

# SAZBA Meeting, March 10, 2026

## 1. General

- Attendees: 20
- Tucson Festival of Books (TFOB)
  - March 14 and March 15
  - Per request of TFOB leadership, volunteers should, if possible, wear a T-shirt representing their organization
  - SAZBA received two books direct from the publisher, for display at TFOB
    - Please look through the books and provide feedback
- Dadant provided some donations to SAZBA
  - 100 copies of an issue of the American Bee Journal
  - Smoker
  - Hive tools
  - A few free subscriptions
  - Please sign Thank You card located at back table by sign-in sheet

2. Monica King's presentation on Growing Your Bees. Most of Monica's presentation slides contained the text she discussed. Here are a few additional comments and notes.

- Three ways to acquire bees
  - Capture a swarm
  - Purchase a package
  - Purchase a nucleus (Nuc)
- When acquiring bees, their Transport is a big deal!
- Swarms
  - Be sure you know how to retain them
  - Inexperienced beekeepers should not attempt capturing a swarm
- Packages
  - Stick to 1 box!
- Nucs
  - If the queen is unrelated and was introduced, ask how long ago the queen was introduced. It can take up to 25 days for a colony to accept an unrelated queen. Don't purchase a Nuc if the queen hasn't been accepted.
  - The queen is usually, but not always, on the center frame.
  - Nucs come with 5 frames of bees.

## 3. Will Fitz's presentation on Hive Management & Inspection

- If starting with a Nuc, place those 5 frames in the center slots of a 10-frame box, with 5 empty frames on the outer sides.
  - It can take a Nuc from a couple of weeks to a couple of months to expand and fill a box and need an additional empty box to be added
  - Mesquite flow accelerates their pace of filling the box. During heavy flow, proactively add a box, else they will fill the frames with honey and not have frames for brood.
    - Try to have a strong double (two boxes) when the mesquite flow hits. You should get a lot of honey. Add a 3<sup>rd</sup> box for honey frames.

- Checkerboarding. As a Nuc colony is expanding, take one of the outer empty frames and place it between two full frames. Do this with 1 frame at each weekly inspection. Once 7 to 8 frames are used, add an empty 10-frame box.
- You can move a couple of drawn (full) frames into the empty box and move a couple of empty frames into the previously full box. This will speed the process of filling all the frames.
- While inspections should occur every 7 – 10 days, during the spring and early summer it is better to inspect closer to every 7 days
- For early beekeepers (less than 3 years of experience), it is important to be more thorough during regular inspections
- Experienced beekeepers can do briefer inspections and still obtain the necessary information
- If this level of rigor is too much for you, then it might be better to not become a beekeeper
  - One related option is to host native beehives
- During inspection if you find brood in all stages of development, that indicates the queen is doing her job
- If you find queen cells/cups, the hive is getting ready to requeen or to swarm
  - Queen cups will be on the frame face or on the bottom of the frame
    - To check for queen cups, tilt the upper box up to expose the bottoms of the frames
  - The egg in a queen cup is fed royal jelly
  - Queen cups start as empty cells. If you see queen cups, cut them open. If there are no eggs, you are ok for now. If there are eggs, then the bees have decided to either swarm or to requeen.
  - If the hive is crowded, add a box or do a split.
    - When you do a split, you are performing a controlled swarming
  - Once the hive has decided to swarm, it's hard to change their mind. But you should try, as you will sometimes succeed.
  - It takes around 21 days for a queen to fully develop from a queen cup egg. It is important to perform regular inspections, every 7-10 days, particularly in spring and early summer, to catch the queen cup behavior and take action.
  - There can be as few as a couple of queen cups, and there can be as many as a couple of dozen queen cups. You must find and destroy all of them.
- During spring, important to check for queen cups
- During autumn, important to check for resources being available to enable overwintering
- In inspection notes, record how many frames there are of brood, pollen, and honey
  - Check for trends over multiple inspections
- Eggs take 3 days to hatch, open brood larvae run 7 days, and closed brood pupae run 14 days
- If you find multiple eggs in a cell, either the queen is gone and worker bees have started laying, or, there is a newly mated queen still learning how to lay eggs
  - Probably won't find larvae or pupae, as it takes some time without a queen to get to the point of workers laying
- Beekeepers are happy to observe frames with the lower and central areas having brood, and the upper edges having pollen (beebread) in an arch shape above the brood

- If there is no pollen arch, the bees are probably not finding enough pollen and you should consider providing a pollen supplement
- Typically, the central frames contain brood, then there is a beebread frame, and the outer frames contain honey
- A frame of brood requires a frame of beebread and a frame of honey
- Once all the frames are used, the hive is out of space and the bees will swarm
  - To prevent swarming, when 7 to 8 frames are used, add a box
  - You can keep adding boxes until the hive gets too tall to manage – even up to 5 or 6 boxes in total
- Late in the season as resources decrease and fewer frame are used, you can remove a box and consolidate resources into the remaining boxes
- If you had a marked queen but now the queen seems unmarked
  - It could be the same queen, where worker bees have cleaned off the marking. If you look very closely you might find remnants of the marking.
  - Or, it could be a new queen – your queen was superseded, and the new queen will most likely produce Africanized workers
- A good brood pattern is one where the frame has solid areas of eggs or brood, with only a few dead cells.
- A concerning brood pattern is one where there is a shotgun brood pattern: a significant amount of the brood have died or never hatched or were removed due to being ill.
  - A concerning brood pattern could be due to a queen doing a bad job, or, there is a disease such as deformed wing virus or a parasite such as mites
- Queens last around 2 years.

#### 4. State of the Hive

- Swarming season has started. Scout bees are around. If you set out lure boxes, you might capture a swarm.
- Phoenix's swarming season starts 1-2 weeks earlier than ours, and they are already reporting swarms.
- It is getting hot. Mesquite trees will start blooming within the next couple of weeks: mesquite flow.

#### 5. Discussion and Observations

- Before cutting out all the queen cups, ensure you still have a queen! If your queen has already left, you will need a new queen.
  - If you can purchase a queen, great
  - If queens are not available for purchase, you can try growing a queen from the queen cups and use that queen until you have the opportunity to requeen with a gentle queen
- If the hive is very crowded, it can be hard to pull out the edge frame to start the inspection. Sometimes people use 9 frames in a 10-frame hive to avoid this problem.
- It's easier to purchase frames and hive boxes, but it can be cost effective to make your own bottom board and lids.
  - Make a bottom board with plywood, add rims on all sides but leave a gap for the entrance on one of the short sides.
  - You can paint the outer edges of the plywood, but you don't need to paint the faces, as they are typically not exposed to rain.
  - Lids do need waterproofing / painting

- Don't place wood in contact with the ground, lest you get termites. One simple mitigation is to place the hive atop cinderblocks.
- If there is a cozy hiding place beneath the hive structure, you might end up with rattlesnakes there.
- Bears, javelina, skunks, and birds can cause problems. In winter, bears and javelina seek food (pollen and honey). Birds and skunks will eat bees. Skunks sometimes scratch at the entrance and eat the guard bees as they come out to defend the hive.
  - To help against javelina and bears, try putting weights on top of the hive, or using ratchet straps.
- You can add cleats to the hive structure: edge bars attached to the top of the sides of the outside of the box.
  - Cleats make it easier to pick up a heavy box
  - Cleats strengthen the top edge of the box (reinforcement)
  - When tipping the upper box, you can rest the upper box on a cleat of the lower box
  - But, if you have cleats, then you can't use standard size telescoping/migratory covers
- Don't checkerboard if it is still too cool at nights.
- Don't paint hive box inner surfaces. Bees will propolize it anyway, making this surface waterproof.
- For outer surfaces, you can use kilz alone, or kilz as a primer and then paint.
- Our climate is so dry that it is not necessary to use linseed oil or wax for preventing wood from rotting.