

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 43, Issue 2

February 2018

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

This Month's Calendar

Monthly Meeting: Monday, February 12

6PM Check out books and videos from our library, buy plants at our fabulous plant table, talk to expert beekeepers willing to share their knowledge with you and help with any problems, socialize with refreshments and meet your cluster leaders. Bring your own cup, please. If you like to bake we also would appreciate donations of your cooking skills!

7PM This month we'll hear from some of SCBA's most experienced members about the biology and magic of honey bee swarming behavior. This presentation is a must-see for anyone interested in being an SCBA Swarm Catcher this year and for any beginning beekeeper. Christine Kurtz will speak about the biology of swarming and Mike Turner, Ettamarie Peterson, Thea Vierling, and John McGinnis will share swarm capture stories and advice.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- March: What the SCBA can do for you: How to maximize the benefits of being an SCBA member. Kelli Cox and SCBA board members.
- April: Honey tasting with Orietta Gianjorio from Napa and UC Davis.
- May: Bernardo Niño from UC Davis will speak about the CA Master Beekeeper program, and methods of Varroa mite control.

President's Message

February is one of my favorite months. We're past the hubbub and stress of the holidays and looking ahead to spring. It's all about preparation and sorting and new beginnings. Our Board is strong and excited for 2018. I am so fortunate to be on a team of such dedicated, passionate and smart individuals. We have made significant strides already and will continue shaping and working toward making this Association one to be proud of.

February is also the time to renew (if you haven't already) your membership. Remember, you must be a member to get the extraordinary benefits of belonging to a Cluster and our Cluster Coordinators have so much planned for you this year.

Many of the Clusters had their equipment workshop/Bee Cafe in January and are now preparing for February with Serge Labesque's "coming out of winter" presentation.

Whether you are a newbie or seasoned beekeeper, you don't want to miss this opportunity. If you haven't yet joined a Cluster or are not sure which Cluster you are in PLEASE stop by the Cluster tables at the General meeting. The Clusters are such a wonderful way to help you develop your bee skills but additionally and maybe even more importantly they create communities and friendships.

Of course the Clusters are just one of the benefits to renewing. Only members can be on the swarm list and check out material from our awesome library and use the honey extractors we have around the county.

Can you hear that Buzz!? Swarm season is around the corner. Our general meeting on Monday, February 12th is **"All About SWARM"**! Christine Kurtz and Susan Kegley have organized a not to be missed packed presentation for you. Additionally, we have a newly formed Swarm Committee as part of our Beeshare Program that is going to be very active with support to our Clusters. If you are planning to be a Swarm Catcher or a Swarm Receiver this is a good meeting to attend. For more information look for the Beeshare article by Christine Kurtz.

Looking forward to seeing you at our General meeting, please come early to schmooze and peruse the tables. It's a great time to meet other beekeepers, talk to your Cluster coordinators and each other, perhaps buy some plants from the gardening table, and eat a cookie (or two).

All the Beest,

Kelli Cox
President



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****READ THIS* AGAIN FINAL NOTICE!***

Membership Reminder

SCBA membership is on a calendar year.

**ALL 2017 memberships expired on December 31st.
If you have not renewed yet, do so now. Don't miss out!!**

On February 15, 2018 all expired memberships will be dropped from the roster, and you will no longer receive email notices.

You will also not be able to participate in great cluster cafes, hive dives, workshops and the swarm list. Swarm season will be upon us soon!

If you joined as a new member anytime after August 1, 2017, your membership is current through December 31, 2018.

How to renew for general and business memberships:

- Online at: <http://sonomabees.org/2018-membership/>
- Or, download and complete a membership application and mail it with your payment to: SCBA, P.O. Box 98, Santa Rosa, CA, 95401
- Or, apply at the next SCBA meeting. Bring the completed application to the meeting, and payment can be made with Cash, Check, or Credit Card.

Everyone (new and renewing) must complete an application with his or her payment. This is the only way we can ensure that the information we have for you is current.

Thank you,

Ann Gerels

SCBA 1st VP Membership 1stVP@sonomabees.org

My February

Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

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Frames and top bars

Could there be a more ordinary piece of beekeeping equipment than a top bar or a frame? Indispensable elements of the “moveable-frame” hives most beekeepers use nowadays, frames and top bars are all about function: Not only do they carry the weight of the entire colonies and their combs, which contain their brood and stores, but they also have to be sturdy enough to endure the loads imposed upon them by rough handling or powerful honey extractors without falling apart. They must to be rigid enough to resist the prying of hive tools without bending, all this while protecting the fragile combs they hold. The demands placed on frames and top bars do not end here. Yet, the bees certainly don't need frames or top bars, since they would normally attach their combs to the walls of the nest cavities they inhabit and brace them as necessary. The point here is that these hive elements exist for the benefit of beekeepers. Safety of comb manipulation and cost are often the main considerations behind their design and selection.

When standalone top bars are used, as is done in Kenyan, Warré, or similar “top-bar” hives, the bees frequently attach their combs to the walls of the hives, but the beekeepers systematically destroy these connections in order to manipulate the combs. Therefore, a logical alternative and arguably an improvement on the use of top bars is the use of frames to hold the bees' wax constructions. Indeed, frames can maintain the bee space between these and adjoining hive elements while allowing the bees to secure the edges of their combs to the end bars and bottom bars of the frames, if they are inclined to do so. Frames that are correctly dimensioned let beekeepers manipulate the combs safely and easily without damaging the combs, as Langstroth and others discovered in the 19th century.

A large number of options are available between the very simple wooden top bars and complete plastic honeycombs. Frames come in many shapes, sizes and materials, and they may be outfitted with various types of foundations and reinforcements. The selection of what we use in our hives depends a lot on our preferences and on how we learn and practice beekeeping. After trying many different styles over the years, my choice is to use wood frames without any foundation. I presently use wiring only in the frames that are destined to be placed in brood chambers, because this allows the safe examination of the brood. This also facilitates the harvest of honey. We simply cut the combs out of the frames. The undersides of the top bars of the frames I make either have a prismatic cross-section or include a wood spline along the centerline. This helps guide the bees during their comb-building process, although it is not an absolute necessity. The careful placement of the frames in the hives is much more effective.

As we prepare our equipment for the approaching spring colony build-up and honey flow, top bars or frames are among the most important pieces of equipment we need to fabricate, assemble, or gather. Frames are somewhat more complex to make than simple top bars, but in my opinion their advantages are significant, both for the bees and for the beekeeper. As long as they are correctly built and placed in the hives that will hold them, the construction of brace combs will be avoided, and they are easy to manipulate without causing harm to the bees or damaging their work.

February in the apiaries

Much is happening inside the hives. The small populations are working hard to raise the next generation of bees. In turn, the colonies will mature into powerhouses capable of exploiting the spring honey flow and, possibly, of reproducing by swarming. It's a transformation that happens over a matter of only a few weeks, regardless of the weather.

The queens are steadily increasing their egg production from a few dozen to several hundred per day, or more. Consequently, brood nests are going to grow very rapidly. But the queens can do this only if they can find enough empty cells to place their eggs. As adult bees emerge, the volume of the clusters will augment even faster than the brood nests. Although the weather can be cold and rainy, there are those nice sunny days when the foragers head out for the plants in bloom. They return carrying heavy loads of pollen and nectar, which they need to unload. All this requires more space in the hives.

The lack of adequate hive volume may lead to one of two outcomes: Either the colony fails to develop well, in which case it will miss the early spring honey flow and the season of colony reproduction, or its nest becomes cramped, which forces the bees to swarm prematurely, before its strength is satisfactory and the conditions are suitable.

It is not difficult to avoid these potential problems. But it requires that we act early enough and increase the volume of the hives. As we've seen in last month's article, this can be easily done in one of two ways, which may be combined. The first and simplest is the addition of supers. The other is the addition of a frame or two alongside the brood nests, a manipulation that is facilitated when we use follower boards and we keep the brood chambers narrow during winter. Doing both may take a little more time, but it will be quite effective in satisfying the needs of the bees. At no point while performing these rapid additions to the hives do we break the clusters or inspect their combs. The risk of chilling the brood is too great, since the number of adult bees is still relatively small.

Since the lower parts of the hives have been vacated by the bees during the winter, it is often

recommended to reverse the brood chambers. However, this is not a good solution, because the colonies will need to use these empty spaces in early spring to expand their brood nests and to form their clusters at night and during periods of inclement weather. It's a practice that breaks propolis seals, if not the brood nests themselves, at the worst time of the year. Still, we cannot expect the bees to move back down into these cold areas of the hives at this time of year.

The October fires prevented many of us from harvesting the surplus honey in the fall. Certainly this was an unusual situation, but this excess honey needs to be removed from the hives. Otherwise, its presence may impair the development of the colonies.

For a variety of reasons, which may include queen failure, too-small clusters, disease and poor hive configuration, some colonies will not make it to the spring. We need to take them away from the apiaries as soon as possible to prevent other bees from robbing them, figure out the cause of their demise and take care of the equipment appropriately. Come next spring, the hives that will have come out of winter successfully will be sources of new colonies to replace the lost ones. It's time to prepare our equipment, first to make sure that these colonies can grow well, and then to house their offspring.

Hopefully, we can find a little time before spring arrives to add plants that will offer pollen and nectar to our bees and other pollinators. There is no better way to feed them and at the same time to improve and beautify our environment.



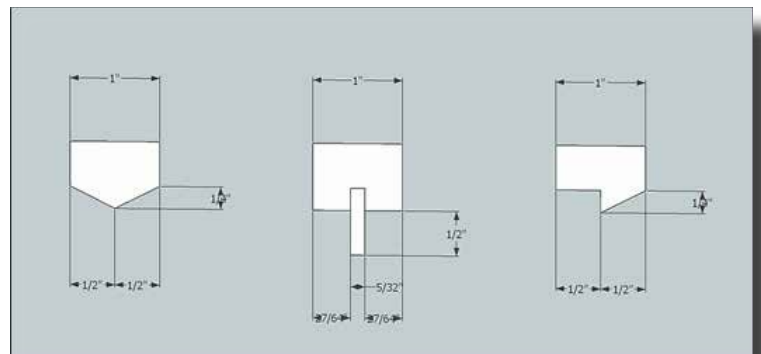
The comb in this frame is partially built. No foundation is used. Instead, in this case a strip of wood that is fastened to the underside of the top bar guides the bees so that the comb is built in the plane of the frame. Both of the wires that were installed have been embedded by the bees in their wax comb.

In summary, this month:

- I highly encourage all beekeepers NOT to order, buy or bring in package bees, nucs and queens from outside our immediate area! Instead, arrange to obtain bees from neighbor beekeepers.
- Inspect the exterior of the hives:
 - Verify that hive tops are still properly set and secured and that the hive entrances remain unobstructed.
 - Observe the landing boards and the ground in front of the hives.
 - On nice days, observe the flight paths and the bee activity. Adjust the entrance reducers, if necessary.
 - Make sure the upper ventilation slots are open to prevent the build-up of metabolic moisture inside the hives.
- Examine the debris on the monitoring trays.
- Early in the month, on a sunny, windless day, perform cursory inspections of only the upper part of the hives.
- Provide additional hive volume: Place supers with a few frames of empty drawn comb and follower boards. Add frames alongside the clusters.
- Take care of or dispose appropriately of any equipment that held colonies that failed, as warranted.
- Build and repair beekeeping equipment.
- Plan for spring.
- Plant bee forage.

May your bee colonies bring you good health and intense joy in 2018!

Serge Labesque
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Three cross-sections through top bars that I most frequently use in my frames. Although the section at left is entirely custom-made, the center one may easily be assembled by adding a spline of wood to a typical grooved top bar, and the section at right is obtained by beveling a wedged top bar before assembling the frame. The center cross-section is the most effective in leading the bees to initiate comb construction along the center plane of the frames.

Spring 2018 Beekeeping Classes at SRJC

Spring Classes at Santa Rosa Junior College with Serge Labesque. Website: <https://srjcce.augusoft.net/>

Class Name: Introduction to Beekeeping

Class Date(s): 01/31/2018 to 2/21/2018

Weekly - Wed 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

4 sessions starting 1/31/2018, ending 2/21/2018

Bech Hall, 1999

Number of Sessions: 4

Number of Weeks: 4

Class Web Description: This short course will introduce students to beekeeping with a strong emphasis on beehive management techniques as practiced in Sonoma County without reliance on any treatment whatsoever for pests or diseases. Topics include: overview of the honey bee colony; beekeeping tools and equipment; how to start with honey bees; swarming; honey flow and harvesting of hive products; diseases, pests and enemies; hive and queen management; and beekeeping throughout the year.

Max Class Size: 57

Class Fee: \$78.00 Materials Fee: \$15.00 Registration Fee: \$2.00

Class Name: Intermediate Beekeeping for Spring & Summer

Class Date(s): 02/28/2018 to 03/07/2018

Weekly - Wed 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;

2 sessions starting 2/28/2018, ending 3/7/2018

Bech Hall, 1999

Number of Sessions: 2

Number of Weeks: 2

Class Web Description: This class will expand on the beehive management techniques that were explored during the Introduction to Beekeeping course. The focus of the class will be spring and summer management of beehives in Sonoma County. Detailed explanations of techniques that are used in apiary expansion, swarm prevention and capture, queen management, and hive division will be given.

Max Class Size: 90

Class Fee: \$49.00 Materials Fee: \$8.00 Registration Fee: \$2.00



Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

Motherwort *Leonurus cardiaca*

Official *Leonurus Artemisia*, Chinese *Leonurus Sibericus*, Siberian

Family: Mint (Lamiaceae)

This was a new plant for me. I love the word “wort,” from Middle English meaning “plant,” especially an herb. Then my dear mother, Jewell Ford, died at age 91 years, and it seemed even more fitting to learn more.

“*Leonurus*” is due to the similarity of the flower stalks to a lion’s tail! Native to Europe and Asia, Motherwort was originally brought here with settlers as bee forage.

L. cardiaca is a perennial, *L. artemisia* and *L. sibericus* are biennials, which means they set roots and leaves the first year and flower the next. *L. cardiaca* grows up to 5 feet tall with flower spikes. The flowers have that lovely mint family tiny open mouth, offering nectar to bees and birds. They are very furry and are arranged in a swirl around the blocky stem, flanked by palmate (shaped like a hand) leaves.

L. artemisia has similar flowers; the leaves on the flower stalks are very long and droopy. Can reach up to 7 feet tall including flower stalks.

L. sibericus is more upright with lance shaped leaves on the flower stalks. Stalks can reach up to 6 or 7 feet.

All three can be direct seeded in the garden, in part shade to full sun. The seeds are generally sown in the fall or early spring. They need to be covered lightly with soil and then watered well through germination.

Motherwort needs regular water, and though it is grown in many parts of North America, and has even naturalized, it is not a native so should be grown with caution near wild lands.

Medicinally, it has been used in folk and Chinese traditional medicine to help in all stages of women’s reproductive health. It is also said to be a sedative and antispasmodic. Claims are even made that it is beneficial for heart health, thus the *L. cardiaca* Latin name. The leaves are brewed into a bitter tea and at times used with red clover flower and leaf, and/or mint leaves.

Please do not take the above information as medical advice. It is for interest only.

Alice Ford-Sala



Leonurus Artemisia

For Sale: Dual-paned window inner cover and solar oven \$120.
This can be used to melt wax using the sun or cook with.

For more info, phone Leonard Riepenhoff, 707-525-8424

BEE SHARING 2018 ~SWARM AND BEE SHARING PROGRAM UPDATES~

Christine Kurtz

The Swarm and Bee Sharing Program are now under the same umbrella—each with their own committee—and will be working together closely as we are not only retrieving swarms for personal reasons but also to share them and help other beekeepers.

There are two distinct ways to get swarms through the SCBA:

1. Getting swarms by being part of our community service Swarm Retrieval List.

Beekeepers with at least one year experience, and who have gone through a swarm orientation can be part of a list on our website that is divided by geographical region that correspond to their cluster groups. The public has access to your contact information and may contact you to retrieve a swarm. The list rotates randomly. Since we are a volunteer organization this service is done on a volunteer basis and is free of charge and gives many opportunities to educate the public about honey bees, which is a big part of our mission.

~**Returning members** to the community service swarm list will be grandfathered in this year and do not require an orientation but must have a current 2018 membership. The contact information you provided on your membership application will be used. You will **still be required** to follow the SCBA swarm etiquette. Remember to keep your phones on and accessible during swarm season. The website encourages the public to call until they get a live person.

~**New members** that wish to be on the community service swarm list must have at least one year of beekeeping experience and are required go to a swarm orientation before being approved.

Two swarm orientations have been scheduled at Bees N Blooms in Santa Rosa. You must RSVP at swarm@sonomabees.org

Here are the two dates:

Thursday February 22
Monday February 26

Both will be at 6:30 – 8:30 pm.
Bees N Blooms
3883 Petaluma Hill Road
Santa Rosa CA, 95404

2. Getting a swarm through the Bee Sharing Program.

The Bee Sharing Program is dedicated to sharing our locally adapted survivor bees to regenerate the bees' own resilience and own survival through sharing splits and surplus swarms within each cluster group. Soon, if not already, a small survey will be sent to you asking you whether you would like to participate in the Bee Sharing Program to either receive a split or swarm and/or to share one. The best efforts will be made to match beekeepers and to provide skills and education. Starting 2018 with education in mind, everyone is encourage to participate in the **February and March Bee Cafes** that will cover a great tutorial Power Point prepared by Serge Labesque on how bees come out of winter, late winter and early spring management and splitting. The pictures and schematics are fabulous and you are guaranteed to learn something.



South Cluster January Beekeepers Workshop

By Ettamarie Peterson

On Saturday, January 20th the members of the South Cluster gathered together at the Peterson's farm to have an equipment workshop. Christine Kurtz gave a talk about the various choices of hive parts and other equipment that are available. She gave some excellent pros and cons for sizes of boxes we use. After her talk the group was broken into three small groups and rotated through three different stations for more equipment information. Ariel Gilbert kept the group on schedule as the official timer. John McGinnis showed a clever box that is designed to avoid lifting supers. Nikki Campbell showed the Warre hive and explained how it is managed here in Sonoma County. There was a top bar hive also on display. Kelli Cox took the group outside to demonstrate how to clean the hive boxes with a torch.

Aerial Gilbert, Cynthia Rathkey, Kerrie Williams are this year's South Cluster co-leaders. The success of this workshop was proof they are a top-notch team! They thank all the participants that brought goodies to share at the break.



Nikki Campbell discussing how she handles the Warre hive.



Brian Martinelli showing how top bar hives works.



John McGinnis demonstrating the clever easy-to-handle hive.



Kelli Cox demonstrating the propane torch method of cleaning frames.



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*Designed and endorsed by Serge Labesque
Recommended by Christine Kurtz*

John McGinnis

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Beek Of The Month

Greetings SCBA Beeks!

The newsletter for SCBA "The Monthly Extractor" has had valuable information for members for years. Several years ago, Bill MacElroy, a member, stepped forward to take on improving its layout and transformed it into the best looking and easiest to read association newsletter ever. The editor sends him a word document that he not only organizes into an outstanding format but also finds photos to add to articles when possible. He goes out of his way to fix any problems with missing information. Some months he is asked to insert a late article after he has already spent a lot of time formatting the first version. He has never ever complained or refused to redo the newsletter when this happens.

Our "Beek Of The Month" for January

is

Bill MacElroy



Bill MacElroy

Besides his work on the newsletter Bill has donated his time to be the SCBA Webmaster, not charging our association anything. He works behind the scenes giving his services to keep our web site up-to-date.

Besides being our Webmaster he has helped the garden group and opened up his lovely Monte-Bellaria farm to them for workshops. The farm grows acres of lavender and olive trees. He keeps his bees very happy using their wax and honey in a sustainable manner.

Kelli Cox
President



Honey Extractor Rental

Members have use of the association's honey extracting equipment, as available. Rental fee is \$5 per day. Extractors must be returned clean.

Email or call to reserve:

South

Ettamarie Peterson
707-479-1613

editor@petersonsfarm.com

Central

Paul Quistgard

PaulQuistgard@aol.com

West

Cheryl Veretto

707-827-3774 (preferred)

cheryl@cbfreelance.com

East

Susan Simmons

925-408-4529

Susanjsimmons@gmail.com

The Top Bar Hive group has a fruit press available for use in honeycomb crushing. Contact Jim Spencer at topbargroup@sonomabees.org



Bee Hive Management & Local Honey Sales

Michael Turner
Owner/Beekeeper
415/871-4662

info@marincoastalbee.com



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Contact Information

Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm at the Rohnert Park 4-H Building. 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 meetings or by mail. Please see our Website 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

2018 Board Members and Other Helpful People

Board Officers:

President - Kelli Cox president@sonomabees.org
1st Vice President - Ann Jereb 1stVP@sonomabees.org
2nd Vice President - Susan Kegley 2ndVP@sonomabees.org
Secretary - Peter Jones secretary@sonomabees.org
Treasurer - Sue Owens/Bill Genthe treasurer@sonomabees.org

Appointed Boardmembers:

Extractor Editor - Ettamarie Peterson editor@sonomabees.org
Bee Sharing (team) - Christine Kurtz (Joy Wesley, Lizanne Pastore, Bruce Harris) beesharing@sonomabees.org
Education Coordinator (team)- Maggie Weaver (Thea Vierling, Jen Espinoza, OPEN)
At Large Director - atLarge1@sonomabees.org - OPEN
At Large Director - atLarge2@sonomabees.org - OPEN

Friends of the Board:

Auction - Darlene McGinnis , Christine Kurtz auction@sonomabees.org
Volunteer Coordinators - Karen Kappa, Carol Ellis, Sonja Moug and Emily Gaines volunteer@sonomabees.org
Assistant - Linda Burns assistant@sonomabees.org

Cluster Leaders:

Regional Coordinator - OPEN – regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org
Central - Brad Lee, Rorie Sweeney, Maggie Weaver, Ann Jereb centralcluster@sonomabees.org
East - Laurie Dorman, Susan Simmons eastcluster@sonomabees.org
North - Cheryl Caletti, Laurie Smith, Candice Koseba northcluster@sonomabees.org
South - Aerial Gilbert, Cynthia Rathkey, Kerrie Williams southcluster@sonomabees.org
Topbar - Jim Spencer topbarcluster@sonomabees.org
West - Bruce Harris, Gina Brown westcluster@sonomabees.org

Groups:

Topbar - Jim Spencer topbarcluster@sonomabees.org
Gardening Group - gardening@sonomabees.org
Swarm - swarm@sonomabees.org
Historian - Kirstie Stramler historian@sonomabees.org
Librarian - Nadya Clark librarian@sonomabees.org
Communications - Bill MacElroy communication@sonomabees.org
Webmaster - Cheryl Veretto webmaster@sonomabees.org