

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 9, Issue 5

May 2017

What You Missed

Our April meeting featured a presentation by Charlie Blevin, beekeeper, San Francisco, CA. Charlie spoke about catching swarms.

Charlie has been keeping bees for over 8 years. He is a past president of SF Beekeepers Association and is the founder of a nonprofit "Habitat for Honeybees."

He has 30 to 40 different apiaries and catches up to 50 swarms a year. His main apiary is on a rooftop in SF but he is reducing that because of his age.

There are two types of swarms:

- Reproductive Swarm
 - Everything is geared toward surviving winter
 - They want to swarm before the spring flow to increase their chance of survival
 - When the brood frames fill with nectar they slow down feeding the queen and end up swarming
- Overcrowding Swarm
 - Can happen anytime, not just early spring
 - Bees have no more room to store nectar so they start filling up brood frames
 - Honey and pollen start to clog the brood boxes so there is no room for brood
- Swarm Cell
 - Swarm cells usually form at or near the bottom of a frame
 - You can take swarm cell out and place it in a nuc to create a new hive.

If your hives swarm it means that you are keeping healthy bees.

- Recommended Equipment for Swarm Catching
 - Well ventilated nuc box or modified deeps
 - Queen clip (practice on drone)
 - Clean cloth tarp

See What You Missed on Page 2

What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday May 4, 2017 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA, starting at 7:30 pm. The meeting will feature a talk by Randy Oliver. "Reading the Combs: Understanding Bee Biology over the Course of a Season".

Randy has defined the eleven biological phases that the colony goes through over the course of the season. With photographs, He will explain how the beekeeper can "read the combs" in order to determine how the bees are doing at each point in time, and whether they need help. Such visual confirmation then allows one to make informed management decisions to fit their situation and goals.

Upcoming Meetings:

June 1, 2017

Gadgets and Gizmos

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- Bee brush
- Dust pan
- Caution tape
- Pruning shears. Small branch clippers/ garden loppers
- Ladder – maybe two different sizes
- Bee vac

In SF there are many beekeepers for a small area, 7 square miles. Swarm catching is a necessity or the city will regulate bees making it harder to keep bees in the city.

Catching Swarms:

- Tap and drop
 - Spread tarp under bees this will catch any bees that don't drop into the box.
 - Dust pan can be used for scooping bees off of flat surfaces.
 - Put a box under the swarm. Tap branch and the bees fall into the box. Nine times out of ten the queen will drop into the box. If the queen is in the box the bees will go in. Leave the box until nightfall and then take them away.
- Queen catch
 - If you can find the queen you can use the queen clip to scoop up the queen. Put the clip between two frames in the center of the box. The bees will be drawn to the queen.
 - Sometime you just have to search carefully to find the queen.
 - Take your time.
- Bee Vac
 - Useful when bees are in an unusual place where tap and drop doesn't work, on a car for instance.
 - You can make your own bee vac. Look online "Bushkill Vac".
 - Good if the head of your shop vac is removable so that you can attach the head directly to bee vac apparatus.
 - Need a nozzle that is a narrow opening but wide on one side. That way you can run the edge of the nozzle along the bees. The small opening increases the vacuum at the opening

of the nozzle. Once it goes into the hose the vacuum is decreased so that the suction on the bees becomes less intense.

- Work from the center out (the queen is usually in the center).
- You can also mount the shop vac head to a 5 gal bucket. Add a shoulder strap to the bucket and then you can suck up bees into the bucket.
- With the bucket method, take the screened lid off and place a hive box with comb on top of the bucket. Within a few hours the bees will all move up into the box.
- The key is to make sure that you don't have the suction set too high or it will kill bees.
- Make sure your bee vac is well ventilated since the bees will be generating a lot of heat.

Charlie is working on using a cordless vac, since electricity is usually the problem when you are catching a swarm. The problem he is running into is how long the batteries last.

Bees will fan at the entrance, releasing nasanoff pheromone to let other bees know where the queen is and encourages the bees to enter the box.

Bees can be from ground level to 3rd floor or higher.

It is also good to have a bucket with a u-shaped metal bracket that fits around the bucket. He then has a pole attached to the u-shaped strap. Pole is a paint extension pole.

Be careful of homeowners that want to watch and or help and get too close but have no protective gear on. Warn them to stay back or watch from inside.

Cutouts are tricky. You should have some experience with building if you are going to do cutouts.

If you haven't tried to catch a swarm before, try to go with someone who has experience with swarm catching.

- Odd locations where Charlie has collected swarms
 - In a bush on the ground – put a box down with lure and the bees went in.
 - Under a picnic table – put a box under the swarm then lifted the table and let it drop to

collect the bees.

- In a recycling bin.
- On an airplane – bee vac was useful
- On a satellite dish.

Safety First!

Don't get yourself hurt trying to catch bees. If they are not accessible you could set up a catch hive. Sometimes you just have to let them go.

- Catch hive
 - Place some old drawn comb in an old hive box, one eight or ten frame deep. Place a few drops of lemon grass oil on the landing board, not too much! Wait for the swarm to move in.

Beekeeping Workshops

Randy Oliver, our May guest speaker, will be leading two beekeeping workshops on **Saturday, May 6, 2017** in Corte Madera, \$50 per person, per session, 20 person max per session.

9:30am - 12:30pm: Small scale queen rearing

1:30pm - 4:30pm: Mite monitoring and treatment options – including Aluen strips (a method for delivering an oxalic acid treatment)

Please contact Richard Hyde at rh@hyderanches.com to register and receive additional information.

There are still a few spaces left. Contact Richard today!

What's the Buzz continued from Page 1

July

No meeting: Marin County Fair. See Page 6 for more fair information.

August

No meeting: Marin Beekeepers Annual Potluck.

Beekeeping Classes

Upcoming classes with Bonnie Morse, Bonnie Bee & Company:

Coming up...our favorite workshops of the season! After we distribute nuc colonies, what is left are beautiful colonies we couldn't part with, and colonies with problems that we would not distribute. That means participants get to see a wide variety of conditions in a short amount of time, including chalkbrood, spotty brood patterns, laying worker colonies (and how to correct this problem)...possibly even drone laying queen colonies..., unhealthy larvae, etc.

Field Workshop: Beekeeping Basics (Sat., May 13, 9:30am – 12:30pm, \$50)

You have your bees, now what?? Learn tips and techniques for using smoker, bee brush and hive tool. The class will look into how to work your frames and what to be looking for to determine health of your queen and the colony as a whole. As urban beekeepers, it is important to prevent swarming (to the best of our ability), so you'll learn what causes swarming, how to prevent, and how to recognize early warnings that a colony is making preparations to swarm.

Location: TBD (San Geronimo Valley area –we'll finalize after we have determined which yard has the most interesting colonies to look at)
[Register through Eventbrite.](#) Limited to 20 people.

Field Workshop: Intermediate Beekeeping (Sat., May 13, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, \$50)

Some of the topics covered will include space management in the hive, queen issues (when you might need to replace and how you do that), and splitting a hive (for colony increase, swarm prevention, or as a method of varroa control).

Location: TBD (San Geronimo Valley area)
[Register through Eventbrite.](#) Limited to 20 people.

Fairfax: Integrated Pest Management & Hive Feeding, Sat. May 20, [Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#), 3 hours, 9am – 12pm

San Rafael: Summer and Fall Hive Management class series, Class room sessions: Wed. 7/12 – 7/26, 6:30pm – 8:30pm, San Rafael Community Center, Field Day: Sat. 8/12, 9:30am – 12:30pm, location TBD. [Register through San Rafael Community Center.](#) Course code 26729

Hive Tips

By Bonnie Morse, [Bonnie Bee & Company](#)

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

- o **Strong hives are 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 **Adding a new hive body above the brood with new frames?** Help entice bees to move up by adding a frame of with built out comb in new box. Are you a new beekeeper who doesn't have any frames with built out comb? Help entice the bees to move up by pulling a frame with young brood (young larvae & eggs) up into the new hive body from area below. Nurse bees will stay with these bees and their presence above will entice building in the new hive body. If you do this:
 - Be sure frame you pull up is kept directly above other brood frame(s) for easy access by nurse bees.
 - Replace frame you pulled in lower box. At this time of year (warmer temps so bees can break cluster to access food in different parts of the hive), you can place the replaced frame in the brood cluster area, OR between outermost brood frame & food frame, OR outside last frame in the box.
- o **You can also add a box between the bottom board and lowest box.** This can give foragers space at night and can limit congestion. Although, the bees won't necessarily build comb in this box and it would likely be beneficial to remove the empty space in the fall.
- o **What if you find queen cells?** If they have already started getting ready to swarm, it is highly unlikely you can stop the process. If there are uncapped cells and you see eggs, it is likely the swarm has not happened yet. Find the queen and take her with a split – just be sure there are no queen cells on the frames you take! That will likely stop the bees from swarming. Keep in mind that if you keep the split in the same yard, the foragers

will likely return to the original hive. So be sure to add plenty of bee bread and nectar / honey so that the split colony has enough to sustain themselves before the house bees make the transition to foraging.

- o **A Simple Formula for Splitting: #7 Split = 2+2+2+1 (for a 5 frame nuc box)**
 - 2 frames of brood (one capped, one mixed age that has eggs/young larvae from which bees can start queen cells)
 - 2 frames of food (include pollen and nectar/capped honey)
 - 2 frames of bees shaken in (preferentially from brood frames that have a lot of nurse bees; return brood frames to parent hive after shaking bees into your split)
 - 1 empty frame
 - Check split in 2-3 days to be sure they are making queen cells (no queen cells? Are you sure you didn't get the queen?)
 - After ensuring that bees have queen cells, then be patient and wait for about 30 days +/- . By then, if the queen successfully returned from her mating flight(s) you will likely see capped brood.
- o Cleaning out a winter dead out in preparation for the arrival of new bees?
- o Check frames closely for the presence of American Foulbrood. While chances are more likely that your bees perished for another reason, this highly contagious disease continues to be found in colonies in Marin. Do yourself – and your neighboring bees – a favor and educate yourself on the signs. Unsure? Ask for help on the Buzz.
- o **If you haven't done so already, it's time to set up your bait hives!**
 - If you plan to set out bait hives this year, now is a good time to do so. (We've already had two move-ins this season.)
 - Review Tom Seeley's book, Honeybee Democracy, for complete details on what his research has shown that swarms prefer in a nesting cavity.
 - 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).

See Hive Tips on Page 5

3. Entrance reducer set to medium
4. Box above the ground 2-3' (higher if you are able)
5. 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.
6. Wait to observe scouts!

o Have a bait hive tip? Post it to the Buzz!



Creating Local Nuc Colonies

2017 Marin Bee Census Survey

[Census time is here again!](#) Thank you to everyone who has contributed to 8 years of data concerning the bee population in Marin (and surrounding) counties and the beekeeping practices that shaped those results.

Since the survey began, the number of local beekeepers splitting hives is up, bees sourced from outside the county are down, and in '14, as a county we reached the saturation breeders look for to achieve "isolation".

Participate in the survey and let's find out how we're all doing! Everyone (who has been keeping bees since 2016 or prior) is encouraged to participate - even if you are just reporting in on a feral colony in a tree you have observed during the survey period of April 1, 2016 - March 31, 2017. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete in its entirety.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H6YJ936>

UC Davis Bee Symposium



The third annual **Bee Symposium: Keeping Bees Healthy** will be hosted at the UC Davis Conference Center on **Sunday, May 7, 2017**, preceded by the first California Honey Festival in Woodland, CA on Saturday, May 6, 2017. This educational program is designed for beekeepers of all experience levels, including gardeners, farmers and anyone interested in the world of pollination and bees. In addition to our speakers there will be lobby displays featuring graduate student research posters, the latest in beekeeping equipment, books, honey, and much more.

This year, our lead speaker is Dr. Steve Sheppard, Thurber Professor of Apiculture and Chair of the Department of Entomology at Washington State University. Other speakers include Santiago Ramirez from the College of Biological Sciences at UC Davis, Maj Rundlof from the Department of Biology from Lund University, and Margaret Lombard, CEO of the National Honey Board. Elina Niño, the Extension Apiculturist from the Department of Entomology and Nematology at UC Davis, will be honoring the Apprentice-level students from the Master Beekeeper Program.

For more information and to register go to: <http://honey.ucdavis.edu/events/2017-bee-symposium>

Date: Sunday, May 7, 2016

Time: 8:00AM - 6:00PM

Location: UC Davis Conference Center

Fee: \$80 (General), \$25 (Students)

County Fair Time!



Join in the fun at the Marin County Fair. The official Fair entry form deadline is Thursday 11 May 2017. If you entered last year you should have received an entry package. If not, or if you are entering for the first time, there are entry forms and the 10 category descriptions for the Adult Honey Department on the Fair website, under Competitive Exhibits.

<https://www.marinfair.org/~media/files/fair/2017/exhibit-pdfs/honey.pdf?la=en>

Entry forms are available at

<https://www.marinfair.org/~media/files/fair/2017/exhibit-pdfs/entry-form.pdf?la=en>

Please don't be shy, enter as many categories as you wish, you have plenty of time to get your entries prepared. Yes it is early but all the rain this winter has brought out a lot of bloom that will hopefully yield a good honey flow. Exhibits will be received over 2 days at the Exhibit Hall at the back of the Fair Grounds.

Friday, June 9, 3 pm to 7 pm & Saturday, June 10, 10 am to 5 pm, at the Exhibit Hall. Judging will be on Sunday June 11 by Michele Ferrante, the chef/owner of Gira Polli, in Mill Valley.

This is an opportunity for all of us to participate in 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, a founding member of Marin Beekeepers. Again, this year each will have additional monetary awards. 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. There is still time to assemble and get your entries in.

Next up is staffing the bee booth inside the exhibit hall during the Fair which this year is from **Friday 30 June to Tuesday 4 July**. This is our club's opportunity to do outreach and get the word out about our little "trusts" and hopefully dispel some misinformation the public has about bees. We get to talk about bees, show off the observation hive (a fresh one every day), 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 gets paid from the Fair to help continue our excellent list of speakers.

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.

The entertainment web site is at:

https://www.marinfair.org/2017/concerts_menu/all-concerts (included with entry) special events and attractions, especially the fireworks display each night at 9:30 p.m. The sign-up schedule will be sent to the Buzz soon. Email me your preferences to: Dan Stralka at Stralka.daniel@epa.gov Please sign up and join in the fun!

The important dates are:

May 11

Entry forms due in with this year's entry fee of \$2.50 per entry.

June 9 and 10

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

Friday, June 9: 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

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

We can accept late entries even if you hadn't submitted a form. Fill out the forms before you come to expedite the processing.

June 11

Judging by Michele Ferrante, chef/owner Gira Polli in Mill Valley

June 16

Finalize Bee Booth sign-up.

June 30- July 4

MARIN COUNTY FAIR!

July 5

Entry retrieval and collection of awards.

Swarm Season



It has been a very busy Swarm Season with 56 swarm reports resulting in 48 captures and 5 that either got away or weren't swarms. Swarms are currently being reported at a rate of 2 to 4 per day.

The Swarm List system has been working reasonably well. Any member can subscribe to the Swarm List by going to:
http://cx99.justhost.com/mailman/listinfo/swarms_marinbeekeepers.org

Members subscribing to the Swarm List should be familiar with our Swarm Protocol. The way the system works is when someone submits a Swarm Report over our Club website, www.marinbeekeepers.org, the report goes out automatically via email to the entire Swarm List. Any member wishing to respond to the report, first replies to the email with their intention. Then the responding member contacts the reporting party to make arrangements to get the swarm. Once there is a final outcome, the member again replies to the original email string with a report of the capture or other result.

Once a member has collected a swarm or begun an

extraction, they are required to wait a minimum of 2 hours before responding to a report of a swarm and 24 hours before responding to a report of an extraction. This delay is intended to allow other members a little more time to respond. The shorter waiting period for a swarm is due to the fact that swarms often move on within a short time after landing. On the other hand, a colony once established in a tree or other structure, will not be relocating on their own. Thus there is less urgency in responding.

If you plan to join the Swarm List, please read and follow the instructions below. The following is the Swarm List Protocol:

1. When a swarm is reported to the Web Site, the List Manager forwards it to the Swarm List. The List manager should include the site address or some distinguishing description in the Subject Line for ease of follow up and identification.
2. If you are interested in collecting a swarm, please attempt to contact the party reporting the swarm. Try to determine if you have all the right equipment and right size ladder before heading out.
3. Immediately reply to the Swarm List e-mail indicating your intent to collect the swarm using the original subject line. That way the reporting party will not get multiple calls from members wanting to get the swarm.
4. Since swarms often move after a few minutes or sometime in the first 24 hours, please arrange to do the capture as soon as possible.
5. If, after investigating the swarm, you decide you are unable to collect it for some reason, i.e. too high, inaccessible, or requires an extraction you don't wish to perform, you need to immediately put a message to that effect back out on the Swarm List Server. Again, using the original subject line and adding any additional information that might be helpful to the next responder. That way others, more up to the challenge, can collect the swarm. As the first responder, please follow up and make sure the reporting party gets some resolution.
6. If, when you arrive, it turns out to be wasps or yellow jackets and the home owner wants to exterminate the nest, you should not do so yourself. Generally, an extermination license is required to kill any pest, including honeybees. Foam spray cans for this purpose are available at most hardware and garden supply stores which may be applied by the homeowner, but not others without the proper license. It is generally not legal even for extermination companies to kill a beehive – in special circumstances professional

See Swarm Season on Page 8

exterminators are allowed to exterminate beehives that cannot be rescued and are a nuisance or hazard to individuals or the public. One licensed, local exterminator who specializes in bee removals and exterminations is listed below:

William Johnson
ATCO Pest Control
(415) 898-2282 Main
(415) 328-4468 Cell

7. **After you have collected a swarm, please wait a couple of hours before your reply to another swarm call to give others a chance to respond** - especially early in the season when many members are looking to repopulate hives lost over the winter months. Remember we have over 300 members. If no one else responds after a minimum of two hours, it's OK to jump back in and go for it. **The Swarm Subcommittee will monitor the Replies and is authorized to unsubscribe Members that don't adhere to this Protocol.** Members who are unsubscribed may re-subscribe after one month.
8. **If the Swarm Listing is a "Structural Extraction", the waiting period for the second reply will be a minimum of 24 hours. The Swarm Subcommittee will monitor the Replies and is authorized to unsubscribe Members that don't adhere to this Protocol.** Members who are unsubscribed may re-subscribe after one month.
9. The Swarm Subcommittee will monitor the requests for extractions to make sure everyone receives a suitable response. If no one replies with a willingness to take on a difficult extraction, the Committee will attempt to find a Member willing to do it. Members willing to do complicated extractions will be contacted on a rotating basis to find someone to do the work.

When responding to a swarm call you are expected to assume some Responsibilities as listed below. Please:

1. Contact the reporting party to determine more information and arrange the details of your plan to capture the swarm or extraction. If you plan to charge for your efforts, **please mention your fee structure in the first conversation.** If you charge for simple swarm collection, you should mention that some members might perform this service in exchange for keeping the bees.
2. Arrive at the appointed time and collect the swarm. If after evaluating the situation, it is more complicated than you anticipated, please have

another discussion of any changes you might want to make in your fee structure.

3. Most beekeepers don't charge for a simple swarm collecting. If it is to be more difficult or time consuming, you can ask a fee or donation to the Club based on the time and effort expended. \$50 - \$75 per hour is not unreasonable. Some quote a flat fee for extractions. If the job requires carpentry repairs, make sure that you discuss if you can do the repairs or if they will need a carpenter or contractor. This work should be left to qualified individuals.
4. Be sure the swarm is on the property of the reporting party or in public space. If not, you need to get the permission of the actual landowner before proceeding.
5. Make it clear to the party **you are acting as an individual and not as an official representative of Marin Beekeepers.**
6. If you will need to cut or trim branches, be sure to get permission first and clean up any limbs or branches left behind. In most cases the homeowner can dispose of the trimmings, but you should clean up and deposit the debris as directed or haul it away yourself.
7. Under most circumstances, **you should leave your catch hive near the swarm site, returning after dark to be sure that you have retrieved all the bees.** This is especially true when the swarm is near where people will be passing by. If you capture the swarm and take it away during the day, the scouts and foraging bees will return to the site of the swarm and be a nuisance to the homeowner.
8. Every effort should be made to insure the survival of the collected colony. The reporting party has made an effort to report the swarm and has a reasonable expectation that the bees will be saved. It is our duty to make this happen.

From the Librarian's Desk

Did you know ...?

- The library "catalog" is posted on the Marin County Beekeepers website?
- If you're interested in a particular title you can email Marina at marinamay53@gmail.com to see if it's available.
- We have subscription forms for a discount to the American Bee Journal
- There are free back issues of the American Bee Journal for members to take home
- Every item you return increases your chance of winning a fabulous prize!

Looking forward to seeing you at the library!