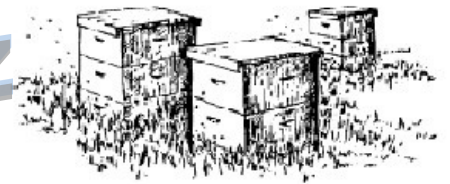




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



March, 2016

The March 8, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Building D 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 on Band Rd. in April 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. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have a few empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Steve Mims who volunteered to bring salty treats and Jennifer Escobedo (something sweet) for our March meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Steve Mims.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The renovations at the "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center are not yet finished. In January and February we met in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. In March we will meet in Building D "as in dog". It is two buildings over from Building B.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I'm a new beekeeper and am anxious to capture my first swarm. I also want to do a cutout at a friend's beach house. Ok?

An A: Ok?? Maybe, but maybe not. Capturing swarms is really pretty easy, but rescues and cutouts may be something else altogether. Our organization wants to foster safe, responsible, successful beekeeping. The lure of "freebees" is great, but novice beekeepers may not yet have the necessary skills to do swarms and cutouts safely, responsibly and successfully.

Safely: Swarms are usually pretty docile, but feral bees in an established colony may defend their home ferociously. Unless you've dealt with mean bees before, a cutout could become a real problem, even for people and pets some distance from the colony. You should

always expect and plan for mean, bad bees that will sting you through your protective gear and attack your veil in such numbers that you can't even see to complete the job. Be prepared and have a plan right up to how you will exterminate the bees if that is the last resort. Proceed cautiously and enlist the help of an experienced beekeeper or perhaps leave cutouts and rescues to others as you gain experience.

Responsibly: Capturing and bringing a feral colony into your bee yard is only part of the challenge. Focus on bee keeping since if they decide to leave they could relocate to someone's house, maybe yours. In our area, it is really bad advice to try to salvage honey and brood from a cutout. After such a huge disruption to the colony, the bees are unable to deal with small hive beetles. Maggots quickly infest the salvaged comb, causing the bees to abscond to who knows where. And every maggot can become an adult beetle to repeat the process again. A good plan is to give rescued bees a frame or two of capped brood (no bees) from another hive to get them quickly established in their new home.

Successfully: Captured feral swarms and colonies are "survivors", having adapted without human help. They are well suited to our climate, floral re-

sources and pests and disease. Hopefully, the bees will adapt to your hive quickly. Remember though that it is the old queen that leaves with the swarm. The colony may begin rearing her replacement soon and it is pretty common for new queens to not return from mating flights. Be on the lookout for queenlessness (probably not really a word, but we know what it means!). If you gave your new colony a brood frame with eggs or tiny larvae, the bees will be able to raise a new queen if the old one didn't make it to the new hive.

Swap Time Again

For our November meeting, we encouraged members to bring along those beekeeping supplies that they want to sell, trade or give away. Of course you could do that at any meeting, but fall's cooler weather seemed like a great time to clean out the garage. Everyone thought we should do it more often.

March 13 is Daylight Savings Time "spring forward" day. We'll have an extra hour of daylight for our meeting in April to check out the stuff folks brought to the meeting. Members can make a deal and swap treasures out in the parking lot. If you have extra hive components or beekeeper gear, bring it along to our April 12 meeting to swap, sell or give away.

February Meeting Notes

The Fort Bend County “Bud” O’Shieles Community Center is undergoing renovation so our January and February meetings were held next door in Building B of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. Note that the March meeting will be in Building D, two buildings down. Hopefully in April we will be back at the Community Center. There was little confusion over the venue change; we had 64 members and guests sign in at the meeting. 26 new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues in February, bringing our roster total to 93!! Thanks to Norman Harris and Donna O’Dea for bringing treats.

Our meeting was opened with an invocation by Maureen McKnight followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. President Daryl Scott announced that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for snacks and our opening invocation. Daryl passed around honey bottle cap labels with the “produced by” wording required for small honey producers in Texas under the new law that went into effect on September 1. The Texas Beekeepers Association had the cards and labels printed. They are available, along with other items, on the TBA web site.

Harrison Rogers reminded everyone that there are still volunteer opportunities for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo honey bee exhibit this year. Volunteers are needed to provide bees for the two observation hives and work the honey bee exhibit. Shifts are 9:00 am - 3:00 pm and 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm. You can check on open shifts under the CALENDAR tab at <http://www.harriscountybeekeepers.org/>. Sign up by email at the CONTACT US tab.

Daryl’s monthly fun facts for February: honey bees fly about 55,000 miles gathering nectar to make one pound of honey; honey bees directly contribute \$8 to \$10 billion to the U.S. economy each year; it is estimated that there are 200,000 Amer-

ican beekeepers.

Next, Vice President Nancy Hentschel introduced our speakers for a special meeting program. JP The Beeman (Jeffery Armstrong) and Shawee (Bruce Scharwath) are beekeepers and video photographers whose work has a huge following on YouTube. JP is from Metairie (suburban New Orleans) and Shawee is from the small town of Paulina, La. (“Shawee” means raccoon in Cajun. He picked up that nickname because he had a pet ‘coon as a kid.) JP met Shawee through his postings on the internet.

JP is in the pest control business and started out by killing bees as his job. Some 25 years ago he wanted to learn more about these fascinating insects so he started keeping bees. He says he learned most of what he knows by making lots of mistakes along the way.

By show of hands JP learned that many at our meeting are just getting started with bees. He warned everyone that you can “get lost” watching bees do what bees do. He rates the experience as almost spiritual. Next came a long string of beekeeping tips and advice:

You should have at least two hives and make sure your hive location encourages bees to fly up and away to avoid conflicts.

Nucs make great “training wheels” for small colonies. Swarm traps work but a nuc with old comb in it (along with a few drops of lemongrass oil) is a whole lot better. If you are using a trap, check it often so it doesn’t become a “cutout”.

Use a red light when working with bees at night or in a dark attic. Use an infrared temperature gun from Harbor Freight to locate bees in a wall. After removing bees, always make the cavity uninhabitable by filling it completely with fiberglass insulation.

JP and Shawee use a “Colorado Bee Vacuum”. You can buy one on Amazon.com! They use Honey-B-Gone to run bees out of inaccessible plac-

es. It is sold to clear bees out of supers for harvest and it works great for other uses too.

Their bee jackets get really dirty doing removals. They like to spray them down with “Greased-Lightning” cleaner from the dollar store before washing with unscented detergent.

The helpful tips were almost endless and it was after 9:00 pm before our meeting ended. Many hung around afterwards to learn more.

Door prize winners in January included Rebecca Eicke: the book “A World Without Bees” donated by Michael Pawelek and a honey bee picture frame also donated by Michael Pawelek. Stephanie Kinghorn donated home made soap (won by Phillip McGaughey) and lip balm (won by Preston Pitts).

Treasurer’s Report

Our February treasury balance was \$3097.49. Since then we collected dues from 26 new and renewing members (\$130.00). Expenses included \$50.00 for our association dues to the Texas Beekeepers Association, \$1,012.36 in expenses for our February meeting and \$291.67 for community outreach materials. The resulting treasury balance is \$1,873.46 consisting of \$45.00 in cash and our Wells Fargo posted balance of \$2,635.82, less \$812.36 in outstanding checks.

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