

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 10, Issue 2

February 2018

What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday February 1, 2018 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA; starting at 7:30 pm. The meeting will feature Mace Vaughn, Pollinator Program Co-Director, Xerxes Society for Invertebrate Conservation. He will be speaking on "Pollinator Conservation Policy: Past Successes and a Hopeful Future".

Upcoming Meetings:

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.

What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a panel discussion of community breeding / sourcing of bees followed by Q&A. Panelists include: Volker Ackermann, Jennifer Berry, Roy Crumrine, (Anything Bees), Richard Hyde, Bonnie Morse (Bonnie Bee & Company) Cynthia Perry (Split Squad) and Dave Peterson.

Dave Peterson

Dave talked about some of the history of the Club's efforts to raise and maintain locally adapted bees. When he started 15-16 years ago only there were only a handful of members. Now there are usually around 350. The Nuc, which is the group of members who maintain the operation of the club, was started in 2008. Before that, Mea Draper managed the running of the club on her own.

The Nuc decided that one of the club goals should be to come up with local bees.

The general criteria for the local bees:

Varroa Resistance
Gentleness
Honey Production

We realized we needed to raise more queens. Ten people went and took a class from Sue Coby at UC Davis and tried their hand at raising queens. The club also tried buying bees from beekeepers that were trying to raise survivor bees. That didn't work too well. Bonnie and Gary decided to start a business raising local queens.

The way to control genetics in the County is to raise your own queens. Try not to bring in outside stock.

See What You Missed on Page 2

-
- 1 What's the Buzz
 - 1 What you Missed
 - 3 Hive Tips
 - 4 Beekeeping Classes
 - 4 Dues are Due
 - 5 Farm Day
 - 5 2018 Bee Symposium

Cynthia Perry

Cynthia has been keeping Bees for about ten years. She started out ordering bees from outside of the County. That didn't work out. At the time, there was lots of discussion about how to raise bees in the County. Cynthia started the Split Squad, matching people willing to split to give bees to those who were looking for bees.

At first no one knew how to make splits and were afraid to split. They brought in some outside people to teach them how to make splits. They decided that the Split Squad would be a natural selection group, no treatment allowed. This way the genetics of survivor bees would be propagated throughout the County. At first the hives all died. After about 8 years they are experiencing an 80% survival rate; which she feels is equivalent to bee hives that are treated. The Split Squad tries to give bees to people who are in the same climate or neighborhood as the split provider.

Roy Crumrine

Roy has been a Beekeeper for seven years. He has several hundred hives around the Bay Area and he sells local queens.

First you need to know the timeline for a queen so that you know when the queens will emerge. You need to learn how to use a grafting tool.

Look for good breeding stock:
Hygienic
Good producers

Making a cell builder:

Put a bunch of capped larvae in a box, without the queen. When the bees have all emerged you will have a bunch of young nurse bees. Set the box up with pollen and honey. Introduce the grafted cells into the cell builder. Once they have been capped they should be placed in nuc colonies. A small colony 3-5 frames. When queen emerges she will take her mating flights and then start laying eggs.

Volker Ackerman

Volker has been rearing queens for about 4 or 5 years.

Objectives:

Split a strong hive, 20 frames strong or more.
Split into 11 hives, each to have some young larvae
You should be at intermediate level of beekeeping.

Advantages:

You end up with 11 hives. You will need some special equipment

Queen Removal Day

Go to the hive you selected. Remove the queen 12 days prior to the split. Put her in a nuc box. You probably will need to feed.

Big Split day

Inspect for queen cells. Make sure you have at least one queen cell in each hive. Add resources and bees. 28 days later you should have laying queens

Jennifer Berry

Jennifer started keeping bees in 2003. She raises and sells nucs and queens.

Nutrition – how to make good queens
Well-fed queens make all the difference

Proper condition within the hive during the queen larval stage:

Need to make sure that they make it through the winter.
Need a healthy population of nurse bees

Jennifer starts to raise queens in late February. She has already decided what hives are candidates for queen rearing. You need good local sources of feed.

Uses the cloak board method (cloak board makes the hive believe they are queenless)
Queens are fed many more times than worker larvae so lots of nurse bees are important. She uses mini nucs to develop queens. Once they emerge and the queen is mated she places the queens in full size nucs.

Richard Hyde

Catching swarms – he usually catches 8 to 10 a year.

Tom Sealy's "Honey Bee Democracy" describes the best sized hive, elevation, entrance size etc. Richard uses cardboard nucs. He places them about 5 to 7 feet above the ground. He uses lemon grass oil for attractant. He will normally have four or five catch hives around his house during swarm season. Each catch hive will have one frame of drawn comb and then a few empty frames.

Bonnie Morse

It is exciting to see how local clubs in our area are producing local bees. Everyone should have a bait hive during the swarm season.

Darwinian Beekeeping – Raising bees more like they would live on their own. When bees are getting ready to swarm, make an artificial swarm. Take a bunch of the bees, along with the old queen. This way you have controlled the swarm instinct.

If you don't need more bees, share with other beekeepers that need bees. You can also donate to a place like the Cedars, which has a beekeeping program. Or participate in "Bees for Mead" (trade bees for mead with Heidrun Meadery).

Randy Oliver has a good article on his website "Queens for Pennies". You don't need a lot of equipment to raise a few queens. Failure is ok because bees will survive.

Hive Tips

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

This can be a precarious time of year for the bees. This season, January has been relatively warm and dry and forage is plentiful. Bees are starting to use those resources to build up the population. But they may be doing so without keeping many food reserves available and that growing population can suddenly find itself with a food shortage if we suddenly get prolonged rains or the temperature drops significantly. Bear that in mind as you consider your management options at this time of year.

Adding space...or not

With warm (mid 60's), sunny days in the upcoming forecast it could be a good time to plan an inspection. Keep in mind that even mid-60's can be 30 degrees lower than bees need to keep the brood warm, so you might consider leaving small colonies alone. Not much you can do at this time of year and it will be very difficult...and sometimes impossible...for them to bring temperature around brood (which is likely there) back up to 90+ degrees. The best chance for a small colony right now is for you to be patient and let them alone for another month or more. Otherwise, your curiosity could lead to their demise.

How do you know it's a small colony?

- Perhaps you see very little foraging activity expect when it is particularly warm or the colony is in full sun.
- If you have more than one colony, a small colony may have much less foraging activity and less pollen going in than the others.
- Put your ear up to the side of the hive and knock gently. The buzz of a small colony will be much less than that of a larger one. Fewer bees to be buzzing!



Checking a Colony with a Knock

Booming colonies might benefit from some additional space. Some signs that your colony might be ready for space:

- Lots of foraging activity, even during times of the day when it cooler or the hive is shaded.
- When you open the top, there are lots of bees on the inner cover.
- If the bees have used propolis to plug up entry holes, they are starting to re-open them.

Lower portion may still be empty, even if boxes above are full of bees. We're OK with that. It can be a buffer to help prevent congestion....and swarming....a little later in the season.

Did you have a colony die out? It's important to check your frames and rule out American Foulbrood as a potential reason. While in Marin the chances are low that it was the cause, we do get several reported cases a year. Because it is such a contagious disease, you need to rule it out. Otherwise, other bees in the area could find your colony and rob it out and spread the disease. If a colony has been dead for awhile, you'll want to be looking for scales on the bottom of the cells in the brood area. Don't know how to diagnose your dead out? Don't be afraid to ask for help! Post pictures to the Buzz, ask a beekeeping friend to look at your hive, bring a frame or two to a Marin Beekeepers meeting, etc.

Time to start getting ready for next season!

- Clean up your equipment from dead outs and pulled honey supers from last season.
- Read a book.
- Sign up for a class.
- Order and assemble new equipment
- Make a plan for your spring bee increases, or what to do with all the excess bees your think your apiary will provide

The 2018 season will be upon us quickly!

Beekeeping Classes

Upcoming Classes

Beginner 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.

Class room sessions: Wednesdays, January 24, 31, February 7, 6:30pm – 8:30pm (3 classes, drop in fee = \$30/class)

[San Rafael Community Center](#), 618 B St., San Rafael. Registration through the San Rafael Community Center opens November 1.

Field Day: Sat., March 17, 9:30am – 12:30pm, location TBD.

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 pest 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: Wednesdays, February 21, 28 & March 7, 6:30pm – 8:30pm, 3 classes, drop in fee = \$30/class

[San Rafael Community Center](#), 618 B St., San Rafael. Registration through the San Rafael Community Center opens November 1.

Field Day: Sat., March 17, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, location TBD.

Backyard Beekeeping

Sat., February 17 or March 31, 9:00am – 12:00pm, \$50.

The abridged version of the Beginner Beekeeping class series.

Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd.

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

Intermediate Beekeeping

Saturday, March 24, 9:00am – 12:00pm, \$50

The abridged version of the Intermediate Beekeeping class series.

Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd.

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

Biodynamic Apiculture

Green Gulch Farm, CA; February 3, 2018.

Info and registration at

<http://www.apisarborea.com/events/>

Apis Arborea - Rewilding Honeybees

The Healdsburg SHED, CA, February 11, 2018.

Info and registration at

<http://www.apisarborea.com/events/>

Dues are Due

If you haven't already, it's past time to renew your membership in Marin Beekeepers. Annual dues remain at \$20.00 for the calendar year 2018. The payment is due by the January meeting, and delinquent if not paid by the February meeting.

After the February meeting we will purge non-renewed Members from the Buzz, Swarm and BeeLegal List Serves. So be sure to renew before February 1st or at the Meeting on the first.

The best way to renew is do it on the Website:

www.marinbeekeepers.org and pay using PayPal or a Credit Card. You do not need to "Sign In". Just click on "Become a Member", scroll down to: "To join, complete the following form:" Then check the circle by "Renewing Member" and fill out the form with your current information. Be sure to complete the payment section. There is a small service charge to PayPal for the processing of the payment.

Your membership can also be renewed by sending your check for \$20.00 payable to Marin Beekeepers to our Treasurer:

Mary Nordquist
2072 Hatch Road
Novato, CA 94947

You can also renew at the meetings as you come in the door, by cash, check or Credit Card.

Farm Day

Thursday, March 22, 2018
9:00 am to 12 noon
Marin County Fair Exhibit Hall

The annual Marin County Farm Day is approaching!

The 3 hour event is attended by about 1300 school children and 800 teachers and parents, so it is a busy, fun time. The Marin Beekeepers exhibit is always a favorite. It will feature Dave Peterson's observation hive, beekeepers' tools, educational posters, flashcards on honeybee vs. yellow jacket identification and extraction equipment.

It is a great opportunity to connect with kids, their parents and teachers and share some of our knowledge about honey bees. The kids always bring a lot of enthusiasm and questions. Even if you are a new beekeeper, it is a good opportunity to get involved and help out.

Six to eight volunteers are needed. If you are interested, please contact Steve Lamb at stlamb1@gmail.com or [415-412-6125](tel:415-412-6125).

If you are not familiar with Farm Day, it is a free event, open to the public, sponsored by the University of California Ag Extension. It features over 30 exhibitors. It is a little bit like the county fair, but without the traffic and parking congestion.

For more information about Farm Day go to: http://cemarin.ucanr.edu/Program/4-H_Program/Farm_Day_98/

2018 Bee Symposium



Date: Saturday, March 3, 2018
Location: UC Davis Conference Center
Cost: \$85 (General), \$25 (Students)

A daylong event discussing bee health and exploring best management practices help sustain the bee population for the future.

The fourth annual **Bee Symposium: Keeping Bees Healthy** will be hosted at the UC Davis Conference Center on Saturday, March 3, 2018. 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, plants, and much more.

This year, our lead speaker is Tom Seeley, Horace White Professor, Department of Neurobiology and Behavior, Cornell University.

For more information or to register go to: <http://honey.ucdavis.edu/events/2018-bee-symposium>