



Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



April, 2018

The April 10, 2018 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Daryl and Toni Scott and John Petter and Vina Burns who volunteered to bring salty treats for our April meeting. Peg Turrentine and David and Cee Cee Parker volunteered something sweet. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

In Memorium

Elton Reynolds, a long time member of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Assn., passed away on Thursday, March 15. He had served as President for many years. Elton was 98 years old and a great friend and mentor to many of our beekeeper friends. Beekeeping has been described as a gentle craft and Elton fit the bill perfectly. He is missed.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Last month's question was about swarm prevention and it prompted questions about capturing wayward swarms. What steps should be taken to be successful when capturing swarms?

An A: This is a great question because you can get dozens of answers from just one beekeeper!

It is important to understand that a swarm is looking for a new home and it can happen quickly. In minutes a swarm of bees on a tree limb can become a major problem in the wall of someone's house. Immediate response to a swarm call may still be too late.

Safe, responsible, successful beekeeping is our goal, so let's answer your question in three steps:

Swarms can usually be easily and safely captured. Most often swarms are very docile and can be hived with minimal commotion. Nonetheless, wear your protective gear

because bad bees can be bad even in swarms. The objective is to get the colony to move into your box and the key is their ability to communicate by scent. Don't light your smoker since smoke interferes with their being able to smell.

Swarms don't always present themselves on some easily accessible spot, so the "safety" challenge is not falling out of a tree or off a ladder. Remember that the swarm is looking for a suitable home and will investigate potential nest sites for some distance. Rather than risk a fall, sometimes the best option is to just leave a box nearby with drawn comb and a few drops of lemongrass oil. Just let the bees move in on their own. A swarm trap is another option. If it is a recent swarm, you can rest assured that the scouts will find your offering and with a little luck will just set up residence. Our web site (www.fortbendbeekeepers.org) has links to a couple of swarm capture videos, including one showing how a jug on a pole can be used while safely on the ground.

Capturing swarms brings with it the responsibility to be sure that the colony stays where you put them. If you bring a swarm home and they abscond, they need to move in with you, not the neighbors.

There are many steps that you can take to encourage the bees to stay. You should leave the colony closed up overnight to get accustomed to their new home. After dark you can offer them sugar syrup in an en-

trance feeder (bees can't see the color red, so a red flashlight should be used so they don't come out looking for a fight). Another idea is to use a queen excluder to prevent the queen from leaving. Remember that you have trapped the drones too so it should only stay in place for a day or two (and expect to find dead drones on it). The queen excluder is not a sure thing since the scouts may still be looking for a better home. They may just wait for the excluder to be removed.

Success in capturing swarms comes in two steps: getting them in a box and then having them stay and flourish. It is best to put the swarm in a hive from the get go. Youtube videos showing swarms in plastic bags, nets or garbage cans did not likely end successfully. One of our website videos shows a swarm marching into a box placed on the ground. There is a view that when the bees move in on their own they are more likely to stay. Sometimes a swarm ends up on the ground because the queen has difficulty flying (old-timers call it a "pancake" swarm for obvious reasons). Offering up a hive entrance on the ground near the "pancake" is usually all it takes to capture them. Or you can snip off the branch and then shake the bees to the ground in front of your nuc. It is fun to lay on your belly and watch for the queen to march in. Sometimes she is among the first to go in, but often she will be one of the last.

A key part of the swarm catcher's tool kit is a can of insect repellent like Off! A swarm capture will go most quickly when a squirt of Off! prevents them from going back up in the tree. You can also use paper towels or a rag sprayed with insect repellent to maneuver the swarm to a more accessible spot. Off! is also very effective in discouraging scout bees that are investigating your home as a potential nest site. (But don't spray it on bees!)

Dues Are Due

Check out the address label on this newsletter. If your name is in *italics*, you need to get your \$5.00 2018 dues paid at our April meeting.

March Meeting Notes

Be sure that you register at the back table at our meetings since the sign in sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities. We had 58 register at our March 13, 2018 meeting. Three tries at a head count came up with 55, 59 and 58... close, pretty close, or perfect.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson called the meeting to order and gave an opening invocation. Albert Smaistrila then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jack next welcomed four visitors. He announced that if a mentor is wanted there are sign-up sheets available (additional mentors are still needed). The cost for mentees is \$25.00. A copy of The Beekeepers Handbook and a Beekeeper's Log book is provided (to both mentors and mentees). A subscription to the American Bee Journal is required, so you might as well subscribe. New beekeepers were also encouraged to go ahead and purchase protective gear. A ventilated suit or jacket is best. However, wearing a veil and double pants, double sweat shirt, double socks with boots and gloves will work.

Jack reported that his bees are doing

really well and he saw the first swarm cells of the year. Be ready to start supering-up!

Jack announced that we will have a beekeeper picnic in May. First we will visit two bee yards, then have our picnic. More details will be announced at our May meeting. We will also plan a couple of field trips: perhaps to the TBA summer meeting, the TBA annual meeting, Buzz Fest in Navasota, or the Louisiana Beekeepers meeting.

Gene DeBons brought everyone's attention to the March 2018 edition of the American Bee Journal. The USDA is planning to introduce a non-native flea beetle to eradicate the invasive Chinese Tallow trees. This will be very detrimental to honey bees and beekeepers. Bees love the nectar of Chinese Tallow trees and hundreds of thousands of migratory hives are moved to the Gulf Coast every year for pollen and spring build up on the Chinese Tallows.

Vice President Chelsea Murray announced upcoming events:

March 17: CTBA Beekeeping School in Brenham

April 14: Sugar Land Earth Day

May 26: Bee Weaver's Buzz Fest

June 30: TBA Summer Clinic in Conroe

Chelsea then presented "Top Beekeeping Tips for Spring", starting out with making sure that your equipment is ready. You should be taking swarm prevention measures and be prepared to capture swarms. (As always, be sure to drink plenty of water and take breaks while working your bees.) And it may seem early, but you should be planning ahead for harvest time. Order bottles, caps and labels. The club has extracting equipment that you can use. We hold a \$500 deposit check and charge \$20 to pay for repair and replacement. It is important that you return everything and have it clean and ready to go for the next member that will be using it.

Jeff Murray reported on three beeyard upgrades in Fairchilds, Sugar Land, and Booth, Texas.

Steve Hutchinson has 16 established hives and will give mentees first dibs to buy them.

Jack Richardson will bring some swarm traps for sale on the letgo table in April.

Thank you to Margaret Wrzesinski for retyping and providing single sheet copies of the MCBA Month-by-Month Beekeeping tasks.

As has become customary, our meeting concluded with a drawing for various donated door prizes.

Time to letgo

Prompted by the silly commercials on TV, we set up a *letgo* table in the back of the room at our March meeting. It seemed to be a real hit, so if you have beekeeper stuff that needs to find a new home, it may be time to *letgo*.

Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was \$3,587.99. Since our last report we collected \$60 in extractor use fees, \$90 membership dues, a \$25 mentee enrollment, and a \$5.00 donation. The resulting balance is \$3,767.99, consisting of \$3,712.99 in our checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent— Horticulture
Fort Bend County
jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
281 342-3034 ext. 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating. 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.