



The Buzzz

The Monthly Newsletter of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association

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President's Message

by Dave Stocks

There's a lot going on in the GBA right now and most of it involves you! First of all, it's almost "Fair Time". This year we hope to have booths at two fairs, the San Benito County Fair and the Santa Cruz County Fair. The Santa Cruz County Fair is September 13-17 and the San Benito Fair runs from September 28-October 3, 2017. We will be contacting you soon with signup sheets. Please consider spending some time at one or both events. There's no need to be bashful. Even the most novice member knows more than 99% of the people you will be talking with!

Andreas Olbring has suggested the excellent idea of having a honey tasting. This most probably will be part of a regular monthly meeting. Hopefully we'll have a date for you at our next meeting. Start getting together your best bottles!

The Board of Directors, spearheaded by Randy Fox, has been busy updating our by-laws. Hopefully we'll have something to present in the very near future. One of the biggest changes will be switching from a calendar year to a fiscal year in regards to our budget. These changes have been necessitated by our association with California Garden Clubs.

September is time to nominate officers. There are some changes on the horizon. Please begin giving some thought to who you want to lead you through the next year.

Please remember that our August meeting will be held at Grant Wolfe's house. We will be discussing different ways of extracting honey, I hope to see you there

News from the Bee World

Articles courtesy of The W.A.S., Bee Culture Magazine and ABJ

WISH YOU WAS HERE! TOP 10 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD 'BEE' HERE AT UC DAVIS SEPT. 5 - 8

By Kathy Keatley Garvey

Have you ever received an email, text or postcard from vacationing family or friends with the lead sentence: "Wish you were here?"

Well, in this case, it's "Wish you WAS here!"

Excitement is building for the 40th anniversary conference of the Western Apiculture Society (WAS) of North America, headed by president Eric Mussen, Extension apiculturist emeritus. WAS returns to its roots on Sept. 5-8 and will be meeting here in Davis. The organization was founded at UC Davis by professor Norm Gary (his idea); postdoctoral fellow Becky Westerdahl, and Eric Mussen, then a new faculty member. Gary is now an emeritus professor; Westerdahl is a Extension nematologist with the UC Davis Department of Entomology and Nematology; and Mussen, although retired, maintains an office in Briggs Hall where he continues answering questions about bees. This is also his sixth term as WAS president, so the "R" word does not mean "Relax."

We asked Eric Mussen for 10 reasons why folks might want to attend the conference, which is open to all interested persons, and registration is now underway. WAS defines itself as "a non-profit, educational, beekeeping organization founded in 1978 for the benefit and enjoyment of all beekeepers in western North America. Anyone can join, but the organization is specifically designed to meet the educational needs of beekeepers from Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming as well as the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and the Yukon.

The 2017 WAS Conference will provide the following opportunities, according to honey bee guru "Dr. Eric":

- to learn about current scientific honey and native bee research, from the researchers themselves, on varying topics such as foraging behavior, parasites, predators, and diseases of bees
- to speak directly to the researchers concerning their research findings and any other bee-related topics
- to learn specific beekeeping-related information from nationally renowned speakers such as Bee Culture editor Kim Flottum of Ohio, who will discuss "The Rapidly Changing Bee Scene"; Les Crowder of Texas, co-author of the book, Top-Bar Beekeeping: Organic Practices for Honey Bee Health, who will focus on "Managing Honey Bee Colonies in Top-Bar Hives" with co-author Heather Harrell; and Larry Connor of Michigan, who will address more in-depth beekeeping fundamentals with his presentation "Keeping Your Bees Alive and Growing."

- to discuss your beekeeping styles, successes and difficulties with beekeeping peers from western U.S. states and Canadian provinces
- to meet new friends and to share recent personal information with long-time acquaintances
- to learn about various styles of beekeeping from "leave alone," through "essential intervention," to "intensive intervention"
- to exchange opinions on unique hives and products brought to the conference by various vendors or demonstrated during the tour to UC Davis facilities, the Harry H. Laidlaw Jr. Honey Bee Research Facility and the Häagen-Dazs Honey Bee Haven, a half-acre bee friendly garden installed in 2009 and anchored by a ceramic-mosaic sculpture of a six-foot-long worker bee, and art coordinated by entomology professor/artist Diane Ullman and self-described rock artist Donna Billick
- to obtain in-depth knowledge on industry concerns, such as pesticide issues
- to participate in a formal honey tasting led by Amina Harris, director of the UC Davis Honey and Pollination Center
- to interact with personnel from Mann Lake LTD on a tour to their products showroom, warehouse assembly plant, and liquid sugar blending plant. That tour also includes a visit a highly successful, moderate-sized, retail, gourmet honey packing operation Z Specialty Foods.

(So, those are 10 good reasons. The prez gets an extra bonus point: he provided 11 reasons, and No. 11 is...drum roll...) to visit the UC Davis campus, downtown Davis, and the northern Central Valley of America

Another big draw is leadoff speaker and Sonoma County beekeeper Serge Labesque, "who has organized a terrific presentation on the natural seasonal growth and decline of a healthy honey bee colony population living in a hollow tree," Mussen said.

Okay, that's an even dozen!

You can learn more about the WAS meeting on its website. (And be sure to register so you can send your family and friends a note saying "Wish you WAS here.")

<http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=24628>

First Pan-European Field Study Shows Neonic Pesticides Harm Honeybees and Wild Bees

Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Researchers from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) publish results of a large-scale, field-realistic experiment to assess neonicotinoid impacts on honeybees and wild bees across Europe, in the peer-review journal Science on 29 June 2017.

The experiment - undertaken in the UK, Germany and Hungary - exposed three bee species to winter oilseed rape crops treated with seed coatings containing neonicotinoid clothianidin, from Bayer CropScience, or Syngenta's thiamethoxam.

Neonicotinoid seed coatings are designed to kill pests such as the cabbage stem flea beetle, but were effectively banned in the EU in 2013 due to concerns regarding their impact on bee health.

The researchers found that exposure to treated crops reduced overwintering success of honeybee colonies - a key measure of year-to-year viability - in two of the three countries. In Hungary, colony numbers fell by 24 percent in the following spring. In the UK, honeybee colony survival was generally very low, but lowest where bees fed on clothianidin treated oilseed rape in the previous year.

No harmful effects on overwintering honeybees were found in Germany.

Lower reproductive success - reflected in queen number (bumblebees) and egg production (red mason bee) - was linked with increasing levels of neonicotinoid residues in the nests of wild bee species buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) and the Red Mason Bee (*Osmia bicornis*) across all three countries.

According to the CEH lead author, Dr Ben Woodcock, "The neonicotinoids investigated caused a reduced capacity for all three bee species to establish new populations in the following year, at least in the UK and Hungary."

He suggests the differing impacts on honeybees between countries may be associated with interacting factors including the availability of alternative flowering resources for bees to feed on in the farmed landscape as well as general colony health, with Hungarian and UK honeybees tending to be more diseased.

In contrast, the hives in Germany happened to be larger, showed little evidence of disease and had access to a wider range of wild flowers to feed on. Dr Woodcock suggests that this may explain why in this country alone there was no evidence of a negative effect of neonicotinoids on honeybees.

The study spanning 2,000 hectares, equivalent to 3,000 full scale football pitches, took account of bee disease and surrounding landscape quality in addition to colony growth rate, worker mortality and overwinter survival.

Dr Woodcock explains that, "Neonicotinoid seed dressings do have positive attributes: they target insects that damage the plant, can be applied to the seed at low dosage rates but protect the whole plant and reduce the need for broad spectrum insecticide sprays. Their use as an alternative chemical control option is also useful in controlling pests where insecticide resistance to other pesticides is already found, so play an important role to play in food production."

In Dr Woodcock's view, "There may be opportunities to mitigate negative impacts of neonicotinoid exposure on bees through improved honeybee husbandry or availability of flowering plants for bees to feed on across non-cropped areas of the farmed landscape. Both these issues require further research.

He adds that, "The negative effects of neonicotinoids on wild bees may also be the result of diverse mechanisms of exposure that include persistent residues of neonicotinoids in arable systems due to their widespread and often very frequent use."

Co-author Professor Richard Pywell, Science Area Lead, Sustainable Land Management at the Centre of Ecology & Hydrology, said, "Neonicotinoids remain a highly contentious issue with previous research on both honeybees and wild bees inconclusive.

"This latest field study was designed, as far as possible, to reflect the real world due to its size and scope. We therefore believe it goes a considerable way to explaining the inconsistencies in the results of past research, as we were better able to account for natural variation in factors like exposure to the pesticide, bee food resources and bee health for different bee species.

"Our findings also raise important questions about the basis for regulatory testing of future pesticides."

Bayer CropScience and Syngenta funded the research assessing the impact of neonicotinoids on honeybees. The Natural Environment Research Council funded the analysis of the impact on the wild bees. The experiment, including design, monitoring and analysis, were scrutinized by an independent scientific advisory committee chaired by Professor Bill Sutherland of Cambridge University.

FIELD EXPERIMENTS SHOW HOW REMOVING A POLLINATOR SPECIES DISRUPTS FORAGING PATTERNS

Emory Health Sciences

The absence of a single dominant bumblebee species from an ecosystem disrupts foraging patterns among a broad range of remaining pollinators in the system — from other bees to butterflies, beetles and more, field experiments show.

Biology Letters published the research, which may have implications for the survival of both rare wild plants and major food crops as many pollinator species are in decline.

"We see an ecological cascade of effects across the whole pollinator community, fundamentally changing the structure of plant-pollinator interaction networks," says Berry Brosi, a biologist at Emory University and lead author of the study. "We can see this shift in who visits which plant even in pollinators that are not closely related to the bumblebee species that we remove from the system."

If a single, dominant species of bumblebee mainly visits an alpine sunflower, for instance, other pollinators — including other species of bumblebees — are less likely to visit alpine sunflowers. If the dominant bumblebee is removed, however, the dynamic changes.

"When the sunflowers became less crowded and more available, a broader range of pollinators chose to visit them," Brosi says.

The field experiments, based in the Colorado Rockies, also showed that the removal of a dominant bumblebee species led to fewer plant species being visited on average. "That was a surprise," Brosi says. "If a nectar resource is abundant and highly rewarding, more types of pollinators will go for it, leaving out some of the rarer plants that some of the other pollinator species normally specialize in."

The findings are important since most flowering plants and food crops need pollinators to produce seeds.

“Basically, for almost every pollinator group that we have good data for, we’ve seen declines in those pollinators,” Brosi says. “The results of our field experiments suggest that losses of pollinator species — at a local population level or on a global, true extinction scale — are likely to have bigger impacts on plant populations than previously predicted by simulation models.”

The experiments were done at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory near Crested Butte, Colorado. Located at 9,500 feet, the facility’s subalpine meadows are too high for honeybees, but they are filled with a variety of bumblebees and other pollinators.

The study included a series of 20-meter-square wildflower plots. Each was evaluated in a control state, left in its natural condition, and in a manipulated state, in which bumblebees of just one species had been removed using nets. The bumblebees were later released unharmed when the experiments were over.

The work built on 2013 research led by Brosi that focused on bumblebees and one target plant species, alpine larkspur. That study showed how removing a bumblebee species disrupted floral fidelity, or specialization, among the remaining bees in the system, leading to less successful plant reproduction.

For the current paper, the researchers looked at a system of more than 30 species of pollinators and their interactions with 43 plants species.

“There’s been a lot of observational research done on plant-pollinator networks,” Brosi said. “One of the general findings is that they have a really consistent structure. That tends to hold true almost irrespective of ecosystem and geographic area, from the northeastern coast of Greenland to tropical rainforests.”

Mathematical simulation models have suggested that plant-pollinator networks would have good resiliency if there is an extinction in the system, based on the assumption that the network structure would remain consistent.

“Our experiments show that this assumption is not tenable,” Brosi says. “These networks are dynamic and when a pollinator species is missing, we’re going to see both qualitative and quantitative changes. Future simulation models need to incorporate ecological processes like competition that can shape which pollinators interact with which plants.”

Drippings from the Extractor

by Dave Stocks

After you've been keeping bees for awhile, you develop concepts or ideas that define the way you want to keep your bees. This varies between every beekeeper. The beekeeper who is in it to sell honey wants every drop he can get, while his neighbor may be more interested in making sure his vegetable garden and fruit trees get pollinated and he gets enough honey to share with friends. There is no right way! Over the years I have gravitated towards the latter. It hasn't always been easy! While I have

remained faithful as a treatment free beekeeper, I have often reverted back to some of the methods used by a more commercial beekeeper.

A case in point. Several years ago my wife and I attended a treatment free beekeeping conference in Oregon. One of the featured speakers was Dr. Thomas Seeley, a professor in biology at Cornell University. Doctor Seeley has done extensive research on feral bees and is a strong proponent of keeping managed colony sizes small. His research indicates that feral bees are able to keep pest levels low by never allowing the colony to get too large. This is accomplished through swarming. I came home vowing to never let my colonies get too big. My plan was to restrict my brood boxes to no more than three mediums and limit the number of supers to no more than two at any time. (Note: This is still large by Dr. Seeley's standards). This plan didn't last long! Whether it was from laziness, procrastination, or just being too darned busy, I soon found colonies in multiple boxes. A recent Facebook post from my good friend Les Crowder has brought me back to where I think I need to be.

Les wrote,

"Someone asked how treatment free beekeepers define 'treatment'. A good question, each of us may have different standards. Doing anything at all could be a treatment: feeding, harvesting, all affect the hive. I started out 45 years ago getting rid of antibiotics. My goal is to fit my beekeeping actions as hand in glove as possible with the natural biology of honeybees that can raise themselves, i.e. they are "fit", as in survival of the fittest. I like Tom Seeley's small hive concept. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgdKrQ16rX8>) Let them be bees and take less from them. This group (Swarms, Cutouts & Trapouts ONLY) is about getting the best bees, potentially from the feral population, bees that have demonstrated that they are not antibiotic and miticide dependent. Example: We have bees in a smallish hive, 1/2 topbar or 1 deep box. They can survive the winter if they fill it. They fill it quickly during a bloom. The beekeeper is not practicing swarm prevention rather swarm encouragement, and watching closely with frequent quick checks, 1/week. As soon as they start swarm cells, the beekeeper "swarms" the queen and many nurse bees into another hive. We play a game of biology with our bees; we interact closely, almost intimately with them."

I encourage you all to watch Dr. Seeley's " youtube" video. Whether or not you agree with his concept, it does offer food for thought. Dr Seeley is also a published author. He has received much acclaim for his book *HONEYBEE DEMOCRACY*. I also particularly enjoyed his book *Following the Wild Bees*. I encourage you to check them both out.

I began writing "Drippings from the Extractor" in April of 2013. For the most part it has been an enjoyable experience. But now it's time to move on! This will be the last "Drippings". I hope you have enjoyed it. Thanks for reading!

This month in the Beeyard

By Serge Labesque

Stores:

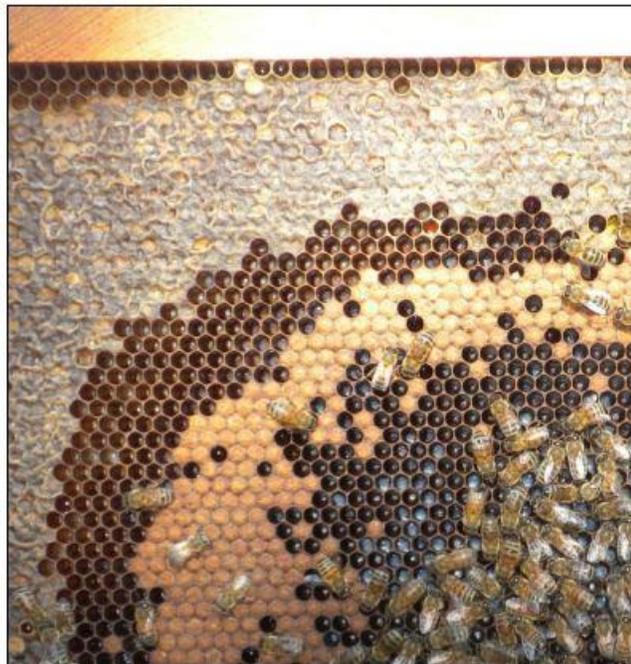
- Capped honey
- Uncapped honey / Nectar (easily consumed or relocated by bees)
- Pollen / Bee bread (may be consumed or left in place)

Empty cells at the boundary between the stores and the brood. Note that the width of the band of empty cells is narrow in this picture, a normal condition.

Brood / Cluster (needs to remain very close to stores)



This picture was taken after a few days of inclement weather that precluded foraging. It shows that the band of cells that separates the stores from the brood has widened, as the nurse bees have consumed the stores. The bees and the brood may be at risk of nutritional stress or deficiency.



My August Beekeeping To-Do List

The frontline of hive dynamics

The bees of a healthy, queenright colony methodically organize the contents of their hive. As long as the brood nest is not split by the beekeeper, it remains compact, tightly surrounded by stores that are predominantly placed above, but also around the brood area. Except for cells that are being prepared for imminent egg laying or nectar storage, most of the empty comb is found beyond the stores or below the brood area. These outlying cells are used by the bees only when the honey flow or the development of the colony demands.

As we inspect a brood chamber, we usually consider the quantity, pattern and condition of the brood, stores and comb space available to the colony. Yet, the band of cells that normally delineates the brood and the stores is a particularly informative region of the combs. This is because the brood nest or the clustered bees must remain in very close proximity to stores. Indeed, whenever there is brood in the hive, the nurse bees must have direct access to nutrients. Similarly, during periods of cold weather clustered bees need to remain in contact with honey. When this is not the case they risk dying of starvation, as cold temperatures prevent the bees from leaving the cluster to reach stores that may be present just a few inches away.

However, the location of this boundary area on the combs between the brood and the stores is not fixed. The contiguity of the stores, brood and cluster is a condition that is constantly challenged. The stores and the brood nest tend to recede from each other as nurse bees empty cells by consuming pollen, nectar or honey to feed themselves and the larvae, or when adult bees are born at the periphery of the brood area. But under normal conditions either the bees refill the emptied cells with honey, nectar or pollen, or the queen lays eggs in the cells that have been cleared. Consequently, the width of the band of empty cells between brood and stores is normally kept to two or fewer cells.

As the use of the cells is switched from nutrient storage to brood rearing or vice versa, the brood nest may expand into areas that previously held stores, or the stores may gain comb over the brood nest. Although this change happens one cell at a time, the brood nest may noticeably grow or shrink and move up, down or laterally on the combs over a few days or weeks. There is in fact a constant remodeling of the brood chamber. Yet, the brood nest remains in close proximity to the stores during the transformation.

The main driving forces are the queen, nurse bees and brood on the one hand, and the honey flow, foragers and receiver bees on the other. When the first group takes over one empty cell in the boundary area, the brood moves in that direction. Conversely, when a droplet of nectar or honey or a pollen pellet is placed in the cell, the stores press towards the brood.

Only in appearance is this cell takeover activity a tug o' war between the brood nest and the stores. Actually, it is a life-sustaining process for the colony. The boundary area of the comb reveals much to the beekeeper about the nutritional condition and vigor of the colony, and about the environmental conditions and honey flow. What we can observe here is a systematic, ceaseless, yet subtle re-organization of the brood chamber that is particularly noticeable during the spring and through the latter part of the summer, when the colony prepares for winter. It is actually a vital condition for the

winter cluster. A narrow, sharply defined separation between brood and stores usually indicates that the colony is functioning well. A wide gap, however, may show that the stores consumed by the nurse bees are not being replenished. This is frequently noticeable right after a period of inclement weather, in the spring. A diffused separation with scattered brood and stores, on the contrary signals a condition that warrants further scrutiny by the beekeeper.

The orderly relative placement of the stores and brood, which is evident in healthy hives, often disappears from the combs of colonies that are stressed. By looking not only at the stores and at the brood during hive inspections, but also at the boundary area between them, we can see the current hive dynamics. On the basis of these observations we can begin to assess hive problems and address the upcoming spatial needs of the bees, the expansion or the contraction of the hive.

August in the apiaries

The difference the location of an apiary can make is seldom more striking than in the middle of summer. If you ever had any doubt about this, just look at hives set in the suburbs of a town at this time of the year and then at a few more that are kept in the adjacent countryside. The first, surrounded by hundreds of lush gardens, are bursting with bees and honey. They are under the influence of a seemingly perpetual honey flow. They are cramming new white comb everywhere possible. Meanwhile, the other hives are enduring dearth even though they may be located less than one mile away from the suburban colonies. These are struggling to survive the intense, dry heat of the season and the assaults of robber bees and yellow jackets.

Although bee colonies may encounter a wide range of conditions in mid-summer, they are all facing the same summer challenge: They have to prepare for next winter. Certainly, they started doing this as soon as colony reproduction was over by raising new queens, building their populations and collecting nectar. But now is the time when they begin to organize the nests for fall and winter. This task will take the next two months to complete, and it will culminate in the production of the winter bees inside very dense brood chambers.

Because the colonies have reached their maximum size for the year and the volume of the brood nests has been steadily decreasing since the end of spring, the management of hives in mid-summer requires very little additional equipment, if any. Even in places that benefit from a summer flow, harvesting some ripe surplus honey and returning the wet frames to the hives may suffice to provide adequate nectar storage space. In many cases the foragers do not bring enough nectar to keep the brood nests from moving up and out of the lower combs. At times, the lower supers become completely empty. When this happens, I leave the vacated lower super in place, as the foragers will soon begin to unload their pollen pellets in those cells. During the next several weeks, the bees will drive the brood nests back into these areas by placing nectar and moving uncapped honey in the upper parts of the brood chambers.

Summer hive inspections consist most often of watching the activity in the flight paths, on the fronts and at the entrances of the hives. Predation by yellowjackets and robbing are dangers we want to prevent by keeping the entrances defensible. Yet, adequate ventilation of the hives is a necessity on hot days. It may be worthwhile to bring a little afternoon shade to the hives, as this reduces the need for the

bees to collect water to cool the brood chambers, and it instead allows them to take better care of the brood and to collect more stores.

Although open-hive inspections are infrequent and brief, mainly focused on the honey supers at this time of year, the colonies will be thoroughly assessed before next month in order to address and resolve potential problems or weaknesses before the fall. The monitoring trays are a simple, effective and non-disruptive means to find out if the colonies are keeping the varroa mites in check. But are there any other health issues? Are the bees responding to the cues of the season by beginning to consolidate their stores and prepare their brood chambers for fall? Are the queens satisfactory? All this information is valuable, as it allows the beekeeper not only to requeen or combine hives that are failing, but it also permits the spotting of good performers. We will want to propagate these colonies next spring should they make it successfully through the winter. Notes are to be made! As we manipulate the combs, we pay attention not to disturb the arrangement of the brood chambers the bees are working on. We certainly may harvest a little honey and remove some of the unused upper frames, but there is no urgency in doing so. Indeed it won't be a problem to leave them in place for a few more weeks. Yet, empty older and misshaped combs are removed at the first opportunity, before the bees put them back into use.

The end of summer hive management is the opposite of spring hive management in that sense that the hives begin to shrink and to become more compact instead of growing. The focus now is the beginning of the preparations for fall and winter. We need to verify that the bees are on track, and we need to do our share.

In summary, this month:

Observe the performance of the queens and colonies. Take notes for later selection, combination or replacement, as warranted.

Requeen or combine hives that are not performing satisfactorily, and those that have failing queens.

As always, keep an eye on the health of the colonies.

Beware of yellowjackets and of the risk of robbing.

Avoid hive manipulations that can trigger robbing.

Keep the entrances of the hives defensible. Reduce them, if necessary.

Ensure that the bees have access to water at all times.

Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated. Providing afternoon shade is helpful.

Begin to reduce the unused volume of hives.

Cull old and misshapen combs.

Harvest surplus summer honey.

Give extracted supers and wet wax back to the bees for cleaning. To avoid triggering robbing, this should be done in the evening, when foragers are returning to their hives.

Beware of the fire danger when using the smoker in areas of dry vegetation.

Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings. The solar wax melter works very well at this time of year.

Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.

Calendar of Events

Meetings

First Monday of the month

Santa Clara Valley Beekeepers Guild

6:15 pm

Dwell Christian Church San Jose

1292 Minnesota Ave San Jose CA 95125

<http://beeguild.org/>

First Tuesday of the month

Gilroy Beekeepers Association

7:00 pm

Old City Hal Restaurant

7400 Monterey Rd.

Gilroy, Ca

<http://www.gilroybees.com>

First Wednesday of the month

Santa Cruz Beekeepers Guild

6:30 pm

El Rio Mobile Home Park,

2120 N. Pacific Ave.

Santa Cruz, CA

<http://santacruzbees.com>

First Thursday of the month

Beekeepers Guild of San Mateo

7:00 pm

Trinity Presbyterian Church

1106 Alameda de Pulgas

San Carlos, CA

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

First Saturday of the month

Monterey Bay Beekeepers

8:00 am

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

Classes and Conferences

Sept 5 - 8: Western Apicultural Society of North America 2017 40th Anniversary Conference, UC-Davis, CA. Info <http://www.westernapiculturalsociety.org>

Nov 14 - 16: California State Beekeepers Association annual convention, Harrah's/Harveys in Lake Tahoe, CA. Info <http://www.californiastatebeekeepers.com/events.html>

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