

The Buzzzz

The Monthly Newsletter of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association

Volume 8

August 2013

In this issue

Getting To Know Each Other *Message From The President* *August In The Beeyard*
Guest Column *Drippings From The Extractor* *Classifieds*
Calendar of Events

Getting to Know Each Other!

by Vicki Basham

This month, we'll get to know Rich Mockabee. And yes, that's his real name! Rich lives on a couple of beautiful acres in Aromas, where he currently has about 30 of his 50 hives.



Rich Mockabee - the perfect name to have for his new business!

Rich started beekeeping as a small business only about two years ago. "I like the idea of employees that work 24 hours a day, 7 day a week for free!" he says. Even though he is

relatively new to beekeeping, he already sells honey, pollen and candles at five farmers markets. He also collects swarms for a fee. He's interested in pollination, too, and gave it a try for the first time this spring when another beekeeper was short of the hives he needed for a specific pollination job. And he is also the spearhead for the beekeeping exhibit at the Santa Cruz County fair, representing the Gilroy guild. Eventually, he'd like to have about a hundred hives.

Like many other beekeepers, Rich is always looking for good ways to deal with Varroa mites. He believes a colony does need help and that if they are not treated for mites in some way, the colony will not survive. This year, he has treated his colonies twice with ApiGuard, and is not seeing a lot of mites right now.

Rich's preferred way to learn about bees is to visit others in the business of beekeeping, especially those with 200 to 500 hives. He believes these businesses are willing and able to experiment a little, as opposed to the much larger beekeeping operations. He likes hands-on learning, too.

He believes new beekeepers should start by joining a club and getting as much knowledge as they can. Rich is a member of quite a few beekeeping guilds, including the Monterey, Santa Cruz and Gilroy guilds. He warns new folks that beekeeping takes more time than one

might think to learn. "You can't just put bees in a box on a hillside and leave it at that!" he says. He speaks from experience. He actually did just that about 12 years ago, not realizing the attention bees need now and then.

One of Rich's most memorable moments in beekeeping happened last year when he was helping a friend with some apiary chores. He slipped on his protective jacket, not realizing that he trapped at least four bees inside the jacket at the same time! The first bee promptly stung him in the eyelid. "I had to sit down - I thought I was going to pass out!" he said.

Another memorable event happened about a month or so ago. Rich received a phone call from a police dispatcher, asking if he would come and take care of a super that had fallen off the back of a truck in a parking lot. The truck had long gone, leaving the super with no top or bottom, but full of bees. When he arrived at the scene, the police had lights flashing, warning tape surrounding the "crime scene" and a large crowd of very curious onlookers. He was very much the center of attention as he strode in and easily rescued the bees. Amazingly, this super had a queen and he still has the colony to this day.



Guest Column

by Heather Oliver

When most of us think of beehives, we picture the trusty Langstroth Hive. The Langstroth surely has its benefits, from simple set up and maintenance to uniform frames that

can fit into an extractor. Personally, I only own Langstroth's, but have been dreaming lately of flirting with less-common ways of keeping bees. Perhaps it appeals to my rebellious nature (I've secretly been harboring bees in my within-city-limits backyard) that I've begun to question if there is another way? The resounding answer is "yes", there are alternatives to the tried-and-true Langstroth. Here are just a few;

- The Top Bar Hive: Top Bar Hives have been gaining in popularity among backyard beekeepers looking to first and foremost provide a home for bees. Honey extraction is often seen as just a fortunate side-effect, rather than the main purpose, of keeping bees in this fashion. Top Bar hives are long, typically have a narrowed base, and sit atop a platform of sorts. This hive is appropriately named in that wooden "bars" are hung across the top. The bees are allowed to draw their comb as they see fit. The involved beekeeper will manipulate the bars so the comb is drawn down in a more-or-less organized way.

- The Warre Hive: The Warre Hive might look similar to the Langstroth from the outside, but is somewhat reversed on the inside. Specifically, when a new box or super needs to be added, it goes on the *bottom* of the hive. The Warre is a simple box design, but is not filled with traditional frames. Rather, top bars are suspended from the box and the bees are allowed to draw down their own comb. The Warre is essentially a vertical top bar hive. An additional feature that distinguishes a Warre from other hives is an upper box filled with insulating materials.

- The Hex Hive: Based on the idea that wild bees prefer to build hives in tree trunks, the Hex Hive was born. This hive attempts to mimic the circular and upright habit of such trunks. The Hex hive is constructed out of thick wood and has small, round entrance holes. The thick outer-hive insulates the colony from temperature fluctuations while the small entrance holes are easier to defend. Regarding entrances, the Hex Hive incorporates multiple entrances into its design. Curious beekeepers can see an actual Hex Hive at the Morgan Hill Community Garden.

●The Dollhouse Hive: This is a facetious name for those beehives that cannot be categorized as a traditional. The name “Dollhouse Hive” was derived from a friend’s actual colony of bees who had taken residence in an abandoned dollhouse. Perhaps you’ve witnessed firsthand or seen photos of such hives under the hoods of abandoned cars, beneath the cover of a bbq grill or anywhere a swarm decides to hang their hats. Such hive locales probably are not ideal for honey extraction, but can provide an ideal home for our apian friends. Next time you find yourself with one swarm too many, consider housing them in an alternative hive. That long-forgotten dollhouse (or armoire, or wine barrel) might serve as a cozy residence for homeless bees.

Presidents Message

What’s an Artificial Swarm?

by Wayne Pitts

In our continuing quest to combat the varroa mite, here’s a new method to defeat the pest based upon the mite’s reproductive cycle. Since the mite requires capped brood to reproduce, simply breaking the brood cycle should reduce the number of mites in the colony. I read about this procedure in one of the magazines a while back and mentioned it at the last meeting. Since it seemed like a viable method, I thought I would give it a try.

What I have tried and discovered. My first attempt was to take a medium and deep Langstroth hive and shake all the bees into a new box with new frames and foundation. The frames with brood were used to beef up weaker hives in the apiary. Two weeks later, I checked the new box. Almost half of the foundation was drawn out and they were working on the remainder. And there was fresh brood present. Apparently, I didn’t kill the hive.

Next I tried a top bar hive by once again shaking the bees from a Langstroth into a top bar box. This box did contain 2 bars with fresh comb that had been made by the previous occupants. There had not been bees present for about 3 weeks. They were the remainder of a

queen less swarm I found about 2 months before yielding a long break in the brood cycle. The combs were about 4 inches by 3. I placed these two bars with comb next to the entrance. Then I proceeded to shake bees into the box, and inspected on day 4. On bar number 4 from the entrance this is what I found.

This is about 9 inches of new comb about 5



inches high. These girls have been busy. Bar number 1 had brood and new comb. Bar number 2’s comb was much larger also. Bar number 3 had more comb than 4 shown above. The bees were busy pulling wax on the next 4 bars.

Why does this work? We have already mentioned that the reproductive cycle will be broken, but what turns the bees into wax producing machines? Two things are readily apparent: lots of food and the lack of wax. I have about (the number varies) 12-15 hives on the hill at any given time. My 5 gallon feeder which I fill every other day with 1:1 sugar water will be emptied by the bees in less than 4 hours. I also placed an internal feeder in the new boxes. This meets the plenty of food criteria and frames (either top bar or Langstroth) without comb meets the other. Now if these hives are alive on 15feb, I will declare success.

Drippings From The Extractor **(Notes from the Editor)**

In an earlier column, I talked about the potential effects of drought on honey bees and honey. One of my concerns dealt with the lack of spring rains on plant growth and nectar flows,

especially in rural areas. Personally, this appears to have become reality. We have somewhere around twenty hives. We recently did our first extraction and could only take surplus honey from four hives. Most of our hives are in rural areas. Plants in those areas that we normally depend on for a good, extended nectar flow just didn't produce. There was a bloom, but it seemed like it didn't last for more than twenty minutes! Our last hope, star thistle, also seems to be less than usual. (This is fantastic news to everyone except a beekeeper!!) On the opposite side, bees in urban areas seem to be doing much better. I wish we had more than two hives in backyards.

The National Climatic Data Center at NOAA issues a weekly Drought Monitor. It currently shows California being in the midst of a severe drought

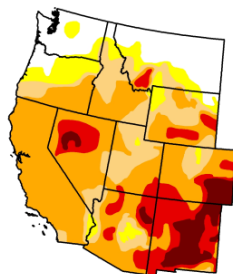
U.S. Drought Monitor West

July 16, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	14.44	85.56	76.94	59.31	18.96	6.15
Last Week (07/09/2013 week)	15.20	84.80	76.41	57.10	20.01	6.68
3 Months Ago (04/16/2013 week)	19.84	80.16	63.67	41.05	14.73	1.64
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 week)	24.39	75.61	69.31	45.04	18.01	2.15
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 week)	15.12	84.88	77.15	43.65	16.85	1.77
One Year Ago (07/16/2012 week)	20.09	79.91	64.91	46.78	15.87	0.48

Intensity:

D0 Abnormally Dry
D1 Drought - Moderate
D2 Drought - Severe
D3 Drought - Extreme
D4 Drought - Exceptional



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, July 18, 2013
Richard Heim, National Climatic Data Center, NOAA

So what does this mean to us beekeepers? The prospects for things to change in the near future are slim. As discussed in August in the Beeyard, we need to make sure that our bees have sufficient stores. We may actually need to start our winter maintenance programs much earlier than normal.

Wayne passed along the following message from Eric Mussen. In light of the recent misuse of pesticides in Oregon, his letter explains the legality of pesticide use on bees. The message was originally sent to our local vector control.

"This is the second request for this information that I have received, recently. I

believe it came from one of your local beekeepers, and my answer is the same to both of you. Honey bees do not have any sort of national or local blanket of legal protection from being killed. However, there are regulations concerning legal ways of killing them.

1. To kill any "pest" with a material labeled as, or used like you would use, a pesticide, the product is supposed to be registered at the federal and state levels. The product must be labeled with the "target pest" (bees in this case) and the appropriate "site" (would depend upon where the bees are) for legal use.

2. There are a number of products on the market for professional exterminators (Pest Control Operators) that are labeled for killing honey bee colonies in houses, etc. However, it is illegal to use a can of wasp and hornet spray, **INSIDE A HOME OR BUILDING**, to kill honey bees. Outside the building, if the label says that it is registered to kill bees, then they can be killed, as long as it is used outside.

3. We know that soapy or detergent water can be sprayed, heavily on a swarm to kill the bees. However, if that occurs outside and subsequently birds come and eat the bees, then die, you can be cited and fined, for illegal pesticide use. The same could be said when I used detergent water to kill a swarm on the playground in a school yard across the street from my house one evening. I swept up all the bees, but the detergent solution was still on the playground, and was a "toxic residue" by regulatory definition.

4. If pest control operators tell the public that they won't remove a honey bee colony from a wall, it is not due to restrictions on killing honey bees, even if they say so. That is a lame excuse used by some of them so that they do not become enmeshed in a subsequent problem. When bees are killed in the wall, sometimes the dead bee bodies pile up and rot, or the brood dies and rots, and either one can smell as bad as a dead rat in the wall. Even if they luck out on that, after a while, especially when it becomes humid, honey can ferment, pop its cappings, and run down the wall, through the ceiling, or whatever. The frustrated homeowner demands the commercial operation "finish" the job they

started (by killing the bees) by cleaning up the mess. That can become very expensive. Thus, the blatantly incorrect early information on the phone."

Wayne also forwarded the following. Swarm collecting can be fun!

CHARLOTTE, N.C. - A US Airways Express flight left three hours late from a North Carolina airport after a swarm of bees kept crews from rolling the plane back from the gate.

US Airways spokesman Davien Anderson says Flight 2690 to Indianapolis had boarded Wednesday afternoon and was ready for departure from Charlotte Douglas International Airport. Anderson says a worker approached the tug - which pushes the airplane back from the gate - and noticed the bees. The worker couldn't operate the tug in fear of being stung.

US Airways spokeswoman Michelle Mohr says a beekeeper captured the bees. She says the 79 passengers and four crewmembers aboard left at 4 p.m. and arrived in Indianapolis at about an hour later.

None of the bees got inside the cabin, and no injuries were reported.

Vicki Basham forwarded the following:
Hello All,
There's a new movie out that you might be interested in. It's called *More than Honey* and there's a special showing in Cupertino on August 14th.

I suspect that this is a movie not to be missed! The photography is stunning. It's about the state of beekeeping today, and at times, it can be rather disturbing.

The San Mateo bee club has arranged for this showing, but to be able to show it, they need at least 30 more people to sign up. The cost is only \$10. To reserve a ticket, visit:

<http://gathr.us/screening/4804>.

I've included two YouTube links that are clips from the movie. One or both might have a commercial before the bee clip; hopefully you can skip it. Here are the links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeFnI9W3iAw> (Preview)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KU1WRdRLA> (Preview)

Sure hope to see a lot of you there!
Vicki

One of our goals at GBA is to provide the best educational experience possible to our members. One way of doing this is to provide speakers for our meetings and offer classes. We need your input. At our next meeting, we will be discussing this topic. Please come with your ideas. Any ideas in advance can be sent to me at dave.stocks@yahoo.com.

Also, it's time for my monthly groveling! Please contribute articles to *The Buzzz*. This is your newsletter; we need your input. Articles can be sent to dave.stocks@yahoo.com. Thank you in advance.

August in the Beeyard

I know it seems like summer has just begun, but for the bees, August is a transitional month. Jeremy Rose, in his book *Beekeeping in Central California*, feels that the condition of your hives on August 15th more or less mimics what you can expect them to be on February 15th of the following year. This is particularly true for bees in rural areas. Here, nectar flows have pretty much ended for the bees. Your bees should be at maximum strength, but are beginning to rear the brood with which they will overwinter. Bees in urban areas may wait a little longer, but for them, changes are just around the corner.

This is a time for the beekeeper to be extra vigilant. If you still have a nectar flow, and your brood boxes have ample winter stores, you may still add supers. If the hives do not have sufficient stores to last the winter, you have two management choices. First, you can take advantage of the remaining flow and allow the bees to build up stores in the brood boxes. If honey production takes precedent over ample honey stores, you can supplement the lacking stores by feeding sugar syrup or surplus honey. The start date for doing so is dependent on the available honey stores within the hive.

If all nectar flows have stopped, and have been for awhile (just like some areas this year), you need to check your hives and make sure they have ample stores. A strong hive that is not

bringing in ample nectar can consume large amounts of stored honey. This is not the time to start starving your bees

An equally important chore for this month is checking and or treating for mites. Varroa mites can decimate a hive rapidly. Your hives need to be checked and depending on what you feel is an acceptable mite threshold, treated. There are several ways to check for mites. If you haven't chosen a preferred method, or aren't quite sure how to do a check, ask a fellow beekeeper. If you want your bees to survive, you need to keep mite populations in check. Remember, some check methods can be harmful to bees, ie; ether rolls. A method I prefer, and which I feel gives the most accurate check, is opening capped drone comb. I will determine a set number of comb to check, say twenty five. I have predetermined that my acceptable threshold is 10 mites per 100. I began scratching the caps off of capped drone comb and remove the larvae. (Don't despair, they were going to get kicked out of the hive anyway!) When I reach 3 mites I have exceeded my mite threshold, and depending on my management style, I need to take action.

Treatment options are numerous, ranging from chemical treatments to doing nothing at all. Again, if you are not sure what to do, ask a fellow beekeeper. Non-action may very well lead to a lost hive. Remember that chemical treatments can have a negative impact on bees, comb, and honey. Before choosing this option, consider a few "more friendly" options such a powder sugar treatment. Another newer thought, but one with merit, involves re-queening the hive. A hive with high mite counts could be indicative of a failing queen, or a queen with poor hygienic behavior genes. By placing a new, mated queen in the hive you are potentially improving the hives vigor, and you most certainly break the mite cycle while the new queen begins her laying process.

A final thought. Weak hives are susceptible to robbing and yellow jacket attack. If you feel one of your hives is experiencing predation, reduce the entrance. The smaller the entrance, the more able they are to defend their hive.

It's going to be a busy month. Remember to take your time with the bees and above all else, ENJOY IT!

Classifieds

Looking for good useable bee equipment, i.e.: wooden ware, medium size extractor, tanks, pumps, forklift, bottling equipment, etc. If someone is downsizing or no longer needing any of these, contact me.

Rich Mockabee, Mockabees@aol.com,
or 831-247-4093

Wanted: End of the season un-capped honey.
Contact Dave at dave.stocks@yahoo.com or
408-605-3977

Calendar of Events

August 1, 2013

Beekeepers Guild of San Mateo County - 7 pm
1106 Alameda de Pulgas
Belmont, Ca

<http://www.sanmateobeeguild.org/>

Topic:

Preparation to Help Your Bees Survive the
Season

August 3, 2013

Monterey Bay Beekeepers - 8 am
2450 N. Fremont St.
Monterey, Ca

<http://www.montereybaybeekeepers.org/>

August 5, 2013

Santa Clara Valley Beekeepers Guild - 6:15 pm
1292 Minnesota Ave.
San Jose, Ca

<http://beeguild.org/>

Topics:

Fall Hive Management with Serge Labesque

August 7, 2013

Santa Cruz Beekeepers Guild - 6:30 pm
El Rio Mobile Home Park
N. Pacific Ave
Santa Cruz, Ca

<http://santacruzbees.com>

August 13, 2013

Gilroy Beekeepers Association - 7 pm
8191 Swanston Ln.
Gilroy , Ca
<http://www.uvasgold.com/gba/>

August 13, 2013

Alameda County Beekeepers Association - 7:30
600 Bellevue Ave.
Oakland, Ca
<http://site.alamedabees.org>

Classes

None scheduled at this time

Special Events

"More than Honey"

New Bee movie screening August 14th
Cupertino

<http://gathr.us/screening/4804>

see the clip on Youtube video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeFnI9W3iAw>

Meetings

Western Apiculture Society (WAS)

WAS 2013 Annual Conference

http://ucanr.edu/sites/was2/Conference_Information/

Santa Fe, New Mexico

October 16-19, 2013

California State Beekeepers Association

2013 CSBA Annual Convention

Harrah's, South Lake Tahoe, CA

November 18-22, 2013