

# The Monthly Extractor



Volume 46, Issue 5

May 2021

*This is our newsletter that reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping. Articles are contributed by SCBA members.*

## President's Message

Greetings Fellow Beeks,

What a strange spring it is! Where are all the swarms? It certainly has a lot of beekeepers scratching their heads.

"Everything Swarm" is going to be our topic at the General Meeting on May 10th when we will do some collective head scratching and, I hope, provide some insight into what is happening. Please make sure you join us.

I am really excited to see the Beginning and Seasoned beekeeper forums evolve, so to keep things interesting I am testing new formats.

On May 17th, the Beginning Beekeeper forum will have "cluster" breakout rooms. The intention is to create the ability to meet fellow cluster members and find bee buddies, as well as discuss issues and ask questions relative to your Cluster community.

The Seasoned Beekeeper Forum is taking a spin too! There will also be breakout rooms, but each room will be topic-specific. This will give folks a chance to look into some of the larger conceptual concerns for our pollinators in Sonoma County.

As folks continue to get vaccinated in Sonoma County, things are starting to open up, and the light at the end of the tunnel is looking brighter for get-togethers! I am hopeful that by July 17th you will be able to attend our SCBA Annual picnic at Bees N Blooms. It was sorely missed last year! Of course, I will be monitoring any new restrictions, but keep your fingers crossed and mark your calendars. July will be here in no-time!



Continued on Page 2

## April Calendar

**Monthly Meeting: Monday, May 10, 2021**

**Topic: Spring Beekeeping -- Swarms, Splits, and Packages**

Join us for an in-depth look at managing Swarms, Splits and Packages What's happening and what can you expect. Our panel of experts will discuss and answer questions.

Join us at 6pm as we launch into this very important "Ask the Experts" and a continued presentation by our SCBA Beekeepers.

**SCBA Zoom General Meeting**  
**Sign on at: 6:00 to 8:30pm**

<https://zoom.us/j/98464288005?pwd=MVBCRzND-V0p4Y1hmZjI2R1RUTVBoUT09>

**Meeting ID: 984 6428 8005**

**Passcode: 284022**

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I want to give a SCBA heartfelt goodbye to four of our amazing SCBA members.

Alice Ford-Sala is moving to McKinleyville. Alice has devoted countless hours to our gardening group both physically – propagating like mad – and writing the much-loved Bee Plants gardening column in the Extractor for years! Although she is going to continue to write her gardening column, her presence in Sonoma will be sorely missed.

Diana Holmes is moving to Kansas. Diana was the vision behind SCBA's 2nd place win at the 2019 Butter & Eggs Parade and oversaw the SCBA greenhouse project. We couldn't have done it without her and we will really miss her energy, creativity and spirit.

George and Maggie Herrmann are moving to the way east. A member of the gardening group and education team, Maggie has given so much to this association. From classroom teacher to community presenter to Cluster organizer and host to swarm catcher to member of the board, Maggie has been an integral part of this association and will be missed. George, currently our Treasurer (through the end of this year) is part of the foundation of our board. George's voice of reason helped shape a comprehensive and strong structure that will make it easier for each Treasurer that follows.

Diana, Alice, George and Maggie will always be a part of SCBA. You are what make this association GREAT! Thank you so much for your years of service and care.

*Kelli Cox*  
2021 SCBA President  
[president@sonomabees.org](mailto:president@sonomabees.org)

## SCBA Goes Literary in June

by Leslie Perlman, West Cluster Coordinator

Heads up, everyone! For our June general meeting (June 14), we are fortunate to have author Meredith May present about her book, *The Honey Bus: A Memoir of Loss, Courage and a Girl Saved by Bees*, as well as her experience as a Northern California beekeeper.

Here's an excerpt from the book's jacket cover:

"Meredith May recalls the first time a honeybee crawled on her arm. She was five years old, her parents had recently split and suddenly she found herself in the care of her grandfather, an eccentric beekeeper who made honey in a rusty old military bus in the yard. That first close encounter was at once terrifying and exhilarating for May, and in that moment, she discovered that everything she needed to know about life and family was right before her eyes, in the secret world of bees."

Goodreads says: "An extraordinary story of a girl, her grandfather and one of nature's most mysterious and beguiling creatures: the honeybee."

If you'd like to learn more about Meredith May, check out her website: <https://meredithamay.net>.

And if you'd like to read the book prior to our June 14 meeting, it can be found at your local public library or anywhere that sells books. It's also possible that someone in your cluster might have a copy for you to borrow! Enjoy!

*Editor's Note: I read this wonderful book a while ago and am eager to hear Meredith May.*

## Regional Cluster Coordinator News

### Cluster Activities 2021

Mark your Calendars for our planned May Zoom education gatherings. Zoom reminders will be sent via separate e-mails in May.

- Mon. May 10, General SCBA Meeting: Ask the Expert starts at 6:00pm
- Mon. May 17, 7:00pm: New Beekeepers Forum
- Mon. May 24, 7:00pm: Seasoned Beekeepers Forum

Cluster activities this past month were focused on assisting beekeepers with their hive equipment, as well as

setting up and monitoring new bees, swarms and splits. Watch your e-mail for information and invitations to your cluster-specific May events.

Swarm season has been slower than previous years, and in many cases, swarms are smaller. Bee Share Coordinators are doing their best to place the donated swarms and splits. If you are a swarm catcher, or a beekeeper with an extra swarm on your hands, please reach out to your Cluster Coordinator or Cluster Bee Share Coordinator. They will be able to place the bees with a suitable SCBA member within your cluster for sure!

*Rorie Sweeney*  
Regional Cluster Coordinator



## Central Cluster Hive Notes

The Central Cluster hosted an equipment workshop on Saturday April 10th led by Rorie Sweeney, Kelli Cox, and myself. We were able to have two groups that brought hive equipment and frames for scraping and torching. We even shared what wax moth larva looks like, as it was living on some of the used equipment. We had one group learning how to assemble new wired frames. The members that attended had a good time and learned a lot.

Have you put up your swarm traps yet? With the weather warming up the bees that are looking for a new place to call home will not wait for you. Bee proactive and get your swarm traps out now so you can hopefully catch a swarm.

Central Cluster is preparing to put together small groups for hive dives. This would be a good time to take advantage of looking into other hives and see how the bees are building comb and storing pollen and honey. Hopefully you will also see newly laid eggs, capped brood or a drone cell. Who knows you might even see a queen cell?

Kelli Cox mentioned she would like to get a hive painting party organized. Not only will we have fun painting our hives, but this would also be a good time to find a bee buddy, talk and ask questions to other beeks about what is going on or what's not going on in your hives.

Save the dates: Tune in on the 3rd and 4th Mondays of the month to participate in the beginner beekeeper and the seasoned beekeeper forums. This is an opportunity to ask your questions to experienced beekeepers and get their insight on your questions.

Our Central Cluster can always use help keeping our hive buzzing along. Send me an email at [centralcluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:centralcluster@sonomabees.org)

Bee well,

*Steve Heglin*  
Central Cluster Coordinator



## Bee Share Program Update Late April 2021

This swarm season continues to run behind 2020. Last year through April 21, there were 296 reported swarms and this year there have been 235 through the same date. Moreover, there are more reported cases this year of swarms that do not end up queen right.

For those of you who split a hive or that have a new swarm, we would like to remind you of resources in the members-only Bee Share section of the web site that detail care of a split and care of a swarm.

**SWARM REPORTING REMINDER** - Please report your splits and swarms 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.

If you aren't able to use the web then please email [swarm@sonomabees.org](mailto:swarm@sonomabees.org) and copy your cluster's bee share coordinator, e.g.: [NorthBeeShare@sonomabees.org](mailto:NorthBeeShare@sonomabees.org).

Please put **SWARM REPORT** in the subject line and in the body of the email include:

- how you heard about the swarm (first hand, friend, public swarm list, etc.)
- the swarm date
- the location of the swarm
- the size (e.g.: softball, football, basketball or beach ball!) or split size in frames
- the recipient's location (yourself or someone else)

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*

LINKS: Swarm Center:  
<https://www.sonomabees.org/swarm-center>

LINKS: Swarm Center: <https://www.sonomabees.org/swarm-center>

Care of a split: <https://www.sonomabees.org/care-of-a-split>

Care of a swarm: <https://www.sonomabees.org/care-of-a-swarm>

# Bee Plant of the Month

## May 2021

By Alice Ford-Sala

### Chamomile *Matricaria chamomilla* *Chamaemelum nobile*

Family: Asteraceae

Peter Rabbit's mother knew chamomile will calm an upset stomach (even those not caused by raiding a delicious garden).

This lovely herb has been used for centuries and in many cultures to soothe upset stomachs, calm anxiety, relieve muscle spasms and inflammation. It is so gentle that people can add some to a baby bottle to reduce colic (no honey for babies, of course). You can also bathe in it to ease skin irritations such as heat rash, diaper rash, etc. Some people may be allergic to chamomile, so if you have never used it before, try a small amount first.

*Matricaria chamomilla*, German chamomile, is an annual that can grow up to 2 feet tall. The sweetly scented daisy-white flowers are harvested for tea. The ferny foliage is also fragrant, with an apple-sweet aroma.

It is an annual, but readily re-seeds. German chamomile is easy to grow, only needing average water, full sun, little to no fertilizer and maybe a sift of compost once or twice a year. Too rich of soil will produce lots of foliage but not as many flowers. Did I mention bees love the blossoms?

*Chamaemelum nobile*, Roman chamomile, is a perennial. It is often used as a groundcover, as it only grows 6 to 12 inches high. It can be walked on but shouldn't be used in high-traffic areas. The foliage is more compact than that of German chamomile. Flowers are the same small white daisies but have a slightly different scent. In my research, some sources said it has a straw-like scent, and a couple said they are more bitter in tea.



Roman Chamomile

Both types are said to be very beneficial as companion plants. They are especially good when grown near brassicas such as cabbage, broccoli, kale. Perhaps the attractiveness of the flowers encourages beneficial insects to consume the nectar and then discover the aphids and cabbage worms? Just guessing.

So, let's enjoy the month of May with a plant that benefits our bees, our selves

*Alice Ford-Sala*



#### Note to my SCBA friends:

On May 12, Dennis and I are moving from our home of 34 years to a new place in McKinleyville, Humboldt County. Our son and his family live nearby, and we want to live close to them.

It's very hard to leave, and in particular to leave the amazingly creative, active, and enthusiastic bee community here. Finding like-minded but also uniquely independent and inquisitive people who love gardens and bees has been a joy that I will carry with me to my new community.

With COVID-19, we missed out on so many in-person experiences, but I was grateful for the effort to keep on meeting through Zoom.

I will continue to write my Bee Plants column for as long as people are interested in it.

Thanks for all your kindness and support over the years, I hope if you get a chance you can visit me in beautiful Humboldt County, starting over with a new garden!

May your bees and gardens thrive through this year and in years to come.

*Alice*

# Research Buzz!

By Gina Brown

I'm always thrilled to learn new things about bees and amazed at their clever evolutionary processes. We already know that honeybees are quite unique in the insect world: they are one of few truly social insects, the only known insect to produce food that humans consume, and they show unparalleled abilities in communicating and collective decision-making.

Put this one in your "fun facts" category! Most **Nectarivores**, (nectar-drinking creatures like butterflies, moths, bees, flies, hummingbirds, bats, etc.), develop a single-feeding strategy to consume nectar. They are typically classified as either "suckers" or "lappers", and this is largely determined by their mouth parts. For example, butterflies have a proboscis that is about 1.5 times their body length and they are well known "suckers." Honeybees are known to be "lappers" because of their hairy tongue (glossa). It turns out that honeybees can deploy both drinking strategies, and they are *flexible* to change drinking methods, primarily based on sugar concentration and viscosity.

Check out this interesting study:

**Sucking or lapping facultative feeding mechanisms in honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) Jiangkun Wei, Zixin Huo, Stanislav N. Gorb, Alejandro Rico-Guevara, Zhigang Wu and Jianing Wu ; Published in *Biology Letters* August 2020**

These researchers used a high-speed camera attached to a microscope and offered honeybees various concentrations of sucrose (10, 20, 30, 40, 50% by weight). They also artificially made the 10% sucrose thicker to test viscosity and measured intake rates.

The bottom line is that honey bees mostly use a sucking method with low sucrose concentrations (faster intake). They mostly use a lapping technique (slower intake) as sucrose concentration increased above 30%. The good news is that they are flexible enough to adjust their drinking method, based on the nectar resources available.

Check out this 41-second video of each drinking method!

This is the link to the video: [https://rs.figshare.com/articles/media/Microscopic\\_observation\\_Movie\\_S2\\_from\\_Sucking\\_or\\_lapping\\_facultative\\_feeding\\_mechanisms\\_in\\_honeybees\\_i\\_Apis\\_mellifera\\_i\\_/12739117?backTo=/collections/Supplementary\\_material\\_from\\_Sucking\\_or\\_lapping\\_facultative\\_feeding\\_mechanisms\\_in\\_honeybees\\_i\\_Apis\\_mellifera\\_i\\_/5077864](https://rs.figshare.com/articles/media/Microscopic_observation_Movie_S2_from_Sucking_or_lapping_facultative_feeding_mechanisms_in_honeybees_i_Apis_mellifera_i_/12739117?backTo=/collections/Supplementary_material_from_Sucking_or_lapping_facultative_feeding_mechanisms_in_honeybees_i_Apis_mellifera_i_/5077864)

Link to the article: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsbl.2020.0449>

If you'd like to suggest a topic of research to explore, you can email me: [boragelane@comcast.net](mailto:boragelane@comcast.net)

## Swarm Tips

by Ettamarie Peterson

When you are collecting swarms, remember you are an ambassador for honeybees. You can educate the public, who love to watch you fearlessly collect the thousands of bees hanging together. Explain to the onlookers that these bees have outgrown their former home and are searching out a new location to call home. Let them know it is important that the swarm is reported as soon as it is noticed because the scout bees (I tell the public that they are like real estate ladies) might choose a place that is not where they are welcome, such as a wall in someone's home. Let them know these bees have a queen and they left queen cells behind to make a new colony. People are fascinated by this information. I also explain that once I have determined the bees have their queen in my swarm box I can let them all settle in and will return at sundown to collect the box to go to a nice, new home where they will be appreciated. I leave my card with contact information for two reasons. One is that the bees may all decide to take off in spite of my lovely box and good intentions. The other is that often there is an after-swarm in the same location or next year another swarm arrives in there. This has paid off several times.



# Notes from the Ag Dept. Apiculture IS Agriculture

Greetings, Beeks!

As promised, I want to address the Ag Department's primary focus in pollinator protection: grower/applicator requirements. I have received questions from beekeepers because they see the equipment out there spraying in the vineyards and orchards, but they didn't get notification.

Many of the agricultural crop operations throughout the county keep a regular schedule of applying amendments, fertilizers, and pesticides. Some of the amendments are foliar applications, which are sprayed with the same kind of equipment that is used to spray pesticides. "Pesticides" includes fungicides, herbicides, miticides, insecticides, and anything else labeled to kill or control an organism. (Look at your household bleach.)

The only time the grower is required to run a bee-check and notify the beekeepers is when both parts of the requirement are triggered:

1. They will be applying a pesticide which has some wording on the label indicating harm to bees, AND
2. They will be applying to an area which has a blossoming plant. This includes weeds and hedgerows in the immediate application area.

When the grower DOES complete a bee-check, they are given a "yes" or "no" for hives within a mile of where they will spray. And, if "yes", they are given the contact information that the beekeeper entered in the BeeWhere website.

I receive daily updates of what activities have been conducted in BeeWhere: registrations, colony number changes, bee-checks, etc. When the beekeeper selects "anonymous email" for notification, I also receive confirmation that the email was sent from the grower to the beekeeper. (I don't get a copy of the actual message.)

If you suspect pesticide poisoning at your hives, please contact me so that I can collect samples to send to the lab for analysis. These services are conducted at no additional charge to beekeepers who are current in their registration.

If you have not already done so, please make sure your registration is current. It should be renewed yearly. If Sonoma County is your "home county", then your \$10 registration fee (regardless of number of hives) can be phoned in at (707) 565-2371 or mailed to:

Sonoma County Department of Agriculture  
133 Aviation Blvd, Suite 110  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Please include your registration number. Once the payment is processed, I will email your receipt and update your BeeWhere account, showing current payment status. Feel free to contact me with any questions:

*Beverly Hammond*

[Beverly.hammond@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Beverly.hammond@sonoma-county.org)  
Sonoma County Agricultural Inspector III  
(707) 565-2371



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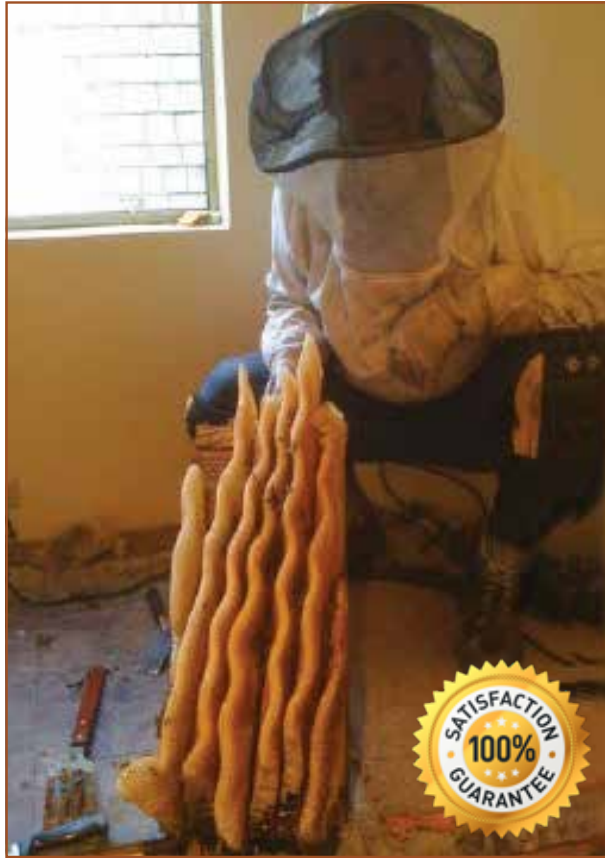


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# 2021 Board Members and Other Helpful People

Click Here  
for the Up-to-Date  
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](http://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; meet new members; bring your own cup and fill it with tea or coffee and have some goodies.

7 pm – Presentation 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: This month's  
meeting is a ZOOM Meeting  
(see page 1 for details!)**

## 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!