

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 40, Issue 4 April 2015

Monthly Meeting: March 9th-6 p.m. Come and chat with beekeepers, bring questions, meet cluster leaders, check out our library, buy plants and enjoy refreshments.
7 .m. Our very own Cheryl Veretto will speak on bee friendly gardening. She is a Master Gardener, beekeeper and also runs our monthly plant sales table. You don't want to miss this talk!

This is our newsletter that reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.

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From Our President:

Happy Spring!

I'm sure you've been out in the yard, tending to your bees or planting bee-friendly plants. Many of us are expecting bees in the near future. Some people have caught swarms or are hoping to do so! It is an exciting time to be a beekeeper.

Speaking of beekeepers, I want to give a huge thank you to our long-time and expert beekeepers in the Association. We are truly blessed to have so many talented, informed and inspirational beekeepers in our group. Thank you for sharing your time, your talent, your thoughts and wisdom, with other members.

Also, I'd like to extend thank you to each of our talented speakers so far this year – Rob Kelley, Serge Labesque, and Dr. Elina Lastro Niño – for sharing their knowledge with us. There is so much to know as a beekeeper and it's helpful to hear from these bee advocates.

Finally, please support our Volunteer or Education efforts by signing up for an event. In the Volunteer realm, we have quite a few events coming up in April and May that, frankly, will not happen if we don't have enough volunteers. Look for invitations by email from your cluster leader, sign up at the volunteer table at the next general meeting, or contact our Volunteer leader, Cathy Kopshever, at volunteers@sonomabees.org. In the Education realm, request come in and Jen Espinoza (Education) is always looking for a helper like you. Jen can be reached at education@sonomabees.org. These are both great ways that you can advocate for the bees.

Enjoy the sun (but still hoping for rain!) and your beekeeping adventures,

Laura Baker, President

My April Beekeeping To-Do List By Serge Labesque © 2015
 Matt's bees

It's a long and bumpy ride up to Suzanne's apiary. Like a wild horse, the narrow steep road wants to throw me off its back and into the valley below. I need to enter the blind curves guardedly. At times, coming out of a hairpin bend, the view over the Sonoma Valley suddenly opens up and stretches breathtakingly to the distant bluish silhouette of San Francisco. But I am not here for tourism. I'm going to see "Matt's Bees". As my truck bounces closer and closer to my destination, thick dark clouds are gathering and growling in the sky. It's almost surreal.

Suzanne had emailed me a week earlier:

"[...] On April 22nd 2012 we lost my brother-in-law. He was very connected to the natural world, and for many years kept honey bees on the family property. There had been no honey bees in hives up there for many years as Matt's health spiraled down. We arrived at the family place on the day of his death to find thousands of honey bees on the top of the chimney and entering the house through cracks in the doors and windows. We knew as a family who these bees were connected to and why they had arrived at that house on that day. They were "Matt's Bees" and we have always called them that.

My husband and I gathered the swarm and put them in a hive box on the deck of the old farmhouse. They have been there now for almost three years. They have been managed minimally and swarmed at least once last year because of that! They produced lots of honey and some was harvested last year. I just saw them yesterday and they are BUSY. The colony is healthy and strong. These bees are adapted to their site. I would love to split them in the spring and have multiple hives with these genetics on the property.

I also wanted to let you know that I just broke down two other hives that died out this year on the same property. One was a swarm I had collected in my West Petaluma neighborhood. I already had two hives in my backyard and couldn't keep them here. They starved up there. Not adapted to the site. The other hive was a package my mother-in-law bought. They either left or died right away. Again, not adapted to the site. Who is thriving up there? Matt's Bees!"

Indeed I find the hive near the edge of the deck. A multitude of foragers are very active, undeterred by the thunderclouds that moan in the background. I try to lift the back of this stack of three medium supers. It's as heavy as lead. Removing the top of the hive reveals packed frames of honey that are patrolled by crowded, yet amenable bees. Although the weather conditions are not favorable for a detailed open-hive inspection, a glance at the bottom bars between cracked supers divulges no swarm cells. A new super is promptly inserted to provide space for expansion and clustering. I'll come back in a few days to probe deeper into the hive and see if it needs to be divided. Meanwhile Suzanne and her husband will prepare additional equipment.

Three splits were made a few days later and the queen mother has since resumed egg laying, producing a nice brood pattern. Hopefully, we will also raise some more queens from her brood in a few weeks. The genes of this sort of bees need to be propagated. Their contribution to the local gene pool is vastly beneficial. With a little luck, the young queens will meet drones that come from equally well-adapted colonies.

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that the wonderful combination of genes displayed by "Matt's bees" will not be lost. Odds are that they will be at least diluted by the onslaught of package bees, nucs and foreign queens that are all-too-often moved into the area and kept alive with feedings and treatments. These imports are a genetic pollution that prevents the establishment of locally adapted bee populations.

Here I call upon you to be part of the solution, not part of the problem: Do not bring packages, nucs or queens from outside your immediate area into your apiaries! Instead, propagate your own successful colonies or obtain bees from neighbor beekeepers who do not treat or feed their hives.

Beekeepers' associations should work more to protect the bees than they seek to increase their membership. We need strong and healthy bees, more than we need more beekeepers, especially when they play a part in the de-stabilization of local bee populations. Some beekeepers' associations even organize package and nuc group purchases instead of focusing their attention on multiplying successful local bee colonies. What a shame!

If you have ordered bees that may carry ill-adapted genes, cancel your orders and connect with neighbor beekeepers to obtain local survivor queens. If you can contribute to the propagation of local bees, go for it; you'll be doing a lot of good.

April in the apiaries:

There is a frenzy of activity at the entrances, which are now wide open. The bee traffic in the flight paths is intense with many foragers leaving purposefully while others are returning loaded with nectar and pollen. Inside the hives, fragile new white comb is everywhere. It carries spring honey that really looks like liquid gold. The massive deposits of nectar and variegated pollen seem to be compressing the large brood nests that contain beautifully dense areas of sealed brood and patches of eggs and of shiny larvae swimming in deep puddles of royal jelly. These crowded hives beg for more space for the storage of nectar, for egg laying, and for clustering between the brood nests and the entrances. New snow-white comb is built in no time in the frames that are inserted by beekeepers. There is much to do to keep up with colonies that are growing so fast and with those that may be preparing to swarm! This means frequent inspections, supering, adding frames, and dividing hives when they are ready. It all needs to be done. Procrastination is not an option during this season. This is what I saw yesterday in Marin, and what spring has brought in good apiary locations. It's thrilling.

In stark contrast, it's unfortunately not what you can see in apiaries surrounded by vegetation that depends on rainfall. This spring again, there are unmistakable signs announcing another challenging beekeeping year. Certainly, this is the consequence of the persistent and deepening drought, of the lack of ground moisture. In these areas the plants are already showing signs of stress due to lack of water. To begin with, the early spring honey flow was meager, with minimal wax production and scant comb building. The build-up of the colonies was short-lived before brood rearing was curtailed in preparation for swarming. Oddly, the progressive culling of the drones prevents many of them from reaching adulthood at this time of colony multiplication. The mating of young queens will be questionable. We are being warned: It's going to be a long summer. How will we, as beekeepers, and our bees survive these tough conditions?

No matter where we keep bees, it's a busy time. We need to anticipate the development of the colonies by gathering clues that we find in their brood nests, and we remain watchful for any health problems that may arise. At times, we split colonies and maybe we rear a few queens. Then we monitor the development of the young queens and of the divides. The results may not be as good as they would be in a normal year, but we cannot wait for ideal conditions. Indeed, if we do not try, we certainly won't have any young queens or new colonies. We have to be ready to replace aging and failing queens, and maybe we want to add hives in our apiaries that are in good locations. Personally, I will keep a reduced number of hives in my apiaries because this year the surrounding vegetation cannot support more colonies than there are already.

In summary, this month:

- Inspect hives regularly.
- Observe monitoring trays, particularly for signs of brood diseases, possibly chalkbrood mummies, EFB-affected larvae, and other health-related problems.
- Ensure unimpeded development of the brood nests. Add frames to provide egg-laying space, as necessary.
- Offer comb-building opportunities.
- Add supers to provide nectar storage space.
- Provide clustering space under the brood nests.
- Gradually open the entrances of the hives to match the increasing forager activity.
- Place swarm traps.
- Perform hive divisions when the hives are initiating their preparations for swarming.
- Keep some equipment at the ready to catch the occasional swarm.
- Rear queens.
- Pull weeds from in front of the hives.
- Discard old and misshapen combs.
- Render wax from discarded frames.
- Routinely clean and torch tools and equipment.
- Harvest only surplus early spring honey (in moderation!).
- Make sure you leave enough food in the hives.
- Combine or requeen hives that are weak or slow to develop but otherwise healthy.

Serge Labesque © 2015

Bee Plants of the Month By Alice Ford-Sala

Native Plant of the Month: Beardtongue, Penstemon Figwort family

Penstemon is such a useful and lovely flower; you are sure to fall in love with this colorful family of plants. Penstemons bloom in upright spikes of scarlet, purple, deep blue, magenta and orangey tubular flowers that are sought after by bees and hummingbirds. There are literally hundreds of varieties, *P. heterophyllus*, Foothill Penstemon is very well known, especially the cultivar 'Margarita BOP', a blue-purple, vigorous bloomer that is disease resistant and easily grown. *P. centranthifolius*, Scarlet Bugler is a warm colored lovely that blends well in a border with other upright plants such as buckwheat, or yarrow. They have low water requirements, so you can plant them in a drought year, and once established they can get by on very little water. They prefer "lean" soil, so don't need a lot of fertilizer. It is a good idea to let them re-seed, as Penstemons are not long-lived. Good drainage and air circulation, as well as full sun to part shade are requirements for success.

Beneficial Plant of the Month: Echinops, Globe Thistle Asteraceae Family

Plant a thistle on purpose? Well, thistles can have incredibly gorgeous flowers, and Echinops are relatively well behaved. Plant them in a perennial border (with Penstemon?) and they will keep their prickly leaves to themselves. The flower heads are interesting blue globes of tiny flowers that are bee and butterfly magnets. They can grow in many climates, and will tolerate a variety of soils, including clay. Don't give them too much water or they will grow too fast and fall over. Globe thistle is a long-lived plant and can stay in one place with no bother for years.

BEE WISE: "PREPARING FOR SWARMS" by Emery Dann

Many of my swarm calls are from people who know me or even a few from my own hives. We also have the www.sonomabees.org Swarm List. If you have not experienced collecting a swarm, give your phone number and interest to someone who knows how to handle swarms so you can go *with* them. Every swarm is unique—similar to jumping out of an airplane *with a parachute*. There is NO way to predict where a swarm will land!

SWARM CALLS:

After you hear panic on the phone, "I have never seen so many bees in my life, can you come right now?!" Do not bee in a hurry! *Asking good questions will save you time and return trips to pick up what you did not bring on the first trip there!* Here are some good questions to ask: First, get the address and where the bees are located with the phone number of someone *ON SITE*, if possible! Call them to be sure the swarm is still there before you leave or to check if the bees are in the swarm box. Where is the swarm located? How many feet off the ground? How big is the swarm—softball size, football size, or basketball size? You want to bring the right sized equipment with you. How *long* have they been there? The longer the swarm stays there bees run out of fuel and are more likely to not be happy and to sting anyone getting close to them. Have a veil and gloves in case. Do I need a ladder? Have you called another beekeeper? Are they coming or have they been there? Are the bees outside hanging in a cluster or flying in and out of a tree or structure? Questions such as these help us *PREPARE* for the best outcome for the bees and use of our time, efforts and travel!

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU:

There are many ways and kinds of equipment to collect swarms. Here is what I bring with me. Hive box or boxes, screen or temporary wooden bottom, inner cover, straps to hold it together, a nuc box, etc., depending on the size of the swarm. I bring a number of frames of empty drawn comb to attract the queen to stay in the swarm box. I have extension ladders and a 10-foot orchard ladder I can bring. Must use extreme caution when getting a swarm on any ladder. Two beekeepers are best—one to hold the ladder and one to climb! If you climb a ladder or tree, remember a trip to the Emergency Room *IS NOT WORTH THE PRICE YOU WILL PAY!* I often use a 5-gallon bucket on a pole that can reach 10--25 feet high. A white bed sheet is very helpful to spread under the swarm in case bees drop to the ground (easier for them and for you to see them). I always want to set the swarm box on something *ABOVE THE GROUND, if possible!* Ants can join the swarm box very fast and greatly irritate or make the bees leave. Don't forget to bring caution tape and a sign with your phone number to warn passersby. Let neighbors know what is going on and the time you will return after dark to pick up the swarm. Tell everyone to never spray bees with water. If there are sprinklers, check when they will be coming on to avoid getting the swarm box wet. I am sure you can add to this list for what is helpful to bring to collect a swarm. **BEEING PREPARED**

MAKES YOU AND YOUR “NEWBEES” EXPERIENCE SO MUCH BETTER! In the event that the swarm leaves before you get there or decides to swarm as high as an eagle’s nest, ***THEY WILL GO WHERE THEY WANT TO GO-- AND NO ONE WILL STOP THEM—SO WISH THEM THE BEST!***

Educators Busy with Bees and Teaching Others about Them

By Jen Espinoza

Last year at this time we’d spoken to over 200 students about honey in the first three months of 2014. This year the number is 575! This is in part to a number of our members presenting on ‘demand’: by people they know, or schools attended by their own children. About half of our presentation requests come to us through word of mouth this way. Thank you to **Ettamarie Peterson, Thea Vierling, Connie Neuhouser, Mike Turner, Abby Peterson, Chris Conrad, Randy Sue Collins, Ken Norton, Elaine Holtz, Jim Spencer, Cheryl Veretto, Jen Espinoza, and newcomer Theresa Giacomino** for all their time and energy in teaching others about honeybees.

With bees in the news and in so many other places (Monsanto even has an ad on one of my phone apps showing healthy bees and beekeepers! Whaaaaat????????), it’s really important that we continue to teach the general public how they can help bees survive. Not using chemicals in our gardens is one thing we mention, and I believe it helps the general public “think” about what they are seeing in the media, and also how to ‘act’ when it comes to gardening. Additionally, this being swarm season, the more eyes out there watching for swarms, the more likely we’ll place them in a safe beekeeper’s box. As people buy plants for their gardens, we can influence what they purchase, and even encourage them to ‘vote with their dollars’ for organic, bee friendly plants from their garden shops.

Did you know that Ettamarie and Marcus run a 4H beekeeping group in Petaluma? It is the Liberty 4-H Beekeepers. Adding to that is a new 4H group that Thea and Connie are mentoring in Kenwood. These are all youngsters who are beekeepers, not simply learning about them but actually working with them. Kudos to all of you 4H mentors!

Editor’s note: The Liberty 4-H Beekeepers will be at the 4-H ChickenQue with the observation beehive on Sunday, May 3rd at the Sonoma Co. Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa. If you like a good chicken dinner and like to support youth come to this event!

If you know of a teacher who would like to have a bee presentation, please refer them to our webpage where s/he can fill out a request form. If YOU would like to come watch one of our presentations, or would like to join in with us teaching others, please contact Jen at education@sonomabees.org. We have seven wonderful presentations scheduled in April (one on Saturday, March 11, for those of you who work M-F) and we’d love to have you come participate or watch. More requests coming in each week.

Pictured below are 4H students assembling frames and looking at frame contents. Abby Peterson, Connie Neuhouser and Thea Vierling ran the class for the 4H students!





By all means don't do it alone!

The flurry of activity with bees is growing along with the emergence of spring and the first swarms have slowly issued. Although we've yet again had an unseasonable start almost by-passing Winter altogether, a lot of hives are still in the growing mode, waiting patiently for the days to grow longer giving them a longer span from dawn to dusk to their work. Some hives sensing the impending long dearth ahead are conserving their efforts, perhaps re-queening the older queen instead of swarming. Others bursting have been split by beekeepers to prevent swarming and to propagate local survivor stock. It is wonderful to see the high influx of new beekeepers of just a few years ago advancing in the stewardship of bees by strengthening the species by propagating survivors with new confidence and skill. We need you now, to take the "newbees" under your wings. Think about taking along another aspiring beekeeper on your next hive inspection. I know what the fear is... what if I make a mistake? What if I fumble? What if I don't know? Because of the uniqueness of our honey bee and the challenges that we humans have put them under, we can but be ever lasting students, at any level that we might be and not knowing everything, making mistakes and fumbling are either a new lesson to be learned or a reminder/review of a previous one. We should not fear these but embrace them; there has not been a beekeeper that has not been there.

I have gone into plenty of hives with one scope in mind and ended up doing something completely different. For example a booming hive I was certain was ready for splitting was actually completely compacted and needed more space in the brood nest, in the cluster space and in the honey supers. There were still ample larvae being raised to show the hive was still in the process of maturing and queen cups or cells completely absent. This situation might come across as the mentor just not exerting his expertise but changing gears in an inspection is common, flexibility a very helpful skill. Another example is a hive ready for a super to be added is actually in the process of re-queening. It needs to stay a little more compact to go through the process and left alone for a few weeks. The extra gear is then shlepped back into storage. Having a plan but be ready to change course. Staying open to all possibilities.

In the fumble department I am not a novice either. I have dropped frames, left behind a follower board, even inadvertently damaged some queen cells and miscommunicated with clients. The learning curve never ends. Developing the slow and steady skill of hive inspection is a skill you have to keep practicing. To grin and bear a sting and not drop a frame, or really making sure you have a good grip at all times, taking a step back and reevaluating how something has been communicated and amending the situation are all skills can be turned into reminders or lessons. This is why we use both hands to hold a frame, or this is why we should always assume there could be queen cells attached to two frames and before you close the hive take a quick look to see all the frames and follower board have been put back in the hive (and hope the follower board or frame left behind belonged to the top super). Keep all communication clear and concise, never assume.

How about not knowing or not being sure? Here again if the teacher/mentor is also a student it's a perfect opportunity for a little homework, whether it's a jaunt on the web, a call or e-mail to another beekeeper, a question brought to the social hour at our association meeting. Seek out those "Ask Me!" volunteers. I often call other beekeepers and ask for advice and guess what they call me too. We have incredible collective knowledge and ideas. More than once I have been stumped from a certainty of

identifying American Foul brood a hundred percent for example where symptoms were not straight forward (as to find out, more than one thing was going on in that hive. Oh you can have more than one disease? Well yes.) To some very weird, smoother than usual looking queen cells which ended up not being queen cells at all but having twin drone larvae in them! What? What are they doing? Those laying workers so wanted to have a queen.

Don't be afraid to be a mentor. We are all learning. Always. Practice your observational, your slow and steady skills, your endless curiosity skills, your learning skills, learn to fumble with the grace of a lesson, and by all means don't do it alone. Take someone along the journey.

Christine Kurtz
Honey Bee Consultant
petalumabeelady@yahoo.com



The placement of these queen cells would indicate the bees are preparing to swarm. Photo by Christine Kurtz

The Perfect Swarm

By Thea Vierling

The perfect swarm only happens once in a lifetime...I have had one like that! See the picture by Ettamarie Peterson of that big beautiful swarm hanging at a perfect height to just pluck off and put in a box!

Most swarms are not like that. Most swarms are really difficult to get: many are too high or too low; some are solidly around the trunk of a tree or in the midst of lots of big branches too thick to shake or cut; Some are scattered in a rose bush or worse in the middle of lots of poison oak; Swarms have been found under a house, on the side of a wall, or on both sides of a cyclone fence! There are swarms with no queen because maybe the swarm left without the queen and then returned to the hive to get the forgotten royalty or maybe she may be too old to fly up that high and they did not listen to her royal complaints! "Help my wings are damaged and I am old. I can't fly that high"

Many swarms fly too far away or may just be an absconding, very small and diseased. There are also swarms that are toooooo big for the swarm box. I have known of swarm catchers who put a swarm like that in a big box with ventilation holes covered with screening. Some hives swarm more than once or even twice or more. The secondary and tertiary swarms often are smaller and have virgin queens, which can be problematic! I even had a swarm call from someone during one of the worst rainstorms of the year... Those poor bees were so wet and so cold that I think they were quite happy to be put into that box. I heard from the

neighbors that it had been hanging there for 3 days two of which were beautiful and sunny! I asked why no one had called us. She answered, "We did not know who to call or that we should even call" We need to do a lot more education!!!

My favorite swarm is one that is perfect, just hanging on a nice limb and five feet high and goes right in the box with no complaints. But even those swarms can be unpredictable. I have heard from many experts that they got the swarm in the box, took it home, put it in the hives boxes and the swarm took off! That's right. Swarms can have a mind of their own and it is not your fault if they don't want to be in your boxes!

Have you been called for a swarm yet? "Ha", you might say, "I never get called". Well, I have heard from many folks who have been called because their name was found on the swarm list. It does rotate and your name will pop up.

The other thing I have heard from swarm list folks is that they were the third or fourth person to be called because no one answered their phones. I think a lot of folks must list that they are available all the time but they are really only available on the weekends. They want to get that call! That really is the wrong way to go about this because what it does is make the general public lose confidence in our swarm list. Instead you should get some folks in your cluster group to call you if there is a swarm. Get to know your cluster members who are on the swarm list.

The other important news for all of you is that we do have a new Chairperson to monitor the swarm list. It is Melissa Bates. John Krafft has done a great job for two seasons. Thanks, John, and welcome aboard, Melissa. John has given Melissa an orientation about the swarm list, how it works and what some of the problems are. If you want to contact your swarm chairperson: swarm@sonomabees.org (Photos are from Internet (bicycle swarm), Chris Conrad (GMC truck swarm) Ettamarie Peterson (The perfect swarm!), Thea and Bunny (Rosebush swarm).



How to Join Your Regional Groups (AKA Clusters)

By Thea Vierling

Several folks have asked how they can join a Regional Group. Well the answer is easy, write to your cluster leader and introduce yourself. Hopefully they will get back to you but if not, write to me:

regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org
southcluster@sonomabees.org Sally McGough
northcluster@sonomabees.org Lynne Black
eastcluster@sonomabees.org Lizanne Pastore
westcluster@sonomabees.org Chris Dicker
centralcluster@sonomabees.org Chris Conrad

Also volunteer for all the Fairs and the special events that are happening and will be happening. You will meet so many beekeeping folks and learn a lot about beekeeping! Email Cathy Kopshever our volunteer coordinator at: volunteer@sonomabees.org

Robbing, Robbing, Robbing

By Thea Vierling

Wait, robbing season isn't until August when the yellow jackets are in high gear, Right? That is the time of maximum honey stores (if they are ever going to be full) and the bee population is gearing down so there are fewer bees to protect the home front! Oh, and the varroa mite population is still strong with new eggs being laid in the honeybee larvae cells. August and September are notorious months for robbing behavior in almost every hive! Wow what difficult months!! So why are we talking about robbing now?

Well guess what, it is April and there is robbing out there! Has anyone seen robbing behavior yet? Several folks have reported intense robbing in their hives these past weeks! It has usually been the weak hives getting hit by the strong hives! It also could be the smaller splits that you just made or a small nuc. Several of our "go to experts" have shared their thoughts. Some say it is the Drought! Do the bees know that this year is going to be like last year and the year before and before that too? Are they saying it is going to be a short nectar season just like last year? Or does this happen every year when the small hives get picked on? Are the bees already panicked that they will not have enough stores and that they will starve or is this a spring survival of the fittest phenomenon? Many hives have seen very few drones, both adults and larvae. Some hives have no drones at all!

Well I hope we hear from some experts and from all of you. What is happening in your hives? Here is a website a friend sent me and it is very good.

<http://www.honeybeesuite.com/robbing-bees-questions-and-answers/>

Meanwhile here are some characteristic robbing behaviors:

- * Clumping near the entrance with signs of fighting
- * Clumping of bees near any kind of opening where the aroma of honey could be; for instance boxes that do not fit well together and places where the wire vents are open a little!
- * Fighting at the entrance and on the ground in front of the hive
- * No usual gentle, polite kind of orientation flights in front of the hive

OK so what can you do for prevention?

- * Entrance reducer, down to the size of one bee!
- * Fix all cracks and spaces with steel wool or other plugging material
- * Make sure the monitoring board is up against the bottom and no bees can get into that space.
- * Don't drop honey around the entrance
- * Use a robbing screen; many say these work well!
- * Don't feed at the entrance with those entrance feeders
- * Don't feed during the day!
- * Make sure you make large splits.

If you see robbing behavior what do you do?

A lot has been written about this. A few ideas that some have used:

- * Gently spray some water from your hose up into the air over the hive to simulate rain (of course there is a water shortage!)

- * Put a wet sheet over the entire hive. The bees that are trapped inside will either join forces or be killed! Hopefully at night, you can take it off and the home bees will return home.
- * Google robbing with Honeybees, ask your experts, and prevention is important.

Minutes of Board of Directors – Go to

SCBA General Meeting March 9, 2015

Held at the Rohnert Park 4-H building, about 150 people present

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by president, Laura Baker. Swarms are being captured NOW. The Dept. of Ag is here with a 2014 Crop Survey Report for those willing to fill one out.

Beekind is having a grand reopening on March 28th, 12 noon to 6 pm. There are lots of give-aways planned. Melissa Bates is the new Swarm Chair, but John Krafft did a swarm class during the 6 pm pre-meeting time.

Thea Vierling, Regional Coordinator introduced the cluster leaders. The Shed in Healdsburg donated \$250 to education, since the North Cluster has developed a relationship with them. Many thanks!

Kelli Cox brought the mike around for the visitors and new members to introduce themselves. There were a dozen or so!

Cheryl Veretto said the SCBA Survey would arrive via email soon. It will be used to compare back to the 2013 survey and Marin's survey and with the Dept. of Ag surveys. Fill it out for a chance to win a nuc of bees. Deadline is before the May meeting.

Cathy Kopshever, Volunteer Coordinator is taking sign ups especially for the County Fair where we are being given a 400 sq. ft. area in the Hall of Flowers!

John McGinnis drew tickets for the 50/50 Raffle (\$101 cash and one bottle of wine). The drawing will now happen monthly before the start of the speaker.

Speaker tonight is Elina Nino, from the UC Davis Apiculture Program. She is originally from Bosnia, came to NY to visit an aunt and uncle, and ended up staying to complete her education. She just joined the staff at UC Davis last year when Eric Mussen retired.

She is continuing research in Queen Reproduction.

When a queen is 5-7 days old, she mates with an average of 12-14 drones over several days. Some mate with up to 40 drones! Once mated, progressive changes occur: she stops mating flights, her ovaries activate, she undergoes pheromone changes, and gene expressions. What exactly causes these changes and what are the effects on the colony?

Queen Pheromone production happens in several glands: Tergal glands, Tarsal glands, Mandibular gland, Dufour's gland (in sting chamber).

"Pseudo Queen is a QMP (queen mandibular pheromone) blend and is used to stabilize a colony in cases of queenlessness in order for a beekeeper to get a replacement queen. It is useful for 1-2 weeks max.

"Super Boost" is used by some beekeepers to stimulate pollen and nectar collection.

Queens were artificially inseminated with 1 microliter and 8 microliters of semen and comparisons were made. The workers preferred queens with a higher volume of semen and with real semen rather than a saline solution substitute. There were less supercedure cells built in the 8 microliter queens, but not much difference in egg laying capacity. All of the 8-microliter queens had died by the next year, but only 50% of the 1-microliter samples died.

Queens naturally mate within a 2-mile radius. So if drone quality were to be maximized, it would have to be an area-wide effort, not just your own effort. Queens don't choose their mates; the drones compete for a chance to inseminate.

Research goals:

1. Identify the factors involved in reproduction to support bee health through breeding efforts.
2. Identify the genes in disease resistance.
3. What are other factors affecting queen pheromones (chemical pesticides, environmental, viruses).
- 4.

You can email elina@ucdavis.edu to ask her specific questions. She can connect us with specific research that's been done.

She's currently developing

- A website for the UC Davis Apicultural extension.
- A CA Master Beekeeper program
- An educational apiary at UC Davis
- Engaging the general public at events like Picnic Day in April.
- Varroa mite control using an essential oil, and parasitic mite (*stratiolaelaps scimitus*).
-

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm
Respectfully submitted,
Becky Jackson, secretary

Treasurer's Report April 1, 2015

The combined bank account totals for April are \$28,090.82. This month our yearly Liability Insurance and our Director's and Officer's Insurance are due and the fee is \$750. Memberships are still rolling in, both for renewals and new members signing up. This month over \$850 was brought in for Membership. This will begin to dwindle as the year goes on, only to increase later in the year when 2015 dues is paid in November and December of 2014. We were fortunate to receive a generous donation from The Shed in Healdsburg of \$250, for which we are grateful and sent out our note of thanks. Our Thanks also go out to the North Cluster for their involvement with The Shed.

"I'll take care of your Bees at your place if you are located in northern part of Santa Rosa. I'll use all of my equipment and perform the labor and we'll share the honey. Call Leonard (winner of Best of Show 2011, 2012 & 2013 in Sonoma County Fair) for more details. 707-525-8424. Leonard Riepenhoff

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Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm. The meetings cover a wide range of topics of interest to beekeepers. Everyone wanting to learn about honeybees is cordially invited to attend. You do not need to be a member nor a beekeeper to attend these meetings. Dues can be paid online at our website sonomabees.org, at our monthly meeting or by mail. Please see our web site for the application and various kinds of memberships available.

Our mailing address is
 Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.
 P.O. Box 98
 Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098

2015 Board Members and Other Helpful People

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