

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 45, Issue 5

May 2020

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

Jennifer Berry is our speaker and will be presenting Queens and re-queening. [For more information see page 2 of this newsletter.]

President's Message

I hope this note finds you well. Spring has sprung and summer is on its way. While our normal routines have been greatly changed by the shelter in place order, our natural world is carrying on unabated. I'm finding that nature's steady normalcy helps bring grounding, peace and joy to my world and I hope you are feeling the same. Gardens are blooming with amazing spring vigor. Hive colonies are booming, swarming and bringing in lots of pollen and nectar.

As many of us wish for more connection, the board has moved to provide the association with Zoom capability. This means interacting with one another through cluster cafes and general meetings will now be on line. It's not the same, but still a way to connect with one another, discuss bees and visit more personally. I've heard from a few groups that their early zoom meetings have been enjoyable learning experiences, and a nice way to connect.

We are encouraging each cluster group to start setting Zoom cafe dates. Be on the watch in your emails for a Zoom invitation. If you are unfamiliar with Zoom and would like help, please reach out to your cluster coordinator for assistance.

And, so you can experience it on a larger scale, I am pleased to announce that we will be having a May general meeting via Zoom. We're all still on the learning curve, but hopeful many of you will be able to join us on May 11. The presentation will be from 7-9pm. Members are asked to log on at 6:30pm.

Swarms have been plentiful this season. Some regions have seen more swarms than others. Please remember

to report your swarms. The data is interesting to track and provides SCBA the opportunity to follow swarm numbers from year to year.

Your cluster bee share coordinators are hard at work trying to make sure that everyone needing assistance with getting local bees will be able to do so through their clusters.

The gardening group recently had a successful plant sale. They creatively set up a driveway/curb distribution. Congratulations to the gardening team!

Join Our Zoom Meeting

May 11 Monthly Meeting will be via Zoom

In order to attend the zoom meeting, you will need to download Zoom to your desktop or device. If you already have Zoom you can skip this first step.

1. Download Zoom on or before 6:30pm Monday, May 11th by clicking on this link:

<https://zoom.us/download>

2. To join the meeting click on this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/95722754055>



I'm looking forward to seeing you on May 11 at our Zoom general meeting.

Stay the course; enjoy your gardens and bees. Hoping our return to a new normal starts soon.

Ann Jereb
2020 SCBA President

General Meeting News

Monthly Meeting: Monday May 11 (Online via Zoom)

Time: 6:30 -7:00 log into Zoom meeting

7:00-9:00 pm guest speaker

Marin Beekeeper, **Jennifer Berry**, will speak about Queens and Re-Queening. Jennifer has been a beekeeper since 2003 and raising queens since 2010. Jennifer raises queens and nucleus colonies for sale, maintains colonies for farms and bees enthusiasts and mentors other beekeepers one-on-one. She is also a regular contributor to Marin Beekeepers Buzz Newsletter. She will discuss queen biology & behavior, as well as how to determine the health of the queen. She will share different methods of how to requeen a hive depending on the circumstances.

To reiterate the information on page 1 of this newsletter, in order to attend the May 11th, online General Meeting, you must do the following:

In order to attend the zoom meeting, you will need to download the Zoom to your desktop or device. If you already have Zoom you can skip this first step.

1. Download Zoom on or before 6:30pm Monday, May 11th by clicking on this link:

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2. To join the meeting click on this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/95722754055>

Honey Extractor Rental

One of the benefits of SCBA membership is access to our honey extractors. We currently have a honey extractor for each cluster as well as one fruit press shared across all regions. Members can find the terms of this rental, as well as the necessary contact information, in the "SCBA Members-Only Info" section of the website. To see this section you will need to be logged in. Happy spinning and crushing!

Contents

President's Message	1
Join Our Zoom Meeting	1
General Meeting News	2
Honey Extractor Rental	2
Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque	3
Growing a New Colony by Serge Labesque.....	4
South Cluster	5
Cluster Activities 2020	6
Bee Plants of the Month	7
GARDENING FOR BEES GROUP	8
G4Bs GARDENING TIPS.....	9
From Our Education Coordinator	9
2020 Board Members	12
Contact Information	12

My May

Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

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April in the apiaries – Growing young colonies

Mid-spring is a time of intense colony propagation, which is achieved by spontaneous swarming or, through apiary management, when beekeepers divide their hives. In most instances, these events bring about temporary interruptions in the growth of the populations while young queens are being raised. Nonetheless, large numbers of foragers continue to collect nectar and pollen. The brood nests of mature colonies that were not divided earlier and that did not swarm will soon be reaching their maximum size for the year. Their adult bee populations will be growing for a few more weeks though, until early summer. These colonies can become very large and benefit the most from the late-spring and early-summer honey flows.

Swarms as well as the young colonies that were produced earlier in the spring must develop into strong hives while nectar and pollen abound. They are a lot of fun to observe and it is easy to assist them in their rapid development, as they are given a good start by the spring honey flow. To do this, the beekeeper makes sure they are queenright and adds space to allow them to build the new combs they need. Although some of the new colonies may become good honey producers during their first season, especially in good apiary locations, their goal over the next few months is to prepare to face next winter.

As forager activity increases, the hive entrances are gradually enlarged to facilitate the bees' comings and goings. When the hive openings are kept too small, the work of the bees is slowed down and the amount of nectar and pollen that may be gathered is reduced. While managing mature hives still calls for occasional inspections of their brood nests to discern their potential inclination to swarm and as usual to check on their health condition, the attention of the beekeeper shifts to the honey supers. Harvesting some surplus early spring honey is indeed a nice treat.

There is no better time of the year than mid-spring to raise a few additional queens from our best colonies. These queens will be kept in small nuc-size colonies, at the ready to eventually replace failing queens and revitalize weak hives during the summer or in early fall.

Occasionally, we encounter colonies that show signs of disease such as chalkbrood or European foulbrood. They can be strengthened by reducing their volume and in particular by removing any brood comb that may carry pathogens. The wax of contaminated combs may be processed in solar wax melters, as these

tools function well now, thanks to the warm and sunny weather. With the help of a generous spring honey flow, safe new combs will be built by the bees to replace what was discarded.

In summary, this month:

- Inspect hives regularly, when foragers are out in large numbers.
- Open the entrances of the hives to match their forager activity.
- Avoid congestion of the brood nests.
- Offer comb-building opportunities.
- Add frames or 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 health issues 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 an occasional swarm.
- Rear queens.
- Harvest only surplus early spring honey.
- Discard old and misshapen combs.
- Render wax from discarded frames.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Pull weeds from around the hives.

Serge Labesque

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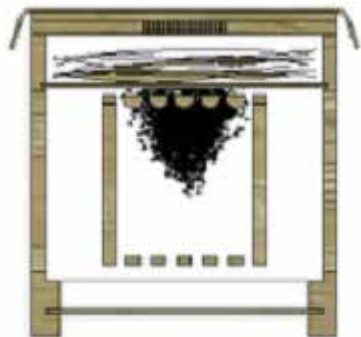
Editor's Note:

It is with great sadness to tell you that this will be Serge Labesque's last regular column in our newsletter. For many years he has faithfully put his wisdom down in timely words for all of us to learn the fine art of caring for our bees in a scientific, beneficial manner. I thank him for all the work he has done for us. His columns in back issues will be available for our reference on the website. We are so fortunate to have them especially because they are pertinent to our climate and so many articles in journals and books are not.

Growing a New Colony by Serge Labesque

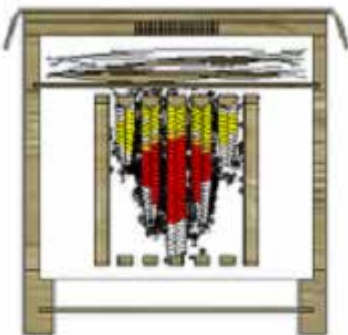
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In the example that is depicted here, the management of the colony is assumed to begin with a queenright swarm.



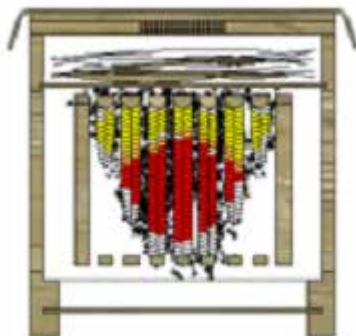
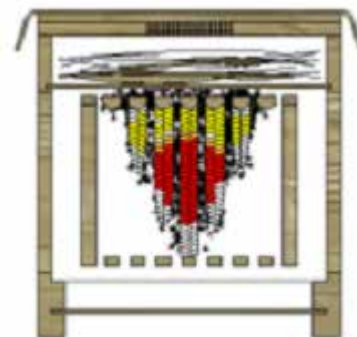
1. *The bees have been hived. Five deep Langstroth frames are shown in this illustration, as four or five such frames are usually sufficient in most instances. Likewise, six or seven medium frames would most often be adequate.*

2. *About one week later, a few combs have been started. The queen is laying eggs and a small brood nest is developing (shown in red). Some nectar is also being accumulated near the brood (shown in yellow). The adult bee population is decreasing gradually.*



3. *Three weeks after hiving the bees, the adult bee population has dropped to its minimum, but new bees are beginning to emerge from the growing brood nest. The construction of the new combs continues. This stage is equivalent to starting with a queenright nuc.*

4. *It's time to provide additional volume for the colony. The follower boards are spread apart to make room for two frames that are added alongside the brood nest, next to the follower boards.*



5. *Week 5-6: Comb is started in the outer frames that were recently added. The colony is gaining strength. Stores are being accumulated above and around the growing brood nest.*

South Cluster Members Form a Swarm Team

By Ettamarie Peterson

In late April Ettamarie got a call to collect a swarm off a fence post near Lakeville Road. The location happened to be where about 50 Tauzer Honey Bee Hives are kept. While she was waiting for the bees to hop onto her old combs she had a look around. Much to her surprise the nearby old oak tree was festooned with several very large swarms. She quickly called John McGinnis who told her to call Christine Kurtz to bring a large bee box from his barn because he was out of town.

Christine showed up with that box and more. In the meantime, the fence post bees took off freeing up Ettamarie's swarm box. Christine spied another swarm on a large old fallen oak. Before they could be captured they took off to parts unknown. That still left more bee swarms than the ladies had boxes for so they called Darlene McGinnis. She arrived with an empty double deep box.

By the time the ladies left 5 boxes were filled and another swarm was left for another south cluster couple to collect. These bees were all distributed to people on the needs bees list. Trevor Tauzer was notified and sent Ettamarie an email saying he was pleased the bees went to good homes but cautioned that it was important to notify landowners as well as the apiary owners. This is a point well taken. It would be good if the commercial beekeepers hung signs on the fences by their out apiaries with contact information about themselves and the landowners.



Ettamarie in a cloud of bees.



Christine teaming with Darlene to fill the double deep.



Darlene with the double deep full of bees!

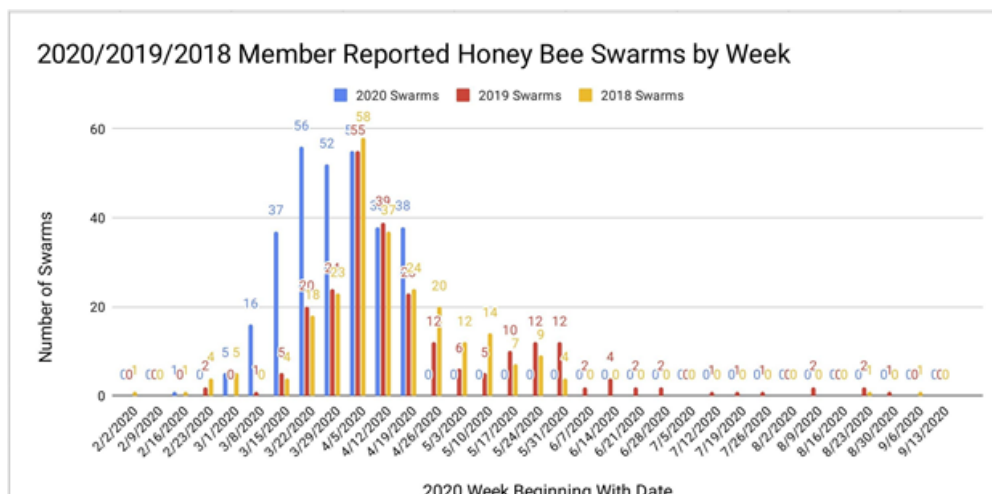
Cluster Activities 2020

Late April 2020 Bee Sharing Program Update

By Bruce Harris

The Bee Sharing program is in full swing. With the warm and dry February, the number of swarms increased sharply in March compared to the last two years. As you can see in the graph below, March 2020 was a huge month for swarms compared to the last 2 years. There were a total of 134 swarms reported county wide compared to 29 in the same month of 2018 and 30 in 2019.

As of April 25 (when we went to press) there were a total of 162 reported swarms in April. This compares to 149 for the full month of April in 2018 and 145 for the full month of April in 2019. So, April 2020 is ahead of the last two years. Moreover, the total number of reported swarms throughout Sonoma County this swarm season through April 25 stands at 297. That is significantly ahead of 183 for the 2018 swarm season through the end of April and 175 for the 2019 swarm season through the end of April. Please refer to the bar chart below for a plot of swarms by week.



Instead of listing the swarm counts by city (which you can find at this link) here is a summary of the location of swarms by cluster, based upon a sum of the number of swarms in the cities that comprise the cluster. Note that Penngrove is grouped with South as more members that live in Penngrove have chosen South cluster as their cluster. Similarly, Cotati is grouped with Central as more members that live in Cotati have chosen Central cluster as their cluster.

Cluster	Cities	Aggregate Swarms Reported thru 4/25/2020
Central	Cotati, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa	111
North	Cloverdale, Geyserville, Healdsburg, Windsor	39
South	Novato, Penngrove, Petaluma	92
East	Glen Ellen, Kenwood, Sonoma	26
West	Forestville, Graton, Sebastopol	29

As of April 25, a total of 6 splits were reported throughout Sonoma County. That compares to 29 through the same date last year. Folks, if you have splits to report you can do so at the Member Swarm Report page (see below).

SWARM REPORTING REMINDER - In response to requests for online reporting you can now report your swarms and splits via your laptop, tablet or phone at <https://www.sonomabees.org/member-swarm-report>. Going to that link will prompt you to sign-in to the website to file your report. Once you are logged into the [sonomabees.org](https://www.sonomabees.org) web site you can follow the number of swarms by city at <https://www.sonomabees.org/swarms-by-city> and the number of swarms per week at <https://www.sonomabees.org/swarms-by-week>. (NOTE: swarms-by-week currently does not display properly on an iPhone with Safari but it looks fine with Chrome or Firefox). On the [sonomabees.org](https://www.sonomabees.org) web site, you can find the swarms-by-city and swarms-by-week links as menu items under the SCBA MEMBERS-ONLY INFO menu.

If you aren't able to use the web then please email swarm@sonomabees.org and copy your bee share coordinator, eg: NorthBeeShare@sonomabees.org. Please put SWARM REPORT in the subject line and in the body of the email include the date, the location of the swarm, the size (eg: softball, football, basketball or beach ball!) or split size in frames, and the recipient's location (yourself or someone else). Finally, please let us know if you heard about the swarm from SCBA's public swarm list or through some other means.

If you have a swarm or split to share please reach out to your cluster's bee share coordinator. Thanks for supporting the Bee Share program by reporting your swarms and splits and through your generous sharing of those extra swarms and splits that you make available!

The Bee Share Team

Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

Eremurus

Foxtail lily, Desert Candle

Family: Liliaceae

A native of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Eremurus grow well here in the New World. The leaves are eaten in some countries.

They are actually more of a many-branched tuberous root rather than a true bulb. The roots are rather fragile, so you need to plant them where you want them to live forever. They insist on well-drained, good soil. They will rot if they sit in water, several sites recommended planting them on a bed of coarse sand or fine gravel. It is best to plant them on a cone of soil, with the roots splayed out on the sides of the cone.

You don't want to plant them in a place that you will be disturbing, so site them at the back of a garden bed where they can send up the lovely 3-8-foot-tall flower spires.

It needs regular water during the bloom time, but you can taper off afterwards.

Plant in full sun.

Eremurus is said to be deer and rodent resistant.

E. himalaicus: With a tall, 4-8-foot-tall white flower spike this beauty will light up a garden with its fragrant, bee-attracting flowers. It is actually an inflorescence made up of many small flowers, both male and female on the same spire.

E. cleopatra: Tall, 4-5-foot-tall orange flower spikes would blend beautifully with other Eremurus, Delphiniums or Pentsemons.

E. stenophyllus: Glowing yellow, 3-5 feet tall, would also look great mixed with the above-named flowers, or rising above some Salvias such as *S. nemorosa* or *S. farinacea*.

E. ruiter and shelford hybrids: They come in a range of colors from orange, yellow and white to soft pink. 3-4-foot-tall flower spikes. Plant them in a mass for back of the garden glowing beauty and long-blooming bee delight.



Eremurus, Desert Candle



Echinium in bloom, happy bees buzzing
Photo by Sibyl Bugarin

Alice Ford-Sala

GARDENING FOR BEES GROUP STILL GROWING STRONG

By Kitty Baker

“We’re working behind the scenes,” reported Maryle Brauer, Gardening for Bees (G4B) Coordinator, “still growing in home nurseries and the greenhouse, but are adjusting our volume to match our ability to share plants. While we’re staying home, some G4B leadership and core group continue to meet via Zoom.”



G4B plant table at a monthly SCBA meeting before meetings are cancelled – introducing G4B’s alternative plant-sharing solution: outdoor, no-contact, social-distancing Pop-Up Porch Sales happening early each month. Watch for details via Wild Apricot emails as well as postings on G4B and Cluster Facebook pages. – Photo from SCBA website

POP-UP PLANT SALES

Even plant sales continue with a creative method of getting our bee forage plants out to members. We call it Pop-Up plants sales and they’re happening on G4B members’ porches, side yards and driveways. Angelo Sacerdote and Chris Dicker hosted the first pop-ups in early

April. Here’s how they work: Members text the host, pick plants and leave cash or check made payable to SCBA in an envelope in a designated box near the plants (please BYO-Envelope if possible). Transactions are on the honor system, similar to a farm stand, to enable safe social distancing and no money changing hand-to-hand for health reasons. Suggested donations are: \$2 for 2-, 3- and 4-inch containers and \$4 for gallons. Six packs are \$5.

Prior to each sale, G4B will send a heads-up via Wild Apricot plus postings on G4B and Cluster Facebook pages, including the days and times for Pop-Up sales, addresses and phone numbers of host, as well as a list of the plants at each location. The plant supply will be first-come, first-served. G4B Group plans to offer porch plant sales once a month until general meetings resume. The next Pop-Up is tentatively planned for the first weekend of May. Please keep an eye out for notices.

How did the Pop-Ups do? The first round of outdoor, no-contact, socially-distancing sales resulted in over \$700 in donations. “It’s so exciting that this is working,” commented Kelly Corbett. “Staying safe and providing more food for the bees!” The Pop-Up porch sale is a pilot program. Locations have been chosen based on where the plants are being grown. We’re willing to offer similar Pop-Ups convenient to other locations if members would like to volunteer their porches or to help with labeling and transporting plants. If you’d like to host a Pop-Up in your area, please contact us at gardening@sonomabees.org.

G4Bs GARDENING TIPS

May is an excellent time to plant sunflowers seeds or seedlings from commercial nurseries. Maryle Brauer says she grows her sunflowers up to gallon-size pots before putting them in the ground to ensure a good start. A few G4B sunflower favorites include Japanese Silver-leaf, Chocolate branching, Autumn Beauty, Black Beauty, Giant Sunflower, and Tithonia.

May is also a great time to plant herbs. Herbs growing in the G4B greenhouse and scheduled to be ready for May-June planting include cilantro, Bronze fennel, oregano, thyme, chamomile, Thai and Italian basil.

And how about supporting our butterflies? Consider echiums. You'll be seeing swallowtails, painted ladies, buckeyes all around them. Delightful little winged angels! And don't forget milkweed. G4B plants in progress include Showy Davis milkweed – a beautiful big multi-headed flower that attracts both Monarch butterflies and all types of bees.



Beautiful bee forage photos by Sibyl Bugarin

From Our Education Coordinator Maggie Weaver

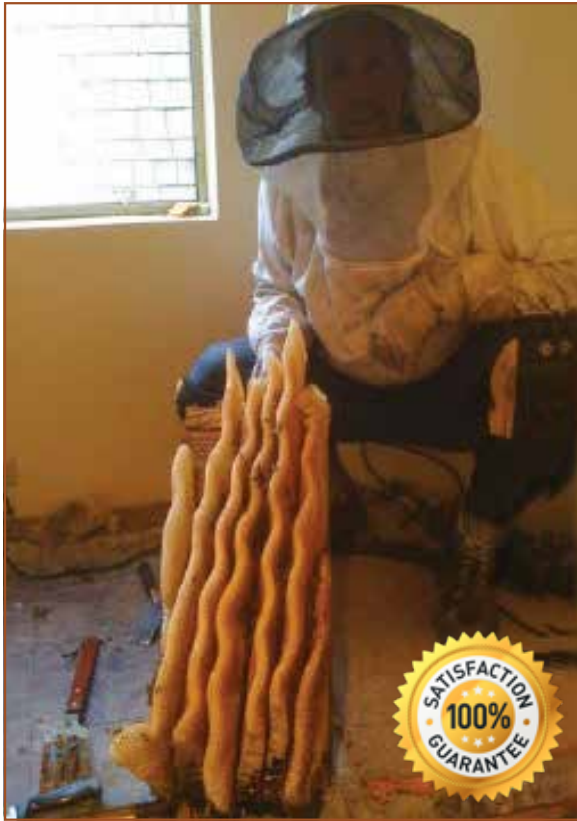
Hello fellow bee lovers. I hope this finds one and all safe and well as we shelter in place and endure these incredible times. The concern and uneasiness we are experiencing can be so very draining. I would like to encourage you to spend time watching the bees. Life goes on as usual for the honeybees, going about their business of collecting pollen and nectar for the greater good. They remain oblivious of the Covid-19 pandemic and can transport you away for a moment of normalcy. It has been well worth my time to partake in bee watching. It really can help.

When things calm down, the education program for the SCBA will be ready to begin the planning for the coming school year. Actually, technology will help us start the process sooner than that! The Sonoma Beekeepers Association has secured a ZOOM

license so we can meet face-to-face. It really does make all the difference! I've reached out to several teachers to see if we could do a school presentation or two before the end of the school year. Stay tuned for updates on that endeavor!

And when things begin again, we will need your help continuing to educate the people of Sonoma County in the value and importance of honeybees. There is a place, a task, for everyone to be involved. Drop me a message at education@sonomabees.org and let me know you would like to be a part of this most worthwhile program.

For now, stay healthy and enjoy what is left of the glorious spring weather. We'll all be back together soon!



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2020 Board Members and Other Helpful People

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Roster of SCBA Resources

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

Remember May's monthly meeting is online using Zoom. See details on Page 1 & 2!