

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 46, Issue 6

June 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,

Another month has buzzed by and while there is a lot going on in our association, it continues to be a head scratching time for our beekeepers. What is going on? Why so few swarms, and the questions go on.

Please make sure you're reaching out to your cluster beeks, perhaps you're starting to have small in person hive dives; use Facebook to ask questions and support each other. There are so many wonderful resources in our association. Peruse the members-only web section and look at the many videos.

Both Beginner and Seasoned Beekeeper forums were well attended and are starting to get traction. Discussions from feeding to swarming to hive density and queen rearing; simple and more complex topics and questions are being addressed. If you haven't had a chance to attend, please do, you won't be disappointed and what better way than to meet some of the other beekeepers in our association.

Now that we are starting to move away from the restrictions of Covid, it's time to start thinking about how to resume our General Meetings. There are, as expected, two camps. Some folks are very happy with continuing our Zoom meetings and others are eager to get back to in-person meetings. I understand both sides and have been discussing with different members the idea of a mixture of both. There are benefits to Zoom meetings: The top of the list - it allows us to have international as well as national

presenters without the cost of bringing them to us. It also enables so many more members to attend the General Meeting, especially those who are unable to drive at night. The argument for in-person General Meetings is being able to connect with each other,



Continued on Page 2

June Calendar

Monthly Meeting: Monday, June 14, 2021

Speaker: Meredith May

Join us at 6pm as we launch into this very important "Ask the Experts" and author **Meredith May** presents 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.

SCBA Zoom General Meeting

Sign on at: 6:00 to 8:30pm

<https://zoom.us/j/97556104366?pwd=dTIGOGtKb-FlyV0tnVjBYeU9nVDVpZz09>

Meeting ID: 975 5610 4366

Passcode: 878133

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something many of us really miss and have been looking forward to. Also, some of our members don't find Zoom as easy as others, so they prefer the once-a-month in-person connection.

I'm thinking it should be a mix of both. Zoom has allowed us to interact in so many ways we couldn't before, and I'd like to continue the Zoom forums. I also think we could Zoom the all-cluster educational meetings. The General Meetings could perhaps be in person (at the 4-H Building) either quarterly or alternating months and include more local presentations and topics: The Zoom General Meetings could have a more global perspective. I would love to get feedback so please email me with any constructive comments to consider.

Another exciting piece of SCBA info is we hired a full-time Volunteer Coordinator. Many of you have had the opportunity to meet Shannon Carr (either at the General Meeting or forums). Shannon comes to us with a wealth of experience working with volunteers. She has taken off running and is eager to meet everyone. Shannon is organizing the SCBA annual picnic and is going to be looking for volunteers to help with a few things on the day. Please reach out to her (volunteercoordinator@sonomabees.org) if you are interested in getting on her volunteer list(s).

Also look for the picnic announcement and mark your calendars!

Until then, Bee well,

Kelli Cox
2021 SCBA President
president@sonomabees.org

PS An Irish Beekeeper's Lament

I met Chris Slade on the SCBA tour of Ireland a few years back. Take a look at his May 20 blog post: World Bee Day Worst Bee Year. It is a very interesting report on bees in Ireland. <https://chrissladesbeeblog.wordpress.com/2021/05/20/world-bee-day-worst-bee-year/>

SCBA Annual Summer Picnic (we've made some great changes)!

Join us for our annual Summer Picnic and enjoy good company with friends we have not seen in more than a year!

Yard games, pasta dinner, a gorgeous sunset, and meet me, your new Volunteer Coordinator – Shannon Carr.

Location: Bees and Blooms – 3383 Petaluma Hill Rd, Santa Rosa (thank you Susan and Geoff!)

Date/Time: Saturday July 17, 4pm to Sunset

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.

Food: we are providing pasta dinner from Pasta King, Salad, Desert, and nonalcoholic beverages. What you can bring: Your own utensils (help us reduce waste by bringing your own plates, glasses and silverware), alcoholic beverages (BYO B&W)

Yard Games: We have a giant Jenga and cornhole games, but if you have a favorite yard game you want to share, bring it along!

Want to help? We could use volunteers to help with set up, serving dinner, and clean up. If you would like to help you can sign up with me via email: volunteercoordinator@sonomabees.org.

RSVP – via the event page in the members only section of our website or send an email to volunteercoordinator@sonomabees.org or go to our website members only section <https://sonomabees.org/event-4331056> to let me know if you can make it and how many you are bringing by June 30 so we can plan food accordingly! All family members are welcome!

Also let me know if you are bringing any activities so I can make space in the Labyrinth. Looking forward to meeting you and having a great evening! – Shannon Carr

Regional Cluster Coordinator News

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

- Mon. June 14, General SCBA Meeting: Ask the Experts starts at 6:00pm
- Mon. June 21, 7:00pm: New Beekeepers Forum
- Mon. June 28, 7:00pm: Seasoned Beekeepers Forum

Bee Share Coordinators are doing their best to place the donated swarms/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!

West Cluster Update

West Cluster was very excited to resume in-person bee cafés in May. In order to allow the most people to participate, we repeated our equipment café twice.

We had presentations by Gina Brown and John McGinnis. John shared his double-deep hive components and a new contraption he's making to ward off robbing. Gina shared her double medium equipment and insulation materials.

Thanks to Beekind for generously lending us various hive components to round out the display of hive options.

It was a real treat to be together!

Leslie Perlman
West Cluster coordinator

Central Cluster Hive Notes

Roger Simpson and a few other Central Cluster members have been busy collecting and donating swarms to Central Cluster members. If you have not received a swarm yet, there is still a little time before swarm season is over. About a month ago I made a split from one of my hives. The split is now in its own hive and doing well. It was the first split I did on my own. I learned how to do this by being on our beginner and experienced beekeeping Zoom meetings. A beekeeper, new or experienced, can learn something at our Zoom meetings. Besides learning it is possible to help answer a question, explain what might be going on in a hive, or what should you be looking for in your hive this time of the year.

Until next month Bee well,

Steve Heglin
Central Cluster Coordinator

Notes from the Ag Dept. Apiculture IS Agriculture

Greetings, Beeks!

Recent questions from property owners and beekeepers have led to this month's topic: HIVE MARKINGS.

According to regulations (California Food and Agriculture Code 29046 a1), hives that are not on the owner's property are to be marked with the name and contact information of the owner. If there are a number of hives placed on a property, the beekeeper can use a visible sign near the apiary or stencil the information on the outside of the hives.

Even though the property owner has given permission to place the hives there, and it's not likely that anyone will come across them, there still needs to be some identification of the responsible party for those hives. To put it very simply, "If your name is not on the deed/lease to the property, then your name should be on or near your hives."

In addition, if your hives are on property that you do not own or lease, your hives must be registered using the BeeWhereCalifornia.com website. When you place a pin on the map for your hive locations, the system is able to measure the distance for pesticide applicators who are running a Bee Check. Of course, we prefer you register the hives on your own property as well so that you can receive notice from pesticide applicators in your area.

Regulations require the applicator to notify registered beekeepers who have hives within one mile of the application site, if the applicator will be using a product labeled as "toxic to bees" on a blossoming plant. This includes vineyard/orchard operators, landscapers, parks, golf courses, and other commercial applicators who may be applying such pesticides.

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 in January. If Sonoma County is your "home county", then your \$10 registration fee (regardless of number of hives) and registration number 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

Once the payment is processed, I will email your registration certificate and receipt, and update your Bee-Where account, showing current payment status. Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Beverly Hammond
Beverly.hammond@sonoma-county.org
Sonoma County Agricultural Inspector III
(707) 565-2371

Bee Plant of the Month

June 2021

By Alice Ford-Sala

Mullein Verbascum

Family Scrophulariaceae (Figwort)

(Note: I just moved and can't find my list of plants that I was going to write about this year – despite having put it in an obviously easy place to find. So, I am repeating a column that I wrote three years ago. I think it is still interesting, and it fits with the theme for this year, which is healing plants for bees, humans and the land).

You have likely seen this common plant in woodlands, roadside ditches or along hiking paths. She likes to wander, setting seeds liberally along the way. Give her nice rich soil and plenty of water, and you will have a striking back of the border glamour queen. But she will thrive in drier and leaner soil and is considered a drought-tolerant plant.

The soft grey-green leaves form a charming rosette in early spring. Then they grow longer and taller until a fuzzy



stalk rises from the center of the plant. The flower stalks often rise up to five feet tall, or even taller! The leaves can spread up to three or four feet wide.

Depending on the variety, the flowers can be yellow (most common), white, pink or even purple. The flowers open from the bottom of the stalk to the top, attracting bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. Leave the seeds on for birds to munch on or cut the spent stalks for re-bloom. Native bees might use the dried stalks for nesting, so leave the last ones of the season on for the winter.

Mullein is said to be deer-resistant.

Some particularly attractive varieties are:

- *V. bombyciferum* 'Arctic Summer' has very fuzzy white down on the flower spike, which contrasts nicely with the yellow flowers as they emerge.
- *V. chaixii* 'Wedding Candles' sends up several spires of white flowers with purple stamens and orange anthers.
- *V. nigrum* 'Dark Mullein' is also super attractive, with yellow flowers contrasting with purple stamens.

Medicinally, Mullein has been used for centuries to treat a variety of conditions. Leaves are used for glandular health, lymphatic cleansing, sore throats and coughs, urinary tract issues. Flowers are harvested and used for earache, and pain relief. The leaves or flowers can be made into tinctures, teas, oils (the common way to treat earaches) or salves. Leaves are made into a poultice to treat bruising and swelling of sprains or even mastitis.

Again, these medicinal uses are for information only, not recommendations.



Alice Ford-Sala



Can you spot the queen? This one is a beauty. She is laying a beautiful brood pattern in Crista Coccia's hive.

-- Photo by Ettamarie Peterson



Research Buzz!

By Gina Brown

Something Completely New in the Commercial Beekeeping Industry

I'm not a commercial beekeeper and have no aspirations of managing more than a dozen or so colonies. I do, however, like to stay current on commercial beekeeping research and trends. It is safe to say that most honeybee research dollars are aimed at commercial beekeeping. Not surprising, because the California almond market alone is valued at over \$6 billion and uses more than 2 million bee colonies for annual pollination¹. When you consider there are more than 30 crops in which growers rent bee colonies for pollination, it is easy to conclude that much of commercial beekeeping is big business and is attached at the hip of mono-agricultural practices².

So, what is new in the almond market, and beyond? An "innovation" for commercial beekeeping that, if I am being honest, I find truly horrifying.

Bee Vectoring Technologies, Inc (BVT) is partnering with the California Almond Board to begin using bees to spread a biological fungicide. So, let's break this down.

BVT has a proprietary fungicide, *Clonostachys rosea* CR7, which is very effective at suppressing *Monilinia*, the pathogen that causes brown rot blossom blight. In addition to almonds, this type of brown rot blossom blight affects stone fruits, apples, and berries, which rely on honeybee pollination. Instead of wide-spread spraying of the fungicide on the crop, they use the bees to spread the fungicide directly to the blossoms as they forage. The hives are modified with a one way out/one way in mechanism. As bees leave the hive, they are forced to walk through a tray of powder containing the fungicide. This system is already in use with strawberries, blueberries, sunflowers, apples, tomatoes and canola. There are 16 other crop uses in development. They have a similar delivery system using bumblebees and they have a certified organic formula available.

Even though I might be sickened at the thought of having bees walk through chemicals, trying to keep an open mind, I can see some potential benefits from a more targeted application. There is less water use to spray the chemical, less cost of equipment, less harm to farm workers, etc. The bottom line for me is how does this impact the overall health of the honey bee (or bumblebee)?

Here is BVT's perspective, taken directly from its website: "How does Vectorite with CR-7 affect bees?"

BVT has spent several years testing the bee vectoring of CR-7 on different crops and in different regions throughout North America and other parts of the world. We have done extensive work with honey bees and replicated trials with independent researchers. We have observed no negative effects on bee health or behavior in our trials, and none have been reported by bee keepers using the system. In addition, the United States regulatory approval process through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for registration of Vectorite with CR-7 in 2019 required bee

safety to be taken into account and included acute and chronic feeding studies on bees. For more information on bee health and safety, visit www.VectoriteBVT.com/resources.3"

I visited the BVT resource page and although I found five published articles regarding the effectiveness of its fungicide, there were, in fact, no published scientific articles on the impact to the health of the bees. Without that, I find this "innovation" in commercial beekeeping suspect at best. What do you think?

Sources:

1. Almond Board of California Almond Almanac
2. CSBA Pollination Survey, Caron et al., and Rucker et al., 2012
3. BVT website: <https://www.beevt.com/>

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

The Wild Hive Project

by GINA BROWN

Over the past several years, I have been populating a "map" of various bee colony locations in Sonoma County. I have 6 or 7 locations where I can keep bees and I was curious about other hives that might be near my apiaries. So I started finding hives and saving locations on a map. This is, of course, is only a partial list, mostly in west county. Last spring, I found unique "locations" for 237 backyard, 26 commercial, and 18 wild honeybee sites. Because most of the backyard sites had just a few hives, and the commercial sites had at 80 -150 hives and all of the wild sites had only 1 hive, I wanted to even the odds for the wild colonies.

I had already been experimenting with designing and building hives for wild bee colonies. After bees successfully over-wintered in a few of my designs, and successfully swarmed the following spring, I decided to expand my project. I received some grant funding to get started and the wild hive project was born!

The aim of this project is to increase the wild honeybee population in Sonoma County. I build simple, affordable nest cavities for honey bees, made from natural, non-toxic material. The hive design is in step with the wild hive cavities described in *The Lives of Bees. The Untold Story of the Honey Bee in the Wild*, by Thomas Seeley. These nests are placed on farms that practice no-spray, organic, and regenerative farming practices. It is a triple win: the bees gain a suitable low-chemical or chemical-free habitat, the growers receive a free hive and pollination service, and the community reaps the benefit of healthy, locally grown produce!

To keep the project going after the grant runs dry, I have a “host one-give one” program for interested beekeepers and the general public. A one-time, \$100 hosting fee covers the cost of materials for 2 hives: one to host on your chemical-free property and one to support a great farmer in Sonoma County!

This swarm season, I was able to install 18 new wild hives in Sonoma County. Currently, 10 of the 18 hives – or 55% -- are occupied. Now I know of 36 locations where there are, or have been, wild honeybee colonies. Next swarm season, my aim is to place an additional 20 to 30 hives throughout the county. If you are interested in a wild hive for next year, or want more information, please visit my website: <https://thewildhiveproject.org/>

The modified swarm trap inside cavity (see photo to right) is about 11 gallons, with wax and propolis to fill holes. Also has a screen to encourage more propolis. That cavity is fully wrapped top, bottom and sides with wool or cotton fiber insulation. Entrance has a stopper between cavities so it can't fall out or push in. Built-in straps top, back, and sides and caulked between outside pots. Should last for years!



Modified swarm trap



Bees love Nigella (aka Love in a Mist)
Photo taken May 26, 2021 by Ettamarie Peterson



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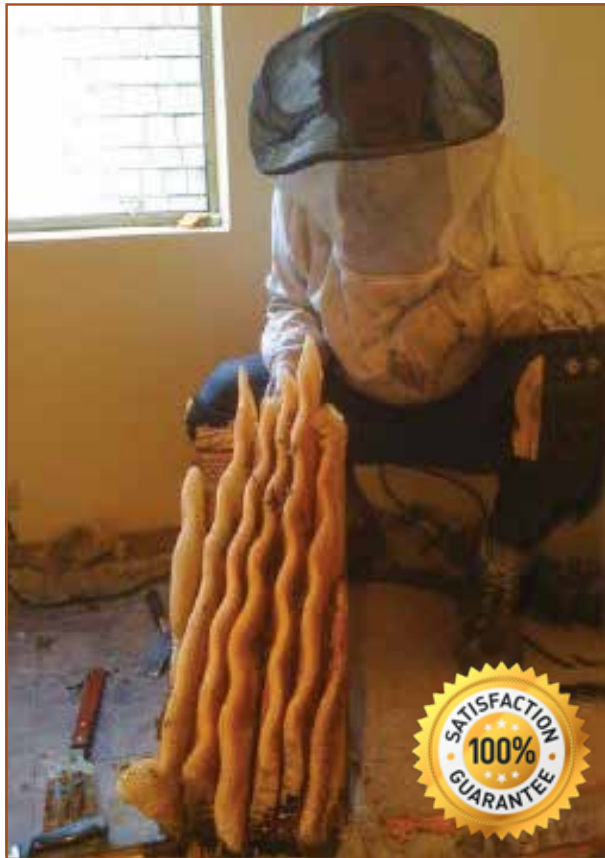


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for the Up-to-Date
Roster of SCBA Resources

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, 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!