



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 29 No. 9

September 4, 2014

September Report by Dick Counts

We had a good crowd of 90 members and guests at our August meeting. Thank you to all who attended. And “Thanks” to our Honey Princess Willow Lanchester for her presentation about a bee removal she did with Jon Aerts and Judy Giles. Willow quite obviously put a lot of work into building that nice PowerPoint presentation. Her presentation visually demonstrated some of the techniques of preparing the removed comb for building a new hive.

The East Texas Fair opens Friday, September 19 and runs through the 27th. We can start setting up the ETBA booth on Tuesday, September 16. I will need two or three helpers to load and set up our booth. At the September meeting, I will have a signup sheet for scheduling staff to work our booth. We need lots of volunteers so be sure to sign up. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet a lot of people (some may even become future beekeepers), including about 1600 school kids. Of course, volunteers get free passes and do not have to pay the entry fee.

We will also have a signup sheet for those who wish to sell honey at the fair. At the meeting, we will discuss the agreement we have with the Fair to sell our honey and agree on a standardized price per pound.

In last month’s newsletter, I wrote about a project to build a wooden skep for the Fair. Initially, it sounded like a project that ETBA could build for the Fair. However, after we received the instruction packet, we found the project to be of much larger scope than we had expected. The ETBA board looked at the requirements and made the decision not to attempt the project.

The State Fair of Texas in Dallas begins September 26 and runs through October 19. TBA will host their Honey Bee Booth. Honey Queens and Princesses and volunteers from the Texas bee clubs will be assigned days to staff the booth. Thousands, yes, literally thousands, of people come through the TBA booth and learn about our honey bees. One of the big draws is the Cooking with Honey demonstrations by the Honey Queens and Princesses. Our ETBA Royal Court will be at the Fair October 17, 18 and 19. Talk with me or Vi Bourns at the meeting for information about participating with us in the TBA booth.

President—Gus Wolf

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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
Sept. 4
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*



I watched a presentation about Cambodian beekeepers collecting honey and was amazed how similarly we do beekeeping -- only in Cambodia they are barefoot and wear no outer protection when working bees! And yes, they do get stung. They do use smoke, but their smokers are different. They light a small fire in the middle of cut limbs with leaves, roll them up, tie in two places, then cut a slit in the bottom of the stack to admit air, and smoke comes out the top. Since their bees are in trees rather than in hives on the ground, they hoist themselves up in the trees to smoke the bees, cut the comb about four inches from the top, and lower it to the ground. Then they roll the comb into a mat to take home. The documentary ended as they started home but in my imagination I can see them mashing the honey out of the comb with their hands. Somehow that looks like an easier process, but I will leave that to the jungle people.

"Thanks" to all of you who gave me your recipes at the last meeting and continue to email me with more. You know your name goes in the book with your recipe. Just thought that little hint would net more recipes! We still need about 25 more. The deadline for getting recipes to me is September 15. Earlier receipt is always appreciated.

With school in session now, I expect to have more requests for Royal Court presentations. The next three months always get pretty busy with the East Texas Fair, the Texas State Fair in Dallas, and the TBA Convention. It is always exciting to see the expressions on the little faces of children who see bees up close for the first time. Some children just can't pull themselves away from the observation hive, leaving their parents to find another exhibit. If you sign up to work the honey booth, you will certainly be entertained. You can even sell your honey to pay for the trip.



Hello Everyone! Can you believe summer is already over? Seems like this year went by much faster than usual although you won't hear any complaints from me if the weather starts getting cooler! My family and I already started school and I'm so excited to start my senior year of high school! I have also enrolled and am a student at Trinity Valley Community College in Athens this semester, taking dual credit classes. This is a big step for me so send a prayer or two my way please!

I hope you all are doing well. I am sure many of you have finished your second extraction by now and hope this year's honey flow was good to you! I also want to thank those of you who attended my sister's wedding last month, she was so happy to see all of you! Thank you for being a part of it! I am going to miss her! It's more than a little strange having both of my older sisters gone. Kellie with a baby and Rebekah married is one scenario I wasn't exactly ready for! It's one of those days that you know will come, yet never fully expect to see it arrive.

Since school ended in June, the Honey Queen events have slowed down. But fall is fast approaching, and there are many events lined up to keep us busy! I look forward to the State Fair in October -- there are always so many eager people wanting to learn about the bees! I'm sure many of you plan to attend the fair as well, and I look forward to working along side of you. Until then, I will see you all at the monthly meetings! ~Carrie



Last Autumn, one of my hives had a varroa mite problem. I successfully babied it through the cold months. However, on the second warm day, the hive absconded. I was confused as to why they suddenly left and determined to find out. It seems that the fault may lay with the varroa mites.

Varroa mites latch onto bees and feed on them, spread disease, and cause deformities. Varroa mites need bee brood to breed and lay their eggs. There are different forms of mite management that involve broodless periods in the hive. While looking into varroa mites, I have found several chemical-free treatments, called biotechnical methods, that were very interesting to me.



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President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

A good portion of my flower beds have been taken over by zinnias. Most was intentional and some was accidental. We've planted them over the years and they keep coming back from seeds dropped by the flowers plus we plant new ones each year. Their variety and stunning colors never cease to amaze me and once they bloom it seems like it is one flush after another until the frost.

Last year, we had so many zinnias that we were selling them at a local health food store along with some of our produce. At least we did until we were informed that we needed a florist license to continue offering them. That put an end to our zinnia sales. But no matter, we still enjoy them and currently many different kinds of butterflies are enjoying them as well.



I am always amazed at the diversity and quantity of butterflies here in Texas. At each time of year, there is always a wide variety around to enjoy. It seems the butterflies and the skippers work the zinnias from sun up to sun down daily. I have yet to figure out where they roost at night, they just vanish!

Back to the zinnias; the bees don't work them but the butterflies do. It is not that there is no nectar to garner, because butterflies do find the nectar with their long tongues. The bees' tongues are not long enough to reach the nectar. Interesting how they figure that out and never bother with those flowers but only feed on the types of flowers from which they can appropriate the nectar. If the bees did have a tongue long enough to catch nectar from zinnias, I wonder what zinnia honey would taste like!

There was a post on one of the Facebook beekeeping forums where someone noticed a fair amount of bees coming back to the hive with a yellow dot on their backs. It almost looked like someone had marked them. Some people drew blanks but a couple of enterprising beekeepers realized that the bees were reluctantly working either red or scarlet clover. When the bees manipulate the flower to reach the nectar, the blossom snaps open and the stamen hits their backs, leaving a yellow dot!

Another curious thing I observed last week is the interaction between our Guinea fowl and the bees. Guineas are dark grey, almost black. Yet I observed them walking with impunity back and forth directly in front of the hives. Although I have read in numerous places that they will eat bees, I have never seen our Guineas eat our bees. I wondered, though, how a large dark bird could be within inches of the hive entrances without being stung. Their heads and necks are devoid of any feathers and wide open to stings but the bees seem to leave them alone. I wonder how much a stung Guinea head would swell! Let's hope I never have to find out. Of course, I need to have myself covered and my head protected to get that close to the bees.

The speaker at our September 4th meeting will be Mark Dykes, the new Chief Apiary Inspector at the Texas Apiary Inspection Service (TAIS) at Texas A&M. Prior to joining TAIS, Mark was a supervisor at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Apiary Inspection Service, where he oversaw the inspections of managed honey bee colonies and supervised a region's six apiary inspectors. Other responsibilities include conducting honey bee research and presenting findings and research results to both scientific and general audiences. Mark will be talking with us primarily about Integrated Pest Management. He will also be available for questions about the services available to beekeepers from TAIS and about state regulations effecting beekeepers.

TAIS has a website with information about the office, state regulations and required forms. You can access the website at <http://www.tais.tamu.edu>. The website also includes a contact list for beekeepers who have registered to remove bees in various counties.

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The first biotechnical method is comb trapping. With comb trapping the queen is caged on three frames for nine days. After those nine days, when she has laid in all three frames, the frames remain caged for an additional nine days. Once all of the brood is capped, the frames are removed and destroyed and the queen is set about her business. Comb trapping has proven to be effective at reducing the varroa population in the U.K. However, comb trapping is definitely impractical for all but the experienced beekeeper.

Another method is the artificial swarm. An artificial or natural swarm causes a gap in the brood pattern, which disrupts the life cycle of the mites. There are many ways to conduct an artificial swarm. One way is to split the hive by removing the old queen and half of the bees and placing them in a new hive with drawn comb. The beekeeper then places a queen cell in the old hive and destroys the old mite infested brood. When performed correctly, the mite problem should be significantly reduced.

The most common method by far is drone brood removal. This method is less time consuming and more practical for the typical beekeeper. Varroa mites prefer to lay in drone brood where they reproduce three times better in than in worker brood. Beekeepers will place drone foundation in the hive so they raise drone larva. Once the mites have laid eggs in the drone brood and the brood is capped, the beekeeper will remove the drone brood and freeze it. This devastates the mite populations.



Lastly, there is powdered sugaring, an effective and safe form of mite management. The powdered sugar makes the bees clean to remove the sugar. It also clogs the mite's feet so they fall off as the bees clean themselves. Combined with the screen bottom board, the process kills off 1/6 of the mites with every dusting. One study showed that a monthly dusting keeps the mite levels at about 3,000 and a bi-monthly dusting keeps the mite population to about 1,000, which is considered an acceptable number by many authorities. A weekly dusting actually lowered the population of mites to minimal levels. Powdered sugaring is my favorite because it is less time consuming and will not contaminate the honey.



So in the end, my bees' absconding may have been their own biotechnical mite control. I am pleased to say that my traitorous hive is doing extremely well at the top of the neighbors' tree. I hope that no matter what kind of mite management you use, this information will help you. ~Willow

Works Cited:

The Food & Environment Research Agency, Managing Varroa York, U.K. 2013
<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/fighting-varroa-biotechnical-tactics-ii/>

Randy Oliver, "Tactics: Biotechnical Methods II—The one-two punch" Grass Valley, California, 2014
<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/fighting-varroa-biotechnical-tactics-ii/>



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

I believe there will be a good fall flow that the bees will use to top off their winter stores. We are heading toward the blooming of fall plants with enough soil moisture in most areas to support a good nectar production. However, colony strength and health will effect a hive's ability to prepare for winter. Sick bees or a weak hive will have a harder time getting ready for the coming winter. I hear weather prognosticators on the TV and radio saying this is going to be a cold and wet winter season. The Farmer's Almanac is making the same forecast. If these models are correct, we need to help our bees become capable of surviving a bad winter. Now is the time to be thinking about the things you are going to do to help your hives survive until spring. Don't wait until November to started preparing your hives.

One important task is to ensure hives have adequate ventilation to prevent moisture buildup in cold weather. We normally add Entrance Reducers in the fall, using the smaller opening to prevent robbing. The smaller opening does not allow the "bee heat" to escape and condensation forms on the upper surfaces of the hive. During Texas winters, we do not have the extended very cold days of more northern states and usually do not find condensation to be a major cause of hive failure. However, even here, extended cold and wet periods can cause excessive moisture buildup in the hive. Adequate ventilation can be achieved by using a thin object to lift the back edge of the Outer Cover. Place a twig, popsicle stick, wooden wedge, thin piece of wood, or even a 6-penny nail on the rear edge of the Inner Cover before putting on the Outer Cover. From November to April, I use small twigs to raise the Outer Cover. If you have trouble with the twig or piece of wood falling off when you lift the cover, add a small drop of glue to hold it in place. You can scrape it off with the hive tool next spring.

If you extracted honey this summer, I hope you have taken care to properly store your supers and protect them from moths and beetles. If you are storing supers off the hive, protect them with ParaMoth (Para-Dichloro Benzene) moth crystals. If you are not familiar with PDB, it is a different chemical than the old-fashion Naphtha moth balls. Walmart and other stores sell them under the brand name of ENOZ. When in doubt, always check the packaging to determine the active ingredient – **and do not use a Naptha product**. I have always bought the can of ENOZ crystals. The crystals are small and vaporize rapidly in hot weather so check them periodically and replenish as needed. I recently saw that Walmart also carries ENOZ as a solid object formed onto a clothes hanger. Being a solid lump, it may not vaporize as rapidly as the small crystals. The hanger may be convenient to hook in the top super on the stack. I also noted that the hanger version had a lavender scent but that should not be an issue. If anyone has tried the ENOZ hanger, share that information at the meeting. One final comment – be sure to tape or seal the cracks between supers to help hold the PDB vapors inside the stack.

Some beekeepers are reporting more than usual problems with beetles this summer. I have received several reports about beetles over-running and "sliming" hives and particularly nucs. Nucs can be more subject to beetles as there are fewer bees to defend the entrance. Unfortunately, I have no easy answers when asked how to keep the beetles away. The conventional wisdom is to keep hives healthy, in full sun, and use only the number of boxes the bees can fill. To that, I can add only to smash as many beetles as you can whenever you are in the hive. There is no beetle-specific medication or chemical currently available to treat beetles in the hive. However, some reports indicated that Check-Mite Strips, a commercially available treatment for Varroa Mites, has also shown some effectiveness in killing or controlling the Small Hive Beetle inside the hive. According to several sources, a Check-Mite Strip is cut in half and attached to a piece of plastic or cardboard, then slipped inside the entrance with the Check-Mite Strip facing down. The theory is that beetles, attempting to escape pursuing bees, will hide under the plastic or cardboard and be exposed to the chemicals in the strip. If you decide to try this technique, make sure you read all of the Check-Mite instructions and cautions before inserting it in the hive. Also, be aware that Check-Mite cannot be used while the honey supers are still on the hive.

The "Got Questions" room will 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. Starting in August, we are meeting in a larger room. Come through the double doors on the far side of our meeting room and follow the signs in the hall to our new Got Questions room.



Bee Facts by Eddie Collins

I know it's hot but go ahead and put on that bee suit and take care of your bees. The main bee activities I do this time of the year are treating for mites and feeding. One suggestion for feeding is to do it as late as possible in the day to reduce robbing. I try to feed just before dark. But one word of caution – it is amazing how a beehive's attitude can change in that last thirty minutes before dark. They can get real mean!!!

By feeding at just about dark, if they do start robbing, it will not last long and it gives the bees all night to eat and clean up what you may have spilled so there is less chance of robbing in the morning.

Also, make sure your bees have a source of water readily available. It is amazing how much water the bees will use during hot weather.

I usually wait about a month before I start feeding pollen patties just because of the problems I have with the beetles liking the patties. They not only like to feed on patties but also like to hide underneath the patty to escape the bees. Beetles also find underneath patties to be a safe place to lay large numbers of eggs out of the bees reach.

One way you can feed pollen now is to place the powder outside the hives and let the bees carry it in. You will need to make sure the pollen substitute stays dry.

Let's talk about Organic Honey. I always assumed to have Organic Honey meant that you did not treat your bees with chemicals and stayed away from old combs that contained chemicals. However, at a recent retail food show, I had the opportunity to discuss Organic Honey with staff from Sue Bee Honey Company. According to the Sue Bee Company representative, Organic Honey must also be made from nectar collected from flowers that have no exposure to chemicals or pesticides. Based on this requirement, they reported it is probably impossible to produce Organic Honey in the USA.

Interesting bee facts:

A bee has 5 eyes. Two compound and three simple eyes.

A bee's tongue is called a proboscis. It is actually a hollow tube that is grooved in the middle.

Bees have two pairs of wings. In flight, a bee's wings move 180 times per second.

Utah is the beehive state.

Bees do not sleep.

The scientific name of honeybee: Animalia
Arthropoda Insecta Hymenoptera Apidae
Apinae Apini Apis mellifera.

Reminder: The next meeting is at 6:45pm, Thursday, Sept 4th in Whitehouse, Texas, The Honey Capital of Smith County!!!!.

See you there.

