

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a presentation by Meredith May. Meredith May is an award-winning journalist and fifth-generation beekeeper.

Her memoir, "[THE HONEY BUS](#) A memoir of Loss, Courage and a Girl Saved by Bees" (HarperCollins/Park Row Books 2019), reveals the life lessons she learned in her grandfather's Big Sur bee yard that rescued her from a difficult childhood.

"The Honey Bus"

She was an odd kid, raised by her grandparents. The book is mostly about getting through an abusive relationship but also hanging out with her grandpa, who was a beekeeper.

Her mom was extremely volatile. There was a big fight at one time and not long after that they moved to her grandparents' house in Carmel Valley. Her mom slipped into melancholy and never really recovered. Her grandmother became absorbed in her mother's problems so the kids gravitated towards their grandfather. Granddad had about 100 hives.

In the spring they would receive many calls about bee swarms and they would go to respond.

His bee yard was tucked away from people so they wouldn't be disturbed. He was able to make a lot of sage honey, which was really prized.

He would bring Meredith to his bee yard and apprenticed her in beekeeping. He subscribed to the belief that venom was good for arthritis. He also believed that you had to be more careful if you wore less equipment.

He would show how bees would make sacrifices for the hive. He would talk about how the queen laid eggs, but couldn't feed herself or take care of herself, implying the mother daughter bond that was missing in her life.

The title of the book comes from a WW2 bus that he converted to a honey house. He used to drive it to the apiary but it soon became too expensive to run and became stationary at their house. It was pretty DIY.

See What You Missed continued on Page 2

What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday September 3, 2020. The meeting will be held online, via Zoom, NOT at the Log Cabin. There is no need to register in advance for the meeting. Look for the link on the Buzz.

Our Speaker for the evening will be Sam Comfort, Anarchy Apiaries.

Upcoming Meetings:

October 1, 2020

[Paul da Silva](#), professor of Biology, College of Marin. "Beyond Pollinators". Fall is a great time for planting. Paul will discuss native plants that are not only pollinator favorites, but also support other native beneficial insects.

November 5, 2020

[Meghan Milbrath](#), Academic Specialist, Michigan State University, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources, Entomology Department. "Why Bees are the Coolest"

December 3, 2020

[Maryann Frazier](#), Senior Extension Associate Emeritus, Entomology, Penn State University. "Beekeeping in Kenya", with auction to benefit a new bee education center in Kenya.

January 7, 2021

[Thea Vierling](#), Beekeeper, Kenwood, CA "Evolution of Bees"

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Everything was held together with fishing line and duct tape.

The honey bus became like a confessional. She could talk to her grandpa about her problems and grandpa would counsel her with bee metaphors. He spoke about swarming as a way to decide at, some time, that she may want to seek a new home.

February 4, 2021

[Michael Palmer](#), Commercial Beekeeper, French Hill Apiaries, St. Albans, Vermont. "The Sustainable Apiary"

March 4, 2021

[Tucka Saville](#), "Queenrearing"

April 1, 2021

[Frank Mortimer](#), adjunct instructor at the Cornell University Master Beekeeping Program, "Bee People and the Bugs They Love"

May 6, 2021

[Sevan Suni](#) PhD, Assistant Professor of Biology and head of the SUni Lab at the University of San Francisco. "Bay Area research on pollen preferences of bees".

June 3, 2021

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

Hive Tips

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

Yellow jacket populations are starting to reach their peak for the year. They can start to cause a problem for bee colonies.

They can be seen 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 of them to your apiary.

A fake hornets nest can be hung nearby to try to discourage them. This can be in the form of a paper bag. 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. You can also pick up a "wasp scarer"....a slightly more impressive looking fake hornet's nest....from the Fairfax Backyard Farmer. A plate or bowl with balsamic vinegar may also help to deter.



Fake Hornets' Nest

Robbing by other bees tends to become more problematic at this time of year. If you have a smaller colony, keep an eye out and perhaps consider reducing the entrance (if you haven't done so already) to help

make it easier for the colony to protect itself. If robbing starts, you need to stop it immediately. Some good suggestions for options on how to do so are available on the website of Michael Bush:
<http://www.bushfarms.com/beesrobbing.htm>

Comb building is done for the season

While there are places in the county where some bees seem to be finding the nectar resources to build a little new comb, in general, comb building is done for the season by this time of year. Don't expect bees to be able to build out on new frames.

If your bees have a lot of honey, you might consider extracting some now and returning the wet frames to them so they can refill with more nectar with the coming coyote bush fall nectar flow.

Varroa mites. Now is the time to start monitoring your mite levels, if you haven't started already. As fall approaches, we tend to see decreasing colony populations and increasing varroa mite populations. This can be a deadly combination for your colonies....which can then become a problem for other colonies in your area.

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.

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

There are passionate voices on both sides of the debate on whether to treat or not to treat. There is logical reasoning on the pros and cons on both sides. Keep in mind that your bees' problems could quickly become another hives problem. And because of the increasing number of beekeepers – and increasing hive density, particularly in some neighborhoods - a moderate approach to consider would be to treat if mite levels go above a certain threshold. If your bees have shown no method of resistance (you should be looking for it every time you inspect), you might consider requeening the colony with more resistant stock when that option next becomes available. If you have been monitoring your bees and they have shown mite resistance, you might consider a treatment as a way to help them reduce the number of introduced mites, but

consider giving their queen another chance.

Visit www.scientificbeekeeping.com for information from Randy Oliver on treatment options and application information. Get as much information as possible on the pros/cons of different approaches before/if you decide to treat for mites.

Seeing queen cells? Not just cups, but cells with larvae floating in royal jelly. This is the time of year when bees may supersede their queen prior to winter.

Hoping the smart bees know that swarming would be a suicide mission at this time of year :-). In preparation for winter, you may also notice more propolis in the hive and a reduced rate of laying by the queen, observed as bees fill cells in the brood area with nectar rather than allowing the queen to lay eggs once brood has emerged.

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 is open Wed – Sun. Call in advance and Jim will have your order ready for pickup.

135 Bolinas Rd
415-342-5092

Thanks a Lot

This will be my last newsletter as I hand over the reins to Jennifer Robin Berry. I would like to acknowledge some of the people who, over the last decade plus, have help make the newsletter better.

Thanks to the contributors including Bonnie Morse for Hive Tips and other articles throughout the year, Marina Wright for keeping us informed about what is happening in the library, and Dave Peterson for writing about goings on from time to time.

I also want to thank my wife, Karen, who has proofread the newsletter every month, making me look like a much better writer than I actually am.

Rob Tysinger

Bee Classes

NOTE:

Field workshops are currently on hold. Classroom sessions to be via Zoom.

Upcoming classes:

Overwintering Your Bees: Class (Saturday, September 19, 9am – 12:00pm, \$65

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

Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#) Class via Zoom



Cleaning and Storing Equipment for Winter

Backyard Beekeeping (Saturday, November 14 or November 21 or December 5, 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 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

Annual Marin Beekeepers' Potluck

Unfortunately, the Annual Marin Beekeepers Potluck that usually occurs in August has been canceled due to Covid-19. We all need to practice social distancing and wear our masks when out in public. Hopefully, that will help reduce the number of infections as we all look forward to being able to gather together in the future.

Until then, stay safe!