



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 26 No. 10

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## *October Report by Dick Counts*

After a summer like this one, where do you start reporting good things? Like I always do, club attendance has been good -- we had 88 at the September meeting. And the triple-digit summer heat is finally fading into autumn. At the time I am writing this article in the last week of September, we still have not seen many fall flowers. Unless we get some significant rain quickly, there may not be any Fall Flow this year. Keep close watch on your hives and be prepared to feed all fall and winter.

We have the East Texas State Fair now behind us. Attendance appeared to be about what we have seen in the past couple of years. We were again allowed to sell honey from our booth but only two beekeepers brought honey to sell. Our booth location was hard to see. Fair-goers had to look back as they headed out the building in order to see us. Our Queen and Princess, Bekah and Hayden, talked to about 1500 kids in six days. As always, our girls did a great job.

Next up for our Queen and Princess is the Texas State Fair. Vi and I will be with them in Dallas October 21, 22, 23. Let me know if you would like to work in the TBA booth. And be sure to stop by the booth if you happen to come to the fair.

I want to remind you again about the TBA Convention in Corpus Christi in November. Plan on joining us. It is always a good time and a good opportunity to learn new things about beekeeping.

At our November ETBA meeting, we will be having our annual Honey Tasting Contest. I hope you have saved at least one honey bear to bring. Don't have a bear? Call me and I will bring you one to this meeting. Cost is only \$.50

Looking a bit further ahead, call or see Darlene Rappazzo (903-734-3553) about what to bring for our in-house Christmas dinner.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—Tammy Lenamond

Secretary—Karen Anderson

Ex. Director and Reporter—  
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford  
Brantley, Randy Bobo

Program Directors — Joshua  
Bradley, Eddie Collins, Mike  
Rappazzo, Stanford Brantley

Webmaster—Ardy Johnson

## NEXT MEETING

**Oct. 6**

**TJC West Campus — Room 104  
1530 West Loop 323 S SW**

**6:45 PM**

## Contact Us

On the Web: [easttexasbeekeepersassociation.com](http://easttexasbeekeepersassociation.com)

Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789

## HONEY QUEEN REPORT *By Vi Bourns*

IT IS EAST TEXAS FAIR TIME AGAIN AND THE HONEY QUEEN AND PRINCESS ARE REALLY BUSY!!!!!! Children from schools all over East Texas have invaded the fair grounds. The fair has scheduled 1,200 children, pre-kindergarten to grades 1-5 from 9 am to 12 noon for six mornings. It is so exciting to see the look on their little faces as they listen to Bekah and Hayden tell them about the honey bee using "Buddy Bee" the puppet. The most comical thing was to see Bekah and Hayden explain to them they had to WAIT for "the bee question" BEFORE raising their hand for a bee sticker. And, of course, most of them shouted all kinds of answers without waiting to be called on.



As part of our display, we are using a miniature bee hive and a full size hive furnished by Joe Mekalip to show the children where the



bees live, raise their babies, and make honey and also an observation hive. Of course, the honey sticks are as popular as ever with the children. They sure don't like to see us hand them to the adults, but this entices them to eagerly follow the teachers to the next learning station.



Hello! I hope all of you are enjoying the cooler weather. I sure am! I had a bit of a scare two weeks ago when I opened up my hive. There was not one drop of honey in the entire hive, barely any pollen, and only a few cells with brood. As you can expect, we started feeding them heavily with 1-to-1 sugar syrup and "Mega Bee" pollen patties. Two days later, I went into the hive and refilled the Boardman feeder which they had completely emptied. I also noticed they started bringing in tons of pollen. Later the next week, I returned to fill the feeder, give them a new pollen patty. I was very happy to see there was honey (made from the sugar syrup) on every frame, tons of pollen, and lots of brood. What a relief! We are still going to have to keep a close eye on all our hives throughout the winter.

I had two public appearances so far this month. First, on the 8<sup>th</sup>, I performed a cooking demonstration at the Mineola Lions Club. This was my first cooking demonstration. The president of the Lions club



also happened to be one of our fellow beekeepers, Mike Ferguson. The cooking demo went really well and I think everyone enjoyed my "honey date snowballs." After the cooking demo, I also did my normal bee presentation.



Then, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, I went to the East Texas State Fair where I talked to multiple groups of preschoolers. My largest group was actually 3 groups combined, and wound up being somewhere around 50 kids!

They would all sit on the floor in front of the ETBA booth and I had a little more than 5 minutes to talk to them. I could tell when it was time to end because they would start to fidget and talk. However, for the most part, they were very cooperative.



I was also at the East Texas State Fair on September 27<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>, talking to students from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

I am looking forward to seeing ya'll at the next meeting where my dad and I will be doing a presentation on honey judging. ~Hayden





## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

We should all be very thankful for the rain we did get even as we hope and pray for more. Hopefully, the scant moisture we received will be enough to stimulate some fall blooms to erupt and provide the bees with nectar and pollen. All our bees are bringing in lots of bright yellow pollen from who knows where – at this time of the year, it is probably goldenrod.



This is the time of year when the beekeeper's primary responsibility is to get the hives strong and well fed for the winter. It bears repeating that there are no flowers in the winter and so there is nothing for the bees to eat except for what they have stored up. It is our responsibility to ensure they have enough stores for the winter. This is especially true if there is not enough forage for them to build stores for themselves. Feeding them sugar syrup is the order of the day. Open feeding is about the easiest way to feed. You simply pour syrup in a shallow lid or container and let bees from all over enjoy the bounty. Hive specific feeding takes a little more work but it targets each individual colony. There is a wide variety of ways to feed each hive. Some are very elegant and cost money – like hive top feeders. Yet others are simple and cost very little – like using a ZipLock Bag. You need to decide which way works best for you but the bottom line is that you need to feed your bees.

During the spring and summer, feeding consists of sugar syrup in a one to one ratio. We've already had much discussion at the meeting of how to accomplish the right mixing ratio. I simply take two quarts of sugar and mix it with two quarts of hot water. Voila! The bees love it! Starting in the fall, we need to switch to a heavier syrup of two parts sugar to one part water. That's done so the bees don't need to evaporate as much water from the syrup. With the high density of sugar to water, you might need to bring the syrup mix to a boil to get it to fully dissolve. Don't caramelize or burn the mixture as it will be poisonous to the bees. I mix 2:1 the lazy man's way. Using a two and a half gallon bucket as a "measuring cup", I boil 2½ gallons of water and add it to 5 gallons of sugar that is in a six gallon bucket. Yes, I know that is packing 7½ gallons of stuff into a six gallon pail, but with all the air space in between the sugar granules and the sugar going into solution, it fits with about an inch of headspace. A few minutes of careful stirring and everything is dissolved and ready for the girls.

It is still warm enough to open up the hives and check the frames, an activity that must be done regularly. Don't only look for brood and brood pattern, check to see how much capped honey they have stored and how much pollen they have. Pollen substitute patties may be needed.

Our East Texas winters tend to be mild but we can have some cold snaps. Last winter it was cold for a significant length of time. Your bees need to be ready for the cold and so does the beekeeper. Bees starve in the cold, they



don't freeze. In the Northern climes, the hives should have 60 to 70 pounds of honey in store for winter. Here, we probably could get away with half that amount. but it needs to be monitored as the winter progresses. Tilt your hive from back to front and get a feel for its weight. If it feels light, feed with sugar syrup and pollen substitute. The first winter of my beekeeping life, I starved my hive because I was not ready for the cold when it came. Last winter, I put hive top feeders on all my hives in case I needed to feed. The hive top feeders allowed me to provide food for the bees when the temperatures were low without allowing the warm air to escape. I'll be doing the same thing again this year. As Dr. Larry Connor said at the spring workshop, "Feed the bees until they stop taking the syrup." It will pay off in the Spring!



**October is Auction / Raffle Month**

## A Beekeeper's Mistake: the Burning of my Twin Towers of Bees

In the past weeks I've asked God, "What should I discuss in the beekeeping newsletter?" I never expected His answer to be so dramatic. My name is Laura Lee Hoyt, and I have been the mother of 60,000-180,000 babies for one year, three months, and 10 days - but who's counting? As a graduate of Mr. Counts' scholarship class, I love bees with the fervor of every dedicated beekeeper; my bees are my pride and joy. Since May of 2010, when I graduated the scholarship class, I have kept bees in a sunny community garden on Old Jacksonville Road in Tyler, Texas.

On September 10, 2011 at 10:00 a.m., I was the proud owner of three bee hives. I visited them with all the tender care and love that only beekeepers understand, peeking into the crannies for intruders and making sure their pantries were stocked. I polished off the morning by dusting the bees with powdered sugar to treat varroa mites, emptying my smoker, packing up, and biking off -- all in a day's work. To my surprise, at 6:00 p.m., my mother rushed me from work four hours early. She hustled me over to my apiary, telling me that a fire had consumed my beehives. My heart sank when I saw the ruins. Two of my three gloriously thriving hives were licked up by the flames from my careless mistake.

Apparently, the tender from my smoker rekindled after I left the apiary. The desecration - thousands upon thousands of dead bees and burnt brood - broke my heart.

Few things provoke such a sick feeling as carelessly killing one's beloved pets. Yet I believe every painful story blossoms into redemption and every



tear of heartbreak yields the smiles of joy. My story is redeemed in three ways. First, this experience reinforces the beekeepers' maxim "live and learn". Hopefully, each and every reader will use caution after this warning and prevent future heartbreak. Make sure the smoker is out and cold before you walk away! Second, oddly enough, the fire which ravaged my hives occurred less than 24 hours before September 11<sup>th</sup>. My twin towers of bee hives burned down the day preceding the tenth anniversary of terrorism on NYC's Twin Towers! My grief is in no way comparable to the horrors of that ghastly event; however, it did help me empathize. If I can be so stricken by the burning of thousands of insects, what must the families of 9/11 victims be suffering? Third, this event once again confirmed the generosity and camaraderie of my beekeeping community. Thanks to all who have supported me with your prayers, encouragement, and help. I am especially grateful to Mr. Dick Counts, Mr. and Mrs. Eudy, and the Jeske family for their compassion. God bless you ETBA!

**Here are a few pictures from the Fair. THANK YOU to the many ETBA members who helped make our booth a success!**

