


THE BUZZ



The official newsletter of the Gold Coast Amateur Beekeepers Society Inc. Est. 1979
 Website: gcabs.net.au  [Gold Coast Amateur Beekeeping Society](https://www.facebook.com/GoldCoastAmateurBeekeepingSociety)



April is when pollen mites appear. Pollen mite versus varroa mite – Understand the difference. See page 4

DATE SAVERS

The Gold Coast Amateur Beekeeper's Society inc. welcomes new members, existing members and visitors to attend our meetings. Non-members attending will be asked to make a gold coin donation.

MEMBER MEETINGS

- **Sun 16th April 10am-noon** GCABS Headquarters. Topic: **Mead tasting**. Please BYO Mead to share a few samples plus a plate of food to share. Guests: Bayside Beekeepers Association
- **Sun 21st May 10am-noon** GCABS Headquarters. Topic: Let's Talk Pest & Disease detection & management with BioSecurity Qld Officer, Dave Schlipalius.

OTHER EVENTS

- TAFE QLD at Robina offer a bundle of beekeeping classes with the next round beginning May 20th and running 6 weeks on Saturdays. Classes can be taken individually or as a package. Info here: <https://tafeqld.edu.au/course/19/19122/complete-beekeeping-bundle>
- TAFE QLD Stand alone course on Native bees: <https://tafeqld.edu.au/course/19/19125/introduction-to-australian-native-bees>
- **Sat 20th May WORLD BEE DAY**
- **Sat/Sun 27th & 28th May** Australian Bush Food Conference. Location 4808-4822 Mount Lindsay Highway North Maclean Qld. For more information email: bushfoods@atac.qld.edu.au
- **June 18th 9am – 3 pm.** Gold Coast Native Plants Market @ Nerang Country Parklands
- **COMMITTEE MEETINGS.** All welcome to attend our online Committee meetings. Email the secretary and ask for the link. Gcabs.secretary@beekeepers.asn.au

**Happy Easter to
all our GCABS
members and
their families!**



From GCABS President and Feb Member Meeting Review



April = Warm weather and good honey harvests.

Hello and welcome to our April newsletter. Through the combined effort of various contributors each month we manage to cobble together a remarkably informative, topical and relevant newsletter.

I applaud our editing team and thank all contributors. If you have anything of interest (words or pictures) to add please do so. Many hands make light work and we are seeking others to join the collaborators who make this newsletter possible.

Upcoming Events include agricultural shows, another round of beginner classes, World bee Day (May 20), a Community Planting day on Aug 20th and our monthly meetings which promise to delight and inform. Members can get some competition grade glass jars for show entries from the GCABS, just ask at our next meeting.

Results from the honey analysis project are not back yet but we anticipate hearing soon.

Although not successful with a recent grant funding application we push ahead looking to install some air con in the shed.

BYO homemade Honey Mead for sampling and tasting in April. Visitors are always welcome.

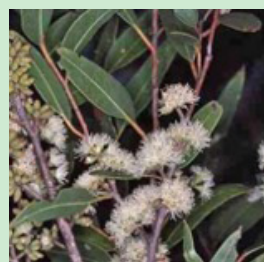
With the ample flora in bloom and the warm weather I'm too busy to write more, there's honey to be extracted and frames to be wired. I look forward to seeing new & existing members this month.

*Take care,
Kathy*

April Honey Flora - S.E. Queensland

Submitted by Jim O'Regan

Banksia. Blackbutt. Broad-leaved Banksia. Broad-leaved Ironbark. Brown Bloodwood. Flooded Gum. Glycine. Golden Candlesticks. Groundsel Bush. Gum-topped Box. Hickory Wattle. Honeysuckle Oak. Malley Box. Mountain Coolibah. Paper-barked Tea Tree. River Sheoak. Rose Sheoak. Tumble-down Ironbark. White Box. White Stringybark. Easter Cassia (Easter Senna)



White Stringybark



Paper bark Tea-tree

Mystery of the Missing Queen

Including March Meeting Review

Prepared by Rod Luke from information delivered by Kevin Tracy

Over 40 club members heard Kevin Tracy expose some of the mysteries that surround missing queens during brood box inspections.

As an established queen bee breeder for many years, Kevin has found that beekeepers are often the common link in many mysterious non-sightings. Ranging from a queen's ability to play an elaborate game of "Where's Wally" to understanding and choosing appropriate queens, there were plenty of valuable inspection tips taken home from the meeting.

For many of us, finding a queen during an inspection can prove elusive, but being able to read the signs of a healthy queen provides a satisfactory assessment of brood box condition. Through development of skills in recognising good egg laying patterns and identifying healthy eggs, we have a good indication of a strong queen. Noting aspects such as poor egg laying patterns and the presence of queen cells indicate the hive's demand for a new queen.

Many reasons exist to why it can be hard to find a queen, besides the queen hiding from sight.

Finding an existing queen is important when re-queening, as often the new queen will not be accepted if the original queen has not disappeared, but just remains unseen. Kevin offered a range of tips that can help in the search for an elusive queen, including:

- Excessive smoking of the brood box can drive the queen off the frames and onto the walls of the brood box.
- Many beekeepers report more success in queen spotting earlier in that day, rather than later.
- Look for the queen in the optimum temperature part of the brood box, depending on the time of day.
- The queen will seek the dark side when inspecting frames.
- When hanging frames outside the brood box, keep them away from the entry, where a wily queen can cleverly return to the box undetected.
- If catching and returning a swarm to a box, be aware that there can be more than one queen.

When considering purchasing a new queen Kevin's tips include:

- Poorly mated queens can deliver virgin queens to the beekeeper. This exposes a new queen to further risks as she will need to leave the hive to mate. From experience, Kevin expects to lose up to 1 in 5 queens during the queen breeding process and much of the risk of a queen disappearing occurs during the time they spend outside the hive.



- A key question to ask a breeder is “what is your catch schedule”, The answer is 23 days or over as a benchmark.
- Be aware that “banked” queens (queens held in reserve in numbers to supply to upon request) can be damaged within the hive they are stored. Damaged queens face the risk of rejection from the new hive.
- Help protect queens from excessive temperature and other transport risks by picking up queens or have them delivered directly. Kevin explained how extreme heat can effect the fertility of a queen. This can be important when ordering & receiving shipment of queens through the post.
- Re-queening at the optimum time, before 2 years of age, can help time the purchase of new queens for planning and ordering. After 2 years of age, queens become 3 times more likely to swarm.

With some insight into the right questions to ask when ordering a new queen, timing the re-queening of a colony and utilising some of the handy hints in picking the right time, frugal use of the smoker, and looking both inside the box and on the dark side of the frame, we can look forward to solving the mystery of our missing queens.

Flower of the Month for Your Home Garden

Submitted by Esther Bligh

The Ivory Curl Tree (*Buckinghamia celsissima*) is a small tree native to the rainforests of North Queensland. It flowers in summer with large ivory coloured long flower heads that are buzzing with all sorts of insects.

It is absolutely loved by both honey and native bees. Ivory curl trees love a sunny spot in the garden and make a stunning feature tree in larger spaces.



Pollen Mites ARE NOT Varroa mites – Be Alert but not Alarmed

A collaboration by Kathy Knox, Kevin Tracy & Leonie Schwarzel, Buzz editor

“Yikes , why are my honey bees doing that freaky, shaky dance????”

It looks as though the bees are having a type of fit: shaking, trembling, frenetically contorting their back legs over their abdomens. To make it worse, it is not just a few bees but hundreds engaged in the same bizarre activity on the landing board & hive face. Unlike the calm, mesmerising, meditative pace of washboarding behaviour, the weird, pollen mite dance appears frantic & upsetting for bees & their keeper alike. In our region, late March & April is the likely time this phenomenon can be seen.

Breathe & relax! Your bees are engaged in cleaning behaviour, trying to rid themselves of nuisance but harmless pollen mites that are taking an opportunistic ride on their host.

What are Pollen Mites?

The Pollen mite (*Melittiphis alvearius*) is a harmless, species that exists in hives & mostly feeds on spillover pollen or pollen discarded to the floorboard by bees. Unlike varroa destructor mites, the pollen mite is not parasitic & not attracted to bee brood. (Gibbins and Vantoor, 1990). Pollen mites on honey bees are an irritant but of no danger to their health. Adult mites (usually females) are ‘phoretic’ on worker bees, meaning that they attach themselves to a host, the adult bee, for transportation to a new food source (Delfinado-Baker, 1994). It is the bee’s attempt to rid its body surface of the mites that causes the troubled behaviour at the hive face.

The mites were first reported in Italy in 1895 and have spread globally. Their presence was first observed in Australia in 1989 as a single specimen on a queen bee. There were no further reported findings until a survey conducted in 1994 (KNIHINICKI & HALLIDAY, 1995).

Download the full study <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1440-6055.1995.tb01349.x>
 Information sheet here: <http://idtools.org/id/mites/beemites/factsheet.php?name=15251>

Understanding the Difference

Pollen Mite	Varroa Destructor Mite
Irritating but harmless	Harmful & mostly eventually fatal to colony
No effect on bee health	Injects bee larvae with viruses
Non-parasitic	Parasitic
Not attracted to bee brood	Breeds & parasitic on brood
Eats discarded or spilled pollen	Sucks on bee hemolymph
Phoretic (attaches to adult host to be transported to new locations)	Phoretic (attaches to adult host to be transported to new locations)
Short term presence at the hive. Will disappear within a few weeks	Stays with the hive ongoingly, weakening & generally killing it if untreated
Smaller than Varroa d. Hardly detectable to the naked eye.	About the size of a sesame seed.

Action

Many amateur beekeepers may never witness the ‘pollen mite shaky dance’. If however you do, record the incidence. If there are no significant bee deaths, you may take a ‘wait & watch’ approach. However, if unsure, contact your state biosecurity officers for advice or at minimum consult a GCABS’ mentor. Do an alcohol wash.

As amateur beekeepers, we are not skilled to accurately diagnose a harmless mite from other severely harmful species. If therefore, you find mites as a result of a sugar shake &/or alcohol wash, take a sample & report them.



Pollen mites on honey bee

Photos published with permission from Kevin Tracy

Next Month's Meeting, May 21st

MEAD sampling

If you've made a brew, bring some along to share a tippie or two. Have you made any other honey based drink? Bring some of that too!



BEEKEEPING for War Veterans Past & Present

ANZAC Day, 25th April, is an important day for our nation when we commemorate our involvement in war past & present, honour our veterans & reflect upon the loss & cost of war.

“Australian Military veteran Marc Webb struggled to leave his house in Adelaide, years after a serious incident in Afghanistan left him wounded and traumatised. He never thought bees would be what saved him”.



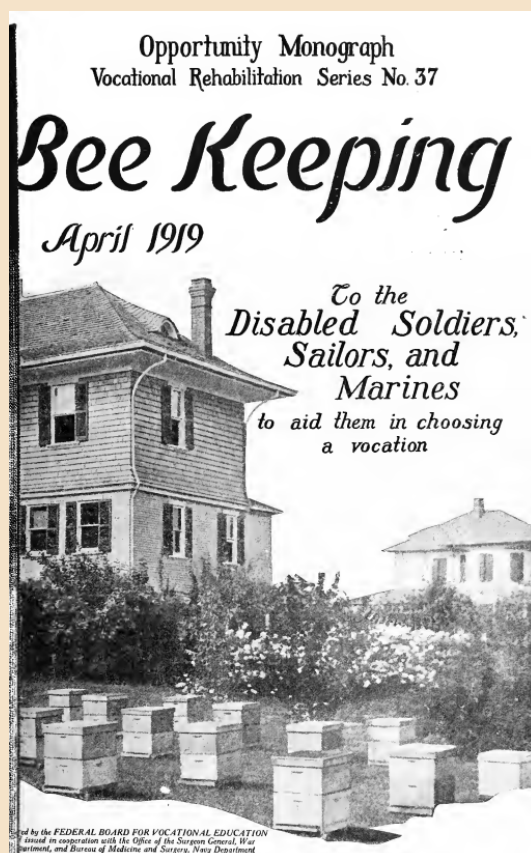
Heroes, hives and a journey of healing

It was observed after WW1 that many veterans were coming home not only with severe physical war injuries but suffering from a psychological phenomenon referred to then as “shell shock”, now known as PTSD – post traumatic stress disorder. These veterans had a very difficult time adjusting to life again in mainstream society. In response, the US Government of the time developed vocational training for wounded veterans to help them adapt to their injuries in various fields of work. One of the programs developed was Beekeeping. It was considered a viable alternative career because a veteran could work alone, at a slower pace and contribute well to a society where demand for honey was increasing. Amazingly, there was another benefit, helping the veterans find a calmer psychological state.

To this day similar programs, including ‘Hives for Heroes’ on Veteran Marc Webb’s farm in the Adelaide Hills, are still actively partnering veterans, particularly those with PTSD with beekeeping. It has proven a great way to recover from issues veterans and service members bring back — visible and invisible wounds.

Adapted from a story by Bec Whetham, ABC Landline, Nov. 16th, 2021

Reference: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-14/healing-power-of-bees-for-traumatised-military-veterans/100532362>



JOBS in Your Bee Yard this March

- Complete your varroa mite surveillance as a priority and report all results (whether positive or negative) to the Bee 123 portal. The Bee 123 desktop portal can be accessed by clicking [here](#).
- Watch your hive entrances for signs of pollen mite presence (the Jerky bee dance)
- ANZAC Day is usually considered the latest date to harvest honey before the cooler months begin. Don't be greedy. Leave the bees several frames. You can always harvest again later if you need to make more room but taking too much could leave them short & in need of feeding, especially in the hinterland, cooler climates.



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