

# THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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June 2010

## What You Missed

At our May meeting our guest speaker was John Gipson, owner of Gipson's Golden Honey. John's interest in bees started as a hobby that he could share with his sons. The boys lost interest in the hobby, but people continued to give John hives and his apiary expanded. He started selling honey on the side during his travels as a medical supplies salesman. Eventually, he gave up the medical supplies and moved full time into selling honey, creating Gipson's Golden Honey.

John has bees located in Oregon, Nevada and in California as far south as San Luis Obispo. He concentrates on placing his hives away from highways and urban areas to minimize the pollutants that the bees are exposed to. He sells honey from 18 different specific floral sources as well as a wildflower mix. He said that the wildflowers have been particularly abundant this year because of all the rain that we have had.

*see Missed on page 2*

## What's the Buzz

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, June 3, 2010 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA, starting at 7:30pm.

### Guest Speaker

Our guest speaker will be Dr. Michelle Flenniken. Michelle is conducting studies on the details of honey bee cellular immune responses to infection by RNA viruses in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the Mission Bay campus of UC San Francisco where she is the Häagen-Dazs postdoctoral fellow.

The eventual goal is to find a way to interfere with virus replication in infected host cells. Working in conjunction with Dr. Joseph Derisi's team, she also is involved in the process of developing microarray "chips" that will be able to demonstrate the presence of any known honey bee pathogen(s) in a submitted bee sample.

Michelle obtains her virus-infected bees from Bay Area hobby beekeepers and she delivers extremely well-received research presentations to audiences with all levels of apicultural expertise.

### Upcoming Meetings:

November 4, 2010

Dr. Diana Sammataro, co-author of the *Beekeeper's Handbook*.

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Diana began keeping bees in 1972, setting up a package colony in her grandfather's old bee hive equipment in Litchfield, CT. She earned a B.S. in Landscape Architecture, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and a M.S. in Urban Forestry, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In 1978 she joined Peace Corps and taught Beekeeping in the Philippines for 3 years. On returning, she worked at the USDA Bee Lab in Madison, WI under Dr. Eric Erickson, studying the effects of plant breeding and flower attraction of bees in sunflower lines. She eventually went to work at the A.I. Root Company, as Bee Supply Sales Manager in Medina OH. She went on to earn a Ph.D. from Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. The title of her dissertation was: *Studies on the control, behavior, and molecular markers of the tracheal mite of honey bees.*

In 1995, she worked as a post-doctoral assistant at the Ohio State University Agricultural Research Center in Wooster OH, with Dr. James Tew and in 1998 at the Penn State University Bee lab with Maryann Frazier. In early 2002, she was invited to join the USDA-ARS Carl Hayden Honey Bee Research Center in Tucson, AZ. Her current position is a Research Entomologist with Dr. Gloria DeGrandi-Hoffman and staff. Her work at the lab includes developing a novel approach to managing parasitic mites of bees using new mite controls (bee and mite chemical compounds and natural products) and research on pollination problems.

The title of Diana's talk will be: "A Molecular Biology Approach to Honey Bee Pathogen & Colony Collapse Disorder Research".

Diana plans to tell us about her research focused on pathogen detection in honey bee samples and her work investigating the honey bee antiviral immune system.

John also is involved in crop pollination, which has been particularly challenging this year due to the strange weather. He noted that many commercial beekeepers suffered heavy losses of bees this winter and were not able to show up for the almond pollination.

Some of the keys to Gipson's success are the quality controls that John has put in place. They rear their own queens, build all their own equipment and collect pollen throughout the year which they feed back to the bees in the early spring to encourage colony buildup. John feels that nutrition is very important to the health of bees.

In closing his presentation John a tasting of over a half a dozen different honeys from Gipson Golden, a sweet end to our meeting.

## Thanks

The Beek is also going to take the month of July off. I just want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all the people who have contributed to this venture over the last several months. They are Mea McNeil, Bonnie Bollengier, Dave Peterson, Dan Stralka, Tim Chambers, Catherine Jasan, Jerry Draper, Jerome Draper, Marina Wright, and Kristen Stringer. My apologies if I have forgotten anyone.

I also want to thank all the members who have taken the time to give me feedback on the newsletter. Your comments and suggestions are always appreciated.

We'll see you all back here at the beginning of August. Have an enjoyable summer with your bees!

## Important Reminders

There is no club meeting scheduled for July. Come and join in the fun at the Marin County Fair.

Mark your calendar for the annual Marin Beekeepers potluck, August 7<sup>th</sup> at Draper Farms. Watch the Buzz for more information.

## “A Celebration of the Bees”

On May 8, in an event to celebrate another spring’s beginning, The Marin Beekeepers and Savory Thymes hosted an educational event, “A Celebration of the Bees.” The event served a cause close to the hearts of many beekeepers today and raised over \$1900 to benefit the Survivor Stock Queen Project. As well as a fundraiser, the community event encouraged bee education for “newbees” of all ages and hosted family-friendly activities aimed to encourage conversation around honeybees, theories of colony collapse disorder, and the integral purpose of bees in our environment.

At the event's location at Hillside Gardens in Mill Valley, the warm weather and expansive gardens gave guests a peek into the world and workings of bees. Dr. Gordon Frankie of the Urban Bee Lab led a bee tour of the garden and students from UC Berkeley held demonstrations outlining the hundreds of known bee species in Marin. Indoors, leadership from the San Francisco Beekeepers including Timur Muhrlin educated guests about honeybee activities using the observation hive, and Marin Beekeepers answered questions from guests using enlarged photographs and books. Proceeds from the sale of Mea McNeil's book, [A Mother's Story](#), and Diana Cohn's book, [The Bee Tree](#), were also donated to the Survivor Stock Queen Project.

To start the afternoon, the Marin Beekeepers initiated a May Pole ceremony complemented by live Celtic Music from our very own Jerry Draper and his band. Another popular activity was hosted in the main house where guests tasted 15 varieties of local honey. From dark honey to light varieties, each taster had his/ her favorites and many were amazed to taste the differences based on location and time of season.

For many, the delicious fare from Savory Thymes was another highlight of the event. Led by Alison Ghiorse and hosted by Hans Schoepflin, Savory Thymes served family-style dishes of garden asparagus and radishes, fresh fruits, garden salad, local Marin cheese with honey, grilled pizzas and a variety of

grass-fed hamburgers and sausages. Along the garden paths, one found homemade lemonade, mint ice water, and local blueberry mead from Beowulf. The casual outdoor meal provided an opportunity for all guests to sit and listen to a series of speakers, including Dr. Frankie and Mea McNeil. Dr. Frankie spoke about the ever-changing science used to study bees. These studies are intended to promote understanding of honeybee patterns, variety of species and current environmental challenges. Mea amused listeners with a rhyme that she wrote to explain why honeybee numbers are declining and how beekeepers can help with a solution in her talk called “Bees are Goin’ Down, Can We Turn it ‘Round?”

Both as a fundraiser and as an opportunity to promote bee education in the Marin community, “A Celebration of Bees” was a lovely event. While children learned about the difference between drones and workers, parents learned which “bee-friendly” flowers to plant in their gardens in order to help their neighborhood honeybee foragers. Thank you to all who participated in this year’s “A Celebration of the Bees”!

## Fair News

The 2010 Marin County Fair is fast approaching. This is a fun annual July 4<sup>th</sup> event in which we can all participate on two levels.

First -- staffing the bee booth inside the exhibit hall during the Fair. This is our club's opportunity to do outreach and get the word out about our little "trusts" and hopefully dispel some misinformation. We get to talk about bees, show off the observation hive, look for the queen and enjoy the various reactions. Even as a "newbie" you have more knowledge than most of the public. The club also receives a donation from the Fair for our participation.

We staff the bee booth with 2 people during each 3- to 4-hour time slot. In exchange, each staffer receives a pass to get into the Fair and each time slot will have one car pass to the exhibitors' parking lot in back of the exhibit hall. The rest of the day you can enjoy the other parts of the Fair. Check out the website, <http://www.marinfair.org/2010/>, for entertainment (all included with entry), special events and attractions, especially the fireworks display each night at 9:30 p.m.

The sign-up schedule will be circulated during the next meeting. Please sign up and join in the fun!

Second -- a little good-hearted competition with other beekeepers on all types of hive products: honey, beeswax, and candles. Cash prizes are associated with the first 5 places. There are two big prizes, the Best of Show and the Barney Salvisberg Award. All the exhibits are on prominent display at the bee booth during the fair (ribbons included) for your friends and neighbors to see, and we can showcase the many different hive products produced locally in Marin.

The important dates are:

### May 13

The entry deadline has passed, but late entries will be accepted at the Fair Building on June 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> during the drop-off times listed below. You can fill out the entry form and pay the entry fee when you drop off your exhibit. The category descriptions for the Honey Department are available on the Fair website, <http://www.marinfair.org/2010/>, under Competitive Exhibits. Please don't be shy; enter as many categories as you wish.

### June 11 &12

Drop off exhibits in the Fair building at the back of the Fairgrounds

Friday, June 11: 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 12: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

We can accept late entries even if you hadn't submitted a form, but please make every effort to send in your forms by May 13.

### June 13

Judging by John Gipson

### June 20

Finalize Bee Booth sign-up

### July 1-5

MARIN COUNTY FAIR!