

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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April 2020

What You Missed

Our last meeting featured presentations by local beekeepers, "Catching Swarms and Extractions"

Swarm Talk:

Catching a swarm can be a lot of fun. Swarms come in all kinds of shapes. Some are neat and tidy. Swarming is the main way to propagate the species. They can hide in odd places, like water meters, or on tennis nets. Having a helper is useful.

Catching swarms:

There are a lot of different ways to catch a swarm. The important thing is to get the queen in the box. The other bees will follow.

How to get them into your catch hive:

- You can scoop them.
- If they are on a branch you can give it a strong shake into the box.
 - Remember that there may be 8-10 lbs. of bees so make sure your box is stable.
 - When they are in bushes you made need to cut away some branches first.
- Sometimes you may need to provide a bridge from the swarm to the catch box.
- Sometimes you have to put a catch hive near the swarm and then hope that the bees will move in.
- For high swarms you can use a 5 gallon bucket attached to an extension pole.
 - Bang the bucket under the swarm and catch the bees in the bucket. Empty the bees from the bucket into the catch hive. Sometimes it might take several tries.

If you want to catch a swarm, sign up for the swarm list. Make sure you read the protocol on our website first.

Bait Hives: A way to collect bees that have swarmed.

About 5% of the swarm, the older ones are usually the scouts looking for the new home.

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What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday April 2, 2020. The meeting will be held online, via Zoom, NOT at the Log Cabin. Look for instructions in the Buzz about how to join the meeting. The meeting will feature a presentation by Marin Beekeeper member Jennifer Berry. She will be discussing requeening.

Upcoming Meetings:

May 7, 2020

[Anne Leonard](#), Associate Professor, University of Reno, "How Flower Rewards Shape Interactions between Bees and Plants"

June 4, 2020

[Wyatt Mangum](#), American Bee Journal columnist, author of "*Top-Bar Beekeeping: Wisdom and Pleasure Combined*" and "*Bee Child*", "History of Bees and Hives in America"

July 2020

Marin County Fair

August 2020, TBA

Annual Marin Beekeepers Pot-Luck

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Per Cornell University publications, preferable properties of bait hives for honey bees swarms are:

- Height 15 ft. above the ground, but probably 3 – 4 ft. would work in our area.
- Well shaded but highly visible.
- Total entrance 1.5 to 2 sq. inches – really important (about equivalent to medium entrance)
- Entrance position near floor of hive
- Total cavity approximately 40 liters (about 1 deep)
- Dry and snug
- The odor of beeswax is attractive as is the smell of lemongrass
 - Lemongrass – mimics the queen pheromone.

They really are looking for the best option in a short amount of time. Once they move in, leave them alone for a few days before you check on them.

Queen usually doesn't arrive until about 75% of the bees are in the bait hive. Queen can often be found on the ground.

Provide three frames of built out comb. You can also add empty frames with a Popsicle stick in the top groove. All of the built out comb should be in the middle. It is better to fill the whole box with frames so that they don't start building comb everywhere. Provide a medium entrance in the front. You can use lemongrass essential oil as an attractant but use it sparingly. You can also make tea from lemongrass from the grocery store.

Moving a hive:

- Make a plan and arrange for help.
- Close the hive when it is dark and all the foragers are at home.
 - Bees don't see red. Using a red light around hives when it is dark will minimize the number of foragers coming out to investigate.
- Use a ratcheting strap to make sure it is tied together.
- When you close the hive, work smoothly and quickly.
- If you are putting them in a vehicle you might want to use a net over the hive.
- Make sure to provide ventilation. Be very mindful of ventilation. Bees can easily overheat. Don't seal

colony any longer than necessary.

Extractions:

First thing to think about in a structure is are they creating a problem or is the owner willing to live with them? They don't do any damage to the structure. Often people want them removed so they can do some work on their house.

In a wall it is often easier to access them from the inside. Sheetrock is usually easier to patch. To limit the space the bees can go into, you can use plastic sheeting, hung floor to ceiling.

When you are extracting from a structure, try to determine where they are and go there first. They will run from the area that you disturb. Cut into the nest area. If you use a bee vac you can suck the bees off of the comb and then cut out the comb and then tie the comb into a frame. You can use twine like used in bakeries to tie the comb into the frames, or any kind of light string. Rubber bands also work well. It is going to be messy. Put plastic down on your work area. If you are working from the inside the bees will congregate on a window. Vacuum them off once in a while.

Hive Tips

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

- **Warm, sunny days are here and swarm season has started!**
- **Strong hives have been 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

See Hive Tips continued on Page 3

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 with a virgin queen.

- **Adding a new hive body above the brood with new frames?** Help entice bees to move up by adding a frame of 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.



Installing a Bait Hive

- **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 or two medium boxes.
 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).
 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!

In a recent casual survey on the Buzz & Swarm lists, there were eleven reported move-ins this season, including pictured here from club member Richard Torney.



A swarm moving in!

Bee Classes

NOTE:

Field workshops dependent on the evolving COVID-19 situation. Classroom sessions likely to be via Zoom.

Upcoming classes and workshops:

Backyard Beekeeping (Saturday, April 18, 9:00am – 12:00pm, \$65)

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 2020 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.
[Location & Registration: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#),
135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax
Limited to 12 people.

Field Workshop: Beekeeping Basics (Saturday, May 16, 9:30am – 12:30pm, \$75)

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. You'll also get to see what a laying worker colony looks like (we inevitably have a few from queens who didn't successfully return from mating during our nuc production) and techniques for making it queenright. Location: TBD (Marin...likely San Rafael) Limited to 20 people.

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

Field Workshop: Intermediate Beekeeping
(Saturday, May 16, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, \$75)

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,

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Help Wanted

The club is looking for a new newsletter writer/editor. After 11 plus years of putting the newsletter together I have decided it is time to give it up to another Beek.

The job entails:

- Attend monthly Marin Beekeeper meetings to report on the speaker's presentation (if you need to miss a meeting, there are others who will provide you with this report)
- Gather articles from others, usually Hive Tips from Bonnie Morse and Library News from Marina Wright. Others from the NUC will provide articles and/or announcements throughout the year.
- Combine everything into a newsletter format (I use Text Boxes in Microsoft Word).
- Convert all that to a pdf and distribute it to the members via The Buzz and posted on the Club's website.

If you are interested please email me at rob@tysingerengineers.us or come talk to me at the monthly meeting. I am not leaving Marin Beekeepers so I will be around to help and give advice about how I have done things until you get comfortable. If you feel the newsletter is an important asset of the Club please consider jumping in and being a part of it.

Rob Tysinger

swarm prevention, or as a method of varroa control).

Location: TBD (Marin...likely San Rafael)

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

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Class (Saturday, July 11, 9am – 12pm, \$65 or \$125 total if paired with IPM field workshop)

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 & Registration: [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#),

135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax

Limited to 12 people.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Field Workshop (Location TBA, Saturday, July 18, 9am – 12pm, \$75 or \$125 total if paired with IPM Class)

We'll be evaluating colony conditions and looking at different management options. Workshop will include conducting sugar rolls to determine mite infestation % levels and organic options for dealing with mites.

Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#)

Re-envisioning Beekeeping in a time of crisis

Interactive Live-stream – course stretches over 4 evenings; April 2, 16, 30 & May 14, 2020; 6pm – 7:30pm PST (San Francisco, CA time zone)

More info and to register go to <https://www.apisarborea.com/events/>

Michael Joshin Thiele
Biodynamic & Arboreal Apiculture
707-540 5072

Need Equipment Fast?

If you find your growing colony – or recently acquired swarm – or split made to prevent a swarm – is in need of equipment ASAP, we have a source in Marin county for bee equipment! The Fairfax Backyard Farmer. Open Wed – Sat noon – 7pm, Sun noon to 5pm. 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax. Jim can still deliver equipment during this crisis. Let's help support our local bee equipment resource during this time.

Swarm List

As a service to the Community and for the benefit of our members, the Club maintains a Swarm Reporting System on our website. By subscribing to the SwarmList, you can participate in the fun of collecting swarms and extractions. When a swarm is reported via

the website, an email notice goes out to all who have subscribed with all the pertinent information about the swarm.

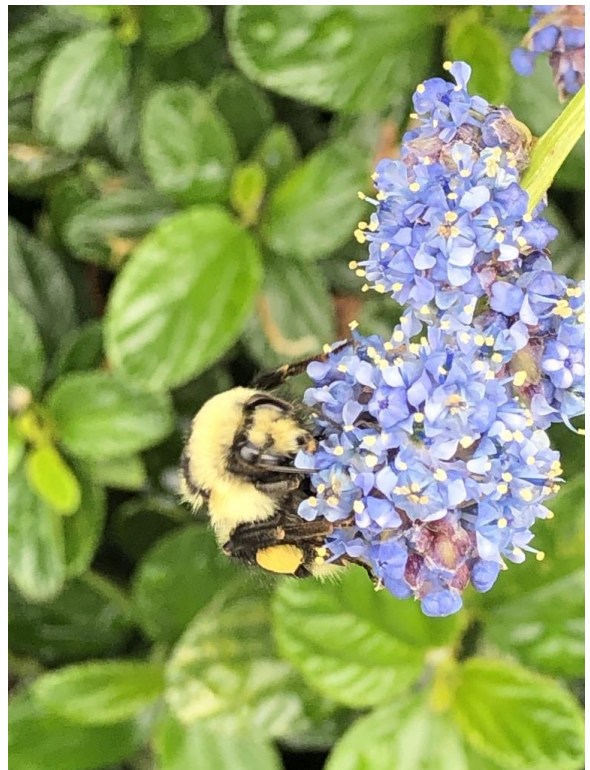
Generally the first to reply is in charge of collecting the swarm, doing the extraction or passing it back to the SwarmList. There are limits after your first capture (see the attached Protocol. Some swarms are very easy to collect, some can be more arduous -- high in a tree, in a shrub or bush and tree and structural extractions can run the gamut. Every beekeeper should experience the fun of swarm capture

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Native Bees

Recent discussion on the Buzz has noted increased observed activity this season of bumblebees. It would seem, if we plant it, they will come!

Here's a picture taken by Fay Mark of a bumblebee visiting her Ceanothus in Sausalito.



Makes sense...our native bees evolved with native plants. As one of the earliest blooming natives, Ceanothus bloom coincides with the post-winter emergence of our native bees.

You can go on and off the Swarms List as your interests change from time to time by visiting the Swarm List Subscription Site:

http://marinbeekeepers.org/mailman/listinfo/swarms_marinbeekeepers.org

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

1. When a swarm is reported to the Web Site, the Report is sent to all subscribers on the Swarm List automatically. The Report includes 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 the swarm, immediately **Reply to the Swarm List e-mail, before contacting the reporting party**, indicating your intent to collect the swarm with a 'REPLY ALL' using the original subject line and keeping the email string continuous. That way the reporting party will not get multiple calls from members wanting to get the swarm and others on the Swarm List will know it is being handled. (You shouldn't reply unless you can proceed immediately.)
3. Attempt to contact the party reporting the swarm ASAP to arrange a meeting time and get any additional information you think you might need. Try to determine if you have all the right equipment and right size ladder before heading out.
4. Swarms often move after a few minutes, often in the first 24 hours, please **arrange to do the capture As Soon As Possible**, that is within a few hours, not the next day.
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 "REPLY ALL", 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 homeowner 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 profession 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 one swarm during the swarm season, please wait a minimum of two hours before you reply to another swarm report for the rest of the season.** This will 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.** The Club is acting only as an automated referral facilitator.
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.
7. Under most circumstances, **you should leave your catch hive near the swarm site and 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.