President's Message

Seasons Greetings, Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association!

Somehow I am the new president of our wonderful beekeepers’ association, and I’m here, still managing some stillness of winter, to introduce myself to you and express my hopes for this year with the SCBA.

So how did I get here? It’s a question we can each ask ourselves, sometimes, especially when someone asks us, “So how did you get into beekeeping?” Well, the quick story is that I had a dream that my neighbors got two hives. And when I told them about the dream, they said that they indeed had two hives, and that they were planning on moving them to the farm and wilderness center where we all lived! I like to listen to my dreams, and so...

That was a decade ago, in 2007, when CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder) was starting to be in the news, as I recall. I realized that I wanted to do my part for the bees. Going into my 11th season as a beekeeper, I’ve again realized that I want to do my part, for the bees, and now, for the SCBA as well. I follow in the flight path of many amazing and dedicated people who care about bees (and native bees, pollinators, plants, gardens, people, animals, ecology, and life, it turns out!)

I’m looking ahead and forward to working with other caring individuals and families, and groups and organizations, as President of the Beekeepers’ Association. Working with. Being part of, connected to, inspired by, listening to, learning from... I’m remembering that it’s important and necessary to collaborate with others to learn, to share, to provide education. I increasingly value those values, and I feel a sense of responsibility to show up to the SCBA, to do my part, and I thank you for the ways that you show up to your dreams and values and passions.

Thank you.

Jason Berkman
President
Has your membership expired?

Just a reminder: SCBA membership is now on a calendar year basis. 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.

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

Business Members:
The business membership benefits are being re-evaluated. Because of this, we have implemented a grace period for all Business members. If you have already purchased the Business Benefit Add-On Package, any necessary monetary adjustments will be made. Look for an announcement later this month.

How to renew:

• Online at:
  http://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

Membership will continue to operate on a calendar year from January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017. Members can apply to join or renew and pay dues on line at the SCBA website: sonomabees.org or you can renew at the monthly meeting (2nd Monday of the month).

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:

**Class Name: Introduction to Beekeeping**
- **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.

**Class Name: Introduction to Beekeeping**
- **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.

**Class Name: Intermediate Beekeeping for Spring & Summer**
- **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.

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California Rare Fruit Growers
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SCION EXCHANGE
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10:00 AM to 1:00 PM
Members get in at 9AM – you can join at the door

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1351 Maple Avenue, Santa Rosa 95404

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$5 donation gratefully accepted at the door. Local chapter membership is only $5 per year, and state membership costs between $31 and $56 depending on how one receives the Fruit Gardener magazine.
Mid-winter hive management

The colonies begin to build up for spring in mid-winter. Fragile at first, they are best left undisturbed. Yet, there are simple but consequential steps we can take without breaking the clusters in order to make sure they may develop freely and well for the season of colony reproduction and in time for the honey flow. Ignoring these measures could lead to poor colony development, lackluster performance, ill health, or early swarming.

Because it takes large numbers of foragers to gather nectar and pollen effectively, it is important that the growth of the colonies be timely and sizeable. To fully appreciate this statement, consider that it takes six weeks to transform eggs into foragers. This means, for example, that the mid-February brood nests contain the eggs that will become early April foragers. Laggard colonies would miss a crucial opportunity in locations where the honey flow occurs early in the year.

The bees need enough space to augment their brood nests, to form their growing clusters and, possibly, to store any nectar the foragers may collect on mild winter days. Because the equipment we use in our apiaries imposes spatial constraints upon the colonies, it falls upon us to manage it appropriately, if we want to achieve our goal of unimpeded colony growth. This may be accomplished on a nice day in mid-winter. Note, however, that the brood nests and the lower parts of the hives will not be inspected then. To do so at that time of year would be too disruptive.

The procedure can be easily performed when Langstroth or many other types of vertical hives are used: A super with a few frames and follower boards is simply placed on the brood chamber. Frequently, inserting one or two frames between the cluster and the follower boards of the upper part of the brood chamber can provide valuable additional volume. Although the needs of small hives and overwintered nucs can be addressed similarly, large colonies, hives that were left with excess honey in the fall, and those that lack a place to accommodate the brood nests in the center of the stores require a little more attention. Yet, all that may be necessary in such cases is to relocate one or two frames of stores from the side of the brood nests or from the center of the stores, as might be pertinent, and replacing them with empty frames or frames with empty drawn combs. The stores that were removed may be used to bait the bees into a new super. In any case, the brood nests should remain in direct contact with ample stores. Having adequately prepared the hives in the fall may avoid some of these more intrusive steps.

Horizontal, top-bar, and Warré hives present unique challenges that require different and somewhat more complicated approaches though, which may explain why they are notoriously prone to producing early swarms. Recognizing the peculiarities of the type of equipment that is in use, and bearing in mind that the bees do not move down into the cold lower parts of their nest cavities at this time of year can help the beekeeper devise ways to mitigate these issues.
A new beekeeping year has begun. Inside our hives, the bees are already working hard to prepare for spring. Let’s give our colonies the space they need to develop well.

January in the apiaries

This season brings adverse conditions for the bees. The populations are at their lowest level for the year and the weather can be harsh. Yet, once past the winter solstice, the queens resume or increase their production of small numbers of eggs at first, but increasingly more every day. As a result, the brood nests are growing and great demands are placed on the winter bees, which must work hard to keep the brood fed and warm. To do this they need direct access to honey and bee bread.

Within a few weeks, usually around the latter part of January, young adults begin to emerge from their cells. There are not enough of them initially to compensate for the gradual loss of their older sisters, but soon, the populations rebound.

Although the bees spend most of their time inside in winter, on mild days the foragers can produce much activity in front of the hives for a few hours, as they fly out to collect nectar and pollen. What is not consumed immediately must be stored. Although there may be empty comb available in the lower or distant parts of the hives, the bees ignore it. It’s too cold there, and it’s too far away from the brood areas and from the diminutive clusters. It will take several more weeks before the bees begin the use those combs, and this will happen only when the populations are large enough, when the weather is milder, or when the upper brood chambers become completely congested.

The larger consumption of honey that is necessitated by the burgeoning brood nests results in the condensation of remarkable amounts of metabolic water inside the hives. Colonies that are nested in poorly configured hives may be harmed. To this end, I rely on the use of follower boards, insulation in the hive top feeders, and upper ventilation slots, all of which have proven beneficial.

Our hive management at this time of year should seek to ensure the unimpeded development of our colonies. Around the end of January or in early February, in addition to my routine visits to the apiaries that include inspection of the entrances, fronts of hives and monitoring trays for possible signs of health problems and other clues, I take advantages of a mild sunny day to perform rapid inspections of the upper parts of the hives. I have with me enough supers, frames and follower boards to cover any imminent needs of the colonies. What has to be done for a hive becomes evident as soon as its top and lid are lifted: A large number of bees amassed in the upper part of the hive indicate the need for nectar storage space, and, quite possibly for additional space to accommodate the expansion of the brood nest and cluster. At the very least, I place a super with a few frames and two follower boards on top of the brood chamber. However, I also often insert one or two frames between the follower boards of the upper part of the brood chambers and the clusters before placing the new supers. The hive is re-assembled immediately, without examining it further.

When, on the contrary, only a little activity is visible through the slot of the hive top feeder, this is a sign that the cluster may be weak or is still located deeper in the hive. Removing some of the honey that is in excess can help a small cluster by reducing the negative impact of this unnecessary thermal mass. If honey forms a solid mass on top of the brood nest, it is greatly beneficial to open a pathway in its center for the cluster by inserting one or two empty frames or empty combs.

Regrettably, some colonies won’t see the spring. We need to remove their hives from the apiary and try to figure out what may have caused their demise as soon as feasible. We can learn a lot from this, and decide what to do with the equipment that held the failed colonies.

Spring is only a few weeks away. We can look forward to it and make sure that our colonies will have gained as much strength as possible when it actually arrives.

In summary, this month:

• Inspect the exterior condition of the hives:
  • Hive tops should remain properly set and secured.
  • Observe the entrances and the ground in front of the hives.
  • Verify that the hive entrances are not obstructed.
  • Maintain adequate and safe ventilation through the hives.

• Examine the monitoring trays.

• Watch for the appearance of drone brood cappings, and make a note of the date.

• Verify that mice have not entered hives. Telltale clues of their presence, such as coarse pieces of comb and mouse feces, etc. are visible on the monitoring trays.

• When no activity is observed, place your ear against the side of the hive, and listen for bee noises. If the colony is dead, close the hive, remove it from the apiary, diagnose the problem, and discard or clean the equipment, as appropriate.

• In the latter part of the month and weather permitting, quickly peek into the top of the hives to assess the location of the clusters.

• Place supers or additional frames where and when warranted.

• Clean and scorch tools and equipment.

• Plan next season. Evaluate the need for equipment and bees.

• Procure, build and repair beekeeping equipment.

• Plant bee forage!

• Read and learn more about bees and beekeeping.

May your bee colonies bring you good health and intense joy in 2017!

Serge Labesque

© 2016
BEE WISE:
“DRIVEN TO EXTRACTION!”
by Emery Dann

Honey extraction is both an art and science. As beekeepers, we have ingenious ways of extracting honey. We have different creative ways of keeping our bees! Here are a few basic honey extracting tips I have found helpful:

#1. In general, it is best to keep honey supers on beehives until you know you have the time to extract. The longer honey frames remain unextracted apart from the hive; serious problems can develop. Crystallization, wax moths, hive beetles, ants, rodents, etc. I avoid storing frames inside a cold garage or freezer; the honey can crystallize making it almost impossible to extract later because the honey cannot be separated from the wax.

#2. Before uncapping, I hold each honey frame up to a strong light. I put only the same color of honey I see together, as I uncap and put the frames into the extractor. This way, I am not blending different kinds of honey together, but separating the honey into distinct nectar and flower sources. Remember to save the honey from each extraction in a one 1-pound Queenline glass jar. You can then enter jars of your honey in the Sonoma County Fair, 2017, this summer.

#3. Having some boards 1/2 to 3/4ths of an inch thick, the size of follower boards can help balance the extractor basket when spinning the honey out of frames that are unevenly filled with honey.

#4. Honey flows so much better when it is warm! When extracting in the fall and colder weather, some kind of heat helps liquefy the sides of the extractor—giving you more honey, a little faster. Be careful to stay with any heating device when in use and unplug it upon leaving the room, due to fire danger. Space heaters cannot be used in a horizontal position—they should automatically turn off. Be careful to follow directions and not overload electrical circuits preventing an electrical fire. Are your smoke detectors working? How old are the batteries? Have you tested them to hear if the batteries inside are still good? Do the batteries need to be changed? I have a fire extinguisher with me when I am extracting honey inside or bring one when I am extracting bees using a torch (open flame) with a smoker to inspecting hives. I check the fire extinguisher to see that the arrow on the gauge is in the green zone.

#5. When the turning finishes, I remove the screws, if the extractor is attached to floor. I carefully tip the extractor at a 45 degree angle resting the extractor on top of a 5 gallon bucket with a honey gate.

Continued on the next page...
#6. I have found Paint strainers work well inside deep stainless-steel V-mesh strainers made in Italy. I buy mine in San Francisco. Then the cappings can be added to the strainer when the liquid honey from the extractor has filtered through the honey gate. The paint strainer is then attached to the outside of the bucket preventing anything from falling into the strained honey. Cappings alone can contain 2 or 3+ pounds of honey. Then I place the bucket and cappings near the kitchen stove, furnace vent or a heat source for a number of days to finish the extraction. This separates the honey from the wax without overheating the honey. This is for winter and fall extraction not during higher temperatures in the summer.

#7. I never clean the extractor or the hot capping knife with an abrasive “scratch pad”! A soft cloth and water will do a good job and not leave scratches behind in the metal. For the groove around the bottom of the extractor, I use the tip of a toothbrush to remove honey and wax that gets stuck there. (Tip from Editor: Wiping the hot knife with a thick, damp cloth between using it on each frame keeps the knife clean and the honey on it from burning. Be sure the cloth is thick, as it gets very hot.)

For me, processing honey slows my life down. Honey takes time as it responds to gravity. There is nothing like the scent of “fresh” honey filling the room we are in extracting or bottling. The smell of honey is almost intoxicating—in the best sense of the word! It reminds me of the amazing journey the bees take to find the nectar, transport the nectar back to their hive, flying uncountable trillions of miles and their tireless work to evaporate the water content in the nectar, “bottle” and “cork” the honey, storing and saving it for their future needs. They have more than earned the honey they protect and guard with their lives. I am thankful we can enjoy some of the “honey surplus” they create from their labor and cooperation with each other both inside and outside their beehive home.

This and much more is why I love Honey Bees and am “DRIVEN TO EXTRACTION” with the amazing, hard work and efforts of our faithful bee friends. I love helping bees on this good, planet earth!!!

Have a great new bee year as we enter 2017!

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---End---
Bee Plants of the Month
By Alice Ford-Sala

Note: This year I intend to explore a few of our most important bee and pollinator habitat plants. I plan to spend 3 months on each species, as they are so large they have several varieties that are interesting and useful.

Manzanitas Arctostaphylos species
Ericaceae family

We can hardly think of California native habitat plants without manzanitas. So important are they, that Anna’s hummingbird is able to live in California year around because of abundant nectar available to them from these winter-spring blooming plants. Of course, honey bees and native bees also depend on the high quality nectar borne in the pretty white to pink hanging blossoms.

All manzanitas can withstand summer drought once they are established. In fact, they will die or develop diseases if given too much water or humidity. In a winter drought, they will appreciate water if no rains appear.

A. manzanita, Common manzanita

This is the tall growing beauty we see in the hills and mountains, at times towering up to 15 feet tall. The smooth burnished red bark is a delight to run your fingers over when out on a hike. Large green leaves contrast beautifully with the trunks and branches. White or light pink fairy lantern blossoms appear in winter to late spring, followed by fruits that ripen to a deep red and attract birds and mammals.

‘Dr Hurd’ is a well-known cultivar, with white flowers. ‘Hood Mountain’ is native to Sonoma County, and has more purplish bark with gray-green leaves and a more spreading growth habit.

A. glauca, Bigberry manzanita

Bigberry manzanita also is tall, growing to a tree-like height of 15 or 20 feet tall. Native to chaparral regions in California, all the way down to Baja. The leaves are waxy, gray-green, with dark brown-red bark. Flowers are white or light pink. The round, red fruit is sticky and thin-skinned but beloved by many animals.

Bigberry can tolerate a wide variety of soils, tolerating some heavy soil, with good drainage, but also thriving in alkaline and granitic areas.

May 2017 bring you and yours health and happiness!
None of your beeswax! None at all it was all mine and mine alone.

I don’t mind bee books covered with propolis, as propolis is part of my life now as it’s everywhere, but I do mind sooty bee books. All right it’s confession time. Enough time has passed that I almost stopped kicking myself and my ornery mood to the ones around me has soften to a sheepish look for forgiveness. I am warning you not to feel bad for me, this article here is my therapy. I am among friends here and I can already feel your sympathy. My penance, however, is to warn you for once not to follow in my footsteps, to instill in you mindfulness to your beeswax, especially when it’s melting on the stove. You know where I am going here.

I was making candles for an upcoming Winter Fair and for holiday gifts. I just needed a few more little ones. I had to run up to the main house to get some more water and got distracted. If you know me doing one thing at a time is virtually impossible for me. I have a busy mind that drives a busy body, most times I get a lot done but sometimes it gets me in trouble. Suddenly I realized my grave mistake, I ran back down my arm flailing above my head passed my son who had another confirmation of his mother being off her rocker.

Yes there were flames…. and smoke as thick as molasses. I was able to grab the two flaming double boilers I was working with by the handles and throw them out the door of my 1973 Airstream trailer bought a few years ago during a mid-life crisis of absolutely needing an instant art studio. My son does well in others crisis and was already behind me with a hose and readily extinguished the fire that was now confined outside. If school wasn’t such torture for him, he really should be a fire fighter. Luckily the flames were confined to the pans still and water was not needed inside. Another few seconds, though, it would have been a 911 call and my embarrassment would have made the papers. The tree next to the trailer might have caught fire and the close proximity of my neighbor’s house and the tree connecting both…you could imagine a lot of really bad scenarios. But most important no injuries, no loss of life.

After opening all the windows and heaving some from the smoke the damage seemed minimal initially. Some melted back slash, a melted molded plastic window frame and a couple of ceiling lights melted from the heat. What I didn’t expect was the damage from the smoke. Wherever air lived smoke entered and deposited a black sooty film, even inside closets inside drawers towards the back. Sometimes soot is dry and can be vacuumed off but in this instance the burned wax turned smoke was greasy. Wax is a fatty substance. If you cannot scrub it off with a brush with a degreaser it ain’t coming off. If you miss a spot and touch it later it’s all over your hands. So it’s been 3 weeks of purging and saying goodbye to unfinished projects, wanna be projects and future project not yet conjured that could not be scrubbed. I’d say 75% was not salvageable and most is not replaceable as there were collections of materials gathered over the last 30 years of recycled and reuse things that spoke to me upon my encounter with them, none from conventional stores.

Now everything is out of the trailer and scrubbing of the ceiling, walls and everywhere you can reach has started, some places with toothbrushes and skinny bottle-brushes. Please don’t feel bad for me as I am done feeling bad for myself. As I scrub and the original interior color reveals itself again from black to 1970 soft yellow and beige, it dawned on me through my sorrow that is turning into a smile: “Wow a clean canvas!”. I guess the spirit of an artist will never leave me. New possibilities emerge, things transform and something new is created. What if I turn the trailer into and educational bee center the public can visit? What if I gut this thing and reconfigure it into a honey house and have a permanent place for that clunky extractor? What if it becomes an air B&B with an observation hive and you can come sleep with the bees? What if….my mind is now filled with possibilities and the loss of things is becoming trivial. It’s all a path going somewhere. You can fight it and never get there or you can keep going, explore it and create new experiences.

So anyone with experience in refurbishing old Airstream trailers? Anyone interested in the unique with too much time on his or her hands and willing to work with someone on an artist and beekeeper budget?

So mind your beeswax please even if this story is ending well and possibilities abound, I cannot guarantee this kind of luck for anyone. Ettamarie, oh wise one, told me after the fact that she does not melt wax over open flames, she uses an old crock pot with water in it and a tin can with the wax in it Bain Marie style. I am changing my ways and I hope you do too.
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@mrsysgarden-n-bees.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:**

**2017 Board Members and Other Helpful People**

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Representatives at Large
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  Open atLarge2@sonomabees.org

Assistant - Linda Burns assistant@sonomabees.org
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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 - Laurie Smith, Candace 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
It has been a long time, 9 years as a beekeeper, to understand the complexity of why the honey bee struggles so much. In my living room I have a binder 3 inches thick of all the notes from colonies past that reminds me how un-sustainable beekeeping has become. Even though loosing colonies has become routine, every one of the colonies that has been in my care affected me deeply. All together they have taught me like mini-universities about so many subjects. Bees are our teachers and messengers of our environment, they urge us to do things differently. Different can be scary, the unfamiliar can’t have speculated outcomes and guarantees (not that doing the same over and over does). Different has to be tried out and experienced whether a whole industry snarks at you, whether university scientists tell you that it will never work and whether your own fear of putting your reputation, time and sense of success on the line tempt you to stay status quo.

One of the clear messages bees give us, that we, as people, need to reconnect from our food production, to nature as a whole and to each other. Each of us hiding in our homes and properties and sticking a beehive or two there, even with the best of intentions, is not enough. Bees tell us because of their forage and mating range of 3 to 5 mile radius, that what other people do affects us and therefore we need to involve communities to create the changes necessary to help the bees. They tell us clearly that we share our environment and so we share our bees. There really isn’t a “my bees” or “your bees”, but an “our bees”. If your neighbors keep spraying pesticides, it doesn’t matter how many beehives you have, they are going to be affected adversely. If a commercial outfit parks a high density apiary in your five mile radius, you bet your bees are going to be affected with food competition and genetics that don’t come nearly anything close to traits for survivability but for high brood production that can’t sustain itself without being fed artificial feeds. If we keep supporting an industry of “puppy mill” bees by purchasing packages of overbred bees from too few queen and questionable drones, you bet you are going to get “bee dysplasia” which will prevent them to be resilient, self sufficient, and able to manage their pests and pathogens.

So here is the different, here is the movement, here is being at the forefront, here is to listening to the bees…. let’s come up with a way to share our survivor bees. Let’s trust that the bees know best, the weak go and the strong remain and reproduce with our help if they let us. Let’s understand that bees acclimate just like plants do to regions and climate and those can read the cues of the season and find the compounds to self medicate and stay healthy. Let’s be responsible for the drones emanating from our hives and have the drones that propagate the genes of those survivor bees that are acclimate to our climate and can manage pests and pathogens and stop importing those that don’t. Stewarding bees is a big responsibility, our practices affect everyone around us and truly you are responsible for the bees you put out there.

To some extent we have already started sharing bees among ourselves last year through our wonderful cluster groups and with the help of the cluster coordinators many splits and swarms have been shared. It’s a big job, we are many and formulating ways to prevent burn out or putting too much on the shoulders of a few is what we are working on. Also there has been interest in queen rearing groups. Wouldn’t it be incredible to have a few members rear locally adapted survivor queens available in each cluster group? A private queen rearing SCBA Facebook Page already has been launched. We have a lot to learn and before the flurry of the bee season starts there will be many educational opportunities.

We are starting off the Bee Sharing program with a series of three lectures that will happen through either special Bee Cafes or Gatherings in each Cluster group in January, February and March. We realize, that in general, we need to understand bee behavior through the seasons better. Here we will concentrate on supporting bees the best we can in the hopes to be a split candidate later with end of winter and early spring management. Serge Labesque is preparing special lectures to train either cluster coordinators or cluster representatives that will then share the information to their respective groups.

1. Dates are just formulating for 3 Bee Sharing Lectures series so keep an eye out for invitations in your e-mail. These lectures are free and open to SCBA members only.

Lecture 1 TBA End of January:
• How bees come out of winter and end of winter management.

Lecture 2 TBA Mid February:
• How to watch and grow colonies.

Lecture 3 TBA Beginning March:
• How to split the hive.

2. All day Queen Rearing Basics Lecture is set for February 5 with Bernardo Nino from UC Davis 9:30 to 4:00. This lecture has a $50 fee and is open to all. Watch for the invitation.

Spend the day learning the basics of effective queen rearing from Bernardo Niño a Staff Research Associate at UC Davis in the E.L. Niño Bee Lab. We’ll explore in depth multiple topics that will get you prepared to rear your own high quality queens; specifically queen biology, various methods of queen rearing techniques, how to evaluate queens, things to consider for breeding queens, and we’ll have time devoted to group discussion. This course will be all classroom based provide a solid informational foundation for you to begin practicing rearing queens on your own. Queen rearing can be very simple and incredibly complex depending on your goals and motivation here you will learn which method/s make the most sense for you and gain confidence in understanding the most important individual in the honey bee colony.

My new SCBA e-mail is beesharing@sonomabees.org.
News From
The Education Volunteers
By Maggie Weaver

Happy New Year from the education group at SCBA!

I'm Maggie Weaver, the new education coordinator and excited to begin spreading the word throughout the county that honey bees are the "bomb". As fellow beekeepers, avid gardeners, conscience environmentalists, or just someone interested in general pollinator issues we have a chance to change opinions and increase awareness of the value and plight of honey bees through education. We, the members of the SCBA education team, go out into the community and present honey bee information on many levels. Schools, clubs, and garden groups are all places where individuals or teams make targeted bee presentations.

Those who have done the talks before know how wonderfully captivated audiences are when the topic is honey bees. Looking out onto a group of school children soaking up knowledge and facts to become honey bee stewards is incredibly fulfilling and rewarding. For newer bee keepers, participating and observing on a team with seasoned presenters is sure to increase your knowledge, confidence, and skill while helping you get over initial nervousness.

Have I peaked your interest to become part of the education group? Would you like more information or know of a place, organization, or school where we could potentially visit? Drop us a message at education@sonomabees.org or come talk to us at the monthly SCBA meeting.

We’re looking forward to an exciting year and would love each and every one of you interested to participate in this fun and rewarding endeavor!