

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 10, Issue 4

April 2018

What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a talk by Leo Sharashkin, PhD. Dr. Sharashkin is contributor to *American Bee Journal*, *The Beekeepers Quarterly* (UK), and *Acres USA*, and speaks internationally on sustainable beekeeping, organic growing, and Earth-friendly living. He holds a PhD in Forestry from the University of Missouri and a Master's in Natural Resources from Indiana University. Dr. Sharashkin's talk was titled "Natural Beekeeping That Works."

Dr. Sharashkin lives in Missouri on 80 acres.

He started by remarking that "You only hear bad news about things, especially bees." He wants to share the news that keeping bees naturally is easy and good news

"Peasant families commonly have many hives. Tending these takes little effort so the owner can work his fields and attend to other members." Nikolay Vitvitsky Practical Beekeeping, 1835.

People often kept 40 – 50 hives with little effort. God created bees so that even the most destitute of men could have his own little animal herd. You don't need much to start keeping bees. Don't need any land and very little equipment.

Now that we have varroa and diseases beekeeping is harder than it used to be. But Leo has been keeping bees without treatment for many years. On his land in Missouri he has many wild colonies of bees. Tom Sealy has found that the wild bees in the Arnot Forest live an average of 6 years, all without treatments.

Leo follows the methods of Fedor Lazutin, who wrote "Keeping Bees with a Smile". Fedor is a Russian beekeeper who has been keeping bees without treatment for many years

"Pick a hive model that is best suited to your regions. Populate it with local bees." George de Layens 1892.

Where do you get local bees?

- Make sure they are from your area. Bees from

What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday April 5, 2018 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA; starting at 7:30 pm. The meeting will feature Samuel Ramsey, Doctoral Student, University of Maryland. He will be discussing his research on varroa mites.

Upcoming Meetings:

May 3, 2018

Tamara Wolfson, LAc is an osteo-acupuncturist, apitherapist, herbalist and educator with over 25 years of clinical experience practicing natural medicine. Here talk will be on "Apitherapy: Medicine from the Beehive".

June 7, 2018

Marin Beekeepers, "Gadgets and Gizmos".

July

No meeting: Marin County Fair, June 30 – July 5. See the Fair notice in this newsletter.

August

No meeting: Marin Beekeepers Annual Potluck.

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another area may not be suitable for your area because they may be out of sync with the local conditions.

- Catch local wild swarms. Use bait hives and place them up in the trees. Leo coats them with propolis if they have never had bees inside. He also uses lemon grass in a slow release tube. Lemongrass oil can be obtained at most health food stores. He wrote about bee swarm lures in the April 2017 edition of the American Bee Journal.

When he first moved to Missouri he put up a bunch of swarm traps and caught over 50 swarms in the first year. His survival rate was over 85%. He follows the suggestions of Tom Sealy from Honey Bee Democracy. He places them high up with good visibility and in trees at the edge of vegetation. He writes something nice on the box "Saving Local Bees" "Honey Bees for Children Project", etc. This reduces vandalism.

He has collected swarms weighing up to 9 lbs. with an average of 4 – 5 lbs. per swarm, much more than the 3 lbs. you get in a package.

The beauty of the swarm catching method that he practices is that you don't need to be on the swarm list. Swarms tend to go at least 300 ft. from their original nest.

When you go to collect your swarm catcher make sure that the swarm has actually moved in to the catcher and not just scouts. Scouts can be numerous.

You can catch more than one swarm from the same spot so you should move the swarm out of the catcher and put the catcher back.

Horizontal Hives – Many years of careful noted observation show that modified Layens hives produce as much honey as Langstroth.

"Horizontal hives are wonderfully suited for remote out-yards. In the yards that I visit only once per year I always find the bees in excellent shape with the hive full of honey." Jean Hurpin, Modified Layens Hive 1946

Leo decided to try this. He put a swarm in a Layens hive and left it alone for a year. It built out comb, and was thriving with lots of honey and brood. Horizontal hives also are easier on the beekeeper. No heavy lifting of boxes. All the frames are on the same level. They do have a frame. They are not like traditional top bar hives. You can inspect them without disturbing the brood nest if you want. The brood stays near the end with the entrance, while the far end has mostly honey.

Leo also builds hives with a double wall, built with 2x4s and insulates the walls to deal with extreme cold and heat in his area. European hives use a frame that is 12" x 16". This was developed by observing many feral hives. Langstroth hives were developed for the convenience of beekeepers. In Layens hives the bees store honey at the top which makes the honey more accessible to the bees in the winter. Don't need to provide plastic foundation. Plastic foundation was developed to reduce the number of drones in a colony.

Following Tom Sealy's advice Leo spreads his hives about 20 ft. apart. Tom found that hives in a dense environment die out within two years, while 50% of the bees in hives set at least 100 yds. apart survived more than two years.

He only pulls honey in October, when he is sure that the honey is surplus. With horizontal hives you can also separate the honey by when it was collected.

You can find out more about horizontal hives and natural beekeeping at his website <http://horizontalhive.com/>

Farm Day



Marin Beekeepers' exhibit is always popular at Marin County Farm Day. This year, visitors were treated to frequent queen sightings in Dave Peterson's observation hive, saw honey in the comb and how it is extracted, learned that most "bee" stings are really yellow jacket stings, what honey bees do for us and what all of us can do to help honey bees and other pollinators.

Thank you to our volunteers this year: Jim Vais, Kerry Keefe, Brenda McCormick, Tim Erin, Jim Dowling, Eric Gustavson, Dave Peterson, Bonnie Morse and Gary Morse.

Hive Tips

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

- **Warm, sunny days are here and swarm season has started!**

- **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.
- **Are they already making preparations to swarm...i.e. swarm cells?** You won't stop swarming by adding more space. You can take a split with the queen – and without any frames with queen cells – to (likely*) stop them from swarming. This is basically a swarm (except they will get some comb and perhaps some food). By removing the queen and part of the colony, you have done what they were already planning to do. Now, leave the original colony (with queen cells) alone for at least 3 weeks to do what they were already planning to do – get a new queen to replace the one that left in the “swarm”.

* “likely”... if they are left with too many bees, they could still have a secondary swarm.

- **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.
- **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.

- **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.

- **Cleaning out a winter dead out in preparation for the arrival of new bees?**

- 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.

- **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

See Hive Tips on Page 4

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)
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!

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

Beekeeping Classes

Upcoming Classes

Field Workshop: Beekeeping Basics (Sat., April 28, 9:30am – 12:30pm, \$50)

Led by Bonnie Morse

You have your bees, now what?? Learn tips and techniques for using smoker, bee brush and hive tool. 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 (Marin) [Register on Eventbrite.](#)

Field Workshop: Intermediate Beekeeping (Sat., April 28, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, \$50)

Led by Bonnie Morse

An overwintered colony requires different spring management than a new colony. 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 (Marin) [Register on Eventbrite.](#)

Queen rearing (Sat., May 12, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, \$50)

Led by Bonnie & Gary Morse, Jennifer Berry, Volker Ackermann

Learn the basics of queen rearing with simple methods that can be used even in small apiaries. Participants

See Beekeeping Classes on Page 5

County Fair Time!



The 2018 Marin County Fair is fast approaching. Entry forms and category descriptions are posted. As well as, this year's entertainment schedule. If you entered last year you should have received an entry package. If not, or if you are entering for the first time, you can view the 10 category descriptions for the Adult Honey Department on the Fair website, under Competitive Exhibits.

<https://www.marinfair.org/~media/files/fair/2018/exhibits/honey.pdf?la=en>

Entry forms are available at

<https://www.marinfair.org/~media/files/fair/2018/exhibits/entry-form.pdf?la=en>

Enter as many categories as you would like. You must enter to win.

Important Dates

Entries received **June 8 and 9 at the Exhibit Hall**

Friday, June 8 – 3 pm to 7 pm

Saturday, June 9 – 10 am to 5 pm

Judging will be the following day on Sunday, June 10.

Actual Fair dates: **Saturday, June 30 to Wednesday, July 4**

Dan Stralka will be posting a fair schedule/sign-up sheet on the Buzz when available. As in the past, we'll need 2 volunteers per time period to educate and answer questions. This is a great opportunity for us to do some PR for bees, for the club to get some exposure with the public and for you to have fun talking about bees. All the exhibits entered will be on display as well as an observation hive for you to practice finding the queen. You'll get a free admission to the fair and can spend the rest of the day enjoying everything else the fair has to offer.

Please note the dates and plan on participating in the fun.

will learn to graft queens and how to set up hives to support those grafted queen cells so they mature into healthy, well-mated queens.

Location: Woolly Egg Ranch, 503 Tennessee Valley Road, Mill Valley [Register on Eventbrite.](#)

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) (Saturday, July 14, 9am – 12pm, \$50)
Led by Bonnie Morse

The challenges of managing pests and diseases in your colony can be overwhelming. We will look at the potential risks and benefits of various tools and techniques available to manage common pests and diseases in your colony.

Location: Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax [Register through Fairfax Backyard Farmer.](#)

Apis Arborea – Rewilding Honeybees

“In wildness lies the preservation of the world”

Green Gulch Farm, CA
April 28, 2018

The framework of '[Apis Arborea](#)' is one of preserving the life and resiliency of honeybees through rewilding, the restoration of nest habitat, natural hives and the development of a comprehensive and wholesome paradigm of apiculture.

In this workshop, Michael will share various aspects of this bee-centric approach, among them current rewilding projects, the craft of traditional tree-apiculture, bee-centric strategies for apiculture and an introduction into nature of honeybees as a holobiont. Participants will be able to integrate new information and insights into the upcoming 2018 bee season. Open to all levels of beekeeping and bee-lovers.

Details for registration at
<http://www.apisarborea.com/events/>

Bee Salon

Club Member Jennifer Berry will be hosting her first Bee Salon of the year on Saturday, April 7th from 11am-1pm at the Woolly Egg Ranch in Tennessee Valley, Mill Valley.

This is an amazing time to be a beekeeper, when spring is in full swing and hives are busy making preparations to swarm. At this month's Bee Salon, we will be opening full-sized hives plus splits and mating nucs, and will focus on hive health, swarms and swarm prevention methods, making increases, and general beekeeping for this season. Jennifer has been busy at the Ranch making splits and raising nucleus colonies, and she'll give everyone a little sneak peek at her first batch of new queens. As always, these Salons are unscripted, and we will talk about anything we find in the hives, including pests and disease, queenlessness, nutrition, and anything else that pops up. Feel free to bring in samples for questions, but make sure they are completely sealed so as to not infect her apiary.

All levels are welcome, and even basic questions are good ones, since they get everyone involved in the discussion.

Bring a veil if you have one. Jennifer will have some to share if you don't. If it's been raining please **bring galoshes** or rain boots, as it gets very muddy at the ranch.

Cost is free to attend, as this is about building knowledge and community around beekeeping- but Jennifer will accept bribes, treats, and donations. :) Come any time between 11-1.

The address is:
Woolly Egg Ranch
[503 Tennessee Valley Road,](#)
[Mill Valley](#)

Cellphone coverage is spotty, so please text if you need to reach me. [415.205.7440](tel:415.205.7440)

Please park outside the gate or on Tennessee Valley Road. **This is a working farm**, so please close any gates you open and don't let the sheep out. The bulk of the hives are located up the hill, scattered between chicken coops, so head up the hill and look for the group if you don't see us when you arrive.

[Jennifer Berry](#)

[415.205.7440](tel:415.205.7440)
jenniferberry.design
jennifer-berrybees.com

Member's Corner

Localized Marin, SF, Known-Breeder-Offspring, and Hygienic VSH Queen Bees available from City Bees.

Marin-based, and other well-known breeding stocks, are now available from long term local beekeeper. Club member Robert MacKimmie has been keeping bees in Marin County for 20 years and is now offering queens from Marin stocks, mated in Marin, as well as queens produced from known low-mite lineage stocks, and nationally known hygienic mother breeder queens. \$35/40. Contact Robert, robert@citybees.com to schedule purchase.

This is a new, trial, feature on the Marin Beek News. If you have beekeeping items to sell or swap, you can list them here. You must be a member in good standing and any bees for sale must be raised locally (Marin County). To be included in the next newsletter, send the info to rob@tysingerengineers.us.

The club is not endorsing any of the items listed. So do your research before you buy. Inclusion in Member's Corner is at the discretion of the editor.

Meadery Tour and Potluck

Enjoy a visit to Heidrun Meadery! The Marin County Beekeepers will be getting a discount on a meadery tour and tasting, as well as added bonus of farm tour (of their pollinator friendly organic garden) and info about their bee program.

Bring a dish to share for a potluck lunch.

Friday, July 13, 11am – 2pm, \$20 per person
[Register on Eventbrite](#)