wisdom on how to manage bees.

Art is retired now and lives in Rockdale, TX. He enjoys spending time with his kids and grandkids. One of his kids is our own Matt Thomas, beekeeper and pastor of Whitehouse United Methodist Church.



Two weeks ago on April 10th, I attended the Henderson County Livestock Show with Mrs Vi, and your princess Willow. The event was led by the county FFA students, who brought groups of kids from various schools and clubs around to each of the booths that were set up. At our booth, we were able to share with the children about our main focus, the amazing honey bee! This was our first event together and I had so much fun working with Willow! Our next event together will be on May the 9th, at Whitehouse Elementary School.

Currently I am in Kentucky, yet again, as the last of my great-grandparents has now passed away. Seems I have spent more time here, rather than in Texas! I thank you all for your patience with these uncontrollable situations. I will hopefully be back on April the 30th, so I will be able to attend our next meeting. ~Carrie



ETBA ANNUAL PLANT SWAP

May will be our annual plant swap. Bring your favorite potted plant, rooting, cutting or seeds.

Price your plants \$5 or less, may as much as \$10 if it is really special. Our goal is to share bee-friendly plants with other members.

All proceeds will go into the Mary Jo Brantley Honey Queen fund.

Treasurer John Holladay will have a "Plant" bucket on his table. Select your plant, drop your money in John's bucket.

We will set up a table for plants. If the weather cooperates, we may place the table outside.

If your plant makes a mess, clean up as you get ready to leave.

We also need a couple of people to clean the plant table after the meeting ends.



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

You fed your bees all winter and now you have a hive overflowing with a workforce of nectar-gathering honeybees. You are daydreaming a bit about your coming honey crop. Let's see, now to get ready to extract all that honey out of the four medium depth supers sitting on the hive. Four supers, nine frames each, that is thirty-six frames. Each frame will produce about a quart of honey, about three pounds. Wow! That is over 100 pounds of honey from one hive! Better go buy some more storage jars to take care of all that honey.

So you go out to the beeyard to check and see if that hive is really living up to your daydream expectations. Uh-oh, there are not many bees flying in and around that hive. What is funny looking glob hanging in that tree! Oh no, that must be swarm from my hive! At least I can reach it from the top of this ladder. Climb the ladder, shake the bees into a hive box. I will just leave them setting here in the sun till dark and then move them to their new home. You come back at dusk and find only a dozen or so bees in the box. What happened?

It is never a good idea to leave a newly-hived swarm in a box in the sun. I have found that more times than not, the bees will leave because of the heat. Also, remember that the swarm was hanging there while scout bees were out looking for the final resting place for the hive. Even though you put the swarm in a box, the scouts are still buzzing around, intent on moving the swarm to a pre-selected place. They may be able to entice the swarm to leave the catch box and follow the scouts. I always try to move the catch box to a new location as soon as most of the swarm goes inside. Don't worry if you leave a few hundred stragglers behind, they will find their way back to the parent hive. With that swarm, there goes the daydream of 100 pounds of honey. I guess the moral of this story is, "Don't count your honey till you see it in the jar."

Listening to the Q&A at bee meetings, I sometimes think of tips that need to be shared with newer beekeepers. Things we old beekeepers have learned the hard way might be beneficial to beekeepers just starting in the craft. Along those lines, here are a few thoughts:

If you are assembling frames with nails, I suggest using a 17 gauge, 1 ¼ inch long nail, one with enough grip to hold the frame together when you try to pry it out of a hive body. Be sure to use ten nails per frame, not eight. The extra two nails are through the side of the end bars into the top bar. Use three 5/8 inch brads to secure the wedge tight against the foundation. You can easily remove these brads later if you need to change the foundation.

If you use a staple gun, also don't forget the staples through the side of the end bars. Don't use staples to secure the wedge, use the 5/8 brad. If you staple the wedge, it is difficult to remove the wedge later without damage.

When starting with a new 10-frame box of undrawn foundation, start with a full complement of ten frames. After the bees draw the comb, you can remove one frame and re-space the remaining nine. If you start with nine frames, the bees often build too much burr comb in the wider spaces.

Sometimes when you leave too much space between frames, bees will form "pancakes" of comb hanging from the top bar or the inner cover rather than drawing out the foundation. If you have the more sturdy plastic foundation, you can press the "pancake" comb onto the plastic foundation till it sticks. Bees will then often finish properly drawing that frame. Be sure to smoke or brush all of the bees off the pancake and the foundation before you smash them together.

If you plan to start a Nuc this summer, do so during the month of May. Our East Texas honey flow is usually over by early June. There will be fewer drones in the hive. It will be harder to get a successfully mated queen if you wait too late to start a Nuc. After the drones are gone or reduced in number, you will have to get a mated queen from a queen supplier to start a Nuc.



The "Got Questions" room will still 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.

Janice and John G Thomas Honey Bee Facility

**Texas Beekeepers Association
Summer Clinic 2014
Saturday June 7th, 10 am to 4 pm**

Hosted by Dr Juliana Rangel
Assistant Professor of Apiculture
at
Janice and John G Thomas Honey Bee Lab
Texas A&M University
Riverside Campus
3100 State Highway 47
Bryan, TX 77807

Remember to bring your
favorite folding chair and
bottled water to help you
remain comfortable as we eat
and enjoy the afternoon.

Cost: \$25 Adults, \$10 Children (includes catered lunch)

Presentations by Dr. Rangel on Queen Rearing
Presentations from 2 other staff members
Tour of the Honey Bee Lab
Lance Wilson on Verroa, Becky Bender on Beescapes and Flowers
ET Ash on Extracting, Professor Bryant on Pollen
Dean Cook on Top Bar Hives
Guadalupe Brewing
Clint Walker Apiaries
Hands on honey bee experience with Mark Dykes, TAIS Chief
(bring bee suits / veils if you wish to participate)
Other presentations

Please RSVP to Jimmie Oakley at jimmie.oakley@gmail.com by May 31st., 2014
to allow for food ordering, preparation and setup.