President's Message

Already it's Midsummer.

Is time speeding up, as my grandmother used to tell me when I was young? Or are we merely increasingly busier and fuller and over-scheduled and such?

For the beekeepers - have you kept up with your hives? For the gardeners - have you kept up with your plantings and the weeding? Have you allowed some unscheduled time, some family time, some bee time, some garden time, so timeless time?

As beekeepers, we notice time - time of day, seasonal changes, temperature changes related to temporal shifting, and behavioral changes related to time of year or changes in the hive. Examples: orientation flights tend to occur around the same time each day in front of the hive; bees begin their foraging behavior when it's warm enough to fly; worker bees kick out drones in the fall (or in times of nectar dearth, etc.) Bee time is reality time! They aren't on a schedule, yet, they respond to time and changes in their environs.

As a drummer, I "keep time." Well, I try to. And these days, we are ALL asked to keep time - who doesn’t have a planner/calendar/datebook/phone with them at all times?

It's (mid)summer. Hopefully we can take a cue from the bees, the plants, the insects, the birds, the furry mammals (and encouraged by the heat wave, phew!) to slow down a bit, to find time within time, to taste of timeless time, to appreciate geologic time all around us. Bees and honeybees have been on the planet for millions of years. And with all that time on the planet, still, the worker honey bee lives for only about 6 weeks at this time of the year!

Have a great summer - may you find eternal moments in your wanderings.

Sincerely,

Jason Berkman
President
Stealthy bees and discreet beekeepers

Because they do not have the support of beekeepers, feral colonies depend only on themselves to stay alive and healthy. They live inconspicuously in tree hollows or other more-or-less suitable cavities. Unfortunately, their habitat is frequently transformed if not devastated by human activities. This forces them to adapt to shifting and often worsening conditions. Only the toughest and most resilient of these bees survive. The others vanish.

Although we may be aware of the existence of a few natural nests, we know very little about their inhabitants, and we can seldom tell how many exist, even within short distances of our homes or apiaries. To a large extent they are a mystery. Yet, they certainly deserve our appreciation and respect.

In a similar way we may know quite a few beekeepers, most likely those who frequent our meetings, and then possibly several more who do not. But who knows how many people keep bees under the radar, what beekeeping practices they follow, how they learned, or how they obtain bees? They are another beekeeping mystery.

Such questions do not stem from a nosy attitude. Instead, they express a deep concern for the bees, because all beekeepers have an impact on them. Our goals and methods, how we acquire bees to stock our hives, the density of our apiaries and just about anything we do to and with our colonies affects other bees. Entire bee populations are subjected to new pests and pathogens and to the harmful dissemination of ill-adapted breeds when beekeepers bring them into their apiaries.

This spring, quite a few people I didn’t know before came to me asking for assistance with their bees or to start in beekeeping. I invited them to join our associations and I provided several with bees and I helped them as much as I could. It seemed to be the right thing to do. Also, it was comforting to know that every colony I gave them was one fewer package brought into the area. Instead of the “puppy-mill bees” they might have bought, they received good tough local bees. This reduced the risks of new pest and pathogen introductions. Hopefully, my advice also saved them from making some of the mistakes I made when I started keeping bees. It was a win-win situation that also benefitted other neighbor beekeepers and our local bees, feral and managed alike.

Unquestionably, the bees connect us. Whether we beekeepers know each other, or not, we are inescapably interdependent. It behooves us to share our beekeeping knowledge and our bees, if only for the wellbeing of the local bee populations and ultimately of the species as a whole.

July in the apiaries

This spring unusually cool and wet weather compromised the honey flow and strained the colonies well into June. However, it was interesting to see how much variability there in the response and growth of the colonies. A few adjusted nimbly and flourished while others languished. The most striking consequences of this odd weather, however, were the hit-or-miss mating of young queens. A difference of a week or two in the timing of their production could lead either to their success or to failure. In retrospect, it’s not surprising that we find laying workers and drone layers rather frequently. We will certainly need to keep our eyes on the quality and performance of the queens during the next summer months.

The consumers of honey will have to hope for some summer honey, as this spring honey crop was slow in ripening and modest at best. Now, it has been processed and it looks beautiful in the jars. I used some of the honey that was left in the wet wax to start a batch or two of mead that is fermenting. The rest was returned to the hives in the evenings to avoid triggering robbing situations. None of it goes to waste.

And then it happened suddenly as the summer solstice approached: A record-breaking heat wave. The very hot spell sent the foragers out for water. No doubt it was a preamble for conditions that will reoccur over the next three months. Needless to say, the sources of water we provide our bees with must be kept provisioned without any interruption.

On a hot summer afternoon, superheated air rises between the heated side of the hive and the adjoining follower board. It exits the hive through the upper ventilation slot. This air circulation makes for better in-hive conditions, which the bees can control more easily.
These extreme weather conditions really show how well or poorly our equipment functions for our colonies and how the locations we chose for our hives affects them. It is quite a challenge to find the right dimension of the hive entrances under such circumstances. Yes, hive ventilation is necessary in order to evacuate excessively hot air, but not to the point of desiccating the brood. In periods of hot and dry weather, the bees collect water not only to lower the temperature inside the brood areas, but also to maintain an adequate level of relative humidity around their brood. Opening the entrances too wide or worse, removing the monitoring trays when the temperatures rise above 100°F and the humidity drops to twenty percent or lower harms the colonies. To avoid this, I keep follower boards in my hives. Combined with upper ventilation slots, the lateral air gaps created by the presence of follower boards act like chimneys that evacuate very effectively the air that is heated by contact with the sides of the hives. Meanwhile, between the follower boards, the bees and the brood remain barely affected by the ambient heat. Of course they still must gather and evaporate water, but certainly not as much as if they were kept in closed box-like hives that do not release the heat energy they collect. Thanks to these simple hive features, I very seldom see bees bearding in front of the hives in periods of hot weather.

Regrettably, foragers may turn to robbing when summer conditions preclude nectar collection. This is one more reason to keep the hive entrances defensible. The placement and orientation of the hives can make a significant difference for the colonies, especially in summer. Indeed, the colonies that receive the early morning sun can send their foragers to the flowers before the nectar becomes desiccated by the heat and the dry breeze. Frequently, the lull in nectar production at the onset of the summer dearth keeps the foragers idle on the outside of the hives. When this happens, they may display the mysterious and still-to-be explained washboard behavior. I’d say that they are “twiddling their thumbs” while waiting for the nectar flow to resume, but there must be a better explanation! On the contrary, in good apiary locations the foragers remain busy and they are beginning to add early summer nectar into the combs. There, the combs are assuming the typical darker color of honey produced at this time of year.

The young colonies need to begin to prepare for next winter. Over the next few weeks, we will watch how they handle mite infestations, how they respond to the cues of the season and how they organize their nests for winter. We have enough nucs with young queens to strengthen or revive the few hives that fail. In early July, the populations have reached their maximum for the year. The volume of the brood nests decreases steadily, and, since little nectar is brought in, there is comb space in the lower parts of the hives. Within a few weeks, the foragers will begin to place some pollen pellets and drops of nectar in these empty cells. This is one of the many steps in the preparation of the brood chambers for the fall.

The management of the hives is minimal in summer and open hive inspections are infrequent. The brood chambers are left undisturbed unless we see signs of health or queen-related problems at the entrances, in the flight paths or on the monitoring trays. As the main honey flow is over, all we need to do is to harvest the ripe surplus honey and maintain a little nectar storage space. Regardless, these manipulations must be performed without triggering robbing, which is a great risk at this time of year. Summer open-hive inspections should be performed only when the bees are actively foraging and returning with nectar and pollen. Most often this corresponds to the morning or lateafternoon hours. Midday inspections are to be avoided as the foragers seldom find anything to collect during the heat of the day, and the hives become quite defensive then.

It’s summer. Apiary work presents dangers for the bees we should not ignore. Do I also need to mention that smokers become hot and can set dry grass on fire easily? So, let’s be careful!

**In summary, this month:**

- Keep an eye on the health of the colonies.
- Provide adequate and safe air circulation through the hives (upper ventilation slots and follower boards).
- Be aware of situations and manipulations that can trigger robbing.
- Make sure that the components of hives fit tightly to prevent secondary entrances that might allow robber bees to enter hives.
- Ensure that sources of water are continuously available to the bees.
- Provide afternoon shade, if at all possible.
- Adjust the size of the hive entrances, particularly those of developing colonies to reduce the risk of robbing.
- Follow-up on the development of young colonies (Keep notes!)
- Evaluate the quality of young queens. Replace failing or undesirable queens.
- Consider combining or requeening inherently weak colonies or those that are not developing properly.
- Monitor swarm traps.
- Keep some equipment at the ready to catch the occasional swarm.
- Manage honey supers (less space is needed as the nectar flow decreases).
- Finish harvesting surplus spring honey, but do not over-harvest, particularly from hives kept in the dry hills, where the bees will be consuming more honey during the summer than they will be producing.
- Extract and bottle surplus honey.
- Return wet frames and wax to the bees for cleaning or re-filling.
- Discard old and misshapen combs and frames.
- Remove frames of undrawn beeswax foundation from the hives.
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings (separately). Solar wax melters work very well at this season.
- Beware of the fire danger while using the hot smoker in dry grass.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.
BEE WISE:
“FUNNY BEE HAPPENINGS…”
by Emery Dann

I have the highest respect for the many passionate beekeepers I know. We often help each other and work together in amazing bee adventures and emergencies! For me it takes dedication, effort and planning along with the few remaining brain cells I have left, to stay humble and ahead of honey bee numbers and intelligence.

Few non-beekeepers really understand the "bee world" we enter every time we face 10's of thousands of honey bees-one swarm, hive or extraction at a time. After all, bees have had it figured out long before we became beekeepers! Bees recognize the face and the scent of a beekeeper (from the "pheromones" we give off). So smile and take frequent showers! It also helps to have a good sense of humor when funny things happen!

Reminds me of a sign: “IF YOU SEE A BEEKEEPER RUNNING AWAY, THEN THINGS HAVE GONE POORLY AND YOU SHOULD RUN TOO!”

I have told those coming with me on a swarm call that swarms don’t sting so I don’t always wear protection. Somehow bees sensed the fear of my daughter and later my grandson, who after being stung refuse to believe me again!

I have often thought: "What are the bees saying to each other after they are all inside my swarm box?” I imagine one bee saying to another, "Whose bright idea was this for us to go into a box we can’t get out of and then to be taken away to who knows where?” They become desperate to escape and will keep trying any way they can!

When bees get into someone’s hair some amazing, original dance moves are displayed along with loud noises heard for miles, including words the person almost never says in public!

Beekeepers know the term “sweat equity” when the temperature inside the veil jacket/suit seems to reach 150 degrees. My clothing inside becomes soaking wet. Staying hydrated is critical as we work with bees! Take water with you.

If bees get inside my bee suit, it is amazing how fast I can remove my bee suit. I discovered this in a real emergency of food poisoning with diarrhea when it became a dire emergency that couldn’t wait! Even a badly needed bathroom break forces one to fight all the duct tape you are wearing to get relief!

I have discouraged tree vandals from cutting flowering Dogwood Tree limbs at night on MacDonald Avenue in Santa Rosa, CA. I place a 3-box empty beehive where they can’t miss seeing it at the base of the tree. No more vandals!

When I have gone to a car wash, the attendant told me he could not get all the yellow tree sap off my vehicle. I didn’t tell him all the yellow dots were really "bee sap"!

One dark night, two of us were moving a 3-box hive strapped together. Carrying it about 50 feet the hive came apart that the bees poured out crawling up on the outside to find us. We could not see them at night, as we carried the hive from where the truck was parked. We quickly realized what happened with the bees leaving a lasting personal impression to remind us!

I made the same mistake twice leaving the honey gate open during part of two different extractions. Not good to waste the honey or cleaning up the mess I made! I learn humility working with bees. I try to laugh often when funny things happen to me! I try not making as many assumptions about bees, as I did in my past.

I want to “BEE WISER”, with a Smile and a good laugh, when funny things happen!
Bee Tree to Log Hive

By Chris Dicker

My daughter’s coworker contacted me about her neighbor Tim’s bee tree, a 50-year-old curly willow in Rohnert Park, which needed to be cut down. Tim didn’t want to harm the colony so we called Emery Dann, long-time beekeeper, past SCBA President and 40-year arborist, to see if he would be able to convert it to a log hive. The log hive couldn’t have been successfully created without his expert help and that of his assistant Henry. There were a few obstacles (a huge nail in the center of the tree, for one, and a stalling chainsaw) but Emery’s expertise made for a very calm transition for the colony and saved it! The log hive was then moved to a new home at SCBA 2nd VP Susan Kegley’s Bees n Blooms in Santa Rosa, a few miles away. Susan reports that the colony is doing well in its new location.

To see the pictures here is the link: https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPvsSIQV-ZeUhyQ739W4QaEXR5MmUue7CaVQu9qckpFCot01yPT_dhHAJpb-6KJ_TA?key=dnR6eFdadnVvci1MQWtrNWw2aHNacnR0Vnh0M0x3

Announcements

by Christine Kurtz

I have the no spray signs for $15 each and more dried lavender $10 a large bunch from a 150 acre permaculture farm. The new blooms are coming in and the barn needs cleaning out. My house, my car, my garage all smell way too nice, powerful! All proceeds to SCBA. Remember no general meeting in July, so contact me 707-849-3220
Announcements:

- Thea gave some helpful tips for catching swarms! As swarm boxes get older, they can let a few sneaky bees out and into the cabin of your car. You can get some nylon screen from somewhere like Home Depot to put around the swarm box. This will keep them in your box on a warm day. If you have the opportunity to move the bees when it is cool, they will stay in the swarm box on their own.
- The 50/50 Raffle netted $90 to one lucky winner and the SCBA. Other raffle winners took home an awning for their hive and no spray the bees signs.
- President Jason gave a warm welcome to all the new members in attendance.
- Our wonderful librarian is back from vacation, and with her are all the books and movies you can borrow for a month. Check out the library in the back of the meeting hall.
- The Volunteer Group announces upcoming volunteer opportunities at events. The Gravenstein Apple Fair, Sonoma County Fair, and National Heirloom Festival all need volunteers. As a volunteer, you get free entrance into the fairs and the opportunity to learn by teaching and listening to your fellow volunteers teach the public. You can sign up for 2-3 hour shifts and don’t worry, you’ll be at the booth in groups, not alone! The theme for the Gravenstein Apple Fair is “In Praise of Pollinators”, so we will have an entire wing this year! We will need lots of volunteers to man the Bee Wing. Contact the volunteer group if you have sealed bee products you’d like to sell there. The gardening group will also be there in the DIY section speaking and giving out seed packets. There will be a honey tasting and a booth for equipment and gear. Email volunteer@sonomabees.org if you are interested in any of these fun ways to volunteer!
- The Volunteer Group likes wearing their SCBA t-shirts to events. If you would like an SCBA t-shirt, or other items with our logo, visit Cafepress. [http://www.cafepress.com/mf/81366583/sonoma-county-beekeepers-association_long-sleeve-tshirt?desired_product_type=2]

2nd VP Susan and President Jason introduced tonight’s panel of speakers. Sitting on the panel are several experienced and respected beekeepers with diverse opinions on beekeeping methods. The SCBA encourages learning about each other’s different methods of beekeeping without judgement. We are here to help each other and learn from each other. So tonight, we invite these speakers with a difference of opinion to voice their opinion on a few important beekeeping topics and encourage healthy conversation about these differences.

Topic 1

How much hive intervention and/or manipulation should a beekeeper do?

- **Thea:** Most beekeepers want to be told what to do in the beginning. They listen to everything their mentor says to make it simple. But there are no absolutes in beekeeping and there is not just one way to do things. Try to let the bees tell you what to do. I am a firm believer in feeding—not always, only under circumstances, like if the bees are starving. This can happen when it rains during a bloom, for example. You can use sugar water and add pro-health or honeybee healthy to give the bees good nutrition when feeding. Along the lines of listening to the bees, it is important to split hives before they swarm. Local bees are our Sonoma county bees. It is important to make our own queens from our own hives to share within our regional cluster groups. Local packages work well for beginners but swarms and splits should go to our intermediate and expert beekeepers, not beginners. This is our valuable local stock that we want to give the best chance of survival to.
- **Serge:** Bees are a wild resource of nature that is to be respected. Honeybees were strong and healthy until humans started exploiting them. The species as a whole is impacted by the human exploitation of this wild species for our own benefit and profit. As beekeepers, we must provide nesting cavities that respect the bees’ biology. We don’t want to put them in a hive that stresses them. Anti-pest treatments and feeding keeps bees alive that cannot survive the local environment. We need to make sure our bees are strong and can survive the local environment. If you have a weak or failing hive, re-queen them with a strong queen that will strengthen the genes of the hive. This will help strengthen the local genetic diversity and adaptability to local environmental factors. Package bees lack diversity. If the bees are susceptible to one thing, all the bees in the hive will die. We need genetic diversity.
- **Christine:** “What he said!” Overtime, my mentoring style and beekeeping style has changed. I started out going in the hive too much, but I learned a lot about how they work through the season. Then, when you don’t go in enough, you don’t see the signs of diseases or know what’s going on in there. You have to find a balance. Going to hive-dives helps you learn by going into the hives and seeing other beekeeper’s hives. You not only learn, but create community to support each other and share the knowledge. To feed or not to feed… I used to buy packages, or “puppy mill bees”, and had to feed them. I had 100% loss, 5 years in a row. I really see the difference with my local hives that are 2-3 years old. The Bee Sharing Program is creating a platform for us to share bees within the local, regional cluster groups. Genetic variation is
a good thing. A diverse hive will thrive because if something happens, it doesn’t kill all of them and some may have the

good hygienic behavior. A Queen Rearing group is also in the works to share strong local queens through the Bee Sharing

Program.

Audience Question:
Instead of using commercial feeders, is it ok to use crystallized honey?
• Serge: Honey may carry pathogens which may weaken the hive even further. If they hive is so weak it needs to
  be fed, it should be re-queened.
• Christine: Open feeding creates robbing.

Audience Question:
Can science really replace the natural nutrition the bees get?
• Thea: Mustard pollen is one of the most complete proteins, not all pollen is created equal.
• Serge: None of the man made diets will be satisfying for the bees.
• Susan: We know the major constituents of pollen, but not all of the minor and trace constituents. Not all pollen
  has been tested and we don’t know the trace constituents. In research, bees will choose real pollen over a man made
  food every time. There is research going on that will test nectar for its trace constituents.
• Christine: We need to be careful about how we interpret things. Some colonies with little food stores will survive
  winter when seemingly strong hives with lots of stores do not. We need to be careful to ask how research is being con-
  ducted and where the funding for the research is coming from.
• Thea: In addition to nutrition, it is important to remember that nectar stimulates wax glands. You also stimulate
  brood-rearing when you feed, so you have to be careful because this may create an even bigger population that the bees
  cannot feed.

Audience Question:
Does it do a disservice to the bees if instead of splitting, you just add boxes?
• Thea: You need to learn how to split well. If they keep growing, they will swarm.
• Serge: I agree, if they swarm, they will have no more that a 25% chance of survival. Let the bees decide when to
  split. Provide them with a nesting cavity when they would naturally be swarming.
• Christine: It is also your responsibility to split for your neighbors who might have to extract your swarm from their
  walls if you don’t split your hive.

Topic 2
Different hive configurations
• Jim: When you open your hive to add a box on top, all of the heat rises and the effort the bees have made for
  months to keep the temperature and humidity under control is gone. With a top bar hive, you lift the hive and put it back
  down onto a new box, which does not disturb the heat and humidity in the hive. The bees will then build down, creating
  new comb at the bottom for the brood. When you add a new box to the top, they create they pretty new comb for they
  honey and use old comb for the brood. This is a practice made for commercial beekeepers who want the honey in the
  pretty new comb so they can sell it. It does not make sense for small beekeepers. It stresses the bees to build up because
  it disturbs the scents, humidity, and temperature in the hive. The bees survived on their own for millions of years. It was
  not until 1852 that they would be in trouble because of the honey industry. We should create hives for our bees that mimic
  how they would live in a tree. The bees have adapted to how we want them to live in these boxes, but it is not the way
  they would naturally live. If it doesn’t happen in a tree, don’t do it. The size of the standard plastic and wax foundation
  cells has grown to 5.4ml, forcing them to make a bigger cell. This has added to the time it takes for a bee to hatch. More
  development time means more time for varroa to develop. We think we have the solutions, but we are the problem.
  Jim invited everyone to join the Top Bar group within the SCBA to learn more about the top bar beekeeping method and
  have in depth discussions about these topics.
• John: How many people have taken Serge’s class? It is fantastic. And Serge is very generous with his ideas.
  I make and sell equipment using Serge’s designs. Hives should be vented at the top, I have vented top covers. Rough
  surfaces encourage bees to propalize them like they would in a tree. I used to make a feeder box for sugar water, but now
  that box is used for wicking moisture with dried lavender. Make sure the lavender is completely dry, then place it in the
  wicking box and it won’t have to be replaced for 1-2 years. The screws in these boxes are dipped in glue so they stay to-
  gether well. My father-in-law builds all the frames for sale. He can make about 100 in 5 hours. The frames are strung with
  wire so the bees can make whatever size cell they want. The follower boards are made to encourage the bees to propal-
  ize. The bottom board has Serge’s design with a metal mouse guard, because you do not want mice nesting in your hive.
  The spacers can open however wide or small you want. This way you can open them wide for the honey flow or shrink it
  all the way to one bee space if your observation board tells you robbing is occurring. All my business success is owed to
  Serge Labesque. It is $220 for the whole set up with 2 medium boxes.
Audience Question:
*What do you think about top entrance hives?*
- **Jim:** This is a topic to research, but give the choice, the bees will go in bottom entrance. Plus, they walk all over capped honey when they go in the top, which beekeepers usually don’t want to happen.

Audience Question:
*Can there be a hive with windows to see what’s going on in there?*
- **John:** All sides will either have a follower board, or you’d be looking at the ends of the frames, so it wouldn’t show you much.

Audience Question:
*Can you just look under the hive and at the observation board to check on them without opening up the hive?*
- **John:** You have to go into the hive at least once a month for minor manipulations, it is just a part of beekeeping.
- **Jim:** This is a question of beekeepers vs. bee havers and whether or not you should manipulate their comb, etc.
- **Janet:** Just leaving them alone is not what you want to do. New beekeepers avoid going in the hive sometimes so as not to disturb their bees, but if you don’t go in the hive to do those minor manipulations, it will cause more problems later and newer beekeepers can get discouraged when they finally go in and their hive is a mess.

**Topic 3**
**Pests/Disease**
- **Susan:** This is among the most controversial topics. I have treated bees in the past, but have not done it in the past 2 years. I strive to not treat my bees, but there are some situations where one may want to. I have some commercial beekeeping friends whose families have been doing this for 4 generations and if they don’t treat their bees, they won’t be able to feed their family. Varroa mites are a serious and complex problem for them because they also transmit viruses. If you do decide to treat and you have new packages or swarms, it is a good time to treat for mites because there is not a lot of brood around. Sometimes beekeepers think their hive has been reinfested, when really it is just the treatment not working. If you want to go treatment free, try to breed for varroa mite resistance. We need to work together with our community and our neighbors whose drone’s our queens will be mating with to strengthen our bee’s resistance to mites collectively.
- **Ariel:** I am treatment free, meaning I do not use chemical or organic treatments of any form. It is important to try to understand the bees as a superorganism. I see the nest like a womb. Ask yourself, how can you keep your nest more like a wild hive? Can you take care of the temperature and the dynamics of heat when opening the hive? What is your relationship to this creature? Everything is up for debate.
- **Chris:** You can always feed your bees by planting flowers. You can always ask the gardening group for tips!

Jason gave a big thank you to everyone on the panel for sharing their knowledge and opinion and engaging in a judgement-free discussion of these different opinions.

Meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.

*Melissa Hanson*
Secretary
Bee Plants of the Month
By Alice Ford-Sala

Eriogonum Buckwheat Family

These important native plants are not the buckwheat you make pancakes with (though Fagopyrum, cereal buckwheat, is also a good bee plant, and related to our wild native), but a widely varied genus, with over 100 species. We will explore some of them in the summer months.

**Eriogonum fasciculatum California Buckwheat**

This buckwheat is easy to grow, and widely adaptable to many landscapes and growing conditions. I had good luck sowing seeds in the fall, and now have several plants in bloom.

Narrow evergreen leaves line the branches, making for a resemblance to rosemary. The blossoms are white to light pink, borne in open clusters that are quite attractive to honey bees as well as other pollinators. Historically, this abundant native has provisioned bees with pollen and nectar, valuable in the hot summer months. The seed heads turn rusty red after bloom, an attractive end of summer sight. Birds appreciate the tasty treat.

E. fasciculatum usually grows up to 3 feet high and wide. Once established, it needs little to no supplemental water. Plant in large masses for an attractive display. The roots knit soil well, so California buckwheat is often planted on slopes for erosion control.

**Eriogonum latifolium Coast buckwheat**

This is the sweet ground-hugging buckwheat we see when hiking along coastal bluffs or hiking over sand dunes. Fuzzy grey-green leaves spill down a rocky cliff, with abundant rosy flower heads beckoning native bees that swirl and buzz to sip nectar and collect pollen. Native butterflies use the leaves as a larval food source.

In the garden, she will cover a retaining wall, or grow in the foreground of a native planting. Coast buckwheat is also drought resistant, and does well in full sun or part shade. In super hot interior valleys, some afternoon shade would be appreciated.
Time to Get Ready for Our Silent Auction!
By Darlene McGinnis and Melissa Weaver

Christmas or Hanukkah in July? Nope, but they will be here before we know it so now is the perfect time to start planning for our annual Holiday Pot Luck and Silent Auction!

Darlene McGinnis and Melissa Weaver are patiently awaiting your lovely donations and we need your help to make this year’s silent auction a BIG SUCCESS for SCBA! Our goal this year is to raise 11K for SCBA, and we believe it’s totally doable with your assistance!

Would you be willing to ask your favorite restaurant, nursery, spa, massage therapist, hair stylist or a business that you frequent for a gift certificate or donation? They do not have to be bee related items, after all, we bring our spouses to these events who may not be as “bee crazed” as we are. Do you know someone who has a craft or is an artist that would be willing to donate? How about Vacation Stays? Who doesn’t want to get away?

We would like to make a couple of kid bee related themed baskets so toys, books, stickers, crayons and other fun items would be welcomed. Cooking or gardening items are great as they generally are our other hobbies. And wine…we always like wine or mead too. Do you own a winery or know a wine maker or perhaps a brewery or beer maker? What about those extra bee trinkets? If you’ve been into bees for a while, you know you have way too many of those gifted to you during the holidays and birthdays. Are you ready to clean out and pass them on?

Anyway, you catch our drift, the possibilities are endless. Cash donations are welcomed too! We can e-mail 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.

To minimize our driving all around Sonoma County please coordinate, if you can, with your cluster leaders or you can always bring donations to the general meeting. Remember there is a lot of work behind the scene and it happens through all the holidays so please try to have your donations turned in by Dec 4th. Also, businesses tend to run out of funding towards the end of the year, so now is the best time to ask!

We are a 501-c3 educational foundation and are tax deductible. You can reach Darlene at auction@sonomabees.org 707-529-8053 or Melissa at mweaver829@aol.com 707-823-3235.

Just an FYI - Below is a list of businesses that have been or will be solicited by members who have built an ongoing relationship and request that others do not seek out additional donations from them.

South Cluster News
By Cynthia Rathkey

The South Cluster will be having our annual summer BBQ picnic on Saturday July 15. Nick Freedman has generously offered to host again this year at his lovely property on Sonoma Mountain. We’ve pushed our usual time back so will be starting at 12 noon instead of 10am. South cluster will provide the buns and sausages for grilling and we ask that members bring a side dish or dessert for sharing; we’ll send out a suggested potluck item by last name to even out the selection. Planned activities include a honey tasting and a bring one, win one raffle. A Facebook invite and email with details will be going out soon!

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West Cluster Highlights
By Chris Dicker and Bruce Harris, West Cluster Coordinators

Patsy Young hosted a hive dive late May with Christine Kurtz leading. Our monthly bee cafe was at Drew and Audrey Ibach's in Forestville.

We also had a hive dive at Bloomfield Bees on 6-24 to see how Geoff Whitford works his bees. He found a laying worker hive in his apiary and we learned how he handles that, plus how to combine two colonies. New beeks learned a lot of basics too.

No bee cafe for July! Instead we are meeting at Bill MacElroy's lovely Monte-Bellaria di California for pizza and potluck on July 16th.

Bee sharing has been very successful this year, especially swarm sharing. Most of our cluster members who needed bees have been able to get a colony.

A Message from CAFF
By Evan Wiig

This is from Evan Wiig <emwiig@yahoo.com> from CAFF. He was a guest at our board meeting last month, and he was well received, and the board invited him to write something up for this month's extractor.

Pollination is central to a healthy ecosystem, to farms and to the resilience of our food system. Our organization (CAFF - Community Alliance with Family Farmers) began nearly forty years ago in the Central Valley of California, at a time when small family farms were fast being replaced by agribusiness more akin to industrial operations than to agrarian enterprises deeply bound to the workings of nature.

CAFF’s mission is to build sustainable food and farming systems through policy advocacy and on-the-ground programs that create more resilient family farms, communities and ecosystems throughout California.

Among the concerns that first galvanized our early work was the disappearance of pollinators, both native species due to loss of habitat as well as honeybees, caused by new pesticides and increasingly vast mono cropping. To respond to this, we worked with farmers across the state to explore natural and organic practices, encouraged polyculture and helped farmers plant hedgerows and pollinator corridors.

Since then our programs have broadened to support family farms and sustainable agriculture, but protecting our pollinators remains a priority. That’s why we welcome the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association to partner with us in educating the public, pushing for bee-friendly policies and by connecting with our farmer members to find mutually beneficial arrangements, whether that’s hosting beehives on properties or by helping to cultivate plants that your bees love. Let’s cross-pollinate!

Up first: we’re excited to welcome back the SCBA for the second year in a row to our 4th Annual Agrarian Games on September 16th. Hosted at the Petaluma Fairgrounds, this event invites the public out for an afternoon of local food, live music and fun, interactive activities for all ages, each one showcasing sustainability in our food and farms. Last year, the SCBA’s “Honey Bee Hustle” was a big hit. We can’t wait to have it back. We’re already training! In the meantime, feel free to spread the word! More info at www.farmersguild.org/aggames2017

Evan Wiig, The Farmers Guild & CAFF
East Cluster Bee Sharing
and Summer News
By Lizanne Pastore

East Cluster had a very busy and very successful bee-sharing season. The data presented here is preliminary and abbreviated. First, it is hard to track this sort of information for many reasons—just as it’s hard to track a bee in flight, try tracking over 50 beekeepers and their activities! Second, we are soon sending another Survey Monkey out with more questions regarding the Bee Share “Program” and how your needs were met or not; we hope to gather a little more data. However, despite approximate numbers presented below, I am excited, hopeful, and humbled by how generous everyone has been here in East County. And I know the same is true for our other cluster groups. Our phones never seemed to stop ringing with swarm calls and hive dive help for those splitting.

Our members work together to support each other as well as our local survivor bees because many of us believe that we can have a thriving local honeybee population, ending the need for buying packages from out of our local regions. Why is this important? Well, sharing splits from a surviving stock of bees with our fellow local beekeepers helps to ensure that the genetic traits needed for each microclimate remain intact in our bee colonies. This strengthens the genetics of our local bees, and increases their chances for survival. Many of us who have been keeping bees for several years have seen more success with these local colonies than we have in packaged bees coming from out of the area.

Furthermore, the sharing of bees has served to improve our bee buddy or “cluster” efforts. We’ve had some great bee cafes and both formal and informal hive dives here in East County. Working together, observing, and helping others improves our skills, and this is becoming evident in our beekeepers’ experience levels. In every way working together has been a big win. Thank you to all who shared bees and to all who patiently waited for local splits and swarms!

NEWS FLASH: PLEASE COME TO THE EAST COUNTY CLUSTER SUMMER PICNIC ON JULY 22 IN KENWOOD. DETAILS TO COME SOON IN AN INVITE. CHECK YOUR INBOXES!

East Cluster Bee Sharing Info

Number of active East County SCBA Members: 78
Number of East County Members who made it on the Bee-share List: 43 (this includes those who participated in a Survey Monkey Questionnaire sent out early this year [31,] as well as those who contacted us directly during the Winter and Spring [12,])
Number of list members willing to share bees through splits or swarms: 15 (in actuality, more than 15 members shared bees; I don’t have the exact number.)
Number of list members requesting bees, either splits or swarms: 28 (this only indicates the number of people wanting bees; the actual number of colonies requested was 2 to 4 times this number, b/c many people wanted multiple hives. Not every member received the number of hives requested.)
Number of swarms given to East members: 17+
Number of splits given to East members: 26+
Number of extractions given to East members: 1
Number of list members who wanted but did not receive bees: 2
Notes: This list does not include info about those who divided and kept their own splits, caught and kept their own swarms. It’s just impossible to keep track of everything that happens during spring, and some of our Top Bar members are still splitting. But generally, almost everyone who requested local bees received them. Huge thanks to Jim Spencer of Top Bar Group for his help in triaging who had what regarding equipment!

Installing a split of bees into Lauri Dorman’s new Top Bar Hive. Photo by Thea Vierling

An “on-the-ground-swarm” captured carefully barehanded in Kenwood. Capture and photo by Lizanne Pastore
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.westernapiculture.org to get more information and to download registration go to http://www.westernapiculture.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/?issue-ID=27&pageID=1
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Save the Dates for the
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 Needed!
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

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