

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 6, Issue 2

February 2014

What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a talk by Rob Keller, local beekeeper from Napa, founder and owner of Napa Valley Bee Company. Rob also teaches at the St. Helena Montessori School, where he incorporates beekeeping into the program. Rob first became interested in bees when he was pursuing a Masters in Fine Arts at UC Davis. Since then, he has found interesting and amusing ways to combine his art with beekeeping. He currently manages bees for 35 clients in the Napa Valley and describes himself as the “pool boy for bees”.

The main focus of Rob’s presentation was the small hive beetle. Small hive beetle was first discovered in Napa Valley in 2012. Rob thought that the beetle was only in an isolated area. He was told that small hive beetles would not be able to survive winter in the Napa Valley.

Rob began monitoring hives for the small hive beetle, using commercially available beetle traps. The beetle is very elusive and without trapping it isn’t possible to know they are present in a hive. He also encouraged other beekeepers in the valley to do the same. Within several months they found that the beetle had spread throughout the valley. Also, the number of beetles trapped was increasing. At first they would find one or two beetles in a trap. Now it is not uncommon to find more than 40 beetles in a trap.

Right now they are noticing dead adult beetles on the monitoring trays but the beetle is known to overwinter in the honey bee cluster.

Adult female beetles fly into a hive where they lay their eggs in protected crevasses in the hive. The larvae hatch and feed on the honey and pollen. As the larvae move about the hive they defecate forming a slimy mess which results in the honey fermenting. Once the larvae have matured they will leave the hive and burrow into the soil. There they will pupate into adult beetles. Small Hive Beetles are strong fliers and can travel upwards of 10 miles to find a suitable hive.

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What’s the Buzz

Our next meeting will be on Thursday February 6, 2014 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA. starting at 7:30 pm. The meeting will feature a talk by Dr. Marla Spivak, Distinguished Knight University Professor at the University of Minnesota.

The title of Dr. Spivak’s talk will be Benefits of “Propolis and Risks of Pesticides to Bee Health: New Findings from the Spivak Lab”.

Upcoming Meetings:

March 6, 2014

Dr. [Eric Mussen](#), UC Extension Apiculturist, beekeeper extraordinaire and longtime presenter in the annual speaker series. This will be his last presentation before he retires.

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Recently, Rob found a hive in a dead tree that had been slimed by the beetles. The slime has the consistency of taffy and is very difficult to wash off.

What do you do about Small Hive Beetle?

1. Place traps in your hives to determine if you have small hive beetle.
2. If you find small hive beetle, let others know so that they can watch for them.
3. Maintain a clean apiary to reduce attraction to beetles. Keep monitoring trays clean. Remove monitoring tray debris from the apiary. Don't scrape in onto the ground.
4. Keep colonies strong. Weak colonies are more susceptible to beetle infestation.

Dues are Due

A reminder that annual dues for 2014 are now due. Dues are still just \$20 per year. Dues become delinquent if not paid by the January meeting. The Buzz will be purged after the February meeting and non-renewed Members will be transferred to the Prior Member List. You can pay in person to David Peterson at the monthly meeting, or pay online at the club website <http://marinbeekeepers.org>, click on the "Become a Member" tab and follow the instructions to renew, or mail you check made payable to Marin Beekeepers to:

Marin Beekeepers
c/o Mary Nordquist
2072 Hatch Road
Novato, CA 94947

Members with new contact info please make sure to include your address, phone number and e-mail.

Membership includes free admission to all meetings, access to the Club's honey extracting equipment, and subscription to the Club's "Marin Buzz" listserv, which serves as an online discussion forum and a way to notify Club members of local bee swarm information.

April 3, 2014

Dr. [Maryann Frazier](#), Sr. Extension Associate in the Entomology Department at Penn State University. Dr. Frazier's research includes determining the effect on honey bee colonies of pesticide residues in pollen collected by foraging bees.

May 1, 2014

Dr. [Gordon Frankie](#), Professor of Environmental Science, UC Berkeley. Dr. Frankie's research focuses on the behavioral ecology and community organization of solitary bee species in selected environments in California and Costa Rica.

June 5, 2014

Dr. [Deborah Delaney](#), Assistant Professor at the University of Delaware. Dr. Delaney's research includes the genetic characterization of unmanaged bee colonies, savethehives.com feral bee project, and evolutionary biology of honey bees.

Hive Tips

Please note: In a usual year, the hive tips for this time of year are relevant to just about all the beekeepers around the county. In this extreme year of drought, however, what is status quo in one area might not apply at all to the bees just a few miles away. Pay careful attention to what you are seeing with your own hives before applying recommendations found here (or from any other beekeeping resource).

With the temperature climbing above 60 degrees on many recent days, you can check your hive if needed. If you do so, have a plan for why you are going in and what you are looking for. Plan to inspect during the warmest part of the day and keep your inspection as brief as possible. Inspecting at this time of year for curiosity sake could potentially do more harm than good, though a well planned and executed inspection could save a colony from starvation, mites or congestion that may lead to swarming.

Prevent your bees from swarming: make sure there is adequate space in the brood chamber.

- o **Strong hives may be building quickly.** If your bees are starting to get crowded, add more space. Most importantly – be sure there is contiguous space in the brood chamber. If you add additional space, but there is only honey between it and brood area, you will not prevent brood area congestion – which is the cause of swarming.
- o **Bees not quite ready for more space above?** But you are concerned about swarm prevention? Add space BELOW. A super below your other hive bodies will give queen potential space to expand into and also give space to returning foragers.
- o **Adding extra space to a weaker colony will just make it that much harder for them to keep the brood cluster at the right temperature.** How can you tell? One indication of adequate ability to keep the brood cluster warm will be if the foragers are leaving the hive early in the morning. If the foragers can leave during colder times of the day, then it may be an indication that they have enough workers to maintain the brood cluster temperature and still have workers to spare for foraging.

Do your bees need food?

- o Colonies (particularly smaller ones) that overwintered successfully may be building up quickly with our warm weather and available forage. But, some may be doing so hand to mouth, consuming as much food stores as they are bringing in. This could even lead to starvation

if we get successive days of rain and bees are kept inside – and capped brood starts to emerge. Consider feeding if you do not see ample pollen or nectar stores.

Considering splitting?

- o Keep in mind that research shows that well mated queens do better in the long term. That means plenty of drones out flying during queen mating flights. It takes 24 days for drones to go from an egg to cell emergence. It takes an additional 14 days to reach full maturity.
- o Drones are flying now and it is more than likely that a queen could mate, the question is whether the time is optimal for her to do so.

Time to set up your bait hives!

- o First swarm of the season was reported on February 22nd. If you plan to set out bait hives this year, now is a good time to do so.
- o Review Tom Seeley's book, **Honeybee Democracy**, for complete details on what his research has shown that swarms prefer in a nesting cavity.
- o No time to read? Local beekeepers report success with the following set up:
 1. Deep hive box
 2. A couple of frames with empty built out combs (if you have them) in the center surrounded by empty frames with starter strips (or just empty space – but you'll need to add frames soon after they move in or else they will start building from the top of the box).
 3. Entrance reducer set to medium
 4. Box above the ground 2-3' (higher if you are able)Optional: Spray lemon grass tea (boil lemon grass until you make a dark tea) or other substances mimicking queen pheromones on the top of the frames and entrance of the hive.
Wait to observe scouts!
- o Have a bait hive tip? Post it to the Buzz!

Spring Beekeeping Classes

Bonnie Bee & Company beginning and intermediate class series.

Beginning Beekeeping class series (9 hours, \$99)

Classroom sessions will include basic bee information, seasonal cycles of a colony, equipment options, where to place your hive, how to get bees and tips on working with your equipment. When the weather warms up, there will be a field session so you can observe and practice working with your tools and bees.

Classroom sessions: Wed., Jan. 22nd – Wed. Feb 5th (3 classes), 6:30 – 8:30pm,

San Rafael Community Center, 618 B St., San Rafael
Field Day: Sat., Mar. 15th, 9:30am – 12:30pm (location TBD, tentatively San Geronimo)

(Rain Day for Field Day: Sat. Mar 22, 9:30am – 12:30pm)

(Drop in for classroom sessions only = \$25/each)
Additional information and registration in the 'Youth and Adult' classes through [San Rafael Community Center](#)

Intermediate Beekeeping class series (9 hours, \$99)

You've got your colony through winter (or not) - now what? Class sessions will include how to clean up your equipment, expanding hive size for spring, swarm prevention- and if that fails, swarm capture, setting up bait hives for swarms, identification of common pests and diseases and management options for them.

Topics will also include dealing with special situations: aggressive hives, queen failures, and laying workers. Field day will include information on how to split a colony, pest and disease ID, and swarm prevention.

Classroom sessions: Tues., Feb 11th – Tues. Feb 25th (3 sessions), 6:30 – 8:30pm,

San Rafael Community Center, 618 B St., San Rafael
Field Day: Sat., Mar. 15th, 1:30pm – 3:30pm (location TBD, tentatively San Geronimo)

(Drop in for classroom sessions only = \$25/each)
Additional information and registration in the 'Youth and Adult' classes, class #21742, through [San Rafael Community Center](#)

Backyard Beekeeping (4 hours, \$39)

This is the condensed version of our Beginner Beekeeping class series and includes information on considerations before you get started, where to place hive(s), equipment options and sources, and how to get bees. Also, basic information on cycles of colonies

and what you will need to be doing with your hive at different times of the year.

Saturday, March 8th, 10am – 2pm

Fairfax Women's Club, 46 Park Rd, Fairfax

Additional information and registration available through [Sustainable Fairfax](#)

City Bees

Master Classes Workshops

\$20 fee per class or \$15 each for the series of 6 workshops. \$15 current local bee organization members, \$10 limited income. 6:30-9:00PM.

These Master Class Workshops:

- Provide the foundation to move your beekeeping practices comprehensively to the next level;
- Convey critical awareness about the obvious clues and timing for each seasonal next step;
- Share insight into the rhythmic patterns unique to San Francisco and the Bay Area.
- Will be especially meaningful to those who have had hives for several years but need to know what's next, and will provide a full spectrum of valuable insight for new and recent beekeepers. These synergistic classes weave together core knowledge of hive management with a bird's eye view of the entire year, and how timing is critical at each phase for overall hive success and prosperity.

January - (date/location to be announced)

OUT FROM BEHIND THE SUN

- Bay Area weather differences, strong overwintering, winter mite reduction techniques, essential protein supplement FYI, early brood buildup, equipment finesse - what matters and what's fluff, primary steps for annual bee success.

February - (date/location to be announced)

BUILDING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT - LIKE YOU MEAN IT

- Hive equipment options, what matters in hivesware, jigs for production speed building, glue for forever, handy specialized optional configurations, and ancient wisdom for the NOW.

March - (date/location to be announced)

DELIVERING SPRING'S PROSPERITY BOOM

- Spring Expansion: colony start-up choices, making splits, drawing comb - choices and production methods, simple queen rearing, swarm controls, hive

See Classes on Page 5

Club Bee Order



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

Once again the Nuc decided to support the efforts of our club members Bonnie and Gary Morse, owners of Bonnie Bee & Company, to provide nucs with queens mated from local Marin stock.

Five deep* frame nuc (nucleus) colonies are \$170 each and will be available late April - mid-May (weather dependent).

*Some medium frame nucs will be available. Request when ordering.

Order your bees directly from Bonnie Bee & Company by contacting Gary Morse at gpmorse@comcast.net, telephone: 415-699-5856.

For more information visit www.bonniebeecompany.com

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stack management, IPM-drone trapping, timing and overall strategies for reduced hive losses.

April - (date/location to be announced)
HANDLING THE POWERFUL REINS OF 'SPRING INTO SUMMER'

- Hive stack & comb manipulation, balancing hives, corrective action, honey flow & harvesting, wax management, honey options - storage and bottling choices.

May - (date/location to be announced)
LATE SUMMER - ANTICIPATE DEARTH, RUN AROUND DEATH, AND WHISTLE PAST TROUBLE

- Mite monitoring schema, Integrated Pest

Management (IPM) techniques, organic mite control methods. Viruses, bacterial disease impact, and parasite vectored diseases - FoulBrood & Nosema Ceranae, tests for Hygienic Bee Behavior, Mite resistance, Phorid Fly Parasitism. Dearth Impact, Record Keeping.

August - (date/location to be announced)
MAINTAINING HIVE HEALTH THROUGH THE ANNUAL CYCLE, PLUS FOUNDATIONAL WORK FOR NEXT SPRING'S SUCCESS

- Fall nectar flow patterns, seasonal population decline, protein feed health essentials, preparation for winter & hive shutdown, working hives through winter.

For further information - 415-722-7640,
robert@citybees.com, or
<http://citybees.com/classes.htm>

Marin Broodless / Survivorstock Study Update

This spring, Bonnie Bee & Company, will begin a data collection intensive study to try to understand how "survivorstock" bees are making it here in Marin. Grant funds for this project are being collected by SuperOrganism. The bees to be used for the study have come from stock collected over the past two years that have reportedly gone through prolonged broodless periods during unanticipated times. Mite numbers, hive weights, brood status and more will be collected at regular intervals. In 2014, it is anticipated that the hives will be visited a minimum of 20 times each. With the added need to clean monitoring boards 24 hours before each inspection, it will require a total of at least 40 visits to that apiary this year. The goal is to include twenty colonies for the study.

Thanks to the enthusiastic support of many associated with the Romberg center for Environmental Studies and particularly John Hafernik, interim director, final sites for the bees have recently received approval. Depending on the success of the first year, the possibility has been offered to use the site for continued study past 2014.

Assistance is still needed for fundraising to make this study a reality. Fully funded, the project will cost \$13,500 for twenty colonies for a one year study. Fundraising ideas are welcome. [Tax deductible donations can be made through SuperOrganism.](#)

Inquiries about the study can be made to Bonnie Morse: bonnie@bonniebeecompany.com