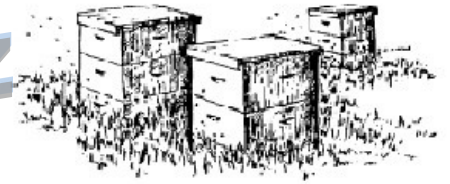




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



May, 2016

The May 10, 2016 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. 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 Rosie McCusker (something sweet) for our May meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Steve Mims. Our May program will include an update on Texas honey bee law by Mary Reed, Apiary Inspector with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I'm kinda new at all this but it seems like my bees have gotten "mean". I've read up on it and it sounds like I need to requeen them. What do you think?

An A: Life is too short to spend much time dealing with mean bees. Sometimes a new queen from more gentle stock is absolutely necessary. Actually, a new queen from better stock may be a good idea even if the behavior problem can be explained.

We all know folks that are grumpy all the time. Others are never grumpy, but most of us get grumpy sometimes. Honey bees may fall in to any of these three categories. Even though Africanized bees made it to Fort Bend County years ago, there really aren't all that many really bad colonies and most of them are feral bees. Before deciding our managed hive falls in the "all the time" category, we probably should contemplate what would cause peaceful bees to become "pissy".

Aggressive behavior in bees is a defensive response to threats to their hive. While foraging bees are intent on the chores at hand and rarely sting, guard bees have an entirely different job. Our smoker serves to calm the colony and cover any alarm scents that guard bees

give off. Don't be surprised if your sweet bees react aggressively when you enter a hive without using your smoker. Duh.

New beekeepers often start out with a small swarm, a few frames of bees in a nuc or purchase a 3 lb. "package". There are about 12,000 bees in the package cage and it may seem like a whole lot of bees. But the hive will grow to a full colony of 60,000 or more and it can happen pretty fast. A queen can lay 1,500 or more eggs per day (an egg per minute!). There can be as many as 2,000 bees on a deep frame covered in workers on both sides. And some 4,000 more workers will soon emerge from a deep frame full of capped brood on both sides. It just makes sense that when colonies get big there are far more guard bees with more food and brood to protect. Perhaps "bad behavior" is just a whole lot more bees flying around than just a few short weeks ago. Larger colonies tend to be more aggressive than the smaller ones and a split may be a good idea to reduce the numbers and prevent swarming (a swarm of bees in search of a place to live often ends up badly for the bees and for people).

When bees react aggressively, for whatever reason, a true test is how far away they get before returning to the hive and how long they stay upset. Gentle bees may seem aggressive but they don't follow you for more than a few footsteps and

quickly calm down. Bad bees may attack for some distance and stay mad about things for quite a while. They may even attack people or pets some distance from the hive.

Honey bees seem to be particularly defensive when the weather is unsettled, a normal reaction when someone has removed the roof of their house with storm clouds threatening. What if your home was threatened by a loud machine throwing debris and giving off smokey fumes (your lawnmower or weedeater)? What if a skunk had been scratching around your front door all night long?

Requeening an aggressive hive can calm things down quickly, often in just a few days. It will require a new queen from desirable stock and a plan for finding and removing the old queen a day or so before she arrives. Sometimes really bad bees respond aggressively to the new queen so a careful introduction is a good idea.

Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$2,008.46. Since then we collected \$5.00 in dues from 12 new and renewing members (\$60.00) plus \$75.00 for three more members enrolled in our mentoring program. We also received a donation of \$45.00. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,188.46, consisting of \$45.00 in cash and \$2,143.46 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

Boyd Edward Dawson **10/15/1936 - 4/29/2016**

We are saddened to learn that our friend and fellow member, Boyd Dawson, 79, died suddenly last week. He was a long-time beekeeper and the Association will miss him and his insights into handling bees. He joined the club in 2003, but had attended meetings regularly for several years before that. Back then, a beekeeper meeting was ten or so members sitting around a table talking about honey bees and beekeeping. Boyd was always eager to tackle bee removal jobs that the others were not willing to attempt. He often reported afterwards that the job had been "easy" and he thanked us for the referrals.

Boyd was always willing to offer advice when we had questions and he would often help fellow beekeepers with difficult jobs. Boyd's honey could be found across the county, from Dozier's Barbeque in Fulshear to Brehm's on FM 359, Enchanted Gardens on FM 359 at FM 723, Fort Bend Feed in Rosenberg and Needville Feed Store. His son Glen plans to continue Boyd's beekeeping operations.

Boyd was a humble beekeeper and a true gentleman. In spite of his great general knowledge of bees and beekeeping, he did not put on airs. He was easy to talk to but reluctant to offer unsolicited advice. We will all miss Boyd's quiet demeanor at our meetings. He was a steady and confident influence on the club and on his beekeeping friends. May we all be a little more like Boyd in our dealings with our fellow beekeepers and with our friends and customers.

April Meeting Notes

Renovations at the Fort Bend County "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center are essentially completed, so we returned to our usual venue in April. 55 members and guests signed in at the meeting and twelve new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues in April. There are

still quite a few members who haven't come up with five bucks for 2016. If your name on your newsletter envelope is in italics, you haven't paid your dues and this the last *Buzz* that you will receive.

Our April meeting included another "swap night". Few members actually showed up with surplus gear, so it will likely be some time before we declare another one. Of course anyone that wants to swap stuff is welcome to bring it to any meeting.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott introduced Dave Grimme who opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl again reminded everyone that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation.

Daryl's monthly fun facts for April came from the web site todayIfoundout.com. We all know that the "waggle dance" is how honey bees communicate where to find food or a new home. In a fascinating experiment, scientists located the only source of food for a honey bee colony on the far side of a mountain. The bees could not fly over the obstacle, but they communicated where the food was to be found as a direct path. They had never flown that route but somehow determined the correct angle relative to the sun to reach the food source. Fellow foragers could not fly over the mountain either but were still able to locate the food.

The "beekeeper's calendar" for early spring includes opening entrance reducers when we see congestion, supering hives and making splits.

Our program was a top to bottom hive stack review by VP Nancy Hentschel. The focus was keeping the names straight. Many of the names and terms we use were introduced along with the Langstroth hive in the 1800's. Common words in 1870 aren't in much use today.

We had a few donated door prizes but forgot to have a drawing! They will be back in May.

Honey Container Order

For several years now we have been ordering honey containers as a group, saving considerably on shipping costs (last year's order was delivered for less than \$5.00 per carton of bottles compared to \$40.00 in shipping for a single box). If you want in on the savings, you'll need to complete an order form and have it with you at the May meeting. We've emailed out order forms and will have some forms available at the May meeting. You will need to visit Sailor's web site to select from the many choices of containers and lids that are available (be sure to state what color and style lid you want).

We will collect the forms at our May meeting and place the order right away. A \$50.00 per box non-refundable deposit is required, so make sure you get your order right. The deposit checks should be made out to Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. Be aware that lids must be ordered separately.

The Association's entire order will be shipped to Jeff McMullan's home in Sugar Land and orders must be picked up on the day it is delivered. The unpaid balance will be due at pickup. If you are unable to pick up your order or change your mind or something, we will offer your order to others for the remaining unpaid balance.

TEXAS A&M
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