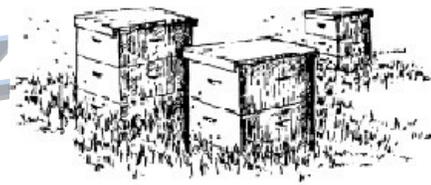




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



January, 2016

The January 12, 2016 and February 9, 2016 meetings 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 March 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. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Greg Pendley.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation. Our January and February 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: What are the bees up to this time of year?

An A: Winter bees are physiologically different from their summer sisters. Workers may live only a few weeks in spring and summer as they exhaust themselves foraging for nectar, pollen, water and material for propolis. Winter bees, on the other hand, have been found to live as long as a year!

As winter approaches, the colony responds to shorter days, cooler weather and reduced foraging resources. The queen slows her egg laying or may stop laying altogether. Colony numbers drop as drones are ejected and dying older workers aren't replaced. There will be fewer mouths to feed over the winter.

With cold weather, there is no activity at the hive entrance, but the bees are not just hibernating inside. When temperatures fall below 57°F, the bees begin to cluster together to stay warm. They remain active in the hive and the cluster grows loose or tight as temperatures rise and

fall. Honey bees are native to Western Europe and adapted to weather much colder than we ever see. When it is very cold, the cluster is small with many of the workers entering comb cells to form a tight group. The cluster is warmed by workers "shivering": flexing their strong flight muscles to generate heat. It is important that the hive is well ventilated in cold weather so that the moisture from all of this activity is not trapped inside to condense on the cold walls, robbing heat from the cluster. And an entrance reducer helps conserve heat and prevent mice from moving in for the winter.

The hive's "pantry" is the comb surrounding the brood nest that is filled with honey and pollen. Honey stored further away may not be accessible to the bees in very cold weather. Bees often move their honey and pollen stores to be near the cluster, backfilling brood comb. As the stores are consumed, the cluster moves upward to be near their remaining supply. Be sure to remove queen excluders that block the queen as the cluster moves up.

Elaborate winter protection for the hive is not necessary, especially with our mild winters. Lift the back of the hive from time to time to check the weight of remaining stores. Don't be fooled by lots of activity on a mild winter day. A colony can starve during a few days of cold wet weather if they are living "hand to mouth".

November Meeting Notes

We had 48 members and guests sign in at our November meeting. Steve Mims opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. November 10 was Veteran's Day and President Daryl Scott recognized the veterans in our group. He then thanked Diane McConnon for her coordination of the refreshments during 2015 and called on new volunteers to step forward to handle the job in 2016.

Harrison Rogers of the Harris County Beekeepers was introduced as a new TBA Director. He will coordinate the local organizations working at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo.

Daryl's bee facts for the month highlighted the largest bee (1 1/2" long with a 2 1/2" wingspan!) and the smallest, *Perdita minima*, from the southwest USA (barely 1/16" long).

Wendy Chopin gave a progress report on the Mentoring Program and Rosie McCusker introduced her three Fulshear area mentees. There were a host of positive comments from mentors and mentees.

VP Nancy Hentschel invited three members to sit up front to field questions. Additional comments were added by members of the association from their own experiences. Topics discussed included mite treatments, hive configuration, swarming, hive inspection timing,

etc. etc.

Harrison Rogers discussed the Texas Master Beekeeper program, which started in May, 2015. The program includes four levels of testing and training: apprentice beekeeper, advanced beekeeper, master beekeeper and master craftsman beekeeper. Exams are given two times a year (spring and fall) and advancement is exam related. More details can be found at www.masterbeekeeper.tamu.edu.

A variety of door prizes were donated for our last meeting of the year. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the winners.

Our November meeting featured a swap meet which was conducted both before and after the meeting agenda. Items presented ranged from a small honey extractor to novelty items like aprons and tee shirts. Beeswax, drum heaters, honey jars, frames, honey dispensers, books and candles were also available for sale or trade. The event was very popular and several members commented that we should conduct such events more often.

Treasurer's Report

Our November, 2015 treasury balance is unchanged: \$2,682.49 (\$2,637.49 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$45.00 in cash to make change).

A financial summary and property inventory for 2015 is presented at right. The main highlights are the Mentoring Program activity plus the \$782.00 in donations received during the year.

Election of Officers

The current slate of officers is willing to remain in office, but anyone interested in running for election in 2016 is urged to contact Gene deBons before the January meeting.

Dues Are Due

Membership dues for the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association are \$5.00 for the calendar year. All member dues for 2016 are now due. Don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid at our January meeting.

Volunteers Needed

Our Association provides coffee and lemonade and members volunteer to bring a snack or dessert to the monthly meetings. At our January meeting, volunteers are needed to sign up to provide refreshments for our 2016 meetings.

We'll also pass around a sign up sheet for the invocation at our monthly meetings plus a swarm call list that will be used to direct folks that contact our organization to members that capture swarms or do cutouts or those that want free bees. We'll also use it to find a home for bees trapped as a service to our communities.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2015 Financial Summary

Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2015)	\$2,983.34
Income	
member dues paid (146 at \$5.00)	\$730.00
donations	\$782.00
Mentoring Program income	\$300.00
extracting equipment income	<u>\$60.00</u>
Total Income	\$1,872.00
Expenses	
meeting door prizes and supplies	(\$97.50)
HLSR outreach flyers (cost share)	(\$45.00)
Super Decorating Contest	(\$96.57)
TBA dues	(\$50.00)
donation to USA Apimondia bid	(\$100.00)
Mentoring Program supplies	<u>(\$1,783.78)</u>
Total Expenses	(\$2,172.85)
Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2014)	\$2,682.49

Note: In 2015 the Association collected (and disbursed) a total of \$984.91 for the group purchase of honey bottling containers. The collective purchase shipped to a single address saved our members about \$300.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2015 Property Inventory

Description	Date Acquired	Initial Cost	Member Contact
four framed beekeeping posters	various	unknown	Jeff McMullan
Learning Hive	8/28/2009	\$144.49	Jeff McMullan
red wagon	10/16/2009	\$45.98	Jeff McMullan
extracting equipment			Jim Lynch
extractor, stand, etc.	8/19/2011	\$583.33	
pin uncapper	11/8/2014	<u>\$15.15</u>	
		\$598.48	
solar wax melter	1/10/2012	donated	Nancy Hentschel
frame assembly gear	3/5/2012	\$157.88	Nancy Hentschel
outreach banners	11/7/2013	\$80.96	Jeff McMullan
public address system	6/21/2014	\$620.22	Jeff McMullan
17/18 remaining swarm traps	11/3/2014	\$132.66	Jeff McMullan
remaining Mentoring Program supplies:			Wendy Chopin
14/20 mentee ball caps		\$99.26	
7/10 mentor ball caps		\$49.63	
84/100 Beekeeper's Journals		\$605.64	
42/42 extra Journal fillers		\$45.78	
19/40 copies "The Beekeepers Handbook"		<u>\$348.27</u>	
		\$1,148.58	

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aid or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281 342-3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.