

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association

September 2017

WCABA Summer Workshops

by Laura Colburn

WCABA Vice President

Our association started a new program this summer, offering hands-on workshops. The first workshop demonstrated two methods for determining Varroa mite levels: a sugar shake and alcohol wash. Dodie Stillman joined us to answer questions about the Varroa life cycle and her experience with these pesky pests. Participants made baskets for alcohol washes and got up close to the sampling process. We were also able to compare the efficacy of each method by first doing a sugar shake and then using the same sample in an alcohol wash. Everyone took home a complete mite sampling kit so they could get started with their own hives.



If you haven't sampled your own hives yet, now is a critical time to do it. Bee populations are decreasing, but mite populations will continue to increase, bringing the ratio of mites to bees dangerously high if not monitored and managed. Hopefully you're not still relying on visual checks for mites. Mites are not only pretty hard to see among a mass of moving bees, but you can't see the ones hiding on the underside of bees. Taking a sample is not difficult, taking only a few minutes.



You can watch me do both methods on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCg2rfljIK-18aqu4FvByQHog?view_as=subscriber.

The second workshop was a follow-up to the mite sampling event, demonstrating how to treat hives with an oxalic acid vapor. Kay Freund from Humming Tree Ventures joined us to answer questions about the vaporizer her family makes.



Participants learned the safety precautions necessary and how to use a vaporizer to quickly and effectively treat for Varroa when mite levels become too high.

Future workshops are being planned, so check your email for the next workshop.

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, September 28, 2017
7:00-8:00: Beekeeping 101 / 201
8:00-9:00: Program

First United Methodist Church
Georgetown (MMC bldg.)

Beekeeping 101:

Michael Wheeler

WCABA Ambassador

Beekeeping 201: Chris Doggett

Program Speaker:

Brandon Fehrenkamp

"Swarm Captures"

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REFRESHMENTS:

Sherry Smith, Jill Douglas,
Matt Ludlum, Leigh Ann Brunson,
Janine Hall

SCHOLARSHIP & QUEEN CHAIR:

Jimmie Oakley

512-507-3009
jimmie.oakley@gmail.com

**all photos courtesy of LColburn*



A Message From Our President



As I write this, we are on the threshold of fall and the temperatures are still in the 90's. That's fall in central Texas. Still, it's time to start preparing for colder weather. There are a number of things to do to get ready.

One of the top items on my list is to make sure the varroa mite population has been knocked down to acceptable levels. Another major thing to do is check for honey stores and make sure each hive is ready for the colder weather that we all hope is coming. We don't need to wrap our hives, but we do need to make sure there is adequate ventilation. Bees can take low temperatures, but moisture is deadly. Also, make sure you are ready to reduce the entrance or use a mouse guard.

When it gets cold and bees cluster, all kinds of critters seem to like the close warm confines of a bee hive. This is also time to take stock of what you will need or want for next spring. If you build your own wooden ware, winter is the time to do it. If you want to expand the number of hives you have, fall is the time to make that decision and start getting ready. Same for re-queening. This is also the time for reflection. How was your beekeeping experience this season? Did you lose hives? What would you have done differently? What worked well?

Our meeting this month is our annual honey tasting and honey judging. It ought to be a wonderful evening and a chance for each of us to show off the fruits of our bees' labor (and ours). Bring a sample of your honey in a baby food jar for the tasting and a 2# jar for the judging and prepare yourself for an enjoyable evening of fun and comradery.



Missing Something??

If you recognize any of these scoopers, see Jimmie Oakley! They were left behind after we enjoyed the ice cream at our August meeting.

They would like to be reunited with their owners. Jimmie will have them at the September meeting - all cleaned up and ready to go home. :)



Honey Queen Coronation Planned

The Williamson County Area Beekeepers will crown a new Honey Queen at the meeting on Thursday night, September 28th. Former WCABA scholarship recipient, Jordan Heivilin, from Lampasas has stepped forward to take responsibility for the position. Texas Honey Queen, Megan Pettibon, from McKinney will be in attendance to perform the official crowning at the ceremony. Come help us celebrate the occasion.



September is National Honey Month

WCABA celebrates by having a honey tasting and a judging of honey to be sent to the Texas State Fair. All members who have extracted honey this year are encouraged to bring a sample of their finest in a jar (baby food size) to be entered into the "Tasters Choice" contest. The membership is then allowed to taste each sample and vote for the ones (you can vote for three) they think taste the best. The process is simple, taste, decide, and leave your mark. After the marks are tallied, ribbons (blue, red & white) will be awarded to the three top vote getters, along with the bragging rights for the best tasting (or second best, or third best, etc) for the year. This has always been a fun event in the past and you get to see, and will be amazed, by all the different tastes that come from flowers, shrubs and trees in the Williamson County area.



Also there will be a judging of honey submitted in 2 pound glass Queenline jars that will be sent to the State Fair of Texas in Dallas to be displayed in the Texas Beekeepers Association (TBA) Honey Booth in the Texas Agriculture Department Food and Fiber Building on the State Fair grounds. At the end of the fair all the honey will be donated to the Happy Hill Farm outside of Granbury, Texas. The honey entries will be judged and ribbons presented based on appearance, correct fill level, freedom from foreign matter, flavor and brightness.

If you need small containers for honey tasting submissions, or a 2# glass Queenline jar for State Fair honey judging, please contact Jimmie Oakley (512/507-3009). You can arrange for container pickup at the Bost Farm before the next meeting. Don't wait.

*photos courtesy of JOakley



Seven Methods of Varroa Mite Transmission

By Permission from Rusty Burlew of Honey Bee Suite (www.honeybeesuite.com)
submitted by Laura Colburn WCABA Vice President

Considering they have only stubby little legs—and no wings, fins, or driver licenses—Varroa mites have no trouble getting around. In fact, they have an entire public transport system built and maintained by the very host they parasitize. Seems unfair, doesn't it?

While many routes of migration from colony to colony have been documented, some are more important than others. Here's a list of common ways mites get around, and there may be others.

- **Mites on flowers.** Of all the possible methods of mite transmission, this one seems the least likely. Mites are attracted to the pheromones of bees, so it seems far-fetched that a mite would jump off a bee onto a flower and wait for another bee to arrive. However, if a Varroa-laden bee lands on a flower and begins to groom, it is possible that she will dislodge a mite. If so, that mite has no choice but to wait for another honey bee to come along and give her a lift. Surely this happens from time to time, but it's probably not a major means of transmission.
- **Beekeeper assist.** Beekeepers can easily move mites between colonies when they exchange frames of bees or brood between hives or when they make splits.
- **Drifting.** Not all honey bees make it back to their own colony. It is well known that if you have a row of hives, the hives on the ends will slowly gain population while the ones in the middle lose it. If these lost bees are carrying pollen, nectar, or other needed stores, they are usually welcomed into the new colony. The unseen gift, though, may be phoretic mites tucked between the bee's segments which are happy to jump off and make themselves to home.
- **Drones.** Unlike foragers, drones are not too particular about where they spend the night. Drones are very likely to stop in at any old colony and the foragers usually let them in. Wandering drones may be a major mode of mite transmission.
- **Swarming bees.** If a colony has mites, so will the swarm. It only takes one mite to begin a new infestation.
- **Abscending bees.** Bees don't always abscond in massive groups like a swarm, but may leave a hive in onesies and twosies. This can happen when a colony is collapsing from disease or parasitism, when the bees are starving, when a colony remains queenless for a long period, when a colony is decimated by bears or other predators, after fire or flood, or whenever the bees' home is destroyed or becomes uninhabitable. The bees fly off and some may be lucky enough to find another colony to join, carrying with them their trove of mites and/or other diseases.
- **Robbing bees.** Whenever a bee colony becomes weak it is a potential target. Bees from healthy robust hives are often eager to empty out the pantry of a weaker hive and ferry the treasure back home, a form of kleptoparasitism that is greater in some races of honey bee than others. Oftentimes the weak hive is riddled with Varroa mites, and it may even be collapsing for that reason. The robbing bees end up with more than they bargained for, taking home both honey and a blood-thirsty population of Varroa mites.

The take-home message is that your colony can pick up an infestation of Varroa at nearly any time of the year. The best practice is to monitor your hives regularly to see if you have a problem, and then decide on a course of action if you do.



*images used with permission - CC



Book Nook - by Barbi Rose (WCABA librarian)



Honey Bee Removal
by Cindy Bee and Bill Owens,
edited by Kim Flottum.

This is a must-read for anyone interested in learning to do cut-outs or capturing swarms. It is a step-by-step workbook that is intended to teach the reader to safely and sanely remove honey bees from everywhere.

The authors are bee removal powerhouses. Co-author Cindy Bee is a Certified Master Beekeeper and long-time recognized bee removal expert. Co-author Bill Owens is a Certified Master Craftsman Beekeeper and is also known as an expert in the business of removing bees.

Honey Bee Removal thoroughly covers the following topics, with lots of relevant pictures:

- What to Wear, What to Bring, and Vacuums - This is incredibly detailed and describes why each item is important. (Have you heard of the "Owens Bee Vac" - sold by Brushy Mountain Bee Farm? Bill Owens is the developer of that bee vacuum. He has included instructions to make one yourself!)
- Basics of Building Construction and How to Find the Nest - There are pictures and descriptions of building framework and visuals of where hives may be located. It also describes how to feel for warmth and listen for the hum when locating the nest.
- Inside Work - This is the actual cut-out process for inside approach. It covers site preparation and step-by-step instructions to cut into dry wall, deal with floor joists, ceilings, and bay windows, plus site clean-up.
- Outside Work - This is for an outside approach,

such as external walls, overhangs, soffits, and roof access, It includes lots of safety tips as well as removing bees from columns, trees, and apartments.

- After the Removal - Yep, it even has step-by-step instructions to cut-in brood with the rubber band method.

Here are some links to a few YouTube videos of Bill Owens doing cut-outs. (The second is a news clip.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJJoKUrrzEs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFyvJl2Jqs>

WCABA Library Resources

Sharing knowledge is one of the benefits of being a club member. Our library contains a wide variety of materials for beginner to advanced beekeepers that can be checked out by members.

Please browse through the list of materials online at:
<https://wcaba.librarika.com>

See something you'd like to reserve? The WCABA librarian can provide a login so you can reserve online, then pickup at the next meeting.

Please be sure to return your books at the next meeting! Someone may have the items reserved for the following month, if you cannot return your items at the beginning of the next meeting, please contact the librarian, Barbi Rose at librarian@wcaba.org, to extend your check-out.



*photo MHerring



W.C.A.B.A. MEETING MINUTES – August 24, 2017

1. Opening the Meeting: President Jim Colbert opened the meeting. This was our Ice Cream Social meeting.
2. Announcements:
 - *The Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Convention will be held in Temple from November 9th through November 11th. The hours are 9:00 until 5:00.
 - *At the TBA Convention, there are break out educational sessions that will include beginning beekeeping, advanced beekeeping and hive product topics.
 - *On September 9, there will be a workshop for Oxalic Acid Vapor held at Laura Colburn’s residence, 9:00 a.m., 1500 CR 235, Florence, TX. Check the WCABA website for more details.
 - *New beekeepers can apply for a free one-year membership to the Texas Beekeepers Association. See Shirley Doggett for an application.
 - *Jimmie Oakley explained our next meeting will be our Honey Tasting meeting. Bring a baby food sized jar of your best honey to be part of the judging.
 - *You can also bring a 2-pound jar (Jimmie Oakley is selling jars for \$1.00) which will be judged at our meeting, then taken to the Texas State Fair for judging.
 - *Pamela Yeaman spoke to the group at the Texas Beekeepers Association’s Honey Show. There will be awards such as “Best of Honey Division”, Best Small Scale Honey”, Best of Mead Division” and others. On Saturday of the TBA Convention, there will be plenty of honey-related education opportunities.
 - *Beekeeping 101 – was taught by Laura Colburn. A panel format followed with a question and answer session.
4. Members Present: 50
5. Program: Jim Colburn introduced the evening’s speaker, Mike Merchant, Urban Entomologist, representing the Williamson County AgriLife Extension office. Mike presented a program on “Protect Yourself from Mosquito and Zika Virus”.

Our next meeting will be on September 28, 2017.

Ginny Stubblefield
Secretary, W.C.A.B.A.

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From the August meeting -

THANK YOU to our Door Prize Donors:

Lisa Hoekstra
Ginny Stubblefield

Congrats to our Door Prize Winners:

Terry Wyatt
Diane Hale
Sam Bingham

We welcome our newest members:

Darryl and Bridget Lee	Liberty Hill
Chris and Penny Bingham	Round Rock
Thomas Bates	Walburg
Stacy McLaughlin	Georgetown
George and Jodi Loa	Troy

We also had these renewing members:

Zane Baird	Round Rock
Larry and Leslie Sparks	Cedar Park



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

Don't miss out on these upcoming events:

** WCABA meeting - September 28*

** State Fair of Texas - September 29-October 22*

** Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Convention - November 9-11*

Watch your email for more announcements and registration information!



Oakley

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Randy Oakley

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Time to treat for varroa / See us at the meeting for
Varroa Mite Monitoring & Treatment Solutions

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