

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 37, Issue 11 November 2014

Monthly Meeting:

Nov. 10- 6p.m. Social hour-Bring your own cup for tea, talk to beekeepers who can help you with your questions, check out our library, and renew your membership.

7 p.m.- Gadget Night-Contact Ettamarie if you are planning to bring a gadget to share.

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

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From Our President

This is the month when we nominate new officers. Please consider either nominating a person you know has skills and time to be our next treasurer, first Vice President, Second Vice President or President. Let me know if you want me to nominate you! Our present officers are ready, willing and able to train you to take over their jobs. Being on the board is really quite enjoyable and not at all hard because we work as a team. The board meets on the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. We take turns hosting the meetings if we have a large enough house. If your house is too small, don't let that stop you from being on the board! I am fortunate to have a large dining room and have hosted the board more than once this year. I didn't always have to prepare the dinner either. There are lots of ways to do these dinner meetings. We find doing them in homes is much easier than trying to meet in restaurants.

Don't forget to contact me at president@sonomabees.org if you have a gadget to share with us for our fabulous and fun gadget night this month. If you have a power point or little video to share with some special technique we can use the projector. Just let me know and bring it on a memory stick. I love gadget night. I always learn something new. This year I am going to share a gadget Michael Fisher made that has helped me move hives easily and safely. I think you will like it, too. I will also share a little lighter that get the fuel going in the smoker nicely.

There is an excellent Nova video about the life of the honey bees. It is called "Tales From the Hive." If you go to this link, you can see it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtKqic69xVo> I have it on VHS but that technology is so old I don't think I even have a player anymore! It is almost an hour long but make time in your life to enjoy it!

Thanks to all of you who shared their apiaries this year for our cluster hive dives! This has helped many beekeepers both experienced and new in many ways. We all learn from each other and it is also an excellent way for members to get to know one another. I can't say enough good things about our cluster program. Thanks to Thea Vierling for being the Regional Coordinator. Your guidelines for these "hive dives" helped the leaders run smooth get-togethers!

Ettamarie Peterson, President

BEE WISE: CLOSED SYSTEMS, by Emery Dann

When we think about a beehive, it is mostly a closed system. WHAT COMES INTO THE HIVE OR WHAT THE BEES BRING INTO THE HIVE FROM THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT STAYS IN THE HIVE LONG-TERM. The analogy is similar to a one-way street into the hive and it can be difficult or impossible for the bees or the beekeeper to reverse this once the bees pass the point of no return. There are two exceptions I see to a beehive being a closed system: 1. What beekeepers add or remove from the hive (timing is critical) and 2. What the bees are able to remove from the hive themselves.

What comes into the hive, such as pollution, pesticides, etc., the brood is affected and is stored in the wax. A lack of good nutrition in the supply of pollen and nectar, bee pests and diseases, ants, even mold or mildew (ventilation), etc., from the surrounding environment or moisture produced inside the hive, directly effects the health of the hive and future survival. If there is too much stress or toxic, chemical build up (lethal or sub-lethal) brought into the hive, strong hives can become weaker and fail.

Sometimes the bees themselves are the cause of their own demise! A queen who does not slow down her egg laying in the Fall before Winter can exhaust herself and create too many bees at the wrong time of year that wipe out all the stores. There are smart bees who do the right thing at the right time with what they have available surviving while less intelligent bee swarms or hives that make mistakes and are not able to survive for various reasons. We can assist our bees by knowing what we can do to help them and what they need to do for themselves.

In a similar way, one could say we humans are closed systems. We need help from outside ourselves if we are to thrive! There is a saying, "If you want to go fast, go alone! If you want to go far, go together." Honey bees cooperate, work, serve and help each other and with their team effort they go far! We need healthy relationships, encouragement and to find the support we need. The Sonoma County Beekeepers Association provides many opportunities for you to connect, learn and improve your beekeeping skills. The more we can open our hives and lives to healthy change and input, the more we will grow, not just surviving, but THRIVING! We can "take the road less traveled," (but more relational—getting appropriate help and input from good sources outside ourselves) and as Robert Frost said, "It made all the difference!"

My November Beekeeping To-Do List By Serge Labesque © 2014

A beekeeper's crutch

Trying to improve both the beekeeping equipment I use and the management of my hives has always been a source of pleasure and satisfaction. In this endless quest for progress, the past year is starting to look like a momentous one in spite of, or maybe because of the dire conditions that prevailed in my apiaries.

All things considered, the Langstroth hive as I configure and use it has proven to work rather well for the bees. Still, the lifting and handling of the supers, which can be backbreaking at times, has led me to prefer keeping bees in medium supers. In recent years however, I've tried to address this physical aspect of beekeeping by designing and building hives that were essentially vertical chests with side doors. The current version of these hives is finally quite functional. All the features from my regular hives that contribute to the wellbeing of the bees that inhabit them are retained, and they allow easy access to any part of the bee nests without lifting any super. The problem is that they are somewhat time-consuming to build.

But there is always a better way.

Last winter, the impact of the drought made it evident that small clusters may encounter difficulties in moving on the combs during cold winter nights, when they need to move between supers. This observation made me reconsider the configuration of the frames for the overwintering clusters. So, this past spring, I transferred the brood nests of four colonies into double-deep frames and, for my benefit I concurrently started dreaming up "inspection shelves" that allow the inspection of hives without having to lift anything that is heavy. At this point in time, I can tell you that both the bees and my sciatic nerves are responding favorably when I work these four hives! Better yet, unlike in my chest hives with their side doors, this is achieved with basically standard beekeeping equipment, a few pieces of scrap plywood and an old crutch. Just take a look at the pictures. However, the management of the frames is slightly different than what I was used to and I anticipate having to modify some beekeeping procedures. And yes, this is a lot of fun and I am learning a lot!



The upper super of this four-deep hive was rotated onto a shelf supported by a crutch which is adjustable in height, at right. After the next super is turned on its end on the inspection shelf at left, there is direct access to the rest of the hive that holds double deep frames.



After rotating the upper supers onto the inspection shelves, a double-deep frame is lifted out of the lower part of the hive. This is the equivalent of three medium frames fused together. Uninterrupted by top and bottom bars, a nice round area of brood is surrounded by stores in preparation for winter.

November in the apiaries:

Having secured the last of the hive tops against the wind and installed clean monitoring trays, the preparation of the hives for winter is now complete. There is nothing left to do in the hives. Now, the bees are on their own to make it to next spring. Nonetheless, I'll visit the apiaries to keep an eye on the hives, especially when the wind and, hopefully, the rain will have come.

During the next two months, the bees should remain calm. With no brood to rear, the clusters will consume very little of their stores to produce only a minimum of heat. Any disturbance of the hives should be avoided during the winter, as this would agitate the bees unnecessarily. The adult bee populations are shrinking down to the winter bees that were raised during the past few weeks. It may be several weeks before the queens resume egg laying. So, I'll watch the last of the summer foragers on sunny days, and I'll place an ear against the sides of the hives when the bees are clustered tightly inside. The monitoring trays can tell what the colonies are doing. At first, the brown chewed up cappings dropped by the emerging winter bees will indicate the size of the winter clusters. Within a few weeks, this debris will turn gray and will be sprinkled with varroa mites the grooming bees will cast off.

It's time to take care of the equipment that was removed from the hives during the fall. Some pieces may have to be discarded or repaired. Everything that will be kept for re-use will be cleaned: Wax and propolis build-ups are to be scraped with a hive tool and the surface of the wood will then be torched.

As nightfall comes early, this is a good opportunity to review the notes made during the past beekeeping season: Last December brought very cold nights that locked the clusters on the comb. Many colonies were fragile with small winter bee populations because their queens had stopped laying eggs in early October. To make their situation even worse, the bees could only collect honeydew during the intense nectar dearth of the summer and fall. As a result, it did not take long for the signs of dysentery to become visible and widespread. The cold weather destroyed the young shoots and flower buds on the eucalyptus trees and on the manzanitas. None bloomed afterwards. The dry weather persisted and there was no spring honey flow this year around my apiaries. The colonies eliminated their drones at the end of March and in early April. The season of colony reproduction and queen rearing was very brief. The long summer dearth followed. Many colonies absconded. In such severe conditions, the innate differences between colonies became obvious: While some managed to build up, to accumulate stores and to prepare for winter, others withered away. We need strong colonies, bees that can cope with tough environmental conditions, and we should not coddle or regret losing the others.

Certainly, there is something that can be learned from the past year: What did I do wrong or right? How could I have managed this or that situation better? How did the bees deal with the challenge of this terrible drought? Already, these thoughts sound like planning for next spring.

This is a period of relative rest for the bees. It has to be respected.

In summary, this month:

- Complete the preparation of the colonies for winter by the end of the first week of the month.
- Raise hives off the ground, if they are not already on stands.
- Remove old and misshapen combs (follower boards greatly facilitate this).
- Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated (upper ventilation slot open).
- Reduce the hive entrances.
- Install mouse guards.
- Secure the hive tops against high winds.
- Install clean monitoring trays. From them, we will obtain important information about what is happening inside the hives during the next months, without disturbing the bees.
- Inspect the exterior of the hives.
- Observe the flight paths.
- Harvest surplus honey (should you be so lucky this year!)
- Extract and bottle honey.
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings.
- Clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Store unused equipment to protect it from damage caused by wax moths, mice and the weather.
- Review notes from the year.
- Start building frames and other pieces of equipment for the next season.
- Look forward to next season.
- Enjoy some honey and be thankful for the bees.

Serge Labesque © 2014

Bee Plants of the Month By Alice Ford-Sala

Note: this is a re-run of my November 2011 column. If you have read it before, I hope you enjoy reviewing it. If not, I hope the information is useful to you.

Alice

Herb of the Month: Chrysanthemum Family Asteraceae

This may seem like a stretch to call Chrysanthemums herbs, but a tea made from Chrysanthemum flowers is very popular in Chinese medicine. I remember when my sister worked in San Francisco in the garment industry and the Chinese sewing ladies recommending Chrysanthemum tea for stomach ailments as well as colds and flu. It is very bitter, so it must be good for you? A spoonful of honey would make it more delicious!

Of course, bees don't like those fancy double mums—they can't access the pollen and nectar. But I have an old single mum that has loads of one-inch-across flowers, and the honey bees as well as native bees, flower flies and tiny wasps are all over it.

It is gorgeous—a small wheel of orange and yellow. The plant must have several hundred flowers on it. And being an Asteraceae family member, a "flower" is composed of a head of small florets surrounded by rays, or petals. Each one of the florets holds nectar for the bees, so if you look carefully, you will see them sticking their tongues into each tiny flower.

This is a good time of year to go shopping at your local nursery and see which ones have bees on them. Now is the time to enjoy the blooms, then cut them back to about 8 inches tall, and plant in good garden with decent drainage. You can cut them back in spring or summer to encourage sturdier stems. You might want to take a few cutting and propagate your favorites.

Other members of this large family that are considered medicinal are *C. balsamita* (Tanacetum balsamita), or Costmary, which has sweet foliage, used in potpourris and salads. *C. parthenium* (Tanacetum parthenium) or Feverfew is supposedly repellant to bees and other insects, but I have seen some on mine, though they aren't crazy about it.

Native Plant of the Month: Native Bulbs

Besides being a good time to plant other native plants, every one knows that fall is the best time to plant bulbs. But don't bother with fussy Tulips, blasé daffodils and ho-hum hyacinths when you can plant California native bulbs.

Here are a few fun and easy to grow bulbs:

Single Leaf Onion *Allium unifolium*

If you have ever let an onion bloom, you know that bees adore the Allium family. This native bulb is easy to grow in sun or partial shade and tolerates a wide variety of soils. It has pretty light to darker pink blossoms and can tolerate some summer water, though it doesn't need any.

Harvest Brodiaea *Brodiaea elegans*
 I planted Brodiaea last fall, and was pleasantly surprised to see the pretty blue-purple flowers in the spring. The bees were happy too, fitting their heads nicely inside the individual flowers that make up a pretty umbel.

Wild Hyacinth *Dichelostemma capitatum* and *Dichelostemma ida-maia*
 These two bulbs look very different from each other, but both are beautiful in a natural setting as well as in your garden.
D. capitatum is a spring hiker's delight. The small round blue heads poke up from the green grasses and nod a greeting. They do well in sun or partial shade, but do not like summer water.
D. ida-maia or "Firecracker flower" has long red hanging blossoms tipped in yellow or green, clustered in a small head. You can find these unusual bulbs from your local native plant nursery, or order them on line. Please never collect them from the wild.

Would you like to run for a board position for 2015?

Every November, we accept nominations for the SCBA Board of Directors. Please read the following job descriptions and see if you would like to help SCBA by becoming a board member. These are non-paid positions but they are essential to the workings of our organization. If you, or someone you know, might be interested, please consider e-mailing your nomination to president@sonomabees.org or bring the name to the meeting. We would like to know who is interested early so we can help that person learn more about the position. This is especially important for our treasurer's job. Rita would like to facilitate a smooth transition to the next treasurer.

Board of Directors meeting October 6, 2014

Board members Present:	Board members Absent:	Committee Chairs Present:
Ettamarie--President	Hasna Wood--2 nd VP	Christine Kurtz--Past Pres.
Laura Baker--1 st VP		
Rita Maloney--Treasurer		
Becky Jackson--Secretary		
Jen Espinoza--Education		
Denise Wright--2 nd At-Large		
Cathy Kopshever--Volunteers		
Cheryl Veretto--1 st At-Large		

Met at the home of Cathy Kopshever. Meeting called to order at 7:12 pm after a fabulous meal. Laura moved that the minutes from September 1st be accepted as presented, Rita seconded and all approved (8 ayes). President, Ettamarie Peterson thanked all who worked at the Heirloom Festival, the Harvest Fair, and the State Farm event. We have so many fantastic volunteers!
 1st VP of Membership, Laura Baker reports 403 total members now! She has membership forms to give to Cathy to include in the Volunteer boxes to take to events.
 2nd VP was absent. Via an email from Hasna, Kate Frey is not speaking at the next meeting. She was able to schedule Serge Labesque on Preparing Hives for winter.
 • November: Gadget Night & nomination of officers. The newsletter will instruct people wishing to share a gadget to sign up at the beginning of the meeting and have 5 minutes to talk. Cheryl will explain the Gadget night at the next meeting, and send out an email blast to members before the Nov. meeting.
 • December: Potluck and Silent Auction.
 • January will be Rob Keller. Hasna should work out details and topic with Rob.
 • February will be Serge Labesque on swarms/splits.
 Secretary's Report--Becky Jackson had nothing to report.
 Treasurer, Rita Maloney presented the September Financial Report showing income of \$1094 and expenses of \$732. She will prepare the budget for next year in Nov or Dec. Discussed items to consider: Raise the amount for Speakers, less on Education, Jen asks for Education donations in a separate category from other donations, need to pay taxes on all auction income, fee charged for PayPal and Square. Workshops should be paid in advance via PayPal.

Rita will write a blurb for Newsletter about the charge SCBA has on electronic transactions and if they are willing to pay that cost OR give us a check or cash.

Rita asked Cathy (or any volunteer) to keep donations from the acrylic box separate from other monies that come in. Yearly Audit being done by Susan Konanz and her husband. Rita gave her all the records and the computer. Susan is donating her time to do this and should be recognized!

Group Reports

Regional Cluster Leader was absent. Christine reports there is a new South Cluster leader: Sally McGough. Thea is looking for a new Central Cluster person to replace Becky. There is a meeting for all cluster leaders at Jim Spencer's home on Nov. 15. Everyone is welcome to discuss what works or what doesn't.

Education—Jen Espinoza reports that she needs more educators. She may try to recruit through the clusters, and try to develop a job description. She welcomes feedback about the website and the education 'button' and content.

Jen would like to develop Lesson Plans that are grade specific, then have the materials available for teachers to download and print before we come: it saves us printing costs. The Educator's Guide workbook is limited in its usefulness, as we need PDF's to be able to forward to the teachers, and post on the website within specific lesson plans.

Technology—Cheryl Veretto had no report.

Pre-Meetings—Christine Kurtz has a few examples to show this next meeting. She welcomes anyone else bringing items too.

Swarms—no report, but Ettamarie will ask John Krafft for one.

OLD BUSINESS

- Silent Auction—Christine showed several items already donated. Lots of help is needed at the December meeting, and plans to make it run smoothly are underway.

- Election of officers: several positions are open and the newsletter will ask for any and all to come forward. The Treasurer position is being carefully considered.

NEW BUSINESS

- Gifts for volunteers—Cathy needs help choosing and planning the distribution. There's \$800 to spend, and about 100 volunteers (based on last year). Cathy will come up with a list, Jen will list her educators. The list will be published in the December newsletter to cut down on the time during the presentation.

- A proposal from a jewelry manufacturer came through Becky, which was discussed, and the board declined a partnership with them.

- The computer and iPad are both currently with Laura. The computer should really be with the 2nd VP for programs. Laura's needs will be further explored, as she had already left this meeting.

Next November Board Meeting will be at Ettamarie's home. Cheryl will host in December.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:57 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Jackson, Secretary

Treasurer's Report November 1, 2014 By Treasurer Rita Maloney

The combined bank account totals are \$15,414.65. I feel confident that we will end the year in very good shape for 2015.

One "luxury" expense that the Board voted to repeat again this year is to pay the 4H to set up and take down the tables and chairs as well as do the cleanup for our December meeting and Silent Auction / Potluck. This worked out really well last year as it saved us from "burning out" at this event. We had enough to do with setting up the Silent Auction and organizing the potluck so this expenditure is really more of a necessity. It will help us enjoy the event as much as we hope that you will.

These are the kinds of decisions that points out how much we depend on our volunteers to help lighten the load. If you can help out in anyway, even if it means helping us put away the chairs and tables and sweeping the floor at our regular meetings, please lend a hand!

SCBA General Meeting October 13, 4H bldg., Rohnert Park

About 115 persons present.

Serge Labesque spoke on Winter Hive Preparation. He first passed a big basket of his own California Buckwheat seed packets, a non-invasive perennial native plant. It's also deer resistant and blooms from May until frost. But the seeds are sensitive to damping off as they are sprouting. Start them in December in sterilized soil, takes 2-3 weeks to sprout.

The beekeeper's goal is to have their bee colony survive and come out of winter strong and healthy and ready for a honey flow.

The dangers between late fall and the next spring are:

- Pests and disease, malnutrition starvation, queen failure, unsuitable nest cavities, accidents, mismanagement by you, bad weather, condensation, etc.

At the beginning of winter a bee colony needs:

- A queen, well-fed winter bees, adequate stores, a properly organized hive, good health.

Serge showed a graph of colony population and a picture showing colony location in the hive during the year. It shows the colony residing in 2 deep chambers.

- July- worker population at its peak
- August-bottom chamber is mostly empty.
- September- temporary increase in brood rearing; drones eliminated, beebread is left where it is stored (bees will move honey but not bee bread or pollen).
- October- Brood nest moves down into stored pollen. Stores are consolidated around the brood nest.
- November- Brood rearing ends; winter bees emerge; summer bees die off; clustering now. All flying foragers are summer bees and will be dead.
- December- No brood rearing; don't consume much; bee population decreases slowly; gradually move up into the store chamber.
- January- Brood rearing resumes; bee population still decreasing. Nurse bees access the summer beebread; store consumption increases. Still moving up into the stores.
- February- Brood rearing accelerates; pollen and nectar foraging starts; clustering still.

The bees prepare themselves for fall and winter by: raising winter bees; they organize the brood and store chambers; and they secure their nests with propolis, etc.

The beekeeper's job is to check the colony and evaluate at the end of August, end of September and the end of October. Leave adequate honey: 10 lbs. for a nuc up to 35 lbs. for a mature colony. A medium full frame weighs 3 lbs., and a deep frame holds 5 lbs. of honey. Remove unused frames and consolidate the hive. Reduce the entrance, install mouse guard, use a hive-top feeder with lavender stems to absorb moisture and reduce condensation, provide an upper vent slot, protect from winds, should receive at least 2 hours of sunlight daily.

Use the winter months to clean up your equipment, scorch tools. Do not disturb the bees.

Respectfully submitted by Becky Jackson, Secretary

Mark your calendars for the fabulous 2014 Silent Auction to be held at our monthly meeting on December 8!

Thea Vierling and Christine Kurtz are gathering items for the auction again and are waiting for your fabulous donations. We know that we have a very creative and generous group and you would know if you had the privilege to see what was available for bid last year! However, creative and generous folks still need nudges and reminders because life is so busy, but now that the bee season is winding down don't forget about the other side, the wonderful educational association that we are all part of and we need your help to gather things for the auction. An appeal went out through the regional clusters and the contest is on... whichever regional group gathers the most donations will have Thea and Christine for a special bee cafe or hive dive, and whoever screamed out loud at the last monthly meeting that we were going to do it in bikinis... well we just might! Anyhow the contest ends at the end of November.

West Cluster Winterizing Workshop By Chris Dicker, westcluster@sonomabees.org

West County Cluster hosted a well-attended and informative Winterizing Workshop on Oct 19th at the amazing home and apiary of Patsy Young, with Marcus Sugihara as our expert. Fortunately we had a warm day in between some much needed rain. Some of our cluster members still need to get their colonies set up for winter and are waiting for a warm day.

Ettamarie and Chris Dicker are working with students from the Academy of Art in SF to make several short "bee advocacy videos" for our SCBA non-profit. Five students have chosen us to donate their talents to, and will create these informative videos, with our input. Don't be surprised if you see the students at our next meeting!



Tim Blythe builds a Top Bar hive for two jars of honey! See story on next page!

Thea and Jim, members of the Top Bar Hive and East County Clusters, saw some wood on the side of a construction site and asked if it was going to the dump. Well it turns out the construction workers said for a jar of honey we will give you the wood. Tim put this together in less than a week. It is all ready for a family of bees to move in! It has two windows and is big enough for two families.

Jim Spencer, top bar hive cluster coordinator, is thrilled that so many members of the association are interested in top bar hives! The cluster meeting on September 28th was a great success. Over 20 members showed up and they discussed various design plans for top bar hives. The group agreed to select two and will have "assemble your top bar hive" construction workshops the second week in January. Stay tuned for more details. The workshops with Sam Comfort were so successful we are working on details to have even more Sam Comfort workshops next August. If you are interested in information about top bar hives add yourself to the top bar cluster Through the SCBA website or email Jim at topbarcluster@sonomabees.org.

Link sent to the newsletter by Leonard Carl

This is about Insectaries for Pollinators and Farm Biodiversity:

An Innovative Pilot Project This project was a pilot effort to enhance pollinator habitat on seven working farms, including a vineyard, three organic vegetable crop farms, a cattle ranch, an orchard, and one diverse farm with grapes, vegetable crops, and livestock.

<http://www.goldridgecd.org/project/pollinators.html>

Raccoons Skunks and Bears oh my! By Christine Kurtz

I am not an expert by all means. My only experience with a live bear was in Yosemite 20 plus years ago when one ran across the road in front of my car. It was the first time I realized, looking at the speed and strength of this bear, that they were not the cuddly little fluff balls we all grew up hugging and playing tea parties within and you definitively can't out run one. Raccoons and skunks visit all the time, so seen much more often, although my dogs do a fair job keeping them away. Skunks win sometimes and you know what I mean.

So Bears are around in Sonoma County, especially on the outskirts as we hear sightings here and there. We all really want to be in denial, but there has been evidence of bear damage in apiaries. The damage I recently saw was in Graton off of Green Valley Road. I kept wanting to believe that perhaps it was raccoons as they are easier to deal

with but the way the equipment was thrown around to 30 feet away, the brood nest ripped out and eaten, the frames broken, those would have had to been raccoons on steroids dragging full supers around.

Bears, as many other wild creatures are hungry. How could this drought not affect them as well? The berry season was dismal, acorns small or nonexistent and the dried up creeks void of fish. So coming to lush areas isn't that far fetched and lo and behold those lush area are full of new beekeepers all over the place with honey and larvae nicely boxes as a welcome gifts.

Since the homeowner of this particular damage was away traveling, unknown to me and without permission to do anything drastic on someone else's property, we strapped the other 6 hives scattered about several acres down tight with ratchet tie downs through the hive stand and concrete blocks. Straps won't really keep bears away especially if the bear had the 'taste' before, but could discourage (so I pray for a quick return of the owner). The straps might or might not keep the hive together if pushed over but then you could still have damage inside the hive if the frame collapse on each other and potentially damage the queen. Learning from folks in the Napa earthquake that had toppled hives, if the hive toppled forward and it was righted promptly it was OK, if sideways a whole lot of bees got crushed. A bear though could tumble that hive for quite awhile and so you can imagine the damage inside. And the bear could still crush the boxes, as bears are really strong. You have probably all seen damage of bears prying into cars and those are made of metal!

We could also make sheets of plywood with nails coming through to make is very painful to approach the hive. You'd have to put it all the way around the hives. You would have do deal with an ethical issue with this approach though of having a possible injured bear, and you might not want that in your vicinity anyway. You'd like the bear to have four paws to move on.

The only thing proven to work the best are electric fences. But those come with their own set of challenges. You'd have to have a strong electric fence and there are ways to increase the voltage if you know how and you'd have to bait it with bacon or hot dogs to give the bear a good zap on the nose and mouth for good effect and deterrent. A big challenge with electric fences is that if one blade of grass touches the wire you have a closed circuit and the fence ceases to work. Another challenge for those living in very dry areas is a lack of moisture. The grounds of electric fences need a certain amount of moisture to work. My sister, a wildlife biologist, who has done extensive work with bears says that they have to put chicken wire all around the periphery of electric fences in dry areas and connect the chicken wire to the ground so that when you step on the chicken wire and touch the wire of the fence you close the circuit and get zapped.

A beekeeper I know in Washington gave up on electric fences altogether with persistent bears and ended up putting a shipping container on his property and beekeeping on the roof only accessible with a ladder. It's too vertical and slick for bears to climb, the inside became equipment storage. Win-win right but you need the space to put one in. Note: He might have Grizzlies up there, which are bigger and more aggressive than the smaller shier black bear we find here.

Now if you see little wet piles of wet bees in front of your hives that could be skunk and raccoon visiting the entrance of your hive, disturbing the entrance and as bees come out to investigate they just slurp them up. When they have a bunch in their mouths they have a way to suck all the juices out and then they spit out the carcasses. You can loose a large number of your population this way and greatly weaken the hive to its eventual demise. Look for disturbed ground in front of the hive, scratches on the hive body (but not as evident if you have industrial paint on your hive) and those wet piles of regurgitated desiccated bees. Raccoons have been known to open the lids and take frames out so straps would definitively help here, better than a heavy rock that can be pushed off. Raccoons can also wreak havoc in stored equipment.

All these animals are smart and have exquisite sense of smell so nearby apiaries can be at risk. Please let others know if you experience these kinds of damages, as they will visit neighboring apiaries next.

Jason Berkman reported another hive was destroyed At Ocean Song location that is on top of Coleman Valley Road out in Occidental. The bear ate most of the 40 pounds of honey. A friend put the hive back together as best as she could but it probably won't make it.

Note Christine got this information from The California State Beekeepers Association just recently:

Fish and Game now has a formal letter authorizing beekeepers to go after bears that are attacking apiaries, nuc yards included. You must take pictures, and still have to get a permit, but bees are now officially recognized as "livestock". Now would it be OK to serve the bear meat at our December dinner?



Bear Damaged Hives

North Cluster Hive Dive Held at April Lance’s Apiary By Ettamarie Peterson

On a beautiful Sunday in October Lynne Black, the North Cluster Leader, led a demonstration of a hive inspection at April Lance’s Healdsburg home apiary. Julie Dilley explained to the many beekeepers that came how Serge Labesque instructed the South Cluster to winterize their hives. She explained about how to put lavender stems in the top feeder to give insulation and absorb moisture caused by condensations. During the hive inspection Lynne demonstrated how to rearrange honeycomb above the brood area.

The cluster learned a lot from the demonstrations, Julie’s talk and questions various people asked. It was a great chance for beekeepers to exchange information and help one another. The group enjoyed a picnic by West Dry Creek where April has a lovely picnic area. She is a great hostess and they all appreciate her sharing the apiary and her techniques.

These cluster benefit to all members. If you will be pleased. It is a nice near your own apiary.

In the photo Julie Zak is showing what a nice frame of honey looks like. Photo



group meetings are really a wonderful exchange of way to get to know beekeepers

showing what a nice frame of taken by Ettamarie Peterson.

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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

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Extractor Techs- Call Ettamarie 707-765-4582 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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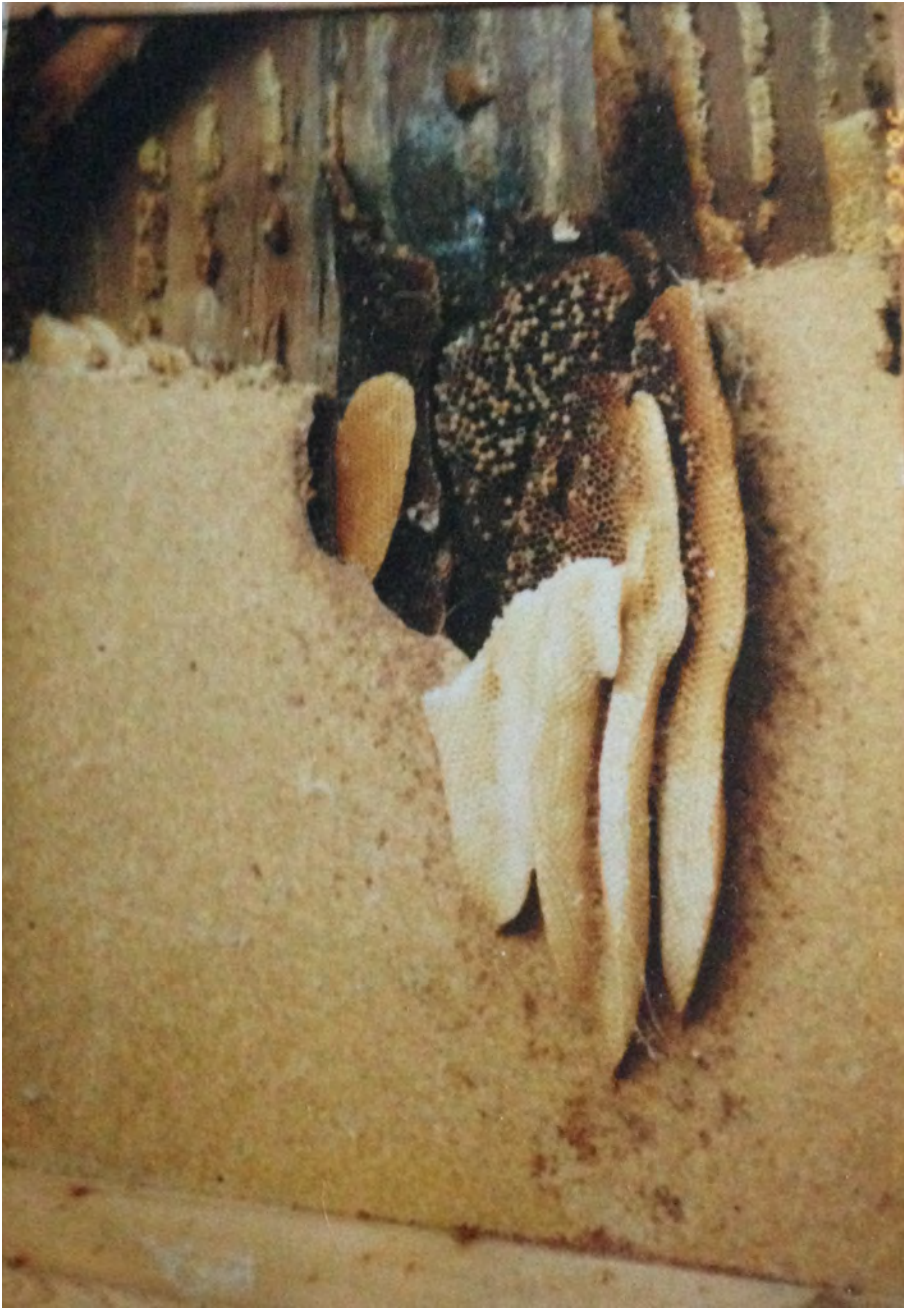
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This is a photo of part of the hive bees made in our barn wall over 20 years ago. The colony grew so large the bees actually chewed through the fiberboard to expand their space. When this colony swarmed a beekeeper came to collect the swarm by our mailbox. I showed him how we had made a window to watch them. He decided I should be a beekeeper and the rest is history!