

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association

April 2018

The WCABA Bee Acquisition of 2018

by WCABA Member Jim Ray

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, April 26, 2018
7:00-8:30: Beekeeping 101/201
First United Methodist Church
Georgetown (MMC bldg.)

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What a trip! I volunteered to help the club and members receive their nucs for the 2018 year and had a fantastic time. The anticipation of getting some new bees was crazy. When the call went out for volunteers to make the trip I had to think about it for about 2 seconds; I am off on Fridays, why not? I found Jim Colbert and volunteered.

At the start of April, the day of the trip was still in the air. The cold fronts set the bees back and not meeting the standard the company had set for the sale of a nuc. We received the final word Thursday that nucs were ready and Friday was a go! The bee retrieval team members were Mr. Jimmie Oakley, Mr. Phil Ainslie, Mr. Steve Hoskins and myself, Jim Ray. Jimmie Oakley provided the comfortable truck and John and Helen Hibbard loaned us an excellent trailer for the job at hand.

I arrived about 8:30AM Friday morning for a 10:00 departure to assist with any last-minute details. Once we had the trailer hitched to the truck, straps and pallets loaded we were ready for the 350-mile trip to Jennings Louisiana. The drive to Jennings was nice with a bar-b-que lunch and a breakfast for supper. We stopped in Lake Charles to fuel up both the truck and ourselves so we could make the drive back to Georgetown with as few stops as necessary.

We arrived just before dark and were able to see the bee yard from one end to the other. It appeared to be about one to two acres of pallets with eight nuc boxes arranged in a star fashion on each pallet. Jimmie and Wes Card with Merrimack Valley Apiaries out of Billerica, Mass at their



winter operations, discussed the best way to load the trailer. Once that was decided the workers commenced to loading the nucs by hand, walking throughout the yard picking up the nucs that were ready for us. Some were carrying 2 at a time. There were not enough nucs in this yard to meet the standard the company had so a truck load of 40 or 50 nucs came in from another yard 2 hours away.



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Beekeeping 101 - Bee biology on wax production plus how to inspect your hive and what to expect for spring and early summer

Beekeeping 201 - What to plant for honey bees and other pollinators (and what to avoid)

A Message From Our President

Things seem to be in full swing in the bee yard. If you received one of the 265 NUCs that came in last week, job one is to FEED, FEED, FEED. Even though they have brood, pollen and some honey, they need to be fed. Mine have been going through a quart of 1:1 sugar water in 1 to 2 days. There are sources of nectar and pollen out there, but they will build up faster with a little help, so do what you can. While we're talking about NUCs, I want to thank Phil Ainsley, Jimmy Oakley, Steve Hoskins and Jim Ray for taking on the job of driving overnight to Louisiana and back to pick up the NUCs. It is a tough trip and we all owe them a big THANK YOU! If you see them this week, let them know how much we appreciate their work.



We will also be getting our new queens in later this month. If you ordered one, it's time to start making preparations for getting her installed. If you're doing splits, make sure you have the woodenware and frames ready and painted. You'll probably want to have feeders ready too. If you're re-queening, you might want to use a queen excluder to isolate the current queen to make it easier to find her when the time comes. No matter what your plans are, now is the time to start the preparation.

Above all, just enjoy this time of year. To me, this is the best time in the bee keeping year; the weather is nice, the bees are happy, things are progressing, the problems are small and all is right with the world. See you Thursday.

Jim

In the Bee Yard....



Bee retrieval team readies the nucs for member pickup.



After an all night trip, Jim Ray finally got his own nucs set up at his home.



Jyll Mattinson selects her nuc.



Randy Oakley and WCABA Vice President Shannon Montez assist with nuc pickup.

**photos by Jim Ray and Jimmie Oakley*



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Once loaded, the straps came out. We had a strap across almost every row of nucs and 2 straps from front to back. 2 pallets were stood against the back row of nucs to help break the wind, stop the rain, and to secure them from sliding off the back. There was no way we were going to lose a single box!



Strapping nucs tightly!

We left Jennings with a heavy load close to 11 PM. The load was estimated to be between 6875 – 8250 pounds. We hit the front just as we were driving into Houston. The thermometer on the truck was at 76 and dropped to 66 in about 2 miles. And then came the rain. Thankfully it was early morning in Houston and not much traffic. It was difficult to see the white lines in the highway. We picked a Fed-Ex truck to follow hoping he was not going to Dallas! My turn to drive was the last leg starting somewhere around Schulenburg. We arrived at the Bost Farm at about 5:45AM safe and sound with all of the boxes intact.



Checking the load before heading home.

Mr. Randy Oakley arrived shortly after with his youngest son Isaac. This young man is a worker! We unstrapped the trailer and Randy and his son screened the entrances as fast as they could. Daylight came upon us, but the temperature was cool and the wind was blowing. Phil, Steve and I lined up the screened nucs as members started showing up with vouchers in hand ready to claim theirs. It was interesting to watch some members walking all through the boxes tipping, lifting and judging. Others would just walk up to the first box, pick it up, then head to their car or truck.



Screening in the bees



Isaac Oakley assisting Anne Bierschenk

What a day! What a trip! Around 11:00 I had had enough fun for the day. I was getting tired, so I said my good byes, loaded up and headed for the house. Once there, I set the nucs right on the new screened bottom boards where their new hives would be, pulled the screens, replaced the empty lids with sugar syrup and went to bed. I am sure glad there are not 32 hours in a normal work day! Monday, I transferred them to their new homes.

Having Mr. Jimmie Oakley on the trip was very informative. The questions were non stop for a while then we would get off on another subject for a few minutes, but soon, another bee question would come out. Jimmie provided answers that had worked for him in the past and some possible alternative ideas.

My thanks to everyone who had a hand in this adventure and allowing me to join in. Thanks to the Hibbards for the fantastic trailer. It worked perfectly. Thanks to Steve Hoskins and Phil Ainslie for their excellent driving skills, good company and endurance. Thanks to the Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association for assisting the members in getting their bees. Thanks to Ms. Bost for the use of her farm for the departure and pickup point. And a special thanks to Jimmie Oakley, who never seems to run out of energy and is always the gentleman.

photos courtesy of Jimmie Oakley

Tips for Inspecting Your Hive

By Laura Colburn
WCABA Program Director



Ready to inspect the hive

After starting a new hive, you're probably excited, and maybe a little anxious, to see what's happening in your hive. In the weeks following your hive setup, you should see evidence of a laying queen: eggs, larva, and capped brood. And you should see new comb being drawn on the foundation of your frames. Avoid checking your hive more than every 7-10 days otherwise you'll interrupt the work of the hive and unsettle the bees.

When visiting the bee yard, have a purpose in mind. It's helpful to make a to-do list so you'll have not only the necessary tools at hand, but you'll know what you're looking for. Wait for nice weather, too. Bees get grumpy when you open the hive on a cloudy day that's threatening rain. High wind can not only disturb the bees, but also dry out the larva exposed to it. A routine inspection can wait for a day of sunshine.

Some things to look for when inspecting your hive include: brood pattern, pollen and honey stores, and attitude of the hive. It's not necessary to look for

the queen. As long as you see eggs, you can feel confident you have a queen.

You'll also want to pay attention to how much space they have available. When they have drawn and filled seven out of 10 frames, it's time to add another box. Decide ahead of time if you plan to use a double-deep setup for the hive body and brood chamber, or a deep with a medium on top or even an all-medium setup. It's really a matter of personal choice. Remember, any time you add undrawn foundation, the bees will need to be fed 1:1 syrup to provide the materials to build the comb. Wax is expensive for bees to produce, so don't hold back.

Another thing to be looking for are queen cells. Cells formed towards the middle of the frame are generally supercedure cells and an indication there may be a problem with the queen. Cells formed at the bottom of the frame are swarm cells and

an indication they feel crowded. Simply cutting out either supercedure or swarm cells won't necessarily solve whatever issue your bees are sensing or their instinct to swarm, so ask a mentor or experienced beekeeper for help if you're unsure. If you're positive your queen is still in the hive, you can give yourself some time to address the issue by cutting out the cells.

Enjoy observing your bees, both outside and inside the hive. Watch for activity near the entrance, noticing pollen and possible robbing. When working in the hive, use steady movements to avoid dropping a frame or squishing too many bees. Always have your smoker ready when opening the hive. It's better to have it and not need it than the other way around. When smoking your bees, use light puffs of cool smoke. You should never see flames coming out. Also, avoid leaving honey exposed while your hive is open. Cover honey supers with a towel or hive cover to prevent robbing.

A healthy hive has plenty of bees, plenty of stores, a happy hum, and it smells good.



Smoke around the edges



Supercedure cells

**photos Laura Colburn*

Scholarship Program Takes a New Direction

By Jimmie Oakley
WCABA Scholarship Program Chair

With the awarding of the Wolf -Bost Scholarships for 2018 the program has taken a new direction. The size and scope of the Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association (WCABA) has changed and there was a call from the Executive Board that changes be made in the program to make it more robust and maybe more relevant to overall changes in beekeeping. Not saying that the original program format has not served the association well for over 30 years to involve local youth in the art and craft of beekeeping, but there is opportunity to make it better.

On the recommendation of Jimmie Oakley, Scholarship Program Chair, a comprehensive 49 week approach is being launched as presented in "A Sustainable Apiary for Central Texas" by Randy Oakley of Robinson, Texas. The new program will include standardized 8-frame equipment, integrated mite treatments, annual fall requeening, and creation of a spring nuc for increase. The second year will be geared more toward honey production.

This year four youngsters are involved in the program, Levi Hoskins of Jonestown (16 yrs), Ryan Doleva of Georgetown (15 yrs), Carter Fojtik of Austin (12 yrs), and Alessandro Talentino of Dale (12 yrs). The older boys will enter the new 2-year program to see how well it works, while the younger boys will continue the historical program for another year.

In addition, the two WCABA Honey Ambassadors, Sebastian Urban (15 yrs) and Michael Wheeler (14 yrs) will enter the advanced program. Both Sebastian and Michael were 2016 scholarship recipients and as Ambassadors this will be more in depth training for their spokesperson position.

The advanced program will utilize a location at the Georgetown Heritage Garden where all four hives can be kept in one place. This will allow for group instruction and developmental comparison of each hive against the other.

This looks to be a great group of recipients, and a great opportunity to improve an already storied program. Keep an eye on it!



2018 Scholarship Recipients and WCABA Queen



Scholarship recipients receive instruction on mixing sugar syrup



Learning to fill feeders in hive



Program Instructor, Randy Oakley, inspects frame for brood

**photos by Jimmie Oakley*

WCABA Bee Nuc Pickup a Land Office Affair

By Article and photos by Jimmie Oakley

To say there was a land office rush to get the honey bee nucs that were ordered from Merrimack Valley Apiaries that came in on Saturday morning the 14th would be putting it mildly.

The pickup crew of Phil Ainslie, Jimmie Oakley, Steve Hoskins, and Jim Ray had barely arrived back at the Bost farm (5:45AM) and got things unloaded before the eager members began arriving to claim their purchased product.

On arrival, Randy Oakley and son Isaac started smoking and screening in the bees in each nuc for the safety and convenience of each member picking up a nuc. It was a usually cool morning which helped immensely in preparing the bees for delivery and when the nucs were picked up. There was not as much pressure on those securing their nucs or on the bees while they waited to be picked up.

Those arriving at the Bost Farm early found parking at a premium, and there was a long line as those with Pickup Vouchers checked in with Dodie Stillman who had set up in the shop area. After review of their paperwork and confirming the number due, each member walked the few paces to the congregation yard where all the nucs were set out to be assisted by one of the several designated fulfillment people.

Of the 265 nucs purchased by the club almost all had been claimed and were on their way before noon, and by 4PM only six individuals had to be called and reminded of their obligation to pick up their bees.

Thank you to all who stayed over, or showed up to help in the distribution of the nucs. Thank you to Mrs. Bost for providing the huge open space at the Bost Farm for the unloading, the congregating, the necessary parking, and the distribution involved in this valuable program to our club. And once again thank you to the dedicated members who made the 18 hour trip over to Jennings, Louisiana, and back to deliver the goods for our members.

From the reports filtering back in there have been no complaints about the quality of the nucs our members received, and there is a general satisfaction with the nucs that were delivered, but if there are any issues you may discuss them with Jimmie Oakley the Order Coordinator of this program at the next meeting on Thursday the 26th, or you may call him on his cell at 512/507-3009.

Finally, the queens ordered in the procurement program are scheduled to be picked up at B Weavers in Navasota on Friday April 27th and will be available for early pickup at the Bost Farm after 1PM, and again on Saturday morning the 28th. Please make yourself available to pick up your purchased queen during those timeframes to help the volunteers get their job done.



WCABA Ambassadors and Honey Queen Speaking Engagements

Submitted by WCABA Secretary and Queen Chair Ginny Stubblefield

The WCABA Honey Queen, Jordan, along with the club ambassadors, Sebastian and Michael, have been busy in the community educating youth and adults about the honey bee. Recently they did an excellent job of representing WCABA as they stood and interacted with the crowd from 9:00 until 2:00, talking about bees at the East Austin Garden Fair. The fair is an annual event held in the Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center in Austin and open to anyone interested in plants, chickens, bees, building things for their garden, etc. Our table display won first place due to the efforts of our young helpers who were so willing to discuss bees with everyone.

Jordan has also reported that she spoke to the 2nd graders at Florence Elementary School during the month of April.



Sebastian and Jordan in front of the WCABA display table.



Jordan teaching about a honey bee queen cage.



The WCABA display table staffed by WCABA Queen Jordan and WCABA Ambassador Sebastian



From our March meeting:

Door Prizes:

Donors

Pamela Cruder
Kay Oakley
Dodie Stillman

Winners

Cynthia Urban
Courtney Ahnenholtz
Alexis Juliana
Barbi Rose
Troy Terrebonne
Elizabeth Exley
Alaine Heilivin

Renewing Members:

Terry Spencer. Round Rock
Dewey & Mary Helmcamp. RoundRock
Brandy Eves. Thorndale

The Urban Family. Georgetown
Kevin Ueckert. Georgetown
Jimmy Shields. Georgetown

Welcome to our New Members:

Pam Abernethy. Hutto
Marilyn Shuster. Taylor
Patricia Harris. Round Rock
Carolyn Barner. Leander
Robert Beckett. Leander
Caleb Hopper. Georgetown
Jim & Sandra Lee. Granger

WCABA is actively looking for members who would like to serve in leadership positions. Think about your talents and interests...how could those be put to work in serving our club and members in a successful pursuit of beekeeping?

**Not sure what you could do but interested in doing “something”??
Talk to one of the club officers about running for a WCABA officer for the year 2018.
Step up. Give back. Share your unique talents.**



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

Questions about the ag value of beekeeping? Check out this website for more information: <http://beepeaceful.com/agricultural-valuation-for-bee-keepers-in-texas/>



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February Beekeeping Activity

Simulative Feeding & Order New Equipment

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