

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
(with photos)

She Hears the Buzz *PCWA Engineer Rescues, Moves Honeybees*

AUBURN -- The water meter at a home off Shockley Road in Auburn was buzzing with honeybees. A colony of 5000 or more bees had settled into the concrete water meter box.

Since meter readers do their best to avoid bees, as they do growling dogs, it was time for a call to resident bee expert Leslie Gault. By day, Gault is a civil engineer with the Placer County Water Agency. In her free time, she's a dedicated beekeeper.

Last week (Aug. 7) Gault donned her protective gear and successfully cut and transferred several layers of honeycomb from the meter box into a portable bee box she placed at the site. She worked slowly and carefully so she wouldn't excite the bees or damage the eggs and larva inside.

She planned to return after a few days to move the resettled colony to the bee yard she keeps at her home in Chicago Park, Nevada County.

Gault's bee rescue efforts are voluntary; it's something she does because she's concerned about declining populations of honeybees and wants to do her part to keep the local population healthy.

Gault said she took a beekeeping class during her college days at UC Davis, fell in love with beekeeping, and has kept bees for the last ten years. She's a longtime member of the Nevada County Beekeepers Association.

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She produces a little bit of honey each year for family and friends but is more interested in the process and activities of beekeeping itself.

PCWA gets reports of meter box bees a few times a year, but Gault said the bees prefer trees, often older decaying ones. “If they can’t find a tree they’ll find whatever they can,” she said. “Meter boxes are the low rent district. They’d much prefer a high rise.”

Gault rescues and moves honeybees whenever possible. The alternative, she says is usually destruction of the bees. “We’d rather not see them killed,” she said.