



Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



July, 2014

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, July 8. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Roxanne Agee (something salty) and Elaine Jameson (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our July meeting. We still need a few volunteers for a few vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: What kind of protective gear should I buy? I want good sting protection (it really hurts!) and the summer heat makes me want a cooler ventilated suit like many of the members have.

An A: This a a great question for a dozen beekeepers since you are guaranteed a whole bunch of answers.

Lets start with gloves: many beekeepers don't use them because they think they are too clumsy with them on. Even if you don't normally use gloves, it is a good idea to have some in your pocket when going to the bee yard since the alarm pheromonea from a single sting could result in many more painful encounters. Some beekeepers use disposable rubber gloves to keep their hands clean and afford a little sting protection. They fit tightly and bees can sting through them but the venom dose is usually small. There are many other glove choices both in the bee supply catalogues and at local retailers. Dishwashing or rubber cleaning gloves work really well so long as they fit loosely. Many of them come in several sizes: bigger is better. Most beekeeper gloves have long cuffs and many have ventilation at the wrist that sometimes results in stings. Heavy leather or chemical gloves deprive you of "feel". Wash your gloves and other gear to remove the alarm scent or expect agitated bees every

time you go the the bee yard.

Many beekeepers get by in the beeyard with light colored clothes and a veil. There are several choices in the catalogues; folding veils store easily. The long strings on the veil go down around your waist then are secured in front with a bow. Make sure that the veil covers your collar or you'll get stung on the back of your neck. The helmets in the catalogues or a similar hat usually work better than a ball cap to support the veil. Some have hooks on the brim to prevent the veil from riding up and letting bees get inside. A headband to soak up sweat is a good idea on hot days. Most veils use screen wire. Cloth screen can end up full of burn holes from embers from your smoker; some will be big enough for an irate guard bee to get inside with you.

A basic beekeeper jacket with zippered veil costs only a few dollars more than a helmet and veil. There are choices to be made in selecting the zippered veil. Wearing a ball cap will keep the popular fencing style veil from touching your face and inviting a sting. On a hot day it is really nice to be able to step away from the hives, easily throw back the veil and drink some water.

Another hot weather solution is the ventilated jackets and suits now carried by most bee supply houses. They are all a bit different and it is a good idea to check out one owned by another beekeeper. Metal zippers don't seem to work as easily as plastic ones and the number of

pockets may be a factor for you.

A full suit costs much more than a jacket, but it affords head to toe protection. It's hotter, but an unnamed beekeeper says she just wears her bikini underneath on a hot day.

New PA System

The Association has been borrowing a public address system for our meetings and it wasn't available to us in June. We had a hard time without it, so it was decided that we should purchase one of our own using donations we recently received. The new system will work great for our meetings as well as for outreach events. It is very portable (the size of a briefcase) and battery powered with a corded and two cordless microphones that can all be used simultaneously. The 50-watt system has a six year warranty and is made in the USA by AmpliVox. Their customer care manager also works with a beekeeper and gave us a special "beekeeper discount".

Treasurer's Report

Our June 2014 balance was \$3,825.84. Since that time we purchased the PA system described above, collected \$30 in dues (6 members at \$5.00 each) and received donations totaling \$331.93. The total cost for our new PA system was \$620.22. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,567.55 consisting of \$30 in cash (to make change) and \$3,537.55 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

June Meeting Notes

The head count at our June meeting was 60 members and guests (but only 40 names were on the roster for our May meeting). It is important that you sign the attendance roster at our meetings to help us track attendance. Detailed contact information is only needed for guests and those attending for the first time. Otherwise, a quick sign-in is all we need.

New members joining in June included Robert Wells from Richmond, Michael Kelley from Needville, Mike Matejek from Houston and Nola Donald from Fulshear. Welcome.

Two guests at our June meeting, Ramona Ridge and Susan Hilvers, live in the Fulshear area and offered up potential bee yard sites. Jeff McMullan has their contact information if you are interested.

Members were asked to suggest books and/or DVDs that the Association should donate to the Fort Bend County Library. We get lots of inquiries from folks looking into beekeeping and it would be helpful to refer them to a specific book for study. Likewise, there are many DVDs that our members would be interesting in watching. A quick survey of the library catalogue revealed that many titles were not current. Books that are twenty years old have little information about the pests and diseases we must cope with today. Few of the books in the catalogue would be helpful to someone wanting to get started as a beekeeper in today's environment. The library asked that we submit a list of the materials we intend to donate before we buy them.

Michael Booth reported on an interesting bee rescue. On Saturday, June 2 we received an email through our website looking for a home for a colony of bees. That is usually not out of the ordinary, but this time it was. A homeowner discovered that bees had moved into a utility box in his back yard. He re-

searched how to do removals on the internet then suited up in a mosquito net, long sleeves, gloves and an ample amount of duct tape. Opening the power company's enclosure, he removed all the comb and stood it up in an old foot locker (he had drilled an entrance hole plus another hole for a feeder he made from a water bottle). He attached the photo below to his email under the subject line "Wild hive-boxed and ready to move":



At our meeting we often caution about hive beetle infestations when trying to salvage comb from cut-outs and when removing bees from traps. This "wild hive" had the potential to get nasty, so an urgent email call went out for someone to pick up the footlocker and get the bees into a hive before hive beetles forced them to abscond. Any delay and someone could bring home a footlocker full of maggots!

Michael quickly made arrangements to pick up the hive (many others also called to offer their help). As expected, when Michael got home with the footlocker, he found the old comb totally infested with small hive beetle larvae. He successfully moved the colony into a hive and destroyed the maggot infested comb. He brought his sto-

ry and the footlocker to our June meeting, offering the "hive" as a souvenir to whoever wanted it. It ended up in the Extension Service dumpster out back.

New member Nolan Donald got started with his first hive in the spring. He moved them from his back yard in Fulshear to a friend's place in Sealy when they became a little too "hot" for his comfort. His plan was to requeen them and return them to the back yard, but they caused problems in Sealy too. The sound of a lawn mower was a call to attack! Nolan asked if anyone could help him. Before sunrise on the following Saturday, Dave Grimme helped him move the hive to Jeff McMullan's bee yard. Plans are underway to requeen them and there will certainly be a story to tell since requeening hot hives can be quite a challenge.

Butch Billings had an urgent need for a bee vacuum when a swarm moved into the soffit of his house. He discovered a "Bucket Head Wet/Dry Vacuum" at Home Depot that fits into a five gallon bucket. For less than \$25 he fashioned a bee vacuum and successfully removed his unwanted guests. He used duct tape to close the vacuum vent to manage the suction, leaving few dead bees.

In the hubbub after the meeting, the door prize winners list got lost. If you donated a prize, thank you. If you won one, congratulations.

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