

# The Local Buzz

November 2019



## President's Message, Jerry Van Heeringen



How could it be November already the year seems to have gone by so fast. With Thanksgiving just around the corner we're getting to that time of year when food just seems to be everywhere. It's not the same for our bees, as the weather turns colder not only is there less to forage, the bees will have less flight time. It is so important this time of year to check the weight of our colonies and feed if needed. The forecast shows temperatures dropping and while they're not too low yet we're getting close to the time of year when it can get cold enough that the bees will not break cluster even to feed.

November also means we elect officers for the next year. Let's have a great turnout to show support those members nominated at the October meeting who are willing to give their time to make it possible for us all to get together every month.

## November 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting –7:00 PM

This month Bonnie Morse from Bonnie Bees in Marin County will be our guest speaker and will be talking about "One Approach to Treatment Free Beekeeping."

Jack of all trades, master of none. A winding road through cultural exchange, event planning, horticulture, arboriculture, gorillas and wholesale ultimately led to bees. A backyard hive quickly led to two and then an obsession and Bonnie and her husband, Gary, formed Bonnie Bee & Company in 2011. The company is located in Marin County, California and offers local bees and honey in addition to support for local beekeepers through workshops, consulting and hive management.

Please join Bonnie and Gary Morse at Marias Mexican Restaurant at 5:15pm Monday, November 4th for a no-host dinner before our meeting. Meeting starts at 7pm at the Grass Valley Veterans Hall.

## Bee Bits

Submitted by Randy Oliver

I'm fresh returned from speaking in Southern California. We should consider ourselves lucky in Nevada County that we don't have a resident naturalized population of Africanized bees, as they do in SoCal. There, at this time of year, it's difficult to work a hive due to intense robbing pressure by the "ferals." One can only open a hive for a few minutes before robbers sniff out an opportunity for plunder, and then descend en mass.

The term "feral" may be a misnomer. "Feral" applies to plants or animal, that having escaped from captivity or domestication, are now living in a wild state. Some, such as feral cats, can become serious pests (since they prey on songbirds and other small native wildlife, and act as reservoirs of communicable pathogens for domestic cats). As Darwin observed, some ferals may evolve back to a more wild-type form and become naturalized in their new habitat. And some can be quite invasive, and expand their range in the new habitat -- the honey bee falls into this category.

The question that I have is whether the original honey bees introduced into South and North America should actually be considered as have been "domesticated" in the first place. The introductions of European

ances of bees back in the 1600's was from populations that interbred with their surrounding wild-type bee races. Thus the original introductions could be considered as having been wild-type, as opposed to domesticated, in the first place. That means that when they swarmed into the wild of the U.S., that they would have established *introduced and naturalized populations of wild-type bees*, rather than "ferals" (escaped domesticated stock). Mitochondrial DNA evidence indicates that our U.S. naturalized populations are self maintained, their unique genes not being propagated by the queen producers.

When I first began beekeeping in SoCal, there was a resident wild-type naturalized population of dark honey bees that were runny on the combs and hotter than firecrackers (we called them "German black bees," and they likely came from the *Apis mellifera mellifera*, or "m" lineage). We preferred to keep the more gentle domesticated Italian, Caucasian, or Carniolan stocks available at the time.

And then *unselected* queens from the Savannah bee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*) were introduced into Brazil. Those bees had never been domesticated, and being wild-type, could not be considered as ferals once they escaped. Those African bees were better adapted to the South American lowlands, and quickly naturalized; in the process hybridizing with the introduced wild-type European bees (again consisting mainly those of the m lineage).

Once those hybridized, wild-type "Africanized" bees invaded SoCal, they likely hybridized with the closely-related existing population of naturalized honey bees, thus resulting in a very well-adapted "local" race.

In SoCal, beekeepers have the choice of keeping naturalized "local" bees, or introduced Italian or Carniolan domesticated bees. The local stock is far better adapted to the environment, but prone towards defensiveness, swarming, and robbing. But it can often hold its own against varroa. Unfortunately, they may not be fun to work, and a hazard to one's neighbors.

I performed a demo over the weekend at the Cal Poly apiary, showing the beekeepers how to inspect colonies of domesticated bees without the benefit of protective gear. But then I was later asked (for the benefit of a late visitor) to check on a hive that had recently been re-queened. It soon became obvious to me that it had likely been re-queened due to it having previously been mothered by an F1 hybrid queen – the typical result when a colony of domesticated bees swarms, and the virgin daughter mates with naturalized local drones in that area.

I could watch my host become uncomfortable as those "F1" bees started to flutter their wings and show signs of agitation, including some warning bumps to my hands. I reacted by slowing down my inspection and using a bit more smoke. I didn't want to frighten the visitor about bees, and even then scooped a handful of those bees off a comb into my hand, and placed them gently into hers. I thought that my host was going to have a heart attack! I was closely monitoring the bees' behavior, and could see that they were on the edge, but felt that I could still safely continue with the demonstration. However, I didn't waste any time in gently returning the frames and closing up the hive, making sure that the visitors kept their veils on until we were well away from the hive. My host breathed an audible sigh of relief as we walked away.

Back home here in Nevada County, keep your generators gassed up, and check your hives to see whether they are prepared for winter. The season is running later than it did for the past few years, and we still have time to feed pollen sub and syrup if necessary to rear the last rounds of bees that will form the winter cluster (if we get a winter). By this time, better beekeepers will have monitored their hives for varroa, and gotten the mite level way down. Once the colonies go broodless, a simple oxalic acid dribble will eliminate most of the remaining mites.

## **Minutes ~ October Meeting**

**Vice President Spencer Wingfield** opened the meeting at 7:00 PM. President Jerry Van Heeringen is traveling. Visitors were welcomed to our Q. and A. discussions and to enjoy the program tonight. Speaker Dr. Jon Zawislak from the University of Arkansas was introduced. His topic is Queens and Genes – Adapting Bees to New Situations.

**Janet Brisson gave the Treasurers Report** and asked those who wish to join or pay their dues, to please see her at refreshment break. She met our speaker at Apimondia in Canadian International Competition. She was pleased to bring his knowledge to us tonight.

**Announcements:** A request was made for a volunteer to fill a Board position vacated by Secretary Jack Meeks when he retired. Ann Hiner volunteered as Acting Secretary but cannot take on the position this coming year. **The new Board of Directors will be voted upon at next month's November 4 meeting at 7:00. Please mark your calendars.**

**December Christmas Party:** Every December the club pays for a turkey and fixings and members bring potluck for sides. The party begins at 6 PM in our normal meeting room. There is a fun contest for who creates the best decorated place setting for their table. A pirate gift exchange follows. Gifts (under \$15.00) will be drawn and may be traded. Don't miss it! December 4, 6:00 PM.

## **Q. & A.**

**Q:** What is honey fraud?

**A:** It is a world-wide problem of adulteration of honey mixed with other substances (like corn syrup or worse) and sold as pure honey. The sale of such "funny honey" depresses the price offered for "real" honey, making it more difficult for beekeepers to stay in business. To check this, researchers are assembling a data base of honey DNA from all over the world. It was reported that at the Apimondia honey competition, 46% of the entries did not meet the purity tests this year.

**Q:** How are your bees?

**A:** The spring rains raised soil moisture levels for the season, which provided more nectar and pollen in August than we've seen in some years. Colonies reared drones clear into September.

**Q:** Does dry fed pollen help for the winter

**A:** Randy and others have found that once converted to beebread, that dry-fed pollen sub may actually have adverse effects upon the bees over winter.

**SPEAKER-** Dr. Jon Zawislak of the University of Arkansas [www.uaex.edu/bees](http://www.uaex.edu/bees)

(If you missed the meeting, his presentation is available at this internet connection, but only if you pay close attention to the use of upper or lower case letters and punctuation. It only took me 3 tries.)

[youtu.be/XD62suykD6o](http://youtu.be/XD62suykD6o)

## **QUEENS & GENES**

Queen bees carry the genetics of all the drones she has mated. Genes are discrete regions of DNA strands that encode characteristics. Many behavioral traits are heritable, such as

- gentleness/defensiveness
- disease resistance
- hygienic behavior
- mite tolerance
- grooming behavior
- behavior on comb
- propolis use – a benefit to community immunity

Re-queening a hive can drastically change the hives genetics. Random chance, multiple matings, and genetic recombination allow for rapid evolution. All bee races developed from a common tropical ancestor. Over time, some traits may become fixed in small or isolated populations. Isolated populations develop adaptation to the local environment.

There are a number of mechanisms used by bees for resistance to the varroa mite.

In France, honey harvest was twice as much in mite treated hives compared with non treated.

Conclusions are being drawn and researcher collaborations like that of Randy Oliver and Jon Zawislac are adding to the big picture with other researchers around the world. Again, go to the web address for the complete presentation. [youtu.be/XD62suykD6o](https://youtu.be/XD62suykD6o)

For more information on wild bee research, he recommends Thomas Seeley's book, The Lives of Bees.

## **Club Membership and Dues**

**Submitted by Janet Brisson**

What a great year this has been. Our goal has been to bring very special speakers to our club. We have heard Dr. Sammy Ramsey, Dr. Dewey Caron and Jon Zawislak and have Dr. Meghan Milbrath and Dr. Wyatt Mangum on our schedule for next year.

I have been working with Bonnie Morse from Marin County Beekeepers Association to share speakers and split travel expenses to get these top names here.

Early this year, the membership voted to increase our dues \$5. It is now \$20 for email subscriptions and \$25.00 to get your newsletter via the mail. We have not had an increase on dues since 2008, over 10 years.

I'll be at the November meeting and will start collecting dues for 2020. Checks are great, try and bring exact change, no worries if you can't.

## **Secure Your Perimeter**

**Submitted by Spencer Wingfield**

**BEARS!!!!**

Got hit last night in two yards (10/27), Bitney and further down toward Wildwood. I was also moving bees at about 2 am and ran into a bear that was tipping over dumpsters across the street from the bee yard in Smartsville. Check your fences and reinforce them to secure your perimeter!



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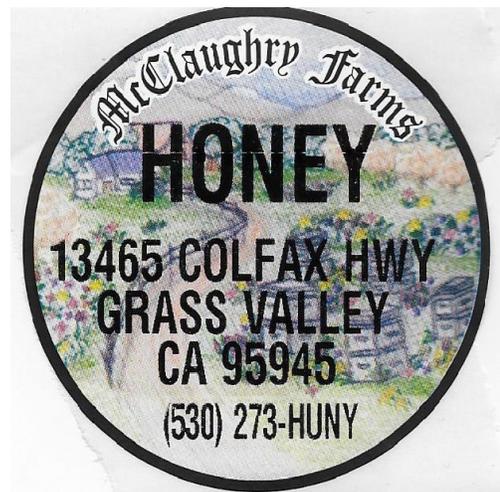
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To show our Club's appreciation, Randy printed up special labels and gifted honey to the Nevada County Fair staff, the Board of Supervisors, and the Ag Commissioner staff.



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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  
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First Class Mail

## **Nevada County Beekeepers Association**

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### **Board Members**

Leslie Gault	346-7092
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### **Committee Chairs**

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All area codes are 530 unless noted otherwise.

November 4th Meeting 7:00PM

Bonnie Morse – One Approach to  
Treatment Free Beekeeping