

The Monthly Extractor

Volume 50, Issue 2

February 2024

President's Message

Happy February Friends!

Winter has set in, bringing with it lots of rain and cold weather. It's a great time to stay inside and keep warm, just like the bees.

And speaking of staying warm, I had the pleasure of visiting a few of the Cluster Cafés in January. It was



lovely to see everyone gathered together in cozy spots, supporting each other and expanding their knowledge about how to take care of bees. Thank you all for getting out to your Cluster Café despite the rain. Attendance was great, especially in the North and Central Clusters.

In other news, we are starting a new column in the newsletter. Each month Andy Baxter, our diligent Secretary, will share a summary of our latest Board Meeting. Hopefully, this will give everyone a glimpse into what goes on during our board meetings, as well as keep you informed about the decisions made and plans for the future.

I am also thrilled to share that we recently held our first planning meeting for the upcoming Pollinator Brunch Fundraiser. As you know, this successful event aims to raise awareness about the importance of our pollinators and the vital role they play in our ecosystem. Stay tuned for more about this May 19th event and how you can help.

It's February already and this means that springtime is quickly approaching. Are you ready for the beginning of swarm season? Soon the bees will be taking flight to start new colonies. The Swarm Rescuers who attended the January 27th Swarm Meeting will be on the lookout. If you want to be on the Needs Bees list, make sure you fill out our annual survey, which hits your email on February 2nd. It's the only



way to get on that list.

February is also the perfect time to continue your beekeeping and gardening education. Make sure you attend all the Cluster Cafés, Workshops, and General Meetings that SCBA has to offer. There is also

a huge amount of information, past newsletters, and videos available to you in our members-only section of the SCBA website. And don't forget the SCBA library, which holds hundreds of books and videos.

I am here to tell you, if you want to know about how to take care of bees, you have joined the right organization! As always, if you have anything you would like to ask, talk about, suggest, or if you want to know how to volunteer, please write to me at president@sonomabees.org. I would love to hear from you!

Stay safe out there and I will see you on Zoom for the February General Meeting!

Your President,
Carol Ellis

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The SCBA newsletter reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.

SCBA FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

Date: February 12, 2024; 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm
Location: ZOOM Meeting ID: 811 2374 2702
Passcode: SCBA

We will start off with some Beekeeping and Tending Q&A, Newsletter Trivia, and Association announcements. At 7 pm we will welcome our speakers, Lena Freij and Dan Raichel from Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Lena Freij is an Attorney on NRDC's Nature Team who works to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides that are harmful to pollinators. Dan Raichel is the Director of NRDC's Pollinators and Pesticides Initiative, where he focuses on protecting our nation's bee populations from the ever-growing threats to their health and existence—particularly the use of bee-toxic pesticides. Lena and Dan will present on NRDC's work around the many problems that neonicotinoids ("neonics") cause for bees, other pollinators, wildlife, and human health.

You can read more about NRDC and the work they are doing in Ann Gallagher White's) article, clicking on the [General Meeting event page](#), or going to [NRDC's Website](#).

SCBA FEBRUARY CALENDAR

The SCBA online calendar is updated frequently. Check it out to see current events.

- Feb 3 – [East Cluster Cafe](#)
- Feb 10 – [G4Bs How to Tend your Winter Garden](#)
- Feb 10 – [SCBA New Member Social](#)
- Feb 10 – [West Cluster Frame Making Clinic](#)
- Feb 11 – [SCBA North Cluster Cafe](#)
- Feb 12 – [SCBA February General Meeting](#)
- Feb 17 – [Redwood Empire Scion Exchange](#)
- Feb 17 – [Central Cluster Cafe](#)
- Feb 17 – [South Cluster Cafe](#)
- Feb 19 – [Beekeepers Zoom Forum](#)

Board Update January 2024

*By Andy Baxter
SCBA Secretary*

January 4th at 6.30pm marked the first board meeting of the New Year and the first in-person meeting with our new board members.



We were joined via Zoom by Liz Savage (Orange County Beekeeping Association president) for the first half hour to discuss potentially increasing state-wide collaboration between hobbyist beekeepers (1 to 50 hives) and sideline beekeepers (those who have other jobs but maintain between 51 and 500 hives). Expect there to be more on this topic over the coming months.

Updates were given by each of the board members. Key topics for discussion included:

Bylaws. Updated bylaws will be published soon once a few compliance issues have been addressed.

Beekeeping best practices. Working to update these on the website.

Swarm rescue. New protocols reviewed ahead of rollout to members.

Insurance. Current insurers are stopping coverage for beekeeping organizations. Increasingly it's a challenge to find coverage.

30th anniversary. This is an important year for the SCBA, and the board had a wide-ranging discussion on how best to celebrate this milestone.

Annual survey. Discussion of format, questions, and timeline.

SCBA Membership: What Do You Get for Your Membership Dues?

For most of our members, Membership Dues are due in January. This is because, in the past, all memberships were for the calendar year. Now our annual renewals begin on the month that the member joined. Membership dues and benefits have evolved over the years based on both the needs of the association and the needs of the members.

Basic Dues are \$100.

There are members who sometimes like to donate a little extra to help contribute to the programs we offer to our community. Membership levels are available to make it easier for you to add additional donations to your dues, in \$50 increments.

Because some members have requested the ability to have their membership renew automatically, we have added this service as an option. If you would like to have your membership automatically renew each year, or if you would like to opt out of the automatic renewals, please reach out to Shannon at ProgramDirector@sonomabees.org

Also, please remember, we never turn away members who are unable to join, due to financial hardship, resulting in the inability to afford the \$100 dues. We have scholarship programs available for student and community members in order to help with the cost of membership. If you would like to enquire about these programs, please reach out to Shannon at ProgramDirector@sonomabees.org

How do your membership dues benefit you and our community?

Access to educational opportunities

- Monthly General Meetings with key speakers
- Monthly Cluster Cafés
- Beekeeping Workshops and Hive Dives
- Gardening for Bees Propagation Workshops
- Pollinator plants, available by donation, propagated by G4Bs

Member-Only Events

- Spring Fling: a fun day filled with social activities and educational opportunities
- Annual Holiday Party: a fun evening to celebrate the holidays, our members, and another successful year

Networking opportunities

- Meet fellow beekeepers and bee-tenders to help you in your journey as a beekeeper/tender
- Access to private Facebook groups
- Personal growth and leadership opportunities from cluster level to board level.

Community Education

- Education about the importance of honey bees, native bees, and pollinators, as well as outreach opportunities at community events
- School Education Programs
- Pollinator Habitat Creation Programs for schools, members, and local communities

Being a member of, and supporting, Sonoma County Beekeeper's Association, not only serves members as beekeepers/bee-tenders but helps our community and our native pollinators as well.

SCBA Name Badges Order Now!

You can now order your SCBA name badge, and make payment, on the SCBA website. Orders are placed with our supplier every few months, on the 1st, depending upon reaching a minimum number of requests.

In addition to a name badge, you can order multiple "swing tags" listing your cluster, position, or fun tag

lines such as "Pollinator Advocate" or "Queen Bee."

Click [Order Your Name Badge](#) to order your SCBA name badge today. If you have any questions email badges@sonomabees.org.



BEE TALK!

Adding Voices and Perspectives to Beekeeping Education

By Kelli Cox, Your 1st VP of Bees

Greetings Pollinator Enthusiasts.

I'm taking a different approach to writing this article than has been done in the past. For the last two years Mohammed Ibrahim has provided you with all the information to manage your hive (monthly), just as Serge Labesque did for many previous years.



All this wonderful, helpful, and important knowledge can be found in our past issues of *The Extractor* as well as at your Cluster cafes.

These are the can-do's, the basics, Beekeeping 101.

What about the anomalies, our changing weather, lack of forage, hive density? How are those things affecting your apiaries? Are you changing your practices, thinking differently?

Last year was different, things shifted, our conversations were different, we're changing with the times. We're evolving and that is exciting! One of the things I noticed more than ever was the openness and acceptance of our membership. Folks are sharing stories, asking questions without judgment, becoming more interested in others' practices rather than the "my way or the highway" approach. There was tremendous support and appreciation of each other. This is what builds a strong community and it was palpable.

How are we going to move forward supporting each other, the honey bees, and other pollinators?

Starting in March I'm going to interview two members from opposing geographical Clusters to find out what's happening in their clusters. This might give us a better sense of what to be looking for while reading the "to do" lists from the Extractors.

This month, however, for most of you, it is still too cold and wet to go into your hives! Bee patient! Don't do it! Resist! I know the warm days are going to test your resilience. I believe in you. Bee Strong!

Rather, get a chair, place it in front of your hive and observe. Look for pollen, what color is it? Can you hear the hum in the hive? Is your equipment ready? Torch, smoker material? (I have a lot of horse poop I'm happy to share.) Do you have enough frames? How about a checklist of supplies, a notebook? It's never too early or late to start taking notes. Help another beekeeper clean their equipment or set up their hives. Use this time to prepare, brush up on some beekeeping 101 and please go to your Cluster cafes.

Spring will be here in no time, and you know what that means ... SWARMS!

The SCBA Swarm Rescuers list (the list on the SCBA website that the public uses to call a swarm rescuer) and the Needs Bees list (the list the SCBA Bee Share coordinators use to help provide swarms to our members) will be updated and current by mid-February. I'm looking forward to a very buzzy swarm season.

February's Hive To-Do List

By Serge Labesque

- Inspect the exterior of the hives:
 - Verify that hive tops are still properly set and secured and that the hive entrances remain clear.
 - Observe the landing boards and the ground in front of the hives.
 - On nice days, observe the flight paths and the bee activity. Adjust the entrance reducers, if needed, to facilitate the forager traffic.
 - Make sure the upper ventilation slots are open to prevent the accumulation of metabolic moisture inside the hives.
- Examine the debris on the monitoring trays.
- Early in the month, on a sunny, windless day, perform cursory inspections of only the upper part of the hives.
- Provide additional hive volume: Place supers with a few frames of empty drawn comb and follower boards. Add frames alongside the clusters.
- Take care of or dispose appropriately of any equipment that held colonies that failed as warranted.
- Build and repair beekeeping equipment.
- Plan for spring by setting up swarm traps and planting bee forage.

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Natural Resources Defense Council Battling Neonics for Pollinator Health

By Ann Gallagher White, 2nd VP

As the days again grow longer, and the rain falls, I am grateful it's here and plentiful, thinking about what to plant, when to plant it, where to plant it and how to get it to grow, just like every winter. Rose pruning, tree pruning, seed spreading, transplanting, scouring catalogs (making sure the seeds are open pollinated and untreated), I am also learning to tend the garden without harming the soil, pollinators, and the planet. The reciprocity of all small acts of care in my garden is my way to combat ongoing global/planetary health challenges knowing that what I do matters.



At our February 12 general meeting, SCBA proudly offers our members an opportunity to feel inspired by two people who have chosen to take on big businesses and to push our regulators and legislators to save pollinators in their roles at Natural Resources Defense Council. Lena Freij is an attorney with NRDC's Nature Team and Dan Raichel, the Director of Pollinator and Pesticides Initiative. Together, they will present on NRDC's work around the many problems that neonicotinoids ("neonics") cause for bees, other pollinators, wildlife, and human health.

Lena and Dan's presentation will include context about the harms of neonics and successful international responses to remedy those harms. They will then discuss the federal government's regulatory failures regarding neonics and legal loopholes that affect states, including California.

You may already know that neonics are deadly to pollinator health and that they have been liberally used in agriculture in the United States. What you may not know is that this class of pesticides is [deadly to all species](#) that eat insects, including birds, fish, deer, and humans. NRDC is at the forefront of ongoing pesticide battles to fight the use of neonics.

Application of neonics, a class of pesticides known to kill insects and act as an insecticide, may occur from **planting coated seeds, spraying or, with systemic treatments of insecticides** alone or with fertilizer. In a [blog post](#), Xerces Society says: "Neonics are not only sprayed, but are often pre-coated on crop seeds, resulting in widespread insecticide applications where treatment may not be needed. However, these seeds are completely unregulated by DPR (Department of Pesticide Regulation) due to a regulatory loophole. Working with NRDC and other partners, we (Xerces) filed a petition to ask DPR to close that loophole and regulate pesticide-treated seeds in California" so that "DPR will propose a plan that ensures pollinators and other invertebrates the protection they deserve from pesticide-treated crop seeds."

Spraying: Farmers will spray (widespread) on agricultural crops to kill insects. Systemic application: A treatment of commonly sold pesticides (you can get it at most garden centers) such as [All-In-One Rose and Flower Care](#) will kill aphids, whiteflies and all pollinators indiscriminately.

The presentation will close with a discussion of state-level action on neonics, followed by an opportunity for questions. Please join us as we celebrate their successes and the ongoing challenges for what is to come. If you would like to reach out, please send an email to 2ndVP@SonomaBees.org and I look forward to seeing you all at the general meeting on Zoom on February 12.

GARDENING FOR BEES

What Is Happening In the Winter Garden?

By Kim Bergstrom, Gardening Coordinator

As I write this article, I am reflecting on our fairly mild winter with a good amount of intermittent rain and some sunshine. The perfect conditions for working on my winter garden. It is a great time to dig up volunteers and pot them up or replant them in other areas as well as prune and divide some of my plants that seem to be growing out of control. In February, G4B's is offering the second workshop on "How to tend your Winter Garden," where you will learn all of the above. We will be holding this again in Ellen Sherron's Garden in Sebastopol, a treasure trove of pollinator plants. As Ellen says: most of the work re-

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Winter Garden, Continued from prior page

quired to keep pollinator gardens healthy, attractive, and productive is winter maintenance, i.e., cutting back, dividing/moving excess plants, and topdressing with compost. These workshops have been a lot of fun and people have learned a lot and taken home plants to fill their own gardens. We hope to have more workshops beyond February if you miss this one.

We have a lot of other great gardening events planned both inside your clusters and more at the association level. In February, we will be showing you how to separate and pot up volunteer plants from your garden. In March we will show you how to start seeds from scratch for those of you itching for spring. For the March seed starting workshop, we will provide a handout, some seeds and perhaps an opportunity to plant some in your cluster cafés to take home. Also, as I write this, our home nursery team is filling pots with volunteer plants to sell at our first plant sale at the March "in-person" general meeting at Druid Hall.

With mustard already blooming along with some new starts of wildflowers, it feels like spring is just around the corner. But I do need to finish my winter gardening to ensure that the garden will be healthy and vibrant for the bees as they begin to emerge from winter.

Happy Winter Gardening!

Intro to Beekeeping at Beekind in Sebastopol

Beekind has been operating in Sebastopol for 20 years. They will be hosting their "[Introduction to Beekeeping](#)" class at the Sebastopol Grange on Sunday March 17th, Cost \$25

This three-hour class will focus on basic beekeeping information, how to get started with bees, use of equipment and what to expect in your first year.

The class will be taught by Doug Vincent, Owner and Beekeeper of Beekind.

Click on this [link](#) to sign up.

FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Need Bees? Fill Out the Survey!

By Shannon Carr, Program Director

It is a new year and we have hit the ground running! Kelli Cox, 1st VP of the Bees, has been working diligently with our Swarm Rescuers and Bee Share team, so we are ready when the bees start to swarm, which historically starts to happen mid to late February with it peaking in March and April. In 1983 SCBA first developed its Swarm Hotline. Today our Swarm Rescuers are listed on the SCBA website under "Report a Swarm".



SCBA's Swarm Rescuers work with our Bee Share Coordinators to connect swarms with members who are looking for bees. To get on the Needs Bees List and receive local bees who survived the last winter in Sonoma County, members must complete the SCBA Annual Survey. The Survey will be emailed to members on Friday February 2nd. While the Survey gets you on the Needs Bees List, it also has questions pertinent to different programs within the association as well as related to general membership. Your answers to this survey help us better understand and serve our members and their needs. Whether you need bees or not, please take a few minutes out of your day to fill out the survey.

Volunteering with SCBA is a lot of fun, very rewarding, and the success of our programs depends on our members volunteering. Consider joining one of the many committees that are forming to make our two large annual events a success.

Spring Fling is on April 27th at Bees and Blooms (more info coming). Committees are forming to help coordinate workshops, lunch, and the raffle. Our main fundraiser is **SCBA's Pollinator Brunch**. It is on May 19th. Committees are forming to help coordinate food, silent auction/raffle, facilities/decorations, and marketing for the event. Email Shannon at programdirector@sonomabees.org to help with one of these committees or to find out other ways to volunteer and get involved.

Tips for LATE Winter Hive Inspections

By Ettamarie Peterson

Usually, the weather begins to become warm enough for hive inspections around the end of February. What you are looking at in your hives are **mood, food, and brood**. These are just the basics, but those three things can tell you a lot.

Mood is something that can change during the hive inspection. Sometimes the bees are so calm that the smoker you lit before opening the hive will never be needed. Other times the mood changes because you did something (usually by accident). Other times the bees get upset because you took too long, and they become louder telling you to finish as quickly as possible. Your ears will tell you what mood they are in. Don't wait until they are bouncing off your veil to close the hive.

Food is an easy one to make decisions about. Look at the amount of capped honey and pollen stores. Take into consideration their chances of improving on their own or not. This depends on the strength of the colony's foragers and the amount of bee-forage within a three-mile radius.

Brood is the third item to make determinations about. Now you are looking at lots of variables. Sometimes a lack of brood is because of the season and sometimes it is because the queen is gone, or the queen is too young. The best brood pattern is tightly laid -- with a few scattered empty cells -- and with flat cappings indicating they are workers. Often the youngest brood, the eggs, and small larvae are on the outer edges and the capped pupae are in the center. The darker the cappings are indicates they are nearest to emerging as the adults.

If you find a lot of drone brood that is bumpy and in the larger cells, that could be a sign that the colony is preparing to swarm. A definite sign of swarm preparation is multiple queen cells hanging on the bottoms of the frames. Do not think you are going to prevent a swarm by removing these queen cells! You will do more harm to your colony if you do and are wasting your time!

Once you spot swarm preparations you have some choices. You can A) do nothing, B) make a split or two or more, or C) you can hang up a swarm trap and/or put out a bait hive hoping your bees will

move in. Old comb and a few drops of lemon grass oil in the trap and/or bait hive increase your chances of the bees moving in. If you want to do a hive split, think about contacting your cluster leader and inviting cluster members over for the experience and possible sharing of the split. Many beekeepers want to learn more about splitting colonies and this could be your chance to help them and yourself, too.

Before you do any hive inspection, decide why you are doing it and think about what you might need. While you are digging about in the open hive is not the time to be running back to your equipment storage area to get another box with more frames. If you think you might be needing to replace an old box or bottom board, be prepared. The longer your box is open, the more the temperature inside will drop. You will be killing brood and/or causing the bees to consume more of their food supply. Each hive inspection sets a colony back a bit. That is why I do not recommend frequent inspections, especially in the cooler months of the year. My rule is you must have a purpose and a plan before you do your inspection.

The last advice I have for you is to keep a record of what you saw with dates. There are several pre-made hive inspection sheets or suggestions for beekeepers to make their own. Some people make notes on the inner covers or even on the top bars. Others put their notes on duct tape with permanent marking pens. Whatever works best for you is fine but do make some notes you can look at before you return to your apiary.



Early bloomer: *California milkmaid on Sonoma Mountain*

State Ag Department Hosts Online Meeting for Hobbyist Beekeeper Input

By Angy Nowicki SCBA

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) hosted a Hobbyist Public (Zoom) Meeting on January 18, 2024. The purpose of the meeting was "To hear hobbyist beekeeper perspectives on the existing State beekeeper fee/registration system, potential changes, and related services."

The meeting was facilitated by Ariel Ambruster, from Cal State University of Sacramento and representing CDFA was Jennifer Berger and Chris Borkent.

In a nutshell, the discussion was about the registration fee for beekeepers as it relates to the Food and Ag Code (FAC) 29044(a), which was written in the middle of the 1980's, and never enforced. FAC 29044(a) coincided with the varroa destructor mite infestation, which caused the commercial beekeepers to pivot the focus of their business from honey production to pollination.

In about 2020, the code was reviewed by the Apiary Board and task forces were created to investigate its implementation. In about 2022, the Board decided to propose the implementation and enforcement of the code, with some new modifications, to the Secretary of CDFA. The changes involved an attachment to an enforcement code California Code of Regulations (CCR) 2950-2954, which will allow for fines to be imposed on beekeepers that fail to follow the code. As of today, we were told that the new rewritten code and regulation is going through Office of Administrative Law for final review.

So, what does that mean for the hobbyist? If the Office of Administrative Law approves the language, it means that all beekeepers must register their hives or face a fine.

According to a recent document submitted as a part of a public hearing, dated 09/28/2023, beekeepers with between 1-9 beehives are considered a hobbyist and would pay a registration fee of \$0. There was some discussion of a \$10 registration fee during this meeting and \$100 prior to the recent document. In other words, it is not clear if the dollar amount has been determined yet.

There is however some side note at the base of the code you might find interesting. The hobbyist beekeeper is eligible for a fee waiver if they request the waiver from the Board of Supervisors of any county, with the approval of the Secretary. Right now, until January 1, 2025, the fees for the hobbyist have been waived pending the outcome of the Office of Administration Law and the fee payment set up process. (There is a clear bet that the Board of Supervisors has no clue what the fee waiver is or how to proceed, nor did the Apiary Specialist for the County Ag, last I spoke to her.)

So, right now the plan is on January 1, 2025:

1. You will be required to register your hive(s) on the BeeWhere website in the county that the bees reside. The fee will be between \$0 and \$100.
2. You must also identify each hive with a stenciled sign with the owner's name, address, and phone number.
3. If you relocate your colony of bees, you must notify the County Ag Commissioner.
4. If you move the colony of bees out of the County, you have 72 hours to notify the County Ag Commissioner.

Heads up, apparently, if you sell your honey, then you are subject to getting a business license, which places you in the commercial realm and MIGHT require you to register at the next tier. They have not yet decided if you would then be disqualified from the hobbyist or waiver designation.

So, what will your dollars be used for? Well, registering for BeeWhere does put you on the list to be contacted if a registered pest applicator intends on spraying a pesticide in your general area. The CDFA representatives suggested perhaps offsetting County employee costs, training the County Ag Commissioner and the Apiary Specialist, or offsetting the County for cost associated with bee related responses such as calls from the public.

There is a survey posted by the CDFA to gain more insight from hobbyists that will be available through February 28, 2024. A follow up meeting will be held in March 2024. Date is to be determined.

[CDFA Apiary Protection Program Website](#)

[Meeting Agenda](#)

CLUSTER NEWS

WHAT'S THE BUZZ IN YOUR AREA?

January Cluster Cafés Buzzing with Excitement

Sacha Lepley, Regional Cluster Coordinator

What a great club we have, and the excitement is building! I attended several bee cafes with hopes to meet as many members as possible on the cluster level and to get an idea of the wants and needs of each cluster. Thank you to all the Cluster Coordinators and Garden Liaisons for organizing these, for attending behind the scenes Zoom meeting with me



AND thank you members for attending the cluster cafes; we hope more and more members will commit to these monthly get togethers.

Attending the Cluster Café monthly meeting allows members to really get to know each other

AND the cluster can focus on their members wants and needs. East Cluster meets the first Saturday of each month. Saturday February 3 will be their first cluster cafe. (East members, I am looking forward to seeing you there!) North's meeting is on the second Sunday of every month. Central, West, and South all meet on the third Saturday of each month. Please mark your calendars and plan on coming to your cluster's monthly bee café (you are welcome to attend others as well). Note: This year the club is taking a break from our monthly meeting and cafe meetings during the month of August to focus on the local fairs. Check the SCBA online calendar for places and times of cafés and other events.

Yes, more members have stepped up to volunteer. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Let's keep the momentum going! If you have a space (home or work) that would hold a group of 20 to 25 members to meet for one of the monthly bee cafés, and are able to host, please contact your Cluster Coordinators or me the Regional Coordinator. Members like seeing other homes, gardens, and bee habitat as well as sharing potluck food. Hosting does not mean you have to present the topic or organize the café for the month. Of course, if you want to present a cluster café topic let your cluster coordinators know!

I am really looking forward to meeting more and more of you. February's cafe will focus on swarms and potting up plants. We are an amazing club.

Shout out to all the cluster coordinators, garden liaison and other volunteers who are organizing cafes including: Mato Herceg, Tripp Hunter, Jamie Storck, Ellen Schwartz, Susan Kegley, Roger Simpson, Angy Nowicki, Bernie Leda, Bill Bridges, Mike Shook, Maureen Bufton-Landwehr, Rachel Parker, Gayle Slade, Kris Wiskes, Maryle Brauer, Cheryl Koeller, Maile Pieri, Gülten Eicher, Shannon Carr, Kim Bergstrom, Kelli Cox, and Carol Ellis.

South Cluster Comraderie

By Rachel Parker and Gayle Slade, South Cluster Coordinators

Despite football playoffs starting and rain threatening, 24 members met up at Brewster's in Petaluma for updates on our cluster, as well as good old-fashioned friendship. Co-chairs Rachel Parker and Gayle Slade shared results of the cluster-wide survey, which revealed that most members like a combination of social and educational formats, many are looking for more advanced beekeeping techniques, and several are willing to host hive dives in their apiaries. We listened and will offer a variety of bee and gardening activities to serve both new beekeepers and veterans alike.

While there, Kristine Wiskes and Maryle Brauer announced they are joining forces to be a dynamic duo of South Cluster's Gardening Liaisons. Thank you both for stepping forward to help South Cluster beekeepers enhance their pollinator gardens.

Thank you also to SCBA's leadership – Carol Ellis, Kelli Cox, Sacha Lepley, and Kim Bergstrom – for adding their voices and ideas to our cluster café.

For February, we will focus on swarms and splits – preparing for them, identifying them, caring for them. We'll meet at John and Darlene McGinnis' home in Petaluma on February 17 at 11am.

Continued, next page

South Cluster, from prior page

The cluster seemed to appreciate a bit of poetry, so we offer this snippet from Irish author John O'Donohue writing of winter:

*This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall,
Until the bitter weather passes.*



South Cluster at Brewster's in Petaluma. A big Thank You to the Brewster's team for taking care of our crowd!

West Cluster Looks Ahead to Spring Events

By Cheryl Koeller, West Cluster Coordinator

Our Bee Café in January was about Mid-Winter Hive Management and pruning in the garden. We utilized the Serge Labesque - Coming Out of Winter PowerPoint presentation to discuss what to do at this time of year when the bees are expanding and how to give space for the increased population and storage of nectar the foragers may collect on mild winter days.

Did you know that the queen might lay only 50 eggs a day when she gets going in January, but increases to 2000-2500 per day by mid-March? She will only maintain this for a few weeks and the brood size will start declining in May or June.

Gülten showed off her gardening tools and demonstrated several different ways to clean them. Who

needs to buy fancy bottles or cans of chemicals when you can make a little concoction using common things in your kitchen like vinegar, salt, baking soda and water? I think several of us were looking forward to going home to try what we learned on our own gardening tools!

Our lovely President and West Cluster member Carol brought our mounted West Cluster map, which was created by Central's Susan Kegley. We each pinned our approximate location. This is going to be a fun and interesting thing to see as I bring our map to our cafes, events and general meetings and our members pin their location! We'll be able to see where West Cluster members are located and this will be a very useful tool to find a Bee and/or Gardening Buddy in your area of the cluster. As you know, West Cluster covers a very large area of Sonoma County.



I'm so excited to let you know that two of our members offered to host a Cluster Café soon! So, we have Sebastopol and Monte Rio locations in the making. Once I have the date set, I will notify everyone so you can Save the Date!

Upcoming Events

We have several events scheduled and hope you will Save the Dates below in your calendar. You can find detailed information about our events on the website in the events tab. An announcement and email invitation is being finalized and will be sent to all West Cluster members soon.

February 10:

Frame Building Clinic

We have unassembled frames and medium only wax foundation with wire available for donation. We will be using a frame making jig that will hold up to 10 frames at a time and is available to check out at the SCBA Library.

February 17:

We do not have a scheduled Cluster Café for Feb-

Continued, next page

West Cluster, from prior page

ruary. We are encouraging our members to try to attend The California Rare Fruit Growers Scion Exchange. The annual event this year is on Saturday, February 17th at the Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Avenue, from 10 to 3. There is a \$5 entrance fee.

There will be pruning and grafting demonstrations, fruit experts available to answer questions, as well as vendors and local organizations sharing their knowledge!

They will also have rootstock available for a nominal fee and the grafters will, for a fee, graft on any scion you choose.

SCBA will also have a table at this event and are looking for volunteers.

Are you interested in hosting a Cluster Café, hive dive, or workshop? If you provide the location, we can handle everything else. Do you have an idea for an interesting or informative workshop or topic for a Cluster Café or workshop? Please email us at westcluster@sonomabees.org.

As you can see, we have a lot going on with more to come. We are looking forward to seeing more of everyone this year.



SCBA BOOK NOOK

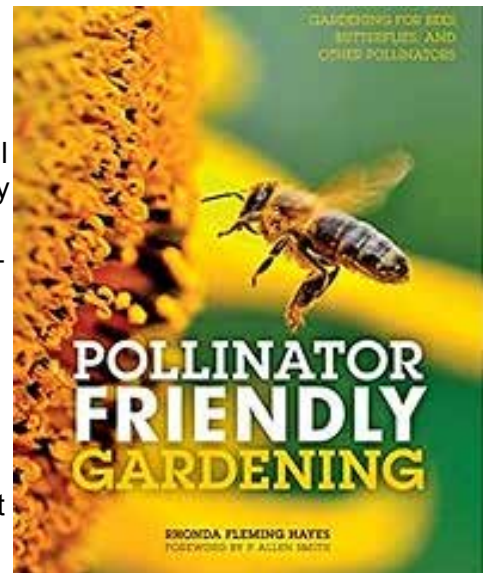
Pollinator Friendly Gardening: Gardening for Bees, Butterflies, and other Pollinators



By: Rhonda Fleming Hayes

SCBA's Library has several books focused on gardening for bees, both honey bees and native bees as well as all pollinators, including this month's Book Nook book: *Pollinator Friendly Gardening: Gardening for Bees, Butterflies, and other Pollinators*.

This book identifies the most visible and beloved pollinators: bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, as well as some more unlikely candidates such as ants, wasps, and beetles. It then explains the intriguing synergy between plants and pollinators. This vital information makes it a unique sourcebook to share the ways that anyone can make a yard a more friend-



ly place for pollinators. Plant selection, hardscape choices, habitat building (both natural and man-made), and growing practices that give pollinators their best chance in the garden are all covered in detail. Plant lists organized by category, helpful tips, and expert spotlights make it fun and easy to read.

In 1982 the SCBA library grew to include 35 books, most of which were checked out and overdue. So, they developed a "system of fines" of 10 cents per day. The fine was to encourage books to be returned in a timely manner and hopefully the funds would help expand the library.

Today, we have more than 250 titles, but we are still looking to expand the SCBA library with current books and resources. If you have any suggestions for books related to honeybees -- or equipment resources -- please email your suggestions to Librarian@sonomabees.org.

Almond Honey Cake with a Kick of Lemon

By Rachel Parker

I bought myself a beehive cupcake form as an early Christmas present, then -- once the holidays were behind me -- started looking for recipes for my gift. It had to have honey, of course, but I also didn't want it to be just a honey cake. I wanted something more substantial. Many of the recipes I reviewed in honey cookbooks used a combination of honey and granulated sugar -- adding the warmth of honey to the texture that sugar and butter create. I turned to a Lemon Almond pound cake recipe in *Breakfast, Lunch, and Tea, Rose Bakery* cookbook and wondered if I could similarly adapt this to a honey, almond, lemon cupcake. Success! The cupcakes are a little denser than a standard yellow cake, thanks to the almond flour and likely the honey. They are subtly sweet with hints of lemon. The original recipe fills a 10-inch loaf, but I filled 6 beehive forms with about 1/2 cup batter, and then had leftover for 6 heart-shaped cupcakes. I served them with honeycomb ice cream, but vanilla would do nicely, as well.

Almond Honey Cake

Adapted From *Breakfast, Lunch and Tea*

By Rose Carrarini

INGREDIENTS

2 sticks unsalted butter, softened, plus more for greasing the pan

3/4 cup sugar

1/4 cup honey

4 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup ground almonds

2 cups all-purpose flour

Glaze (optional)

Juice of 1 lemon

1 1/4 cup powdered sugar.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and butter a 10-inch loaf pan or other cake pan.

Rub the lemon zest into the sugar to release the flavors, then cream the butter and sugar together till it is light and creamy. Add the honey, beating to incorporate it well. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition; add the vanilla extract and lemon juice.

Mix the baking powder, salt, ground almonds and flour, then stir the mixture into butter and egg mixture.

Pour the batter into your prepared tin and bake for about 35 minutes or until a knife inserted into the top comes out clean and the top is light golden. (I looked in on the hive shapes at 20 minutes and let them

brown on the edges just a bit longer.)

Let cool in the pan for a few minutes before turning it out.

Make the glaze if you like, and drizzle over the cake, letting it drip down the sides.



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Liz is a beekeeper and potter motivated by the intersection of art and conservation. Along with pottery she offers live bee removal and backyard beekeeping services.

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Candice Koseba
info@sonomacountybeecompany.com
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