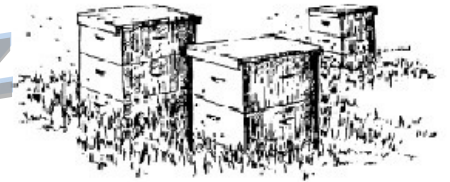




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



August, 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, August 11. 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 whoever volunteered to bring salty treats and Dona Tomplait (something sweet) for our August meeting. Our clipboard with signup sheets disappeared after our June meeting, so we plan to start over in August to sign up volunteers for refreshments and the opening invocation for the rest of the year. After 30 minutes of social time, our August meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Kim Kutach.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I've read that I shouldn't be going into a hive during a major honey flow unless I suspect problems or are adding/removing supers. I got to wondering why. Are there other reasons beyond interrupting the bees during this highly productive time and/or the potential to incite robbing? I've tried to keep my inspections at this time to a minimum, usually just a very short peek to check whether I need to add supers and/or rob some brood frames.

**An A:** Whenever a beekeeper inspects a hive, it is very disruptive to colony activity and it may take several hours for routine activity to be resumed. Hive inspection should be for a specific purpose like checking the progress of a split or new package (or swarm) or checking to see that a new queen has been released. Otherwise, it is best to just observe hive entrance activity for changes that may indicate a problem that would require an inspection.

During honey flow, the bees are following their powerful instincts and function with great efficiency. As you figured out, that is not a good time to be checking inside the hive. Robbing is not very likely when forage is plentiful, but be

very mindful whenever checking on a weaker hive. With weak hives, it may prove wise to cover the frames during your inspection to discourage robbers.

When inspecting a hive, always wear adequate protective gear and use the beekeeper's most useful tool: your smoker. Guard bees alert the whole colony to your intrusion by emitting alarm pheromones. As you get started, a few puffs of smoke at the hive entrance will hide the guards' signals from all the workers inside. Use smoke as you manipulate the frames or top bars too, since workers that are inevitably injured or killed will send out the alarm signal too.

As you inspect the hive, work quickly, carefully and deliberately without jarring the hive. Smooth calm motions minimize the disruption. A helper and their second set of eyes can help get finished and the hive closed back up in a minimum amount of time. Besides disease or pest problems, beekeepers should always carefully study the comb from the brood nest. It is always best if you can spot the queen, but eggs and brood (along with knowledge of the honey bee life cycle) provide evidence that she was there in recent days. It is great to see a full pattern of capped brood, healthy white larva and single fresh eggs at the bottom of cells.

And don't forget to keep a written log of your inspections.

## Mentoring Program

Our August, 2015 meeting will mark the rollout of our Beekeeper Mentoring Program. Our goal is to facilitate mentoring teams (mentor and mentees) that result in more knowledgeable, safe, responsible, successful beekeepers. Many thanks to Wendy Chopin who has pushed this effort along after many years of good intentions. At our meeting, we will distribute a document describing the structure of our program that includes a program enrollment form.

The club has invested almost \$1,900 getting this program going. Each mentoring team member will receive a copy of The Beekeeper's Handbook as a reference. They will also be provided a "Beekeeper's Journal" to encourage a log of activities over the 12 month program. A ball cap completes the package. In addition, each participant will be required to subscribe to the "American Bee Journal". Discount subscription coupons offer 25% savings on the subscription cost.

Now the big news: the cost to participate is \$25.00 for mentees and \$zero for mentors (other than the ABJ subscription). Generous donations to our club have made this possible.



## July Meeting Notes

We had 52 members and guests sign in at our July meeting. We welcome new members Almir Mesic of Fulshear (Cross Creek Ranch) and Rocky Ybarra of East Bernard. Thanks to all who signed in.

Vice-President Nancy Hentshel called the meeting to order (President Daryl Scott was out of town on vacation). Dave Grimme offered an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Nancy then welcomed visitors, first-timers and new members.

Our program in July continued to address the problem of dealing with small hive beetles. "Ask a dozen beekeepers..." in the July *Fort Bend Buzz* had addressed the life cycle of the SHB. At our July meeting, Jeff McMullan presented material on how to use our knowledge of the beetle's life cycle in our efforts to control this obnoxious pest.

The discussion continued based upon the principles in The Art of War by Sun Tzu, an ancient Chinese general. Written around 600 B.C., this enduring advice stresses that to be successful in war you must both know your enemy and know yourself. Jeff pointed out that dealing with small hive beetles is indeed a war for the survival of our hives.

The important knowledge of our "enemy" is the SHB's life cycle and behavior. As beekeepers, we must understand and grow the limits of our knowledge and, to be successful, we must always observe our hives carefully and apply this knowledge in a timely manner.

Small hive beetles are averse to light so it is best for hives to be in full sun or afternoon shade. Likewise, translucent plastic telescoping covers allow in some light and deter beetles from entering the hive from above.

If you use screened inner covers, it is best that they have window screen to block out beetles. The 8-gauge hardware cloth used in

screened bottom boards allows beetles in, but at least varroa mites can fall out as well. SHB adults fly at dusk and locate hives by scent. It is best to avoid opening a hive late in the day since beetles can gain easy entrance inside. Dusk is a good time to remove the telescoping cover if you have window screen inner covers. Several beekeepers reported that it is satisfying to squish beetles as they land on the screen attempting to get inside. Some reported killing 30 or more as they landed on the screen.

Most beetles get inside by just walking in the hive entrance. Many recommend reducing the entrance as much as possible without creating congestion. That allows guard bees to better exclude adult beetles.

Bees react aggressively to SHB's so the pests often seek refuge in cracks and crevices. Frame spacers and frame rests should be carefully constructed. Avoid creating places for adult beetles to hide. Top bars in top bar hives must fit snugly together. Make sure that there is "bee space" on top of frames or top bars. If you open your Langstroth hive and see beetles on top of the frames, you have a problem that must be dealt with. In fact, whenever you see an adult SHB anywhere other than on comb, check the area for hiding places to be fixed.

It is probably a good idea to always have some small hive beetle control measure in place. There are oil filled traps that mount between or on frames or beneath the hive. Since fire ants feed on vegetable oil, mineral oil is recommended for use. Other traps provide a hiding place and the bees imprison SHB's after they take refuge. Some of them use a piece of a CheckMite+ strip to kill the beetles once they are inside.

Other practices include feeding only partial pollen patties that are wrapped in foil. Weak colonies should be eliminated, requeened or combined.

Our meeting ended with the customary drawing for donated door

prizes. Sharon Moore and Albert Smaistrla scored great looking red-meat watermelons while Vina Burns took home a yellow one. They were donated by Milton Woods of Bonus, Tx. Milton attended our May meeting in search of help pollinating a couple of acres of melons. He cut a deal with Jeff McMullan who loaded three hives on his trailer for him. Milton took the bees to his farm, parking the trailer out of the way. After a few weeks of pollination duty, Milton closed up the hives, hooked on to the trailer and returned his helpers to Jeff's bee yard. Andy Kuba won some fresh fig preserves put up by Jerry and Dona Tomplait. David Haas won a bottle of Albert Smaistrla's honey while John McConnon won a pint jar of Herman Hoot's Brazos Bend Honey.

## Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,059.31. Since then we collected dues from two new members (\$10.00) and received \$100.00 in donations. We also were refunded the \$3.00 bank charges mentioned last month. Costs this month associated with our Beekeeper Mentoring Program totaled \$1,050.58. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,121.73, consisting of \$2,081.73 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$40.00 in cash for change.

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