



January, 2020

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The January 14, 2020 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, so don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid at our January meeting. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Members are welcome to bring sweet or salty snacks to enjoy. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Now that all the leaves have fallen, I see what looks like a swarm of bees in my pecan tree. But I think I can see honey comb. Are these honey bees?

An A: At this time of the year we get quite a few questions like this. Yes, those are honey bees. Weeks ago they likely clustered as a swarm but instead of moving on into a suitable site, they established their nest out in the open. The term often used to describe these colonies is an "aerial hive".

There are some 20,000 species of bees and most are not colonial insects. Those that are eusocial (living together in organized colonies and sharing their labors) can inhabit different sites as their nests. While many of our native bumble bees nest below ground, our Western honey bee is usually a cavity nester, whether in our managed hives or perhaps a hollow tree (or, worse yet, our soffit).

Honey bee colonies reproduce by "swarming" with about half of the bees leaving their nest site along with the existing queen to form a new colony. The bees that remain count on a new queen that soon emerges from her cocoon. She must successfully complete her mating flight(s) and return to the colony to continue its survival. Colony reproduction is risky for

both the old and the new colonies.

The swarm's mature queen is not a strong flier so a swarm usually gathers with her just a short distance from their old home. The cluster may remain in place several days as scout bees search out a new home. (The warmer weather and abundant resources of swarm season are just around the corner. Our members that capture swarms are preventing bees from moving into an undesirable nest site and becoming a pest control problem).

Research has shown that honey bees have clear preferences for a nest site. If one cannot be found, they sometimes just remain out in the open, building comb, raising brood, and storing resources. Honeybee Democracy by Thomas D. Seeley is a fascinating book that tells the story of how honey bees search out possible new nest sites and "debate" the merits of each one. They then make a collective decision. Unfortunately as the book comes to an end, the author gets a bit too "anthropomorphic" in assessing honey bee behavior. Such assessments are usually not what beekeepers are interested in.

Winter survival of aerial hives is perilous, even with our usually mild weather since forage is not available. The workers must keep any brood warm or it will die, so they generate heat by flexing their flight muscles. Aerial hives are at risk of consuming all of their honey stores just trying to stay warm.

Election of Officers

Officers for 2020 were elected at our November meeting. Jack Richardson announced that he is moving and unable to continue as President. Current officers Lynne Jones (Secretary-Treasurer) and Danessa Yaschuk (Vice President) agreed to continue their roles and were both nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations and both were re-elected by unanimous vote. For President, both Dan Jones and Nancy Hentschel were nominated, but declined. Craig Rench was nominated and seconded. He was elected by unanimous vote. Jeff McMullan consented to continue as our newsletter editor and was also confirmed by acclamation.

November Meeting Notes

We had 49 members and guests sign in at our November meeting. Please be sure to sign in since these sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting at 7:30 pm after 30 minutes of social time. He gave an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. There were eight first-time visitors. Each introduced themselves and related their interest in beekeeping.

Vice-President Danessa Yaschuk announced that several of our members attended the Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Convention in

November Meeting Notes (continued)

in San Antonio last weekend. Members with winning entries in the 2019 Texas Honey Show included Monica Siwiak (1st place dark/amber extracted honey, 2nd place candles and 2nd place creamed honey) and Danessa Yaschuk (1st place chunk honey). Monica Siwiak was named TBA Area 5 Director, replacing member Harrison Rogers who was limited to two terms.

The dates and locations for 2020 Summer Clinic and Annual Conference have been announced. Mark your calendar: Summer Clinic on June 20th in Denton and Annual Conference November 5- 7 in Allen. Both sites are just north of Dallas/Fort Worth.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones read several emails with requests for speakers and also one email from a Rosenberg property owner who is looking to have a beekeeper establish hives for Ag Valuation. She suggested checking out the products available at www.thehivebutler.com. If there is enough interest, we can do a group order for 10% off.

Gene DeBons read from an article by Dr. Richard C. Potter titled, "The Alarming Decline of the Bee Population in the United States." Its main points were the decline of bees and pollinating insects due to habitat loss, insecticides and fungicides and the need for contract pollination services to offset the loss of bees. The article was originally printed in the American Bee Journal in August 1949. Gene noted that, with a few updates, it could have been written in 2019, 70 years later.

"In the Bee Yard" for November and December was presented by Danessa. In addition, several members shared recent beekeeping adventures.

We closed with our door prize drawing for donated items .

Boll Weevil Eradication

A recent newspaper ad attracted some attention. It was a public notification that Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation personnel will be entering the cotton fields in our area beginning January 2. Beekeepers were asked to notify the Foundation of their hive locations in case weevils are detected and pesticide spraying will take place. (In fact, boll weevils have been declared "functionally eradicated" from more than a million acres of cotton across East Texas).

Cotton farmers in our area are assessed a \$2.00 per bale fee to fund this very successful program. It is amazing to think that a focused effort including farming practices, monitoring with pheromone traps and the judicious use of pesticides has virtually eliminated the cotton boll weevil (and all of the pesticide use that was needed to control this damaging agricultural pest).

If your hives are near cotton fields, you can report their location to: Patrick Burson pburson@txbollweevil.org and Larry Smith ls@txbollweevil.org. Include the address, county, gps location, and distance & direction from nearest city.

Treasurer's Report

Our October treasury balance was \$4,106.03. Since our last report we collected \$10.00 in dues and had expenses of \$604.04 for t-shirts, \$12.76 for website costs, and \$48.95 for a centerpiece for the TBA annual meeting. The resulting balance is \$3,450.28 (\$3,396.78 in our checking account plus \$53.50 in cash to make change). A financial summary and year-end property inventory for 2019 is presented below (we spent about \$22 less than we took in).

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2019 Financial Summary	
Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2019)	\$3,427.92
Income	
member dues paid (154 at \$5.00)	\$770.00
donations	\$165.00
extractor use income	\$80.00
t-shirts	\$549.00
mentee fees	\$250.00
Total Income	\$1,814.00
Expenses	
The Beekeeper Handbook, qty 10	(\$237.50)
t-shirts	(\$604.04)
speaker expenses	(\$350.00)
donations	(\$148.95)
Texas Beekeepers Association dues	(\$50.00)
Photo/Hive Painting award ribbons	(\$86.85)
website expenses	(\$314.30)
Total Expenses	(\$1,791.64)
Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2019)	\$3,450.28

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2019 Property Inventory				
<u>Description</u>	<u>Date Acquired</u>	<u>Initial Cost</u>	<u>Member Contact</u>	
three framed beekeeping posters	various	unknown	Boone Holladay	
Learning Hive	various	\$313.81	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	\$15.15		
honey refractometer	11/30/2016	<u>\$71.64</u>		
		\$654.97		
frame assembly jig	3/5/2012	\$157.88	Nancy Hentschel	
outreach exhibits				
banners	11/7/2013	\$80.96	Jeff McMullan	
posters and easels	2/8/2016	<u>\$193.30</u>	Jeff McMullan	
		\$274.26		
public address system	6/21/2014	\$620.22	Lynne Jones	
7/18 remaining swarm traps	11/3/2014	\$54.62	Boone Holladay	
Mentoring Program supplies:			Lynne Jones	
20 Beekeeper's Journals		\$144.20		
26 extra Journal fillers		\$28.34		
10 "The Beekeepers Handbook"		<u>\$237.50</u>		
		\$410.04		
gray cart for meetings	7/7/2016	\$121.25	Boone Holladay	

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

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