

# THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 3, Issue 4

April 2011

## What You Missed

At our last meeting Dr. Eric Mussen gave an overview of current bee research projects. Research is continuing on colony collapse disorder (CCD). Not much more is known about CCD, but it doesn't appear that there is any one cause. Eric stated that CCD has occurred about every twenty years. However, in 1962 the occurrence of CCD lasted longer, until 1964, the current outbreak has lasted over six years. Eric's opinion is that we are getting much better at keeping sick bees alive longer.

Eric says there appear to be two different camps as far as philosophy of beekeeping. There is one group that wants the tools necessary to keep their bees going. The other group doesn't want tools; they want to let the bees figure it out themselves.

Studies of varroa mites have found that there are mites that are not very virulent and the bees and mites learn to coexist. There is also a more virulent form of mite that has been inadvertently developed by commercial beekeepers and their use of stronger and stronger miticides, only the strongest mites survive to breed. Bees, in general, don't have a very strong immune system or a system to break down toxins. Bees live in a fairly sterile environment through the use of propolis and wax. Mites circumvent this

*see Missed on page 2*

## What's the Buzz

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, April 7, 2011 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA, starting at 7:30pm.

### Special Guest Speaker

Our guest speaker will be Maryanne Fraser from the entomology dept at Penn State University. She is an expert on pesticide use and honey bee health. Her focus at Penn has been to work on an IPM approach to control honey bee diseases and mites and to improve information transfer techniques through traditional and innovative methods.

### Upcoming Meetings:

**May 5<sup>th</sup>**: Randy Oliver, scientist/migratory beekeeper, researches worldwide scientific literature and beekeeping practices, applying his knowledge to practical beekeeping. [www.scientificbeekeeping.com](http://www.scientificbeekeeping.com)

**June 2<sup>nd</sup>**: Jeremy Rose, author of *Beekeeping in Coastal California*. He is co-founder of the California Bee Company, which promotes the health and well-being of honey bees by using natural management methods, and breeding queens with mite-resistant behaviors. He will have his book available to buy at the meeting

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protection by spreading pathogens from bee to bee.

Eric thinks that isolated bee colonies that show a resistance to mites would probably be wiped out if they were exposed to the "commercial" variety of mite. Studies by Tom Seely at Cornell University seem to support this opinion. Tom studied over twenty colonies of feral bees. He took two of these colonies of feral bees and exposed them to a commercial environment. Both colonies were wiped out in short order.

Another concern with the use of chemicals is the synergistic effect. Studies have found that some of the chemicals used to treat mites when combined become lethal to bees. This can occur when one chemical gets stored in the wax during treatment combines with the other chemical during a subsequent treatment. Care should be used if you treat your bees to avoid this type of problem. In addition, new test have shown that larvae may be more strongly affected by chemicals that previously expected.

Eric doesn't believe that introducing outside bees (genetics) is a bad idea as long as you are judicious. They bees need to be bred with the characteristics that are in line with the characteristics that you desire in your apiary.

## Other Items of Interest

### Marin County Bee Census Survey Coming Soon!

Next week, the 2011 Bee Census will be released. This survey will track the local bee population between April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011. It is an online survey that will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

This will be the third consecutive year for the survey. We encourage all to participate - and if you know of beekeepers who are not members of the Marin Beekeepers Association, please forward to them.

While it is interesting to review the results from a single year, more interesting will be trends we may be able to observe over time as we continue to track our local bee population. It is important to collect data as we move forward in our goal to breed for survival stock. Data will enable us to separate anecdotal evidence with statistical data to determine what is happening with our local bees and what management techniques are most effective

### Upcoming Workshop:

#### **Gardening for Native Bees, taught by Marissa Ponder, Research Assistant, UC Berkeley**

Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 11am – 2pm (best time of day for bee viewing)

Location: Central San Rafael

Cost = \$25

Limit 15 people (if we get large response, will add a second date)

Learn about the often overlooked stars of a healthy garden – the local pollinators. There are over 1600 types of bees in California. In this hands on workshop, Marissa will help identify native bees in the garden as well as the plants and gardening practices which help encourage them to take up residence in your yard.

**To sign up**, send an email to Bonnie Bollengier: [bonbollengier@yahoo.com](mailto:bonbollengier@yahoo.com)



### **Skep (straw beehive)-making workshop**

Saturday, April 30, 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., in San Anselmo

We will use a roadside grass, or rush, to begin a bowl-shaped basket, using a skep-making technique. (Second from the right in the photograph.) Donation: \$70

#### **For reservations or more information, contact:**

Charles Kennard (415) 457-1147  
[charleskennard@comcast.net](mailto:charleskennard@comcast.net)

## The Farm Report

Farm Day was a big success thanks to Anna Taylor Gravley and her crew of volunteer beekeepers. Many curious children *and adults* were asking lots of great questions. It, as usual, everyone had a whole lot of fun.

Anna sends her thanks to the following people for helping with the Farm Day "booth", even with the lousy weather!

Richard & Karen Hyde -- Many thanks for showing up early, even with the traffic challenges, and for making the great name tags. Sorry I arrived in such a state!

Mary Finnican -- Thanks for reminding me about the hand-outs... oops! And for "manning" the hive tools & questions about smokers & bee hive frames & boxes ... 1,000,000 times!

Gullivan Perry -- Thank you for staying by the OB hive and getting down on the level with the children (literally!)... I loved that you did that!

Gayle Hagen -- Thank you for "quizzing" the kids about the bees vs. yellow jackets. It is such an important educational angle.

Anne Chase -- Thank you for seeing to it that all the little kids got a bee eraser... after all, what fun is a cereal box without the prize?? So glad you made it & learned so much.

Arthur Seebach -- Thank you for answering questions about swarms... 'tis the season, after all (if the rain ever stops) and we need people to know we're here!

Dave Peterson -- Thanks for the observation hive -- as always, it was a HUGE hit.

Bonnie Bollengier -- Thanks for making it all so easy. Your materials are amazing & I'm pretty sure you did WAY more work than me, and you weren't even there!

and finally

Paris & Bob Gravley -- for taking time off from school and work to make sure I didn't do this alone! Paris - you are a natural-born teacher; and Bob - once again, you were my hero. What would I do without you?

And for everyone else... *there's always next year!! :-)*

## Spring Time - Let's Split

Dave Peterson conducted another great Split Workshop on March 12th.

Dave reports that the weather was pleasant and we were able to hold the class room portion outside near the apiary. Unfortunately it stayed a bit on the cool side, in the low 60s, as we went into the apiary for the hands on portion. It is really better when work with brood, for the temperature to be in the high 60s -- better yet in the 70s. Brood chill can set in when the brood is out of the hive and uncover for very short periods. The bees will maintain the brood at around 93 degrees, that is the best temperature for the brood to develop.

Not everything went as well as the previous Workshop in 2010. Last year the class was about two weeks later. When we went into the first hive, we discovered three frames with swarm cells already capped and another with an uncapped cell -- in the first few minutes we had created four splits from the first hive. I moved the Workshop earlier to make the splits before the bees started making queen cells.

This year was different in that when we opened the first hive, I discovered a classic mistake. I had added a honey super a few weeks earlier, then returned to add a queen excluder after the bees began storing some nectar. But I had failed to make sure the queen was below in the deep boxes intended to hold the queen and her brood. The honey super was packed with capped brood, larva and freshly laid eggs. But alas we wanted to make some deep-frame splits. After a futile look for the queen. I closed the hive up and made a note to get back and move the queen down on the next warm day. That's why I'm not an expert..., still making lots of mistakes.

We then moved on to the second hive, only to find it without a lot of excess brood, honey and pollen required to make a good split. We did manage to pull four frames of resources having all the needed elements to start a good split. But I made a note to go back and shake some bees from another hive to give them a better start. By the time we put the second hive back together, the sun was getting lower and with the wind picking up. One of the group suggested we best not risk chilling the precious brood and come back on a warmer day. We used the time for addition Q & A.

It just goes to prove, when you go into the apiary you are never sure just what you will find and just how long it might take to accomplish your goal. Last year; four splits in a few minutes -- this year; one split after good deal more time.

## Fair News

The 2011 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>, 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 two meetings. 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 11

Entry form deadline for exhibits. Fair participants from last year you should have received an entry package. If not, or if you are entering for the first time, there will be entry forms and category descriptions for the Honey Department at the next meeting. It is also available on the Fair website, <http://www.marinfair.org>, under Competitive Exhibits. Please don't be shy; enter as many categories as you wish even if you are not yet sure that you will have an entry prepared.

### June 10 & 11

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 12

Judging - judge to be announced

### June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 4<sup>th</sup>

MARIN COUNTY FAIR!