



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 42 No. 5

May 4, 2017

May Report by Dick Counts

I look forward to seeing you at our May meeting. We had 121 members and guests at our April meeting. Thank you for your participation. All of us working together are what makes ETBA a success!

I want to say a special “Thanks” to President Matt for conducting his queen rearing class. A number of our members participated and learned how to raise their own queens. Also, a special thanks to Roger Farr who gave a great presentation at April’s meeting. Anyone interested in a copy of the informational power point pages he put together on (1) *New beekeeping legislation* or (2) *How to raise queens* : contact the newsletter editor; Trish Wilson. Her email is trish.etba@gmail.com

Most of our members know Program Director Joe Laws as the man who makes sure we have a program each month. Joe is also actively involved with a new bee club in the Athens area. I had the opportunity to speak at their meeting last week. If you are interested in the Athens club, you can get more info from Joe.

The TBA Summer Clinic will be in Arlington on Saturday June 10. Summer clinics used to be a social gathering of a hundred or less beekeepers at someone’s farm or ranch. We talked and sweated and had a good time with old friends. Now they are well planned and well organized educational events featuring a large variety of classes and nationally known speakers. They are also now held in first class indoor air conditioned facilities! This summer’s key-note speaker is Randy Oliver; a well-known and well respected man in the beekeeping community (Randy’s website is www.scientificbeekeeping.com). There will also be over 40 classes available, covering a wide variety of subjects.

You can get more info and register at the TBA site www.texasbeekeepers.org

Our 2017 Beginners Beekeeping class is almost done. As I write this article, I have 65 hives full of bees in my yard, waiting for students to come and prepare them for transport and to take them home. As the last step in their class, they learn how to remove the hives from pallets, remove the internal feeders and then replace them with frames of foundation, add the top and bottom boards and secure the hive for transport. Class may be over, but the learning process is just beginning for them in their own apiaries!

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Happy
Mother's
Day!

HONEY QUEEN REPORT by Barbara Ferguson



Hello to all.

Our Ambassadors were excited to work the Caldwell Zoo for Earth Day, it was a fun event and we reached thousands of people at one event. Also, our 2016 Honey Queen Brittany Miller worked the Eastman Family Day with us. It was so good to be working with her again. Thank you Brittany for helping share your knowledge of the honey bee.

The May meeting is when our fundraising auction is scheduled. Eddie Collins will teach us what we should be doing with our bees and afterward we will hold the live auction. There will be no silent auction/raffle drawings this year. Many of our last year donors have been kind enough to donate again this year. We have live bees, one night cabin get-away, wooden ware with designer paint jobs, bee themed quilts and totes, and other great items. Please come to support our Honey Queen and Ambassador Program, I'm sure all will have a good time. ~ Barbara



Hi everyone, I hope that your hives are doing well, and being productive. This is one of the honeybee's busiest times of the year and also time for them to start swarming. Swarming is a natural function of the honey bee, and is the subject of my article today. Swarming has many benefits for the bees, but also can benefit the beekeeper.

Bees swarm for a couple of reasons and I hope my article helps in the understanding of how and why.

Honey bees swarm mainly for reproductive reasons. Honey bees are classified as a super-organism, which Google defines as "the term superorganism is used most often to describe a social unit of eusocial animals, where division of labor is highly specialized and where individuals are not able to survive by themselves for extended periods." Ants and termites are another example of super organisms. Similar to a cell, super organisms reproduce by splitting in two. In a beehive, this looks like the old queen leaving with half of the workers, looking for another cavity to nest in. Some bees have a strong split nature making them more likely to swarm in spring.

This year, my family put an empty hive body in our apiary, just in case a swarm might nest there. This is a good way to the area.

There are a few signs that can indicate swarm. One of the easiest ways to the hive has plenty of room for the Generally bees will swarm when they especially important right now in the their supers almost as fast as we put them on. Another early sign of swarming can be the creation queen cells within the hive. The hive will split just before the young queens' hatch; with many of the workers following the old queen to a new home. Some things you can do to keep the bees there, is to put a queen excluder underneath all of your boxes. This will keep your queen in your hive. Another method would be to split your hives, especially if there are queen cells on the frames. You should talk to an experienced beekeeper if you need to make splits and have never done it before. Swarms can be great for a beekeeper, especially if they are from someone else's hives. One of my favorite things to do as a beekeeper is to catch swarms and hives with my dad. We have removed hives in roofs, wall, trees, bushes, water meter boxes, and fences. Swarms are very easy to handle, but an established hive can be a little trickier. I have learned a real lot from catching bees, and one of these lessons is: that it is better to supplement your hives with swarms that were free as opposed to buying hives.



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that your hives might be preparing to prevent swarming is to make sure that queen to lay eggs and raise brood. run out of room in their home. This is honey flow; when the bees can fill up that your hives might be preparing to prevent swarming is to make sure that queen to lay eggs and raise brood. run out of room in their home. This is honey flow; when the bees can fill up

I would also like to point out that bees are most docile when they are swarming. My father had caught a swarm, in our first year of beekeeping, with just a broom and a box. Also, there is nothing bad about buying bees, but anything free is great. Just remember that queen cells are a good indicator that your hive is preparing to swarm and it is better to split them yourself before they do.

~Jacob

Beeswax



Do you know what the honey bees' most precious resource is? It is Beeswax!

If you have studied or seen the anatomy of a honey bee you could have noticed that bees have six glands on the bottom of their abdomen. These glands secrete a substance called bees wax. Bees need to eat 7 to 9 pounds of honey to make 1 pound of wax which can store 22 pounds of honey in 35,000 wax cells. In optimal conditions it takes three days for 10,000 bees to make one pound of wax.

Honey bees have many uses for beeswax. The most common ways bees use wax is for storage; bees need a place to store honey and pollen, they store it in beeswax. They also use wax for reproduction; the queen lays her eggs in cells of wax and the bees go through their larvae and pupae stage in that cell. Bees have a certain width of space between almost everything, known as bee space. This amount of space allows only a couple of bees to fit in that area. If there is a space smaller than bee space the bees fill it with propolis, while if the space is bigger than bee space, the bees will fill it with beeswax until it is the right size.

Wax is not only valued by the bees, it is also valued by humans, but we can't make it, so we harvest it from the bees. There are many different ways for beekeepers to harvest beeswax. The most common way is while extracting honey that the bees make by dehydrating nectar. To prevent rehydration once it is dry enough, the bees will cap it with wax. To extract from a Langstroth hive, we cut the capping off the cells, scrape them open, or melt the very top off. Most people dispose of the wax, but some people save the wax for other things. Extracting bees wax from a top-bar hive is different since the frames won't withstand an extractor. The wax has to be crushed and since crushed wax cannot be put back into a hive, a lot of people will recycle the wax.

People have many uses for bees-wax; and one of the many uses for wax is selling it as honey in the comb. Special frames are designed to allow the beekeeper to remove a round of honeycomb with the honey once it is capped; this method leaves the honey in the comb, which many high end restaurants or grocery stores will sell to customers.

Another use for beeswax is candles. Beeswax is flammable, which makes it one of the more preferred candle ingredients. When beeswax burns, it releases negative ions. Most dirt, dust, and pollen carry a positive charge which is how they float. The negative ions released from burning beeswax negate the positive charge of air contaminants, and the neutralized ions go back into the burning candle or fall to the ground.

Beeswax is also used to coat cheese which blocks out the air and prevents spoilage. Beeswax is used in many cosmetics, lip balm, salves, and hand creams. Beeswax is also an an important ingredient in hair pomades, and mustache wax.

Beeswax is super important to bees, and they are not the only ones. We humans have harvested and found many uses for beeswax too. The most important resource for honey bees is their wax because it takes so much hard work to make it, and because they depend on it for their survival.



~ Peter

President's Letter *by Matt Thomas*



Greetings Beekeepers!

I have a beekeeper that always asks me what my secrets are in reference to how to keep bees! The answer is layered. One of the first things a beekeeper should know is how a hive works. Experience is a great teacher. At minimum, knowing the social makeup and mission of the colony is as important as knowing what the queen, drones and workers do. What is a new colony capable of and how do you manage them to fulfill their mission?

Everything starts from the center. Let's start there! The brood nest is the center of the colony and tells the tale of the hive's future. Each day in the Spring, the queen will lay 1500-1800 eggs. Twenty-one days later the first of her progeny begin to emerge from their hexagons. So...Every day after 21 -1500-1800 eggs hatch. You can see how quickly a colony can proliferate and the colony grows significantly. Most of the time this is in conjunction with a honey flow or feeding pattern. Obviously, these colonies are gaining more bees than they are losing. All these young bees need food as they are unable to leave the colony. Foragers bring the necessary pollen back to the colony for all the underdeveloped bees being born. The protein filled pollen will help the newborns develop in to mature bees. From the center of the colony the bees are very quickly matured from cell cleaners to nursery attendants, middle aged bees to finally becoming foragers. Bees being born today are pushing on bees being born yesterday. This push is moving the bees in the colony from the center to the entrance. Bees are pushed and pulled to the field. Their mission is to perpetuate their colony. They accomplish that by a unique system of push and pull. To make the system work they need pollen and nectar. They also need bees in the field and bees in the nursery. If bees are split right around March 1st and new splits are given queen cells, they should be ready by the beginning of May to begin putting on some delicious honey.

How much honey is a strong colony capable of producing? Depending on the forage available for the bees; most colonies can make between 75-100 lbs in the main flow. Some will make more and some will make less. A lot depends on how good the queen is. The last week of April, I made a 2 queen colony. I built it to make some comb honey. For several years I have wanted to see how one would do in East Texas. My guess is the bees will draw the comb honey out fairly quickly as the honey flow gets better. The hive is made up of 4 deep boxes of brood under 2 excluders. On top of the 4 deeps are 6 shallow boxes of wireless wax foundation. I also decided to make them up at the end of swarm season to decrease some of the swarming impulse. It will be fun. I will let you know how it works out.

Recently, I was able to meet the Heglund family. They came over to the house to pick up some bees. Their baby girl climbed up on a bee hive for a photo opp. I will leave you with the youngest little beekeeper I know sitting next to a beekeeping ogar.

See you in May.

~ Matt



Happy 
Mother's
 Day
 Sunday, May 14th

Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley



Nectar flow should be in full swing during late April and May. The increased forage will allow lots of brood production and nectar being stored in the honey supers. Along with this activity will be an increased incidence of swarming. Nothing is so disheartening as looking into the trees near your hives and seeing four to five pounds of bees on a tree limb. That group of bees means that one of your hives just lost about half of its honey-producing capability.

How do you prevent swarms and keep your hives filled with a large bee population capable of producing a good honey crop? You probably cannot prevent swarming – it is a natural procreative urge of bees to swarm and start new hives – but there are some steps you can take that reduce the tendency of a hive to swarm. Most beekeepers have their favorite methods to minimize swarming. Some rotate brood chambers, placing the brood nest on the bottom with the empty drawn comb over the brood nest to give room for expansion. In double brood hives, some “checkerboard” brood frames by swapping frames of drawn comb from the empty brood box with frames of capped brood from the box containing the brood nest, separating the nurse bees required to tend the frames. Others will “checkerboard” the box above the brood nest. When forage becomes readily available, frames of capped honey in the supers directly above the brood nest are alternated with frames of empty comb. In other words, the super has a honey frame, an empty frame, a honey frame, etc. The objective is to break up the solid band of capped honey directly above the brood nest while leaving the brood nest undisturbed but in contact with its food supply and to provide additional hive volume. Some will “bottom super” by adding a second super below the super full of honey, giving the queen a sense of room to expand above the brood chamber.



Pay attention to your hives during May. In a strong honey flow, supers can fill quickly. Make sure there is sufficient super space to store honey. As outer frames of a super start being filled, add an additional super. Consider “bottom supering” if the frames are capped. May is also a good month for bees to draw nice frames of drawn comb. The strong nectar flow provides plenty of food for the bees to make wax. To get good straight comb, start a new box of foundation with all 10 frames installed. The full box ensures proper bee space between the frames and prevents bees from building wild comb or bridging gaps. If you are a beekeeper who prefers to use 9 frames in a 10-frame box, remove one frame after the comb is drawn. Then, equally respace the remaining frames. Some beekeepers feel adding that new box of foundation below the queen excluder allows the workers to draw the comb faster. After the comb is drawn, the box can be moved above the excluder – make sure the queen is not on any of the frames before you move this box above the excluder. Do not worry about any brood, it will hatch above the excluder and the bees will clean the cells for honey storage.



Let's talk a bit about Flow Hives. I had an opportunity to talk with a beekeeper who has some functioning Flow Hives. He shared with me some of the lessons he has learned over the past year. First, he said maintaining a very strong colony is important to the success of Flow Hives. His first attempt failed because the hive was over-run with Small Hive Beetles. The design of the Flow Hive offers more places for beetles to hide. It takes a really strong population of bees to win the battle with the beetles. After cleaning and reassembling the hive, he made sure his colony was well established before adding the Flow Super. So far this spring, his colony is thriving and he is draining honey from the Flow Supers. He had two comments about draining honey. First, he installed his Flow Super with the honey drain tubes facing the front (landing board side) of the hive. This was not the recommended configuration but it suited the location where the hive was sitting. However, it placed the honey collecting container right in the path of bees entering and exiting the hive. Secondly, you need to fabricate some type of cover for the collecting jars to keep the bees from flying into the container and trying to eat the honey as it drains from the super. Some of the early PR videos on YouTube showed honey draining into open containers with no bees trying to share but he found a lot of bees wanted to reclaim the honey draining into his open container.



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.



Texas Pollinator PowWow
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Nacogdoches Exposition Center
 May 5-7, 2017

Join us as the Texas Pollinator PowWow journeys east to explore the most botanically rich and pollinator friendly area of our great state. Nationally acclaimed speakers Doog Tallamy, Clay Bolt and Merlin Tuttle will complement a host of regional experts. Experience bats and moths in evening excursions, and get a rare chance to study pollinator habitats in wetlands at Boggy Slough.

www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org

*May 4 -
 Rose City Farmer's Market in Downtown Tyler
 (local produce, honey, pastries & more)*

*May 4-
Live Auction @ ETBA Club Meeting: in Whitehouse*

*May 5 thru 7-
 Texas Pollinator PowWow in Nacogdoches-info:
www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org*

*May 12 thru 14 -
 Caddo Lake State Park -Various Outdoor Activities -
 info: (903) 679-3351*

*May 14 -
 Sunday - Mother's Day!*

*May 24 thru 28
 Southwest Classic Horse Show
 -Tyler*



BEE BIZ by Bridgette Thomasson

As we focus more on our purpose of educating members and the general public about the honeybee and beekeeping activities, we will be changing the format of our monthly meeting. Starting with our May meeting, we will begin promptly at 6:45 PM and have a brief period for announcements and welcoming guests. At 7:00 PM, if not before, we will have our speaker begin. Once the speaker concludes, we will have a 10 minute break, then resume the meeting to talk about general business, if needed. We will still have the 6:00 PM Question & Answer session prior to the meeting.

Want to get more involved with the club? We have several committees that need support as we look to improve the club and the educational opportunities we offer. We are also looking for someone to join our board as the Honey Queen Chair. This person would oversee the Honey Queen & Ambassador Program.

If you are interested in participating, please contact one of the board members to learn more.

Did you know we now have a Facebook page? Please like and/or follow us. You can find us by searching for **"East Texas Beekeeping Association"** or follow the link fb.me/EastTexasBeekeepingAssociation.

Please feel free to share what is going on in your bee yard or ask questions. As we no longer have the forum, this is a perfect place for us to share beekeeping information with one another. Invite your friends and neighbors to like us too!

At the April meeting we had our 2017-2018 Board Member elections.

President - Matt Thomas

Executive Director - Dick Counts

Vice President - Eddie Collins

Secretary - Bridgette Thomasson

Treasurer - John Holladay

Programs Director - Joe Laws

Newsletter Editor -Trish Wilson

Director-at-Large - Stan Brantley

Honey Queen & Ambassador Program Director - tba

Beginning January 2017, annual club dues are as follows: Individual ETBA Club Membership \$25.00, Family \$45.00