

# THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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## What You Missed

At our January meeting Jerry Draper shared the presentation that John Keyfuss presented at Apimondia this last summer. John is a beekeeper near Toulouse, France. He has been keeping bees without chemical treatment for over ten years. John developed a method of testing for varroa resistance that he called "The Bond Method". He would not intervene on behalf of the bees if they became infested with varroa mites. He would allow the bees to "live or let die", only bees with some hygienic behavior or resistance to varroa would survive. John would raise queens from the survivors, propagating the varroa resistance trait. He furthered this concept with the "live or die" program, purposely infecting hives with varroa to accelerate the process. He has since come up with a gentler approach, which he calls the Soft Bond Method. In the Soft Bond Method only a portion of your hives are subjected to the Bond Test. The rest of your hives may be chemically treated as necessary as long as you don't propagate the chemically treated genes. Queens are then raised from the survivors of the Bond Test and they are

*see Missed on page 2*

## What's the Buzz

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, February 4, 2010 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA, starting at 7:30pm.

### Special Guest Speaker

Our guest speaker will be University of Minnesota bee researcher Marla Spivak who will speak on "Keeping Bees Healthy and on Their Own Six Feet". Marla is an internationally renowned bee researcher who has worked to develop a line of hygienic bees that are known to be more resistant to mites and bee diseases.

### Upcoming Meetings:

March 4<sup>th</sup>

March will feature Dr. Eric Mussen. Dr. Eric Mussen is the UC Cooperative Extension Apiculturist.

April 1<sup>st</sup>

April will feature Serge LaBesque. Serge will return to speak about spring and summer in the hive.

## ASK ERIC

Dr. Eric Mussen is the UC Cooperative Extension Apiculturist.

**Q.** I have about 30 frames of drawn comb which I stored outside exposed to light but out of the rain. I put spacer blocks (1-1/2") between each box of frames to allow for airflow to discourage wax moths. I checked them the other day and the frames are all

*see Ask Eric on page2*

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introduced into your other hives. Eventually all hives will have varroa resistance and chemical treatments can be discontinued.

The Soft Bond Test is an attractive alternative for commercial beekeepers, who otherwise fear that they would lose their livelihood if too many hives succumb to varroa in a given year.

John also argued that chemical treatment is not cost effective in the long run and that the sooner the commercial world is able to stop treating bees the better for everyone.

Rob Tysinger gave a short report on the survivor stock project. He discussed the timeline that the survivor stock group is proposing, which could be as long as ten years before the club could supply Marin survivor stock to all club members who want it. He pointed out that the program is in its infancy and that very few members of the group have successfully raised queens. He also noted that each year more people will be encouraged to learn queen rearing and join the program. This spreads the program out over more members and safeguards against any one set of genetics becoming too prevalent.

Catherine Jasan announced that the club will offer a colony splitting workshop this spring and a hands-on queen rearing workshop in the late summer or early fall.

Doug Vincent of BeeKind was in attendance and was asked to talk about what we were proposing. He announced that he is buying VHS breeder queens and intends to have 50 plus queens for sale this season in addition to the queens and packages of bees that he has sold in past years.

## Local Ordinances Pertaining to Beekeeping

While there are many who take a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" approach to beekeeping for fear of learning that their beloved bees are in conflict with local laws, others prefer to know their rights or to act proactively to gain those rights.

If you are in the latter group, you will be interested to learn that Mimi Lewis is working to compile local ordinances pertaining to keeping bees. If you have a copy of any city or town ordinances from Marin County, please email her: Mimi Lewis <[mimi.r.lewis@gmail.com](mailto:mimi.r.lewis@gmail.com)>.

mildewed. The comb has some mildew and also some mold. The question is, are these frames still usable?

**A.** Yes, the combs can be used again. It is best to wait until the weather is better and the bees are up and going for the spring.

The combs should become dry when the dry weather moves in. The dry combs will be cleaned, completely, in a day or two by a robust colony building quickly into the summer. The fungi do not hurt healthy bees.

**Q.** If they are usable, would the mildew impart any flavor to any honey that is stored in the mildewed comb?

**A.** Bees won't store honey in cells that are not cleaned thoroughly. There will be no taste or smell of fungi in honey coming from previously moldy comb cells. If some mold can still be seen on corners of the combs, etc., you would not want to extract the honey by spinning it out of the combs and over the mold.

## Marin Bee Mapping Project

Work has begun on a mapping project which will allow Marin beekeepers to locate other beekeepers in their area and microclimate. The goal is to enable beekeepers to share information about hive management and health, offer each other support and mentoring and to help aspiring beekeepers, or those whose hives have failed, find a source of local survivor nucs.

The map will be one part of the survivor stock project, promoting the development of locally adapted survivor queens and bees that will thrive in Marin without chemical hive treatments. We hope to have wide participation in this mapping project so that it can be of maximum benefit to the bees and beekeepers of Marin. Watch for details as the project evolves.

## CANDLE MAKING WORKSHOP

Saturday January 16<sup>th</sup> found a dozen Marin Beekeepers huddled around a simmering cauldron of water at Draper Farms. Were they fending off the chill of a rainy weekend? Some of us were. The primary purpose of the gathering though, was to learn the age-old skill of hand dipping beeswax candles. Dan Stralka guided us on our journey, demonstrating the key steps and having us “learn to do by doing”. Dan generously shared his wealth of knowledge, his treasure trove of gadgets and his seemingly endless supply of beeswax.

High“lights”

- cover up – the floor & yourself
- fishing weights are multipurpose tools
- size matters ... of the wick, that is
- liquid wax is hot
- patience is a virtue
- self-confessed science geeks have the best gadgets
- once you're set up, it's not that hard!

In the end, 12 pairs of candles were created – and the competition at the Marin County Fair just got a little tougher!

Many thanks to Dan for leading the class and to the Drapers for their warm hospitality.



## OTHER EVENTS

### Straw Beehive (Skep)-Making Workshop



Saturday, March 13, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

San Anselmo, Marin County

with Marin Beekeepers Member Charles Kennard

The classic dome-shaped beehives made of straw bound together with split blackberry stems have been used in northern Europe for centuries, and make attractive—although not very practical—homes for

bees. Charlie will demonstrate the use of various materials and tools used in skep-making, and then each participant will prepare a bundle of straw, and begin weaving a bowl or skep to take home. We will also have the opportunity to see completed skeps, and a basketry plant garden that Charlie is creating at the Marin Art and Garden Center. (State regulations prohibit the use of skeps for brood comb in bee-keeping.)

This is a class for adults; beginning and experienced weavers are welcome. Registrants will receive further details in advance of the class.

Class donation: \$70 includes materials and loan of specialized tools. Reservations must be made by advance payment.

Charlie has practiced basket-weaving as an avocation for 20 years, using local materials and a wide variety of techniques. He is a frequent guest presenter at area schools, and has conducted teacher-training workshops for UC Botanical Garden and STRAW. He is also active in habitat restoration in Marin, managing several projects for the Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed.

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