

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 9, Issue 8

September 2017

What You Missed

Our last meeting was the annual potluck dinner. A smaller group than usual attended this year but the camaraderie was just as strong. Beeks and friends descended on the Nordquist's home in Novato to share food and drink, stories about bee adventures and a myriad of different topics. It's a great way to get to know your fellow club members on a more personal level.

A big thank you to Neil and Mary Nordquist for opening up their home to the Club once again for this great event.



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What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday September 7, 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 Kate Frey. Kate is the co-author of *The Bee Friendly Garden*, and will be talking about "Bee Friendly Gardens". She will have copies of her book on sale for \$20.

Upcoming Meetings:

October 5, 2017

Gro Amdam, Professor, Arizona State University, "Vaccinating Honey Bees: Concept, Data, and Feasibility".

November 2, 2017

Gene Brandi, President, American Beekeeping Federation, "Beekeeping from a Commercial Perspective".

December 7, 2017

Janet Brisson, owner of Country Rubes, "Small Hive Beetles".

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January 4, 2018

Marin Beekeepers, "Panel Discussion: Community Breeding".

February 1, 2018

Mace Vaughn, Pollinator Program Co-Director, Xerxes Society for Invertebrate Conservation, "Habitat and Lobbying".

March 1, 2018

Leo Sharaskin, editor, Keeping Bees with a Smile, "Natural and Practical Beekeeping".

April 5, 2018

Samuel Ramsey, Doctoral Student, University of Maryland, "Varroa Research".

May 3, 2018

Elina Nino, Extension Apiculturist, UC Davis, "Effects of Supplemental Forage on Bees".

June 7, 2018

Marin Beekeepers, "Gadgets and Gizmos".

July

No meeting: Marin County Fair, June 30 – July 5.

August

No meeting: Marin Beekeepers Annual Potluck.

From the Librarian's Desk

Welcome back to the Club Library! We've had a couple of generous donations over the summer - "Beekeeping A Practical Guide" by Richard E. Bonney and "The Honey Bee" by James & Carol Gould.

Don't forget to check your bookshelves and bring back your borrowings - as always, every item you return is worth a chance in the lucky draw. For those new to the Club, the library is available to all members. Stop by & say hello on Thursday!

Hive Tips

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

Mentioned last month but worth mentioning again....Yellow jackets continue to be a problem for many beekeepers. 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 the population (and cluster size) of your colony is already reducing 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 yellow jacket traps on or near your hives. The pheromones that help lure the yellow jackets into the trap may actually be attracting more yellow jackets to your apiary.



Yellow Jackets at the Door

A fake hornet's nest can be hung nearby to try to discourage them. 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.

While we wait for the fall flow to start, some bees are having trouble finding enough to eat. If you haven't been inside your colony recently, it might be worth taking a quick peek to make sure they've got enough to eat. While I've seen a lot of colonies with excess honey ready to be harvested recently, I've also seen quite a few colonies with NO food whatsoever. Those bees need help to get ready for winter! A full size colony (example 2 deep boxes or 4 medium boxes) needs about 30 lbs stored for a Marin winter. A small colony (like a 5 frame nuc colony) needs about

50/50 brood/food ratio.

Late Summer and Fall Hive Management. The days are getting shorter, and bees should have already started getting ready for winter. Some changes you may see:

- **Queen supercedure.** It is not uncommon to see supercedure cells in your colony at this time of year. Let the bees replace their queen, if they feel it is needed. The drone population tends to still be high at this time of year (though this will vary based on location as well as strength of individual hives), and while you may not know the qualities of the drones your new queen will be mating with, a young queen may help the colony get through the winter and be ready for rapid spring growth.
- **Propolis** may be more prevalent in your colony. While perhaps an inconvenience (usually minor) to the beekeepers, allowing the bees to utilize propolis as they see fit will provide them with a number of benefits. In addition to the anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties of propolis which may assist in keeping a hive healthy, bees will use propolis for a variety of reasons, including to seal cracks and to minimize entrance opening(s) to prevent unwanted access to the hive from ants, yellow jackets, and weather elements.
- **Brood cluster size and location** may be changing as the brood area in upper portions of the hive are converted to food storage.
- **No evidence of eggs, larvae or capped brood?** Before jumping to the conclusion that your colony is queenless, check pollen/bee bread stores. If the colony has not been able to bring in enough, then the queen may cease egg laying until food availability again increases.



Getting Ready for Winter

Varroa mites. Mite levels are climbing and it's time to check the infestation % if you started already. As fall

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approaches, we tend to see decreasing colony populations and increasing varroa mite populations. This can be a deadly combination for your colonies.

About ½ the colony losses in Marin occur between October – December, and many of these losses are a direct result of varroa mites and the diseases they vector.

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.

Mite drops on monitoring boards under screened bottom boards may not give an accurate indication of what's happening inside the colony. (If you came to the June meeting, you heard me discuss the results of the Romberg study. The colonies that survived actually had the highest average and highest individual drops.)

Two other alternative ways to test are by using an alcohol wash or by doing a sugar roll. Information on [how to do a sugar roll to determine varroa infestation % is available from the University of Minnesota](#) Bee suppliers are now selling a "Bee Squad Varroa Testing Kit" with everything you need.

Beekeeping Classes

Upcoming Classes

The Hows of Honey with Bonnie Morse

How much you can harvest, how to collect from hive, how to extract, how to clean up, and how to process cappings.

Saturday, September 16, 9am – 12pm, \$50 per person

Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax

Tel: 415-342-5092

Fall and Winter Hive Management

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.

Classroom sessions:

Wednesdays 9/27 & 10/4, 6:30pm – 8:30pm

Location: San Rafael Community Center

Field Workshop:

Saturday, 10/7, 9:30am – 12:30pm,

Location: TBA

\$85 or \$30 drop in for classroom sessions, \$50 drop in for field workshop

Register through the [San Rafael Community Center](#) course code 27546

Overwintering Your Bees

Preparing for winter, how to handle common winter problems, how to clean up / store equipment.

Saturday, October 21, 9am – 12:00pm, \$50 per person

Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax.

Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#)

Backyard Beekeeping

Considering becoming a beekeeper? Take the first step by learning about this fascinating and important pollinator. This is a great time of year for new beekeepers to start planning so equipment is ready and bees are ordered in time for the 2018 season.

In this class, you'll learn about the roles of the queen, workers and drones within a colony and how they interact with seasonal cycles. Learn about basic considerations you'll need to take into account before jumping into this exciting new hobby, including where to place your hive, equipment options and sources, bee sources, and time required.

At the end of class, you'll have the opportunity to sample some local honeys from around Marin County. Saturday, November 11, 9:00am – 12:00pm, \$50 per person

Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax

Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#).

Limited to 12 people.

Mite-A-Thon 2017

The First Annual Mite-A-Thon is a collaborative citizen science effort led by Pollinator Partnership to monitor the “mite loads” in honey bee hives across North America. From September 9 through the 16th, thousands of beekeepers will test their hives to measure the level of varroa mite infestation.

Information on [how to do a sugar roll to determine varroa infestation % is available from the University of Minnesota](#).

The primary objective of the “First Annual Mite-A-Thon” is to raise awareness about the level of varroa mites across the hives of North America and to teach consistent and effective methods to measure mite load. A secondary purpose is to educate beekeepers about mite management strategies through materials utilizing partner developed books and videos.

The “Mite-A-Thon” coincides with the 30th anniversary of the discovery of Varroa Destructor in North America.

The Mite-A-Thon’s major sponsor is Valmont Cosmetics in conjunction with sponsors The Almond Board of California, Project Apis m., The American Beekeeping Federation, The American Honey Producers Association, The Canadian Honey Council, Mite-Check from the University of Maryland, The University of Michigan, The University of Minnesota Bee Lab, The Honey Bee Health Coalition, and Pollinator Partnership.

For more information, visit www.pollinator.org/miteathon