

Elm Fork Beekeepers Association

Member's Spotlight

Interview series featuring members of the EFBA so we can all get to know each other and our community of beekeepers.

Six questions with Michael Barber, local beekeeper and Vice President of EFBA



Why Honey Bees?

The keeping of bees is an incredibly straightforward and mysterious pursuit. Crucial to the survival of the world

and struggling for their own survival gives them the underdog hero status that I have always been drawn to. Combine this with my love of the outdoors, construction, hard work and feeling good about what I do makes for the perfect recipe to interest me. They are infinitely fascinating with no horizon to the knowledge they hold or to the challenges they present.

How and when did you first become involved with beekeeping? Early in 2018 my brother called one day to ask about the possibility of locating a few colonies at my place. I have been curious about bees and have always had some vague image in my head of wearing a bee suit and working bees. One thing lead to another and now we raise bees together.

What are you currently doing with honey bees?

Making bees, lots and lots of bees. We started in April of 2018 with no bees, no experience, no gear and no woodware. We bought our first deep for \$300 and so it began. Next we started building swarm traps and catching swarms with success over the next 5 months. We also bought 2 more nucs from separate sources in early May. Six months later after requeening any hot bees with some extremely docile queens we have split we have pushed past our goal of 50 colonies. Our biggest limiting factor was woodware so we spent hours and days barely



keeping up with our needs building nucs and mini splits boxes. Although very tempted, we agreed to not pursue making honey our first year so our options would be greater the next year. Looking forward to next spring we are focused on overwintering, getting permission for new apiary locations and building more traps. Honey production is on the menu for 2019.

What goals do you have as a beekeeper?

Our goals revolve around learning all



that we can about honey bees and incorporating this knowledge to build a family business together.

Any past problems or failures with bees that you care to share?

I've made tons of mistakes! Poor timing for splits, creating robbing frenzies, killing queens one way or another, not feeding, feeding, loss to pests, forgetting what I needed to do, running out of construction materials, being clumsy or ignorant, panicking and being a poor weatherman. The list of failures is much longer.

Any advice or encouragement you would like to offer to new beekeepers or possible future beekeepers?

Pay attention and be aware. Filter what you hear and seek multiple sources while decision making. Winter is coming, spring is near, summer is unpredictable and who knows what fall means so try be ready! Don't put all your eggs in one basket so making a few mistakes doesn't cost

you the whole season. And most important of all, have fun along the way!