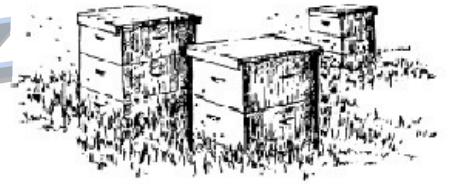




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



August, 2018

The August 14, 2018 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. The main topics in August will be the spring/summer season and preparing for fall. 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Michael Booth who volunteered to bring salty treats and Bob and Nancy Hentschel and Marsha Ho Sang (something sweet) for our August meeting. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home. It's looking like there will be a real pile back there this month!

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Does the Association's swarm call list refer members to do removals (not just swarms)?

An A: We get lots of different inquiries about honey bees. Many calls originate from our web site (fortbendbeekeepers.org) or contact information on the TBA web site (texasbeekeepers.org). Animal Control and other government agencies often refer bee calls to our club. Some pest control companies do as well since they prefer dealing with ants or cockroaches.

It is important to distinguish between "beekeeping" problems and pest control problems. Capturing swarms (clusters of bees in search of a new home, usually in the spring) is usually within the scope of skills of even novice beekeepers since they are usually docile and anxious to move in to a new home when one is offered. The most significant hazard in capturing swarms happens when a ladder gets involved. A five gallon pail or water jug (with its bottom cut out) mounted on a pole allows swarm capture safely from *terra firma*. Another powerful trick is to use insect repellent (like *Off!*) to discourage bees from returning to their cluster. It can be sprayed on a paper towel and placed high up using the same pole.

We often get calls about established colonies living in the walls of a house or some old building, cavities in trees, old BBQ pits, water meter boxes, green cable and power company pedestals, etc. etc. We don't refer these problems to our members since we can't assess member skill levels and potential problems. Instead we suggest an internet search for "bee removal" and encourage people to call providers of this service, hopefully with the appropriate skills, insurance coverage, etc. It is important that people understand that, "dead or alive", bees must be removed and that 2/3 of the bees aren't out flying around. Caulking up the hole is not a good idea since they usually find another way in and out.

Often people have stocked up on "Wasp Killer" but can't seem to kill the bees. Insecticide foggers actually work very well with bees, but dead bees smell worse than dead rats in the wall.

This month's **Q and an A** is a great opportunity to share a few stories about bee calls we have received. Several years ago a Fort Bend homeowner called a "bee remover" to take away a hive that had been abandoned by her son in the backyard. He agreed to a "freebie" since he planned to keep the hive. She ended up calling our Association for help when the hive got fumbled off his refrigerator dolly in

her back yard. Really bad bees (the actual reason she wanted them gone) had the whole neighborhood in lockdown. The "bee guy" called her from his truck to say "they are way too mean for me!". Of course he took what he could: the hive cover, inner cover, bottom board and hive stand. The club scored a generous donation when a couple of our members managed to remove (and re-queen) the fiery white boxes.

In recent weeks, we got a call from a homeowner who wanted advice after a pest control provider killed the bees in her attic. He fell through the ceiling when he went up to clean up dead bees. Apparently he was going to send a sheet rock guy out to repair her home. "Doesn't he still need to clean up the dead bees and comb?"

Another hazard of working in attics is the heat. Another homeowner recently had the same question after the bee remover ended up laid out on her floor from the heat.

In the past we have gotten calls about plastic bags full of dead bees. People were trying to figure out how you get bees in a plastic bag and we usually told them that they probably had been poisoned. Last week a Katy homeowner called: she found a clear plastic bag full of live bees in her back yard. It appears that someone caught a swarm in a bag then pitched it over the fence into her back yard. Go figure.

July Meeting Notes

We had 60 members and guests sign in at our July meeting. Once again a near miracle: the head count came up with the same number. Amazing! Thanks for signing in. (Our sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.)

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack welcomed nine visitors and asked them to introduce themselves. Some are beginning to explore beekeeping while others are keeping bees already. Jack then gave a quick rundown on the club, our mentoring program, and the fun *letgo* table in the back of the room.

Apparently some members had not yet received their July newsletter. Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones took a show of hands; it was only a few. We mail the newsletter out so that it shows up just before the meeting (a not so subtle reminder). Perhaps the delivery problems in July was due to the Independence Day the week before.

Gene DeBons brought a Vitex plant for "show & tell". It is a great honey plant for our area. It can grow about 20 feet tall and blooms all summer. Jack added that bottlebrush is also good but not cold-hardy and Chinese Raintree is good but invasive.

Gene also showed the upgrade he made to his smoker. He has added a coffee can liner as a false bottom to protect the smoker bottom and also keep the smoker body from getting so hot. The false bottom can be replaced as needed. He also keeps a rag handy to plug the spout when he is ready to put the smoker out. Good starters are tissue paper, wax soaked newspaper and WD-40. Good fuels for smoke are burlap, cedar bark, and green grass. If you have a torch, you can re-light the smoker by applying the flame to the outside of the smoker.

Chelsea provided details on the Hive Painting Contest and Photo Contest which will be held at the September meeting. The contests are open to club members and their immediate

family members. A flyer will be available at the August meeting (see the details below). The hive boxes and photos must be at the meeting by 7:30 pm. Ribbons for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in each contest will be awarded in accordance with the club member vote results.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association
Hive Painting and Photo Contest Rules

1. Hive box and/or photos must be present, in-person at the September 11, 2018 FBBA Meeting.
2. Contest is open to FBBA members and their immediate family.
3. Hive boxes must be painted by the entrant. Photos must have been taken by the entrant.

Hive Painting Specifics

1. You only have to paint a hive box (any size). You do not have to include a top or bottom.
2. 3 winners will be voted on by club members present at the meeting. There will be ribbons awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Winning hive boxes will be featured on the club Facebook page and website.
3. Entries are the property of the entrant. The club will not keep any of the hive boxes.

Photo Entry Specifics

1. The theme will be "Our Glorious Honey Bee." Photos should include some element of honey bee behavior, science, history, or any aspect of beekeeping that contains a honey bee in the photo.
2. Entries must be no larger than 8"x10"
3. 3 winners will be voted on by club members present at the meeting. There will be ribbons awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Winning photos will be featured on the club Facebook page and website.

Chelsea also spoke about the Texas Beekeepers Association Summer Clinic which she and several other members attended. It was a fun and informative event. The keynote speaker, Dr. Jamie Ellis of the University of Florida, gave a very good opening presentation as well as several seminars. All of his presentations are based on his publications, which are available online. Lynne Jones will send everyone an email with links to his publications.

Kellie Jenson with the Brazoria County Beekeepers Association gave a presentation on their Queen Bee Initiative program. Their program's goal is to learn about rearing queens and study results on which stock seems to do best in our area. They are working to develop queens that have good traits for longevity, temperament, hygiene, brood production and honey production. The QBI bee yard is near Alvin and available only to members of BCBA. Members raise queens using various techniques and equipment. They also do mentoring at the QBI yard. Members of the Youth Program are each assigned a hive to be responsible for

and after a year, the hive becomes theirs. At present, there are 36 queens in the yard. None of the hives are treated. Last year, six hives were lost to varroa mites.

BCBA membership is \$20/year per family. The club meets on the second Monday at the Brazoria County AgriLife Extension Building in Angleton. The doors open at 6:00 pm and the meeting starts at 6:45 pm.

Kellie also spoke briefly on the upcoming Honey Expo which is a fun and educational event and free to the public. It will be at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds in Angleton on July 21, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm.

Several members of our Association also belong to the Brazoria club. We like to say that Brazoria's roots are in Fort Bend, having "swarmed" a few years back.

Our meeting closed with the customary drawings for donated door prizes. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to the donors.

Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,542.22. Since our last report we collected \$40 in dues, and \$50 in mentoring enrollments. There were no expenses since our last report, so the resulting balance is \$3,632.22, consisting of \$3,577.22 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

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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