President's Message

Summer greetings - I hope that this season is allowing you some slowdown time, especially when it's hot. I lived the 1st half of my life in Southern California, where summer equaled hot, and we had no choice but to slow down.

During these warm/hot days, the honeybees that I look after are not slowed down at all, it seems. In fact, in some hives, I’ve seen some late comb-building, not always in the parts of the hive where I wanted comb to be.

It shows me that “you never know” (what a great and true expression) how it’s going to be. Each season and each hive is always changing, kind of like this thing we call life.

Speaking of changes, there is an immediate need to fill the vacated position of Secretary for the SCBA Board. If you are interested, and if you are able to attend each monthly board meeting through December, please email me at president@sonomabees.org

We thank and appreciate the work, time and energy that Melissa Hanson gave to this volunteer job.

As we seemingly rapidly move toward the fall, and the return of the shorter days and thus the slowdown of the bees' foraging, I wish us all some form of rest, relaxation, rejuvenation, renewal, and recuperation.

Sincerely,

Jason Berkman
President

This Month’s Calendar

Monthly Meeting: August, 14
• 6 pm – Check out books and videos from our library, buy plants at our fabulous plant table, buy raffle tickets, 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!
• 7 pm – Kelton Temby with Keltronics, to talk about EyesOnHives, video technology for monitoring your hives to assess patterns of activity.

Upcoming Meetings/Events
• August 12 & 13, 2017 – Gravenstein Apple Fair at Ragel Ranch Park in Sebastopol -10 am to 6 pm both days. We need volunteers for this event!
• September 11- Aimee Code, the Pesticide Program Director at the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

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The frontline of hive dynamics

The bees of a healthy, queenright colony methodically organize the contents of their hive. As long as the brood nest is not split by the beekeeper, it remains compact, tightly surrounded by stores that are predominantly placed above, but also around the brood area. Except for cells that are being prepared for imminent egg laying or nectar storage, most of the empty comb is found beyond the stores or below the brood area. These outlying cells are used by the bees only when the honey flow or the development of the colony demands.

As we inspect a brood chamber, we usually consider the quantity, pattern and condition of the brood, stores and comb space available to the colony. Yet, the band of cells that normally delineates the brood and the stores is a particularly informative region of the combs. This is because the brood nest or the clustered bees must remain in very close proximity to stores. Indeed, whenever there is brood in the hive, the nurse bees must have direct access to nutrients. Similarly, during periods of cold weather clustered bees need to remain in contact with honey. When this is not the case they risk dying of starvation, as cold temperatures prevent the bees from leaving the cluster to reach stores that may be present just a few inches away.

However, the location of this boundary area on the combs between the brood and the stores is not fixed. The contiguity of the stores, brood and cluster is a condition that is constantly challenged. The stores and the brood nest tend to recede from each other as nurse bees empty cells by consuming pollen, nectar or honey to feed themselves and the larvae, or when adult bees are born at the periphery of the brood area. But under normal conditions either the bees refill the emptied cells with honey, nectar or pollen, or the queen lays eggs in the cells that have been cleared. Consequently, the width of the band of empty cells between brood and stores is normally kept to two or fewer cells.

As the use of the cells is switched from nutrient storage to brood rearing or vice versa, the brood nest may expand into areas that previously held stores, or the stores may gain comb over the brood nest. Although this change happens one cell at a time, the brood nest may noticeably grow or shrink and move up, down or laterally on the combs over a few days or weeks. There is in fact a constant remodeling of the brood chamber. Yet, the brood nest remains in close proximity to the stores during the transformation.

The main driving forces are the queen, nurse bees and brood on the one hand, and the honey flow, foragers and receiver bees on the other. When the first group takes over one empty cell in the boundary area, the brood moves in that direction. Conversely, when a droplet of nectar or honey or a pollen pellet is placed in the cell, the stores press towards the brood.

Only in appearance is this cell takeover activity a tug o’ war between the brood nest and the stores. Actually, it is a life-sustaining process for the colony. The boundary area of the comb reveals much to the beekeeper about the nutritional condition and vigor of the colony, and about the environmental conditions and honey flow. What we can observe here is a systematic, ceaseless, yet subtle re-organization of the brood chamber that is particularly noticeable during the spring and through the latter part of the summer, when the colony prepares for winter. It is actually a vital condition for the winter cluster. A narrow, sharply defined separation between brood and stores usually indicates that the colony is functioning well. A wide gap, however, may show that the stores consumed by the nurse bees are not being replenished. This is frequently noticeable right after a period of inclement weather, in the spring. A diffused separation with scattered brood and stores, on the contrary signals a condition that warrants further scrutiny by the beekeeper.

The orderly relative placement of the stores and brood, which is evident in healthy hives, often disappears from the combs of colonies that are stressed. By looking not only at the stores and at the brood during hive inspections, but also at the boundary area between them, we can see the current hive dynamics. On the basis of
these observations we can begin to assess hive problems and address the upcoming spatial needs of the bees, the expansion or the contraction of the hive.

**August in the apiaries**

The difference the location of an apiary can make is seldom more striking than in the middle of summer. If you ever had any doubt about this, just look at hives set in the suburbs of a town at this time of the year and then at a few more that are kept in the adjacent countryside. The first, surrounded by hundreds of lush gardens, are bursting with bees and honey. They are under the influence of a seemingly perpetual honey flow. They are cramming new white comb everywhere possible. Meanwhile, the other hives are enduring dearth even though they may be located less than one mile away from the suburban colonies. These are struggling to survive the intense, dry heat of the season and the assaults of robber bees and yellow jackets.

Although bee colonies may encounter a wide range of conditions in mid-summer, they are all facing the same summer challenge: They have to prepare for next winter. Certainly, they started doing this as soon as colony reproduction was over by raising new queens, building their populations and collecting nectar. But now is the time when they begin to organize the nests for fall and winter. This task will take the next two months to complete, and it will culminate in the production of the winter bees inside very dense brood chambers.

Because the colonies have reached their maximum size for the year and the volume of the brood nests has been steadily decreasing since the end of spring, the management of hives in mid-summer requires very little additional equipment, if any. Even in places that benefit from a summer flow, harvesting some ripe surplus honey and returning the wet frames to the hives may suffice to provide adequate nectar storage space. In many cases the foragers do not bring enough nectar to keep the brood nests from moving up and out of the lower combs. At times, the lower supers become completely empty. When this happens, I leave the vacated lower super in place, as the foragers will soon begin to unload their pollen pellets in those cells. During the next several weeks, the bees will drive the brood nests back into these areas by placing nectar and moving uncapped honey in the upper parts of the brood chambers.

Summer hive inspections consist most often of watching the activity in the flight paths, on the fronts and at the entrances of the hives. Predation by yellowjackets and robbing are dangers we want to prevent by keeping the entrances defensible. Yet, adequate ventilation of the hives is a necessity on hot days. It may be worthwhile to bring a little afternoon shade to the hives, as this reduces the need for the bees to collect water to cool the brood chambers, and it instead allows them to take better care of the brood and to collect more stores.

Although open-hive inspections are infrequent and brief, mainly focused on the honey supers at this time of year, the colonies will be thoroughly assessed before next month in order to address and resolve potential problems or weaknesses before the fall. The monitoring trays are a simple, effective and non-disruptive means to find out if the colonies are keeping the varroa mites in check. But are there any other health issues? Are the bees responding to the cues of the season by beginning to consolidate their stores and prepare their brood chambers for fall? Are the queens satisfactory? All this information is valuable, as it allows the beekeeper not only to requeen or combine hives that are failing, but it also permits the spotting of good performers. We will want to propagate these colonies next spring should they make it successfully through the winter. Notes are to be made! As we manipulate the combs, we pay attention not to disturb the arrangement of the brood chambers the bees are working on. We certainly may harvest a little honey and remove some of the unused upper frames, but there is no urgency in doing so. Indeed it won’t be a problem to leave them in place for a few more weeks. Yet, empty older and misshaped combs are removed at the first opportunity, before the bees put them back into use.

The end of summer hive management is the opposite of spring hive management in that sense that the hives begin to shrink and to become more compact instead of growing. The focus now is the beginning of the preparations for fall and winter. We need to verify that the bees are on track, and we need to do our share.
In summary, this month:

- Observe the performance of the queens and colonies. Take notes for later selection, combination or replacement, as warranted.
- Requeen or combine hives that are not performing satisfactorily, and those that have failing queens.
- As always, keep an eye on the health of the colonies.
- Beware of yellowjackets and of the risk of robbing.
- Avoid hive manipulations that can trigger robbing.
- Keep the entrances of the hives defensible. Reduce them, if necessary.
- Ensure that the bees have access to water at all times.
- Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated. Providing afternoon shade is helpful.
- Begin to reduce the unused volume of hives.
- Cull old and misshapen combs.
- Harvest surplus summer honey.
- Give extracted supers and wet wax back to the bees for cleaning. To avoid triggering robbing, this should be done in the evening, when foragers are returning to their hives.
- Beware of the fire danger when using the smoker in areas of dry vegetation.
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings. The solar wax melter works very well at this time of year.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.

Serge Labesque
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Santa Rosa Jr. College Bee Course
by Serge Labesque Schedule

**Class Name: Introduction to Beekeeping Class**

Date(s): 08/31/2017 to 09/21/2017
Weekly - Thu 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;
4 sessions starting 8/31/2017, ending 9/21/2017
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: $50.00
Materials Fee: $8.00
Registration Fee: $2.00

**Class Name: Intermediate Beekeeping for Fall, Winter, & Early Spring Class**

Date(s): 09/28/2017 to 10/05/2017
Weekly - Thu 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;
2 sessions starting 9/28/2017, ending 10/5/2017
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 fall, winter, and early spring management of beehives in Sonoma County. Detailed explanations of techniques that are used for fall, queen management, and hive preparation for winter will be given.

Max Class Size: 90
Class Fee: $78.00
Materials Fee: $15.00
Registration Fee: $2.00
BEE WISE:
“CHOOSE HARD TASKS FIRST”
by Emery Dann

One question on a school test asked: “Name 6 animals in the Arctic.”

A teacher grading the test read a student’s answer: 2 Polar Bears and 4 Seals.

This was creative—but the “easy way out”, —not giving the answers the teacher wanted.

First question: “When I need to accomplish anything, am I avoiding the hardest tasks, preferring doing the easy or fun tasks first?” This reminds me of stalling words I am familiar with: “Procrastination”, “Denial”, “Excuses” and “Pain Avoidance”.

Second question: “How does that work?” My answer: “Not very good!”

Third question: “Are there projects have I resisted or only half-way completed because I avoid doing the hardest part of the task facing me? Am I letting my fear undermine what I need to accomplish? Do I have and seek a support team, mentors I can call and talk with so I am not alone? It is easy for me to overload my available time by not saying a simple “No”. It can be easy as a beekeeper to let another day, week or…(?) go by when I need to inspect, move a beehive or extract honey. I do know without a doubt that wax moths do not procrastinate!

When I do the hardest part of the job first, I have the most energy and mental capacity. If I do the easy items first, the difficult parts hanging over me can de-motivate, discourage and stall my efforts. I can infuse some enthusiasm when I need a moral boost, by doing a very few easy things sprinkled in-between the hardest tasks facing me. But only when I deal with the hardest things I don’t want to do, FIRST!

Reminds me of what Dale Carnegie said, (before my time): “DO THE HARD JOBS FIRST. THE EASY JOBS WILL TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES!” For me, a good attitude greatly helps when I figure what the hard parts and easy parts of the job are for me. Then I can “CHOOSE TO DO THE HARD TASKS FIRST” intentionally not randomly wishing for different results while avoiding what needs to be done!
Eriogonum Buckwheat Family

Eriogonum grande v. rubescens
Red Buckwheat

I had a couple of these gorgeous buckwheats in my garden a few years ago. The bees were constantly on them, so much so that for several summers in a row a praying mantis would lurk upside down on the blossoms waiting for a sweet bee snack. I would gently escort the mantis to another part of the yard, but he/she would be back the next day or so.

I have re-planted the buckwheats, but so far the mantis isn’t back.

The red-pink-magenta blossoms are held a couple of feet above the rounded evergreen leaves. The entire plant including flower stalks can reach three feet tall, but are often somewhat smaller. The leaves are a light grey-green underneath and sage green above. They look nice massed in a border, perhaps mixed with other buckwheats, or sages. Encourage seedlings if you are lucky enough to get them, as the plants only live 3 to 5 years.

Red buckwheat enjoys full sun to part shade, can survive on normal rainfall once established, and needs good drainage.

Eriogonum giganteum
Saint Catherine's Lace

As you may guess by looking at the Latin name, this is a large buckwheat. Very attractive, with large oval leaves that are creamy white underneath and silvery green above, the flower stalks are covered with sprays of white to pink blossoms that tower above the plant, making a striking background plant. The entire plant can grow up to 6 or 8 feet tall.

When the flowers age, they turn a deep rusty red that you can cut and bring inside for flower arrangements. Leave a few seeds for the birds, as they also adore this native plant food source.

Saint Catherine’s Lace blends well with other natives such as lower growing buckwheats, sages, annual wildflowers such as clarkia or phacelia.

Give them good drainage, they live in non-irrigated gardens, but can also tolerate occasional summer water. Full sun is preferred, though part shade is ok if it is not too deep.
Central Cluster July Potluck
By Molly Kuhl

Central Cluster had a fantastic July potluck picnic/hive decorating party on July 15th at the beautiful home of Denise Silviera. We enjoyed a wonderful afternoon of sharing delicious food and painting our hives. Everyone brought a box or two to decorate, and we had paint and stencils galore to share. It was so fun and inspiring to see all of the different creative ideas people had. We all had such a fantastic time, and Denise was a wonderful hostess!

We have a hive dive planned for July 30th at Bees N Blooms, Susan Kegley's farm (our 2nd VP). It should be a really fun and educational event, with about 20 people in attendance.

West Cluster Has a Picnic
By Bruce Harris and Chris Dicker

West Cluster had a wonderful ‘picnic’ get-together at Bill MacElroy's place, Monte Bellaria. There was a great turnout and Bill took us on a tour of his lavender and olive oil business. Then we feasted on delicious wood fired pizza.

There are certainly less swarms this month, whee! But we still got a few calls so bee sharing continues. A call came in about an abandoned apiary on Lone Pine Road. Two colonies were rescued from it, and lots of used equipment was salvaged. The two colonies were moved at night to a new home in north Sebastopol.
Time to Get Ready for Our Silent Auction
By Darlene McGinnis and Melissa Weaver and Ettamarie Peterson

It seems early but a silent auction takes months to gather, sort, plan and make a successful event that raises much needed cash for our association. Start doing your share for our annual Holiday Pot Luck and Silent Auction.

Darlene McGinnis and Melissa Weaver are patiently awaiting your lovely donations and they need your help to make this year’s silent auction a BIG SUCCESS for SCBA! They believe it is totally doable with YOUR assistance!

Would you be willing to ask your favorite restaurant, nursery, spa, massage therapist, hair stylist or business that you frequent for a gift certificate or donation? Items do not have to be related to bees, just something that will appeal to someone who wants to bid on them. Think about your crafty or artistic friends who might want to make something to donate. Maybe you know someone who has a vacation rental that could donate a few days. That would be a great item. Maybe you could put together a dinner for a few people and make a bee-themed meal. This is something more than one member could do with another.

Bee themed baskets can be put together for children and adults. You can contribute all or some things to make up a basket. Other things to put together in baskets are home-prepared jams, jellies and preserves or garden items including seeds, tools, books and garden decorations (especially good are ones that have a bee theme). Maybe you know a wine or beer maker that would like to donate some. If you have any nice, big baskets we can fill please contact Darlene or Melissa soon. Filling them is a big job best done well in advance. Since this is a beekeeper’s event bee themed anything always gets bought! Maybe you have been gifted twice with the same bee towel, picture, socks, mug, mat, or other item. Think about donating the extra one!

Put your creative mind to work to make this the best auction ever. Cash donations are also welcome. Darlene and Melissa can email you an auction request form and Letter of Intent to give to your donors to fill out and keep for their tax returns. Remember to ask your donors for gift certificates, signage, business cards and other promotional materials before you go to pick up their donation gift.

Your cluster leaders will be happy to gather your donations at cluster meetings or you can bring items to general meetings. This will save a lot of driving around picking up all the wonderful things SCBA will have at the auction. It will be stress relieving if the committee has the donations EARLY! AVOID THE HOLIDAY RUSH! Please try to have donations turned in by December 4th! Remember businesses are asked all the time for donations and often have to stop saying yes so ask NOW!


Our Auction Needs Your Help!
Providing Quality Hives and Components at an Affordable Price

~ Complete Hives ~ Screened Bottom Boards ~
~ Supers with Frames and Follower Boards ~
~ Top Feeders ~ Vented Top Covers ~
~ Wired Frames ~ Follower Boards ~
~ Telescoping Top Covers ~ Hive Stands ~
~ Wooden Swarm Traps ~ Solar Wax Melters ~

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

**John McGinnis**  
(707) 478-9787  
803 Lynch Rd, Petaluma, CA 94954  
By appointment only  
goahwayranch@gmail.com

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**Education Committee Report**  
By Maggie Weaver

As we come to the "winding down" portion of the beekeeping calendar, we within the education group are just beginning to turn back on. The summer thus far has largely been spent making presentations to summer camps, daycare programs, community activities, and preschools throughout the county. Thank you to everyone who played a part...either recommending, organizing, or participating in an education event this summer. We couldn't do it without you! We still have several large events coming up, namely the Gravenstein Apple Fair and the Heirloom Festival both of which will have an education program participation. I will be reaching out for volunteers but don't be shy...drop us a message at education@sonomabees.org if you'd like to help!

School is right around the corner and inquiries have begun arriving for the new school year. We have some big plans with hopes of reaching more children and adults, expanding our programs to include more schools, organizations, and groups within Sonoma County. We welcome member input...whether parent, grandparent, school teacher/administrator, or organization member, let us know where you would like to see an SCBA education presence and we will make it happen!

As the calendar fills I will be calling upon our amazing volunteer network to help with the presentations. We can find a job for everyone...you don't need to be a honeybee expert. All you need is a want to learn, a love of children, and a desire to help disseminate our message of understanding, support, and protecting the most important pollinator...our beloved honeybee.

That's about it or now. Happy beekeeping and enjoy the balance of our glorious Sonoma County summer!!
40th Anniversary
WAS Conference
will be in Davis, California Sept. 5-8, 2017

Our very own Serge Labesque will be the leadoff speaker! Here are some of the speakers and events you will be able to hear and see. We are fortunate to have this conference so close to us. Go to www.westernapiculturalsociety.org to get more information and to download registration go to http://www.westernapiculturalsociety.org/2017-conference-registration/

- Leadoff speaker **Serge Labesque** has organized a terrific presentation on the natural seasonal growth and decline of a healthy honey bee colony population living in a hollow tree.
- **Kim Flottum**, of Bee Culture, will share some of his insights on the “Rapidly Changing Bee Scene.”
- There will be off-campus tours at The Moon Shine Honey Company packing facility and the Mann Lake Warehouse and Showroom and their sugar syrup blending facility.
- Visits to the **UC Davis Bee Biology Facility** and the Häagen Dazs Bee Haven Garden.
- Outdoor mini-sessions will be held at the **UC Davis Bee Biology Facility** on various topics such as types of bee hives (containing colonies), diagnosing *Nosema* or *Varroa* and native bees foraging in screen houses.
- Outdoor mini-sessions in the field include preparing bee samples for molecular studies and selecting plants for bee food.
- **Dr. Larry Connor** will address more in-depth beekeeping fundamentals with his presentation “Keeping Your Bees Alive and Growing.” It will be a three-part session, including: 1) The Numbers Game – Understanding Honey Bee Reproduction; 2) Making and Using Increase Packages; and 3) Managing Colonies for Sustainability – Location, Genetics and Nutrition. Larry also is the founder and owner of Wicwas Press, and he will have a variety of books for review at the conference.

See July/August 2017 WAS Journal http://digitalwasjournal.advancedpublishing.com/?issueID=27&pageID=1
COMING RIGHT UP!

Gravenstein Apple Fair
www.gravensteinapplefair.com

Saturday & Sunday, August 12 & 13, 2017
Hours: 10:00AM – 5:30PM
Ragle Ranch Regional Park
500 Ragle Road Sebastopol 95472

SCBA Volunteers Still Needed!

The theme of the fair this year is "In praise of pollinators.” Accordingly, the SCBA is going to have an awesome booth with demonstration hive, live demonstrations, and educational outreach. Please show your support, attend the fair and help keep Sonoma pollinators healthy and happy!
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

Extractor Techs- Call Ettamarie 707-479-1613 or Janet Leisen 707-528-2085 or Cheryl Veretto e-mail cheryl@cbfreelance.com to rent the electric extractor for $5 a day. Rental fee is $5 per day. Cheryl is located in Sebastopol. Janet is North of Santa Rosa. Ettamarie is in Petaluma. There is a hand extractor at Deborah Rogers’ home and her e-mail is deborah@olivequeen.net She lives in Glen Ellen.

2017 Board Members
and Other Helpful People

President - Jason Berkman president@sonomabees.org
1st Vice President - Ann Jereb 1stVP@sonomabees.org
2nd Vice President - Susan Kegley 2ndVP@sonomabees.org
Secretary - Melissa Hanson secretary@sonomabees.org
Treasurer - Lew Spengler treasurer@sonomabees.org
Volunteer Coordinator - Open volunteer@sonomabees.org
Representatives at Large
   Ettamarie Peterson atlLarge1@sonomabees.org
   Open atlLarge2@sonomabees.org
Assistant - Linda Burns assistant@sonomabees.org
Auction - Darlene McGinnis auction@sonomabees.org
Bee Sharing - Christine Kurtz beesharing@sonomabees.org
Education Coordinator - Maggie Weaver, Thea Vierling, Jen Espinosa, Patsy Young education@sonomabees.org
Extractor Editor - Ettamarie Peterson editor@sonomabees.org
Gardening- Ellen Sherron gardening@sonomabees.org
Historian - Kirstie Stramler historian@sonomabees.org
Librarian - Nadya Clark librarian@sonomabees.org
Regional Coordinator - Kelly Cox – regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org
Regional Coordinator 2 - Sally McGough – regionalcoordinator2@sonomabees.org
Cluster Leaders:
   Central - Molly Kuhl, Joy Wesley, Ann Jereb centralcluster@sonomabees.org
   East - Lauri Dorman, Lizanne Pastore eastcluster@sonomabees.org
   North - Chery Caletti, Laurie Smith, Candice Koseba northcluster@sonomabees.org
   South - Nikki Campbell, Cynthia Rathkey, Brian Martinelli southcluster@sonomabees.org
   Topbar - Jim Spencer topbarcluster@sonomabees.org
   West - Chris Dicker, Bruce Harris westcluster@sonomabees.org

Swarm - John McGinnis swarm@sonomabees.org
Webmaster - Bill MacElroy webmaster@sonomabees.org