

# The Monthly Extractor



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June 2019

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

## President's Message

Fellow Beeks,

We're 1/2 way through the year! Where did it go? As I write to you on this Memorial Day the weather forecast is telling me we are finally past the rain! It looks like lots of sun from now on out. Perhaps that means more swarms or splits? Please make sure you're attending your Bee Cafes and Cluster Coordinators if you are able to share or are still in need of bees!

Our Board and Task force has been diligently working toward getting a number of job descriptions ready to share with you. You will be receiving an email blast next week with more details. This new organizational structure is very exciting and I can't wait to share it with you.

Don't forget our SCBA Potluck Picnic coming up (in lieu of our July general meeting) on Saturday July 20th from 12 - 4pm. I am excited that Susan Kegley has offered again her beautiful Bees N Blooms property! We encourage you to bring your families.

SCBA will provide meat and drinks (soda, water and juice). I will send out a more detailed invitation in July's Extractor. Marcus Sugihara is the lead for the Gravenstein Apple Fair on August 17th and 18th and will have a sign up sheet for volunteers at our June general meeting. Please consider helping. If you are not going to be at June's meeting we will also have the sign up sheet at the July picnic or you can email Marcus at: [mcsugihara@gmail.com](mailto:mcsugihara@gmail.com) for more information.

Thanks to all of you who volunteer your time to make this organization what it is!

Thank you,

*Kelli Cox*  
2019 President



## This Month's Calendar

### **Monthly Meeting: Monday June 10**

- **4-H Foundation Bldg. Rohnert Park**
- **6 pm** – Meet your cluster members; ask questions; bring your own cup and fill it with tea or coffee and have some goodies.
- **7 pm** – General meeting starts. Our speakers for the June meeting will be a panel of members discussing **SCBA's FAQs about Beekeeping**. Are you a new beekeeper and wondering where to place your hive, how often to inspect your colony, and whether or not to feed your bees? Or are you an intermediate beekeeper with questions about re-queening your colonies, how to move a hive a short distance, or the best hive designs? This month's meeting will focus on the beekeeping topics you, the SCBA members, told us you wanted to hear more about in the recent surveys you took. With a panel of our own experienced beekeepers to answer questions, we'll be assured there will be more than one approach to solving a beekeeping problem, so come and hear what they have to say and bring your own ideas as well.

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# My June

## Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

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### ***Hive dynamics keep stores and brood together***

Inside a hive, the brood nest or the cluster must remain within very close proximity to the colony's food and energy reserves. But the contents of the combs are not fixed or unalterable. Since the size and overall location of the brood nest, as well as the amount, type and arrangement of the colony's supplies change constantly, their moves have to be well choreographed.

Normally, the bees organize the contents of their nest without any beekeeper intervention. They may accumulate, consume, or relocate stores within the hive. And most of the eggs that are laid ultimately develop into bees that emerge from the comb. In turn, the cells that have been emptied or vacated may be cleaned and prepared to receive eggs or stores again, but not necessarily the same thing they previously held.

When pollen or nectar is deposited in a cell before the queen lays an egg in it, the stores retain or gain comb over the brood. This is frequently the case during a honey flow or when the bees re-organize their brood chamber at the end of summer and during the fall. Conversely, when a queen places an egg in a cell, the brood nest remains set in place at that location or makes an incremental move towards the stores. We may picture this in-hive activity as a tug-o-war between brood and stores. It results in the gradual relocation of the brood nest over time, mainly up and down the comb, and to a lesser extent, from comb to comb.

Occasionally, inclement weather during periods of intense brood rearing results in wide bands of empty cells around the brood, the stores the cells contained having been consumed. In these conditions, which happen most often during cold and wet springs, the foragers cannot compensate for the large amounts of stores that are being devoured. Strong colonies led by prolific queens can tackle this situation by rapidly expanding their nests higher up in the hives. If this move is not prevented from happening, the colonies are not constrained and their vigor is not affected. It can be anticipated that the upper parts of the brood nests will be filled by incoming nectar as soon as the adult bees emerge from the comb and good weather conditions return. The brood nests will then be gradually relocated lower in the hives.

When the honey flows are generous, or when the bees relocate uncapped honey, which they do during their preparations of the hives for winter, the brood nests are forced to retreat into the lower parts of the brood chambers. When, on the contrary, meager honey flows or dearth arrive, a gradual move upward of the brood nests in the hives can be observed.

Beekeepers, however, interfere more frequently than the weather with these natural processes, sometimes with dire consequences. This can be the case, for example, when queen excluders are used. These devices can isolate brood nests from the stores they need. Similar stressful

conditions may be created when frames or supers are added without considering the impact of their placement. Most often, there is a clear demarcation between brood and stores at the edge of the brood nests. However, a seemingly random mix of brood and stores may at times occur within the brood area. Honey-bound conditions of the brood nests are one example of this. In the spring, when the brood chamber of a hive becomes honey-bound, the queen is forced to reduce her egg-laying rate. Soon after, she will be ready to fly out with a swarm. Usually, bees also cram their brood nests by including stores in the brood combs during the preparation of the hive for winter. One of the multiple benefits of this is that the brood that will become the winter bees a few weeks later will be well nourished. Another is that the heater bees that keep the developing young warm will find sources of energy where they are needed. In addition, this condition leads the queens to gradually slowdown.

The location of the hives, the weather and the honey flows have a strong influence on the hives. Nonetheless, it is the bees that manage the contents of the combs. They place their stores and the brood methodically, not just to maintain good nutrition of their developing young, but also to initiate life-changing colony events such as swarming, or to prepare for winter and other challenging times. This bee behavior is vitally important to the colonies. It deserves our attention... and respect.

### ***June in the apiaries***

The longest days of the year usher in substantially different weather conditions and the next phase in the life of the colonies. Now, the season of colony reproduction is essentially over. Swarms are becoming scarce. Not surprisingly, beekeepers shift their attention from hive divisions to the honey supers.

At the end of the spring honey flow, which is marked in this area of California by the California buckeye and blackberry blooms, a sudden period of dearth seems to catch the bees off-guard. Unable to find much nectar, many foragers resort to robbing in order to gather food for their colonies. Young and weak colonies can be at risk, especially in places where the density of hives has become high. The colonies eliminate large numbers of drones and become defensive.

Although the brood nests of the established and mature colonies have reached their maximum size for the year, the young colonies are still building up. Led by young queens that will have to be evaluated in early summer, they have to begin to prepare their nests for next winter.

Hive inspections are often limited to watching the bee activity in front of the hives, examining the monitoring trays and occasional peeks into the honey supers. The brood chambers are accessed less frequently, as colony health is usually good at this time of year. But this cannot

to be taken for granted. So, open-hive inspections need to be performed anytime there are signs suggesting that there might be a colony health issue. These manipulations are timed to avoid the heat of the day in order to reduce the risk of triggering robbing or defensive behavior. As the grass has dried, it is necessary to be particularly careful with the smokers, too, as they must be kept at the ready during these hive inspections.

If practical, it is good to provide some shade to the hives during the afternoon. This helps to reduce their need for water. Regardless, sources of water must be kept available to the bees without any interruption. Any surplus spring honey that has become ripe and sufficiently dehydrated may be harvested. However, it is important to make sure we leave enough honey in the hives for the bees. This is in anticipation of the summer dearth, which can be pronounced in locations that depend on natural vegetation. I prefer harvesting a few frames of honey on multiple occasions instead of entire supers at once. This reduces the risk of robbing, does not appear to agitate the bees, and facilitates the entire process. Wet frames are returned to the hives in the evening, again to reduce the risk of robbing.

Nectar-storage space is added more modestly now than earlier in the spring. This is not only because the early summer honey flow is usually modest, but also to help preserve or establish a crown of honey in the upper part of the brood chambers. This part of hive space management is particularly important with Double-Deep Brood Chamber

(DD) hives, because the colonies and their winter stores will have to be well established in the brood chambers by the end of summer or early fall. If the upper parts of the hives were kept excessively open, the brood nests would tend to move up in the hives, since there is less nectar available to the bees. For the same reason, comb building is slowing down. Therefore, it is beneficial not to direct this task to the honey supers when new comb may be needed in the brood chambers. Yes, it is still springtime and I am already planning for fall and winter. This is because it will take all summer long for the colonies to prepare, especially if we divert too much of their effort and energy to the honey supers.

The color and fragrance of the wax that is collected during the spring honey harvest are just delightful. At this time of year, this product from the bees may be easily processed in solar wax melters.

The weeks around the summer solstice may provide a last chance to raise a few queens under favorable conditions. Originating from the very best of our hives, these young queens will be kept at the ready to requeen colonies that do not perform well, or those that do not control mite population satisfactorily.

Do not miss going to the apiaries in the warm evenings and enjoying the sweet fragrance that emanates from the softly humming hives.



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### ***In summary, this month:***

- Inspect hives when the foragers are out in large numbers, avoiding the heat of the day.
- Follow-up on the development of young colonies.
- Begin to evaluate the quality of the young queens. Replace failing or undesirable queens.
- Keep an eye on the health of the colonies.
- Combine or requeen inherently weak colonies or those that are not developing properly.
- Perform hive divisions and raise queens when conditions are favorable.
- Maintain adequate air circulation through the hives.
- Be aware of situations and manipulations that can trigger robbing.
- Make sure the components of the hives fit tightly to prevent secondary entrances that might allow robber bees to enter.
- Ensure that sources of water are continuously available to the bees.
- Provide filtered afternoon shade, if at all possible.
- Adjust the size of the hive entrances to match the forager activity and to reduce the risk of robbing.
- Monitor swarm traps.
- Keep some equipment at the ready to catch the occasional swarm.
- Manage honey supers (Add space, as necessary.)
- Harvest surplus spring honey, making sure to leave enough honey in the hives.
- Discard old and misshapen combs.
- Render wax.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.

*Serge Labesque*  
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# Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

## Hedgerow Bee Plant Month Rhus Family Sumac - Anacardiaceae

One more hedgerow plant that provides us with edible treats!

### Rhus integrifolia Lemonade Berry

This California native is happy in full sun to partial shade, is drought tolerant and can be fire and deer resistant. Other attributes: An extremely attractive evergreen shrub that is easy to keep tidy with a bit of pruning if necessary. Lemonade berry can reach from 4 to 20 feet tall and wide. The thick leaves are dark green with lighter green undersides. The petioles (from Wikipedia: petiole is a stalk that attaches a leaf to the plant stem) are deep red, and the new growth is also. Flowers are pink or white and borne on the ends of branches. They are very attractive to bees - honey and native, butterflies and hummingbirds. The sticky fruits were traditionally made into a tart tea or mush that is said to be very refreshing. Birds and small mammals also enjoy the berries.

### Rhus ovate Sugar Bush

Very closely related to *R. integrifolia*, they even hybridize freely. Sugar Bush has all of the advantages and beauty of her sister, making a large, attractive screen or hedge, specimen or even pruned into a small tree. The leaves are a bit darker green and more oval shaped than Lemonade Berry. The bracts are darker red, very attractive in winter. Blossoms are held in clusters, also, with so many tiny, nectar filled flowers that bees can't resist! The berries are also soaked in water to make a refreshing drink. Both can be used on hillsides for erosion control, under oaks in dry shade, they are completely drought resistant once established. I read in some articles that if you live in a high fire danger area, watering once a month in summer, keeping weeds away from the plant, and even spraying the dust off occasionally make them more fire resistant. Either plant can be coppiced (cut to the ground) if they need to be invigorated. They are long-lived plants, so plant them where they can provide beneficial forage for pollinators and wildlife.

Note: They are not poisonous, but they are in the Sumac family, which includes poison oak, mango and cashew. They may be mildly irritating to some people, so it's best to wear gloves when pruning to avoid the sap.

*Alice Ford-Sala*



*Rhus integrifolia*

## Summer Introduction to Beekeeping Course

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.

**Instructor: Serge Labesque**

**Course # 7616 4 Tuesdays, July 16th – Aug. 6, 6:30 – 9 pm Class is in Lark Hall, Santa Rosa Campus. Fee: \$94 (Includes \$16 of materials) (707) 527-4372**

<http://communityed.santarosa.edu>

## Bee Display With Other Bugs Mosquito Abatement District

By Ettamarie Peterson

One Saturday in May I was asked to bring the observation hive and talk about bees to the general public at the Marin-Sonoma Mosquito Abatement District's Open House. This was a good chance to inform the public of what Sonoma County Beekeepers Association does for the public and how the public can help our honey bees. It was a fun day and the public was interested to learn what they could.

One man that came by was the grandson of Peter Heuter, a long ago member of Sonoma County Beekeepers when it was a small club. His grandfather was from Germany and hand built all his beehives in a special way. The boxes were much bigger so the bees had large frames to build comb on. I told the man I actually have one of his grandfather's empty boxes. It was really great to have the chance to chat with him and tell him that his grandfather was often quoted when I was beginning beekeepers years ago.



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## SCBA & Children's Museum of Sonoma County

By Theresa Giacchino

In 2011, the Children's Museum of Sonoma County met with the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association to ask for advice and know-how in designing an exhibit space that would focus on honeybees complete with an observation hive. We worked on everything from bee facts to observation hive design. The exhibit was opened in 2015 and has been supported by SCBA members ever since! Over the years, we've had a few colonies installed with help from Chris Conrad, of Bee Conscious Bee Removal. Doug and Katia from Bee Kind stepped up with a donation for materials from their store. The Children's Museum has hosted a few events that SCBA Education group has presented fun and engaging education to our visitors. The Children's Museum also hosts a SCBA member for our "Visit with a Beekeeper" every second Friday of the month. We even had quite a few donations of honey for a special honey tasting done at our 2018 Time to Wonder fundraising event. It was so sweet!

A big thank you to Karen Cappa, Maggie Weaver, and Chris Conrad for rescuing the observation hive at the Children's Museum this past weekend. We had a failing queen and Karen donated a few queen cells to install. Maggie brought them over and Chris helped me install the new frames of bees. We're keeping our fingers crossed that she will get mated and be an amazing queen. We have a wonderful and generous beekeeping community and we are truly grateful!

If you would like to be a "Visiting Beekeeper" at the Children's Museum, please contact Theresa Giacchino [theresa@cmosc.org](mailto:theresa@cmosc.org)

Thanks for your help all the time!!



**Now is the time to plant those sunflower seeds!** If you are buying seeds be sure to check to see if they say pollenless. The bees don't want to waste their time going to those. Leave those seeds for the people who are growing for the florist trade.

## Late May Bee Sharing Program Update

The Bee Sharing program continues to perk along, though the recent cool and rainy weather temporarily dampened swarm activity. The last couple of dry and warmer days have seen some swarms again and with sunny days ahead hopefully the swarms will continue for awhile. The last week with more than 1 reported Sonoma County swarm in 2018 was the week beginning with Sunday June 3.

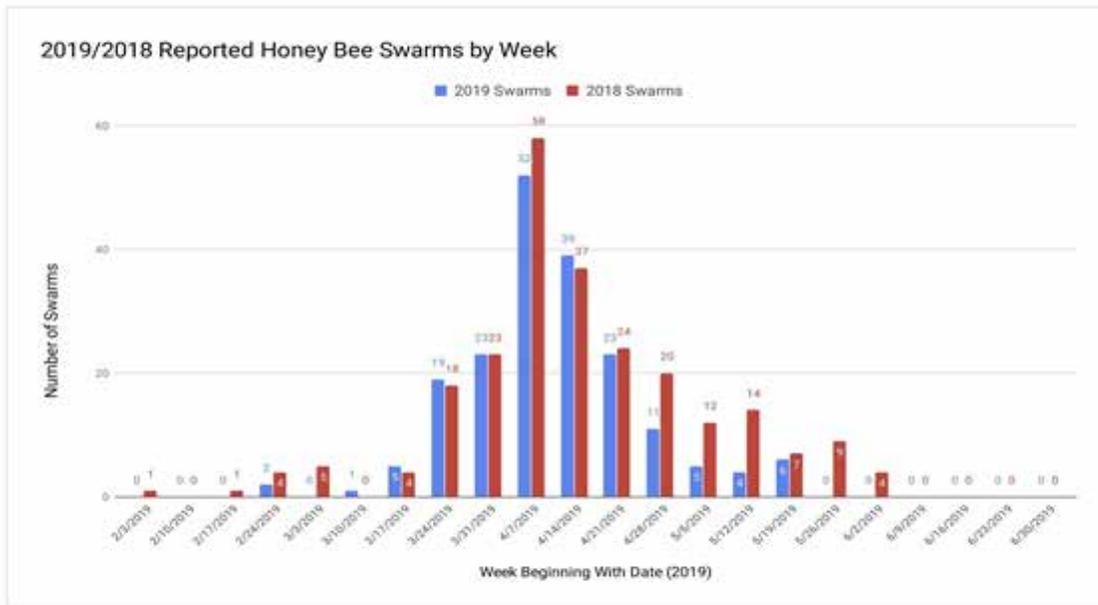
With the caveat that some folks may be slow in reporting swarms so the following could change, here are some updated numbers on reported swarms to date. As of May 25 a total of 190 swarms were reported throughout Sonoma County. That compares to 228 reported through the same date in 2018, roughly 20% more than this year. The bar chart below is updated through May 25, 2019.

In terms of reported swarms by city, Santa Rosa is now in the lead with 55, followed by Sonoma with 22, Petaluma with 22, Sebastopol with 21, Kenwood at 18 and Healdsburg at 14.

As of May 25 a total of 27 splits were reported throughout Sonoma County. That compares to 36 through the same date last year.

Please continue to report your swarms and splits to [swarm@sonomabees.org](mailto:swarm@sonomabees.org) and copy your cluster coordinator. Please put SWARM REPORT in the subject line and in the body of the email include the date, the location of the swarm, the size (eg: softball, football, basketball or beachball!) or split size in frames, and the recipients location (yourself or someone else). Finally, please let us know if you heard about the swarm from SCBA's public swarm list or through some other means.

Thanks for supporting the Bee Share program by reporting your swarms and splits and through your generous sharing of those extra swarms and splits that you make available!



*The Bee Share Team*



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## 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

Kelli Cox  
707 280-4376

[president@sonomabees.org](mailto:president@sonomabees.org)

### Central

Brian Gully  
707-391-4727

[svo.must@hotmail.com](mailto:svo.must@hotmail.com)

### West

Gina Brown  
415-828-8359

[Boragelane@comcast.net](mailto:Boragelane@comcast.net)

### East

Claudine Latchaw  
(707) 971-9708

[claudinelatchaw@gmail.com](mailto:claudinelatchaw@gmail.com)

The Alternative Hives (formerly Top Bar Hive) group has a fruit press available for use in honeycomb crushing. Contact Jim Spencer at:

[alternativehives@sonomabees.org](mailto:alternativehives@sonomabees.org)

## Order Bees in January

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# SCBA

## Monthly Meeting Minutes

Date: My 13, 2019

Location: 4H Building, Rohnert Park

Meeting started: 7:00 PM Approx. attendance: ~ 120

### General announcements - Kelli Cox

- Kelli asked people to stand up to show how many people were at the meeting for the first time, how many have been members for 1 - 2 years, how many 3-5 years, etc.
- Looking for people to bake cookies etc. to bring to meeting.
- Susan Kegley gave an overview of the survey participants' responses.
- Kelli presented Butter & Eggs float pictures and discussed. Mentioned how we really need people to step up and volunteer.
- Board is in midst of organizing board positions and volunteer job descriptions - maybe by June or July will be done. (task force)
- Thea presented "The Drones" (handout)
- "Beekeeping Skills and Techniques", Mike Turner, Marin Coastal Bee Company

Adjourned: 8:37PM

Respectfully submitted,

*Irene Sample*  
Membership

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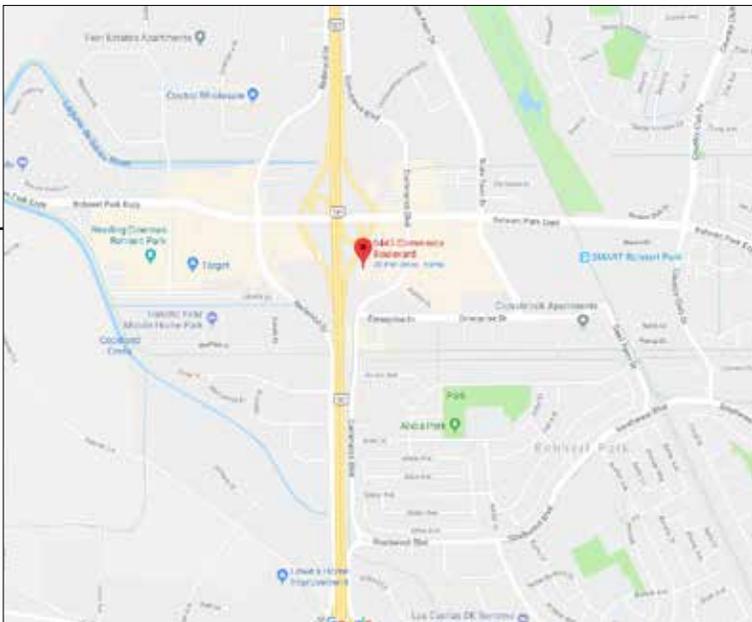
# 2019 Board Members

and Other Helpful People

**Click Here  
for the Up-to-Date  
Roster of SCBA Resources**

## 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](http://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**

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Directions