

# The Monthly Extractor

Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association

P.O. Box 98

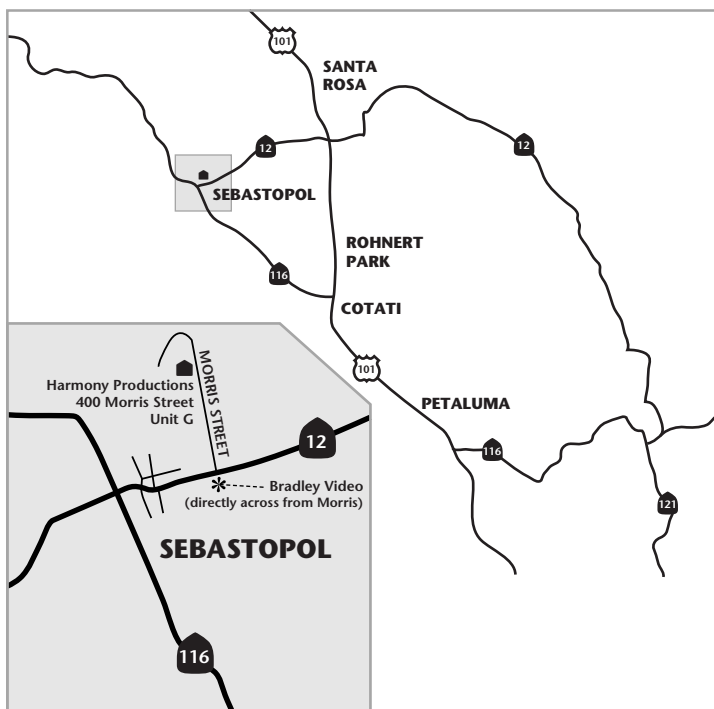
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**IMPORTANT:** The meeting location has changed! Our meetings are no longer held at the Sonoma County Farm Bureau offices. The February meeting will be held at Harmony Productions, at 400 Morris Street in Sebastopol. Please refer to the map below for directions. The date and time is unchanged: 13 February, 7 PM. Please attend.



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# The Monthly Extractor

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association

*To increase interest in and knowledge of bees and beekeeping for the hobby and commercial beekeeper, and to educate the general public in the value of bees.*

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**WE WILL MEET ON 2ND MONDAY OF THIS MONTH -- MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Feb.13  
NEW LOCATION IS 400 Morris Street, Unit G, Sebastopol. See map.**

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## From Your President

Fellow Beeks...

I have had quite a week! I drove a forklift for the first time. It's never too late to teach an old dog new tricks. LOL And, day before yesterday I caught a swarm from one of my hives. Actually, I think it was a supersedure queen who was taking a mating flight and some bees left with her. It was probably 3 pounds of bees and the hive they came from still had 7 frames of brood in a deep and 4 in a medium; and they had a laying queen, because I watched her do it.

Oh, and I have helped Scott Nelson unpackage hives. There are 800 so far and another 400 on their way. These bees are already in summer mode. It is summer in Australia and there are drones and beautiful golden Cordovan bees, instead of the wild Italians we are used to. Most of the queens are golden...maybe 90%. They are making bright white wax and laying wall to wall brood. Scott has them on pallets and is feeding corn syrup and pollen patties. The bees are gentle, for the most part. During the warm weather they were a happy bunch. Today was too cold and they got pissy very early in the day. Next week, they leave for the almonds. For those of you who don't know, almond honey is not supposed to taste very good, but the bees don't know that. 8-)

I am sending 20 hives to the almonds, so that the almond honey I get can be used in the new nucs I'm raising. That way, I have 200 frames of feed and plenty for all the new queens I will be making. I plan to make 20 new queens to requeen MY hives when they come home. They are not going into Africanized Honeybee country, but they'll be close enough to make me want to do it, just in case.

In my own area, the acacia is starting to bloom and the garden is pushing up daffodils and calla lilies. I'm getting some equipment ready to paint. Cleaning, scraping and torching old equipment is happening here, too. Hives that are going to the almonds and hives that are going to be drone mothers and queen mothers are being fed pollen patties and syrup. Drone mother hives are getting lots of drone comb that you would usually cull out of a hive. I see white pollen from Eucalyptus and

yellow pollen from wild mustard. What colors do you see? Don't see pollen going into your hives? Better see if you have a queen on the next nice day.

Right now, Frank has been building tables that we will put the mini mating nucs out on. I am toying with the idea of velcro-ing the mini hives to the tables. We are getting ready to make cell finishing hives and a nurse nuc for the first 24 hours of the queens. My practice batch is just about ready to start. Keep your fingers crossed that there are enough drones who are old enough to fertilize the queens at this early time!

Be thinking of swarms. The time is getting ripe. The very first swarm I ever caught was on February 23rd. What does this mean to you? Get your swarm kit together. (Swarm box, sugar water spray bottle, brush or feathers, smoker, ladder, etc.) Keep your car gassed up. Remember most calls are from people in crisis. Remember to ask key questions....these are on our new web site that Sean Straw, your secretary, will unveil.

In a few weeks you will need to go into your hive and look for swarm cells. This can be done easily by lifting up the bottom box from the front. Swarm cells look like peanuts hanging down on the bottom of the frames. So, what happens if you find some??? You can't stop it, but you can lessen the chance you'll lose bees. But, you have to have equipment on hand. Time to visit beekind and buy a nuc or three. You can split that colony that wants to swarm. Put a swarm cell frame in every nuc. Divide the rest of the frames and give to the nucs. Put a feeder on and feed as they need it. Mark your calendar and watch for your swarm. After the queens hatch out, see which one is the best (gentle, good buildup, solid brood pattern, etc) and combine the hives by putting a newspaper on the deep and adding the frames from the nuc on top. You need to kill the queens you don't want before you join the hives. Smoke the bees and give everyone a little spray of sugar water with a mint leaf crushed in it. This way everyone will smell alike and there should be no fighting.

I hope you all find us at our February meeting. We'll be in a permanent home soon.

Bee seeing you.



## SCBA Executive Board 2006

<b>President</b>	Kathy Cox	president@sonomabees.org	707/823-2804
<b>Past President</b>	Spring Maxfield	pastpres@sonomabees.org	707/527-5913
<b>Vice President</b>	Katia Vincent	vicepresident@sonomabees.org	707/869-0430
<b>Secretary</b>	Sean Straw	secretary@sonomabees.org	415/342-2833
<b>Treasurer</b>	Donna Nelson	treasurer@sonomabees.org	707/575-9761
<b>Librarian</b>	Ettamarie Peterson	librarian@sonomabees.org	707/765-4582
<b>Raffle Chairperson</b>	Leonard Riepenhoff	raffle@sonomabees.org	707/525-8424
<b>Historian</b>	Ettamarie Peterson	historian@sonomabees.org	707/765-4582
<b>Editor</b>	Ettamarie Peterson	editor@sonomabees.org	707/765-4582
<b>Swarm Chairperson</b>	Katia Vincent	swarms@sonomabees.org	707/869-0430
<b>Extractor Tech</b>	Ettamarie Peterson		707/765-4582
<b>Representative at Large</b>	Hector Alvarez		707/579-9416
<b>Representative at Large</b>	Serge Labesque	nonprofit@sonomabees.org	707/996-3149

Board e-mail addresses should be used for association business only.

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 honey bees is cordially invited to attend. You do not need to be a member nor a beekeeper to attend these meetings. Please contact the treasurer to pay dues

## What's in Bloom

The Eucalyptus, dandelions, camellias, some of the flowering fruit trees, and wild mustard are blooming now.

## Attention All SCBA members!

### Membership Renewals:

It is time to renew your membership. The swarm hotline list is put together in February so please pay your dues NOW and notify Katia Vincent that you want to be included on the list! She needs to know your contact phone numbers, locations where you are willing to go for swarms, times you are available and if you charge. Katia can be reached at the beekind store 707/824-2905 or e-mail swarms@sonomabees.org.

### Wanted:

Someone to take over the librarian job and someone to be our new historian. Both jobs are not hard. See Kathy Cox to volunteer!

### Help us cut costs:

Postage rates are higher now. You can save the association money on that and printing costs by viewing the newsletter on line in Adobe Acrobat format. Send an e-mail to Ettamarie at editor@sonomabees.org and request to be an on-line viewer only

## Calendar

### February 13

#### Monthly meeting

Serge Labesque will be talking about getting our hobbyist beekeepers ready for the season ahead of us. Come learn some methods to prevent swarming, having healthy bees going into spring, and more information.

### February 13 – 20

#### 8<sup>th</sup> National Honey Week!

**Community College Class for Beekeepers-Instructed by Serge Labesque.** Courses held at 1288 Barnett Hall, Santa Rosa Junior College Campus.

### February 15 through March 8, 2006

#### *Introduction to Beekeeping*

Four Wednesday evenings, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Course Fee: \$67

### March 22 and March 29, 2006

#### *Intermediate Beekeeping for Spring and Summer*

Two Wednesday evenings, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Course Fee: \$45

For registration:

SRJC Community Education REGISTRATION

Telephone: (707) 527-4372

Fax: (707) 527-4870

On line: <http://www.santarosa.edu/communityed>

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## Monthly Maintenance

February is the last month to get your apiary ready for Spring! Take inventory, set your goals, buy or repair your old equipment. Read what Kathy Cox says and what Eric Mussen says in this issue. The newer combs are far

healthier than old comb so go through the hives and replace empty old comb with fresh foundation. This will also slow down swarming as the bees will be busy building new combs. Be sure the bees are not starving. Lift the back of the hive to see how heavy it is. This is a month the bees can really gobble up stored food.

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## SCBA January Minutes

### General meeting Jan.9, 2006

The scheduled speaker, Duane Sorenson of Mann Lake, Ltd. was unable to make it for the meeting. Scott Nelson gave a presentation on commercial beekeeping instead.

New member: Eddie

Scion (grafting) Exchange Saturday 28 January in Sebastopol was announced.

Katia suggested possibility of raising funds to get Guenther Hauck to speak. Estimated about \$50 per person.

Question & Answer time:

Wax moths are a misnomer: they're really POLLEN moths, as they're attracted to pollen residue in used comb, not the wax itself. You can kill them and their larvae by placing the frames in the freezer for two days. This has no effect on AFB or EFB, but does kill mites.

Honey can be heated to 108°F max before it starts to lose its special properties -- above that, enzymes begin breaking down.

Scott Nelson told how he has plans to take 2000 colonies into the Almonds for 2006. This season, he lost 400 colonies to Tracheal mites, and 200 to flooding (mostly along the Petaluma River). He is bringing in 800 colonies from Australia before the Almond pollination.

Pollination colonies are "hive and a half" - a honey super UNDER the brood for easier inspection (as per the contract).

Gets about \$115-125 per colony for almond pollination. Expects \$175-200 per colony for the same thing next year.

Almond pollination is from 01 FEB through 15 MAR. Afterwards, colonies go to Cherries (in Fresno until Mid-April), for \$45/colony, or Apples then Oranges (no money in orange pollination, but ~200 lbs of desirable orange blossom honey PER COLONY), or Cranberries in Oregon. Provides free pollination to ORGANIC apple growers in Sonoma county.

Expects to produce 150K pounds of honey in 2006, plus 30K pounds of pollen.

He orders corn syrup by the truckload in August. Feeds queens pollen substitutes to keep them laying year round. He requeens EVERY year.

Australian bees have NO Tracheal or Varroa mites. Queen stock is not from Australia - they import Italians from Europe.

Uses dead-out hives for package bees - provides 4 drawn and 6 foundation frames. 4 lb package = 6 frames, but has 8 by the time the bees reach the almonds.

Works with open space districts to arrange staging areas for out apiaries.

Honey Producer's Association provides liability insurance for \$400/year. You don't have to be a member of the association to obtain insurance through them.

Thymol \$3/pack (Apilife/VAR) - requires a Title 18 exam to apply. Is an organic acid, so leaves no residue in the wax. Does not affect the drones and queen. Scott treats only in the fall. Oxalic Acid = \$.05/hive to treat.

Tracheal mite is a bigger problem this year than Varroa.

Each hive generates about \$500 per season. Costs \$200 to operate (fuel, maintenance, etc).

To clear bees from the honey supers, removes box, places on chute/funnel, use blower to knock the bees off.

Lavender honey fetches the best price: \$6.50/10 oz at retail. He gets 1 lb a month per hive of propolis. Fetches \$25/lb wholesale.

He has 1 beekeeper for every 400 hives. Gets to every hive in 2 weeks, except mid fall through mid winter.

Places apiaries using GPS.

Sean Straw, Secretary

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### Board meeting, Jan 17, 2006

In Attendance:

Kathy Cox – President  
Ettamarie Peterson - Newsletter Editor  
Sean Straw, Secretary

Absent:

Katia Vincent – Vice President  
Donna Nelson - Treasurer

The meeting was held at Kathy Cox's home.

MEETING PLACE - Kathy has secured a meeting place for February. Harmony Productions is renting the space to us for \$50 per meeting, it has kitchen and restroom facilities, and they are not requiring liability insurance. Kathy volunteered to park her van (with door logos) at a location on the road in front of the industrial buildings on Morris Street to make the meeting place a bit more visible to arriving members. Morris itself is across HWY 12 from the Bradley Video parking lot.

Going forward in 2007, since we will not be paying the Farm Bureau membership (which has already been paid for 2006), this equates to a net increase in our expenses of about US\$475 (compared to an increase of \$1600 per annum if we stayed at the Farm Bureau, for rent and a typical liability insurance policy).

SWARM LIST - We discussed issues with publication of the swarm list on the web site and could not arrive at any reason that we would bear any more liability for the content of the swarm list published on the web site versus the materially identical swarm list we compile and provide to various agencies by postal mail. We reviewed the 2000 and 2005 swarm list cover letters and noted some wording there which could be further modified and incorporated into both the web site and the 2006 swarm cover letter. A vote was taken and it was decided 3Y:0N:0A to publish the swarm list on the web site (with the added disclaimer) when the participant data is available. Additionally, the matter of a yellow pages advertisement for the association, directing people to the association web site for the swarm list was discussed briefly. An issue was raised about swarm complaints - seems in past years indirect (and thus unconfirmed) reports of a member dealing with swarms in a less than humane fashion have made their way back to the board. How can we enforce a humane policy or complaint handling for the swarm list? Should we - it seems that it would open us up to policing and investigation of complaints - a good disclaimer seems the way to go there.

WEB SITE - The association web site is not yet available for public consumption. Some additional data is needed, some board member review of content, and then we can go live, announcing it in the February newsletter. It will continue to be modified over time to improve upon some data and add other useful facilities (including integrating the library list with the membership data on the backend).

NEWSLETTER - Sean has offered to work with Ettamarie to see that the newsletter has a quality vector representation of the map to the new meeting place.

MEETING TOPICS - Kathy reported that Katia had indicated she was inquiring with Serge about speaking at the February meeting.

SILENT AUCTION - We discussed possible approaches to having a silent auction.

WORKSHOPS - It was suggested that we might contact David Bassing about hosting a workshop, as he has done so in the past and has a well-equipped workshop space.

LIBRARIAN - As previously announced, Jon Akre will no longer be available to serve as the librarian. Library materials are currently in storage at Ettamarie's home. It was suggested that after determining that the Health & Harmony meeting location is compatible with the membership, we might approach them about placing a Rubbermaid type locker on their premises for library storage, which would alleviate issues with carting the books around to meetings.

Respectfully submitted, Sean B. Straw

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## Member Classifieds

**This area is available at no cost for any member to advertise any bee related item to sell, buy, trade or donate.**

**KATHY COX** has the following for sale:

QUEENS for sale in April. \$19, \$20 marked

NUCS for sale in April \$120. Includes 5 frames with pollen and nectar, approx. 3 pounds of bees and their queen.

HIVES for sale in April. \$200. 8 frames of drawn comb, honey, pollen and a 2006 queen. Bottom, deep and migratory top. (This hive will bring you a honey crop this year!)

To purchase any of the above. Call 707-823-2804 and leave a message or talk to a human. Leave your phone numbers, e-mail and pertinent order information. I will put you on a list. Send full payment for queens. Send \$60 deposit for each nuc and \$100 deposit for each complete production hive. If you have already gotten on my list, now is the time to send the deposit. My address is: 1295 Bloomfield RD, Sebastopol, CA 95472-5506.

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**At beekind now:**

**Package Bees 3 lbs w/ laying Italian Queen:** \$80.00€  
Refundable Deposit on Cage: \$5.00 Arrival dates of April 14 and 21.

**Basic Fully Assembled Complete Hive /Special Price:**  
**\$90.00 & includes:** Basic bottom board, Mann Lake 9 5/8", Deep Hive Body with 10 assembled frames & Rite-cell Foundation, Inner Cover, Mann Lake€ Telescoping Metal Cover/Top, Entrance Reducer, Entrance Feeder (jar not included).

**Deluxe Fully Assembled Complete Hive/ Special Price:**  
**\$175.00 & Includes:** S & C Labesque's Screened Bottom Board w/monitoring tray, Mann Lake 95/8" Deep Hive Body with 10 assembled frames & Rite-cell Foundation, S & C Labesque's Hive Top Feeder with cork floats, S & C Labesque's Inner Cover, S & C Labesque's Fiberglass Cover with heavy core, S & C Labesque's Deep Follower Boards (for better hive insulation and ventilation).

**Basic Tools and Protective Gear/ Special**

**Price: \$90.00 & Includes:** Basic Hive tool 10" (Die formed, high carbon, tempered steel), Mann Lake 4 X 7" Smoker with guard and replaceable bellows, Bag o Smoker Fuel ( this will last quite a while),Beekeeper's Vented Helmet, Beekeeper's Veil (Round or Square), Leather Gloves with vents.

**Deluxe Tools and Protective Gear/ Special**

**Price: \$135.00 & Includes:** Deluxe Frame Lifter and Hive tool combo 10 1/2" (tempered steel, multi function), Mann Lake 4 X 7" Smoker with guard and replaceable bellows, Bag o Smoker Fuel ( this will last quite a while), Light Weight Nylon Zipper Jacket with Unobstructed Vision Hood (easy on over anything), Leather Gloves with vents.

**COME SEE US NOW!** 10 % OFF on all other supplies and equipment or if bought separately thru Feb. 15. We also have some incredible honey chocolate truffles and taffies for your Valentine(s). Package & Deal prices good thru March/06 & not in conjunction with any other sales or promotions of beekind. Open Mon.-Sat. 10 - 6. Phone: 824-2905 e-mail: beekindbees@aol.com

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## Need a Place to Put Bees? Here's Two!

George Jackson called and said he has room on his place in Mark West Springs area for four hives. Call him at 707/579-0347 if you are interested. George doesn't have any hives of his own right now but would love to share his land. It is a great location.

Spring Maxfield has a friend named Stan who is disabled and would like someone to keep a bee hive in his backyard or sell him a bee hive and help him maintain it. He lives in downtown Santa Rosa, right off Dutton. If anyone is interested give him a call at 707/579-1343.

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## Bee Trivia (and Book Review)

Found in The Life of the Bee by Maurice Maeterlinck, 1901-- Not the easiest bee book in the world to read. He knew a lot about bees but tended to drone on giving them many human attributes. Good for insomniacs. See quote following:

The brain of the bee, according to the calculations of Dujardin, constitutes the 1-174th parts of the insect's weight, and that of the ant the 1-296th. On the other hand the peduncular parts, whose development usually keeps pace with the triumphs the intellect achieves over instinct, are somewhat less important in the bees than in the ant. It would seem to result from these estimates-which are of course hypothetical, and deal with a matter that is exceedingly obscure-that the intellectual value of the bee and the ant must be more or less equal.

Try working this bit of trivia into a conversation!

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## I Learned About Beekeeping From This Thanks to Mickey Marshall for this lesson!

Several years ago I had collected some burr comb in a bucket and I planned to melt it down. I brought the bucket in the house and set it in the computer room with good intentions of getting it done soon. Several weeks later I saw something crawling up the wall not far from the bucket. It was a wax moth larva. Yuck. So I started looking for more and found quite a few behind the chest where I keep my purse. I cleaned everything up and thought I had it all.

The next day I was sitting in church and saw something moving in my purse. Yup. Wax moth larvae. You can't run screaming out of church so I just sat there quivering, hoping no one would notice the movement in my purse and hoping the larvae would stay in my purse. As soon as I got out I took everything out of my purse and found at least 10 of the creatures, eating my wallet and pupating in corners of the purse.

From then on I learned to keep wax out of the house unless I was ready to melt it.

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## Dr. Eric Mussen's Feeding Advice

If you are contemplating feeding your bees this month, this information will be useful to you.

Excerpts from article by Eric C. Mussen, Extension Apiculturist, U.C. Davis found in Sacramento Area Beekeepers Association's newsletter, The Bee Line:

Nectar is a glandular secretion of plants, usually collecting at the bases of flowers that bees depend upon for their energy source. Nectar normally contains a low to moderate concentration of sugar, and honeybees dehydrate nectar to produce honey. There are barely measurable amounts of proteins, vitamins and other nutrients in nectar, especially if a little pollen becomes incorporated into it....Bees use nectar in two ways. It can function as a water substitute, used to dilute brood food and air condition the hive. Or it can be "ripened" by the bees to become a stored carbohydrate resource. The sugar syrup that we feed to the bees can be used in either of those ways, also. But, we use different sugar concentrations for different purposes, as will be mentioned shortly...

Attentive beekeepers are kept aware of colony conditions through periodic examinations of their colonies. Inspections should be conducted about every ten days during early and late spring (ed. note: in Sonoma County February can be much like early spring so I feel this information is timely.) Early spring inspections relate more to adequate food supplies. Late spring inspections deal more with swarm control. At each inspection the beekeeper should determine whether or not the bees have adequate food to carry them through a dearth period, usually caused by weather conditions that prohibit foraging flights. If the bees have twenty pounds of honey or stored sugar syrup, they will make it to the next inspection in ten days. If they have less stored carbohydrate, they need to be fed....

Beekeepers dealing with sugar (sucrose) syrups that they mix themselves will follow these guideline. Syrups fed early in the season are used for brood rearing. Feeding sugar usually stimulates egg laying, so early season feedings are done with "light" (1 water:1 sugar) syrup. Syrups fed late in the season, to assure adequate winter stores, are not intended to be used as brood food, but are to be stored as ripened syrup. Thus fall feedings are done with "heavy" (1 water:2 sugar) syrup....It is a good idea to start feeding in the evening, after the bees have settled down for the day....By feeding after flying has ceased, the potential robbers find a source right at home. Try not to spill syrup on the hives. It attracts ants and robbing bees....

Be very cautious when purchasing...bargain carbohydrates. Sugar from broken bags may contain insecticides from floor sweepings. Soda syrups or candies may contain indigestible long chain carbohydrates, like caramel. Soda syrups may be "out of date." If they are fermenting, the bees may be able to salvage some of the remaining sugar, at the cost of getting tipsy. If bacteria have begun working on the alcohol and converted it to acids, the "soured" syrup will be toxic to the bees.

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## Gadget: A Honey Pail Stand

By Serge Labesque © 2006

Bottling extracted honey is a pleasurable task for beekeepers. To do this, I used to place five-gallon pails of honey on a table top, with their gates overhanging the edge of the table. The jars were held under the gates for filling.

The set-up could hardly have been simpler, which is good, but it had some annoying faults. One problem was the discomfort I endured because of the height at which the jars had to be kept in order to fill them with honey. Another inconvenience was not being able to completely drain the pails without performing a circus act: balancing the pails on precarious arrangements of blocks of wood.

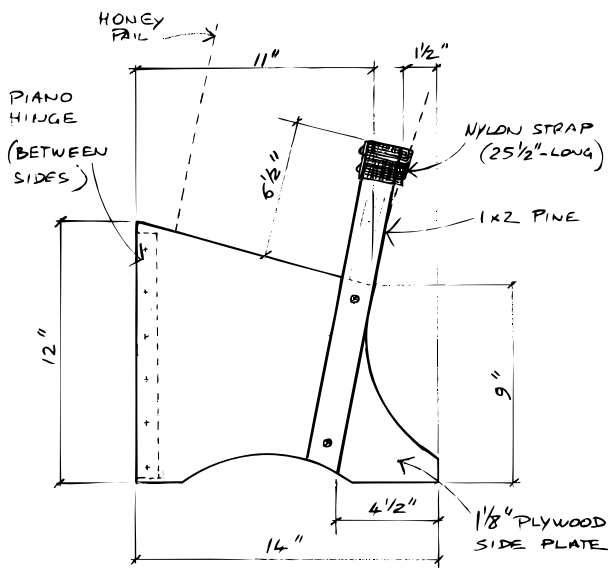
For a long time I thought about putting together some kind of stand, but it took a massive spill of honey to coax me into actually making it.

Thanks to this honey pail stand, which is described in the following lines and drawings, I can now dispense the honey much more comfortably. There is ample space for pint- and quart-size jars between the table and the gate. Because the stand keeps the pail leaning forward, more honey can be bottled before the pail has to be turned onto its side, again on the stand, to thoroughly drain it. An appreciable feature of this device is that the pail is kept in a stable position until the last drop of honey has fallen into a jar. This last honey is not as clear as the rest, of course, but we are nevertheless quite happy to consume it at home.

When all the honey has been bottled, the stand can be easily stored in a minimum amount of space because it folds along its back.

The fabrication of the stand is very simple. Two pieces of plywood are cut to the shape shown on the drawing, and connected along their rear edges by a section of piano hinge, which makes for an easy assembly. The 1 x 2 cleats that hold the pail are fastened to the outer faces of the plywood plates with glue and screws. A short length of nylon webbing connects the ends of these two cleats. This strap conforms to the shape of the pail and prevents the stand from opening too wide.

The stand was a quick and easy project, and, with hindsight, I can only wonder why I procrastinated so much before making it.



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## Advice from Eric Mussen

Sent to the newsletter by Joe Michalek

Apiculturist: hive decline due to chemical residues and viruses by John Schmitz Freelance Writer

UC-Davis Extension apiculturist Eric Mussen works with a lot of beekeepers every year, and one thing he keeps hearing over and over is that something is going on in hives that is somewhat of a mystery to them and quite unsettling. What beekeepers are basically saying is that compared to the good old days of beekeeping, things are just not the way they used to be. The dilemma is characterized in large part by a loss of queen vitality early on, Mussen told Oregon beekeepers gathered for their annual convention on the coast. A practical text book will tell you that a queen is supposed to last three years, no problem. Most commercial beekeepers know better than that. The ones who are hauling their bees around on trucks are saying "We're lucky if we get six months to a year out of them."

While the deadly Varroa mite, which has been a problem for years in hives, is not directly to blame for early queen die-off, it has been contributing indirectly to the problem, Mussen said. One tip-off to poor hive health is the failure of worker bees to rear a daughter queen to replace, or supersede, the ailing one, Mussen said. When beekeepers suffering premature queen losses started buying queens from different sources and even rearing their own queens to solve the problem, they discovered that these tactics did little good, Mussen said.

"The question now is, what on earth is going on?" As he told beekeepers, Mussen believes that the chief culprit is years of accumulation of chemical residues on older hive components. We've got residues of all sorts of stuff. And this stuff wasn't in there not too many years ago. They've (beekeepers) put in everything under the sun (to battle Varroa and tracheal mites). What befuddles Mussen is that some beekeepers wonder why hive materials are to blame when they've been using comb their grandfathers used. Well, for heaven's sake, pollution builds up, he said. But old equipment is not the only suspect in hive decline. Another could be microbes called RNA viruses that infect hives.

Before the Varroa mite appeared on the scene in the late 1980s, the RNA viruses were not that big of a problem, Mussen said. But now that the mites have become a severe threat to beekeepers, the RNA viruses are literally hitching a ride on them. Unfortunately, Varroa sucks those viruses up and moves them around. So now all of a sudden, a disease that was a peculiar little abhorrence apparently is becoming very wide spread.

Mussen said that in a study conducted last winter in California, many colonies brought into a holding yard for inspection by USDA were just falling part. Researchers from the ARS lab in Beltsville, Md., isolated "every virus they know how to test for, as well as tracheal mites, Varroa mites and Nosema", Mussen said. What was interesting, however, is that other hives in the study that showed high levels of viruses and other pests were not collapsing. So they couldn't really put their finger on what was causing the problem, Mussen said. One remedy to all this is to try to reduce hive stress, Mussen said. What I pushed during my talk is for beekeepers to try to rotate out some of their ugliest, oldest combs that are sure to have a whole bunch of

chemical contaminants in them. Get some new wax in there, some new frames in there. If you talk to a beekeeper who for whatever reason decided to take some honey supers that are basically fairly clean and put their bees on those, they find out that the bees take off beautifully, Mussen said. They build up their brood and get big and strong, go out and get honey and do everything they're supposed to. Of course, at the end of the year they have mites in them.

Mussen said that another reason for hive stress, especially in western states, is under nourishment during winter. Varroa mites have little if any direct effect on queens because mites reproduce mainly in the more plentiful worker and drone brood cells, Mussen said. Also, the queen matures much faster than drones and workers, giving mites little time to do any damage.

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## Recipes

### Muffins With Orange Juice & Honey

2 cups	Flour
¼ cup	Sugar
2 teaspoons	Baking Powder
1 teaspoon	Baking Soda
½ teaspoon	Salt
2	Eggs
½ cup	Honey
½ cup	Orange Juice
1/3 cup	Butter, melted
1 teaspoon	Vanilla extract

In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt; set aside. In a mixing bowl, beat eggs. Add honey, orange juice, butter and vanilla; mix well. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fill 12 greased muffin cups 2/3 full. Bake at 375 degrees for 15-20 minutes or until golden.

Makes: 12 muffins

### Honey Oat Bread (Machine Recipe)

1 cup	Warm water
¼ cup	Honey (I like clover here)
2 tablespoons	Vegetable oil
3 cups	White bread flour
½ cup	Oatmeal, raw
1 teaspoon	Salt
2 teaspoons	Active dry yeast

Combine ingredients in bread maker per your manufacturer's instructions. You can replace 2 cups white bread flour with 2 cups whole wheat flour and add one tbs vital wheat gluten. Makes a moist, sweet loaf. Bread type -White Bread cycle, Large loaf. (Number 2 for Oster machine).

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## Graham Law Presentation at Ettamarie Peterson's House

Several members of the SCBA came to hear Graham Law's talk on making and maintaining an observation bee hive year-around. I got positive feedback from different members.

Sean Straw said, "Everybody who didn't show up missed a great presentation. Ettamarie Peterson hosted a visiting beekeeper from the UK midlands, Graham Law and his wife Annie. On Friday, 20 January, he presented a video on the observation hive he has in his home, documenting several design iterations, and insights he has gained from watching the bees activity on a daily basis.

Graham's web site can be found at <http://www.beeginners.info/>. Though the presentation material won't be found there, you can find a number of useful materials there just the same, and there's a link to a walkthrough of his home.

His video presentation included several pieces of footage of queens emerging from their cells, and their interaction within the colony, piping, and some "windows" into developing queen cells. In addition, there was video of light attraction (as well as indifference) and swarming activity. All of it was thoroughly interesting and very well put together.

We were quite fortunate that he was able to stop over during his holiday.

I expect that our next general meeting with be <ahem> buzzing with interest in observation hives."

Shelley Arrowsmith commented, "What a wonderful talk and slide presentation Graham and his wife gave at the potluck. Graham is an engineer and a hobby beekeeper who has decided to perfect the art of the observation hive. He has built three versions which are all able to turn 360 degrees so you can see both sides of the hive at the same time. It's a fabulous idea.

All during the 8 or so years he has had his observation hive in operation, he has kept his video camera at the ready and has taken pictures of all the activities we don't usually see in our darkened boxes in our apiaries. We saw queens being born, cells being built, nectar being spit into the cells, pollen shaken off the pollen baskets and too much more to say here.

He also discussed the challenges to keeping a three frame observation hive going all year long, through all the seasons in a climate like England.

It was a great presentation. Thanks, Ettamarie, for bringing Graham to us"

Graham was delighted to meet and talk to the various members of the Association that had time to come over. He and Annie had never been to California before and were really interested in our ways of doing things. He was able to hear about Scott Nelson getting bees from Australia and learned some of California bees' pollinating the almonds.

Both Graham and Annie have a great sense of humor, which was obvious in the video presentation. Annie wants us to know it is not true that she does not like an observation hive in her dining room. She enjoys it as much as Graham! They both worked hours making the model hive with all the little bee dolls doing their specialized tasks in the hive.

Katia Vincent thinks we should make something like that for the fairs we exhibit in! If only we had the time and talent Graham and Annie had, that would be a fun project! Any volunteers?

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Cartoon

