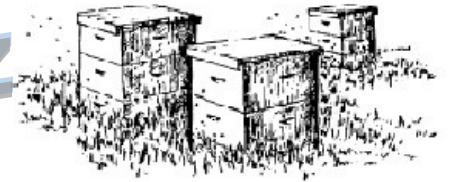




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



February, 2016

The February 9, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, 4310 Hwy. 36, Rosenberg, Texas. Our meetings should return to the Fort Bend County "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center in April when renovations are complete.

Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have a few empty spots on or sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Norman Harris who volunteered to bring salty treats and Donna O'Dea (something sweet) for our February meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Maureen McNight.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation. Our February and March meetings will be held in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: Why do bees make honey? It may sound like a silly question, but I get asked it all of the time. My usual smart reply is because they are *honey* bees. I really need a better answer.

An A: Beekeepers are asked that question all of the time and it is really a very significant query. In fact, a better question may well be "Why don't bees stop making honey?". If honey was only a food resource for winter survival, one would expect the colony to only gather an adequate supply. But they don't. If nectar resources are available, honey bees make honey so long as they have a place to put it. "Honey bound" colonies have used their comb to store honey to the detriment of raising brood.

Of course, beekeepers prefer bee stocks that make lots of the sweet stuff, but that doesn't explain the behavior of feral colonies. Honey bees were gathering all the nectar

that they could long before there were humans.

It is thought that the first insects recognizable as bees probably appeared on Earth about the same time as flowering plants, 146 to 74 million years ago. The oldest known fossil bee is thought to be around 96 to 74 million years old. Fossil evidence of "honey bees" doesn't exist, so it isn't possible to estimate when they first appeared on Earth. Scientists think that the first early humans appeared five to seven million years ago so we should appreciate the long head start that honey bees appear to have on us.

It is thought that honey bees first evolved in a tropical climate in the area of land that we now call Europe. Over the ages as the climate became cooler, bees adapted as cavity nesting colonial insects that were able to regulate the temperature of their home and store food when nectar was abundant.

Why don't bees stop making honey? Of course, adequate stores are very important to the colony's overwintering success. It is the excess that is used to nourish brood to build a workforce before nectar comes available in the spring. Honey bees have figured out that "some is good but more is better" applies to their reproductive success in the spring. Raising brood in

late winter/early spring has been compared to an "investment" made by the colony. If the bees get it right, they have a large work force ready to go in the spring. If they get it wrong and raise more mouths than they are able to feed before the first blooms of spring, they will deplete their stores of nectar and pollen and their survival is at stake. These remarkable insects have figured out that the way to deal with that huge risk is to continue making honey without limit.

Special Meeting Program

At our January meeting, Vice President (and meeting program planner) Nancy Hentschel announced our intention to have a least one special program each year. Nancy plans for that special program to be at our February meeting.

JP The Beeman (Jeffery Armstrong) and Shawee (Bruce Scharwath) are beekeepers and video photographers from New Orleans. JP does amazing bee removals/cutouts while almost always finding the queen on the spot. Both have been keeping and rescuing bees for many years. Their informative and entertaining videos can be found at JPthebeeman on YouTube. We are happy to welcome them to our meeting. Be ready with questions about this completely different perspective on keeping bees.

January Meeting Notes

The Fort Bend County "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation so our February meeting was held next door in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. Confusion over the venue change seemed to have been minimal but we only had 46 members and guests sign in at the meeting. Since 60 new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues at the meeting, it's apparent that many missed the sign in sheets. Please make sure to sign in at our meetings since attendance data is important to record our use of county facilities.

Greg Pendley opened our meeting with an invocation offering thanks for "hives that are full and stings that are few". Greg then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance even though there wasn't an American flag in Building B. We'll get that straight in February. Note too that at this point it looks like our March meeting will be in Building B again.

As always, there is a whole lot to get done at our first meeting of the year. President Daryl Scott reminded everyone that our annual dues are \$5.00 and the January meeting is a great time to get them paid. There were lots of new faces at the meeting and Daryl welcomed our guests and new members. He also reminded everyone that there were sign up sheets for 2016 volunteers for snacks and offering our opening invocation. We also need a volunteer who can show up a little early to prepare coffee and lemonade.

Daryl next introduced Harrison Rogers, a Fort Bend member and newly appointed Area 5 Director for the Texas Beekeepers Association. He is the TBA representative for five area beekeeping groups. (There are 35 or so Texas beekeeper organizations affiliated with TBA.) Harrison suggested checking out the Texas Beekeepers web site (<http://texasbeekeepers.org>) for more information and beekeeper

resources. A principle focus of the TBA is promoting Texas honey. Unfortunately honey is the second most adulterated food (behind olive oil).

Harrison is organizing the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo honey bee exhibit this year. Volunteers are needed to provide bees for the two observation hives and work the honey bee exhibit. Shifts are 9:00 am - 3:00 pm and 3:00pm - 9:00 pm. It is a great opportunity for beekeepers to serve their community by educating the public about honey bees and beekeeping.

Daryl next updated the group on what beekeepers are up to. Spring is right around the corner, so we should be repairing equipment, ordering bees and supplies, and perhaps feeding our bees for a kick start into spring. If the temperature is over 60° or so, a quick inspection may be a good idea. Daryl offered his monthly fun facts): bees have two pairs of wings (flies have one), bears prefer bee larvae over honey, and the color and flavor of honey depends on its floral source. (He found them on the Internet so they must be true.)

Our January program was a presentation on honey and human health by Sarah Ayala. Sara is a UT PhD candidate in agribusiness and "The Kiwi Importer". She imports and distributes Manuka honey from New Zealand. Manuka is well known for its medicinal value in skin care and wound treatment.

Besides sweet food, humans have known of the medicinal value of honey for some 5,000 years. Today we find honey in skin care products and even bandages from CVS. The antibacterial benefit from honey is due to the presence of hydrogen peroxide (from enzymes), low pH (acidity) and very low moisture content. Sarah's Manuka honey is laboratory tested and labeled with a measure of its antibacterial properties. A small jar retails for as much as \$60!!

An important piece of business for our January meeting was the elec-

tion of officers for the coming year. Gene deBons offered a nomination report. Each of the current officers agreed to serve another term. There were no other candidates or nominations from the floor. Albert Smaistrila moved that the nominations be closed and our officers reelected by proclamation. After a second by Craig Rench, the motion carried. Reelected were Daryl Scott (President), Nancy Hentschel (Vice President) and Jeff McMullan (Secretary-Treasurer). Congratulations.

Door prize winners in January included Margie Freed and Cynda deBons. They picked bars of handmade soap donated by Joey Tuttle (<http://www.fulshearsoaps.com>). Other winners were John Petter (a candle made and donated by Jack Richardson), Harrison Rogers (a mug donated by Sharon Moore), Tim Scott (yard eggs from Kenneth Nugent and Phillip McGaughey).

Treasurer's Report

Our January treasury balance was \$2,682.49. Since then we collected dues from 67 new and renewing members (\$335.00), enrolled two new mentoring program (\$60.00) and received \$20.00 in donations. We were also charged then reimbursed \$3.00 in banking fees. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,097.49 (\$3,052.49 in our checking account plus \$45.00 in cash.

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent— Horticulture
Fort Bend County
jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
281 342-3034 ext. 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

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