

The Monthly Extractor

Volume 44, Issue 10

October 2019



This is our newsletter that reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.

President's Message

Greetings Fellow Beeks,

Fall is here, early rain(s) and nippy mornings. It was great to see so many of you at our last general meeting. What a fabulous presentation from Serge, I do hope you took good notes and are working on wrapping up your girls for the winter. I hate to be the broken record but.....

We are still looking for next year's President of the Board, and

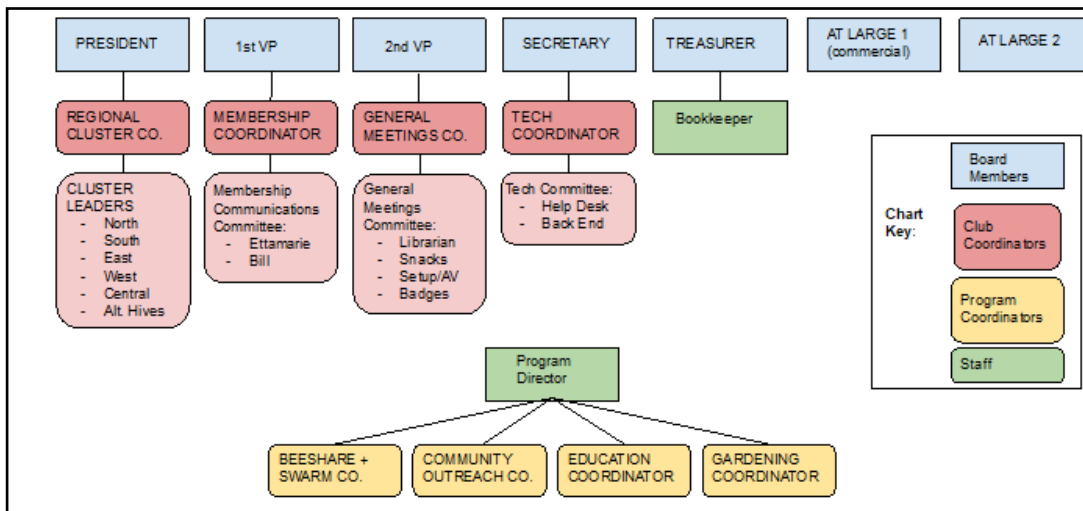
a person to take the reins of the general membership meetings (General Meetings Coordinator).

These two positions are super fun and manageable, and you will be surrounded by a competent and friendly team that will support you in every way. Additionally, as past President, I will be available until you are comfortable taking over as I am committed to this association and its success.

Please take a look at the accompanying organizational structure chart to see how these positions factor into a great organizational structure that makes the work very doable and enjoyable. If interested, please write to Kelli at president@sonomabees.org

Beest,

Kelli Cox
2019 President



This Month's Calendar

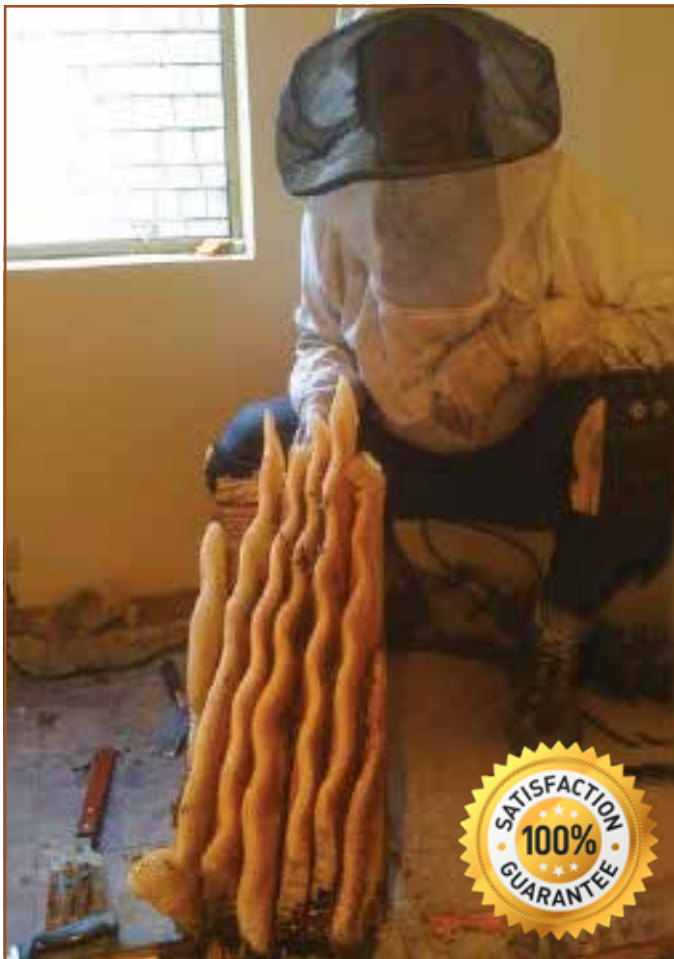
Monthly Meeting: Monday, October 14th

6 pm - socialize, buy plants in the lobby tonight, check out material from our library, have refreshments (bring your own cup, and meet your cluster leaders.

7 pm - The garden group will be offering tips on planning and planting for honeybee needs at this time of year. Then our South Cluster members that went to Gormanston, Ireland will present their adventure. See more on page 4.

Contents

President's Message	1
This Month's Calendar.....	1
Discovery Days.....	2
Serge's Fall Course Schedule	2
Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque	3
This Month's Meeting Topic	4
2019 Fundraising Raffle	5
Bee Plants of the Month	6
Monthly Meeting Minutes	6
The Alternative Hive Group Meetings.....	7
Honey Extractor Rental	9
2019 Board Members	10
Contact Information	10



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Discovery Days

October 26th

By Ettamarie Peterson

On October 26th North Bay Science Discovery Days will have an event at the Sonoma County Fair grounds. This is an outstanding event that covers every aspect of science one can imagine. It is entirely free including parking so hundreds of families come. SCBA has helped educate the public at it along with the Liberty 4-H beekeepers project for several years. It will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on October 26th. If you would like to volunteer at this wonderful event, please let Ettamarie know. Contact her at editor@sonomabees.org or 707-479-1613. Please consider signing up to help at this event especially after noon. You will be working with the young people many of you have donated equipment to over the years.

Serge's Fall Course Schedule Santa Rosa Jr. College

Class Name: **Introduction to Beekeeping Class**

Date(s):

10/02/2019 to 10/23/2019

Weekly - Wed 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;

4 sessions starting 10/2/2019, ending 10/23/2019

Call Building, PC 697

Number of Sessions: 4 Number of Weeks: 4

Class Web Description: This short course will introduce students to beekeeping with a strong emphasis on bee-hive 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: 52

Class Fee: \$78.00

Materials Fee: \$16.00

Registration Fee: \$2.00

My October Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

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Lizards!

Every year with the bees brings its own series of quirks, surprises and challenges. This spring, an unanticipated hurdle emerged in my main apiary in the form of four-legged creatures: ordinary lizards.

I had often seen lizards waiting near the hive entrances, stalking foragers, but I very seldom saw one catch a bee. Although their preying habit was annoying, I did not think it could have a significant impact on the colonies unless they would catch a queen; not impossible, but an unlikely event. So, I did not dwell on the issue or do anything to prevent the little fellas from capturing a few foragers. Everybody has to live. This year, however, changed my opinion on the danger lizards can present.

In an area of the apiary where the bees had regularly been doing very well, three colonies started declining at the same time. The hives were rather close together, forming a small group that was spread over a distance of about thirty feet. The examination of their brood nests did not reveal any sign of disease or parasitism, but their adult populations were unmistakably shrinking. That's when I started paying more attention to the lizards that scurried in all directions anytime I came near these hives. If I walked away for a minute, they would almost immediately be back again right next to the hive entrances, ready to pounce onto a bee. And they were all pretty plump! Something had to be done to control this unsafe situation.

At first, I saw no solution other than moving the three hives out of this lizard-infested location. This was promptly done. Unfortunately, and as might have been expected, the lizard issue spread rapidly to all the other ten hives in the apiary even though they were dispersed over a distance of 600 feet. The lizards had become as dangerous as skunks, raccoons and mice can be.

Normally, the bees can defend themselves and sting an occasional lizard to death. But this lizard population was exceedingly large. A little search showed that there are lizard repellents, and that some plants, such as peppermint or eucalyptus, are also said to keep them away. But these means seemed quite impractical or not suitable in that location, if they were actually effective at all.

Alternatively, modifying the design of the hives to make it more difficult for lizards to jump on bees seemed possible. Maybe fences could prevent the lizards from

running to the foragers. So, I cut and installed strips of ½" welded wire mesh in such a way that they created spiked edges around the front of my hive bottoms. Barely noticeable, these defensive obstacles stumped the lizards. At once, the reptiles' potential prey had been reduced to the few bees that flew or landed outside my fences. These bees, by the way, might be robber bees. I'll admit that I took pleasure in seeing the predators mystified. The fact is that the colonies did very well during the rest of the summer in spite of the obviously large lizard population that also thrived throughout the apiary. However, I still find it intriguing that lizards, which are known to be a problem in subtropical and tropical areas, have become such a problem here. Is it simply a fluke, a normal spike in their population, or could it be another sign of climate change? I do not know. Regardless, "good fences make good neighbors". I think that I'll make these "lizard guards" permanent features of all my hive bottoms next winter, and we will all be happy, the bees, the lizards and me!



October in the apiaries

During the last hive manipulations of the year, we ensure that the colonies have all they will need to make it through winter. Once this is accomplished, we will leave the bees undisturbed for a few months. No later than mid-fall, the hives should be safe and sound, containing adequate quantities of well-organized stores, a good queen, and enough developing winter bees to form viable winter clusters.

Right now, the queens are steadily reducing their

egg production. To some extent, it is the saturation of the brood chambers that force them to slow down. When the bees respond well to the clues of the season, they also help by filling these combs with stores. Consequently, we see that the brood nests hold mostly sealed brood that will become the winter bees.

The volume of brood between early- and mid-fall presages the size of the future winter clusters. It is a good basis to estimate the amount of stores that must be left in the hives. To keep it simple and safe, twice as much honey as there is brood in terms of comb surface area has shown to be sufficient in my apiaries over the years. This usually corresponds to 15 to 35 lbs. of honey, depending on the strength of the colony. Any honey in excess of this amount is surplus honey that may be harvested before closing the hives for winter. If there is a choice, it is preferable for the bees' sake to leave the lighter honey and to harvest the dark honey, as this may be honeydew honey.

The combs that are centered directly above the brood nests probably hold some bee bread that was left in place when the brood nests moved downward in the hives. This is a good thing, because the bees will probably use this source of protein in mid-winter. The centermost combs of the stores, above the brood nests, should also be comprised of worker-size cells, since that is the location where the brood nests will most likely be located in mid-winter.

The tightening of the contents of the hives during the fall presents a good opportunity to remove old and misshapen combs. If these undesirable frames still hold a little honey or nectar, the comb may be placed in the hive top feeders and crushed. The bees will gather the honey and will relocate it in the brood chambers. Any bee bread may be placed directly on the top bars of the brood chambers. However, combs that hold healthy brood should be left in place.

The removal of some of the frames allows the hives to become somewhat narrower, which is a favorable configuration of the hives during winter. The use of follower boards facilitates these modifications and creates wide air gaps between the follower boards and the sides of the hives. This, too, benefits the bees by improving the air circulation within the hive.

In order to further better the in-hive conditions for the overwintering bees, recently harvested dry lavender can be placed in the hive top feeders. It provides insulation that prevents condensation of metabolic water on the underside of the feeders and it absorbs moisture quite well without rotting.

A generously dimensioned screened ventilation notch cut in the edge of the lids of the hives helps eliminate the excess moisture that would otherwise accumulate in the hives.

The frenzy of forager activity that is visible in front of the hives will soon subside. These are summer bees contributing their last-ditch effort to their colonies' future. In a few days, in a few weeks at most, they will have disappeared. The only bees that will then be left in the hives will be the winter bees.

As the bees prepare their nest, they seal cracks and they plug excessively large openings with propolis.

However, the overall condition of the equipment remains the responsibility of the beekeeper. Mouse guards need to be set in place without delay to prevent mice from accessing the inside, and the hives also need to be secured against the wind and the rain.

In summary, this month:

- Assess the colonies, their health, queens, brood nests and stores.
- Examine how the bees have arranged their brood chambers and how the stores are organized. Ensure that there is some comb with worker-size cells, uncapped honey and pollen centered above the brood nests, surrounded by honey.
- Combine or requeen hives that are not performing satisfactorily (no later than early in the month). Better yet, reduce their volume to strengthen them.
- Adjust the volume of the hives to match individual colony strength and needs.
- Remove old and misshapen combs (follower boards greatly facilitate this).
- Early in the month, configure hives for the consolidation of honey stores (Breaking the cappings of patches of poorly located sealed honey helps.)
- Harvest, extract and bottle only surplus honey.
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings.
- Return wet frames and cappings to the bees for cleaning (by placing them above hive top feeders or inner covers).
- Watch out for yellow jackets and any instances of robbing. Reduce the entrances of the hives that are threatened. Close any secondary hive openings.
- Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated.
- Install mouse guards and reduce hive entrances.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Store unused equipment to protect it from wax moth or mouse damage and from the weather.
- Secure the hive tops against high winds.

Serge Labesque
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This Month's Meeting Topic Beekeeping in Ireland

The South Cluster will present a report on their trip to Gormanston, Ireland. Hear and see Irish beekeeping from our own SCBA members who visited there this past summer to meet, mingle and learn about how they do beekeeping across the pond. Ireland is the native home of the Black Bee and beekeepers there work hard to maintain the purity of their lines. Come and hear about Irish beekeeping and how it is both similar to and different from what we do in Northern California.



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2019 Fundraising Raffle

Raffle Reminder: Don't forget to turn in your raffle ticket stubs and money at the October 14 meeting! Do not lose out on the chance to win great prizes!

1st prize is one \$1000, 2nd prize is \$750, 3rd prize is \$500 AND each full packet sold receives one entry into the supplemental raffle to win a complete hive setup donated by John McGinnis, hive stand donated by Darrel Jones, and goodies from Bee Kind!! More tickets will be available at the October meeting. In addition, the first two hundred completed packets returned will receive an awesome signature bee pin!

Thank you for supporting the SCBA!

Darlene McGinnis

2019 Chairperson

Lovewhatyoudo1960@gmail.com

GARDENING FOR BEES OCTOBER UPDATE

By Kitty Baker

Super September Plant Sales

Even with the early start at last meeting, the Gardening for Bees Group transported, set up and sold a stunning \$275 worth of plants in just 15 minutes! It's prime time for planting bee forage that will help feed our bees and other pollinators next spring.

A Bounty of Plants Predicted this October

The G4B growers expect a bumper crop of plants for sale before next SCBA meeting. A few of the varieties our growers predict will be available: Biokovo Geranium, Shasta Daisy, Pride of Madeira Echium, Mozart Rosemary, Mullein, Penstemon, plus many more.

A Short Talk on Planting for the Long Dearth

To help you choose, plant and care for forage that helps bees survive well in the dry season's dearth, G4B will kick off the October SCBA meeting with a gardening talk offering tips on planning and planting for honeybee needs at this time of year. Watch for "Plants For Sale" postings on G4B and your cluster group Facebook pages just prior to the October 14 Meeting. Arrive early for best selection, bring boxes to cart your purchases if that's easy, and prepare to stock up.

See you then!

Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

Hedgerow Bee Plant Western Hawthorn
Thornapple *Crataegus douglasii*
Family: Rosaceae

The hawthorn family has many attractive and useful members, but please don't plant the classic English hawthorn, *C.monogyna*, as it is invasive in some wild lands, crowding out natives.

A nice and very bee-friendly native is *C. douglasii*, western hawthorn. The foliage is dark apple green in summer and rosy orange in fall. The flowers are white clusters of tiny flowers that bees happily visit throughout the spring. They look like small bouquets of white roses. The tiny red apple-shaped berries are nutritious and highly attractive to our feathered friends. People also eat them; they were an important food source for native peoples. The fruit can be eaten raw or cooked as in pies or preserves. The fruit, leaves and flowers have been used in traditional medicine as a tonic for stomach upset, or heart problems.

This plant can grow up 6 to 20 feet tall, trained as a small tree or a multi-trunked shrub. It has a tendency to sucker, which would make it good for filling in a row or fence. It can also be pruned easily if you would like to have a small upright thorny tree.

They do have thorns; so think about where you want to plant them- as a hedgerow, like they do in Europe? They will deter unwanted visitors if planted as a living fence. You can also plant them as a small street tree, or in a lawn. Hawthorns grow alongside creeks and streams, and need some moderate water but not standing soggy soil.



Alice Ford-Sala

Western Hawthorn

Monthly Meeting Minutes Sept 9, 2019

Meeting Started: 6:00 Approximate attendance: 150

- Miles Sarvis-Wilburn introduced as new Program Director.
- Kelli presented SCBA org chart with new structure, including the names of people currently in the roles. Each Coordinator/ Board Member/Cluster Leader/ Program leader was introduced.
- Open positions for next year include President and General Meetings Coordinator. Those interested should inquire with Kelli.
- Serge Labesque was speaker: Getting Ready for Winter.

Summary:

- What the bees are doing now in terms of storing food, rearranging resources, changing brood-laying rate
- What do the bees need to survive winter? A queen, a good home, winter bees, sufficient stores, good health
- Know your mites. Serge presented a non-invasive way to count mites on the monitoring board—wax paper covered with Crisco to trap mites. A grid to help with counting. Every month to give you some trend data and provide info on which hives are best for splitting the next year and which should be requeened.
- Discussions of fall issues, like robbing, amount of stores to leave for the bees.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kegley,
2nd Vice President

The Alternative Hive Special Interest Group: Two Great Meetings

By Thea Vierling

Wow our Alternative hive coordinator, Jim Spencer, did it again. We had two different meetings about alternative hives, one for top bar hives and one for Double Deeps. They were both outstanding. Just so you all know, the alternative hive special interest group is not to be confused with the regional cluster groups, North, south, East, West and Central. This group is composed of folks who have alternative hives and there are over 400 members which means almost the whole association! What is alternative? Alternative means different from the regular Langstroth hives which is not to say "the boring old Lang hive". There are other alternative hives too like the Cathedral hive, The Warre, the log hive, the tree hive, the observation hive... and many others.

Alternative hives have a lot of challenges and also create a whole new set of management issues including equipment! The two workshops could not have been more different. One was a casual discussion group with several folks who are seasoned top bar hive folks like Kelly Corbet, Jim Spencer, Susan Kegley and Nadya Clark. We shared experiences and equipment issues, challenges, innovations, etc. We discussed winterizing and also the tendency of the top bar hive to swarm. Believe it or not, swarming in the top bar hive group is something our group is quite proud of because swarming is a great Varroa Destructor control! Many of our hives make it year to year. We just have to be careful to catch our swarms! We have them trained now and they come right down into our swarm traps!!! Top Bar Folks have given away many swarms to lots of folks for their Langs!

The top bar hive group met at "Bees N Blooms" where Susan Kegley has created a piece of heaven. She and her husband have really changed a former sort of simple laguna into an amazing creation of labyrinths, flower gardens, lavender heaven and bee haven.

The Double Deep (abbreviated DD's) workshop was very different. Serge was the guest speaker and is and "expert" on DD's. Even he admits that there are no experts but in his case, he is an expert. He has been experimenting with double deeps for about 5 years and has perfected them. Of course, in another year he will come up with even more ideas. (Does Serge ever sleep or is he always thinking!) Let's put it this way: we have all gone from the two deep hive box method (for the weight lifters) to all mediums, (for the weaker beekeepers that cannot lift those huge boxes)! (Oh, those aging beekeepers!) Now we are back to double deeps but those are all on one frame because the bees like to be together without spaces and wooden boards to cross over.

We met at John McGinnis' Apiary and workshop which was wonderful. His workshop is clean, well organized and full of equipment for all the various hives (wait, not for top bars.... John????). He is very thorough and Serge and

Christine Kurtz, which says a lot, approve his equipment. John and Darlene have over 13 hives in their apiary and as I remember he has about 5 DD's.

All in all it was a great weekend for the Alternative hive group. If you are a Facebook person, ask to join the "SCBA Top Bar and Warre Hive Group" and we will let you in but you do need to be a member of SCBA! Here are some great photos for all to see. Jim Thanks for all of your hard work. You are awesome!



Another Alternative Hive Meeting In the North Cluster

I got this message from North Cluster. Cheryl Caletti and Candace Koseba rescued a log hive and custom build out some frames for a Warré. It's part log hive, part Warré and so lovely. See attached photos. They are working together as Sonoma County Bee Company.



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Honey Extractor Rental

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Maryle Brauer
 707-934-7392

southcluster@sonomabees.org

Central

Brian Gully
 707-391-4727

svo.must@hotmail.com

West

Gina Brown
 415-828-8459

Boragelane@comcast.net

East

Claudine Latchaw
 (707) 971-9708

claudinelatchaw@gmail.com

The Alternative Hives (formerly Top Bar Hive) group has a fruit press available for use in honeycomb crushing. Contact Jim Spencer at:

alternativehives@sonomabees.org



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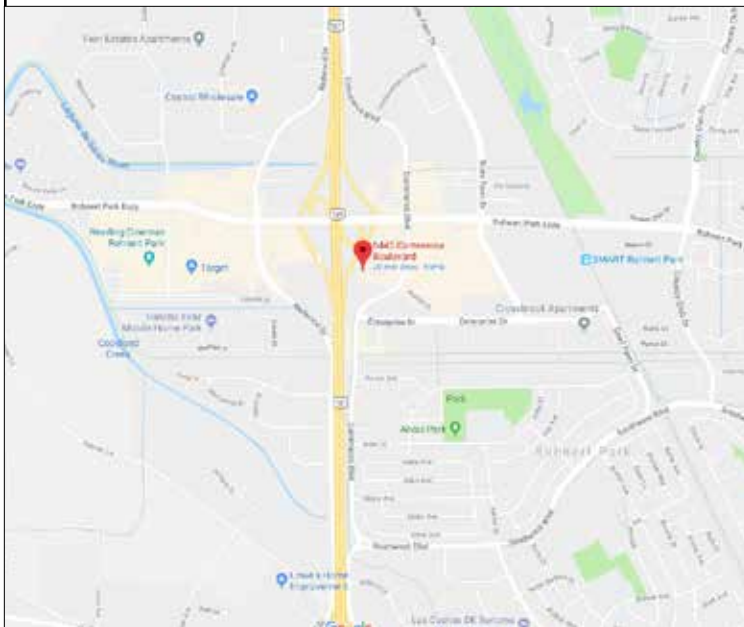
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2019 Board Members and Other Helpful People

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Contact Information

Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month 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.



6 pm – Meet your cluster members; ask questions; bring your own cup and fill it with tea or coffee and have some goodies.

7 pm – General meeting starts. (See page 1 of this newsletter for speaker details.)

Our mailing address is:
Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.
P.O. Box 98
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098

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