

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 37, Issue 2 February 2014

Monthly Meeting: Feb.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, renew your membership.
7 p.m.- Talk by Dr. Eric Mussen, Ag. Extension U.C. Davis Department of Entomology. Bring your questions! He is great and really knows a lot about bees!

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

Table of Contents

1. From Our President, Ad Prices
2. My February Beekeeping –to-do List by Serge Labesque
3. Serge cont.
4. Beekeeping Classes at SRJC & Bee Wise-Swarm in Your Box – Emery Dann
5. Bee Plants of the Month – Alice Ford-Sala & January Bee Education Activities
6. Pre-Meeting Social Hour & Meeting & Regional Cluster Program and Overview for 2014
7. Regional Cluster News
8. Board Meeting minutes
9. Board Minutes Cont.
10. Treasurer's Report & Membership Meeting
11. Membership Meeting cont.
12. Ads
13. Beekind Ad & Extractor Rental information
14. Contact Information
15. Photo of propolis gathering

From Our President

My thanks go to Jim Spencer for helping me navigate the member's only part of the Association's web site and get into it as President. He was very helpful. I urge all of you to contact him if you are having a problem with this part of the site. He showed me there are some little glitches with some people's membership or passwords and they are usually easy to fix. He can be contacted at eastcluster@sonomabees.org. He demonstrated to me how to find contact information on the membership. I couldn't get to that part before because I didn't have the right authority. This is so helpful to me both as your President and your newsletter editor! I love the way people help each other in this association!

Speaking of getting help, I hope all of you now understand the Cluster concept. The idea was dreamed up and organized by Thea Vierling when she and several other East County beekeepers started helping each other out. Christine Kurtz formed the South cluster at about the same time. The South Cluster actually saved some abandoned hives while helping several beekeepers learn the art of splitting and reorganizing dilapidated old hives with good colonies that survived. You will get notices of cluster meetings from your cluster leaders. Sometimes you will be able to learn new skills or share a skill you have mastered. These cluster meetings will help you make friends with near-by beekeepers. Take advantage of them if you have the time. Our membership is around 400 members so it is easy to feel like a little fish in a big pond at our general meetings. By attending your cluster events you will feel more like part of a family (colony?). If you don't think your cluster is doing enough to help you, volunteer to host a cluster meeting or ask for help from your cluster leaders. They need to hear what the beekeepers want help with.

Ettamarie Peterson, President

Ads in This Newsletter

The monthly costs for ads in this newsletter 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 the treasurer 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 February Beekeeping To-Do List

By Serge Labesque © 2014

Learning from colony losses

No matter how much I had prepared myself to sustain heavy losses this winter, I was not quite ready for the way they actually happened.

By Christmas two of the thirty-five colonies I had launched into the cold season had died. These casualties were no surprise, as their queens were showing signs of waning early in the fall. In prior years, I would have combined their bees, but this past fall I decided not to use this practice. The following weekend brought record low temperatures and many of my hives became silent. One-third of my colonies perished, almost all at the same time! This was an unprecedented level of losses for this time of year in my apiaries. Strikingly, except for one colony that had simply vanished, all the dead colonies presented exactly the same signs: small, grapefruit-size clusters of bees dead of starvation around their queens, in most cases less than two inches away from ample stores.

It would be easy to call this a bout of CCD or to simply blame the cold weather for these losses, but this would be ignoring a few other peculiarities that the dead clusters had in common: Their queens had stopped laying eggs very early in the fall, in the midst of a protracted nectar dearth and, most noteworthy, the clusters died just below the top bars of the frames that carried them; honey was in ample supply in the supers directly above them!

As I was trying to make sense of this brutal situation, these observations offered a possible explanation for what had happened: Although the clusters were small because the fall build-up of the winter bee populations had been curtailed, they had been moving up on the combs, consuming honey that was in their way in order to stay warm. This had gone on until they reached the top bars of the frames. Once against the wood, they exhausted the honey they were in direct contact with. Unfortunately, the distance that separated the small clusters from the rest of their stores was too large for the bees to straddle in the cold December weather. They would have had to pass the top bars, cross the gaps that separate them from the bottom bars above, pass the bottom bars of the next frames and then bridge over the open spaces bees frequently leave between comb and bottom bars. This discontinuity of the combs is a situation that many man-made beehives create by design for the convenience of the beekeeper. It is absent in most natural bee nests. Often, the bees fill these gaps with bridge comb that we routinely remove during our hive inspections. Whereas these interruptions of the combs would not have been much of an obstacle for larger winter clusters, it proved to be fatal for these small wintering colonies that had endured a long and stressful dearth.

I had to do something to correct this flaw that I had suddenly perceived in my equipment. Since the daytime temperatures were mild, I decided to open my other hives, something I normally would not do at that time of year. Several colonies, although still alive, were in the same predicament the dead ones had encountered possibly only hours earlier, during the night. The bees were obviously very weak and lethargic. To restore the vertical continuity of their combs, I cut thin strips of comb that I placed on the top bars that were directly above the clusters. These, I thought, would act as ladders for the cold bees. Would that be enough to give them a chance to access their stores and to see the spring? This question is still to be answered. But, as I finish writing this text, nearly one month later, these hives are still humming.

Admittedly it's often a chain or group of events, factors and circumstances that lead to death. Seldom is it a single cause. The final one of these factors becomes frequently the most obvious and, it may be unfairly or incorrectly held responsible for the loss. Certainly, it can be said that the colonies that died were weak to begin with, if only because of the drought. The fact remains that a flaw in the design of the hives actually contributed to the demise of these colonies when the cold weather reduced the mobility of the bees.

I could blame myself for not identifying this defect in my beekeeping equipment earlier, but that would not help anything. So, I must learn something from this sobering experience, something that will benefit the bees in the future. Already, I know that next fall I will pay attention to this detail, which proved to be of vital importance. I have built double-deep frames, which I intend to use in the brood chambers. If such modifications improve my equipment, these colonies won't have died in vain.

February in the apiaries:

With absolutely no nectar to draw foragers out of the hives in January, my apiaries remained eerily quiet at a time when the colonies normally awake. I don't know how many times I placed an anxious ear against the sides of my hives. The hillside behind our home apiary kept its dry gray cover under a sky that was stubbornly devoid of rain clouds. Deprived of ground moisture for over a year, the manzanitas did not even bloom. The eucalyptus, having suffered heavy damage from the freezing nighttime temperatures in December did not offer any blossoms. No calendula, no mustard, nothing. And yet, we know that the part of the cold season that is the most severe for the bees is still ahead. Will there even be a spring flow this year?

The silver lining in this exceptionally long drought is that the extended period of winter broodlessness provided the bees with the best chance to reduce or eliminate their varroa mite populations. The colonies that did not take

advantage of this situation and that would need to be treated to keep them alive are not worth having around. Worse, wherever they are, those pampered bees would do damage to our bee populations during the next queen-mating season by spreading their inept genes. I am glad that there is not one of those undesirable colonies in my apiaries, but unfortunately there are some around.

Expanding on this point, we can see that the climatologic anomaly we are facing presents a huge opportunity for us beekeepers to strengthen our local bee populations. First, be assured that there will be bees in the spring. Among them will be some that made it through the winter without any beekeeper-provided treatments and food. These will be the really strong ones, those that had prepared adequately for winter and that survived it on their own in spite of the challenging conditions they were facing. Such bees are priceless. Their colonies should be multiplied and distributed locally, and their genetic make-up should be protected from bees brought from outside our area. It would be a real shame to object to nature's drastic triage of bee colonies and not to give our preference to bees that will have performed remarkably well under extraordinarily challenging conditions.

With this in mind, I call upon you to act accordingly by cancelling your orders of package bees or nucs, if they were medicated or fed, or if they do not originate in your very own immediate area of uniform environmental conditions. Stimulate the production of local survivor bees by demanding them and by networking among nearby beekeepers, through your local beekeepers' association if necessary, and by sharing locally adapted survivor stock. Bees are a natural resource that we must manage responsibly together. The bees will be stronger, and we will have in our hives healthier colonies that will be tough and well adjusted to the conditions around our apiaries. This is the future in beekeeping that we want, not the slavery of the treatment-feeding treadmill.

Normally, February is the wettest month of the year in our area. But, as I write this there is still no rain in sight. These exceptional and lasting weather conditions force us beekeepers to prepare for another year that will be very difficult for the bees.

In spite of the total lack of incoming pollen and nectar to stimulate my colonies, the brood nests are growing. This increasing demand for diminishing supplies is a dangerous situation, which is characteristic of this time of year, but it is greatly exacerbated this year. Yet, nothing should prevent the colonies from developing as rapidly and as strongly as they can. Supers with a few frames of empty drawn comb and follower boards will be in place by the middle of the month. This will prevent the congestion of the brood nests, should any nectar flow occur.

If there is to be any resemblance between this year and last, the spring flow, if there is one, will happen very early, and it will be brief, accompanied by a very short reproductive season. So, we have to be ready for any chance this might offer to renew our queens and to propagate the colonies that came successfully out of the long drought and odd winter. After that, the colonies may have to endure another long dearth. Honey? In times like these, if it is not for the bees, I am not thinking about it.

On the other hand, even if some rain finally does materialize, the bees could be kept inside their hives and will have to draw even more on their dwindling stores. However, the additional ground moisture might bring a late spring or an early-summer flow. What a different outlook for the balance of the year this would be!

All this means that, more than ever, we need to be flexible and nimble in the management of our hives, prepared for any possible scenario, and not unreasonably demanding of our bees.

In a nutshell: This year follows the worst on beekeeping record and it is the driest in centuries. At this point in time there is no relief in sight. So, in February I'll place supers and I will make certain that my colonies can grow. Then, I'll try to be prepared for anything. Meanwhile, I keep planting for bees. Drought resistant natives and Mediterranean plants stay at the top of my list: California buckwheat; all sorts of lavenders; rosemary; thyme; manzanitas; Toyons and more. Bees and birds will feed on them for many years.

This month:

- Inspect the exterior condition of the hives:
 - Verify that hive tops are still properly set and secured.
 - Observe the landing boards and the ground in front of the hives.
 - Verify that the hive entrances remain unobstructed.
 - On nice days, observe the flight paths and the bee activity. Maintain adequate and safe ventilation through the hives. Adjust the entrance reducers, if necessary.
- Examine the debris on the monitoring trays.
- Lift the back of the hives to feel if the colonies are running low on stores.
- Take care of or dispose of the equipment that held colonies that failed, as appropriate.
- Perform cursory inspections of the upper part of the hives on a sunny windless day.
- Place supers with a few frames of empty drawn comb and follower boards, where needed.
- Keep the upper ventilation slots open.
- Build and repair beekeeping equipment.
- Plan for spring.
- Plant bee forage

Beekeeping Classes at SRJC Taught by Serge Labesque

Introduction to Beekeeping

Category: Home and Garden

Section # 9082

Wed. February 5 through February 26, 2014, 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

2004 Lark Hall, Santa Rosa Campus

Course fee: \$88

Intermediate Beekeeping for spring and summer

Category: Home and Garden

Section # 9081

Wed. March 5 through March 12, 2014, 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

2004 Lark Hall, Santa Rosa Campus

Course fee: \$53

To register to the SRJC classes:

This can be found at: <https://portal.santarosa.edu/CommunityEducation/Information.aspx>

The options are:

- Online
- By phone: (707) 527-4372 during regular business hours
- By mail: with a check sent to Community Education Registration, 1501 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95401
- By fax: (707) 522-2731
- Or in person at Community Education.

BEE WISE: “SWARM IN YOUR BOX” by Emery Dann

Swarm collecting is one of our “Last Wild Frontiers”! Every swarm is unique depending on hours or days since the swarm’s arrival, location, height, size of cluster, weather conditions and the bee’s attitude! Swarms can be easy, less or more difficult and sometimes impossible beyond our ability to reach them. At this point, I wish them well!

Swarms are homeless—exposed to the elements, similar to us camping for a few days without a tent! Unlike us, their numbers provide warmth inside the cluster until they find the best shelter/home available to them. Every swarm catching beekeeper I know (myself included) has had a swarm leave before our arrival or they go in the box, and I return to find an empty box. Is this “bee humor”? Or are the bees saying, “Na na na na na—you can’t catch us!” If the swarm box is the right size AND if the queen is inside with a few frames of old comb made by other bees, you have the start of a functional beehive. You know you have the queen, if bees are going inside and there are bees “fanning their wings” outside the entrance.

Then you need a good, safe place to transport and set them up that night or the next day. By leaving the box there until dark before moving the bees or picking them up very early the next morning *before* the bees start flying, they will all be inside.

Swarm Etiquette:

1. Appreciate the concerns (bee hysteria) of those calling you. It may be the first time they have ever seen a cloud of bees or thousands of bees in a swarm cluster. This is an opportunity to educate the neighborhood about honey bees. You represent the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association. Give them the best service possible!
2. Ask permission to cut branches off trees or shrubs, if needed. While it may make it easier for you, they may not like their prize Petunias being trampled, limbs removed or gates left open that you went through and forgot to close.
3. Get their name and phone number. Stay in contact, if you leave and come back later.
4. Finish well. I was called to the parking lot in front of Home Depot for a swarm. Another beekeeper (not a member) the day before had removed a swarm there in the middle of the day, taking the queen and *most* of the hive. I was called for the “second swarm” or the remaining bees left from the first cluster. There was no way I could hive the remaining bees without the queen. I told them it was impossible for me to help them. This was unfair to the business, customers and to my time trying to help. We need to do the next right thing and treat others better than we want them to treat us!

Like the song “The Gambler” sung by Kenny Rogers in the 70’s, “You have to know when to *hold em*, know when to *fold em*, know when to *walk away* and know when to *RUN!*”

Bee Plants of the Month By Alice Ford-Sala

Native Plant of the Month *Carpenteria Californica* Bush Anemone Family Philadelphaceae

Now is a good time to really think about planting natives, as they can survive on a lot less water than many ordinary garden plants. If you want a very pretty, sweetly fragrant and hardy plant, you might want to consider planting a Bush Anemone. They are so attractive that they are also grown in England for the free flowering white with yellow-centered blooms. Growth can be up to 7 feet tall, with most bloom occurring in spring. The bright white flowers will perk up a garden corner, blending well with other woodland plants. Sun in cooler summer areas, or part shade is the natural light requirements of Bush Anemone. Most soil types are tolerated, with good drainage important. Water can be very infrequent, though a little summer water will keep the plant perkier. If growth is too rangy you can cut the bush back after flowering.

A note on planting natives: though they are drought tolerant, when you plant a new specimen, you do need to soak the soil thoroughly, or they won't survive. That's why we usually plant in the fall to take advantage of winter rains

Beneficial Plant of the Month *Verbascum* Mullein Family Scrophulariaceae

Thanks to Ettamarie for suggesting this month's plant. She mentioned that she has it growing wild in her yard. It is indeed a wild-growing plant, liking to grow by the side of the road and spreading freely. Mullein is native to the Mediterranean, which makes it very adaptable to our climate. The leaves are wooly and soft, and the flowers are borne on tall spikes, sometimes up to 3 feet high. Bees adore them. Many are yellow flowered, but they can be blends of striking colors such as white and purple in *V. chaixii*, or purple in *V. phoeniceum*. The "wild" plant, *V. thaspsus* has been mentioned as a good tea plant, or even hair rinse! Give them full sun and moderate to light water. They are very easy to grow, I planted some in my folks yard and it comes back every year with no care. If you cut the flower stalk off after bloom, you might get another flower spike- and the bees will thank you.

January Bee Education By Jen Espinoza

Though our bees appear less active in the winter, the education committee has been working very hard on creating a Spanish version of our bee presentation. We hope to reach out to more Spanish-speaking community members, starting with preschools and immersion/bilingual schools. Additionally, a team presented to The Healdsburg School at the end of January (in English!) and were amazed by how much the kids already knew about bees. They had watched Maria Spivak's Ted Talks video on why bees are disappearing (http://www.ted.com/talks/marla_spivak_why_bees_are_disappearing.html) and have taken on a project to make Insect and Native Bee Hotels. Below is a picture of one from Hamburg, Germany. Many of these hotels can be found in Europe, and it would be great to see more here as our landscape technique of mulching often covers up habitat that our native pollinators desperately need.



The Education Committee thanks SCBA member MARK FREELAND for his generous donation of time and materials in laminating all of our education posters. That's 40 posters! All laminated for free and now education efforts can go on and on because the beautiful posters will last and last! Thanks John!

Pre-meeting Social Hour By Christine Kurtz

I am inviting you to come to our monthly meetings starting at 6 p.m. an hour before the general meeting program starts and have some tea (be green and bring your own cup) and cookies to meet other beekeepers, share your triumphs and find support for your departed and ask all your questions ruminating in your mind. Volunteers sporting an Ask Me About Bees button are available to answer your questions about bees. If you want to be an Ask Me volunteer please contact me at pastpresident@sonomabees.org or southcluster@sonomabees.org. You don't need to know everything as we are all there to support and help each other, just have a few years of experience. Or just come up to me (Christine Kurtz, your past president) at the meeting and I'll adorn you with a button.

Show and tell or show and ask as very welcome and are great teaching and learning tools. Don't be shy to ask questions as no question is too stupid or elementary, we have all had them at the beginning and then found that there is an ever stream of questions to follow so you might as well practice asking.

Katia and Doug from beekind store and April Lance from Healdsburg will be there to offer their bees for sale. Please seek them out at their tables. They can answer all your questions about purchasing bees. Note that Geoff Whitford from Bloomfield Bees will regrettably **not** be selling nucs this year. See you there! Christine Kurtz, Past President



Dr. Eric Mussen from U.C. California Davis will be here at our Feb. meeting to answer questions on the health of our bees. He is the Extension specialist on honey bees.

Regional Cluster Program Overview and Goals for 2014

For more information contact the Regional Coordinator at: regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org

This was the first year for this program and in general it was a great success! Here are some of the accomplishments of the program:

1. We had 15 Bee Cafes- 3 per Cluster Group with topics on all kinds of honeybee problems. The emphasis was on hands on beekeeping.
2. More than 30 hive dives- There were many more hive dives than 30 but they were not all recorded. People would have loved even more of these!
3. We have 5 active and working clusters! We have 5 excellent cluster leaders and all have backups to help out the leaders in case of sickness, overload or technology challenges.
4. A Liaison position with Napa County was established. This will improve communication between our groups and possibly create programs that could mutually benefit both groups. Jon Senigny is the new Liaison. To contact Jon: napacluster@sonomabees.org
5. A learning Apiary was created in the South County Cluster. It is called "Serendipity Apiary. They saved several dying hives and created a place for beekeepers to congregate and learn about every aspect of the bees.
6. Bee Buddies were made by all. This was the greatest benefit to see, people talking and sharing both their successes and their loses. We are not alone anymore!
7. People felt more comfortable coming to the general meetings because they now know people from the hive dives and bee Cafes.
8. People said they learned so much from the hands on activities. More than you can learn from books, classes and reading. Seeing is learning and, in small groups, they were not afraid to ask!

Regional Cluster News

South County just had a bee cafe about equipment in January and is gearing up for another bee cafe on February 19 at 6 pm in Ettamarie's Barn. We are talking about reproduction from plant sex and those funny promiscuous squash plants and to the dual reproduction system of bees. Thea Vierling will be our guest speaker and not to be missed. We will also have swarm certification for those who did not have a chance to be certified at the January meeting. If you want to be on the swarm list you must attend one of the certification classes. Please bring finger foods to share.

If you are part of the south cluster look for an invite in your e-mail and sign up there. If you do not get an invitation please e-mail me at southcluster@sonomabees.org.

If anyone in our cluster has a dead out hive and wishes to have an "autopsy" done and wouldn't mind a group of beekeepers tagging along let me know. There is a lot to learn from an empty hive, especially whether you can re-use the equipment or not. Again contact me. Christine Kurtz-South cluster leader.

East cluster has an equipment workshop on Sunday Feb. 9 in Sonoma. The top bar hive sub cluster will meet Sunday Feb. 16 in Sebastopol. For more details go the calendar. If you have any questions, email: eastcluster@sonomabees.org

Central Cluster had a build a frame workshop in January (the one day it rained!). Chris Conrad hosted and shared with us his tips and tricks to frame building, as well as a variety of methods of foundation (wax, wired, pop cycle sticks, etc.). Thank you, Chris Conrad for being a gracious host! For more information contact Sierra at centercluster@sonomabees.org Sierra

West Cluster: We had a very productive West County Cluster meeting last week and have mapped out our activities for the first half of 2014. Next month we have two events planned; one a return visit to Bloomfield Bees for an equipment seminar (specifically aimed at new beekeepers). It will be on February 9th, 1:00 to 3:00. Chris Dicker is sending out notices. The second activity is an analysis of a dead hive. One of our members had a hive that went silent in early December (no activity at all). Christine Kurtz will do a "forensic hive dive" to take the supers apart, look for possible issues, and to suggest changes for next year. We have that scheduled for February 16th. For details contact Chris at: westcluster@sonomabees.org



This is a picture submitted by Brandon Maio. It is fairly typical of a hive that had food but died because the cluster was too small and could not create enough heat to survive. There was plenty of food. Analyzing a failed hive is a very valuable activity for a cluster to do. If you want to do something like this, ask your cluster leader to organize this activity.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 6, 2014

We began the meeting with a fantastic lasagna dinner at Ettamarie Peterson's home.

Present: Ettamarie Peterson—President; Denise Wright, visitor; Sabin Larsen—MembersOnly Admin; Cheryl Veretto—Webmaster; Linda Hale—2nd Vice Pres.; Rita Maloney—Treasurer; Becky Jackson—Secretary; Laura Baker—1st Vice Pres.; Deborah Hammerlee—retiring Membership; Christine Kurtz—Past Pres.; Kelli Cox—Volunteers.

Meeting called to order at 6:36 pm by President, Ettamarie.

II. President's Report-- Ettamarie confirmed that there are 5 Board positions, and up to 13 support staff. By acclimation, Cheryl Veretto and Sabin Larsen were appointed as Board Members-at-Large with voting privileges. Ettamarie asked, and Rita volunteered to notify the State of the minor changes in the Bylaws that were made last month. Cheryl will update the website with the change.

Rita reports via email: We do have to report any change in the by-laws to the IRS, even though our change is considered to be "minor". A "major" change would be something that would directly affect our 501 (c) 3 status and needs to be reported immediately. Ours can be reported during the regular report, which isn't due until May.

I. Cheryl moved that the December 2013 Board minutes be approved as written. Rita seconded; all approved.

III. 1st VP Report by Laura Baker—Laura and Deborah H. met to transfer info. There was some discussion as to what info would be useful in a Membership Report to the board in the future. Cheryl will help define a list of helpful info, such as Commercial members, swarm list, expiring members, etc. Sabin can put it in CiviCRM and Google Docs so everyone on the Board can open the reports. Laura reports 420 members now including 158 expiring members currently in a 30-day grace period.

A Crop Survey Report for the State Dept. of Ag will not be presented by SCBA. The Ag Commissioner, Andrew, can come to a meeting to ask people.

Update on Board position: Laura had difficulty in the huge number of expiring memberships handed to her, but it may improve next year as new memberships won't all expire on Dec 31. She brought up an issue with the free ad that Business Members should get in the Newsletter. There are currently about 8 Business members and no official Honorary Members. Rita as treasurer should be informed of the ones getting a free ad.

IV. 2nd VP Report by Linda Hale—Proposed Programs and Tentative Events lists were handed out. Christine will continue being a liaison with Mia of the Marin Beekeepers. Some months our meetings don't fall in the same week, so we can't share a speaker. Linda thanks Thea who set up the first few months of programs to help in the Board transition. SCBA provides audiovisual equipment: laptop, screens, mikes and speakers. The Meeting night schedule is:

1. Dinner with the Speaker
2. 6:00 – 7:00 pm Pre-meeting activities (small groups, Q&A, socializing, etc.)
3. 7:00 pm Business items (about 20-30 mins.)
4. 7:30 pm Speakers and Program (45 minute talk with 15 minutes Q&A)

Compensation can be offered such as a bottle of wine, hive tool, tee shirt. Cash payments need advance Board approval. Linda asks if there is a budget for Speakers, and Rita answered no, she doesn't want money specified for Speakers, which then cannot be used for other things. But there is money available under "Meetings."

The County Fair, Apple Fair and Heirloom Festival are the 3 events the Board will be responsible for in 2014. Other volunteers may run some of the other events with our blessing. Ettamarie is representing us at the upcoming Scion Exchange with a table and brochures.

V. Secretary's Report by Becky Jackson—Becky asked for nametags to be worn until she learns people's names. Jen Espinoza will make nametags. It was mentioned that anyone can come to Board meetings, but with the current venues at people's homes with a dinner served, it is encouraged that non-board members RSVP to the host.

VI. Treasurer's Report by Rita Maloney—Rita handed out a Reimbursement Form for everyone to use when requesting reimbursement. Also handed out the December Financial Report showing Bank balance of \$17,190.63. The Dec. income was \$8252 and expenses were \$2248. The Silent Auction earned about \$5000, and the year ended with numbers very close to our projected budget.

Rita has the CiviCRM instruction book and will give it to Sabin, and then Laura would like to see it too.

2014 Budget—Discussion ensued. Rita suggests we invest some of our money in 9 month CD's. Should we charge non-members if we have a 'big name' speaker? Cheryl will run the plant sale table.

We will no longer sell merchandise other than trying to sell what's left, or give as gifts. Members can order merchandise directly from Café Press and we get a percentage. Link is on website.

Laura moved to accept the proposed 2014 Budget (\$20,000 income and \$20,000 in expenses) as presented by Rita. Cheryl seconded and all approved.

VII. Group Reports-

- a. Regional Clusters—Thea was sick but sent a Liability Release for members. This latest one was worked on by Philip Welsh, a lawyer. Rita reminded all that the Association's Liability insurance is for Board members only, not cluster leaders. Sabin can put a check box on the membership form that they will have to check agreeing that they have read and accepted our liability release policy. But words to the effect of "Refusal to accept doesn't deny membership." Cheryl moved that we approve the Member Liability Release as written, and approve the Audio & Visual Authorization as written. Laura seconded. But clarification was asked concerning the Denial of Authorization to use Audio & Visual recordings. It was decided to include verbiage from the Denial document to the Authorization document. Cheryl amended her motion to approve the Audio & Visual Authorization to include the words: "*With such denial of consent, I understand and agree that it is my sole and personal responsibility to be aware of any such audio and visual recordings of an Activity (whether or not there is any posted notice of such recording, and include a duty to inquire whenever and wherever I am otherwise unsure whether there is any such recording planned or proceeding) and to remain outside of any area that may be involved in such recordings.*" The amended motion was seconded by Laura and all approved.
- b. Education—Jen Espinoza wasn't here but sent a year-end report. She won't usually attend, but will send updates.
- c. Technology committee—all agreed it would be a great idea and will be Cheryl, Sabin and Jim Spencer. Only one needs to report to the Board.
- d. Pre-Meeting Coordinator—Christine volunteered and reports that she will organize it more thoroughly this year. She will have "Ask Me" volunteers; she will organize small groups to give 10-minute talks (in a corner, not on stage); there will be Show and Tell stuff, perhaps called "Christine's Corner." Kelli will provide the cookies and teas each month.
- e. Swarms-- John Kraft wasn't present, but Rita will ask him to send out the postcards earlier to businesses and schools, fire departments, etc. Discussion ensued on who can be on the swarm list, and who can approve members to appear on the swarm list. All agreed that John should have that task if it doesn't become a burden. Board Members and Thea can also have administrative privileges, but Cluster Leaders should not. Cheryl may change the password to get into Google Docs. Sabin will put the Swarm Liability Form on the website, and include a "Swarm List" check box on the Membership form with words to the effect of: "checking this box doesn't get me on the swarm list, I have to go through approved training by John Kraft." Rita will communicate this to John. Our February general meeting will be John explaining about the process of getting on the Swarm List. Cheryl made a motion to approve the new swarm list liability release form as presented. Laura seconded and all approved.

VIII. Old Business

- a. The BOD meeting day will remain the same, the 1st Monday of the month at 6:00 pm, with dinner included. Next month Rita will host it, and Linda might host in March.
- b. Our involvement in the Scion Exchange on Jan 25th at the Vet's bldg. will be organized by Ettamarie.
- c. The membership benefits for business members is already updated on the website.
- d. Cheryl asked for SCBA to renew her website design contract for another year at a raised rate of \$600 per year. It covers maintenance at this point, since she has done a fantastic job of designing the new site. Cheryl will send the contract to Rita. Sabin moved "to continue to use Cheryl for web maintenance, web service, and online support." Laura seconded and all approved.

IX. New Business

- a. Cheryl will change the password again for Google Docs and Web mail to remove some of the extra people not needing confidential info.
- b. Polo shirts—the ladies chose a ¾ sleeve version in Midnight Blue, and Sabin can have the men's version, made by Port Authority. The board members will have exclusively the blue, and other volunteers can order other colors. Please wear to General Meetings to ID us as Board Members.
- c. Quick review of technical abilities—Ettamarie needs help with computer 'stuff' and Cheryl can help her. Cheryl suggests a group training with us all bringing our laptops and will try to set that up. Christine reports that the Cluster Groups just met at Jim Spencer's home to learn how to create regional events. Jim is making YouTube tutorials for teaching us with. Christine added that she is acting as a board liaison to the Historian, Kristie Stramler. They would like to put interesting things on the website.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm. Next Board Meeting on Feb. 3rd, 6:00 pm at Rita Maloney's.

Respectfully submitted, Becky Jackson, Secretary

Treasurer's Report February 1, 2014

The combined bank account totals are \$18,180.02. Membership dues are coming in steadily early this year, \$2200 this month. Your timely payment helps us plan for the year, so thank you!

We are working with a budget for 2014 of \$20,000. You are welcome to email me (treasurer@sonomabees.org) to receive a copy of the yearly budget and/or the monthly report that I present to the Board showing the current month's income and expenses.

Treasurer's Report January 1, 2014 (REVISED)

The combined bank account totals are \$17,190. Our income for the year was \$22,547 and our expenses were \$21,770 for a net profit for the year of \$783. Our budget for the year was \$20,500, so we came very close to meeting our budget projections.

Our silent auction was a resounding success, with a net total of just over \$5,000. Thank you for supporting the organization by participating in the auction.

Membership dues are still rolling in, to the tune of \$2115 this month.

Our major expense this month was the purchase of an iPad mini to use for taking credit card payments at the meetings and at events like our auction and a new (refurbished) laptop for the Treasurer. The old Treasurer's laptop will now be our dedicated Association computer to use at the meetings for presentations. These two new items totaled \$861 and now make it possible for Board members to not have to use their own computers to perform Association business. An iPad has also been loaned (by me) to the Secretary for her note-taking use at meetings.

As I start to create a budget for 2014, the main change will be to have separate budget items for the Regional Clusters and for the Education group. Both will be well funded in order to fulfill our Mission Statement of providing Education about bees to the general public and to our Association members.

General Membership Meeting, 4-H Bldg., Rohnert Park Jan. 14, 2014

Pre-meeting talk by John Krafft about getting on swarm list. More details discussed during the regular meeting.

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm by Ettamarie Peterson, new President (she has been beekeeping for 17 years). 109 members in attendance.

Introduced new officers. Asked the members how many have lost all their hives and about 20 raised their hands. "Pray for rain" she added!

Two at-large board members were introduced: Cheryl Veretto and Sabin Larsen. They can, in addition to any board member, bring your concerns to Board meetings.

Scion Exchange on Jan. 25th, 10 am-2 pm at the Vet's Building, SR. Ettamarie is looking for volunteers to man a table for SCBA.

Christine had a few awards to pass out left over from December dinner meeting.

Andrew from Ag Commission was announced but not here. There is a copy of the 2013 Crop Report he would like all beekeepers to fill out. A link will be added to our website to the Ag site for anyone interested.

Christine Kurtz is in charge of the pre-meeting social hour. She welcomes suggestions for topics or help. She recited some great drone trivia. She says Marin beekeepers are seeing drones in their hives already.

Program on "Swarm Orientation" by John Krafft, "Taking Bees from Walls" by Chris Conrad, and a Panel Discussion by Emory Dann and Ettamarie.

2nd VP Linda Hale first talked about requirements to be on this year's Swarm List:

Sign a Liability Release form.

Be an active member of SCBA.

Attend orientation training.

Have prior swarm retrieval experience.

You must be certified by Swarm Leader (John Krafft).

You can be on only one swarm region unless you're a business member.

The list has a random sort, which works better than in the past.

John reports he has been a beekeeper for two years. He passed a tablet around asking people to record they were here. This informational 'workshop' is one of the qualifications to being on the Swarm List. Only 20-25% swarms, on average, survive according to Serge. It's important to keep them in their own geographic area.

Problems SCBA has in past with some swarm calls:

- Beekeepers not returning phone calls
- Taking calls and not showing up
- Getting upset because other beeks show up
- Never getting swarm calls
- Inexperienced in collecting swarms.

The public.... doesn't always know who to call.
Maybe go anyway (for public service) even if they're yellow jackets.
Use the moment to educate the public.

Chris Conrad spoke next. He has a business: *Bee-conscious Bee Removal*. Chris has been beekeeping for 6 years. He removes swarms as well as colonies that have already moved into a building. This is called an extraction. These bees are always defensive, since they have a home to defend. He always wears a bee suit or veil, and often uses a Bee vac.

He had a slide show of pictures of his many jobs. Cool!! He was self-taught, rents any heavy equipment needed, and doesn't fix any holes he makes. Verbal agreements, not a signed contract, work for him so far. He tells the homeowner to then get a contractor who is not afraid of bees to repair any holes several days later. He charges based on each case: usually about \$600-800, maybe a few thousand. He had about 50 jobs last year. Starts around noon and lasts all day.

Ettamarie spoke next and always brings a swarm box with old comb in it. She also has a swarm bucket with a supply list written on the outside: rubber disposable gloves, Duct tape, Fisher's Bee Quick, rope, turkey feathers, bungee cords, business cards to give to passers by, caution tape, extra box, extra veil, sugar water spray.

Emory Dann then spoke on his experiences. He's an arborist and owns *Skyline Tree Experts*. His extractions this year didn't have any stored honey (it was a pretty dry year). Bees are unpredictable: be ready to put them in a box of any kind. Put handles on your boxes! Cardboard swarm boxes warp, he has wooden ones. He lays a bed sheet on ground before shaking the swarm. Or throw a rope over limb and raise a bucket with comb in it. Leave there all day. Gets them all! Rope is coiled in a gallon nursery pot. He says you can tell the queen is in your box if the bees start fanning and marching in. Leave them until after dark and then retrieve the hive. In your vehicle, align your hive frames front to back so frames don't bang together when vehicle stops. Emory does 10-15 extractions per year. Over the years, he's done 75 limb removals with hives intact. April Lance has one of them and she reports they are healthy and strong.

Janet Leisen recommends the *Easy-nuc*, available at Western Farm or Beekind. Stiff enough, but lightweight. Cost about \$20, if pre-built.

Hector Alvarez talked about *tanging*. If a swarm is flying overhead or otherwise on the wing, you can bang metal to make noise. It confuses them and they will land somewhere close by.

Linda thanked everyone and reported that next month's speaker is Eric Mussen from UC Davis. Meeting ended at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Becky Jackson, SCBA Secretary

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Extractor Techs- Call Ettamarie 707-765-4582 or Janet Leisen 707- 528-2085 to rent the electric extractor for \$5 a day. Rental fee is \$5 per day. We have a third extractor and need someone to store it for us. If you have an easy to access space and are willing to supervise the checking out and in of this equipment, please contact our treasurer.

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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Webmaster- Cheryl Veretto Webmaster@sonomabees.org

Historian - historian@sonomabees.org



When I was up at Truckee (looking for snow :>() I discovered this shop. Besides tasting some interesting honeys they had Balsamic vinegars, olive oils and some jams and jellies to taste. The honey was from Moonshine Honey Co. The lady said it has some connection with U.C.Davis. I told her about Randy Oliver being a famous beekeeper and living very close by so she said she would look him up. The store is called Tahoe Oil and Spice. Check out their website tahoeoilandspice.com.



Did you ever wonder how bees carry propolis? This bee is taking away some propolis she found on old equipment by packing it on her back legs.