

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association

October 2018

NEXT MEETING:

TUESDAY, October 23

7:00-8:30: Harold Smallowitz -

“Things that don’t matter in
beekeeping (but we argue
about anyway)”

Georgetown Public Library

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Winter Beekeeping

by Laura Colburn, WCABA Program Chair

The only thing predictable about Texas fall and winter is its unpredictability. Just a few years ago we were still suffering through 100 degree days in October. Some years, Thanksgiving is warm and sunny and others we’re shivering through ice storms. This year we’ve had more than half our annual rainfall for the year in just 6 weeks. I think we were all caught a bit by surprise by this cold, wet weather. Hopefully you were able to do your fall inspections, but I’ve no doubt we’ll have warm weather again this fall.

How to Prepare Your Hives for Winter

As the temperatures finally begin to dip, there are a few tasks you should do for your hives to make sure they’re prepared for overwintering: check for mites and treat if necessary; ensure hives are queenright; remove queen excluders and reduce entrances; make sure hives have enough food.

It’s crucial to send your hives into winter with very low mite counts. Hopefully you’ve done your fall sample, but if not, on the next warm sunny day, take the time to do a sugar roll or other sampling method. If the results show mites greater than 2%, treat as soon as possible.

While you’re checking your hives for mites, confirm all your hives are queenright. You don’t necessarily need to see the queen, but you do need to see evidence she is still present and laying: eggs and very young larva. If your hive has lost its queen, it’s too late for them to raise a new one before winter. Your options are to find a supplier nearby or to merge the queenless hive with a queenright hive.

As winter progresses, the cluster will slowly move up. If you forgot to remove the queen excluder, your queen will be left down in the cold. Be sure to remove queen excluders before the cold weather arrives. Speaking of colder weather, the bees are buzzing to keep the cluster warm. As the warm air escapes and rises, it collects on the inner cover, which can then lead to cold condensation dripping back down, chilling and even killing bees. You can provide upper ventilation by simply placing a popsicle stick under the inner cover. There are other methods, such as upper entrances or protected holes drilled into the top box. All are effective at providing much-needed ventilation.

**continued on page 3*



Winter Hive - Creative Commons



A Message From Our President

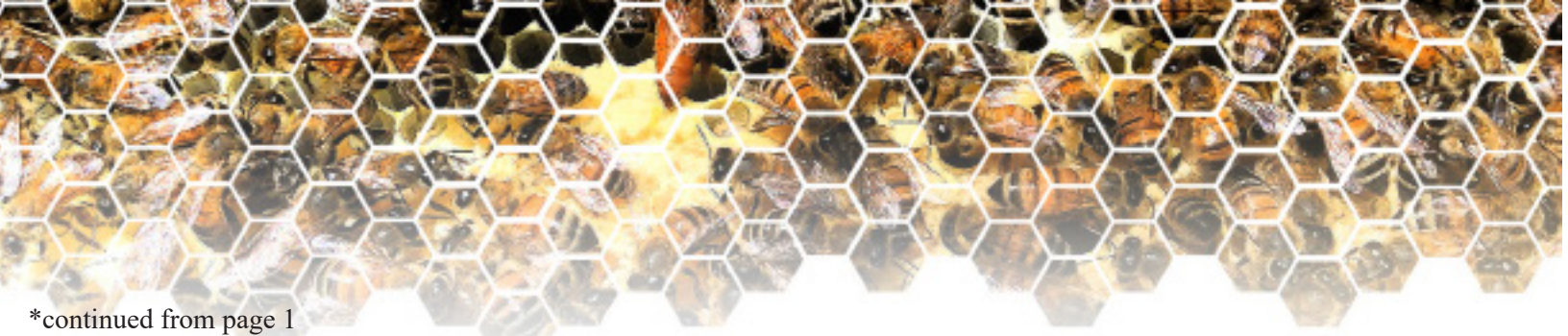
To state the obvious, it has been raining A LOT! This can make it pretty hard to find time to check our hives, but there are still things that need to be done. We will be seeing colder weather soon, so this is a good time of year to get your hives ready for the winter. Check winter stores, treat for mites and if you are lucky, pull a little fall honey for yourself. Fall honey can be dark and strong, but some people (like me) actually prefer it to spring and summer honey. Even though the weather is not conducive, it is important to find those days when you can check on your bees. It is the difference between being a bee keeper and someone who has bee hives.



We are now into October and are getting ready for our second meeting in the Georgetown Public Library. This is a very special meeting because not only do we have a great speaker lined up, our nominations committee also has a list of nominations for the coming year's board although the election won't be held until November. Even though this is sometimes thought to be a slow time of year, there is actually quite a bit going on.

Hope everyone can make the meeting on October 23 and I look forward to seeing you there.

Jim



*continued from page 1

Outside the hive, reduce the entrance to its smallest opening to prevent cold winter winds from whipping in the entrance. You may also need a mouse guard. This is an addition to the entrance that allows bees to come and go when the weather permits, but prevents mice from squeezing in and making a mess of your combs. Above all else, you need to ensure your bees have enough to eat for the winter. They need at least one medium full of honey and two or three frames of pollen. These resources are not always on a single frame, so take note of what's on the frames of brood. Often there will be a ring of pollen around the brood cells, surrounded by a ring of honey. The frames with brood should be centered in the brood box with a couple of frames of honey to either side. The majority of the honey needs to be above the brood. The hive usually takes care of this arrangement. If your hive doesn't have those resources, you'll need to plan on feeding all winter. Feed a liquid 2:1 syrup when the temps are above freezing and a solid fondant patty if temps fall below freezing for more than a few hours. A pollen patty may be necessary, but not until closer to the end of winter. It's also not too late to plant perennials for your bees. Trees, shrubs, and even some herbs will do well over winter and establish strong roots to survive the harsh summer heat and drought.

Understanding the Winter Cluster

L.L. Langstroth wrote, "If the colonies are strong in numbers and stores, have upward ventilation, easy communication from comb to comb, and water when needed, and the hive entrances are sheltered from piercing winds, they have all the conditions essential for wintering successfully." From early spring through summer and fall, the bees in your hive are working cooperatively to raise brood, clean the hive, control the temperature in the hive, convert nectar into honey, store pollen for brood rearing, and of course, caring for the queen. The hive is a busy place most of the year. But that activity changes significantly when the temperatures fall in late fall. As winter approaches a new crop of bees are raised to be fatter in order to create and retain heat and to survive the winter as brood rearing slows or stops. Unlike the short-lived foragers of summer, these winter bees may live three months or longer.

When outside temperatures fall below 50 degrees, the bees draw closer together, forming a cluster towards the bottom-center of the hive structure between frames. A hive with a healthy population will have enough bees to cover the surface of those center frames, even nestling into empty cells for the closest contact. The bees towards the center are the warmest, and they are able to care for the queen and any brood that hasn't yet emerged. They are able to disconnect the muscles that control wing beat and vibrate those muscles to heat the cluster. Bees towards the outer edges of the cluster help retain the heat with the tiny hairs covering their bodies. Clustered bees in contact with honey can pass it through the rest of the cluster to where it's most needed, just as they pass nectar during the warmer months: mouth to mouth.

It's important to note they are not heating the hive structure, but are rather heating the cluster of bees, although the heat they create will of course eventually escape and rise. This is why the cluster moves up over the winter and early spring month and why it's important that honey stores be situated directly above the brood cluster going into winter. Honey to the sides of the cluster are difficult to reach when it's cold and can leave bees stranded if temperatures suddenly drop. The rising heat is also why ventilation is crucial. Warm air rises towards the cover, then forms condensation, which in turn drips cold water down onto the cluster. To provide necessary ventilation, add upper entrances, either by a notch in the inner cover or a 5/8" hole cut into the top box, or crack the lid with a Popsicle stick or coin.

The hive slow their consumption of pollen and honey while in the cluster and move about the hive when temperatures allow. It's in the later weeks of winter and the early weeks of spring that consumption rapidly increases and when the bees are at the greatest risk of starvation. Kim Flottum of Bee Culture Magazine says 80% of the food consumed during the whole winter will be consumed in the LAST 20% of winter, when brood rearing starts.

If you have managed your hive during the summer, ensuring they have ample honey and pollen and are free of pests and diseases, they should do well through the winter.

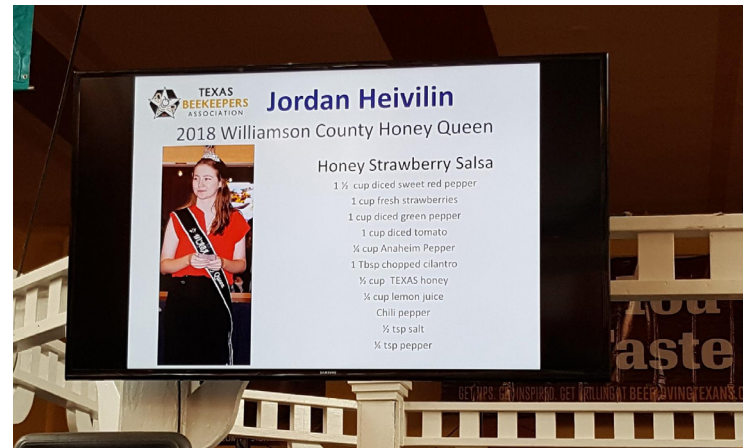
Royalty Reports

WCABA Queen Jordan Heivilin -

“On the 13th and 14th of October I went to Dallas, TX and attended the Texas State Fair. There I did a cooking demo while speaking to the public about honey bees. I used the Honey Strawberry Salsa from my brochure, which was very delicious, in my cooking demo. I had a great time reconnecting with the other Honey Queens while meeting the American Honey Queen. I also worked the TBA booth with my fellow Queens and beekeepers who volunteered their time to help educate the public about bees.”



Queen Jordan answering questions from the audience.



Queen Jordan's recipe using honey.



In the picture to the left, Queen Jordan demonstrates cooking with honey.

****Pictures - G. Stubblefield, A Heivilin**

WCABA Ambassador Sebastian Urban -

“My time at the Brazos Valley Bee School was a pleasant experience to say the least. When I first got there I was just looking for someone I recognized (I was a little late from the storm). I asked a member of the Brazos Valley Beekeeping Association if anyone needed assistance. At first I coordinated participants with their beehive box orders and helped bring there orders to the assembly area. Once that was completed I went to the table with observable hives. While there I talked with several people who came by to see the active hives. A variety of people stopped by from the novice beekeeper to those who were fairly experienced. I was able to contribute to most of the conversations by relaying my own knowledge and experience to those who wished to learn more. Overall this was a memory which I will hold dear not only from the things I learned but also from the fun I had.”

WCABA Scholarship Recipients to Sell Honey at Hill Country Fair

by Jimmie Oakley WCABA Scholarship Chair

For as long as the youth scholarship program has been in existence there has been an effort to raise money for it by selling honey. This year is no different as the current recipients of the Ed Wolf - Robert Bost Memorial Scholarship Program will sell donated honey at the **Hill Country Arts & Craft Fair at Sun City** on Saturday and Sunday, November 3rd & 4th this year.

The proceeds of this sale will go toward granting future scholarships in the program. Parents and youngsters alike will man the booth during the two day run of the Fair. In addition to selling honey the youngsters will be able to talk about bees, beekeeping, and the value and benefits of honey with booth visitors. There will be an observation hive with live bees to enhance the conversation with the general public. The booth will be **located at site #827** in the Memorial Garden Area at the Fair (off the back patio on the grass by the lagoon).

The marketing of the scholarship honey in this way will complete the cycle the kids are learning about in production, processing, packaging and selling of the fruits of their labor. Additional help will be required to cover the time the booth will be open and a volunteer signup sheet will be available for those wishing to help out. Also donations of honey and money will be accepted at the meeting. Show our scholarship youngsters your support by being a part of this worthwhile activity. See Jimmie Oakley, Scholarship Committee Chair, for details or to signup.

Working the Booth: Sam Bingham, Marius Talentino, Carter Selvera & Dylan Roberts



Honey Judging and Honey Tasting Nets Results

by Jimmie Oakley - Scholarship Chair

The Williamson County Beekeepers held their annual Honey Judging and Honey Tasting at their new meeting location in the Georgetown Public Library - (second floor) Hewlett Room.

It is not known whether the new meeting sight or the lack of a prior month meeting promotion was the cause, but participation was way down. Thankfully the enthusiasm was up, and it appeared a good time was had by all.



Ginny Stubblefield, Mary Bost, and Kay Oakley

The "**Tasters Choice**" contest only had 10 entries (half of last year's participants), but there was no doubt of the preference of the members taste. Ginny Stubblefield, our club Secretary, took top honors (23) and the Blue Ribbon with a mild yet unique tasting honey made by her "Mean Girls" (referring to her bees, not her kids). Mary Bost, long time former newsletter editor, had enough votes (18) to garner 2nd place and the Red Ribbon from a hive located on her farm SE of Georgetown. Randy Oakley was close (17) and took 3rd place and the White Ribbon, producing honey south of Waco in Robinson. Other winners in order were: Marius Talentino (16), Jimmie Oakley (14), Shawn Anchors (10), William Janke & Shannon Montez (7), Ann Bierschenk (6), and Alessandro Talentino (5).



In the **Honey Judging**, participation was down also, but maybe just as well because of our limited space. The three Judges, Frank Hunt, Chris Doggett, and Shannon Montez did their looking, tasting, and testing out in the open for all to see (total transparency). This honey was in 2lb glass jars and would go on to the Texas State Fair in Dallas for display in the Texas Beekeepers Honey booth. Judged to a 100 point standard all of the entries were considered Blue Ribbon quality (yea).



Judging: Frank Hunt, Chris Doggett, and Shannon Montez

Honey Judging and Honey Tasting Pictures



William Janke, Ann Bierschenk, Kay Oakley (for Randy), Jimmie Oakley Alessandro and Marius Talentino and Mary Bost



The Honorable Judges



Keeper of the Cans and His Keeper
Jimmie and Kay Oakley

A big thank you to all who participated by submitting honey, tasting honey or judging honey.
It's only one year till we get to do it all again. Plan to be a part of this fun event.



WCABA Officer Nominations

Fall has arrived and with it the nominations for the 2019 WCABA Club Officers. Elections will be held at the club meeting in November.

President – Phil Ainslie
Vice-President – Shannon Montez
Secretary – Jill Mattison
Treasurer – Barbi Benjamin
Programs – Jennifer Shear
Newsletter – Chris Doggett
Membership – Shirley Doggett
Historian – Matt Ludlum
Past President – Jim Colbert
At-Large – To be selected by new board
At-Large – To be selected by new board



Welcome to our new members:

Brian McCluskey. Hutto.
Dakota Wampler. Hutto.
Renee & Neil Tice. Leander.
C.Kelley & Penny Crossman. Liberty Hill.
Scott Wukasch. Georgetown.
Jim & Sandra Lee. Granger.



W.C.A.B.A. MEETING MINUTES – September 25, 2018

1. **Opening the Meeting:** Jim Colbert, President, opened the meeting.

2. **Announcements:**

- The President asked everyone to remain after the Honey Tasting because the members will be asked to vote on an important matter at that time.
- Robert Horton, a longtime member passed away. His family will be selling 6 bee hives and equipment. Contact Chris Doggett for information.
- The Texas Beekeepers Association will hold their annual meeting on Nov. 8 – 10 at the Frank Mayborn Event and Convention Center, 3303 N. 3rd Street, Temple, Texas. Go to the TBA website to learn about the speakers, classes offered and pricing, <https://texasbeekeepers.org>.
- Laura Colburn explained she will be running a loop tape about the making of honey for the members while the Honey Tasting goes on at the meeting.

3. **WCABA Tasters Choice Honey Tasting:**

- The top 3 winners in the Honey Tasting contest were:
 - 1st Place – Ginny Stubblefield
 - 2nd Place – Mary Bost
 - 3rd Place – Randy Oakley

4. **Honey Tasting Contest:** The entries will be sent to the Texas State Fair for judging also: The following entries received Blue Ribbons for local judging of their honey:

- Shawn Ancors
- Ann Bierschenk
- Alessandro Talentiono
- Marius Talentino
- Jimmie Oakley
- Mary Bost
- Randy Oakley

5. **Members Present:**

6. **Proposed Constitutional Amendment:**

The following amendment regarding meeting days and places was read to the WCABA group for a vote:

“The Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association shall meet each month, January through November, at a place and time to be designated by the majority vote of the Executive Board. There shall be no scheduled meeting in December due to the holiday season. A quorum at a meeting of the Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association shall consist of fifteen members present.”

After a brief discussion, there was a motion to approve and a second to the motion. The amendment was passed by majority vote and will be added to the WCABA Constitution.

7. Door Prizes were awarded by Jim Colbert.

The meeting was adjourned.



Membership Application

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association
Dues \$15.00 per year - Individual or Family Membership

New Member / Renewing Member (circle one)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Amount: _____

Address: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Please print, fill out, and bring to club meeting or mail with check to:

Membership

Shirley Doggett, 400 County Road 440,
Thrall, TX 76578

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association * 4355 County Road 110, Georgetown, Texas 78626*<http://www.wcaba.org>*email: info@wcaba.org

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