

# The Local Buzz

May 2019



## President's Message, Jerry Van Heeringen



Can you believe it, a week of warm sunny days! What a relief that winter of seemingly endless cold rainy days is finally over. According to the calendar spring came on Wednesday, March 20, at 2:58 PM. but according to my thermometer it came in this past week. The real sign of spring to us beekeepers is the increasing reports of swarming. Everywhere I look there is an abundance of forage for our bees, its no wonder colonies are blowing up everywhere. In spite of that I understand there may be a shortage of bees or queens for sale this year so if you need either I hope you already bought yours or you have your order in with someone.



If you have a chance to be around a swarming colony its really quite exciting. You hear this loud buzz and walk out to see the air filled with a swirling mass of bees. Though it's a bit unnerving you can walk right into the middle of them as they are just looking for a new home and have no interest in you at all. They rise up into the air like a tornado of bees and if you're lucky the queen lands on a low branch nearby. The tornado shrinks as the bees slowly cluster around her leaving just a few hundred scouts looking for a place to live.

Don't forget the California Honey Festival is Saturday May 4th from 10:00 am to 5:00pm in Downtown Woodland California. The schedule is packed with events and I'm sure there will be plenty of vendors as well.

## May 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting –7:00 PM

Our speaker for the May meeting is Dr. Dewey Caron. Entomologist, speaker, author and story teller, this will be a must attend program featuring one of our most revered bee experts.

## Bee Bits

Submitted by Randy Oliver

Sunshine at last! As I type these words, the last of manzanita is still in full bloom, well over a month beyond "normal." And plums, apples, and pears are all blooming on top of one another, rather than their blooming periods being spread out. The nectar flow is amazing!

Swarming has hit us hard, since it had been too cold for queens to take their mating flights, we put off splitting our hives. Then this sudden warm weather and intense nectar flow caused them to immediately plug out, and we haven't been able to keep ahead of swarming. I'm now concerned about how many of those swarms are going to establish colonies in whatever cavities they can find, only to become a source of mites late this summer.

If your colonies have not yet swarmed, I strongly suggest splitting them. Either include a swarm cell with the splits, or make sure to include at least one frame with eggs with each split. Then be sure to give all your hives plenty of room to store the incoming nectar. We usually have spare queen cells for sale at this time of year, but because of the issues above, may not have any available for another week or so. Once we catch up, I'm happy to supply queen cells from our mite-resistant breeder queens, free of charge, to any hobbyist with hives in the County. If you're interested, please email me with the words "Queen cells," followed by the number that you want, in the subject line, and I'll put your name on a list (Example "Queen cells, 3"). Please do not put any other words in the email. I'll raise a batch to order as soon as I'm able, and give you a few day's notice of when you can pick them up.

This season may well offer us the best honey crop in quite a few years. For those who need more equipment, a member getting out of bees has asked me to sell her equipment at reasonable prices. If you're interested, please email me with the word "Equipment" in the subject line, and no other words. I'll send you back a list of what's available. Happy beekeeping!

## In The Yard

Submitted by Brion Dunbar



Some of you know I decided to sell my bee business last year about this time. I wanted to have more free time to travel and relax, and that is still the case. However I can't deny that I miss working bees regularly, and so have decided to get back 'in the game' just a bit. I ended up last year with 8 colonies that did make it to almond pollination. This year maybe 25 colonies and 50 next year. But that's it!

What an amazing last month for nectar and pollen flow! Don't leave your colonies alone for too long- they may be filled to the brim with honey! I had left one mating nuc colony without 2 or 3 frames in the hive body. When I went back 19 days after placing queen cells, there were 2 ten inch high combs attached to the lid, half full of honey!

Another bee that seems to be having a banner year is the local carpenter bees- genus *Xylocopa*. I was out in the back pasture this last week, and amazed at the number of them in our old barn

buildings. Dozens of black shiny bees hovering around certain areas inside and outside the buildings. Apparently the male bees are 'claiming' a territory just outside the holes in the wood that the females have made nests into. These bees can do serious damage to wood structures, though a good coat of paint is all that is needed to deter them. The tunnels are about 1/2 inch in diameter, go in an inch or so, then turn 90 degrees and can be as long as 4 feet! I'm not too worried about them inhabiting these structures as they are going to come down at some point. *Xylocopa* pollinate large or open flowers that can support their heavy weight. Some species put their strong jaws to use and chew holes into the sides of smaller flowers, like blueberries, to rob nectar. They are really beautiful bees, and only the females have sting capability, though they rarely use it. The males seem aggressive when protecting their territories, but it is just 'bluffing'.

## Minutes ~ Last Meeting

Submitted by Ann Hiner – Acting Secretary

President Jerry Van Heeringen began the meeting at 7:00 in the downstairs meeting room of the Veteran's Memorial Building in Grass Valley, CA.

Introductions were welcomed. There was no old business to report.

## New Business

Amy Hustead, Bear River Bees, is working with our **NCBA Facebook page** as the Social Media Administrator, keeping nuisance and misuse off the site and gathering good information.

Randy Oliver will be starting a **new class for beginning beekeepers on April 20**, just as Dan Wheat at A to Z completes his classes this week. Randy will take about 20 people new to beekeeping. Fee for an all day class is \$45.

## Treasurer's Report from Janet Brisson

Membership Dues - have you paid?

Only \$15 per year via email and a one time library use of \$5

Beginning Balance	3/31/19	\$5,470.81
Deposits		458.00
Subtotal		\$5,928.81
Debits		-112.60
Total R/C	3/31/19	\$5,816.21

## Announcements

### Dr. Z from the University of Arkansas is booked for us in October.

Janet Brisson was given a round of applause for her scheduling work. President Jerry will put out a sign-up copy of the speaker topic choices at our next meeting. Give your preference for Dr. Z's topic....he has many! You may also email Janet your vote for his talk. (Be sure she has your current email address.) See last page for email addresses to the Board.

### Celebration of Monarchs on April 20

From 11:00 to 4:00 at the Auburn Fairgrounds. They have invited us to their booths to add honeybees in action to their program. Randy has the observation hive but cannot be there this time. After 40 years of installing it, he needs a volunteer to coordinate it. Please contact Randy and he will collaborate ahead of time.

**Strawberry Music Festival also needs booth volunteers. May 23-26 is their annual Memorial Day weekend** celebration. Four hour shifts = 1 free ticket to this popular event. Randy would need a volunteer for this coordination as well.

### Nevada County Apiary Ordinance

This is ready and going to the Board of Supervisors in the near future. Please come to that meeting when the call goes out. Remember, this is to protect our own county beekeepers, hobbyists, and commercial interests from out of the area illegal dumping of hives. For our hobbies/businesses to be sustainable, guidelines have been put together for Nevada County.

## Q & A

**Concern for queen bee back orders** was a topic of discussion. Randy had just come from Chicago, and noted an example: 15,000 queens make up the usual order for Kansas beekeepers from a large supplier there. This year, no queens are yet available, as we write this, due to the late rains and storms. Commercial queen producers (and Randy) are sold out a year in advance. Almond pollination is late this year.

Another clarification was needed regarding how queen cells are timed and produced. Randy pointed out that there are 3 kinds of cells....**Queen-made swarm cells** to lead swarming when necessary; **supersedure cells (for failing queen replacement)**; and **emergency cells (where worker cells are made into queen cells with royal jelly)**. Note the hive may tear down the queen cells once they have a queen they are satisfied with. If the selected queen is not doing well 3 weeks after her emergence, she may be superseded. And sometimes, daughter and mother queens share the work, working side by side, whereas a queen will fight to the death with an unrelated queen. Mating with more than one drone adds diversity to the hive.

**Timing is tricky this year.** If the drone cells are delayed, fertilization of the queen and peak of bloom can be out of sync. Seven days after they emerge, queens require 70 degree weather for mating. Watch for drones

flying around 1:30 - 2:00 in the afternoon, typically for 7-14 days. Best queens occur during excellent weather and during swarm season. She will lay her body weight in eggs each day. Workers can detect when drone sperm isn't good enough. The quality of the queen is dependent on her nutrition. Good nutrition assists the queens in passing on mite resistance.

## **PROGRAM**

Wendy Mather, of California Master Beekeeper Programs, now in its 4th year, explained their goals, introduced 2 apprentices, one who is a 4th generation beekeeper from Ontario. They shared their challenges and research done in their universities. Their main Canadian pollinator crop is blueberries. They have 3.5 million people in Canada, where we have 40 million just in California. They have enjoyed their visit here and learned how we care for our hives. They discussed their successful technique in wintering hives in unheated garages to control temperature extremes. Their main pest problems are varroa mites and American Foul Brood. The Ontario Beekeeping Association is supporting the testing of probiotics for health of the bees, in Bio Patties made from sucrose, inactivated brewer's yeast, and soy flour. The probiotic Lacto-Bacilli is hoped to bring liberation and prevention of diseases. Nozema, a fungal pathogen, is being treated with yeast, B-1, and Vitamin B. Randy shared his field research that feeding does help. Added nutrition that is good for them helps bees get healthier.

## **Dr. Dewey Caron – upcoming speaker for May**

**Submitted by Janet Brisson**

Our May speaker, Dr. Dewey Caron and I go way back to 2005 when I first started using powdered sugar to remove mites from bees and started Country Rubes. I was being asked to speak at various clubs and soon realized I had no real talent for public speaking. I would just start talking and when my hour was up, I realized there were so many things I forgot to mention. I tried Toastmasters for about 6 months and still couldn't seem to memorize my talks or keep things in order. I needed to educate myself more on Varroa mites and checked out a DVD PowerPoint we had in our library by a Dr. Dewey Caron. I must of watched it a dozen times when it dawned on me that I needed something like a PowerPoint to keep me on tract during my talks. I had a PowerPoint program that came with my computer, but had no idea how to use it. Going back to Dewey's PowerPoint, I discovered I could exit the slide show and not only see all the slides, but I could also exchange my own pictures and words, even change the backgrounds. Here it was, all laid out for me. Now all I needed was permission.

I found Dewey's email online and sent him a note explaining what I was trying to do and if it was ok for me to use his PowerPoint setup to build my own. I got an immediate response from him, "If you can help save our bees, go for it!" And I did. In thanks, I sent Dewey one of our bottom boards with a thank you note, and he sent me an email back saying he was going to be at the Oregon conference and saw I was also on the agenda.. I have to admit, at this point, I didn't realize how important Dr. Caron was in the bee world. We were pretty tight with our money back then, so I didn't subscribe to the bee magazines or buy books. I introduced myself to him at the conference and he invited me to sit with him and talk. What an absolutely delightful man. He was so interested in what I was doing, asked insightful questions and urged me on with my work. When I mentioned to him our eldest just got a job at the University of Pennsylvania, Dewey said when I visit him, I needed to come see him at the University of Delaware. With a look of confusion, I said, no, our kid is in Philadelphia not Delaware. He got this huge grin on his face, "Honey, look at a map, these schools are only an hour away from each other." Yep, wasn't very good at east coast geography either.

As I gave talks and attended conference across the United States, Dewey was always a featured and beloved speaker. At a conference in Connecticut, he gave me one of his books, "Africanized Bees across the Americas" which I read on my flight home. I loved it and when I saw Dewey the next time and told him, he said, "You read the whole book? You poor thing." Seriously, it was a great read. We got to host Dewey for a talk here in 2009. He told us he was the entomologist at the Panama Canal working on mosquitoes. He was involved with the first Africanized bee swarm that crossed the canal and tried to work with the governments to stop the spread into North America. This altered Dr. Caron's path into bees. There are so many more great Dewey Caron stories, but I'll stop here. This will be a must attend program by one of the most revered bee expert ever. Hope to see you there.

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**Honey Extraction House**

A to Z Supply has a honey extraction house available for rent. Equipment is provided and the room is heated and there's lots of hot water for cleanup.  
For more information: 530.273.6608

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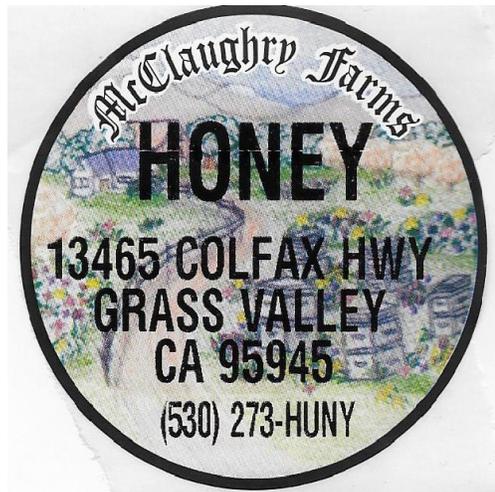
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- Bee themed gifts & decor for home and garden
- Wide variety of books - children's, beekeeping, DIY soap & candle making

**NCBA Swarm Hotline List**

The NCBA Swarm Hotline List is in the process of being updated for 2019. If you want to be on the list as someone who can be called upon to retrieve a bee swarm then send the below information via email to Lynn Williams at [iamlynn@hughes.net](mailto:iamlynn@hughes.net).

- Name:
- Phone Number(s):
- Any area limitations:

Even if you were on the list for last year you must confirm your participation for 2019. Note that many calls come from the Yuba City/Marysville area.



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Advertising rates are \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members.

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association is dedicated to apiculture education and promotion of the art and science of beekeeping among beekeepers, agriculturists, and the general public. This is a "not for profit" organization. Donations are welcomed.

Meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 7 PM at the Grass Valley Veteran's Memorial Building at 255 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley. All visitors are welcome. Use the back entrance.

The newsletter is published monthly as a service to the membership. Articles, recipes, commentary, and news items are welcomed and encouraged. Contributions should be received by the 20th of the Month to be included into the next issue. Submit to [garyg@newpress.com](mailto:garyg@newpress.com)

Advertising space (3" by 2") in this newsletter is usually available and need not be bee-related. Advertising rates are \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members. Please email Janet Brisson at [rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com)



**Nevada County Beekeepers Association**  
[www.nevadacountybeekeepers.org](http://www.nevadacountybeekeepers.org)



c/o Janet Brisson  
20693 Dog Bar Road  
Grass Valley, CA 95949  
First Class Mail

May 6th Meeting 7:00PM

Dr. Dewey Caron. Entomologist,  
speaker, author and story teller.

## **Nevada County Beekeepers Association**

### **Officers**

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Karla Hanson	265-3756
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Swarm Hotline	
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Lynn Williams	675-2924
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All area codes are 530 unless noted otherwise.