



# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

The May 10, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. COVID-19 hasn't gone away, so stay informed in case plans must be changed. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are \$10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep an extra ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at the meeting. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

## Meeting in person or online

Our May meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

**Tues., May 10, 7:00 - 9:00 pm**

To attend online:

login: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183>

pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYm  
JDNG1EK1UrUT09

Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183

Passcode: 275853

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

As usual, we plan to start the meeting 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:** Everything about bees and beekeeping is "api" this and "api" that. What's the deal?

An **A:** "Api" relates to the Latin word for honey bee: apis.

The European (or western) honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) is the most common of the 12 or so species of honey bee. These fascinating colonial insects have adapted the ability to collect nectar from flowers and turn it into honey to be stored for future consumption. Without this transformation to honey, the nectar would ferment and spoil. Once it is

honey, it will keep almost indefinitely.

Honey bees are one of the very few domesticated insects, having long been nurtured for the honey and beeswax the hive produces. Honey bees are native to Western Europe, but arrived in the New World with the first European settlers. They quickly adapted to their new home and wild colonies are found almost throughout the continent.

The honey bee is eusocial which means they live in colonies with a single fertile female (the "queen") and as many as 60,000 or more non-fertile female workers. The workers produce beeswax and build comb, care for the eggs and brood, gather nectar to produce honey, and defend the colony. The colony also includes a couple of hundred male bees or "drones". Drones develop from unfertilized eggs (not uncommon in the insect world) and their only role is that of mating partners for newly emerged queens. Drones leave the colony every day and gather in a "drone congregation area" to attract virgin queens. Mating takes place in flight. The new queen may make several mating flights and mate with as many as a dozen or more drones before returning to the hive. She has a special organ called a spermatheca to store semen and will likely never again leave the hive after mating, using the stored sperm to fertilize thousand of her eggs (as many as 1,500 or so a day during peak season). The queen can live as long as eight years, but she will be replaced as her store of sperm is depleted and

she begins laying unfertilized eggs. After mating, the drones fall to the ground and die. As winter approaches, any drones still in the colony are ejected from the hive and die since they are no longer needed.

Carl Linnaeus (1707 - 1778) was a Swedish naturalist and physician who is known as the "father of modern taxonomy". He developed the binomial (two-part) Latinized nomenclature for naming organisms. "*Apis mellifera*", for the European (or western) honey bee, was one of his first namings. "Apis" means honey bee, while "mellifera" can be translated as "honey-bearing". Linnaeus recognized that honey bees "bear" nectar and make honey, but declined to change the name. Oh well.

Since much of the English language is derived from Latin, "api" seems to show up every time honey bees are mentioned.

## April Meeting Notes

Attendance at our April meeting was 33 in person and 6 on Zoom. Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Those attending for the first time introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Gene DeBons gave a book review of Tales of Old Time Texas and a bit of biography of its author, J. Frank Dobie. Dobie was born in 1888 and had a long career as both an educator and a writer. In 1932, UT named Dobie the first full professor not to possess a Ph.D. He was an outspoken liberal, which

eventually resulted in his dismissal from UT in 1947. As a writer, Dobie is known as a folklorist. Published in 1955, Tales of Old Time Texas is a collection of 28 of his short stories. One chapter called, "Honey in the Rock," includes several stories about early Texas bee lore including historic bee hunters who claimed they could see a bee "over a mile away!" The bee hunter flourished at a time when a meal was "composed of dried venison sopped in honey." The chapter includes several tales of prodigious quantities of honey in Texas caves and the schemes people came up with to retrieve it. Dobie died on September 18, 1964 at the age of 75, just four days after being awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President, made several announcements on upcoming events and of two groups requesting a beekeeper to give presentations.

We then had a brief Show & Tell that included:

Two types of queen introduction frames and a push in queen introduction cage.

A plastic bottom board from Arizona-based Apimaye. It is manufactured in Turkey by Yildirim Plastik. Their principle product is insulated plastic hives, but their bottom board can be used with regular woodware. It has a built in pollen trap or you can put diatomaceous earth in the tray for small hive beetles.

Here is the rundown on diatomaceous earth (DE). It is the fossilized remains of tiny marine organisms called diatoms. It is used as a non-toxic pesticide that absorbs the oils and fats from an insect's body. The insect soon dries out and dies. DE's particles are sharp-edged and are likened to broken glass, inflicting many cuts in the insect's cuticle between skeletal plates. It remains effective as long as it is kept dry and undisturbed. Be aware that DE insecticide is scented to attract roaches.

A couple of pop-up mesh laundry

hampers which can be used for capturing swarms.

A heavy-duty strap/hook to put on a tree to hang a swarm trap.

Danessa then introduced our speaker, beekeeper Steve Brackmann, owner of Bear Creek Apiaries in Alvin.

Steve has been a beekeeper for over 25 years, getting his start doing structural removals. He began his queen breeding operation 10 years ago and is a participant in the Pol-line 2.2 program which is selecting for hygienic behavior. Last year Bear Creek Apiaries produced 1,500 queen bees for sale and 500 for their own operation.

Steve recommends requeening when the queen is not laying as much brood as the other hives you have, for example if there are only three frames of brood, but the other hives have six or seven frames. Also if the brood pattern is spotty or the brood is not a nice shiny white, which can be sign of a viral disease. Another reason to requeen is if your colony is aggressive (overly defensive). When re-queening an aggressive hive, be certain that the old queen is gone then place the new queen in a push in cage over empty cells where she can lay (which will help with acceptance). For introducing a queen directly from the queen cage, Steve prefers to put a spacer (Imrie shim) on the box and place the queen cage on top of the frames. If you receive your caged queen and can't put her into the hive right away, you need to keep her in a place that is in the dark and cool (but not cold) and give her a drop of water three or four times a day. If it is going to be more than a few days, you can "bank" queens. There are a couple of ways to do this. In a queenless colony, you can simply put as many caged queens as you want on top of the frames using a spacer shim. In a queen-right colony, you need to have the queen below a queen excluder and a frame or two of open brood above the queen excluder. The nurse bees taking care of the open brood will also

take care of the caged queens, again placed on top of the frames using a spacer shim. Because the resident queen is below the queen excluder, she cannot get up to the caged queens. Steve does not recommend banking a queen more than five days because the longer she goes without laying, increases the possibility that she might not start laying again. Rather than banking, instead you can grab a frame of brood from another colony, stick it in a nuc box with some drawn comb and let her start laying in the nuc box. Once she is laying there, you can just take her on the frame with her open brood and introduce her to another colony by sticking the frame straight into the hive.

The meeting was adjourned after the door prize drawings.

## Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$3,576.96. Since our last report, we collected \$110.00 in dues and \$50.00 for mentoring program registration. Our expenses were \$14.05 for a 3-outlet power adapter, \$681.96 for a new LCD projector, \$42.99 for Network Solutions' annual web domain name renewal, \$9.95 for honey.com printed materials, and \$12.99 for our email subscription. The resulting balance is \$2,975.02 (\$2,925.02 in the checking account, plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

### TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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

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