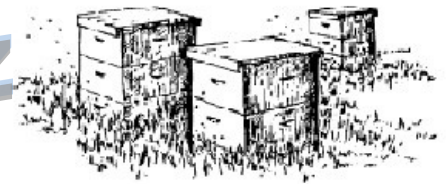




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



May, 2015

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, April 12. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Diane McConnon for volunteering to get the coffee and lemonade set up for us. Thanks too to Norman Harris for volunteering to bring salty treats and Dona Tomplait and Jaime Vernor (something sweet) for our May meeting. We still need volunteers for vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet. After 30 minutes of social time, the meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Daryl Scott.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I finally figured out that all of the dead bees in front of my hive were killed during a robbing attack after actually seeing the fights going on. All manner of flowers are blooming, why are bees killing each other over stores of honey?

An A: Usually bees that die in the hive are removed by the workers and carried away so as not to attract predators to the hive entrance. Dead bees on the ground in front of your hive can be the result of pesticide poisoning or, as you discovered, casualties from robbing. Fortunately, poisoning is not a common cause since victims usually die in relatively small numbers near where the pesticide was applied. Most often dead bees near the hive entrance were killed in battles over honey stores.

Robbing behavior in honey bees doesn't seem to fit the profile of gregarious hard working insects scouring the countryside for nectar. In fact, it sounds like a bunch of criminals (which accurately describes the situation). Robbing is most common when little nectar is available and can result in colony loss as stronger hives kill workers and steal stores from weaker ones. Even in the spring there are periods when little nectar is available. Despite our recent plentiful rains, we have received many reports of weak

nectar flow at times.

Both robbers and "robbees" become more aggressive and can become problems for the beekeeper. Beekeepers should be cautious when opening hives when there is a dearth of nectar since robbers may seize the opportunity to steal honey from the open hives. (Bee supply houses sell covers to protect the hive during inspections.) Robbers are quickly attracted to unguarded honey, especially if capped honey is broken open while removing frames. Many more robbers are soon recruited and a melee ensues.

When feeding bees, be careful not to spill syrup at the hive entrance. Also beware of open feeding or putting out wet supers for the bees to clean up since robbing nearby weaker hives may be stimulated by the free food. Entrance reducers and robbing screens help make the hive entrance more easily defended. In an emergency, a sprinkler at the front of the hive can stop robbing. It may even be necessary to move the weaker hive to a safer location.

Honey Container Order

At our May meeting we will be finalizing our 2015 honey container order from Sailor Plastics (http://www.sailorplastics.com/Honey-Containers_c_7.html). When purchased in bulk quantities (200 or more containers and lids in a single large box), the cost per container is substantially less than buying from

a bee supply house. Shipping on these individual big boxes is about \$40 each. Last year our members saved more than \$1,500 by consolidating our container orders and having them shipped to a single address at a cost of less than \$12 per carton. The arithmetic is pretty simple: for one-pound squeeze jars with flip lids, the all-in cost is about 46¢ each versus 55¢ each if ordered as a single carton of 225. The cost becomes about 74¢ if ordered by the dozen from a bee supply store. If you want in, you'll need to complete an order form and have it with you at the May meeting. We emailed copies of the form and we'll have a few more available at the meeting. You will need to visit Sailor's web site to choose from the many containers and lids that are available. And be aware that lids must be ordered separately.

We are requiring a \$50 per box nonrefundable deposit, so make sure you get your order right. If you change your mind or something, we will offer your order to others for the remaining unpaid balance. It is ok for members to get together to split a box, but one of them must place the order for the full box and lids. Shipping costs will be divided equally by the total number of boxes ordered.

Make your \$50.00 per box deposit checks out to Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. The balance on your order will be due at pickup at Jeff McMullan's house in Sugar Land.

April Meeting Notes

We had 47 members and guests sign in at our April meeting. Thanks to all who signed in. There were lots of latecomers who were delayed by construction on US 59 to the east. In May, it might be a good idea to avoid the freeway and come down Hwy 36 from Hwy 90.

After a short delay because of the traffic, President Daryl Scott called the meeting to order with silent prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. After Daryl had welcomed visitors and new members, Greg Pendley made it through the traffic and apologized for being late. Greg expressed the sentiments of many when he thanked the club leadership for recognizing that an invocation is a beneficial part of any meeting. It serves to focus the attention of members of a group toward a common goal or purpose with shared thoughts of thankfulness for blessings, recognition of present and future needs, and expressing a request for wisdom and guidance for the organization. Invocations should be sincere and respectful of the diversity of thought that exists within a non-religious organization. Greg then presented the invocation that had been delayed by traffic.

Chuck Bunkers has hived our first swarm from the Association's swarm trapping program started this year. Jeff McMullan demonstrated how to show up after dark (when all the bees are home) and use a bit of smoke to get them all inside. Black square plastic buckets work good to close the trap up for the trip to the beeyard if there are no "leaks". A sheet or blanket with a couple of bungee cords works well too. Jeff also gave an update on his efforts to make high quality mite resistant bees available to hobby beekeepers as well as the status of bills before the legislature. He also reminded everyone about the Association's honey container order for 2015 (see the related article).

Next came Daryl Scott's amazing honey bee facts for April. Most of our members have gotten emails touting the Flow™ Hive from an Australian startup that has raised some \$10 million in funding and has received 10,000 orders. Other facts included that honey is the only food that includes all that is necessary to sustain life, even an antioxidant linked to improved brain function! We also learned that honey bees have 6 legs, 2 compound eyes (made up of thousands of tiny lenses), 3 more simple eyes on the top of their head, 2 pairs of wings and both a nectar pouch and a stomach.

Jeff McMullan gave a demonstration of beekeeper protective gear, all of which comes without any instructions on how it is to be properly used. With Preston Pitts as his eager model, Jeff started with the simple folding veil and helmet and worked his way through almost all the options. Several members praised the ventilated jackets and suits that are now available to us. Jeff and Preston demonstrated how to use pants leg closures to keep bees from crawling up your legs, including Velcro straps from the bee catalogue or bungee ties from Home Depot or Lowes. Likewise he demonstrated leather beekeeping gloves alongside blue nitrile exam gloves or plastic work gloves. One trick was to buy only plastic gloves that come in sizes and get the Large since a loose fit lessens the chances of a sting. Some gloves have white inner lining so Jeff likes to wear them inside-out (mostly just to match his jacket).

Our meeting ended with the customary drawing for donated door prizes. Thanks to the donors and

Dues Are Due

Our membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year. If your name is in *italics* on your address label, this will be your last issue of *Fort Bend Buzz*. You can mail a \$5.00 check for 2015 to Jeff McMullan, 74 Hensford St., Sugar Land, TX 77479.

Mentoring Program

At our April meeting, we again discussed a mentoring program for the Association. After the meeting Wendy Chopin volunteered to help make a more formal program happen. Wendy is just getting into beekeeping and has agreed to take the reins. She has now researched mentoring programs and at our May meeting she will offer up for input a list of what a mentee would expect to learn over a full year cycle. The idea is that the program start any time of the year. The program just picks up somewhere along the list when mentees are matched with a mentor who keeps bees nearby. We may even put together a few Saturday morning workshops on topics like hive components, component construction, finding the queen, etc. for mentors, mentees and others that may be interested. Exciting news!!

Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was misreported as \$3,428.34 (a typo). The correct amount is \$3,452.81. At our April meeting we collected dues from 11 new members (\$55.00). We've also received \$65.00 in donations and spent \$7.28 to replenish our coffee supply. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,565.53 consisting of \$30.00 in cash (to make change) and a checking account balance of \$3,535.53.

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