President's Message

What a winter here in Sonoma County - there was no way not to be affected by it, and it became a central event, with the cold, the storms, perhaps the power outages, the slowing down for all of us and all the critters. And still, amidst the stormy winter, around the day after the Solstice, the queen honeybee begins to lay eggs again, beginning the exponential growth rate of the hive.

Did you get to slow down (even if it was subtle), and have you noticed the speeding up again, the acceleration back into busyness? The bee colonies reflect this - on these sunnier days, we see more activity at the hive entrance, as the bees forage to some degree.

As beekeepers and/or people interested in supporting the bees, there is no way to avoid noticing the weather, the seasons, the plants, and we try to do our best for our hives. What does "doing our best" look like, though? There is so much to learn. It's complex; there are many challenges to bee health and many techniques and ways to keep bees, etc. It can feel overwhelming to a beginner beekeeper, or even to a seasoned beekeeper! To be a better beekeeper, it seems important, and necessary, to have opportunities for support, education, and learning through experience and sharing.

The Sonoma County Beekeepers Association is here for you! We are all learning, deepening in our understanding, with much emphasis on helping others. It is community in action, and by taking in new information, sharing it, responding to situations as they emerge, we are thus mimicking the democracy of the honeybees.

As a member of the SCBA, you are supported in learning about honeybees, beekeeping, plants and native bees. There are speakers, workshops, classes, regional cluster meetings, hive dives, swarm information, educational programs for schools, events, and more. You are part of the community, and thank you for your part.

Jason Berkman
President
Has your membership expired?

Time is running out!

On February 14th, all memberships that have not yet renewed will become expired. Renew now and don't miss out!

If you have already renewed anytime after September 1, 2016, your membership will be current through December 31, 2017. If not, please renew now so you can enjoy the many benefits of membership, including workshops, cluster events and hive dives, and swarm list participation. On February 14th, all expired memberships will be dropped from the membership roster and will no longer receive email notices about events and cluster activities.

General Membership: ($50)
For a listing of membership benefits please refer to the sonomabees.org website.

Business Members: ($100)
Business membership has been simplified. Business membership is now a straight fee of $100. For a listing of benefits and how to place an ad on the website or in the Extractor, please refer to the following links on the sonomabees.org website:

www.sonomabees.org/new-membership-page
www.sonomabees.org/business-member-info/

How to renew:

• Online at:
  www.sonomabees.org/new-membership-page

• Download and complete a membership application and mail it with your payment to:
  SCBA, P.O. Box 98,
  Santa Rosa, CA, 95401

• Apply at the next SCBA meeting. Bring the completed application to the meeting, and payment can be made by 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.

If you make a payment with a PayPal account that has a different name than your listed membership name, please indicate on the application that the business or other family members name is associated with you. We otherwise may have difficulty knowing that a payment is yours.

Thank you,

Ann Jereb
SCBA 1st VP Membership
1stVP@sonomabees.org

Please read the Best Management Practices page before you fill out your membership. We want all our beekeepers to have a good, safe apiary for themselves and everyone nearby. Here is the Link to SCBA BMP - http://sonomabees.org - there is a button in the middle of the page. http://sonomabees.org/new-membership-page/scba-best-management-practices/
Spring 2017 Beekeeping Classes at SRJC

This time, Serge will be presenting a four-evening series of the Introduction to Beekeeping class at the Petaluma campus in addition to the classes in Santa Rosa.

Here is the info for the classes:

**Introduction to Beekeeping [Click to open]**
Class Date(s): 02/01/2017 to 02/22/2017
Weekly - Wed 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM
4 sessions starting 2/1/2017, ending 2/22/2017
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.

**Introduction to Beekeeping [Click to open]**
Class Date(s): 02/23/2017 to 03/16/2017
Weekly - Thu 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;
4 sessions starting 2/23/2017, ending 3/16/2017
Call Building, PC 656
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.

**Intermediate Beekeeping for Spring & Summer [Click to open]**
Class Date(s): 03/01/2017 to 03/08/2017
Weekly - Wed 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;
2 sessions starting 3/1/2017, ending 3/8/2017
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.

Looking For Volunteers
(To Talk About Bees to Schools and Other Groups)
By Maggie Weaver

Come one and all! Join your fellow SCBA members and become part of the education teams visiting Sonoma County schools and other groups that want to learn about honey bees this spring. We're busy setting up the visits and putting together schedules now. All we're asking you to do is volunteer for 1-2 presentations. We will work with any date, time, and location requirements to make it easy for you to say YES! We have materials for you to make your presentations interesting. These are in tote-boxes stored in the five cluster locations around the county.

It's fun, educational, and gives you a chance to see those shining faces beaming as you talk about the amazing honey bee. Most of the requests we get are from schools but sometimes we have requests from groups such as Rotary, Lions and garden clubs. These talks are given either early in the morning, at lunchtime or in the evenings.

Send us an email at education@sonomabees.org or find us at the tables before the monthly SCBA meetings.
New pests and pathogens on our doorsteps!
Bummer… But we can stop them.

Scientists from Oregon State University reported in the December issue of American Bee Journal on “a new honey bee pest in America”, the Australian sap beetle, Brachypeplus basalis Erichson.

First sighted in California in 2010, this little-known insect was almost certainly introduced in the state via some of the hundreds of thousands of packages that were imported from Australia between 2006 and 2010. Since then, the beetle has spread from California to Montana and Oregon, and possibly too many other states, as beekeepers transported their hives from the California almond groves to other crops in the country. So far, its distribution in the U.S. is not known precisely, but its presence has been confirmed in commercial operations in the Western U.S.

What will be the impact of this beetle be? Nobody seems to know, but it’s already causing significant damage.

Once again, humans have caused another problem for the bees and for themselves. When are we going to learn?! Name a bee pest, a bee disease, or an undesirable strain of bees such as the Africanized honey bees, and look for the root cause of its introduction, emergence, spread or increased toughness or virulence. In most cases, you’ll see that humans, beekeepers and scientists included, were instrumental, if not completely at fault. That this might have happened once could be considered accidental and, maybe, excusable. But it has happened so many times, especially in recent decades, that it can only be the effect of sheer stupidity or unrestrained greed on our part. Don’t we know that whenever we move bees or bee products, we also risk moving bee pests and pathogens, not to mention unfit genetics? Of course we do! Is it so hard to understand that in doing so we damage irreversibly our local bee populations? Are we so shortsighted or greedy that we ignore the dangers our practices often represent for the bees?

We know the answers to these questions, don’t we? And they are not very flattering for the arrogantly self-labeled Homo sapiens sapiens (The wise Man)!

So, what are we to do? Closing the borders to the movement of bees and other vectors immediately comes to mind. But this will come too late, if ever, as politicians will very likely dawdle and finally succumb to the lobbying pressure of powerful agribusiness. Beekeepers could be much more effective by acting together.

A simple, workable solution exists that each and every one of us can implement immediately: We must not bring bees, packages, queens, or any bee germplasm into our apiaries from outside our local area. Instead, we can multiply our good local survivor colonies and raise queens from them. “Local”, in this case, is used to mean “from within bee-flight range of our apiaries”.

Actually, in view of the rapid-fire series of bad news events we have seen, if only in the last months of 2016, wouldn’t it be irresponsible, if not altogether criminal toward the honey bee, to do otherwise? Indeed, in addition to the Australian sap beetle, we learned about the Moku virus that has been identified in Hawaii, where huge numbers of queens are produced commercially; we read that a new bacterium (Serratia marcescens Ss1) was found in Wisconsin; we are being warned about the increasing danger presented at the global level by emerging infectious diseases; and we are told that real threats such as Varroa jacobsoni, Troliaelaps clareae and other potential bee pests are expanding their domains.

It’s urgent that we do something to stop contributing to the spread of bee pests and diseases. First and without delay, let’s cancel all orders of packages, nucs and queens to leave the pathogens where they are. And then let’s connect with our neighbor beekeepers to help propagate local bees. It’s that simple. There will be enough bees for all. And these will carry no new pests or pathogens.

February in the apiaries

Signs of spring approaching are more visible every day. Mustard, manzanitas, willows and eucalyptus trees are already offering their catkins or blossoms. Soon, the wild plums, rosemary, acacia and a rapidly lengthening list of plants will be adding color to the landscape. On nice sunny days, these varied sources of nectar and pollen are intensely visited by foragers, which carry heavy and colorful loads back to their hives. When this happens, the hive entrances become very busy places indeed, for a few hours. But the weather is quite unstable at this time of year. It may become inclement abruptly, in fits of a winter that is resisting the advance of spring.

But inside the hives, the colonies must grow regardless of the weather. The brood nests swell, and the populations begin to increase. And our watchful care of the colonies must go on.

Before the middle of the month and weather permitting, the initial addition of nectar-storage, brood rearing and clustering space that was described last month is complete. The colonies headed by young queens and other overwintered nucs needed particular attention during these manipulations, as their development at the end of winter can be phenomenal. Such hive management measures are usually sufficient to substantially reduce the risk of premature swarming by the colonies until spring weather rolls in. However, we have seen the season of colony reproduction happen quite early in recent years. So, enough equipment must be prepared and at the ready to accommodate not only the growth of the colonies, but also and hopefully, a real spring honey flow and the upcoming division of the hives.
Although we may become impatient to work our hives, we refrain from performing open-hive inspections that would expose the brood nests to cold and breezy air. The colonies are still too fragile. We will wait for favorable conditions before examining their brood nests. Until then, the debris that accumulates on the monitoring trays can provide us with valuable information about the condition and development of the colonies.

In addition to possible queen-related issues, multiple health problems may affect the colonies at this difficult time of year. All too often, they are exacerbated by the flaws of our equipment. For example, hives that lack ventilation may turn into moisture traps when the colonies produce large amounts of metabolic water because of their rapid and large consumption of stores. The signs of fungal diseases, such as mummies indicating cases of chalkbrood, and dysentery caused by spoiled stores, or the consumption of honeydew honey or, possibly, by nosema, may become visible on the monitoring trays and in front of the hives. Also, starvation may occur quite suddenly during periods of cold weather, especially in rapidly growing colonies that were incorrectly prepared for winter.

Not surprisingly, we occasionally discover some hives that did not survive winter. No matter how saddening these finds might be, we need to face them. The equipment that contained the lost colonies is removed from the apiaries and inspected to determine the probable causes of the losses and to decide how to process or discard the hive components.

Rather than dwell on the failed hives, we focus our attention on the surviving colonies, as they will very likely more than compensate for the ones we lost, when we divide them. Until then, we have to keep in mind our goal, which is to ensure their unimpeded development. This is done by providing the additional hive volume they need in a timely manner.

There is still time to plant bee forage wherever we can. Every tree, shrub or flowerpot we add will help nourish bees, the perennials for years to come.

In summary, this month:

- Cancel any order of package bees, nucs and queens from outside our immediate area! More than ever, this is hugely important.
- Early in the month, perform cursory inspections of only the upper part of the hives on a sunny, windless day.
- Place supers with a few frames of empty drawn comb and follower boards, where needed.
- Inspect the exterior of the hives:
  - Verify that hive tops are still properly set and secured.
  - Verify 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.
- Examine the debris on the monitoring trays.
- Slightly lift the back of the hives to feel if the colonies are running low on stores.
- Take care of or dispose appropriately of the equipment that held colonies that failed, as warranted.
- Keep the upper ventilation slots open.
- Build and repair beekeeping equipment.
- Plan for spring.
- Plant bee forage.

Serge Labesque
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February Speaker
Dr. Susan Kegley

Dr. Susan Kegley is Principal Scientist and Founder of the Pesticide Research Institute (PRI), an environmental consulting firm focusing on development of tools for governments, researchers, beekeepers, gardeners, farmers, and consumers to better understand the risks of pesticides to humans, pollinators, and other species, and provide information resources that help reduce risks from pest management activities. Susan is also a beekeeper and farmer, and is now working with her husband to establish an 11-acre organic farm in Santa Rosa called Bees N Blooms, where they are growing lavender and other flowers for the cut flower market, propagating pollinator-friendly trees, and keeping 8-10 honey bee colonies for honey production, pollination to make seed for the cut flower operation, and entertainment.

We are fortunate that Dr. Kegley is also our 2nd VP in charge of lining up speakers for our Association meetings. Her extensive travels and attendance at meetings around the States and internationally helps her meet all kinds of interesting people in our world of bees. When she hears various people speak, she is able to evaluate their possible contributions to our programs.

Our thanks go to her for taking this role and being willing to share her own extensive knowledge of the problems with pesticides.
BEE WISE:
“What do you do with a 400 pound limb with bees inside?”
by Emery Dann

A rain and windstorm on January 4th toppled a large oak tree in Doyle Park, Santa Rosa, California. On its way down it broke a smaller part off a limb on a neighbor tree that had an amazing beehive inside the rest of the limb. The bees in this hive are the longest continuously living tree bees I know of in Sonoma County--more than 50 years (verified by a number of long-time seniors living nearby the park)!

Their entrance was only 8 feet above an asphalt walking path before the limb was broken. To my knowledge, they never bothered anyone walking or visiting the park below their hive for over 50 years. We cut off the remaining portion of the branch with the bees inside by tying off a large wool burlap sack to keep the bees safe inside. We lowered it into my trailer. I moved them about 2 miles to my home. The bees are adjusting well to their new location.

It has been my privilege to rescue, extract or remove 73 large sections of trees or large limbs with bees inside, sometimes with help but mostly by my trailer and myself. A few times we have used 100-foot cranes or tractors on site to help with the heaviest lifting. This was another SWEET BEE SUCCESS!
Dead Bees In Your Hive?
By Thea Vierling

What are those dead bees on the ground in front of your hive and why are some of them only walking and not flying? Are some of them on the landing board and maybe clogging up the entrance? Are you worried that your hive is dying? This is exactly what happened two days ago to Barry and Cheryl from East Cluster. They called in a panic that they had AFB because of the smell. Luckily Christine was in the area and we went up there to look.

The pictures tell it all but here is some of the information to go along with the photos. We have just had a lot of rain and bees died in the hive. They are the older ones and it is normal for them to die at this time. New bees are emerging to take their place but there is no doubt that the hive is very small at this time of the year and it is a lot of work to take out those dead bees. There were so many dead bees lying on the floor of the hive that the entrance was slightly blocked. Cheryl cleaned those out and noticed that some had no wings; a symptom of Deformed Wing Virus. Some were larvae, still white, with maybe only an abdomen because they broke apart while being pulled from the cells. Some died with their tongues sticking out, symptom of a disease in the hive. According to Christine the smell was not AFB but just the smell of dead bees, slightly vinegary. The hive was very active with orientation flights going on in front. Christine mentioned that the hive was demonstrating hygienic behavior with bees culling out the deformed wing bees and also larvae that were not complexly developed but were sick. But overall she felt the hive was doing well. What a relief! Christine thanks as usual for your knowledge and availability!

---LIVE BEE REMOVAL---
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Beekeeping lessons offered at reasonable prices.
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Santa Rosa
Free Bee Colony for successful referral.
Manzanitas 

Manzanitas Arctostaphylos species Ericiaceae family

We continue with Arctostaphylos, our beloved Manzanita that nourishes wildlife, including hummingbirds, those hard working natives, bumblebees, and of course, honeybees. Humans, too! We can eat the tart “little apples”, or make a tea from the leaves. Other mammals such as coyotes, foxes and squirrels enjoy the berries.

A. bakeri ‘Louis Edmunds’
This Manzanita is native to Sonoma County, usually growing upright to about 5 or 6 feet tall and wide. The pink flowers charm us in late winter or early spring. You can plant it alone to preen against a fence or other focal spot, or plant a hedge of companions for an informal fence or barrier. You can plant other natives around it, such as California poppies, sages, native bulbs or mix it with ceanothus. Wherever you plant Manzanita, don’t give it summer water. As a native Californian, no summer water is needed. Plant in fall or winter to take advantage of rain to get it established.

A. densiflora ‘Howard McMinn’
A shrubbier plant, growing 3 to 4 feet tall and wide. Very hardy, and more forgiving of garden conditions- some water in the summer, heavy soil, Howard McMinn is nonetheless a very attractive plant, with light pink flowers, shiny green leaves that contrast nicely with the deep red bark. Howard McMinn can take quite a bit of pruning, so you can trim them to show off the interesting branches that twist and gnarl.

A. ‘Sunset’
A Manzanita that has shaggy instead of smooth bark. Very good looking, ‘Sunset’ can grow up to 6 feet tall, and wide, and can accept pruning to show off the interesting bark. White to pink flowers are borne in late winter to early spring. Go up close to them and you can smell the sweet fragrance of the nectar. ‘Sunset’ will tolerate some occasional water in summer, though it can also survive well with normal rainfall.
Swarm season is approaching soon! With all the rain we are receiving I think we should have lots of swarms this year. That being said the following are mandatory requirements for returning swarm list members and new swarm list members. One year of beekeeping experience and current membership status will be required of all members wishing to be on the swarm list.

**Previous swarm list member requirements:**
For members who have been on the swarm list in the past and want to be on it this year, you must attend a swarm update meeting. We need to update your information and share some new ideas regarding the swarm list. This is not an orientation session but a swarm list update meeting.

Monday, February 13 at 5:30pm before the general meeting, or
Monday, March 13 at 5:30pm before the general meeting.

**New swarm list member requirements:**
For members who have not been on the swarm list, they must have at least ONE year of beekeeping experience and attend the Swarm Orientation/Training Session.

Date: Sunday, February 19 at 1:00 pm
Location: My House, 803 Lynch Road, Petaluma 94954

Looking forward to an awesome swarm catching season in 2017. E-mail me if you have questions at swarm@sonomabees.org. See you all soon.

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**John McGinnis**
Swarm Chairperson

Photo by Ettamarie Peterson

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Buzz Off Honey Goah Way Ranch

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John McGinnis
Buzz Off Honey Goah Way Ranch
(707) 478-9787
On Pondering About Bees
Small Hive Beetle versus Smaller Hive Beetles
By Christine Kurtz

Have some of you noticed that not all small hive beetles look the same? Over the last few years we (by “we” I mean the collective seasoned chatty beekeepers that I check in within the neighboring counties) have noticed a smaller hive beetle. It has the tell-tale paddle antennae of a hive beetle but it is smaller, more slender and looks more segmented because their wings don’t cover their abdomen entirely. UC Davis told us it was a cousin but nothing more. We speculated all sorts of things like it being a stunted version but didn’t expect that it is a sap beetle imported from a different country than our imported Sub-Saharan small hive beetle Aethina Tumida that all the literature talks about. Like the greater wax moth has a competitor the lesser wax moth we started calling the smaller hive beetle the “lesser” hive beetle. Well low and behold we were not the only ones that noticed. An article in the December American Bee Journal identified the “lesser” hive beetle as a new honey bee pest: The Australian Sap Beetle Brachypeplus Basalis Erichson.

In 1922 the borders to import bees were closed to protect US honey bees (The Honey Bee Act of 1922) due to the tracheal mite’s identification in Europe that was wreaking havoc and decimating hives there. Unfortunately the tracheal mite was smuggled in anyway but attempts were made to protect US bees from this affliction. From the end of 2004 to the end of 2010 not learning our lessons packages were allowed in again from Australia and New Zealand because it was perceived that there was a shortage of bees for pollination and gave way for an entry and later dispersal through the vast migration of bees to the Almonds in California.

Risk assessments were made before allowing the importation for exotic bee parasites and diseases but did not include honey bee detrivores like beetle scavengers. Earliest spotting was in 2010 and by 2015 four California Counties reported seeing it. Initially it was thought to be confined to inside the hive but by 2015 and 2016 Montana and Oregon commercial beekeepers were seeing damage in stored equipment. You can add my California kitchen in 2016 with a bin with ten honey frames waiting just a little too long to be extracted. Left a soupy mess of fermented honey crawling with thousands of little white larvae and tiny Australian sap beetles. I have seen them, too, on monitoring boards and in either really weak hives or ignored dead outs by beekeepers having a party along side wax moths. The Australian sap beetle, so far, acts very much like the small hive beetle, laying eggs thousands of eggs that hatch into larvae that tunnel through honeybee stores, their excrement fermenting the honey on it’s wake and destroying it for human or bee consumption.

The Australian sap beetle is still a relatively new pest and its impact is not yet fully understood. Will the Australian sap beetle be a minor pest here or is it better adapted to our climate than the small hive beetle? Can it successfully invade living honeybee colonies? Do its shorter wings not make it as strong as a flyer than the small hive beetle? Is it depended on honeybees for survival or can it live off base on fruit like the small hive beetle or perhaps sap in this instance? Does the sap beetle have a soil pupating stage or does its cycle complete within the hive? A lot is still unknown.
On January 25 the Regional Coordinators met for their first discussion on managing bees coming out of winter. Serge Labesque through amazing schematics explained where the bees are at this time of year and how to do minimal non-intrusively hive manipulation to prevent early hive congestion and pre-mature swarming. He has spent endless hours coming up with scenarios and then visually representing them. Even though computers are amazing tools it still takes skill and time, lots of time (that is why I still use crayons for my schematics and then take a picture, mine look more Picasso like however). I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Serge.

The regional coordinators are now able to take this information and share it within their respective cluster members. Invitations are in the making and some already had their meeting before this newsletter came out. Because we are such a large organization, it’s through groups lectures, group workshops and group mentoring (hive dives) that we will be able to give opportunities for our beekeepers to develop the skills to become the best bee stewards as possible. I have to tell you how impressed I am with the regional group leadership and the incredible work they are doing to first become better beekeepers themselves and then organizing, planning, trouble shooting, communicating and all they do to bring all the events to you, not unusual to have close to a hundred text messages back and forth. They inspire me and replenish my pitcher. Your dedication is exemplary.

We even got to celebrate Thea Vierling’s Birthday with a most delicious chocolate cake made by Lizanne Pasitore.

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**Bee Sharing**

*By Christine Kurtz*

Meanwhile time of waiting to extract your honey frames is over, and cleaning out dead outs cannot longer wait. It is yet reaffirming the responsibilities of being a beekeeper. Keep strong colonies, extract your honey promptly, freeze all your frames at least 48 hrs before storing (wet frames or frames with old bee bread that cannot be put back on colonies for the bees to clean out, keep them in the freezer until you need them again). Some beekeepers are opting to promptly process all the wax and don’t reuse any.

Moving bees trans-continentally or across our own states is just not a good idea and here is yet another example. Will we ever learn?

You can read the full article in the American Bee Journal on Page 1329 Titled “The Australian Sap Beetle Brachypeplus Basalis Erichson: A New Honey Bee Pest in America by Michael Burgett, Ramesh Sagili, Andony Melathopoulos, Hannah Lucas and Christopher Marshall

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**Queen Rearing Class**

The Queen Rearing class has been sold out and a waiting list is forming. The interest shows that we need more of these classes. We have started a private Facebook page under “SCBA Queen Rearing Group” for folks interested in queen rearing so discussion, sharing and pictures can be shared. The hope is that eventually each cluster has a few members raising locally adapted queens. We all know that often when one needs a queen it can be difficult to find one. This is another way we can help and support each other and spread our resilient local survivor stock.

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So here we are, February already, and so much water, with more to come! What does this mean for our bees and us as beekeepers? We hope it’s a sign of great things to come: a booming, blooming bee year with more flowers, meaning more nectar and pollen for the bees. Many of us are already seeing bees busily bringing brightly colored pollen into our hives. The hives are really starting to hummmmm!

Our Regional Clusters – North, South, East, West, and Central – are humming too. Our amazing volunteer Cluster Coordinators are busily creating calendars for the year, filled with bee cafés, workshops, and hive dives. Already they have spent hours planning events to help further your education and understanding of bee culture. If you haven’t been to a Cluster event yet, you may not know what a great resource they are – check them out! So, do you know which Cluster you’re in? Have you met your Cluster Coordinators? At least one Coordinator from each Cluster is at the monthly Monday night SCBA meeting in Rohnert Park, sitting at the Cluster table, so go by and say hello. Have you checked out one of your Cluster’s bee cafés? They’re a great place to meet other beekeepers in your area and find a Bee Buddy. Do you need bees? Let your Cluster Coordinator know and get involved with the exciting new Bee Sharing Program through your Cluster.

A reminder: just like our bees, we need to be organized, prepared, at the ready. Yes, that means getting our equipment ready for the coming bee season, but it also means renewing our SCBA memberships for 2017. Sad to say, but if you do not renew by Feb. 14th, this will be the last Extractor you’ll receive. On top of that, you will no longer receive SCBA email notices about our great events and Cluster happenings. Don’t let that happen! As far as we know, SCBA is the only beekeepers association that has anything like our Cluster program. We may be biased, but we think it’s one of the best things about SCBA, and if you get involved, we think you’ll agree.

Questions? We’re always at the Monday night SCBA meeting, or you can email us at regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org (Kelli) or regionalcoordinator2@sonomabees.org (Sally). Here’s to a booming 2017 bee year!

Kelli Cox & Sally McGough
Regional Coordinators

Central Cluster Equipment Workshop
By Molly Kuhl, Central Cluster Coordinator

Central Cluster kicked off the season with an equipment workshop led by Chris Conrad on Sunday, January 22. Maggie Weaver and her husband George Herrmann were our wonderful hosts, and as you can see, the cluster coordinators provided a lovely spread! The participants learned how to build a frame. We discussed plastic foundation versus wax versus starter strip versus none, deep and medium boxes and the benefits and drawbacks of both, and of course covered the subject of ventilation. We also learned about smoker fuel types, gloves, feathers versus a bee brush, and so much more! We had wonderful input from a few experienced participants, as well as great questions from some beginners. We look forward to continuing to grow our awesome Central Cluster community! centralcluster@sonomabees.org
Held at the RP 4H Center, about 80 people present.

President Janson Berkman brought the meeting to order at 7:08pm. Jason announces the tea and cookie/brownie table with a donation jar—all money goes back to the association and helps support all the education and services provided to members. 2017 Board members have been appointed by Jason. John McGinnis has been appointed to Swarm Coordinator, Christine Kurtz to Bee Sharing Coordinator, and Ettamarie Peterson, our Extractor editor, to At Large. There are openings for Volunteer Coordinator and additional At Large positions.

1st VP Ann Jereb reminds everyone to renew their membership. The association has ambitions plans this year. Christine is working on 3 upcoming education opportunities with Serge Labesque which are available to members only. Serge will teach about queen rearing, helping hives coming out of winter, and making splits in preparation for swarm season.

At Large Ettamarie Peterson requests volunteers for the Scion Exchange Jan 28th hosted by the Rare Fruit Growers Association.

Swarm Coordinator John McGinnis asks everyone on the swarm list to come to the next general meeting early (5:30pm) to fill out a form and learn about some changes. People who would like to be added to the swarm list need at least one year of beekeeping experience and will need to come to a more in depth training. The training information will be in the next Extractor. There will be an auction this year. Auction items will be needed in December. You can contact John about this via email at swarm@sonomabees.org.

Bee Sharing Coordinator Christine Kurtz announces the start of the Bee Sharing Program! The program will help members share their surviving local bee stock through the cluster groups. Serge will have 3 upcoming classes about queen rearing, how to help hives come out of winter, and helping them grow in the spring before splitting. There will be follow-up workshops/discussions in cluster meetings. You must be a member to attend these classes from Serge. The Bee Sharing Program will create a list of beekeepers willing to split their hives and share bees with other members. They may receive some money in return for donating their bees to encourage bee sharing rather than purchasing “puppy mill” bees.

The 50/50 Raffle netted $105 to the winning ticket. SCBA earned the same.

Visitors and new members were asked to stand. Welcome Audrey and Jaime!

2nd VP Susan introduced our speaker Julie Cridland from UC Davis, speaking on the ancestry of California Honeybees. Susan asks members to send ideas for future speakers to 2ndVP@sonomabees.org.

Julie has worked at UC Davis for the past 4 years and her research findings are relevant to beekeepers in California.

Honey bees are essential to the agriculture industry in California.

• 1,140,000 hives in January of 2016 (USDA NASS, 2016)
• $25 million in honey production in 2014
• $4 billion in almond production in 2014 (require honey bees)
• Small scale beekeeping popular ~50,000 colonies by beekeepers with less than 5 colonies in the US as of 2015.

Honey bees are not native to the US.

• German Bee: Apis mellifera mellifera
• Italian Bee: Apis mellifera ligustica
• Carniolan Bee: Apis mellifera carnica
• Africanized Bee: Apis mellifera scutellata crosses

There are 25 subspecies of Apis mellifera. Different environments can lead to local adaptation.

Apis mellifera was brought to North America from Europe and Africa. Two Californian honey bee populations:

• Domesticated
• Feral
  • May have desired traits, greater genetic diversity, and genetic information about the history of Californian honey bees.

Continued on next page...
California honey bees have a mix of African, Central European, and Western European genes. The levels of contribution from these lineages vary across the state. Whole-Genome sequencing helps estimate the contribution levels. In Norther California, the feral honeybees are similar to the domesticated. Their ancestry is from mostly from C lineage bees (Italian, Carniolan) ~85% and M lineage bees (German) ~15%.

Varroa mites arrived in California in 1987.
- Before the Varroa mites arrived, studies showed ~80% of colonies survived winter
- After, the colonies survived only 6-12 months
- Because of this, we can guess most feral bees in Northern California have recently swarmed from domestic hives

In Southern California the honeybee ancestry is from C lineage bees (Italian, Carniolan) ~40%, M lineage bees (German) ~20%, and A lineage bees (Africanized) ~40%

Africanized bees:
- Might be more mite resistant
- May continue to spread because of genetic advantages like this.
- Southern California honey bees have shown growing amounts of contribution from Africanized bees in the past 20 years. This may happen in Northern California as the genes spread.

Varroa mites might not have reached Catalina Island yet. The honey bees on the island may look more like the honey bees of the past because they have been genetically isolated.

Genetic Diversity is important for the health of honey bee colonies:
- Lower disease intensity
- Better thermoregulation
- Better response to environmental conditions
- Higher productivity and fitness

Questions:
How do you get the genes from honey bees?
- Samples are taken from the flight muscles. You can grind the whole bee as well. It costs ~$2,000 to do whole-genome sequencing. This is why the data is limited. It is very expensive. Bees can be preserved in ethanol to sequence their genomes later.

How do you define “feral”?
- In her research, bees caught on the side or the road away from known domestic hives or in national parks/reserves.

When you say “Africanized” in this presentation, do you mean genetically from Africa, or bees with behavior described as “Africanized”?
- Bees with genetic ancestry that can be traced back to Africa.

How do you know how much of the ancestry is from Africa vs Europe?
- It is an estimation. You can see that a gene shows up 70% of the time in Europe vs 30% of the time in Africa. Then, when that gene is shown in California, we can guess the honey bee got that gene from European ancestry. It is not exact.

How long does a hive have to be abandoned before it is considered feral?
- Feral is a very nonspecific term, so it hasn’t been defined.

Meeting adjourned at 8:49 pm.
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.

Links to Association Reports:

January Board Minutes - www.sonomabees.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2JanBoardMinutes.docx

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
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Regional Coordinator 2 - Sally McGough – regionalcoordinator2@sonomabees.org

Cluster Leaders:
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   East - Lauri Dorman, Lianne Pastore eastcluster@sonomabees.org
   North - Laurie Smith, Candace Koseba northcluster@sonomabees.org
   South - Nikki Campbell, Cynthia Rathkey, Brian Martinelli southcluster@sonomabees.org
   Topbar - Jim Spencer tobarcluster@sonomabees.org
   West - Chris Dicker, Bruce Harris westcluster@sonomabees.org

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