

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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June 2013

What's the Buzz

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, June 6, 2013 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA starting at 7:30 pm.

Wyatt A. Mangum (Ph.D.) internationally-known, top-bar hive beekeeper and monthly columnist for the *American Bee Journal* on Honey Bee Biology, Dr. Mangum will speak about top-bar hive beekeeping. He will also have copies of his new book, "Top-Bar Hive Beekeeping: Wisdom & Pleasure Combined", for sale during the meeting.

Upcoming Meetings:

July 3 to 7, 2013

The Marin County Fair
See "Fair News" on page 5

THERE IS NO REGULAR CLUB MEETING IN JULY.

August 10, 2013

There is no regular meeting of the Marin County Beekeepers in August. Instead, please plan to join us on August 10th at the home of Neil and Mary Nordquist, 2072 Hatch Road, Novato, CA for the annual potluck dinner. Sign up will be online again this year. Go to: <http://marinbees.org/wp/annual-potluck-2013/> for more information on the event and to sign up to bring a dish,

Directions to Neil and Mary Nordquist, 2072 Hatch Road, Novato:

Take the San Marin Drive/ Atherton Avenue exit from US101. Turn west onto San Marin Drive.

Continue on San Marin Drive to Simmons Lane, the first stop sign. Turn left onto Simmons Lane. Follow until you come to a stop light at a T-junction with Novato Boulevard. Turn right onto Novato Boulevard and then make a left turn at the next light onto Wilson Avenue. Follow Wilson approx 1 1/4 miles.

There will be stops at Center and Vineyard Roads on the way. Hatch Rd will be a right turn shortly after Wilson narrows.

The Nordquists are 1/4 mile down Hatch Road on the right. 2072 is on the mailbox just before the gate. Please park on the street and walk in through the gate.

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What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a talk by Dr. Eric Mussen. Dr. Mussen is the Extension Apiculturist at the University of California Davis. Dr. Mussen held a question and answer period for his presentation.

Dr. Mussen reflected that when he first became an extension apiculturist he could keep ahead of beekeepers because he had access to all the international journals. Nowadays information is instantaneous.

see *What You Missed* continued on page 2

Dr. Mussen then opened the floor up to questions:

- Q. What is your opinion of screened bottom boards for varroa control?
- A. 15% of varroa mites fall off on a daily basis, particularly the young daughters. Screened bottom boards allow them to fall out of the hive. If you have argentine ants they will come and carry the fallen mites away.

- Q. What about drone brood removal?
- A. It is proven that mites prefer drone brood because of the longer period it takes drones to emerge. If you remove the drone brood you will eliminate another 15% of the mites.

Even with a total removal of 30% of the mites, it will not be enough to control mite infestation.

There are certain groups of beekeepers that are managing mites without treatment and are able to deal with the mites. However, Dr. Mussen thinks that this is because they are kept locally and not exposed to new parasitic pressures. Dr Tom Seeley conducted an experiment where he collected feral colonies after the recovery from the introduction of mites to the US. He took the feral colonies out into the "real world". The feral colonies only lasted a few months.

Mites can change genetically every month but bees only change genetically a couple of times a year. Locally, your mites will evolve to live with the bees without causing the hive to die out. A good parasite does not kill its host. Currently there are 23 RNA viruses that infect honey bees. Mites transmit most of them.

- Q. Is there value in breeding for varroa resistant behavior?
- A. Yes, but the tests that are conducted is usually to see how well the bees can remove infested brood. There are other varroa resistant behaviors that are not as easy to measure but may be as valuable to a colony
- Q. Where are we with CCD?
- A. You can't point your finger at any one cause. It was a phenomenon. Varroa infestation or Nosema infestation have certain characteristics; but with CCD the bees all just

disappear.

In a survey beekeepers were asked what they thought was causing the hive loss problem. The number one answer was uncontrolled mites, the second highest reason was starvation. Only about 7% thought that the losses were caused by CCD.

- Q. Can you comment on neonicotinoid insecticides?
- A. There has been evidence of bees directly killed during planting of seed treated with neonics.
1. When planting, coating is sticky and the dust created during planting would stick to the bees causing die off.
 2. The wind would blow the dust around, the dust would stick to the bees and they would bring it back to the hive.

However, when plants are treated the neonics will likely show up in the pollen and nectar, only on the level of 7 parts per billion (ppb). The lethal dose for an adult bee is 150 ppb. The problem is that neonics stay in the plant for a long time (the exposure last a long time). What happens to the colony with prolonged exposure? Nobody knows. The EPA only requires pesticide manufacturers to study the effects of chemicals on adult bees.

Many times applicators of pesticides add additional adjuvants (chemicals to make the pesticide stickier or to penetrate the plant more effectively) for cost reasons. These were discovered to affect bees. When things are combined (i.e. Pristine, adjuvant, insect growth regulator) the effect on the bees can be significant but there are no studies on this yet.

The Europeans have recently banned the use of neonicotinoids so, in effect, they are conducting a big experiment of the effects of neonics on bees in the real world. However, the neonics are in the soil so it may take a long time to remove them from the system.

The unanticipated colony loss appears to be a northern hemisphere problem. Australia uses a lot of neonics but has no varroa.

Beekeeping Classes

This list of classes was collected from various sources for the benefit of our members, because education is a key ingredient in beekeeping.

Make Your Own Mead! with Robert MacKimmie of City Bees

Sunday June 9th
3:30 pm – 6:00 pm
Sticky Art Lab, 1682 University Ave (at McGee), Berkeley

Learn the secrets to making mead--and take home your own gallon to ferment at home--at this hands-on class taught by apiarist, Robert MacKimmie of City Bees. Speculated to be mankind's first fermented beverage, mead is easy to make at home, yet fine enough to serve at special occasions (read: no better way to impress guests at your next party). Participants will mix their gallon of mead under Robert's ever-watchful eye, ensuring delicious results. The class will also discuss and review more advanced recipes for Cyser (apple and honey wine) and Melomel (fruit and honey). Best of all, plenty of tasty samples will be provided. Each participant goes home with a gallon jug of mead and recipes, ready to ferment!

Fees: \$60 (all ingredients & equipment provided for a gallon jug of mead)

To Register: Register online at:
<http://biofueloasis.com/workshops/>

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The pest will still be there so new more lethal chemicals will probably be developed.

- Q. I used to spray my fruit trees but stopped when I started keeping bees. Now I have a lot of buggy fruit. Is it ok to spray pesticides on my fruit trees or will it harm the bees?
- A. Spraying is ok but not during the time of pollen or nectar collection
- Q. What are some alternative methods to control mites?
- A. 1. Powdered sugar dusting is a way to depress the mites but it will not eliminate them.
2. Organically, you could use formic acid, (Mite Away Quick Strips), or thymol (Apiguard).

Fall Hive Management & Harvesting Honey with Bonnie Morse

Saturday, July 20th
9:30 am – 12:30 pm
Location TBA

Late summer can bring a variety of problems including increasing mite counts, yellow jacket problems, and lack of forage. Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms and how you can assist the colony during difficult times. Your bees will have already begun winter hive preparation. You should be thinking ahead, too: how much to reduce the hive, timing for doing so, simple things you can do to help bees during winter, signs you should recognize that your colony is in trouble. Fall is also the time of year to determine how much excess honey you can extract. We will review this as well as methods of removing frames, extracting honey, bottling honey and cleaning the wet frames.

To Register: email Bonnie:
bonnie@bonniebeecompany.com

Les Crowder Workshop

Les Crowder, a beekeeper for over thirty years, a top-bar beekeeper for seventeen years, a leader in the development and promotion of natural beekeeping, and a co-author of the book "Top-Bar Beekeeping: Organic Practices for Honeybee Health" will be coming to the Bay Area to teach a Beekeeping Workshop in June.

Dates: June 8 and June 9

Times: 10 am to 5 pm

Location: Berkeley Hills - exact address will be given at registration

Cost: \$80 for one day, \$140 for both days. Limited sliding scholarship available based on financial need.

Topics: June 8 - hive design, honeybee biology, getting bees going in the hive, comb management for expansion and swarm prevention
June 9 - harvesting honey, beeswax, propolis, making divides, raising queens, getting ready for winter.

Contact: Julia Roll (510) 684-1603, julia_roll@yahoo.com

Can't make it on the 8th or 9th? Les will also be speaking at the Treatment Free Beekeeping Conference outside of Portland, OR July 26-28 and at the WAS (Western Apicultural Society) annual conference in Santa Fe, NM October 16-19

Club Bee Order - Update



Installing queen cells into the nucs at Bonnie Bee & Co.

The spring supply of nucs from Bonnie Bee & Company is sold out. They are planning a second round of queen rearing with nucs that will be ready in late June/early July. If you are interested, contact bonnie@bonniebeecompany.com.

Five deep* frame nuc (nucleus) colonies are \$150
*Some medium frame nucs will be available. Request when ordering.

For more information visit
www.bonniebeecompany.com

Celebration of the Bees: Gardening for Pollinators



The Celebration of the Bees, sponsored by Savory Thymes and SuperOrganism at Hillside Gardens in Mill Valley was another resounding success.

The day included rich learning experiences about honey bees. The bee information area was hosted by Dave Peterson and Volker Ackermann (Volker brought a caged queen). Charlie Kennard brought a display of woven skeps and his skep weaving demonstration was very popular.

Guests were warmly greeted by Marina Wright and Jessie Draper and thanks to them check in was very smooth. The honey tasting in the living room, hosted by Annaleis Atchley, included varietal honeys sourced by Mea McNeil and local honeys provided by Bonnie and Gary Morse, Richard and Karen Hyde, Jerry Draper and Mea McNeil, Jeff Kent, Dan Stralka, Diane Cohn and Craig Merrilees (from Hillside Garden's hives), Bob and Anna Gravley, Robert MacKimmie, Dave Peterson, and Rob Tysinger.

Dan Stralka brought a number of meads to taste and there were lively discussions of each one including the onion mead.

The native bee walk and talk brought Dr. Gordon Frankie (who also gave a talk about his current work) and Celeste Ets-Hokin to the gardens.

Celtic music by Marc and Philip Batchelder and Jerry Draper blended with the education, food, drink, mead, talks, and otherwise good times. We all enjoyed ice cream bars donated by Haagen-Daz to end the event.

Fair News

The fair is fast approaching. This year the fair runs from July 3rd to the 7th. Now is the time to assemble your entries. The categories and criteria can be found on line at <http://www.marinafair.org/2013/competitive-exhibits/~media/Files/Fair/2013/Entry%20Forms/2013%20HONEY.pdf>

Entries can be dropped off at the rear of the fair building across from the Civic Center Friday 7 June from 3 to 7 and Saturday, 8 June from 10 to 5.

Please bring them in even if you did not pre-register, that can be taken care of at the time. Judging will be on Sunday.

Final plans are being made for the Fair exhibit. There are still spaces available at the booth. Please check your calendars and sign up. Remember that you get a pass to the fair and enjoy the rest of the fair while not at the booth: music, exhibits, animals, artwork and fireworks. The sign up sheet will be passed at the June club meeting and is available on the Buzz, or email Dan Stralka at stralka.daniel@epa.gov with the time and date you are interested in signing up for along with your contact phone number.

Hive Tips

The flow (nectar and pollen) has slowed considerably in the last few weeks. The affect this has on a hive will vary considerably based on location and each individual colony. Overwintered colonies that may have had excess stores coming out of winter in addition to being able to take advantage of early spring conditions may be in a better food storage position than new spring nucs, splits and packages. Colonies in southern Marin and north along the 101 corridor tend to have more forage available at this time of year than northern Marin and areas west of (and including) San Anselmo.

When inspecting your hive(s), be on the look out for stored pollen (bee bread), nectar, and capped honey. Is it there? Great. Not? Consider feeding. It may seem early in the season to do so, but lack of March & April rains are causing an earlier summer dearth than is usual. Also, with the increase in popularity of beekeeping, there are simply a lot more bees that need food. Be mindful that feeding can have unintended consequences of attracting ants and/or robbing and mitigate as needed.

Reduction in pollen availability can lead to

reduction or stopping of brood production. If you don't see eggs/larvae when inspecting your hive(s), check to see if pollen (bee bread) resources are present. If not, lack of brood may be related to lack of food as opposed to the colony being queenless.

Robbing has been reported already in weaker colonies in areas with a recent considerable slow down in nectar availability. If you have a smaller colony, keep an eye out and perhaps consider reducing the entrance (if you haven't done so already) to help make it easier for the colony to protect itself.

Yellow jackets are starting to make an appearance around hives. Despite their conspicuous absence earlier in the season, yellow jackets are starting to make their appearance hauling off dead and weak bees around hives. While this activity can be beneficial, it is prudent to keep an eye out. If you see yellow jackets entering healthy hives, it would be a good time to reduce entrances (or add a robber screen) to help make it easier for the colony to protect itself.

From The Librarian's Desk

After this month's meeting we will be on hiatus until September. Please stop by the table and pick out a summer read - we have a nice selection of bee-related fiction that may help you while away the hours while you are on vacation.

At the potluck supper in August, the library will be hosting a silent auction. We have a number of interesting items for you to bid on including candle making equipment, honey containers and a very generous donation from club member Roy Crumrine of a starter hive (minus the bees!). If you are interested in donating something to the auction, please contact Marina at marinamay@earthlink.net.

Pacific Northwest Treatment-Free Beekeeping Conference

July 26 to 28, 2013

Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon (30 mins. drive from downtown Portland).

For more information or to register online:
<http://www.blisshoneybees.org/Events.html>