

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Vol 15 Issue 03

June 2025

FROM THE EDITOR

Please join us this Thursday -

Marin Beekeepers

Thursday, June 5, 2025, 7pm

American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place,
San Anselmo, CA 94960

For beginner, intermediate, and advanced
beekeepers

Feel free to come a little early and hang out with
fellow beeks in the downstairs bar.

CLUB NEWS

Board Changes

There have been some changes with the board since our last newsletter. Kristine Erving has stepped down from her position on the board as Director of Community Engagement. Kristine has been instrumental in our transition to a non-profit last year and did much of the work to move us forward with establishing our board of directors and many of our policies and protocols, so big shout out to her hard work and dedication. With Kristine stepping down from the board, we've made a few changes to our community outreach efforts. We've transitioned the Community Outreach role to a non-board member position, allowing us to bring in more flexibility.

We are pleased that Cecil Nielsen is again organizing our community outreach at public events, including the County Fair, a role she's led with skill and grace for several years now. These changes will help us continue fostering strong connections within our community.

Current Board Members for Marin Bees:

Jennifer Berry, President
Malcolm Goldsmith, Treasurer
Mia Cicccarelli, Secretary
Jim Lawson, Communication
Robert MacKimmie, Education
Jed Nelson, Membership

Mailing Lists and Website

As more and more email providers tighten up their email acceptance policies, we've had to adopt the new anti-spam protocols for our three mailing lists: buzz, events, and swarms. We've done about as much as we can without making some low-level changes to the mailing list configurations. We'll be experimenting over the coming weeks with some changes that should further assist with reliable delivery, by arranging for all swarms list email to come from the mailing list itself, rather than the original swarm report poster. This shouldn't pose any problems, since the original poster is the website and it doesn't care about replies to its posts.

Currently, our hosting and mailing list services are shared with other groups. This means that should one of them start generating spam, our posts would be subject to whatever restrictions the destination servers impose on the shared source server. Additionally, we don't have access to the raw mail logs to help troubleshoot delivery problems. This means we have to poke the service provider to investigate on our behalf and this can be problematic.

We'll be making minor corrections and additions to the website as we investigate CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems that may provide a better match to our requirements.

MCBA Education and Listserv Policy Update

We've rolled out a new Education and Listserv Policy to help guide the educational content we share as a community. This policy covers MCBA-sponsored events to member-generated content posted on our listserv ("The Buzz") and adds a bit of fine tuning to the Buzz Protocol in regards to posting about workshops and education opportunities.

What You Need to Know:

- **Staying True to Our Mission:** All content should align with our goal to promote responsible, science-based beekeeping and native bee populations and serve our community. Please avoid self-promotion or commercial content unless it's approved by the board.
- **We do not allow the reposting or forwarding of solicitations from organizations,** so please refrain from sending out to the Buzz.
- **Protecting Our Pollinators:** We believe in supporting healthy bee populations. That means we won't share content that encourages unmanaged or feral honey bee colonies, as it can put our bees and local ecosystems at risk.
- **Content Review:** We may review member submissions to make sure they're relevant, accurate, and in line with our values.
- **Moderation:** This is just a routine check to make sure everything shared is on point and aligns with MCBA's mission.
- **Respecting Boundaries:** If you're sharing your own work or ideas, please be sure to clarify that you're not officially representing MCBA unless we've given the go-ahead.
- **Community Vibes:** We're all about keeping conversations respectful and focused on learning, so let's keep things positive and productive. We have a separate protocol for the Buzz, so please familiarize yourself with it.

This new Education policy helps make sure that all the information we share is helpful, accurate, and reflects the spirit of our beekeeping community.

Marin Beekeeper Perspective: It's June ~ What Kind of Beekeeping Year Is It?

Veteran and recently launched beekeepers will lend their perspective on what the year has been, what is happening now in the hives, and what kind of year we expect it to be overall. A cross-section of beekeepers will share their own lessons or influences that have unfolded in the first half of the year, and will illuminate some of the livestock transitions that they have worked on to improve hive conditions from last season.

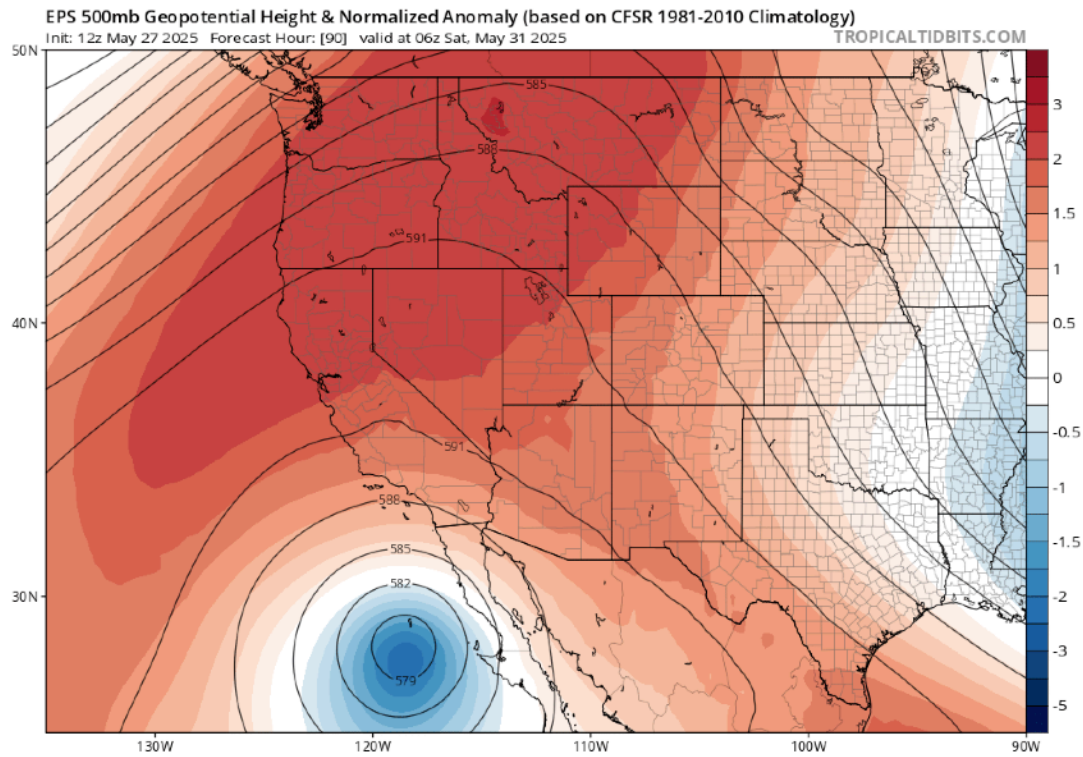
The biggest factor locally is rain. We had three modest rain events in April, and that brought our rainfall year total to 97% of our annual average, but with Climate Change, how the rain is delivered has become a major factor. With Atmospheric Rivers dumping massive tropical downpours, and very little of the slowly metered out, gently delivered moisture over a long absorbing timeline, things are different. How much of the annual rainfall actually goes into the ground, and how much flow directly out to sea? We are not in a drought, but many Bay Area landscapes no longer have the nectar flow of Spring oozing from the landscape flowers. For the first part of June, WeatherWest.com describes our environmental experience as, "June Whiplash to come: Brief surge of record NorCal heat before sudden cooler/unsettled shift—then notable heat returns again." One San Francisco beekeeper reported only one pull of honey all year from his nearly ten hives - not the normal honey year.

The one thing we've learned in the recent years from our evolved climate environs is that moisture and nectar flow are almost completely based on extreme microclimate profiles, meaning little pockets of differing weather patterns impact how nearby neighborhoods vary vastly. Some hives have continual background honey nectar flows, while nearby locations may be dry as a bone, nectar-wise.

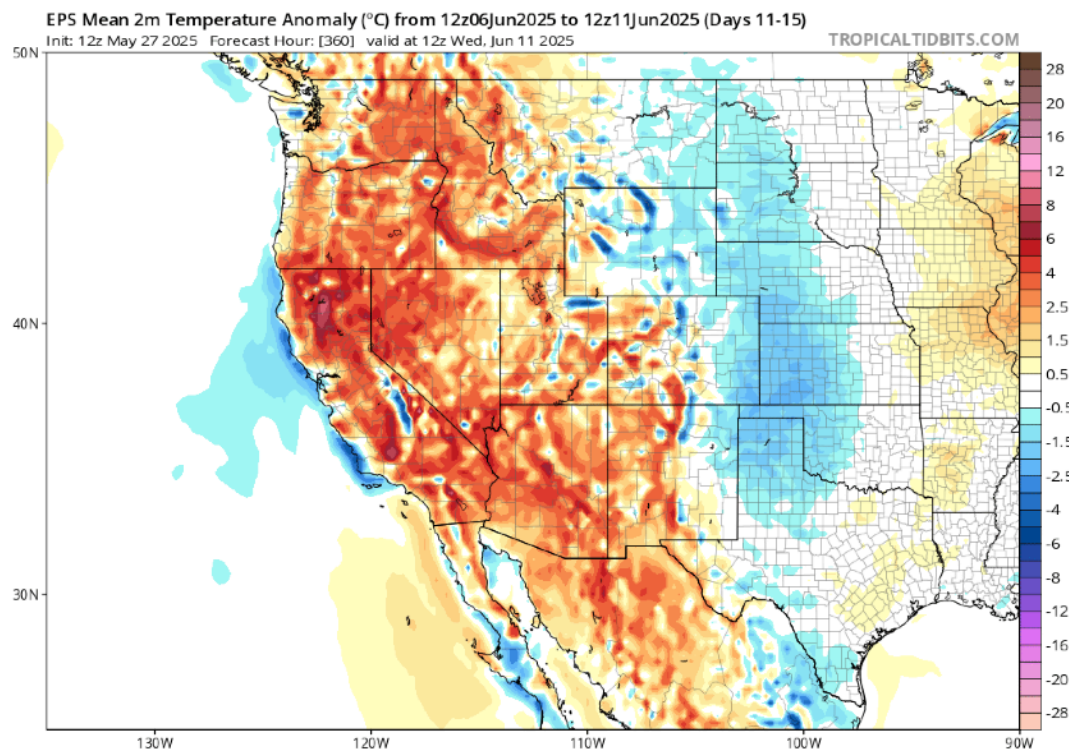
Honey crops are one factor, but as we will hear, queen mating is impacted. When there are scant resources for the bees, they no longer want to participate in making new queens, drawing comb on foundation is over for the year, and bees being the jovial superstars of nature vanish - they get cranky!

References regarding weather:

<https://www.weatherwest.com>



What our weather experience is as we move into June 2025.



The projection of temperatures in the West through the middle of June 2025.

Moving Sustainable Hygienic Behavior Forward ~ The VSH Queen Project



Daughter of City Bees VSH Breeder Queen

With another Spring opportunity for wrangling queen bee livestock, Robert MacKimmie continues to push towards a local VSH queen initiative. "Varroa Sensitive Hygiene" is a genetic trait identified by Dr. John Harbo at the USDA Research Lab in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, more than 30 years ago. When a mite jumps into the larval cell as they seal up in their cocoon, the olfactory senses of VSH bees allows them to identify, and tear open the cells of bees with mites feeding on them. While they often reseal the cells, the opening of the cocoon drops the humidity in the cell, and the foundress female mite fails to successfully reproduce, with offspring produced. If a hive has a strong hygienic trait, mites in the hive are absolutely minimized, and the viruses vectored by the mites drops to a bare minimum, avoiding major disease impact, and hive collapse.

For a number of years, Robert purchased VSH Breeder Queen Mothers directly from John Harbo. As Breeder Queens are inseminated, they possess "stacked alleles" which are the genetic markers for the behavior. Having both maternal and paternal VSH genetics through insemination, all daughters grafted from the Breeder Queen hold the VSH trait. Daughters of the daughters will lose effectiveness of the VSH trait if they do not open mate with VSH males in the sky.

By working to establish a VSH mating apiary, daughters grafted from a VSH Breeder Queen scheduled to arrive this June will be able to mate with a variety of VSH queens sourced from around the country. VSH Virgins have been sourced from Cory Stevens in Missouri (<https://www.stevensbeeco.com>), Ryan Williamson of Sourwood Farm in Virginia (<http://sourwoodfarm.com/Honey-Bees.html>), James Lee of Sustainable Beekeepers Guild of Michigan (<https://sbgmi.org/>), and VSH USDA Pol-Line Queens from Matt and Megan at Kobe Apiaries in Michigan (<https://kobeapiaries.com>) All of these VSH queens are from tested lineage, having to meet strict scientific evaluation through the Harbo Assay (<https://www.harbobeeco.com/measure-vsh/>). With the "Harbo Assay," 100-300 brood cells are dissected to count the number of reproducing mites, and importantly, counting the number of non-reproducing mites.

This is the definitive test in evaluating the extent of a colonies' VSH behavior. A new evaluation test called "UbeeO" has been developed. It measures a similar olfactory response to the mites, but it is not the same evaluation of traits. This year's VSH Breeder Queen mother will be arriving from Jason Bragg of Appalachian Queen Bees (wvqueenbees.com). The daughters of the Breeder Queen will carry the stacked alleles because the Queen Mother is inseminated with male VSH genetics. If the VSH daughters open mate with male VSH genetics in the sky, very high hygienic scores on the Harbo Assay will likely be the outcome. High VSH Hygienic behavior means the bees control their own mites, and mite treatments by the beekeeper are most often not required.

Treatment Free Beekeeping with validated scientific evaluation for hygienic behavior allows beekeeping to move forward towards less mite controls, and less mites! Stay Tuned as the VSH project moves forward.

OTHER EVENTS

Marin County Fair - July 2-6

Every year our club hosts the Marin Beekeepers booth at the Marin Fair. The fair this year is July 2-6, 2025. The theme this year is BUGS!

If you would like to enter your honey, amazing capped frame or candles at the Marin County Fair 2025, then do so here:

<https://marinfair.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/MCF25-Guide--Honey-Adult-ADA-FINALWEB.pdf>

Would you like to volunteer at the fair for a couple of hours and get free admission and parking? Check out this link and see what is available:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1SarNOd5okGIWNeNurBhCPabelPyWicyfcl48yHLIG4M/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

and then send Cecil Nielsen an email: crnielsen415@gmail.com the time and day you are interested in.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Membership Dues are now \$25.00 for the year for single members, \$40.00 for families.

We need to hear from you. Please renew your membership Online at www.marinbeekeepers.org. There are many benefits from being a member, aside our monthly meetings, where you can chat with guest speakers from all over the beekeeping world:

- Use of the Club's extractors, electric uncapping knives, wax-melter, hive carrier, embedding tool, and other beekeeping equipment;
- Free subscription to the Marin Beekeepers Newsletter (11 issues a year). Back issues on the website are available for background information and beekeeping tips;

- Preferred registration for beekeeping workshops (usually 4 or 5 per year) and special events;
- We have a great library that includes books, magazines and catalogs on everything from starting your first hive or baking with honey to raising your own queens.
- Free admission to our monthly meetings, where we have speakers among the foremost bee experts in the world (normally a \$10 donation);
- Subscription to our "BUZZ" email listserv which is where we converse online about beekeeping in Marin;
- Subscription to our "SWARMS" email listserv which is where we notify members of any swarms that need hiving;
- Subscription to our "Event List" email listserv which is our general notification list of events and workshops.

The best and easiest way to pay your 2025 dues is online at www.marinbeekeepers.org. You do not need to sign in or use a password. Just click on "become a member", fill out the form and submit. Be sure to complete the payment section at the end, which is via PayPal. You do not need to have a PayPal account to pay using a credit card. There is a small transaction fee added to your dues that is assessed by PayPal.

Or... you can mail a check payable to Marin Beekeepers to our Treasurer:

Malcolm Goldsmith 105 Molino Ave, Mill Valley, CA 94941.

ABOUT THE MARIN BEEKEEPERS CLUB

We are people who share an avid interest in honey and native bees. We are a mix of hobbyists as well as professional beekeepers. We have a wide range of interests, covering bee biology, pollination, sustainable bee breeding, health aspects of bee products, international beekeeping, and other bee-related topics. We

welcome you to attend our meetings and to become a member:

<https://marinbeekeepers.org/become-a-member/>

Monthly meetings are typically on the first Thursday of the month and usually feature a knowledgeable speaker and/or project and includes informal sharing of information by members throughout the meeting (\$10 donation for non-members). Meetings are a good way to learn about beekeeping. Please consider becoming a member whether you have bees or not.