

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 8, Issue 7

July / August 2016

What You Missed

Our June meeting featured a presentation by Marin Beekeepers member Bonnie Morse. Bonnie, along with her husband Gary Morse, are owners of Bonnie Bee and Company, which produces locally sourced queens and nucs. Bonnie presented the results of the broodless study that Bonnie and Gary undertook in March of 2014.

In 2011 while collecting samples for the Marin Beekeepers' Pollen Project she noticed that several colonies appeared to be broodless but not queenless. She observed colonies that were without brood for up to 76 days. The bees in these colonies were calm and purposeful, not plugging the brood nest with nectar. There was plenty of food available. The broodless period seemed to have a positive impact on the survival rate of the colonies. Of 19 colonies in one apiary 9 had broodless periods. 7 of the 9 survived the winter, of the other 10 colonies only 2 survived the winter.

Bonnie and Gary decided to conduct an experiment to see if this trait was hereditary. In March 2014 they created 20 two frame splits from colonies that had previously displayed broodless period behavior. The colonies consisted of one frame of brood and one frame of food, with an additional frame of bees shaken into the split. The bees were managed equally, using common management techniques. Mite counts were taken on a regular basis.

These colonies did not appear to mimic the mother colonies. The only significant brood breaks observed were related to swarming and supercedure. In 2014 no colonies swarmed or superseded the queen. In 2015 5 colonies swarmed. Swarming did not appear to impact the mite counts in the remaining colonies.

Who survived?

18 colonies were alive in December of 2014. Four colonies died in February of 2015 due to dysentery. Thirteen colonies remained in March of 2015. Nine

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What's the Buzz?

There is no regular meeting of the Marin County Beekeepers in August. Instead, please plan to join us on August 6th, starting at 6 pm, 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> and click on Club Resources for more information on the event and to sign up to bring a dish. Everyone should bring their own plates, utensils and drinking glasses. This is a **GREEN "ZERO WASTE" EVENT**. All items should be brought in a reusable or recyclable/compostable container. Please plan on taking your recyclables / compostables / garbage with when you *leave the event*.

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

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swarms were added to the 13 colonies that overwintered 2014/2015. By March of 2016 only 7 colonies remained. Eight colonies had high mite counts to which they succumbed. One colony was killed by yellowjackets. There was no obvious reason for the loss of the other 5 colonies.

Bonnie pointed out that 2015 was a tough year for beekeepers in southern Marin. Their company suffered 65% losses in that area last year.

They observed that mite count did not appear to predict colony survival. They looked at drone population, but that didn't appear to have an effect on survival. They did observe that the timing of peak mite load had some impact on survival.

The most useful information that they obtained was understanding the rapid rate of colony build-up during the winter in Marin County. Most books about beekeeping are written in the east or mid-west where winters are colder and last longer. Our build-up period is usually February to April. Marin beekeepers need to be ready to react to colony build-up earlier than most books predict. Marin beekeepers also need to be aware that colony size also needs to be adjusted for winter, November to February. Hive size should be reduced, as required, to help the bees overwinter.

and then make a left turn at the next light onto Wilson Avenue. Follow Wilson for approximately 1 1/4 miles.

There will be stop signs 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.

Upcoming Meetings:

September 1, 2016

Diana Sammataro, PhD Ohio State University. Dr. Sammataro is a research entomologist at the Carl Hayden Honey Bee Research Lab, Tucson, AZ. Dr. Sammataro's talk is titled "Varroa: Meet the Enemy". The biggest threat to our bees comes from the parasitic varroa mite and diseases it vectors. Learn about its lifecycle in relation to bees and the seasons.

October 6, 2016

Claire Kremen, PhD, Duke University, Dr. Kremen is a professor of arthropod Biodiversity, Department of Environmental Sciences, Policy, and Management, University of California, Berkeley She will be talking about how honeybees and native bees interact.

November 3, 2016

TBA

December 1, 2016

Marion Ellis, PhD, University of Nebraska. Dr. Ellis is a professor of Entomology at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE. He will discuss the use of formic acid.

January 5, 2017

Bernardo Nino, staff research associate, Department of Entomology, University of California, Davis, CA.

February 2, 2017

TBA

March 2, 2017

Ross Conrad, beekeeper and owner of Dancing Bee Gardens, Middlebury, CT. He will speak about CCD and Organic Solutions. Workshops will be scheduled for Saturday.

April 6, 2017

Charlie Blevin, beekeeper, San Francisco, CA. He will discuss swarms and extractions.

May 4, 2017

Randy Oliver. Workshops will be scheduled for Saturday.

June 1, 2017

TBA

July

No meeting: Marin County Fair.

August

No meeting: Marin Beekeepers Annual Potluck.

Hive Tips

Yellow jacket populations are peaking. Yellow jacket populations seem to be rather robust right now. They can be seen constantly around many apiaries now 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. If your colony is already reducing the population in preparation for winter, it may be time to consider harvesting excess honey or removing unneeded boxes to reduce amount of space the bees need to defend.

Do NOT hang yellowjacket traps on or near your hives. The pheromones that help lure the yellowjackets into the trap may actually be attracting more yellowjackets to your apiary.

A fake hornets' nest can be hung nearby to try to discourage them. (See photo.) We've had mixed results with this, but hey – it's just a crumbled up paper bag so it's inexpensive and worth a try if you're having trouble. A plate or bowl with balsamic vinegar may also help to deter yellowjackets.



A "Fake Hornet's Nest" to Deter Yellowjackets

Robbing by other bees tends to become more problematic at this time of year. If you have a small 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. If robbing starts, you need to stop it immediately. Some good suggestions for options on how to do so are available on the website of Michael Bush: <http://www.bushfarms.com/beesrobbing.htm>

Varroa mites. Now is the time to start monitoring your mite levels, if you haven't started already. As fall approaches, we tend to see decreasing colony populations and increasing varroa mite populations. This can be a deadly combination for your colonies. You might think that we are hardly into summer, but mite numbers are building up now – or may be building up now in your colony.

By regularly monitoring the levels of mite infestations in your colonies, you'll have a better idea if high mite levels are due to your bees' inability to deal with mites in the colony (which some bees do through hygienic behavior (often observed as uncapped pupae), grooming, broodless periods, etc.) or whether a sudden spike this fall might be due to your colony finding and robbing out a nearby crashing hive. Information on [how to do a sugar roll to determine varroa infestation % is available from the University of Minnesota](#)

There are passionate voices on both sides of the debate on whether to treat or not to treat. There is logical reasoning on the pros and cons on both sides. Keep in mind that your bees' problems could quickly become another hives problem. And because of the increasing number of beekeepers – and increasing hive density, particularly in some neighborhoods - a moderate approach to consider would be to treat if mite levels go above a certain threshold. If your bees have shown no method of resistance (you should be looking for it every time you inspect), you might consider requeening the colony with more resistant stock when that option next becomes available. If you have been monitoring your bees and they have shown mite resistance, you might provide a treatment as a way to help them reduce the number of introduced mites, and consider giving their queen another chance.

Visit www.scientificbeekeeping.com for information from Randy Oliver on treatment options and application information. Get as much information as possible on the pros/cons of different approaches before/if you decide to treat for mites.

Diana Sammataro will be discussing varroa mites at the September Marin Beekeepers' meeting. She will also be leading a workshop which will include a demonstration of doing a sugar roll and options for treatment. Space is limited so sign up early!

Fair News



R2D2 Looks for the Queen

The Marin County Fair bee exhibit was another great success this year. The exhibit was well attended as usual and there was a lot of excitement to see the observation hive displayed. Thanks again to Dave and Bonnie and Gary for the use of their observation hives and to everyone who staffed the booth and answered questions. Thanks goes out to Wendy Lee, Tim Ezekiel and Tim Crosse for securing and arranging the bee-friendly plants from West End Nursery in San Rafael. There were some great entries for the honey competition. There are 10 different categories for the Honey Judging and as usual we had about 20 honey entries but there were fewer entries in the other categories than usual. Now that we have a fair number of honey entries, let's see if we can raise more interest in the other categories. Remember you have to play to win.

As for the Honey Competition, here are the final results.

Honey

Eucalyptus Blend

1st Richard Hyde, Tiburon, CA
Floral

1st Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA
2nd Beth Renneisen, Fairfax, CA
3rd Laura J Dawson, Mill Valley, CA
3rd Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA

Wild Flower

1st Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA
1st Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA
2nd Richard Hyde, Tiburon, CA
2nd Marina Wright, Sausalito, CA
2nd Eric Gustavson, Mill Valley, CA
3rd Bill Papendick, San Rafael, CA
3rd Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA
4th Jeff Kent, San Rafael, CA
4th Bill Papendick, San Rafael, CA

Crystallized

1st Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA
2nd Jeff Kent, San Rafael, CA
2nd Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA
3rd Bill Papendick, San Rafael, CA
3rd Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA

Chunk

1st Daniel Stralka, Mill Valley, CA
2nd Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA

Comb

1st Daniel Stralka, Mill Valley, CA
2nd Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA

Hive Products

Natural Beeswax

1st Richard Hyde, Tiburon, CA
2nd Daniel Stralka, Mill Valley, CA
3rd Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA
4th Bill Papendick, San Rafael, CA

Molded Beeswax

1st Rob Tysinger, Novato, CA
2nd Bill Papendick, San Rafael, CA
2nd Will Ackley, Sonoma, CA
3rd Richard Hyde, Tiburon, CA
4th Daniel Stralka, Mill Valley, CA
Hon. Mention Jim and Barbara Yeager, Corte Madera, CA

Hand Dipped Beeswax Candles

1st Daniel Stralka, Mill Valley, CA
2nd Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA

Full Frame

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1st Jim and Barbara Yeager, Corte Madera, CA
2nd Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA
3rd Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA
4th Bill Papendick, San Rafael, CA

Special Awards

Best of Show – Honey “Marin Beekeepers Award”
Daniel Stralka, Mill Valley, CA

Best of Show – Beeswax
Rob & Karen Tysinger, Novato, CA
Best of Show – Full Frame
Jim and Barbara Yeager, Corte Madera, CA

Salvisberg Award
Bonnie & Gary Morse, San Rafael, CA

Bee Audacious Update

Over 2/3's of the participants have now been confirmed, including participants selected from registration applications. A diverse group representing a range of interest and experience continues to come together. Their enthusiasm to be part of this gathering is infectious! You can be part of it, too. We are looking for people who want to host a participant before or after the conference. We also have a few spaces still left for volunteer note takers who will be recording breakout sessions. You need to be able to type quickly and have a laptop computer to be considered. To inquire about either opportunity, send an email to: info@beeaudacious.com.

Mark your calendar for the panel discussion of the leaders, including Tom Seeley, Marla Spivak, Mark Winston, Jim Frazier, William Klett, Stephen Martin, Heather Mattila, Chas Mraz, Francis Ratrieks, and Neal Williams, that will take place at Dominican University of California at 7:00pm on December 14th. Tickets will be available in the early fall. Can't make it? It will be live streamed and available for viewing at www.beeaudacious.com.

If you missed the booster.com campaign, don't worry! You can now buy Bee Audacious t-shirts anytime through Bee Progressive. They just took delivery of their first order of shirts and they will be on their website soon. Check back later in the week if you don't see them now. They will be adding hoodies and tie dye shirts to the line up starting this fall. A portion of all Bee Audacious sales will be donated to help cover conference expenses. To date, we have raised 71% of our \$100,000 goal. Sponsorship opportunities are still available. Donations happily accepted and all are tax-deductible.

Beekeeping Classes

Upcoming Classes

Honey Extracting

Bonnie Morse
Saturday, September 17, 10am – 12pm, \$30 per person
The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax
Tel: 415-342-5092.

Fall and Winter Hive Management class series,

The majority of annual hive losses occur between October and December. We review the reasons for this – primarily varroa mites. Other management issues that occur when temperatures start to cool include feeding, managing space, moisture management, how to inspect hives with minimal time / intrusion, and off-season queen issues / solutions.

Bonnie Morse
Classroom sessions, Wednesdays, 9/28 & 10/5, 6:30pm – 8:30pm, location: San Rafael Community Center
Field Workshop, Saturday, 10/8, 9:30am – 12:30pm, location TBA
\$80 or \$30 drop in for classroom sessions, \$40 drop in for field workshop
Register through the [San Rafael Community Center](http://SanRafaelCommunityCenter)

Beekeeping Workshops

Diana Sammataro will be conducting two workshops on Saturday September 3rd in Corte Madera.

1) 9:00am – 12:00pm: Mite Workshop: Learn how to do sugar rolls, count sticky boards, assess mite related diseases, and treatment options (Mite Away Quick Strips and oxalic dribble).

2) 1:00pm – 4:00pm Bee feed: The best nutrition for bees comes from diverse foraging sources. You'll learn about planting for bees to provide food through the seasons. Sometimes that's not enough so you'll learn to assess food stores, and supplemental feeding options, if needed.

Each workshop cost \$50 per person, 20 person max per session.

Contact Richard Hyde at rh@hyderanches.com to reserve a space.

Alameda Beekeepers Bee Symposium

The ACBA (Alameda County Beekeeping Association) celebrates its centennial with a Symposium: a day of workshops on How to Be a Better Beekeeper.

Beekeepers of all skill levels are invited to attend. There will be exhibits, vendors, and a honey tasting as part of the event.

Speakers include: **Randy Oliver**, scientificbeekeeping.com, **Jeremy Rose**, author of Beekeeping in Coastal California, **Brian Johnson**, UC-Davis, **Kate Frey**, author of The Bee-Friendly Garden, **Jennifer Radtke**, BioFuel Oasis Cooperative, **Robert MacKimmie**, City Bees, **Alan Kramer**, Alameda County Hobbyist Beekeeper/Beebreeder, **Chef Clyde Serda**, Honey Tasting of 4 Seasonal East Bay Honeys

When: Sunday, August 28, 2016 from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Where: Ed Roberts Campus - 3075 Adeline Street, Berkeley, CA 94703

Visit <http://www.alamedabees.org/> for more information and to sign up for the symposium



Fair Photos

