

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 40, Issue 7 July 2015

Monthly Meeting: Sunday July 7th Riverfront Park 7821 Eastside Rd Windsor 2-5pm
The SCBA will supply sausages, hot dogs and non-alcoholic beverages. Please bring a dish to share and your own tableware.
Please carpool as parking at the park is very limited! \$7.00 fee per car. The PG & E substation at River Rd and Hwy 101 is a convenient meeting place and there is plenty of space.
Let Cathy Kopshever know you are coming so we know how much sausage & such to buy
volunteer@sonomabees.org

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

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From Our President:

** Don't Forget: There is no July General Meeting at the 4-H Center. Please attend the Annual SCBA Picnic at XXXX. Our next meeting will be in August. **

Greetings Bee Lovers,

It's been an amazing year so far. At the last few meetings, I have met a number of new members who commented on how friendly and helpful we are as a group. It is true that we have a beautiful membership, all-working for the health and well-being of the bees and this hive, our Association. Thank you for your participation in creating this extraordinary organization.

So with that said, I'd like to extend some mid-year Thank Yous (and this by all means does not cover everyone!):

- Thank you to all who keep our meetings running smoothly. A big thank you to Ettamarie Petersen for programming a great list of speakers for our meetings – and a huge thank you to those speakers!! Ettamarie is already working on 2016 (as well as consolidating the monthly Extractor newsletter)! Also, thank you to everyone who volunteers at or for the meetings – making cookies and brewing for tea, setting out chairs, hosting and helping members, new and old, selling bee-friendly plants, gathering volunteers, transferring knowledge with our extensive library, cleaning up, and so on. We couldn't do it without you!
- A warm thank you to Christine Kurtz for running the Ask Me program, for coming to the meeting with examples of various bee-related lessons, and to her and her crew for answering the variety of questions that we have over time.
- Membership: A special thanks to the Membership and greeting committee, Kelli Cox, Jim Spencer and Linda Burns, who make it such a pleasant experience to walk through the door at meetings and help to get member set up on our membership database system.

Additionally, we are working on a website and membership database refresh – so a hearty thank you to Cheryl Veretto, Chris Dicker, and Thea Vierling for their work recreating the website into the best that it can be. (**nothing has changed yet, so more will be announced about this later **).

- Thank you to Becky Jackson for her super-duper note taking skills. Becky pays such great attention and takes such good notes. I don't know how she does it.
- Denise Wright is keeping track of all of our dollars, and also keeps track of a myriad of other things. She is a jewel and has great focus and attention, with a continuous goal for improvement, clarity and ease. Thank you Denise!
- Thank you to each and every volunteer – you cover a lot of territory and spread the word about the beautiful bee. Cathy Kopshever oversees the Volunteer programming, handles a lot of organization, and always does it with a beautiful smile.
- Thank you to the entire Education committee, headed by Jen Espinoza, for educating many students, mostly young but also adult. What a gift to have young people knowledgeable about the amazing bees.
- Thank you to Thea Vierling for her endless work with Clusters as well as Workshops, such as the upcoming Sam Comfort workshop in August. Thank you to every Cluster leader for getting people together and sharing knowledge and so much more, including bees. You are such a vital part of this organization.
- Swarm chair Melissa Bates has been fielding calls and educating us on how to rescue a swarm; we all appreciate her service.
- A special thank you to our 3 At-Large board members, who help members and the Association in a vast variety of ways. Cheryl Veretto not only grows and sells the plants at the Meeting plant sales, but also has been our fearless Webmaster for a number of years. This year, she and a creative committee are working on the up-and-coming bee display in this year's Sonoma County Fair Hall of Flowers. Chris Conrad has recently installed bees in the Children's Museum of Sonoma County's observation hive. John McGinnis started the 50/50 Raffle this year and often has great ideas.

Obviously, we couldn't do this without such an awesome group of VOLUNTEERS! I know that it is not only the 'people-with-titles,' but also so many hard-working individuals. Thank you to those who have educated themselves and share their knowledge and experience with the larger group. All of these pieces make up the 'comb' of the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association. Thank you so much to each of you for your contribution to this amazing organization.

Happy July!

Laura Baker, President



This queen hatched June 18th and started laying June 30th. Her first daughters will be born around July 20th. Think about these dates when doing splits or experiencing a swarm. (She was a supercedure queen in my observation hive. Ettamarie



**Sam Comfort in front of wine barrel
Hive in Napa County Photo** by Chere
Pafford Photography

August 10th Meeting by Thea Vierling

Sam Comfort will be our general meeting speaker in August. I say August because we will not have a July meeting and we just want folks to gear up for our August speaker! Sam is a world-renowned beekeeper! He is the Johnny Appleseed of the bee world. Although he is well known for his top bar hive experience, he is just an all around great beekeeper with experience in every area of beekeeping. His real skill is listening to the bees. As he says it: "They can tell you so much by the sounds they make." Sam seems to know how to interpret the bees! Here's what our neighbor beekeeper from Napa, Rob Keller says about Sam: "The single best thing I learned from Sam Comfort last year was just watching him. He is so gentle and it has changed the way I do beekeeping." In case you are wondering, Rob Keller is also a bee whisperer but he doesn't sing songs and play the ukulele like Sam does but Rob knows how to whisper!

Sam will be singing some of his songs at the general meeting and I hope selling some of his CD's. Here are a few websites to check out his style, knowledge and entertaining personality. You can also go to You Tube and see him in action.

<http://cheguebeeapiary.blogspot.com/2012/10/bee-wisdom-by-sam-comfort.html>

<http://anarchyapiaries.org/>

<http://www.meetup.com/meetthebeekeepermondays/events/139947672/>

<http://www.beverlybees.com/top-bar-hive-honey-harvest/>

If you have any specific questions you want him to address, please send them to the regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org

**My July Beekeeping To-Do List By Serge
Labesque © 2015**

Once a beekeeper, always a beekeeper

"Beekeeping is a disease."

Ron uttered the puzzling words softly and slowly, self-approvingly nodding his head. His smile could not completely mask the bout of mixed sadness and bitterness that had invaded him as soon as this topic had come up in our conversation. He looked at the floor between us, and remained silent for what seemed to be a long time. Then, as if to offer an

explanation, he started telling his own story in brief sentences.

Many years earlier, when he used to be a young cabinetmaker, a swarm of honey bees landed near his shop. Even though he had never before handled bees, he managed to capture the swarm. Not surprisingly, he rapidly became enthralled by the bees. Beekeepers might have said that "he got the bug". Soon, his woodworking skills were put to use for the bees. He fabricated beekeeping equipment by turning every piece of scrap wood he had into a frame or another part of a beehive. An abundance of swarms and deft hive management allowed him to rapidly augment his apiaries, which, within a very few years, grew to hold well over four hundred colonies. The bees were

producing enough honey to provide a decent income for their keeper and his family. So much so in fact that he decided to close his woodworking business. Beekeeping had become his life, a wonderful way of life.

That's when devastating and widespread losses of colonies happened: mites! First, the tracheal mites arrived, and varroa mites followed soon after. All over the country hives died in catastrophically high numbers and apiaries dwindled. Ron's colonies were no exception. For him, as for many beekeepers, beekeeping was no longer the bucolic and thrilling activity he had enjoyed. Beekeeping had suddenly become hard work focused on fighting the pests with chemical compounds. Every day was filled with the anxiety of finding still more failing colonies in the apiaries.

Ron could not support his growing family under those conditions. After several years spent producing honey and loving the fascinating interaction with productive and healthy bee colonies, it was time to go back to pushing wood through the table saw. With a family to feed, there seemed to be few options.

When Ron and I spoke, he no longer had bees. Yet, he had fond memories of a very special time among his beloved bees. Listening to his tone of voice, I understood that his heart still harbored the "disease" I had just caught. Was Ron warning me?

July in the apiaries

With the season of colony reproduction behind, the colonies are already preparing for winter, doing all they can to accumulate stores. This is one of the reasons why the untimely "July swarms aren't worth a fly", as we all know.

The brood nests are shrinking noticeably at this time of year and, warm weather helping, they demand less attention from the relatively large adult bee populations than they did a few weeks earlier. The colonies have reached their maximum size for the year, and they can send large numbers of foragers off to the fields to collect as much nectar as possible. Hopefully, they will find enough of the sweet substance to carry their colonies through next winter. In propitious locations, the bees gather and process enough nectar to share some of their honey with us. But unfortunately and this year in particular, this is not the case everywhere. At times, nectar, if there is any, may only be accessible early in the morning, before it is desiccated by the sun and the dry breeze. Later in the day, idled foragers may turn to robbing in order to bring something back to their hives.

What are we beekeepers to do? Let's make sure that our colonies benefit as much and as safely as possible from the resources that are available.

To begin, we assess our colonies by watching the flight paths, the hive entrances, and the ground in

front of the hives. We examine the monitoring trays and we perform open-hive inspections that are swift and focused. The health status and the nutritional conditions of a colony may be known by looking carefully at the contents of one or a few selected frames, and we determine the extent of the brood and stores. Note that the location of the brood nests in the hives can tell a lot. This year, I find the brood nests in the upper part of the hives. This is due to the lack of a spring honey flow. Indeed, in the absence of incoming nectar, which would normally have been placed above the brood areas, the brood nests climbed into the upper empty combs.

In spite of the widespread lack of stores I observe, it is interesting to see that the colonies have not culled their drones this year. During previous years, the drones were entirely eliminated as soon as the early and brief honey flows ended. This year, in spite of or maybe because of the absence of a spring honey flow, the colonies are acting as if the season of colony reproduction might still be ahead, and they have maintained surprisingly large drone populations. We need to be aware of at least two negative consequences of this situation: The stores, which are already scarce, are being further depleted to feed the drones, and the presence of drone pupae in the nests may harbor developing varroa mite populations.

However, the colonies are remarkably healthy. But we nonetheless need to keep our eyes open for any budding problems, which may include American foulbrood, as well as queen failures. None of these issues should be ignored or neglected.

We can also make sure that our bees do not have to perform tasks such as collecting excessively large amounts of water and circulating air through their hives when this may be avoided. This situation is made worse when the bees cannot find water in close proximity to the apiaries. Hives that provide adequate air circulation and that are placed to receive some shade in the afternoon hours definitely help to minimize wasteful water foraging.

Since I find that the brood nests are surrounded by very little stores this year, whether it's in my own apiaries or in others' yards, the question of feeding inevitably comes up. No, I am not going to feed my hives! I maintain that this is a harmful practice. Consider what feeding does: Like treatments for pests or diseases, it helps to keep alive ill-adapted colonies that would normally be eliminated by the process of natural selection, had they been on their own. Feeding may protect beekeeping operations from colony losses, but this is done at the expense of the species, which is weakened by these inept genes. Unfortunately, feeding is so extensively practiced that the entire bee populations of the developed countries are flooded by genetic strains that cannot support themselves, that depend on the beekeepers' intervention to stay alive, except, maybe, when all the conditions are nearly perfect. But how often is this? Bees are not domesticated animals, and they should

not be managed as such. The best way to feed bees is to provide an environment that offers pollen and nectar sources. So, let's plant bee forage.

The colonies should be able to defend their nests against robber bees, yellow jackets and other predators. Adjusting the size of the entrances to match the strength of the colonies and making sure that all secondary entrances are sealed are important steps. It is also beneficial, whenever this is possible, to place and orient the hives so that they receive early morning sunlight and warmth, as this helps the bees break clusters early. Then, they can guard the entrances and also forage for early morning nectar.

It's time to evaluate the queens and young colonies that were produced during the spring. The management of the good performers is sheer pleasure. Failing or weak hives may have to be combined or requeened. But this is a drastic intervention and, at this time of year, it is still possible to give them a second chance. I do this by reducing the volume of the hives to the bare minimum of combs the bees can occupy. This is facilitated by the use of follower boards. A final decision about these small bunches of bees will be made around the end of August, because they may bounce back surprisingly well before the fall.

In summary, this month:

- Keep an eye on the health of the colonies.
- Provide adequate air circulation through the hives (upper ventilation slots and follower boards).
- Be aware of situations and manipulations that can trigger robbing.
- Beware of the fire danger while using the hot smoker in dry grass.

- Make sure that the components of hives fit tightly to prevent secondary entrances that might allow robber bees to enter hives.
- Ensure that sources of water are continuously available to the bees.
- Provide filtered afternoon shade, if at all possible.
- Adjust the size of the hive entrances, particularly those of developing colonies to reduce the risk of robbing.
- Follow-up on the development of young colonies (Keep notes!)
- Evaluate the quality of young queens. Replace failing or undesirable queens.
- Consider combining or requeening inherently weak colonies or those that are not developing properly.
- Monitor swarm traps.
- Keep some equipment at the ready to catch an occasional swarm.
- Manage honey supers (less space is needed as the nectar flow decreases).
- Finish harvesting surplus spring honey, but do not overharvest, particularly from hives kept in the dry hills, where the bees will be *consuming* more honey during the summer than they will be producing.
- Extract and bottle surplus honey.
- Return extracted supers to the bees for cleaning or re-filling.
- Discard old and misshapen combs.
- Remove frames of undrawn beeswax foundation.
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings (separately). Solar wax melters work very well at this season.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.

Serge Labesque © 2015

Bee Plants of the Month By Alice Ford-Sala

Native Plant of the Month: Coreopsis Tickseed Family Asteraceae

Not all of these pretty yellow to white to pink members of the sunflower family are native to California, but almost all are native to North America. They can be perennials or annuals. Coreopsis gets by with little to moderate water and full sun, and is generally a pretty tough beauty.

Our California native is *C. maritima*, or sea dahlia. It has a tuberous root like a dahlia, and grows 1-3 feet high and 1-2 feet wide, making it a nice flower for a narrow bed or in a border. The bright yellow flowers are pretty cut and arranged in a natural bouquet. Bees love almost all Asteraceae family members, and they adore *C. grandiflora*. It grows up to 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide.

Many pollinator or wildflower seed blends include coreopsis seeds, which show how easy they are to grow. Sow seeds in the fall with the rains, but you can plant the plants out now, just make sure to give them some water to get established.

Beneficial Plant of the Month: Gailardia Blanket Flower Family Asteraceae

Another easy to grow and gorgeous flower is Gailardia. The daisy-like flowers (notice a pattern? Flowers in the Asteraceae are beloved by many pollinators) resemble a woven blanket with bands of orange, yellow and red. Perennials such as *G. x grandiflora* 'Arizona Sun' (orange petals with yellow tips) or 'Mesa Yellow' (pure yellow) are easy to grow, 1 to 1 ½ feet high and wide. They make a low groundcover or can be used in the front of a flowerbed. The bloom time is from spring through frost. Give Gailardia full sun and moderate water, let them re-seed (the birds will help spread the seeds though the garden), and you will have them for years to come.

BEE WISE: “A FUNNY THING HAPPENED!” by Emery Dann

Some beekeepers can be like some fishermen. We don't always tell about the swarms (or fish) that got away! A swarm was 10 feet up wrapped around a large tree limb. No need for a veil and gloves, until I realized I was standing under the swarm on top of a large, in the ground, yellow jacket nest--*UNPROTECTED!* I can hear your laughter! I quickly put on my veil jacket and gloves then found yellow jackets *inside* my suit and all over my pants. I kept getting stung! So off comes the veil jacket, as I leave the area. Isn't this hilarious? This could have been one of those funny videos of me on YouTube! I returned looking like a fully dressed astronaut with duct tape around my legs and arms. No more stings!

It had gently rained all night. Wet bees are *not* happy bees! Then so many yellow jackets were harassing and removing bees from the swarm to feed their young. The swarm wanted nothing to do with the yellow jackets or the guy in the white suit! I was unable to get the queen into my swarm box after trying several different methods. Hundreds of bees were trying to guard their sisters in the swarm and became very defensive and unhappy with my efforts. I finally let this swarm bee! You girls did not want my attempts giving you “swarm CPR” (Care, Provide a new home and Rescue)!

I wish you the best girls...Here is what I learned:

Lesson #1 for Emery: I need to check out the surrounding area for any and all hazards *BEFORE* they find *me!*

Lesson #2: I poured non-toxic, food-grade diatomaceous earth on the yellow jacket ground nest entrance. It did a very good job for my “beekeeper, yellow jacket revenge”!

Lesson #3: What to do about the stings? I bought a snakebite, wasp and bee sting Extractor, sold at sporting good stores in the camping section. I had some sting areas that hurt real bad. By putting the suction tube on where I was stung, it quickly relieved the swelling and pain by disbursing the venom. This way, rather than the swelling staying at the sting site causing me pain and itching for a number of days, the pain went away fast. I did this hours after I was stung and it worked! In addition, ice can be applied on sting areas to help with the pain and swelling.

I hope my pain can help you to “BEE WISER” than I was! I learned how to BEE WISE the hard way, but I did learn and am now better prepared for my next bee adventure!

EAST COUNTY CLUSTER June Hive Dive With Serge Labesque at Lizanne’s Apiary in Glen Ellen By Lizanne Pastore, East Cluster Coordinator

I opened my 4 hives with 15 local bees present to observe. Serge Labesque offered his expertise, and afterwards a discussion ensued about summer and fall management in this new era of drought and concerns going forward. Here in the East County we are seeing obvious signs of distress, mainly lack of food. We discussed many things including:

- Keeping hives “small” during spring with good space management (not overburdening hives with too many empty frames during Spring)
- When and why to combine weaker hives (careful to ensure a “weak” hive is not diseased, and usually best to wait until late Summer or Fall to combine)
- Proper equipment strategies to reduce intra-hive stress in the heat (ventilation using “attics” and inner covers with enough ventilation, and ensuring a cross-current thru the hive with a well-ventilated inner cover with vent in the rear, use of follower boards)
- Why removing/replacing Queens in summer in order to have a young Queen over-Winter would not work here (early drone culling here would result in poorly or unmated Queens, always a risk to nip a good Queen!)

-Optimal winter configurations for smaller colonies (narrow, vertical configurations of 4 to 6 frames max with follower boards, and wintering small colonies as nucs)

-And we discussed the changing times due to climate including the delicate topic of “Are there too many beekeepers in some regions?” Anyway, all this got me thinking...



First, the hives:

All of my hives “seem” to be doing well; there is a good population of bees in most, the brood chambers have migrated upwards in the hives, and we saw patterns one would like to observe at this time of year—heavier in sealed brood with smaller amounts of open brood, a sign that the Queens are slowing down. Three of my 4 hives have re-Queened this spring for a variety of reasons (2 were splits and 1 was a swarm,) so I’ve got nice young Queens in my apiary. But there is a frightening lack of stores. Bees can consume 20 to 40 pounds of honey over the summer months. So I need to hope that the bees can tick by, maybe gain a few more pounds as our lavender and buckwheat bloom continues. But it is scary to see how little food the hives have.

Due to the lack of stores this year, I’ve been extremely cautious in how much space I’ve provided. Instead of adding a super full of empty frames, I’ve added some empty drawn comb or an empty frame, one or two at a time, at the most during my inspections. I’ve not wanted to overburden the hives with comb building and unnecessary space—they need to forage with limited distractions.

The sealed brood we observed will emerge over the next few weeks and maybe the bees will store a little more honey in the newly opened cells, so I don’t need to give any extra frames at this point, even though 3 of my hives “looked” like they were full. The brood nests are in the upper supers and they will soon move down again, and I suspect, given the dearth, I’ll be removing some frames in summer.



In my most populous hive there is about 10 pounds of honey total, and in one hive there is virtually nothing, maybe 1 or 2 pounds. This particular hive, my smallest right now, was my one remaining hive from winter. I lost 2. I split this hive in late March, and it ended up as the Queenless split. It had a hard time re-Queening, so a small addition of brood with young eggs was added in April, then it took a while for the new Queen to get started, resulting in a period of Queenlessness-broodlessness of almost 2 months. Its formerly

large forager population has of course dwindled. I’ve been really worried about this hive.

Despite this late start, the current Queen is laying in a beautiful pattern, and there will be more foragers in the next couple of weeks. Shelley chimed in as we observed, “Maybe this will be your best hive by the end of the season!” Given its small size, it may have less nutritional needs, and if it makes it through summer, it may over-Winter like a “nuc,” and, who knows, it may well be a survivor. One can hope.

Due to its recent history, I am sure many would consider feeding this colony, but I won’t. First, I don’t think that it has a large or strong enough population to defend against a robbing situation, which an addition of sugar syrup in the hive would surely trigger, especially in my area. I’ve seen a split decimated from robbing in my early years of beekeeping, and that memory alone keeps me from feeding. But as I’ve been maturing as a beekeeper I have a more important reason not to feed. These bees are the offspring of a beautiful strong hive of local stock from 4 seasons ago. I’ve not fed or intervened with these great bees, other than to try my best to provide good equipment and manage space as well as I can. If any bees can survive, these bees can. And I want them to survive on their own merit. I live and keep bees in the Valley of the Moon region of Glen Ellen—I am now calling this bee-purgatory. It’s all mono crops (vineyards) and dry grass. We need “bad-ass” bees here.



So, now the editorial...

I’m only in my 5th year as a beekeeper. Serge says “you can call yourself a beekeeper when you make your first successful split.” But, I joke that you know you’re a beekeeper when you receive your first pair of bee slippers! For me that was 3 Christmases ago, and in addition to the slippers there were bee books, bee t-shirts, a bee bike jersey, jewelry, you get the picture! Everyone knows I’m bee crazy. Perhaps I’ve been passionate about other hobbies, but not like this. Aren’t we all? I don’t lose sleep over biking or cooking or reading.

I do lose sleep over bees. And not a day goes by that I don't feel mesmerized by them.

Yet, I am prepared to not keep bees. I know this sounds melodramatic, but if you've been beekeeping by my side these past few years, you'd understand. Each year has gotten harder. As our discussion deepened after the hive dive, it really made me think about the future of our local stock here in East County. I may lose these incredible "bad ass" bees this year. Bees that I've lost sleep over. Bees I obtained from a local beekeeper who diligently worked over many years to nurture his strongest and most suitable bees for this area, while allowing his weaker colonies to perish.

There are many beekeepers around here, perhaps 5 or 6 within a 2-mile radius and maybe 20 to 30 hives. Bees need 1-acre per hive for forage per day. I wasn't a math whiz, but this calculation isn't hard. We don't have that forage here this year, not even close. And the drought is supposed to get worse over time. Our local beekeeping master has reduced his apiary by 75% because he knows this area can't support too many bees. The drought is making the act of foraging an utterly herculean task. So given these circumstances, are there too many of us keeping bees here, which makes competition for food much more intense? And many of our local beekeepers bring in packages and far-away Queens. Who have "my" new Queens mated with? Likely the incredibly strong local gene pool "my" bees started with is changing as I write this.

When I started beekeeping, I honestly didn't realize that bees reared in Petaluma or Marin or Sebastopol would have traits that would be so different from bees reared in Glen Ellen. Now I get it. I was under the impression that "more bees are better," and that "we need more beekeepers." That weekend 3-hour class I took did not mention the importance of local genetics, it felt like a summons for us all to get started. I wasn't prepared.

I think almost everyone who wants to keep bees has good intentions, yet now, when I meet new SCBA members who want to get into beekeeping, I take the time to tell them what they might expect here in the East County. I educate them about packages vs. local bees, I ask them what kind of forage is available in their area, and I beg them to wait it out for a local split.

If I go without bees for a season or two—or more—I'll still consider myself a beekeeper. I'll

spend my days planting more forage, continuing to read up on bees, learning more about native pollinators, observing who's on what plant when...and definitely riding my bike again.

But instead, what I would love to see is that we all begin having real conversations about the future of our local bees, including our native pollinators. Maybe instead of cheering on the brand new beekeeper next door who buys her first package from out of the area, we instead educate her about the status of beekeeping in a tough area. Perhaps she learns a little more about the nutritional needs of the bees and assesses whether or not her area can adequately support a colony of bees. Maybe we ask her to hold off on buying that package, invite her to wait it out and procure a local split, or bring her on a swarm call and teach her how to catch swarms. Maybe we put an **equal** amount of status on planting for bees as keeping bees. I think we need to ask, "Why do you want to keep bees?"

It's not for me say that there are right or wrong answers to this question. Some people keep bees for a living. But I don't, it's just for the love of it, and maybe that's not a good enough reason any more, at least in my area.

I'd like to redefine what it means to beekeep. We do an admirable job of educating the public; I'll bet no other association in the state does as good a job as the SCBA. But, as the climate changes, and we find ourselves being regulated over water use, should we also be talking about more "sustainable" beekeeping? "More bees" is not necessarily better, especially if they need to be propped up to survive.

I would like to see us educate about and ask the tough questions. "Are we bringing in too many non-local bees?" "Is feeding a weak colony sustainable in the long run?" "What regions are the toughest to beekeep in, and yes, are there too many of us in some places?" Bringing in packages from other areas and feeding bees sugar water is not going to help the bee population in the long run, but planting forage and advocating for local farms and vineyards to stop using chemicals might help.

Our local honeybee and native bee population is more important to me than me keeping bees. So if I lose my bees, I'll wait it out.

General Meeting Minutes June 8, 2015

Held at the 4H Building in Rohnert Park. About 80 people present.

Chris Conrad brought the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. President Laura Baker started with announcements about signing up for the Sam Comfort Workshops to be held in August. There are also sign up sheets for the County Fair and Thea Vierling showed the size jar needed to enter honey in. Deadline for entering is June 14th (online).

Kelli Cox welcomed about 7 new visitors/members who introduced themselves. **The SCBA Picnic will be at Riverfront Park on July 5th 2-5 pm. THERE WILL NOT BE A REGULAR MEETING IN JULY, come to the picnic instead. Limited parking, so meet at the PG&E substation to carpool there. There's a \$7 parking fee. BBQ hotdogs and sausages will be provided. Bring a dish to share. Bring your own table service and cups too. An evite will be sent to everyone, please RSVP so we have a count.**

County Fair lead is needed for running the 2nd weekend. Ask Cathy Kopshever for details. 50/50 Raffle, organized by John McGinnis, netted \$125 for us and for the winner. A bottle of wine was also won.

Ettamarie introduced our speaker, Brad Woodward from Humboldt County. His company, WoodlynBrand Beehive Supplies makes wood hive parts and he had lots to sell this evening.

Brad said the first year he kept bees, all his bees died. But he and his family didn't give up. He values educating yourself and becoming a scientist in order to be a better beekeeper. Read and study! But not the Internet—it kills more bees than anything else.

He is treatment free and foundationless, because it's cheaper! He follows Serge's teachings. He says the common denominator of the mentors he's learned from is don't reuse brood frames! Control the size of the hives. He likes a max of 3 mediums tall or a deep and 2 mediums. He says if the hives get too big they get lazy. They cap the honey faster with a smaller hive, so he removes 2-3 honey frames every few weeks and gives them new frames to fill up. He claims that if there's not enough honey in the hive, the bees won't swarm.

He will split the hive and raise his own queens rather than add another box to a hive. Since limiting his hive size he's had no more moisture problem, no issue with Varroa or chalkbrood. Splitting the hive gives a break in the brood cycle, slowing Varroa reproduction. He's also overwintering his hives in nucs by putting the queen and a few frames in, and he lets the mother hive re-queen itself. August is the latest he'll do a split or nuc. September is his best weather for queen rearing and mating, and preparing for winter.

Keep a queen on hand in a nuc in your apiary! This is one of his goals to teach people. One third of hives die of queen failure and you can control that with a nuc handy. A box has to have A LOT of bees in order to make a good queen. Raise your own drones to flood your mating yard. He doesn't feed sugar water, it just causes robbing for him.

Meeting ended at 8:09 pm
Respectfully submitted,
Becky Jackson, Secretary

Minutes of Board of Directors – Go to



Extractor Techs- Call Ettamarie 707-479-1613 or Janet Leisen 707- 528-2085 or Denny Pederson e-mail denny1@sonic.net to rent the electric extractor for \$5 a day. Rental fee is \$5 per day. Denny is located in Forestville. Janet is North of Santa Rosa. Ettamarie is in Petaluma. There is a hand extractor at Deborah Rogers' home and her e-mail is deborah@olivequeen.net She lives in Glen Ellen.

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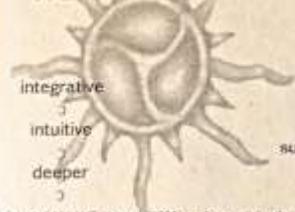
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Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm. The meetings cover a wide range of topics of interest to beekeepers. Everyone wanting to learn about honeybees is cordially 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
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