President's Message

It's the season of the pollinators, for the pollinators, by the pollinators! Everything - and everyone - is actively dancing a frenetic ballet. Or maybe it's just perfect balance. Or maybe it's organized chaos. Or it's all of the above and more. Whatever "it" is, it's ON!

How do we keep up, be effective, get some rest, take care of ourselves and family and friends and others, show up for work/chores/errands, maintain and manage our gardens/bees/habitat/homes, have some creative outlets, not be so serious, be active in our communities and our whirling world... it is a balancing act.

I used to think and believe and proclaim quite regularly "there is too much to do, and not enough time to do it." These days, I'm catching myself when I think or say this. And, when asked how I am doing, I notice I tend to say, "busy" - as if this is the only correct response - and, the culture might agree with us. So, the obvious next question is, "How do we slow down (even just a bit), and still be effective and efficient?" Well, here's my answer... "I don't know!"

I'm learning that "I can't do it all," and that sometimes, more and more, I need and want the help and support of others. Teamwork. Community. Family. Friendships. Organizations... can you see where I'm going with this? Yes, you got it - striving for, and moving in the direction of, the all-knowing hive consciousness and hive mentality and hive action!

This week, I was part of the team that presented on behalf of the SCBA, to a school in Sebastopol, and we had 20-30 minutes for each of 6 classes of K-2nd grade. Maggie, Katherine, Brett and I had props and photos and equipment and facts and such, and we were met with enthusiasm, interest, questions, stories, and reactions. Some of those young ones were already going to be beekeepers, it seems! We got to slow down, to be in bee education time with the children. It wasn't easy, and also, it wasn't difficult - we all know more than we think, and, we are all still learning, and, it's a reminder to be ourselves, to share who we are and what we know, so that others may feel inspired and supported in their learning.

The SCBA is a lovely opportunity and venue for us to practice these life skills - to be involved with others, to learn, to share our knowledge, to support and be supported in showing up for the pollinators. It’s hive consciousness 101, ongoing education.

Sincerely,

Jason Berkman
President

This Month’s Calendar

Monthly Meeting: Monday, May 8

- 6 pm – Check out books and videos from our library, buy plants at our fabulous plant table, buy raffle tickets, talk to expert beekeepers willing to share their knowledge with you and help with any problems, socialize with refreshments and meet your cluster leaders. Bring your own cup, please. If you like to bake we also would appreciate donations of your cooking skills!
- 7 pm – Rich Morris, CEO of BroodMinder Bee Health Telemetry-- how to learn about what's going on inside the hive without having to disturb the bees.

Upcoming Meetings
- June 12, Panel discussion on topics on which reasonable beekeepers can disagree.
- July, no meeting
- August 13, Kelton Temby with Keltronics, to talk about EyesOnHives, video technology for monitoring your hives to assess patterns of activity.

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Bee Hives Wanted
By Nick Papadopoulos of Crop Mobster

I run a local food networking community called CropMobster. [https://sfbay.cropmobster.com/](https://sfbay.cropmobster.com/)

Many of our members have interest in hosting beekeepers and hives so we built this map at their request. In a few days there are almost 20 locations in 4 North Bay counties that would love to host beekeepers.

[https://sfbay.cropmobster.com/bee-hives-wanted/](https://sfbay.cropmobster.com/bee-hives-wanted/)

Any feedback or questions welcomed as well as sharing this resource.

If SCBA members or your organization have any needs that our community exchange is a free place to post alerts, support requests or broadcast your work to 1000's in the SF Bay area.

CropMobster
707.332.9209

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Santa Rosa Jr. College Summer Schedule

The JC will be adding Serge Labesque's popular introductory course to beekeeping for the summer. Not to be missed if you want to be a beekeeper!

Class Name: **Introduction to Beekeeping**
Instructor: **Serge Labesque**

Class Date(s): 06/21/2017 to 07/12/2017
Weekly - Wed 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM; 4 sessions starting 6/21/2017, ending 7/12/2017
Shuhaw Hall, 1764
Number of Sessions: 4
Number of Weeks: 4

Class Web Description: This short course will introduce students to beekeeping with a strong emphasis on beehive management techniques as practiced in Sonoma County without reliance on any treatment whatsoever for pests or diseases. Topics include: overview of the honey bee colony; beekeeping tools and equipment; how to start with honey bees; swarming; honey flow and harvesting of hive products; diseases, pests and enemies; hive and queen management; and beekeeping throughout the year.

Max Class Size: 57
Class Fee: $78.00
Materials Fee: $16.00
Registration Fee: $2.00

To register go to: [https://srjcce.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=6778&int_category_id=1&int_sub_category_id=3&int_catalog_id=0](https://srjcce.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=6778&int_category_id=1&int_sub_category_id=3&int_catalog_id=0)
My May
Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque
© 2017

Musings around double-deep brood chambers

Basically, the type of beehives I use in my apiaries is the ordinary Langstroth. However, over the years I’ve made several alterations to the original design in attempts to improve my beekeeping equipment. Many modifications were tried and I retained only those that showed to be beneficial to the bees and that were practical. In this line of continuing experiments, I have been playing in recent years with what I call “double-deep brood chambers”. This year is in fact the fourth consecutive year in this particular exercise. I hear you: Preparing the first human trip to the Moon may not have taken this long!

At this point, there is no doubt in my mind that the bees benefit greatly from this set-up. This alone is encouraging and makes the concept worth further evaluation. But it has also become evident that the handling and the management of such hives deviate from usual practices. For sure, the manipulation of the very large double-deep frames requires good dexterity, and the examination of their contents demands a level of proficiency that surpasses the aptitude we normally acquire by keeping colonies on smaller frames. Indeed, comb features that would normally be nonexistent, different, or clearly sorted out by standard frames can transform viewing these large combs into confusing experiences. The bees benefit from a higher degree of freedom in organizing their nests in double-deep frames than when they are constrained by the boundaries of smaller frames. So, I had much to learn. I had to sharpen my open-hive inspection skills, watch carefully what the bees were doing, and rethink and adjust some of my ways in the apiaries.

These trials have highlighted the importance of several aspects of hive management that are often ignored or neglected. The most consequential and valuable point is possibly that the management of the double-deep brood chambers requires good year-round planning. This is because the large frames that constitute the cores of the brood chambers are less easily relocated than smaller ones. Unexpectedly, some precious flexibility in the management of the brood chambers can be regained by paying attention to the use of the lateral combs. These combs can be held in standard frames, as long as they are outfitted with “frame extension boards” to prevent the construction of unwanted combs along their bottom bars. They can be used to increase the volume of the brood chambers at the end of winter and, later, to bait bees into additional supers, for example. It’s a principle that applies readily to the management of regular hives and that I have found to be of great value.

Overwintering colonies on five or six double-deep frames seems to work very well in my area. Yet, it is important to manage the colonies in such a way that their brood nests and stores are fully established in the double-deep brood chambers before mid-fall. To achieve this goal requires more attention to the management of the supers past the colonies’ spring build-up. All in all, it’s helpful to adhere to a planned and coherent development of the brood chambers starting at the end of winter, through the hive-division process, and all the way to the following winter.

One inconvenience I have encountered so far is that I had to transfer double-deep divides to regular equipment when I wanted to give bees to other beekeepers. However, this is an acceptable hurdle that all beekeepers that use nonstandard equipment such as top-bar, long, trunk, and other alternative hives face.

Besides the benefits bees draw from this set-up, I have gained appreciable relief from the lifting of heavy supers during the inspections of my hives, since the brood chambers may be inspected from top to bottom without taking them apart.
May in the Apiaries

The first month of this spring has been unusually wet and cool, making it difficult to find appropriate times to work with our colonies. Yet, occasional cursory checks revealed that the bees did not benefit much from the profuse bloom, in spite of their remarkable foraging efforts, sometimes in defiance of the rain: Their minimal wax production was leaving many frames without comb and nectar was not filling the frames that were ready. By mid-April, many colonies were in fact running low on stores. A few cold nights caused some of the peripheral brood, mostly drone brood, to be chilled. As a consequence, large numbers of drone pupae and dead young adults could be seen in front of the hives. All in all, the early spring honey flow was missed. More of a concern though is the quality of the young queens that needed to mate during that period of time, as it will undoubtedly have negative effects, something that may not become evident for months. If only for this reason, it will be a good precaution to raise a few additional queens in late spring when the weather finally improves. They will be at the ready to requeen hives later in the summer or early fall.

“April showers bring May flowers”. Let’s hope so. Thanks to this year’s much improved ground moisture, the colonies should make up for some of the lost time and nectar. Fortunately, the supers are already in place and the populations are large. Given good weather the foragers will load them rapidly, possibly to the point that we may harvest a little surplus spring honey.

Although the colonies seemed to have curtailed their reproductive impulse in April, let’s not be fooled: It will happen and we will be able to produce splits and young queens during the next few weeks. Only a few of the colonies have been divided so far. The others risk swarming. Their prompt and timely division should minimize losses and produce the strong splits and young queens that might be necessary later in the season. Until then, their brood chambers will still require that we monitor their development and occasionally supply additional space. At this time of year, new frames may be advantageously inserted in the center of the brood chambers of strong colonies.

The growth of the colonies may at times necessitate the addition of supers. This is best done by baiting, which consists of transferring some of their existing lateral frames and follower boards into the new supers. By doing so, the odor of the colonies is brought into the new space, and the bees respond well by immediately expanding their activity into the new super.

The increasing forager activity at the entrances prompts us to gradually widen them. This facilitates the comings and goings of the foragers, and therefore optimizes the productivity of the hives.

The monitoring trays necessitate cleaning more frequently at the time of year. Doing so helps us keep an eye on the mite fall and other signs of colony health issues, which may include chalkbrood and European foulbrood. When these spring diseases occur, the brood combs need to be removed and burned, as they carry the infectious pathogens. Another cause of concern at this time of year may be the blooming California buckeye trees, as the pollen they produce is toxic to the bees. Hopefully, the foragers will find enough alternative safe sources, such as blackberries. If not, we’d do well moving our hives away from locations where the poisonous trees abound.

The bees have visibly reacted to this unusual spring. We, too, may have to modify our plans accordingly.

In summary, this month:

• Inspect hives regularly, when foragers are out in large numbers.
• Open the entrances of hives to match the forager activity.
• Avoid congestion of the brood nests.
• Offer comb-building opportunities.
• Add supers to provide nectar storage space.
• Maintain adequate clustering space between the brood nests and the entrances.
• Watch for signs of spring diseases. Remove infected brood combs when they occur.
• Ensure adequate air circulation through the hives.
• Perform hive divisions.
• Follow up on earlier hive divisions.
• Maintain sources of water for the bees.
• Monitor swarm traps.
• Keep some equipment at the ready to catch the occasional swarm.
• Rear queens.
• Pull weeds from around the hives.
• Harvest only surplus early spring honey.
• Discard old and misshapen combs.
• Render wax from discarded frames.
• Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.
BEE WISE:

“THE BEES HAVE IT FIGURED OUT!”

by Emery Dann

You may or may not agree with me. I don’t even know how it happens by instinct or intuition? But honey bees have been through drought conditions. This year with 60+ inches of rain here in Sonoma County, California. They seem to know what to do depending on the changing weather conditions. Bees may even sense the weather before it comes to them and us. When you see a swarm hanging in the rain on, you might not think so. Is their timing off? But I have seen bees survive together; even during the heavy rainstorms we have had this year!

What I have noticed in the hives I care for is that due to the frequent rain we have had, foraging has been somewhat limited. There has not been time for every hive to gather plentiful honey stores, yet. This may be different where your hives are located! What the bees have concentrated on, instead as I see it, is creating larger swarms. With the rain we have not experienced in 6 years, could it be that since hives cannot forage as much with so much rain, the bees know this will be a good year for dividing their hive by swarming. The good foraging will come after all the rain stops later this spring, summer and fall. “The bees have it figured out!”

One concern I have seen in several swarms I have removed this year is “hot swarms”. The bees are way more defensive than I would like. These will need to be re-queened with good local queens. Even when collecting swarms it may be a good idea to be fully “dressed for success”, until you know what kind of bee swarm you are dealing with. It is fun for beekeepers to impress the general public by collecting swarms without a veil or gloves. It is not fun to be seen running away from a swarm that you were not prepared for their reaction to you! I learned this year that even swarms that have come to rest the same day with plenty of nectar in their honey stomachs can be very defensive and hard to work with. Don’t traumatize yourself or those around you, (it can ruin someone’s “bee friendly” attitude) if the bees do not do what you expect them to do when collecting a swarm or even if one of your hives becomes “hot”!

We are thankful for the rain that is helping our environment and replenish water resources and give our formerly dry landscape for 6 years new life! “Bee ready” with the equipment you need for the bloom that is coming soon during the rest of the year! I have always thought, “The bees have it figured out!” How they figure it out, I do not know. But bees often know more about the weather and bee-keeping than us beekeepers!
Sonoma County Beekeepers’ Association © 2017

SCBA General Meeting
April 10, 2017

Held at the RP 4H Center, about 160 people present.
President Jason Berkman brings the meeting to order at 6:58pm.

Announcements:
• Jason reminds members there is a donation jar for the tea and cookie table in the back.
• Thea does a fun presentation with props about the transition time from egg to larva and larva to sealed brood. Thea announces that the education group is looking for volunteers to give these presentations at schools. The props are very fun for kids and teaching about bees is a great way for you to learn more.
• There is a volunteer opportunity table in the back of the room. You can meet other beekeepers while using your skills and interests during your 6 volunteer hours per year.
• The 50/50 Raffle netted $112 to one lucky winner and the association. Beekind donated two tote bags to the raffle, which two other lucky ticket holders won. Beekind also donated a honey super to the raffle and a final winner got to take this great prize home.
• John asked people on the swarm list to report the swarms they captured because of SCBA’s swarm list to swarm@sonomabees.org. The report does not have to be very detailed, just the size of the swarm and where you captured it. If someone donates a swarm to you, please return the equipment they gave you ASAP. They need their equipment back to capture more swarms. If they gave you the swarm in boxes with frames, please reimburse them for that equipment.
• If you are setting swarm traps outside of your property, you must get permission to put your traps there. You must also put your name and phone number on every swarm trap you put out so people can notify you if you need to move it or if there are bees in it.
• Regional Coordinator, Kelli, announces the great opportunities and events offered by the cluster groups. There are bee cafes (similar to general meetings but with more in depth education), hive dives (hand on experience in a hive with an experienced beekeeper), workshops (in depth presentations about specific topics), and the sharing of swarms and splits.
• Christine Kurtz shows how to clean smokers. Ash can accumulate in them that prevents them from closing, but before you throw it away, you can try cleaning them to save money. You can ask Christine, Janet, Ettamarie, Chris, Doug, or any of the other experienced beekeepers for beekeeping tips and tricks before the meetings.
• The Bee Sharing Program is run through the cluster groups. Each member is assigned to a regional cluster group determined by their location. If you would like to get bees from another member or donate a split to another member, you can get involved with your cluster group. If you plan to share bees from a split, Christine can assist you in splitting your hive. The best way to get bees through the Bee Sharing Program is to be proactive by volunteering and networking with beekeepers in your cluster.

2nd VP Susan announces the speaker at the upcoming meeting in May will talk about using technology to monitor your hives. Susan introduces this month’s speaker, James Cook. He is not your average commercial beekeeper.

James is a full time commercial beekeeper with ~23,000 beehives, which is considered small by industry standards. The largest operation in the US has ~93,000 hives. The operation he runs with his wife produces most of the honey in Minnesota. He does almond pollination in California, where you can make around $150 per hive during the pollination season. The hives are also split while they are in California, producing around 1,500 hives, which is important for building numbers back up after losses each year. Many hives were lost one year due to neonicotinoid use in Minnesota cornfields. Half of the adult bee population died and 60% of the queens died. The state came out to do an inspection and said this was an acceptable loss. By the end of that summer, 80% of the hives had been lost. James showed a picture of dead bees covering a snowbank 4 days after the kill. They calculated about 30 dead bees per square foot. The loss was huge but it can be hard to picture the numbers until you see it, and they never would have seen it had the snow bank not been there. Since this incident, they have kept the hives in California until the planting and spraying is finished in Minnesota.

Dialogue with the growers and farmers is incredibly valuable. It is important to cultivate a relationship with them because if they are aware that certain practices or use of certain pesticides is killing off your bees, which lowers their production, they will be more open to changing those practices.

James completed the Keep the Hives Alive tour where he drove about 2.5 million dead bees to 7 stops around the country and made a speech in DC. He also made a Keep the Hives Alive documentary, which is still in the works. He showed the trailer, which can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/171110684

A net must be put over the hives as they are transported between locations by truck, even though the bees can fit through the netting. It is best to transport them when they are cold because they will want to stay in the hive anyway. When it is hot the bees will want to get out. Luckily, the bees will stay inside if the truck is moving fast enough, but if the driver decides to take too long of a bathroom break, it can cause some trouble. James showed a picture of a truck covered in bees that went outside for a break of their own.
In the winter, the bees are taken to a climate controlled potato cellar. They are usually put in there around the second week of November because they have to wait until the cellar is emptied of Thanksgiving food. The cellar is monitored and has proper air exchange to ensure it's a good environment for the bees. At this time of year in Minnesota, it could be snowing, but if they are moved elsewhere, they tend to think it is spring because of the temperature from leaving cold Minnesota. This causes the bees to brood up early and break into their old honey stores because there isn't a spring nectar flow yet. Putting them in the cellar allows them to go broodless over the winter, which helps with varroa mites. The temperature is kept at a brisk 40-50 degrees because they can still maintain their proper hive temperature otherwise, the bees could warm the cellar way above the proper temperature since it is a contained environment. The bees don't need to be fed much because of their dormant state. Some moisture does accumulate in the hives, but there is air exchange, so it is not much of a concern. The goal is to have the hives come out of the cellar looking exactly like they looked going in.

The pollen in Minnesota is toxic, so they do not want the bees getting into their stores of it. When they are taken out of the cellar, the bees are put right by a fresh manzanita bloom, which is where James contributed data to the Pesticide Research Institute study that Susan presented at February's meeting.

When the hives make it to the Almond orchards, James likes to “reverse the hives” by switching the bottom boxes to the top and vice versa to create equally balanced hives for splitting. This also shows the grower that you care about your hives because it takes time to do this with every hive. It can also allow you the opportunity to check if the bees are exhibiting toxic effects from pesticides the grower or a neighboring grower are using. Bee kills are difficult to report because the dead bees are scattered, but if there are many dead bees right outside the hive, it could be a sign of over-spraying. When this happened to James’ hives, he had a conversation with the grower he was working with and the grower was present for the inspection by the state. The grower’s economic loss is huge when the bees pollinating their crop are dying, so if they are involved in the conversation, they are more likely to want to take action.

Questions from the Audience:

Q: What is the average size of your hives?
A: The hives are kept at 2 boxes high year-round. When they are transported to Minnesota, they are given another box of space for honey production. James likes to keep them at 2 boxes so the bees don’t abandon the bottom box when the queen lays in the top box.

James mentions his queen-grafting program. A queen cell can be sold for $4-5. James tries to create very genetically diverse queens who seem to exhibit good genetic traits, like handling varroa mites well. This year 2,400 queen cells were created and grafted by freezing.

Keeping records is very important, especially for a commercial beekeeper. You can track the genetics of your colonies and learn which queens create colonies that are good at handling which environmental factors. James uses blank gift cards that he staples onto the hive to write in sharpie what type of queen is in there.

Q: How do you handle varroa mites?
A: There is a balance between what is best for the bees and what is best for the business. James would love to not have to treat the hives, but that is not economically viable for commercial beekeeping right now. So, he tries to keep it as organic as possible by using treatments like formic acid. Formic acid does not work well for capped brood, so there must be multiple well-timed treatments or the hives will reinfect themselves when the capped brood is opened. Oxalic paper can be used in the fall for it's highest potency because the bees are heading towards going broodless. Natural acid treatments must be used multiple times because they are fast acting organic products, which don't penetrate the brood nest. In the Pesticide Research Institute study, they did not find a correlation between the number of varroa mites and the survival of the hive. It seems that it is not the varroa mites alone, but a combination between the mites and other factors, such pesticides, which decreases a hive's overall health and potential to survive. For commercial operations, the bigger worry is the pesticide sprays in fields surrounding the hives.

Q: Why don’t you have a screen at the bottom of the hive?
A: There is a physical limitation. The forklift used for loading onto the trucks rips bottom screens.

Q: How big are your splits?
A: James splits in half, 8 or 9 frames each. Sometimes he makes nukes, 4 or 5 frames so he can create 4 hives from 1.

Q: How do CRP lands function now?
A: They are privately owned now. They used to be state funded so the owners would get a tax break, now the private owners do not have the money to plant foraging crops like clover.

Q: Is there a list of dirty growers?
A: It would be very difficult to get a list like that together.

Q: Do you pollinate alfalfa in Minnesota?
A: Some, but unfortunately the hives are moved before the bloom.
Q: How is the price set for pollination?
A: The price is usually negotiated yearly between individual growers and beekeepers. That is how it works for almonds, at least.

Do beekeepers get together to decide on a price together?
Commercial beekeepers mostly work on price negotiations alone, but there are some that do work together.

Meeting adjourned at 8:43 pm.

---LIVE BEE REMOVAL---
We specialize in removing bees alive from
Walls, barns, sheds, and trees.
“Difficult” extractions are our specialty.
Beekeeping lessons offered at reasonable prices.
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We have been doing wall extractions for 10 years and have done over 450 to date.
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Melissa Hanson
Secretary
Continuing with this gorgeous and under-utilized pollinator friendly native plant. Ribes, or the Currant and Gooseberry family. A diverse and incredibly beautiful family, they benefit pollinators and native birds and mammals in a variety of settings.

**Wild Currants Ribes**  
Species Grossulariaceae family  
Ribes sanguineum var. glutinosum Pink-Flowering Currant

In early spring, when this currant blooms, the lovely pink tassels attract hummingbirds, bumble bees, carpenter bees and honeybees.  
Pink-Flowering Currant grows in an attractive vase shape; the charming light green lobed leaves make this a prized specimen for the garden, hedgerow or informal fence.

The bloom lasts for about a month, then green currants that later ripen to deep purple dangle from the branches. They are edible, but the birds will beat you to them. The leaves fall in autumn but in late winter you will see the green buds swelling and you know spring is on the way.

Easy to grow, needing regular water in summer, (every 2 weeks) partial shade is preferred, though in cool coastal areas, she can take full sun.

Several cultivars are available:
- ‘Claremont’ can grow up to 8 or 10 feet tall and has especially long and pink tassels.
- ‘Tranquillon Ridge’ also has pretty dark pink flowers.
- ‘Inverness White’ has white flowers.
- Ribes sanguineum var. sanguineum Red-Flowering Currant

Cultivation requirements are as those for Pink-Flowering Currant.

Some nice cultivars are:
- ‘Elk River Red’ with small deep pink blossoms beloved by pollinators.
- ‘Barrie Coate’ is very floriferous, covered in dark pink-red blossoms in early spring.
- ‘Brocklebankii’ has glowing golden-green leaves that make it a stand out in the shade. Flowers are magenta pink. Needs protection from hot mid-day sun.
The Regional Buzz
By Sally McGough and Kelli Cox

The bee sharing program is up and running in the clusters! Swarms are happening all over the place, and beekeepers with booming hives are starting to divide them. This means the folks who signed up on their cluster’s “needs bees” list are starting to reap the benefits of the program and the generosity of the people who pass on swarms and splits. This is such an exciting and sometimes hectic time of year, with the bees growing and preparing for swarming at breakneck speed and the cluster coordinators scrambling to make sure the swarms that are caught and the splits that are made find a good home.

If you’re waiting patiently to get your bees through your cluster, there are some things you can do that will help make it a smoother and easier process for you, the cluster coordinators, and the swarm catchers and splitters. First, be sure you have all your equipment ready – not just assembled, but in good shape, clean, and ready to receive a new colony. If it’s older equipment, it most likely needs to be scraped and scorched. (If you’re not sure what that means, ask a more experienced beek in your cluster or at the Monday night general meeting). Second, be as accessible as you can so that when it’s your turn to receive bees, they can reach you to let you know it’s happening. Check your phone frequently and respond as soon as you can. Third, if you caught a swarm on your own or got a swarm or a split from a friend – or if you’re lucky enough to have a swarm land right in your yard, let your cluster coordinator know so they can take you off the list. And when you get the bees, call your bee buddy and do the follow-up necessary to make sure they’ll thrive. And finally, if you brought your bees home in the swarm catcher’s or splitter’s nuc box, return that to them as soon as possible so they’re ready to catch their next swarm or make another split.

It’s possible that by the end of the season this year, like last year, clusters will have more bees than they can find people in the bee sharing program who still need them. Even if you haven’t signed up for the bee sharing program, if you can take one of these colonies and give them a good home in your apiary, please let us or your cluster coordinator know.

We’re excited to see so many people getting local survivor stock through this great program. If you happen to see Christine Kurtz, you might give her a big thank-you for hatching this program. Another big thank-you goes to the cluster coordinators who are putting in the time to match up the “have bees” with the “needs bees.” And on an individual basis, you’ll be thanking that swarm catcher or splitter who gives you these precious bees. As far as we know, we’re the only beekeepers organization that has this kind of program, and all of us are super proud of it and the volunteers who make it happen!

Kelli Cox & Sally McGough
Regional Coordinators

Kelli: regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org
Sally: regionalcoordinator2@sonomabees.org

Another drought tolerant plant – Bottle Brush
Photo by Ettamarie Peterson

R Honey Pots
Liz Russell & Joey Romo R
Forestville, Ca
A husband and wife team specializing in the extraction of bees from buildings since 2001
(707) 696-0861/540-2551
www.RHoneyPots.com email: RHoneyPots@gmail.com
Deceased Member Priscilla Coe
Katia Vincent Gives Us Sweet Memories

I recently attended a memorial for Priscilla at the Shed in Healdsburg. The memorial came quite a while after her passing but the stories of over 30 different friends (who all seemed to know each other and be connected in so many ways) and never stopped speaking of her kind brilliance, passion for the earth, arts, the bees and food and all the amazing things she did for people. Priscilla Coe was a passionate honey loving beekeeper friend that I met at the Sonoma County Beekeeper’s Association in 1999. Many in SCBA will remember this sharp wonderful woman. At our meetings back then, she would always be lit up with excitement whenever anyone talked about products of the hive. Honey tasting night was her favorite meeting. I was drawn to her passion. I had the honor of traveling to Seattle with her for a three-day Apitherapy Conference where I learned a lot. Priscilla was a major and constant inspiration for the Beekind Honey Store, the Original Bee Symposium here in Sonoma County (which continues now at UC Davis this May 5,6,7) and a co-founder of the Melissa Garden Honeybee Sanctuary in Healdsburg, Ca. Priscilla was always encouraging me to use and bring in bee products that were rare and unique honeys from around the world. Her knowledge and passion of the ways that medicine from the hive could be applied was phenomenal and she was always willing to share it. I am forever grateful that I knew this sweet bee-ing and will forever share what she taught me. Priscilla was a certified Professional Culinary Instructor in 1984 at the International Association of Culinary Professionals and was also a fabulous cook, who once assisted Julia child! Priscilla studied with David Hoffman and received her certificate in Medical Herbalism at the California School of Herbal Studies in 2005. She attended the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, BS in Child Development and English 1972. She attended four national conferences organized by the American Apitherapy Society (AAS) and attended Apimedica2006, an international conference in Athens, Greece. She wrote numerous articles on Apitherapy and was a publicist for the American Apitherapy Society. Priscilla, we will miss you with love!

Educational Group Kept Busy
in April
By Maggie Weaver

The skies are filled with swarming bees and, as we await the arrival of the drier, warmer days, we are as “busy as bees” doing presentations all over Sonoma County. We continue to schedule school visits, prepare lessons, make presentation materials, and visit schools. A big thank you to those who have stepped up and helped out! I find myself getting a couple emails a week from people wanting to help with school presentations. All of this makes the work easier and more worthwhile. For example presentations were given to 200 children at Liberty Elementary on its Science Day, SCBA had four members with Ettamarie Peterson’s observation hive talking to children and their families for four hours one Saturday at Mark West School District’s Science Day and four more SCBA members taught a garden class about bees at Parkside Elementary. There’s still time to be part of the fun. Drop us a message at education@sonomabees.org and let us know what days/times are better. Even after the school year ends there are summer programs, garden groups, clubs where we’ll be spreading the honey bee story. It really is an easy, fulfilling way to satisfy the 6 hours of volunteer services we ask from our membership. Hope to hear from you soon!
Swarm Season

Personally my favorite time of the year! I love capturing swarms, and what a swarm season we are experiencing. I have already experienced 10 swarms this year and it’s not even May first. I have read in several books that a swarm in May is worth a load of hay, but a swarm in July ain’t worth a fly. I think that might be one of those things that you may get a different answer depending on the beekeeper you ask. I have had some very successful late swarms. The size of the swarms I have experienced this year is awesome, and from the pictures I’ve seen I’m not alone. Just an awesome year!!

I know I’ve said I only want you to report to me swarms that you have gotten through the SCBA swarm list, but on further consideration we are all members of SCBA and if we capture a swarm, no matter where the call is from, we as a group have saved another colony of bees. So please let me know if you have captured a swarm from any source, so we can brag about saving the bees. Report all swarms by email to swarm@sonomabees.org. If you have captured a swarm and have not reported it YOU STILL CAN I know there are a lot of swarms I haven’t heard about. Don’t worry it’s not a rule or anything, it’s all for fun!

I do have to report that our little talk about swarm etiquette at the last general meeting was not taken lightly. The last two swarms I donated to new beekeepers my swarm box was returned the next morning, one with a six-pack of beer and the other with two bottles of wine. Those little perks are a nice addition to the experience, and a small price to pay for a colony of locally adapted bees. Please keep being generous with your swarms and no one wanting bees will be left out. It’s such a fun thing to do when you gift a swarm to a new beekeeper. Hopefully all clusters are running out of names.

Please enjoy a few pictures I have taken and received this season.

John McGinnis
SCBA swarm chairperson
(The Swarm Guy)

Editor’s Note: The rhyme came from England where the seasons are a wee bit behind us. Also says, “A swarm in June is worth a silver spoon.”

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More Swarm Pictures from John McGinnis

And the biggest swarm of John McGinnis’ collection was this one caught in an industrial complex in East Petaluma! Lesson of that day was to have big enough equipment to take them in!
The weekend of April 29 and 30 was the spring edition of the annual Sonoma County Farm Trails event: Blossoms, Bees & Barnyard Babies.

In keeping with the theme, the SCBA hosted an exhibit at Monte-Bellaria and gave the more than 200 visitors informational demonstrations and led hive visits in the field. The volunteers (six people over the span of two days) were incredible ambassadors for the bee world and quite a few of the visitors expressed interest in joining the association.

We were able to get some fantastic free-standing displays that Ettamarie had stored for us that were perfect for educational purposes and sparking discussions.

Thank you to ALL of the volunteers that made this a tremendous event!

Upcoming Event: Gravenstein Apple Fair, this year’s theme: In Praise of Pollinators
**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. Jan 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:**


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