

sonomabees.org

Sonoma County Beekeepers Association

Three Year Report

2019-2020-2021

Sonoma County Beekeepers Association
P.O. Box 98
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501(c)3
EIN 68-0193325



Hello SCBA member!

What follows is an overview of your association, run by your friends and community, laid out in a single document. Please take a minute to read through it and marvel at the incredible endeavor being done on behalf of honey bees in Sonoma County. Our association volunteers accomplish amazing work and every ounce of effort is reflected in the strength of our community, the health of our honey bees, and the quality of their environment.

- Miles Sarvis-Wilburn, Program Director

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PART ONE: WHY WE'RE HERE



"I continue to be amazed by the overwhelming support by SCBA volunteers and members. I so enjoy sharing my beekeeping knowledge with others and being educated by those with more experience. We all WIN, including the bees!"
- Rorie Sweeney, Regional Cluster Coordinator

Our Mission

Our mission is to have a thriving and sustainable bee population in Sonoma County.
We strive ...



“Little did I know when a beautiful big swarm of bees landed in my backyard seven years ago that my life journey would lead me into beekeeping. I went from knowing very little about beekeeping to thoroughly enjoying caring for my own beehives and assisting others. My initial offer to donate cookies led me into being a part of our wonderful beekeeping community and serving on the board for five years. Being active in SCBA has truly been a gift and an amazing journey along the way.”

- Ann Jereb, President of the Board of Directors

Our Organizational Values



We share the common goal of increasing the resiliency of honey bees.

We are committed to the critical evaluation of research and beekeeping practices to optimize colony health and survival.



We work to provide and protect healthy ecosystems that support honey bees and other pollinators.

We are focused on educating the community on the biology and importance of the honey bee.



We believe in building a respectful and inclusive beekeeping community that helps our members thrive.

Your Support

SCBA only exists due to the incredible hard work of its volunteers and the support of its membership and community. Here are some ways you can continue to help support our work with the honey bee in Sonoma County.

Expand our membership: <https://sonomabees.org/join>

If you are not a member, join! Tell your friends, family, and neighbors. Many SCBA members are not beekeepers themselves; some wish to be at some point, others are gardeners, and others still are just interested in bees.

Donate directly: <https://sonomabees.org/donate>

Donations help us run our three programs (see the third section of this report) and keep our organization in strong financial standing. SCBA is a 501(c)3 and your donation is tax deductible!

Choose us on Amazon Smile: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0193325>

Choose Sonoma County Beekeepers Association as your charity of preference on Amazon Smile and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to SCBA. It's totally free and easy!

Choose us with eScrip and your local grocery community card:

<https://www.escrip.com>

Selecting Sonoma County Beekeepers Association as your preferred charity in conjunction with using your community card at local grocery stores like Oliver's and Petaluma Market directs 3-5% of your purchases to SCBA at no cost to you!

"I am a member and I did actually have a hive here, but I got a bee sting last fall that landed me in the ER. I have a severe allergy. : (But I could not believe the deep generosity of my bee buddies when I was first starting out. I still appreciate it. So I am pleased to give my monthly tithe to SCBA. I love and profoundly appreciate what you all do."

- Sally Romer, member

PART TWO: WHO WE ARE



Back in the early nineties an informal group of local beekeepers would meet to discuss their mutual interest, eventually becoming the Sonoma Bee Club. In 1994 they founded the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association and began to draw increasing attention from the community. SCBA was formally incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in 2006 and has since grown to over five-hundred members. And yet, this amazing growth has not meant a loss of our roots; we still have many of the original founding members with us providing guidance, expertise, and wisdom. If nothing else, SCBA revolves around this personal mentoring that can only happen when a loving community comes together to better themselves, their environment, and their bees.

“Just wanted to pass on a comment from a member who joined the other night. He'd come to a couple meetings of ours and has been in other bee organizations. He wanted us to know that he thinks SCBA is the most well run, professional bee organization he has experienced. Very impressed with everything. Kudos!”

- Irene Sample, Membership Coordinator

Quick Facts



100% all-volunteer.



Over 500 members!



Celebrated twenty-fifth anniversary in 2019.



Largest regional county association on the west coast, perhaps nationwide.

“Our work with SCBA is not just about taking care of the honey bee, it’s about taking care of our community. Like the honey bee we need each other to thrive. SCBA offers both its members and our communities the ability to educate each other about pollinators while helping each other. As we become more understanding of the bee, we understand each other better as well. This understanding gives us the ability to help our communities and develop skills that we otherwise might not have the chance to share. In this way, SCBA has the ability to cross imposed human barriers because the focus is on the honey bee, not on the differences between each other. SCBA brings folks together that probably wouldn’t ever meet if it weren’t for the common thread, the honey bee.”

- Kelli Cox, member and former Volunteer Coordinator, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, and President

Our Volunteers



The Sonoma County Beekeepers Association is nothing if not our amazing, hardworking volunteers. Whether it be overseeing the association on the board of directors, helping educate beekeepers on best practices, educating the community on the value of bees and pollinators, or propagating invaluable forage, just like bees in a colony our volunteers keep the association productive and meaningful.

We currently have around fifty people who turn the wheels of this amazing organization. That means about ten percent of our membership selflessly puts forward their time and energy for the betterment of both our county's honey bees and our community.

Want to help SCBA continue our good work and be a part of this amazing association? We have the following positions open in 2021:

President of the Board of Directors: The President oversees the operations of the association, making sure that our programs and activities are within the guidelines put

forward by our mission statement and our core values. Working closely with the 1st Vice President, the President chairs monthly Board meetings and serves as the face of the association. The board has spent two years making this position more manageable and approachable, and you will have the ongoing assistance of our current President throughout the coming year. This position is perfect for an outgoing, excited person who cares deeply about our work and wishes to see it through the coming year and beyond!

Secretary of the Board of Directors: The Secretary is the official custodian of the association's by-laws and takes notes at both board meetings and general meetings. This position works closely with the Treasurer, President, and other board members, and is perfect for someone who is very organized and structured.

Community Education Program Coordinator: The SCBA Community Education Program is composed of four parts (school presentations, community events, the School Pollinator Garden Project, and the Public Swarm Service) and needs someone to facilitate public inquiries by directing them to the appropriate project, as well as to run quarterly meetings. This is an oversight position and one that helps the many volunteers in schools, parades, fairs, libraries, and community organizations work with more ease. Just interested in keeping accounts? This program is looking for a Treasurer as well!

North and Central Educational Regional Liaisons: SCBA sends trained volunteers into hundreds of local schools, teaching thousands of students about the value of wonders of honey bees. Regional liaisons manage their local areas volunteers, being sure they know where to go and when. Teachers, educators, or anyone interested in the relationship between students and educational content are welcome to inquire.

Tech Committee: SCBA maintains multiple personal computers, a website, membership program, internal email and cloud storage, as well as social media pages. We have a need for technologically savvy folks who wish to volunteer time either on the front end or back end of these various platforms. All work can be done remotely.

Don't see what you are interested in and would like to volunteer for something else? No problem! Reach out to any volunteer to get more information and be directed to someone who can help.

Our Community Partners

SCBA is decisively local. We partner with numerous organizations, educational institutions, and groups across our beautiful county. Below are some of our community partners:

Youth Ag & Leadership Foundation	Kenwood Elementary
School Garden Network, Sonoma County	Mark West School District
Sonoma 4-H	Penngrove Elementary
Sonoma County Farm Trails	Austin Creek Elementary
Bees N Blooms	College Oak Montessori
Daily Acts	Proctor Terrace Elementary
Petaluma Downtown Association	Prestwood Elementary
Community Soil Foundation	La Tercera Elementary
City of Santa Rosa	Sonoma Charter
Girl Scouts of Northern California	Kid Street Charter
Healdsburg Sunrise Rotary	The Spring Hill Middle School
Juilliard Park Community Garden	French/English Charter
Multicultural Child Development Center	Dunham Elementary
Children's Museum of Sonoma County	Montessori School of Sonoma

PART THREE: WHAT WE DO



Beekeeping Program

The goal of the SCBA Beekeeping Program is to foster the practice of sustainable beekeeping in Sonoma County. We do this through:

- Educating ourselves about the honey bee.
- Staying at the forefront of news and research.
- Continually honing our craft in the apiary.

Much like the workings of the colony, our strength is our collective knowledge and willingness to learn and share. The Beekeeping Program stands as the central pillar of the organization, informing and guiding broader activities while continually striving to reaffirm its central tenant: love of the bees and the community they help cultivate.

2019 QUICK FACTS



Conducted over 75 educational presentations



Delivered over 20 educational workshops



Shared over 100 swarms and splits between members



Continued additions to our library, now with over 230 items

2020 IN PROCESS

2020 has been a difficult year for both bees and beekeepers alike. The emergence of COVID-19 meant that all our meetings, both general monthly meetings and regional cluster meetings, could no longer occur in person. The Wallbridge, Myers, and Glass fires meant smokey skies and difficult foraging for our colonies. And yet, in spite of these hurdles and just like our bees, the association adapted and was able to engage its membership, albeit at limited capacity.



Remote Education and Community

The Board of Directors reacted quickly to new social distancing regulations by purchasing an organizational membership to Zoom as well as securing presenters over this new platform. This allowed for general meetings to occur remotely, with interesting presentations being delivered by such renowned beekeepers as Tom Seeley and our local Serge LaBesque. Additionally, regional clusters were able to provide ongoing educational presentations with presenters such as our own Christine Kurtz at a local level.



Ongoing Beeshare

The popular Beeshare project, wherein beekeepers donate swarms or splits to fellow beekeepers in need, was slightly limited but we were able to remain safe while sharing swarms and splits. Over one hundred swarms and splits were shared, reminding us all that the SCBA community is a generous one whose primary goal is the health and well-being of our bees.

COMING UP FOR 2021



New educational opportunities

Pilot plans are in place for expanding the cluster curriculum to include material more suitable for the intermediate and advanced beekeeper.



New speakers and presenters

Other than a few hugely popular local experts who will be kindly asked to return, we will continue to expand our speaker and presenter selection to cover a wide basis of topics and interests.



Increased data capture

Thanks to members reporting their swarms, we have better data for these events over time and place. If increased reporting keeps up, we hope to be able to expand our reports to include size and source.



Expanding our media

We look forward to building out our new website to include more educational information for our membership, better documentation of our activities, and a focused social media presence.

“Being a part of SCBA is such a valuable experience. Amazing intelligent information on our bees and other pollinators that help me every day learn how to live in harmony with nature and what complex creatures our bees really are. Every time I attend a general meeting I come away with more knowledge and respect for our community and how we all can live better lives working together while helping these beings survive and thrive. I love volunteering for this organization because it feeds my soul, and I have met stellar human beings who have opened my heart very wide.”

- Karen Cappa, 2020 1st Vice President

A special thanks to Ettamarie Peterson, Cheryl Veretto, Emery Dann, Randy Sue Collins, Spring Maxfield, Michael Kelly, Kathleen Murphy, Kelly Cox, Katia Vincent, Thea Vierling, Christine Kurtz, and Serge LaBesque for helping found our organization and providing years of expert guidance.



Community Education Program

The goal of the SCBA Community Education Program is to educate the Sonoma County community on the importance of pollinators, in particular the honey bee. We do this through:

- Presenting to students at local schools.
- Engaging the public at fairs, parades, and other events.
- Providing a swarm retrieval service to the public.

Beekeepers can do their best when it comes to their apiaries, but not everyone is or wants to be a beekeeper. Everyone, however, impacts pollinators through their choices and actions in their daily lives. The Community Education Program is how SCBA interacts and engages our neighbors across the county, continually reinforcing our place as knowledgeable and helpful beekeepers to the public at large.

2019 QUICK FACTS



Collaboration with over 30 schools, reaching 3,600 students



6 major community events serviced



Thousands of members of the public reached through events and swarms



Successful pilot launch of the School Pollinator Garden Project

2020 IN PROGRESS

The Community Education Program was the hardest hit by COVID-19 as the pandemic meant the suspension of school and thus both the School Presentation Project and the School Pollinator Garden Project were put entirely on hold. In addition, with public gatherings being unsafe the Community Events portion of this program was also postponed. This said, we were able to educate many local residents through the Public Swarm Service (over 100 successful calls!) and look forward to rejoining schools when it is safe and appropriate.

COMING UP FOR 2021



Scaling up SPGP

The School Pollinator Garden Project was very successful and will seek to double its reach into schools and their gardens. Collaborating with educators, gardeners, and students, we hope to service over ten schools in the coming year.



Improving media

Our school presentations reach thousands of students of all ages every year. Given that this happens in the classroom and not at the hive or in a meeting, SCBA members may be unaware of its incredible reach. We hope to improve our media capture of this incredible work to share with membership throughout the school year.



Library Presentations

Plans are in order to expand our educational presentations out of schools and into our local library system. The Sonoma County Regional Library has fourteen locations and reaches hundreds of thousands of residents every year. What a perfect place to learn about bees!



Continuing to refine

In 2019 the Board of Directors decided to refine how SCBA handled swarms, mostly due to insurance and legal issues. 2020 saw a new structure, titled the Public Swarm Service, and we aim to continue down this path focusing on educating individual community members during this incredibly wondrous moment.

“Hello!

Maggie and Stevie came to our garden (Larkfield Community Garden) and presented to a 4th, 5th and 6th grade special education class and a 3rd grade class from Mark West Elementary. Their presentation was age appropriate and very informative. They answered all the children's questions and several times used their questions to lead into the next part of their presentation.

Their own interest in and excitement about bees was apparent as well as their knowledge. They used the time well and tailored their presentation to fit into the time available

We are excited about the plants and they came with beautiful and informative markers. We will plant them with the classes that heard the presentation within a bee patch planted in our garden by girl scouts. [...]

We are also very excited to have the presenters returning for a honey tasting in May.

*Thank you!
Kerri”*

A special thanks to Thea Vierling, Maggie Weaver, Ettamarie Peterson, and Jen Espinoza for crafting the Education Program into what it is today. Tens of thousands of Sonoma County students are better prepared to help the honey bee due to your efforts.



Gardening Program

The goal of the SCBA Gardening Program, known internally as the Gardening for Bees group or G4B, is to nurture abundant pollinator habitat across Sonoma County.

Towards this end, we:

- Educate our members and community on best practices for healthy pollinator habitat.
- Propagate and share a diverse crop of bee-forage plants that bloom in all seasons of the year.
- Cultivate, plant and maintain vibrant gardens at home and in our community to feed our bees and other pollinators.

Healthy, abundant, pesticide-free gardens are of critical importance to the future of both pollinators and people. Our Gardening Program stands as an integral part of a strong and sustainable Sonoma County Beekeepers Association.

2019 QUICK FACTS



Over 1,000 plants propagated and distributed



8 home nurseries operational



5 school gardens provisioned



Over 30 educational workshops, presentations, and publications delivered

2020 IN PROGRESS

Unable to provide pollinator-friendly flowering plants to the general membership via the monthly general meetings, the Gardening Program adapted and was able to engage our community in several ways.



Regional Pop-Up Plant Sales

The gardening team was able to deliver beautiful and healthy plants to various sites around the county, allowing members to pick up forage for their bees while maintaining safe social distancing. The plant sales required not only the usual hard work of our expert gardeners to propagate and maintain plants prior to the sales, but also demanded detailed planning and coordination leading up to each sale. We are pleased to report that the Pop-Up Plant Sales were a huge success!



Pilot launch for Community Pollinator Garden Project

The SCBA Gardening Program has teamed up with the Sebastopol Grange to install a six-hundred and thirty square foot hedgerow at the Grange! The plants were selected by SCBA to provide year-round forage to honey bees and other pollinators and we have helped with the planning and design of the site. Installation is scheduled to occur in late October.

COMING UP FOR 2021



New greenhouse operational

We have acquired the use of a 1,000 square foot greenhouse! This large growing space will help us start seedlings and sustain cuttings through

difficult weather. Improvements have been made such as installing a solar fan and shade cloths.



Increasing productive capacity

Streamlining our home nurseries in conjunction with the new greenhouse will allow us to produce more pollinator-friendly flowering plants than ever before.



New project

We have established three potential pilot gardens for our new Community Pollinator Garden Project. Modeled after the successful School Pollinator Garden Project, we will engage community members to plant gardens and learn about bees and pollination.



Expanding educational work

We are exploring hands-on workshops which focus on particular aspects of successful gardening for pollinators, such as soil or irrigation.

“This is just a heartfelt thank you for all of your hard work cultivating, propagating, potting and selling the fabulous pollinator plants for our gardens. I was able to purchase many plants at the March meeting and a pop up sale in May for my new pollinator garden. We are gradually recovering our property after the Nuns Canyon fire and the pollinator garden I have planted is the source of so much joy for me and food for my bees.

*Thanks so much,
Lauri Dorman”*

*“Gardening for bees, the next best thing to keeping your own hives!”
- Stevie Lazo, Gardening Program Treasurer*

A special thanks to Ellen Sherron who founded the Gardening Program in 2016 and molded it into the vibrant program it is today, and to Maryle Brauer and Sibi Bugarin who have poured their time and energy into its continued development and success.



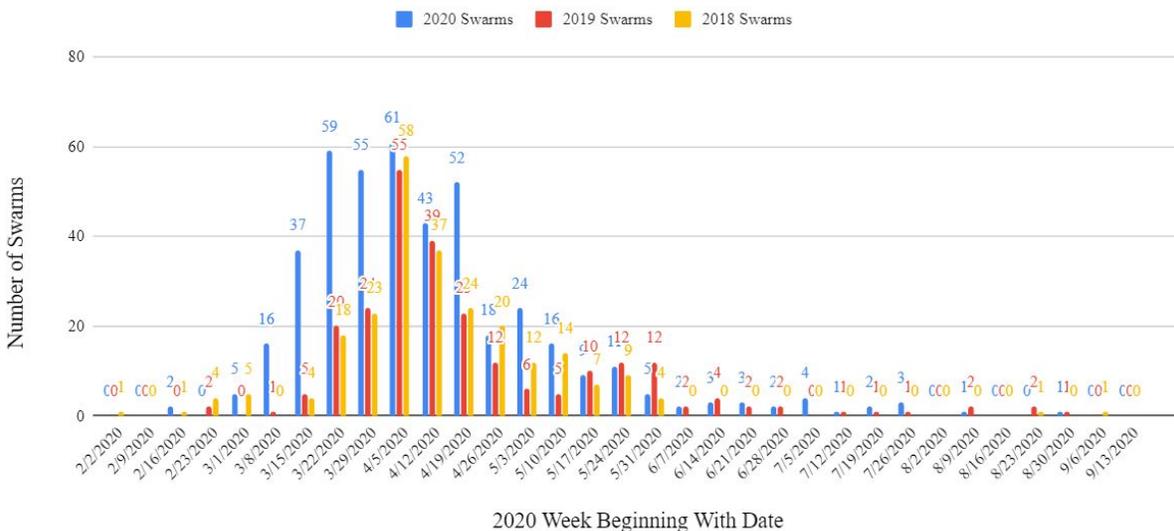
Appendix: Swarms!

“Swarm season is my favorite time of year. Capturing swarms is a great way to meet and educate the public on the importance of bees and their amazing existence in our world. SCBA is a wonderful community of beekeepers with similar interests. I loved meeting with the members when we could still do that and I’m so looking forward to the time we can do it again. Being part of SCBA and being on their public swarm list is a huge part of our lives in the spring. I love to be able to capture and donate the swarms back to our members and to supply them with quality bee hive equipment. Our business, Buzz Off Honey, only exists because of SCBA.”

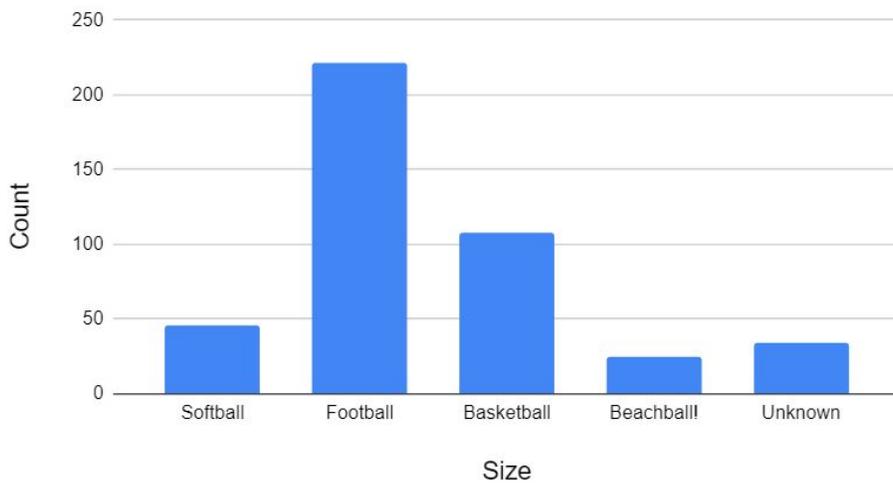
- John McGinnis, Public Swarm Service Coordinator

We are so grateful to every member who reported their swarms as it allows us to construct a data set for the county. In turn, this data set can be made visual so our beekeepers can better understand what is happening with honey bee populations across the region. Please note that these charts are available in the “Members-Only” section of our website and are continually updated throughout swarm season by our mighty Tech Coordinator, Bruce Harris. In addition, keep in mind that the chart below is reflective *only of the swarms that were reported*.

2020/2019/2018 Member Reported Honey Bee Swarms by Week



2020 Member Reported Honey Bee Swarms by Size



The following narrative was compiled by Bruce Harris and the BeeShare Team and published in the July edition of *The Extractor*:

Swarm Source - We see that swarms were caught in a swarm trap about 20% of the time. The remaining 80% were found without a trap. So having a swarm trap increases your chances of catching a swarm. We typically hold swarm trap workshops during February +/- so keep an eye out for that invitation early next year.

Swarm Source	Count	PerCent
Swarm: Found without swarm trap	339	79.95%
Swarm: Caught in swarm trap	85	20.05%
Total:	424	100.00%

Swarm Destination - About 6% of swarms got away, that is, they never landed in a catchable spot. Swarm catchers kept 43% of the swarms and 42% were shared with others. For our purposes here a swarm catcher is anyone that caught (or was adopted by) a swarm. For example, a person in West Cluster “caught” swarms that moved into 2 vacant hives.

Swarm Destination	Count	PerCent
Got Away:	27	6.37%
Hived in my apiary:	186	43.87%

Shared with Bee Share team (Need Bees list):	98	23.11%
Shared with an SCBA member:	51	12.03%
Shared with someone else:	27	6.37%
Other:	35	8.25%
Total:	424	100.00%

Who called about the Swarm - The single highest source of swarms was first hand observation at about 1/3. The next highest was the SCBA Public Swarm List at about 25%. Friends and neighbors referred about 18%.

Who Called About the Swarm	Count	PerCent
Public Swarm List:	107	25.24%
I saw the swarm firsthand:	136	32.08%
A friend/acquaintance/neighbor:	78	18.40%
Another SCBA member on the Public Swarm List:	25	5.90%
Other:	78	18.40%
Total:	424	100.00%

Swarms by Cluster - As you might expect, the swarms in Sonoma county were not evenly distributed across our clusters. This table lists the swarm count by cluster. The Count column includes swarms that Got Away. For example, of the 52 swarms reported in West Cluster, 8 got away.

Swarms by Cluster	Count	PerCent	Got Away
Central Cluster (Cotati, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa)	154	36.32%	7
North Cluster (Cloverdale, Geyserville, Healdsburg, Windsor)	57	13.44%	1
South Cluster (Novato, Penngrove, Petaluma)	126	29.72%	7
East Cluster (Glen Ellen, Kenwood, Oakmont, Sonoma)	35	8.25%	4
West Cluster (Bodega, Bodega Bay, Cazadero, Forestville, Freestone, Graton, Guerneville, Occidental, Sebastopol, Timber Cove)	52	12.26%	8
Total	424	100.00%	27

Thank you for reading!

SCBA wishes our wonderful community of people and bees continued health and happy foraging.



