



THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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June 2026

 Join Us This Thursday – Marin Beekeepers Meeting

 Thursday, June 4, 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

We have a new board. Come to meet and greet your new board members.

June 2026. Message from the President - Robert MacKimmie

One of the clear challenges is how we can get as many people as possible to advance in their beekeeping skills regardless of where they are currently. By initiating a program of answering any inquiry or problem with a proposal to turn it into a hive dive, the person can have their issue resolved and educate a handful of beekeepers at the same time, not only to whatever the challenge is that the beekeeper's having, but also newish and intermediate beekeepers can see how to open a beehive, manage the inspection process, handle individual frames, what to look for on brood comb, how to be sure that there are no diseases. One of the particularly helpful components of our hive dives is having Justin do a very quick and easy mite test. While a beekeeper can use powdered sugar for a mite roll in a one-quart wide-mouthed mason jar with a hardware cloth lid to shake out powdered sugar and mites, Justin has been using Dawn

dishwashing detergent at a ratio of two tablespoons per gallon. It makes for a very quick and easy assessment of all mites that happen to be on half a cup of bees from any part of the hive. Half a cup is 300 bees. So if a mite test shook out three mites in a batch of 300 bees, that would equate to one mite per 100 bees, or a 1% infestation.

After many years of beekeeping, it's fairly common to understand that when the mite level reaches 2%, the viruses and other health challenges vectored or spread by the mites starts to impact the hive health, and the hive starts to decline. For that reason, it is quite an advantage to keep mite levels as low as possible, and definitely below the 2%, or six mites out of 300 bees shaken during a mite test. When the mite levels are low and the viruses are not spread around through the hive brood, the hive stays strong, robust, and always appears to be strong, productive, and nearly impervious to the downsides of disease spread by the mites. Hive dives have been able to share small techniques with attentive beekeepers so that they are aware of how to take a hive apart, and when handling individual frames, how to hold them by opposing corners, one on the top bar and the other hand being in the opposite corner of the lower bar. And by using these diagonal handhold points, the beekeeper can search over the brood comb, looking for the queen, looking for eggs and larvae, looking for any perforated cells that would

indicate foul brood or other diseases. And then by holding on the diagonal, the beekeeper can simply twirl or rotate the frame in their hands without straining their wrists or arms, and then they can inspect the other side of the frame for the same issues. Subtle handling issues by an experienced beekeeper can show a world of simplicity to those who are not yet comfortable with hive inspection. At a certain point, inspecting a hive becomes something of an adventure where the beekeeper looks forward to seeing what's going on in a hive, and how you as a beekeeper can improve their daily function as bees.

It's June. Is it climate, weather, or wishful thinking?

After a late start to the swarm season, due mostly to a slightly colder Spring, swarming seems to have kicked into gear. Though we got six tenths of an inch of rain, it wasn't quite enough to soak to their roots. Our Spring continues to be a bit dry, heading towards a landscape without much in the way of nectar forage. Again, our primary rule is that everything is dependent on microclimates. Some places have underground moisture and continued plant flowering, most places are drying out until rains return in November.

One of the clear challenges for any bee organization is how we can help as many people as possible to improve their beekeeping skills, no matter their current level. We've started a program where any question or issue is addressed through a hive dive. This allows the person to resolve their problem while simultaneously educating other beekeepers. This approach benefits not only the beekeeper facing the challenge but also helps novice and intermediate beekeepers. They learn how to open a beehive, manage the inspection process, handle individual frames, identify key features on brood comb, and ensure there are no diseases.

A particularly useful aspect of our hive dives is the quick and easy mite test conducted by Justin. While a beekeeper can perform a mite roll using powdered sugar in a one-quart wide-mouthed mason jar with a hardware cloth lid, Justin uses Dawn dishwashing detergent at a

ratio of two tablespoons per gallon. This method allows for a quick assessment of all mites on half a cup of bees from any part of the hive, which equals about 300 bees. If a mite test reveals three mites in a batch of 300 bees, this indicates a 1% infestation rate.

Experience has shown that when mite levels reach 2%, the viruses and other health challenges spread by the mites begin to affect hive health, leading to a decline. Therefore, keeping mite levels below 2%, or six mites in a batch of 300 bees, is crucial. When mite levels are low, the hive remains strong, robust, and productive, and is less susceptible to diseases spread by mites.

Hive dives also share subtle techniques with attentive beekeepers. They learn how to disassemble a hive and handle individual frames by holding them at opposing corners—one hand on the top bar and the other on the opposite corner of the lower bar. Using these diagonal handhold points, the beekeeper can inspect the brood comb for the queen, eggs, larvae, and any perforated cells indicating diseases like foul brood. By holding the frame diagonally, the beekeeper can easily twirl or rotate the frame without straining their wrists or arms to inspect the other side for the same issues.

Experienced beekeepers demonstrate innate handling techniques, simplifying the process for those less comfortable with hive inspection. Eventually, inspecting a hive becomes an adventure, where beekeepers look forward to discovering what's happening inside, and then how they can enhance the daily function of their bees through delicate hive manipulations.

Hive Tracks CEO Shares His Wares

On Thursday, June 4th, 7pm, we will be joined by Max Rünzel, CEO & Co-Founder of HiveTracks, a beekeeping application which is turning Pollinator Networks Into Planet-Scale Biodiversity Intelligence, important for global societal projects, and more importantly for us as beekeepers, Max's application provides a richly comprehensive way to maintain meaningful information about the ever changing details of what's going on in each of a beekeeper's hives.

While some people can't be motivated to write down even a few descriptive words about each hive inspection, Hive Tracks can codify data, and providing a structure for recording important information about each hive. With SmartWatches, SmartPhones, and longlife Bluetooth earbuds, hands-free dictation is now available to every beekeeper, and all that's needed for accurate dictation of all hive assessments, as long as there is organizing software to ingest and share back meaningful data about the bees. Like most software, Hive Tracks is adding AI logic to their hive inspection inputs, organizing and transforming much of the data, minimizing the hand work needed to format bee information.

How can we apply Hive Tracks to the Marin Bee Group? We have three bee populations that we need to track in order to improve our bees. First, quite often beekeepers are discovering that their own colonies, or colonies picked up as swarms become hot, nasty, testy, spicy or just unfriendly. Purchasing queen bees from just anywhere in the Central Vally might do it, buying queens that open mated in skies filled with some Africanized drones will do it. Any way you cut it, nice bees are nice. Cranky bees are a pain. Two other strains of bees need to be tracked. First, the bees with high mite numbers need to be recorded so that those queens can be replaced by other, more known genetic queens which should be Hygienic. The other group of bees that mite testing will identify is the bee colonies which already possess the right genetics, and keep the mite levels low, all by themselves. High non-mite scores will advance a colony of bees to the breeding program so that we can have more of those bees.

HiveTracks is building the data infrastructure layer for biodiversity, enabling landowners, developers, and farmers to measure and improve ecological outcomes. As demand for nature-related reporting accelerates, the company combines community-driven data collection with AI to generate scalable and auditable ground truth environmental data. Max started building HiveTracks following his appointments with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and the Consultative Groups on

International Agricultural Research, where he worked on digital tools to empower smallholder producers. Being fluent in six languages and having lived on three continents, Max believes in a truly global solution to monitoring and managing biodiversity. Max has an MA in Applied Economics from Korea University and a Master of Science degree in International Rural Development from Ghent University. He has been the CEO and co-founder at HiveTracks since November 2020, and is turning HiveTracks into a much more relevant and expansive data platform.

Why be President of the Marin County Beekeepers' Association?

This humble beekeeper has been running hives for 30 years, since 1996. I was a whipper-snapper, so became President of the San Francisco Beekeepers' Association in 2002, and two more years being supportive as Vice President. I know more now, but have many more questions than I did then. My biggest chunk of bee knowledge is that we are all community. What one beekeeper does in her backyard impacts all beekeepers within three miles, and likely also within a ten mile radius.

Becoming a mature beekeeper, it seems most compelling to be sure that everyone expands their bee expertise as much as they can for the sake of the bees, and then also, we need to do all we can to breed and manage the best bees that we can. To that end, I took the first week of April 2026 to attend a five-day Queen Bee Insemination Training with Krispn Givens, bee research scientist at Purdue University in Indiana, to be able to move along the combining of high scoring Hygienic bee lines. Better bees coming

!My focus in the past decade has been to establish VSH (Varroa Sensitive Hygiene) bees, which seem to be the only bee genetics to consistently keep mite reproduction at a minimum. Beekeepers who run VSH genetics have minimal or zero mites through the year, and some VSH beekeepers have not needed to use mite controls in 18 years.

To that end, I am hoping that as an organization, we can start to deploy known VSH or Randy Oliver genetics to participating Marin

Beekeepers, with an agreement that they provide mite load testing to identify any mite controlling genetic lines. When those bees become apparent, the breeding program kicks in, and the highest scoring Hygienic, low-mite bees gain more VSH genetics from the other half of the species, and we deploy more and more mite controlling queens to more and more beekeepers.

When we have VSH virgins going on mating flights with VSH drones in the sky, our bee survival rate will improve, and we will continue to have better bee stocks each year. The choice of running better queen bees results in Marin bees experiencing a huge survival upgrade. Education, nice bees, and mite-resistant bees are our goal. Bees who remain healthy, have their beekeeper being happy.

Community Outreach - Dana Pepp & Tom Pillsbury

Hi fellow beeks,

Interested in sharing your love of bees with others?

Would you like to do some positive PR about bees with our community?

Want to have fun at the Fair while also volunteering?

If this sounds like you, please sign up to volunteer at the Marin County Fair, July 1-5. To thank you for volunteering, you will receive a free ticket to the Fair! Please follow this link to sign up for a spot:

[Marin County Fair signups](#)

We need more volunteers to make this happen. It really is fun, social and a good way for us to connect with our community.

And, if you have creative ideas or would like to help set-up, please let me know.

Thank you!

Education - Justin Strom

Hello everyone,

My name is Justin Strom, and I would like to sincerely thank you for voting for me to serve as the Educational Director of the Marin County Beekeepers Association.

I began beekeeping three years ago with four nuc colonies. Since then, I have grown my apiary to 35 colonies without purchasing additional bees beyond those original four. The learning curve has certainly been steep, but I have found that the challenges of beekeeping make the experience even more rewarding.

While I would never claim to be a longtime mentor with decades of experience, I do believe there is value in having someone involved whose early beekeeping experiences are still fresh in mind. Many of the questions, mistakes, and challenges that newer beekeepers face during their first few years are things I have recently worked through myself.

I am always happy to connect with fellow members to compare notes, share experiences, and continue learning together. I also have a large bee yard in West Novato available to members who would like hands-on experience becoming more comfortable with routine hive inspections and mite washes.

June is an especially important month for mite monitoring, as mite populations can grow rapidly this time of year. Learning proper mite management techniques early can make a tremendous difference in colony health and survival.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like to talk about your bees, discuss challenges you may be experiencing, or gain some practical hands-on experience in the bee yard.

We are all on this beekeeping journey together, my friends.

Sincerely,
Justin Strom

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

neilmary@verizon.net

OTHER EVENTS

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Field workshop with Bonnie Morse

Saturday, July 25, 9am – 12pm, \$95

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. A focus will include varroa mite infestations and organic treatments. This is also the time of year in Marin when forage can be scarce so we'll discuss feeding options. Workshop will also include managing hive size at the end of the season and yellow jacket problems.

Location: San Rafael

[Register Now](#)

Bonnie Morse
Eastern Apicultural Society Master Beekeeper
Cornell Master Beekeeper
bonniebeecompany.com

Learn from the Bees Classes - Jennifer Radtke

Year Round Varroa Mite Management - on Zoom

Part 1: Sunday, July 19th, 6:30pm - 8pm

Part 1: Sunday, August 2nd, 6:30pm - 8pm

\$50, recordings included

Learn how to keep your hive alive for multiple years by keeping your varroa mite levels low. We focus on organic treatments that have worked for me and my students in the Bay Area. We'll cover the sugar roll test, drone comb frames, formic acid, and oxalic acid glycerin.

Taught by Jennifer Radtke, Learn from the Bees and Urban Farm Oasis Co-Founder

[Link to Register: https://urbanfarmoasis.org/CLASSES-EVENTS](https://urbanfarmoasis.org/CLASSES-EVENTS)

Prepare Your Hive for Winter Class - on Zoom

Part 1: Saturday, August 15th, 9am - 10:30am

Part 1: Saturday, August 22nd, 9am - 10:30am

\$50, recordings included

Learn how to assess your hive health so your bees survive through the winter! We'll show how to consolidate the brood nest, likely reducing the hive by 1-2 boxes. We'll advise on how to protect your hives from robber bees, wasps, ants, and wax moths. We'll also cover when to inspect during the winter months, what to do about varroa mites, how to store frames over the winter, and how much honey to keep in the hive.

Taught by Jennifer Radtke, Learn from the Bees and Urban Farm Oasis Co-Founder

[Link to Register: https://urbanfarmoasis.org/CLASSES-EVENTS](https://urbanfarmoasis.org/CLASSES-EVENTS)

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.

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.