

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 37, Issue 4 April 2014

Monthly Meeting: April 14- 6p.m. Social hour- Bring your own cup for tea, talk to beekeepers who can help you with your questions, check out our library, renew your membership.
7 p.m.- Janet Calhoun speaking on Native Pollinators – What we do for them helps our bees, too.

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

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From Our President

In March the Liberty 4-H Beekeeping project had a display at the Sonoma County Fair Grounds for Ag Days. SCBA member Marcus Sugihara and I were able to make the display better than ever thanks to the use of two of SCBA's pop-up display banners and a generous donation of 3 frames of bees with their queen by member Hector Alvarez. The young beekeepers did a great job of talking to 4400 school children and handing them each a honey stick donated by the Sonoma County Farm Bureau. We had parents and one grandmother helping us as well. It all made me think of the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child."

SCBA has a terrific educational committee headed by Jen Espinoza that is going into local schools, clubs, events and other gatherings to educate young and old about honey bees. We realized how important this is when we asked the school children at Ag Days what honey bees did or to name one fruit or vegetable they pollinate. These seemed like easy questions but we found out there was a great lack of knowledge. If you want to help educate people about our favorite insect, contact Jen to be involved with the committee.

If you know of a young person who wants to be a beekeeper, put the youngster in touch with Marcus Sugihara or me. Members of the project must be a 4-H member in any club. See the web site www.liberty4hbees.com for more information. Our youngest member is now six and he is in his second year of beekeeping.

Ettamarie Peterson, President

Two Volunteers Found!!!

A Sound System Person: We found a wonderful couple to store the sound system at their house and bring it to every meeting. Thank you Terry and Joanne McLaughlin for stepping up to this very important job. Your help will help all our meetings and speakers.

Ads in This Newsletter

Check with Treasurer Rita Maloney for annual costs of running ads. It is cheaper than the monthly costs for ads, which are \$10 for a business card size, \$20 for ¼ page, and \$40 for a half page. The editor needs to know you have paid her and needs a jpg copy of the ad. The current and back issues of the newsletter are on the www.sonomabees.org web site so many people besides the 400 or so members view the ads. Contact information is on the last page of this edition.

My April Beekeeping To-Do List

By Serge Labesque © 2014

Want bees? The best ones are right around you.

Time and again, the remarkable power of regeneration of the honey bees has been demonstrated. For example, consider the historical emergence of the so-called "Isle of Wight disease" (tracheal mite) in the early twentieth century, or the outbreak of American foulbrood in Hawaii in 1930. In both instances, apiaries were devastated over huge areas of land. And yet, it only took a few years for the colonies that survived these catastrophic events to rebuild the bee populations. They rebounded without human help, since scientists and beekeepers did not even know how to deal with the situations. Not only did bees refill beehives and tree hollows, but also they were also stronger, tougher than ever before. The new populations were resistant to the pest and pathogen that had destroyed most of the original colonies.

This spring, the bees are facing yet another challenge of nature, this enduring drought which is compounded, if not entirely caused by our mismanagement of natural resources. Many beehives are empty and consequently large numbers of colonies are needed to rebuild apiaries and to satisfy the demand for bees by aspiring beekeepers.

It's easy to order bee packages, nucs and queens from commercial producers. In fact, *it's too easy*. This is done without the slightest consideration for the bees. Indeed, beekeepers seldom give any thought either to the consequences of introducing various strains of bees into areas they are not suited for, or to the very real risk of bringing pests, pathogens and viruses along with the purchased bees. Too many beekeepers want bees at any cost the species will have to pay. This keeps the commercial bee producers and their distributors in lucrative business. If all beekeepers were good stewards of the species, the commerce of bees simply would not exist.

It's not the production of honey or stocking our boxes by purchasing bees that makes us real beekeepers. It's what we do to ensure the wellbeing and preservation of the species through the propagation of our own colonies. Collectively, our local hives can produce all the bees that we need. These are tough bees that are well adapted to our local conditions. No bee supplier can rightfully say that they sell such desirable bees to all beekeepers.

As beekeepers divide their hives and produce queens from their untreated and unfed survivor colonies, they can only cringe at the thought of all the packages and nucs that are brought around their apiaries from outside their area. They are concerned for their young queens, which are at risk of mating with drones that do not possess matching qualities.

Therefore, the message must be made loud and clear: Let's leave the nucs, package bees and queens where they are, and let's propagate our locally adapted survivor stocks. Everyone will win: beekeepers, new and experienced, and the bees. Think about it: If we do not bring bees from outside our area, we do not bring in new pests or pathogens, and our local bee populations can only become a better match for our local conditions. Bringing bees from outside our areas negates these benefits. The role of beekeepers' associations can be crucial in helping beekeepers connect and propagate bees locally. I dream of the day when they put as much energy into this as they do now into organizing grouped purchases of package bees. Certainly this will happen. But the sooner it does, the better for the bees.

April in the apiaries:

Normally, this time of year is a time of intense honey flow and of rapid growth for the colonies. But around my apiaries, this year is anything but normal. In early spring, the colonies grew only briefly and minimally before initiating their preparations for swarming. The expansion of the brood chambers, supering, and ensuring that adequate clustering space was present did not do much to delay the onset of colony reproduction. As had been anticipated, this was an early and short season for colony propagation. The young bees were also given comb-building opportunities, but not much comb building is happening. Without a nectar flow and strong populations, little wax comes out of their bodies. No, this is not a normal spring! Fortunately, keeping an eye on the hives permitted their timely division. Now, like an expectant parent, I must wait patiently while the young queens complete their development. Meanwhile, the old queens are launching their divides into a new life. I provided them with the egg-laying space they need. Hopefully, the hives will gain enough strength and accumulate sufficient amounts of stores before the long summer dearth that is expected.

Overall, the health of the colonies is good though. It really takes a great deal of effort to find a mite. Luckily, small hive beetles have not yet shown up in my hives, but it is probably only a matter of time before this next blow is inflicted on the bees.

In areas that offer better bee nutrition than my apiaries do, the honey flow produced by spring blooming plants swells the bee populations, fills the supers and whitens the frames. Comb building is going well. It's the busiest time of the year for beekeepers and for their colonies: expansion of the brood chambers for the growing brood nests; providing

clustering space; supering for nectar storage; maybe harvesting some early spring honey; dividing hives; rearing queens; and being ready for occasional swarms. Frequent hive inspections should help detect the appearance of health problems, which may most likely be cases of “spring diseases” (chalkbrood, European foulbrood). Also not to be missed are the sudden slow-downs in the production of brood, which may correspond to the beginning of the preparations for swarming by colonies. When this happens it is the best time to divide these colonies, as the conditions to rear queens are optimal.

In summary, this month:

- Inspect hives regularly, when foragers are out in large numbers.
- Observe monitoring trays, particularly for signs of excess moisture, lack of ventilation, possible chalkbrood mummies, EFB-affected brood and other health-related problems.
- Make sure that there is enough food in the hives (The colonies may consume it rapidly during spells of inclement weather.)
- 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 their increasing forager activity.
- Place swarm traps.
- Perform hive divisions (but only if and when the hives are ready).
- 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 scorch tools and equipment.
- Harvest surplus early spring honey (in moderation!).
- Combine or requeen hives that are weak or slow to develop but otherwise healthy.

Serge Labesque © 2014

Honey Bee Pollinating Ceanothus



Apples Need the Honey Bees This Month



Photos by Sierra Castillo

Bee Plants of the Month By Alice Ford-Sala

Note: The format is a little different this month, and for the next couple of months. I am going to focus on alternatives to the great American lawn. While they are great for children to romp on, we don't need vast acreage devoted to green expanses, especially with the Mediterranean climate we have here. They suck up water, fertilizer and weed killer, to the detriment of water supplies and wildlife. So- if you can get rid of/reduce your lawn, you will have lower water bills and a buzzing garden. Talk to your good local garden/farm center and University of California Master Gardeners about irrigation and how to convert a lawn to a low-water garden.

Ground covers and very low growing shrubs:

Native Plants of the Month:

Arctostaphylos- Manzanita

Several varieties of our lovely native manzanitas are very low growing; the hanging fairy lantern flowers delight honeybees and bumble bees in the cold days of winter. Hummingbirds depend on them, also.

Edmunds Manzanita, *A. edmundsii*, has several cultivars that are reputed to be quite easy to grow in a variety of conditions and soils. Bert Johnson grows 1 to 3 feet tall and up to 6 feet wide. Pink-white flowers and tiny green leaves make this an attractive addition to your garden. **Kinnikinnick**, *A. uva-ursi* (bear berry) grows from Alaska all the way down to the South Pole. It is very low growing, from 4 to 18 inches tall and six or more feet wide. Kinnikinnick usually grows along the coast, so prefers some afternoon shade in hot inland regions.

Cenanothus-California Lilac is another favorite native plant, and for good reason. The bright blue blossoms are usually sweetly fragrant, and attract native and honey bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. Two great low- growers are **C.'Centennial'**, a creeping plant 8 to 12 inches high and has deep blue round flowers. **C. gloriosus**, 'Anchor Bay' is 3 feet tall and 6 feet wide, with purplish blue blossoms.

Beneficial Plants of the Month:

Chamaemelum nobile-Roman Chamomile makes a fine groundcover that you can step on, growing 3 to 12 inches high. The tiny daisy flowers appear in spring and summer. You can shear it occasionally if you wish it to be more lawn-like. I'd mow it in early spring and then again after bloom in late summer, so bees can enjoy the flowers. You can also plant it around stepping-stones, where it will fill in nicely.

Thymus-Thyme makes a very bee-friendly groundcover. It can take some foot traffic or grow around pavers. Good groundcovers are **'Hall's Woolly'** a 2-3 inch high by 3 feet wide plant that is a profuse bloomer, and highly attractive to bees. 'Elfin' is very tiny, and grows in a very tight mat. It is particularly good for growing in between stepping-stones, and you will enjoy the tiny pink flowers along with your bees. (Editor's note: Thyme honey is excellent; many people believe it to be healing for sore throats.)

BEE WISE - "THE POWER OF THE SWARM By Emery Dann

The best swarms are produced by healthy colonies for two reasons. 1. The time of the year a hive swarms and 2. A majority of the bees in the swarm are young bees.

First, look at the time of the year. Obviously the best time for collecting nutritious pollen and the best nectar flow is usually in the spring, weather permitting. This is a tremendous advantage for a swarm. The amount of nectar flow determines how much wax the bees can create to build comb in their "new homestead". "There is no place like comb!" Most swarms in late summer or fall do not have enough time to make the stores to survive the winter and may have disease or other problems. Late swarming divides the hive. Perhaps this protects the stores left in the hive, which if consumed by too many bees would cause the hive to starve. Beekeepers avoid late swarms because something may be wrong with the bees causing generally smaller swarms at the wrong time of year.

Second, successful spring swarms I have collected always have a very high number of the young bees. These young bees "hang out" doing their swarm duty protecting and keeping the queen warm. These bees seem slightly smaller to me than mature, forager bees. There are scouts, nurses, guards and foragers that go with every swarm. But the young bees in the hive produce the most wax from their bodies from the 10th to the 16th day of their lives. Young bees are the "power of the swarm" and are ready to build new comb at 95 degrees or a little higher. It makes sense to me that this is why these young bees stay clustered with the swarm. There are older bees in every swarm that fly away from the swarm cluster to defend, scout or forage and then return later in the day to their swarm cluster sisters and their queen.

The original queen prepares in advance for swarming by laying the most eggs about a month before the hive swarms. Then many of the young bees the queen creates go with the swarm! They "leave their first home" and go camping without a tent (sometimes in the rain)! Swarms must build comb fast and have enough time to collect stores they need to survive through the summer dearth and the coming winter.

Swarms look for protection and room for expansion in a tree, building or space about a deep and a medium or three mediums, using Langstroth hives. We do not need to give them all this space at once when we collect a swarm. But regular hive inspections are important for us to know if the frames we give them are being filled or not used at all.

Drought conditions restrict comb building and collecting nectar.

This year the drought is already impacting swarming. This is an unusual year—you can count on it! Some hives are not drawing comb out. The bees may be consuming the nectar they do find and leaving top honey supers empty. The drought stress is affecting our hives and robbing may be a more serious problem this year...we need to check hives not having enough bees to find out why? Splits could be risky because of limited bee forage in drought-affected areas here in Sonoma County.

The “power of the swarm” is the amazing ability bees have to reproduce, find a new home address in a new location, building new comb and pollinating the plants and trees they choose to work. Bees collect nectar, up to a few miles in all directions from their hive. Local honey bees benefit our lives and do their amazing work quietly and mostly unseen by most humans, who are too busy to notice, UNTIL THEY SEE THE POWER OF A SWARM IN THEIR OWN BACKYARD!

Recipe for April From National Honey Board

Honey Citrus Salad with Avocado

Ingredients

- 3 (6-inch) - corn tortillas
- 4 - oranges
- 4 - grapefruits
- 1/3 cup - honey
- 1/4 cup - raspberry vinegar
- 2 tablespoons - oil
- 1/4 teaspoon - salt
- 1 - avocado, sliced

Directions

Preheat oven to 255 degrees F. Slice corn tortillas into very thin strips. Place strips on a cookie sheet and bake for 15 minutes or until dry and crispy. Set aside. Peel oranges and grapefruits, then section, seed and place in large bowl; set aside. In small bowl, whisk together honey, raspberry vinegar, oil and salt. Pour over citrus sections and toss gently. Top with avocado slices and tortilla strips.

Education Requests Swarm In!

Just as the hives are growing, so is the list of requests for presentations in schools. This is great news as one of the association’s primary goals is to educate (its members and the public).

Since January we’ve spoken to over 200 students, and to add to that, our president Ettamarie, Marcus Sugihara and their 4H kids shared their demonstration hive and honey sticks with over 4000 students at “Ag Days” at the end of March.

In addition to the presentations scheduled for April, there is an Earth Day event happening April 19th from 12-4 in downtown Santa Rosa where we will have a table with bee information and crafts. If you would like to sign up to volunteer for this event, please do so at April’s general meeting.

If you speak some Spanish, tune into KBBF (89.1 FM) April 3 from (7:30-9:00PM) or April 5 (1:00-2:00) to hear Jen Espinoza, our education coordinator, talk about bees and their importance on the radio. If you want to hear an abbreviated interview in English, listen in on Monday, April 14th from 11:00-noon to SCBA member, Elaine Holtz’s show when she talks to Jen about bees and Earth Day.

We are still SEEKING queen cups, queen cells or any other interesting construction that the worker girls created. If you have something to donate or any questions about the education program, please contact Jen at education@sonomabees.org.

Chance to Be Famous While Capturing a Swarm

Our Educational Director, Jen Espinoza is working with a newspaper reporter who wants to go along on a swarm call to document what a beekeeper does. If you get a call soon, call Jen at 707-527-9272 so she can contact the reporter and meet you at the swarm site. The goal is to get publicity and information about the value of taking care of bees properly.

April’s Speaker Will Be Janet Calhoun

All About Mason Bees: Bee Smart, Bee Dazzled An Intro Native Bees and A Workshop on Raising Mason Bees Make you landscape a magnet for native bees. Janet will show the link between these bees and a healthy, thriving garden. She will also demonstrate how to create and care for native bee houses.

What we do for our native bees will certainly make our honey bees happier.

News from the Regional Cluster Leaders "God Save The Queen"

By Thea Vierling, Regional Coordinator of the Regional Cluster Groups

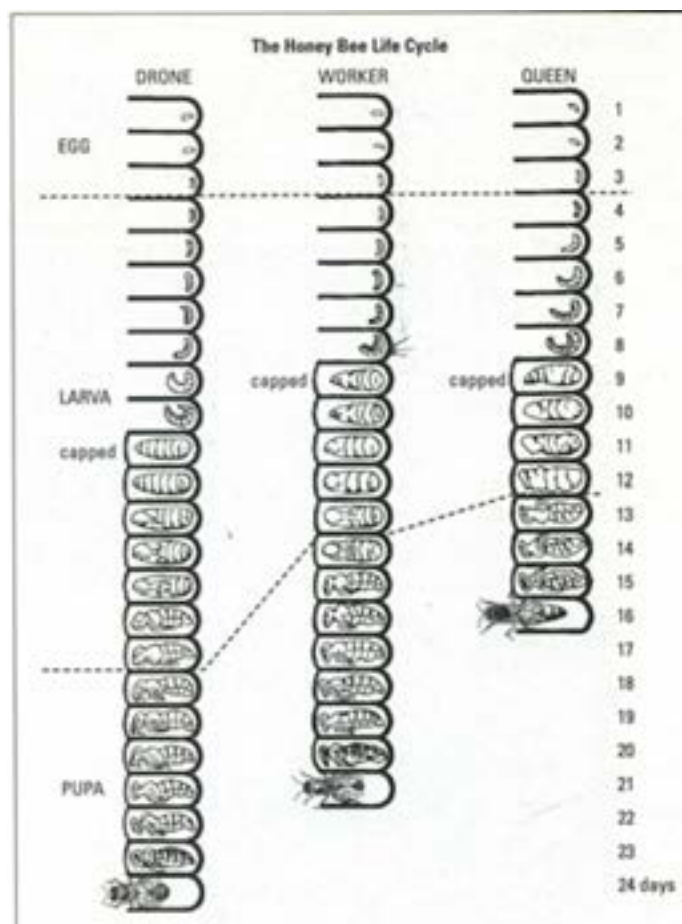
For a long time, people and even scientists thought that the hive was run by "A KING!" Really it is true; during the 1700's, before females united and liberated the monarchy, everyone thought that the KING ran the hive! But thankfully the truth is out and we now know how important the Queen is. After all she is the only bee who is allowed to poop in the hive and she is the mother of all the bees. So Long Live the Queen!

So what does all of this have to do with the Regional Cluster Groups...? A LOT!!!! Why just the other day, a member of East Cluster said to me, "I lost my queen but there are still so many workers in the hive and plenty of food. What should I do? If feel so helpless and cruel if I just let them starve?" I told them to email their cluster leader because maybe someone in the cluster had a frame of young eggs to give them and the worker bees could start making a new queen! YES THAT IS RIGHT! You can make a Queen from someone else's frame of brood.... But you have to find someone who is willing to share and frequently the only one who knows everyone in the cluster is the cluster leader. Plus, they are the only one who is able to e-mail everyone in the cluster and ask if there is someone willing to share young eggs!

This, to me, is the most important and marvelous reason for the regional clusters. So if you are not going into your member's only website, if you are not attending cluster meetings, if you are not asking for help from your cluster leaders.... You are missing the boat! Well, as they say in apiary lingo, "You are missing the QUEEN! So Bee-gin now and get involved with your clusters!

Did you know that if the worker bees start early feeding the youngest larvae (less than 4 days old) with the rich food that future queens get, royal jelly, she becomes a bigger and better queen with more eggs and can even hold more sperm. Every day counts. Look at the difference between day 4 and day 5! Every day that the egg gets older, the chances of getting a great queen gets slimmer and slimmer. Below I have attached a chart of the larval stages of the 3 different castes. Memorize it! And join your clusters.

Editor's Note: This chart is something you might want to print and put in your beekeeping notebook. Remember if you are using a brood frame from another hive the queen they build will not be a freshly laid egg but could be on day 4, 5 or 6. You will be able to judge more accurately if you know what day the queen cell is newly capped but it isn't good to be looking in the hive and risk scraping the queen cell (or cells) as you lift the frame.



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Regional Updates

South Cluster just had a wonderful bee cafe for beekeepers in the group to get to know each other better, create bee buddies and many phone numbers were exchanged. This was wonderful to see the scope of the clusters at work just the way it's intended to: to help, support and mentor each other no matter the years of experience under our belts. Christine showed her pole and water bottle swarm catcher device to reach those unreachable swarms. It's available to South Cluster members if needed. Just contact her. Some hive divisions have also occurred with some booming hives that were at the brink of swarming. As we identify more and more survivor stock, we will encourage more beekeepers to split their hives and share within the group to help create strong bees in our area.

Next Bee Cafe is planned for Saturday April 12 at Heirdrun Meadery In Pt.Reyes from 10 to 12. Make sure to RSVP to the e-mail invite so we can tell the owners how many to expect. First hour we will discuss bees, last minute prep for bee arrival, demo how to hive a package, your bee questions...Second hour will be tour and tasting. Cost is \$10, which is waved with a 3-bottle purchase. If you are in the South Cluster and have not received your invite contact Paty Perkins my co-leader at patyperkins@yahoo.com or Christine Kurtz at Petalumabeelady@yahoo.com

East Cluster: There have been several hive splits with various members. Please contact your cluster leader if you have questions, want to do a hive dive with others, or need help with you package bee installation.
eastcluster@sonomabees.org

West Cluster: There have been several hive splits with various members. Please contact your cluster leader if you have questions, want to do a hive dive with others, or need help with you package bee installation:
westcluster@sonomabees.org

Central Cluster: There have been several hive splits with various members. Please contact your cluster leader if you have questions, want to do a hive dive with others, or need help with you package bee installation:
centercluster@sonomabees.org

North Cluster: Please contact your cluster leader if you have questions, want to do a hive dive with others, or need help with you package bee installation northclusterr@sonomabees.org

SCBA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes March 3rd, 2014

Held at the home of Rita Maloney. Called to order at 6:36 pm.

Present: Rita, Thea Vierling, Christine Kurtz, Ettamari Petersen, Cheryl Veretto, Becky Jackson, Laura Baker.

Cheryl Veretto moved that the minutes of the February 3rd Board Meeting be approved as written. Laura Baker seconded and all approved (5 ayes).

Denise Wright will be asked to take Sabin Larsen's place as the At-Large 2 Board Member position.

Thea has secured Cathy Kopshever as the new Volunteer Coordinator.

Laura Baker reports 337 total members at this point, with expired members having trouble since they have to now join under the status of "new member." But Sabin has given Laura a way to correct this.

Janet Calhoun will speak in April on Native Bees. May is tentatively Doug Vincent on queens.

Treasurer, Rita Maloney reports \$17,491.12 in the bank with February's income of \$1403 and expenses of \$2091. She purchased honey sticks for Events and Education.

Regional Cluster Coordinator, Thea Vierling reports that Becky Jackson is the new Central Cluster leader.

Sierra Castillo is our new photographer.

Education committee has an Educator's Guidebook from 1997 that SCBA already produced and will look into getting it updated and new copies made.

Cheryl reports there have been 6 million visitors to our website! Sabin Larsen moved to Wyoming, but will continue to help with technical items as they come up.

The third Association owned extractor is at Denny Pedersen's in Windsor. The other two are at Ettamari's in Petaluma, and Janet Leisen's in Santa Rosa.

The Sound system will now be stored and transported to meetings by Terry and Joanna McLaughlin.

Cheryl presented a proposal from the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership for the Board to read for future discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm. Next Board meeting location undecided.

Respectfully submitted, Becky Jackson, Secretary

Treasurer's Report April 1, 2014

The combined bank account totals are \$17,420.55. This month our yearly Liability Insurance and our Director's and Officer's Insurance were due to the tune of \$1550. Memberships are still rolling in, both for renewals and new

members signing up. This month over \$1000 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 are paid in November and December of 2014.

Member's Meeting March 10, 2014

Held at the Rohnert Park 4-H Building. About 225 in attendance; 7:10 pm.

Ettamarie announced that the Board has a new At Large 2 member: Denise Wright. This replaces Sabin Larsen, who moved to Wyoming. The 2nd VP of Programs is also now vacant and volunteers were sought. Hasna Wood stepped forward for consideration.

Serge Labesque was introduced as tonight's speaker on Spring Hive Management.

Spring is the time to plant for bees. Nectar dearths can happen as hives build up, then run into bad weather or absence of forage. The threat of starvation is the worst in the spring, not during the winter. Serge says he plants a little more each year. He handed out packets of California buckwheat seed that he harvested! It's one of his favorites—deer resistant, drought tolerant, blooms in May through winter's freeze.

Normally, there's a small bee population in February, with a circular brood pattern: new eggs and larvae in the center, older and capped brood surrounding that, then a crescent of pollen and bee bread, ending with the corners and outside edges of capped honey. But this quickly grows as a healthy hive wants to reproduce and swarm. This is the only time of year that brood and the population are quickly increasing (he showed a graph). The egg laying and open larval cells will stop/decrease when the hive is wanting to swarm. Look for full frames of uniformly capped worker brood, with little to no open brood cells.

1. Our primary task is to facilitate expansion!
2. Produce quality queens is our next task.
3. Then we must decide what we want from our colonies (honey or new colonies).

Don't open the hive too early in the season; wait for warmer weather. Chilled brood may result. Serge listed some Spring Stress diseases such as European foulbrood (a bacteria which can be enhanced by a lack of pollen), or chalkbrood (a fungus which can be avoided with good ventilation and moisture control).

There's possible Buckeye poisoning (pollen is lethal to brood) though if blackberries bloom, their blossoms are more desirable and the bees go there instead.

Observe your bees from the outside: watch their flight paths; look at the ground in front of the hives; study the monitor boards beneath screened bottoms; lift up from the back to determine the hive weight; look at the hive-top feeder (if you use one). Finally only open the hive under favorable conditions to assess the young brood, the stores of food, the pattern of laying, the health, and the available expansion space.

Be flexible! Be willing to reevaluate and change your plans. Example—Serge noticed his hives culled drones last March 29th and again on April 26th. So he had to stop dividing and rearing queens. Take good notes from year to year!

In the brood nest, the larvae should be swimming in royal jelly. If not, the food supply is lacking. If you see lots of young brood and eggs the hive is not ready for swarming yet. Serge suggests going into your hives once a week or 10 days to monitor their expansion and brood ratios. Once they stop growing, they will swarm. Have additional equipment ready.

Provide the bees with adequate space to build comb. Stay ahead of their needs. Spring is the best time to get comb built, as it's the young bees who produce wax.

Gradually enlarge the entrance space so the foragers don't have to squeeze in and loose their pollen loads in the process.

Serge's prediction of this year: He expects it to be very, very tough. He thinks there will be a very short reproductive season; a brief and meager honey flow and a long summer dearth due to the lack of deep ground moisture right now.

Along with challenges, these difficult years can bring opportunities. Nature's 'Selection of the Fittest'. Serge believes we shouldn't bring in package bees or nucs or queens from outside our area (a few miles).

His goals will be queen rearing and colony multiplication. Minimal honey harvest planned—the bees come first. He uses the Hopkins method, with a square of comb containing young eggs suspended over the tops of the brood frames.

You can make your own splits and queens available to your neighbor beekeepers. Over 95 per cent of the state's beehives are kept by 1 percent of beekeepers (mostly commercial). Together, our hives are a genetically diverse repository of bees.

QUESTION: Have you seen small hive beetle? **ANSWER:** No, but it's just a matter of time.

QUESTION: Won't splitting our hives negatively interrupt the natural swarm instinct? **ANSWER:** Less than 8% (not ___% as stated last month) of swarms survive on their own. We need to provide the nesting site. They will swarm prematurely if the hive is forced to live in too small a cavity. Remember, a healthy hive wants to swarm for reproduction, not because they've run out of space.

QUESTION: When we see drones, does that mean a swarm is imminent? **ANSWER:** No, drones are a sign of the season, not indicative of a swarm. All hives naturally produce them in spring.

QUESTION: Do you do anything for Varroa mites? **ANSWER:** No, he doesn't do anything, he lets the bees groom them off on their own!

QUESTION: How far apart should a split be? **ANSWER:** They can be in close proximity (a few feet) but turn the entrances 90 degrees from each other.

QUESTION: Does our area have too many hives for the available amount of pollen or honey? **ANSWER:** Maybe, but turn the question around to: have we screwed up the environment so that it can't support the number of hives? So plant more every year, like Serge does around his property.

QUESTION: Can I reuse frames of pollen from deadouts for new colonies? **ANSWER:** He wouldn't, the bees prefer fresh pollen. Use it yourself on toast!!

QUESTION: Does it matter which half of a split gets the queen? Why would we want to check 4 days later to see where the eggs are? **ANSWER:** The one with the old queen must be managed for growth, whereas the queenless one must be let alone for a full month to let them raise a queen undisturbed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Becky Jackson, Secretary



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Member Ad (Free to use to buy, sell or trade personal bee related items.)

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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

2014 Board Members and Other Helpful People

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Extractor Techs- Call Ettamarie 707-765-4582 or Janet Leisen 707- 528-2085 or Denny Pederson (cell)707-328-4692 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.



Bees gather propolis and attach it to their back legs just like they carry pollen.
Photo By Sierra Castill

