



# THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Vol 16 Issue 02

April 2026

 Join Us This Thursday – Marin Beekeepers Meeting

 Thursday, April 2, 2026 – 7:00 PM

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

Join us this Thursday for discussions on club elections and whatever is happening in your hives. Feel free to come a little early and hang out with fellow beeks in the downstairs bar.

## CLUB NEWS

### Club Elections - Jim Lawson

It's time to elect a new slate of club officers. Please come to the next two club meetings to discuss the candidates and your ideas for club projects going forward.

### Farm Day - Dana Pepp & Jim Lawson

Farm Day was Thursday, March 26. Thanks, everyone, for a great Farm Day!

It takes a village/a hive to chat with the kids and their adults, answer questions, hand out stickers and help everyone appreciate our bees.

Our thanks to volunteers Barry, Carol, Gary, and Jim, Dana for organizing, and David for loaning us his observation hive, and for discovering why we were unable to find the queen in a hive full to the brim with bees: there was a supersedure cell hanging off the top front frame.

Here are some photos from the event:





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## What's Happening - Robert MacKimmie

Almost universally, nobody knows what's going on inside your hive until you pop the lid a look inside. Remember, smoke them up, give them a full minute, the pull each of the upper boxes, setting them on the short dimension of the super box so that you don't get crud on the bottom of the frames, and so the frames don't all crash together causing a flood of errant honey! Stack the upper boxes in a row with six inches to a foot between them so the bees stay busied in each box. Don't look into the honey supers - just get to the bottom brood box so you can do the most important work of inspecting the queen's status.

Anything is possible. Inspecting a bottom brood box in April is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get.

Most hives will have a crop of bees that are at full strength. If your local area is profoundly charmed, your honey boxes may be filled, you might have a dozen queen cells getting ready to hatch, you may have queen cells where the hatch of the cell has already been opened, and half your bees have flown away, or maybe the queen cell or queen never took, and you have a troubleshooting fixit job ahead of you. The good news is that almost anything you do with the bees right now will result in a successful operation. Everything about Spring is about prosperity, abundance, and success.

Many of you may have lost half a batch of your bees to swarming, whether you know it or not. Often the beekeeper won't notice that half the bees have departed, but those hives will take most of the year to recover, and you won't get the massive honey abundance that gifts you if you keep the hive from swarming.

This is also the prime time of the year for building drawn comb. Even if you don't need more drawn comb frames, throw foundation into some frames, and throw the medium box or deep into the hive stack for comb production. When the nectar of juicy Spring turns off, all drawn comb frames will come to a quick stop. On big secret to drawing comb is to put two frames of drawn

comb in the middle of all undrawn foundation frames. The bees don't immediately recognize all foundation frames as a solution to their problems, but if two frames are drawn comb, they will head up and immediately populate those two drawn frames, and then look over to the undrawn foundation, then immediately starting to work on drawing those foundations. It's good to play Tom Sawyer, and motivate the bees to do the work that you want them to do.

Pull and extract any of the honey supers on your strong hives, and then return the drawn comb honey boxes to the hives. In the right area, with the right blooming plants around you, and the right weather, bees can sometimes fill and cap off a drawn comb honey frame, and cap it off in a week. Most honey supers take a few week or month this time of year, but always be easy for the hive that wants to make you 250 pounds of honey this year.

Please participate in our elections this month. We have had a number of enthusiastic people step up to help run the organization, which we are most grateful for. If we can get an enthusiastic crew assembled, we will likely be able to expand our programs back out to where we are serving people's needs for advice, consultation, new information inputs, and general bee camaraderie.

Thanks for being part of the Marin Beekeeper's group. Please join us at the main meeting, and let us know if you have specific requests for information areas of interest to you.

Happy Spring!

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## Special Request for Members To Attend This Meeting (repeated from last newsletter with a focus on the election) - Robert MacKimmie

With the information about the need to replenish organizational management positions, it would be very beneficial to have all potentially interested members to attend the April and May meetings, so that we can have an open discussion about

where we each would like the Marin bee organization to focus, and what direction we would like the organization to pursue. By having a common sense of purpose, we can more easily shape the direction of programming, and especially the focus of special interest areas such as bees bred for mite resistance, bee stocks that we can make accessible from within the clubs efforts. By knowing the special interest areas of people within the group, we can actually organize to accomplish some very significant advances in our bee genetics, coming up with specialized bee stocks that actually can survive with minimal or no mite controls.

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## Board Positions and Current Candidates

We have the following board positions open with the current slate of candidates:

### **President - Robert MacKimmie**

Seeking a leadership role in the Marin Beekeepers' organization.

This year, I'm thrilled to be experiencing my 30th year as a beekeeper. Nothing else in life has fulfilled with the deep knowledge of knowing on an intuitive level, the intricacies and subtleties of how bees function. I feel that I've gained an understanding of what bees require to remain healthy and productive, and at the same time, I feel the strength and imperative need to share bee knowledge with those just joining the ranks.

I recently found a notebook with notes from the first class that I took from Randy Oliver in 1998, and feel fortunate that I have relied upon his expert insights from my first years in beekeeping. What is so clear to me in this anniversary year of my taking up beekeeping, is the clarity of how the scientific evaluation of animal husbandry methods allow the bees healthy, robust success in how they take on their bee year, and I feel the strongest need to use the collective focus of our non-profit bee organization to help interested and caring bee lovers to be successful through the powerful guidance of making the right choices, to choose better queen genetics, to use wholly

acceptable organic methods to control parasitic mayhem, when needed, and before taking those actions, monitoring and evaluating the parasitic loads in hives to identify those potential colonies that have exceptional genetics, and are able to have a strong influence in managing mites on their own. Treatment-free beekeeping can be real, but not by being inattentive.

What has become most obvious after three decades of nurturing honey bees is that the term "locally adapted bees" has been wrongly, and misleadingly, implied as having genetic abilities to evolve bees' being and function. What the bee community actually should be saying is that it is our responsibility to understand "locally identified genetic traits" which allow us to select the bees that can flourish on their own. The role of Varroa mites can be minimized by the bees, on their own, by the strength of their knowing how to manage the mites on their own. We are at the beginning of having bees that truly express "mite resistance," and we simply need to take those attributes seriously and identify which bees have those traits. Even the first year beekeepers can take themselves, and their beekeeping, completely seriously. It takes the same amount of time to learn beekeeping's absolute best practices as it does to chase wild and fantastical alternative methods which don't actually benefit the health and robust function of the bees.

I have used the first week of this April to attend a week long professional training in Queen Bee Insemination. This compliments my recent years of running Randy Oliver bee stocks, and my very dedicated pursuit of purchasing VSH (Varroa Sensitive Hygiene) queen stocks which allow the expansion of scientifically verifiable mite tolerance and mite controls by the bees themselves. There are four scientific methods for verify mite control by the bees, and I'm hoping to bring those methods to the general Marin membership as a standard practice of modern beekeeping in our area, the same as beekeepers have accomplished in the UK, Wales, Sweden, Cuba, and the continent of Africa. Beekeeper efforts to select mite resistant bees is bringing true bee accomplishment, but expecting that one or both of your backyard hives will come up with

those magic bees which are resilient to mites isn't likely. Monitoring, and selecting for mite resistant behaviors in the genetic behavior of your bees is within the purvey of every localized bee organization. I am interested in channeling the enthusiasm of our Marin group to collectively push available scientific tools for raising the bar, and start selecting better bee genetics so that we can all experience prosperous, natural beekeeping. Mite resistant bees are a reality in organized bee communities around the globe, and I would like every Marin member's participation in going the extra mile, and making a difference in a mite resistant future. I am making a huge effort to identify, and produce such bee genetics, verified by scientific testing and evaluation. I'm asking for the opportunity and enthusiastic support in seeking mite resistant colonies in Marin.

I ask for your vote in assembling a progressive team to improve the powers of beekeeping in the Marin area. We can collectively make beekeeping a better and more successful endeavor, for the bees, and for us as beekeepers.

### **Secretary - David Potovsky**

This is the start of my 3rd season as an amateur beekeeper. My wife and I host three colonies at our home in the hills of San Anselmo. We are both lifetime Marin residents and proud to call ourselves MillBillies.

The club has been a fantastic place to learn, get advice and listen to a myriad of diverse opinions and best practices. I personally like the hands-on activities where we make things to improve the health of our hives. Hopefully we can continue this practice on an ongoing basis.

### **Community Outreach Coordinator - Dana Pepp/Tom Pillsbury co chairs**

Hi. I'm Dana Pepp and I offered to be the co-chair for Community Education and Engagement. In my fifth year, I am still a beginning beekeeper, but community education and engagement is what I have done for many years. As a teacher,

social worker, parent, consultant and involved community member, I am all about creating spaces for connection. I look forward to working with Tom to help engage and educate the community about bees and beekeeping. And, if we want to show up at events and promote beekeeping, we need YOU to volunteer! We are not asking for a lot, maybe twice a year. There are many opportunities, but we can only say "yes," if we have enough people willing to donate their time and show up.

And on another note, I think we need to take a look at the culture of the Marin County Bee Association. Who are we? Who do we want to become? Are we welcoming and inclusive to ALL beekeepers, of all demographics, throughout Marin? In order to thrive, we need to outreach, engage and include newer, more diverse and younger beekeepers.

Tom Pillsbury, moved to West Marin four years ago, from Piedmont, Ca. , where I started my beekeeping hobby. I've been keeping bees for around seven years. I joined The Marin County Beekeepers two years ago, because I knew my knowledge/skill level was fairly limited. The more I learned, the more I enjoyed having hives. I enjoy giving my honey to friends and family that appreciate local honey.

What I like the most about being a member of our club is two things: first, I love the location, with a great bar downstairs. Second, I enjoy the conversations, and exchange of ideas during the meetings. Now that I am retired from the wine industry (DuMOL Winery in the Russian River Valley), I intend to help get more involved in having our club represented at Marin community events. I feel it is important to be spreading the gospel of bees to all those in our community. Participation matters. Now more than ever, we need to be involved, and share our passion!

### **Treasurer - Ken Kaufman or Gary Denison**

Ken Kaufman is a passionate advocate for conscious living, natural ecosystems, and human connection with the environment. His work with

bees reflects a deep respect for the intelligence and essential role these remarkable pollinators play in sustaining life on Earth. Through hands-on experience and ongoing learning, Ken has developed a grounded understanding of beekeeping that blends practical stewardship with a reverence for nature.

In addition to his work with bees, Ken has been actively involved with the New Living Expo, a gathering that celebrates holistic health, sustainability, and personal transformation. His connection to the Expo reflects his broader commitment to exploring innovative ideas and fostering community around mindful living.

Ken brings an authentic, down-to-earth perspective to everything he does, bridging the gap between traditional practices and modern awareness. Whether working with hives or engaging with like-minded individuals at events, he is driven by a curiosity about life and a desire to contribute to a more balanced and connected world.

Gary Denison, Mill Valley

Member of Marin BeeKeeper Club for six years. I have represented the club at Marin County Fair Exhibit and at Fair Days.

Retired Bank Examiner from the U.S Treasury (35 years). Very familiar with required Financial Statements for both non-profit and for profit businesses.

Former Managing Director of Global Credit Examination at Union Bank of California.

I have the expertise and desire to serve as the Club's Treasurer.

### Membership - Jim Lawson

My wife and I started beekeeping soon after I retired - Kate decided we needed a hobby that neither of us were familiar with so there'd be no "expert". As an engineer, I continue to be amazed at the engineering work the bees do. We've had great mentors and look forward to our sixth year of beekeeping.

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## Club Equipment - David Peterson

The club has electric extractors for harvesting your honey. Each extractor comes with an extraction kit that includes uncapping bin, electric knife, and a scratcher.

David Peterson, in Ross, manages six and 12 frame extractors. He also has a hand crank two frame extractor for those who need the exercise. Mary and Neil Nordquist, in Novato, manage six, 12 and 20 frame extractors.

The six and 12 frame extractors can generally fit into an SUV, station wagon or minivan. The 20 frame extractor requires a pick up truck or something equivalent.

You can schedule a request for use by contacting them at:

[dpeterson307@aol.com](mailto:dpeterson307@aol.com)

[neilmary@verizon.net](mailto:neilmary@verizon.net)

## OTHER EVENTS

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### Backyard Beekeeping: class / field workshop (Saturday, April 11, 9:30am – 12:30pm, \$95)

Considering becoming a beekeeper? Take the first step by learning about this fascinating and important pollinator. If you haven't started already, now is the time to get going so equipment is ready and bees are ordered for the 2025 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.

Location: San Rafael (Rain date April 11)

[Register Now](#)

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## Beekeeping Basics Field workshop (Saturday, May 16, 9:30am – 12:30pm, \$95)

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. This will include when / how to add space, food issues, pest & diseases. 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: San Rafael

[Register Now](#)

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## Intermediate Beekeeping Field workshop (Saturday, May 16, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, \$95)

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: San Rafael

[Register Now](#)

## 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](http://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](http://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.

## 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.