

# THE BUZZ



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



*Some leave, others arrive but most will stay the same. Same for GCABS committee this month!*

## 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 15th Oct 10am. GCABS Annual General Meeting (AGM).** Annual changeover of GCABS committee - see next page. Also presentation on using bees wax, including making wax cloth wraps. Lucky door prize. Venue – GCABS Clubhouse.
- **Sun. 19 Nov. 10am-noon Last meeting for 2023.** Topic TBA
- Please bring a plate to share at our member meetings.

### UPCOMING SHOW

- **November 4th – Murwillumbah Show** including Apiculture Competition. Register your exhibits by Sunday Oct 29th October. Entry is FREE. See schedule: <https://murwillumbahshow.com.au/>

## From GCABS President



September has been an eventful month. In light of the paradigm shift from eradication to management of varroa in NSW I encourage you to stay informed and alert. Sentiment in the industry has been that this was inevitable. I admit I had a sleepless night on Sept 20th. However I do take solace from the words of 'Bee Scientifics': "Don't be scared. Let's go forward with courage and optimism".

On a lighter note, colonies on the GC are very strong at this time, as we would expect. I hope you are managing yours which are at swarm capacity right now? Call on your friends and mentors to support you if needed.

The latest beginner class held 30 Sept -1 Oct had a wonderful weekend with the training team Dave, Sue, Suzy and Meg. Thanks all for your time and expertise. Another class will be scheduled soon.

Next is our AGM where we refresh the committee and set some targets for the coming year. The business of the October meeting will be kept brief I promise, followed by an activity for all and shared lunch. Thanks for reading.

Kind regards... Kathy

## Next meeting 15th October 10am-noon : AGM, DIY Wax cloth wrap making workshop & door prize!

It is time to farewell the departing committee members, usher in the new for the coming 12 months, then enjoy a workshop showcasing the use of beeswax & DIY beeswax cloth wraps, led by Kathy Knox.



## October Honey Flora - S.E. Queensland

Supplied by Jim O'Regan

Black Sheoak, Blue Gum, Broad-leaved Banksia, Caley's Ironbark, Dogwood Flat Weed, Fuzzy Box, Glycine, Golden Candlesticks, Grass-tree, Grey Ironbark, Mexican Poppy, Mugga Narrow-leaved Grey Gum, Prickly-leaved Paperbark, Red Bottlebrush, River Mangrove River Sheoak, Scribbly Gum, Swamp Sheoak, Tallowood, Tumble-down Ironbark, Turnip Weed, White Bottlebrush, White Clover, White Mahogany, Wild May (Baeckea), Wild May (Leptospermum)



Dense white and pink flowers of the native Tea Tree (*Leptospermum*) attract native bees amongst other pollinators

## A farewell message from the Editor

Leonie Schwarzel

After 5 years as your editor, I have decided it is time to call it a day.

It has been a pleasure & a privilege to prepare & deliver the GCABS' monthly newsletter. For the first season it was my sole responsibility. Then my dear friends & fellow beekeepers, Colin Allen came onboard as typesetter & Ann Allen prepared every 3rd edition. Thank you for your unwavering support.

Through research, and the generous sharing of our many expert contributors, I have learned, shared with you & personally applied a wealth of knowledge to my own beekeeping practices. To all our many contributors, my greatest thanks. I especially wish to thank those who contributed their expertise regularly: Paul Fullwood, Kathy Knox, Kevin Tracy, Corinne Jordan, more recently Keith Barton & Esther Bligh to name a few.

My own beekeeping journey has been one of great joy with only one notable stumble: sole manager of a thriving boutique, commercial apiary near Tyalgum on the pristine slopes of the world heritage listed Mt Warning, then I helplessly witnessed most of my home hives washed away in the 2022 flood. Our property had never been flooded in its 105 year history but in February 2022, the Tweed River raged across us, leaving a muddy plain of debris & drowned ideals when it finally receded.

Although the flood was a quick, decisive fate for the lost bee colonies, I salvaged two hives & rebuilt. However, there is no sure-fire fix for the insidious threat that's now on its way. The macadamia pollination in northern NSW has just completed. Some of the colonies there had come from the Kempsey area, a 'hot spot' for varroa. As beekeepers relocated their hives after the maccas, it is quite possible that varroa may have already been present in some of those boxes. So, more than ever, checking for detection is paramount. Where will they show up next?

We have been fortunate. We've known healthy bee colonies during the 'pre-varroa' era. When it reaches us, our bees will need help like never before. As a species, they will survive but losses will be great. Our beekeeping practices will change forever. I have decided not to be a part of the complex era involving chemical treatments. I am in the process of handing on my hives to other beekeepers who are more willing to face the emerging challenge.

So, I'm not only standing aside as editor, I'm also wrapping up my direct involvement with honeybees & moving to a 'wait & watch' phase. I've loved my experiences, made great friendships along the way and value the work & opportunities that GCABS' continues to provide. I won't disappear from the GCABS scene. You'll see me from time to time. Thank you all for your appreciation & readership of the Buzz.

Leonie  
Buzz editor emeritus



# September Meeting Review

Thanks to Esther Bligh

## SPLITTING COLONIES

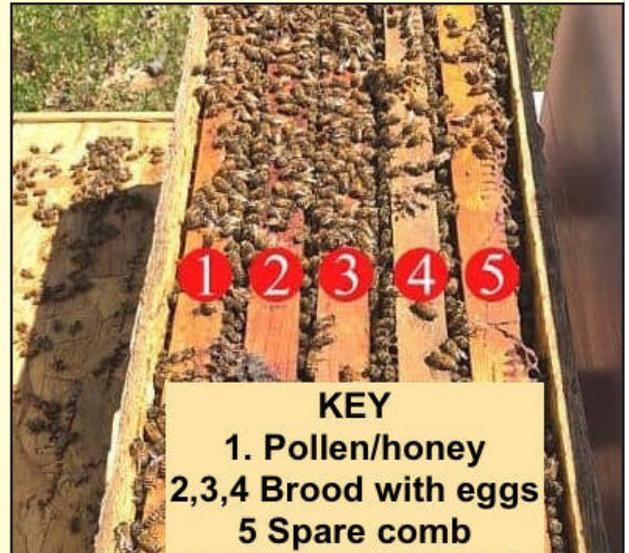
The September meeting was all about splits - why, when and how to turn one bee colony into two. Keith Barton & John Vallance were on the panel; both have growing apiaries and have done dozens of splits. The topic invited a lively discussion between the panel and the attending members.

So why do we split beehives? There are mainly two reasons: to grow your apiary and to prevent swarming.

When do we do it? In our region, splitting can be done from late winter to Autumn but is mostly needed & successful in spring - which is usually a time of high nectar flow during warmer and longer days. Splitting in spring ensures that there are lots of drones around, making a successful mating flight of your virgin queen more likely. Spring is also the natural time for a bee colony to swarm. Signs that the colony is planning to swarm are the presence of lots of drones & drone brood and queen cells.

There are a couple of ways to split a hive. You can do a walk-away split or create a nuc. With a walk-away split, you separate the two brood boxes of a double brood box hive. No need to check where the queen is - you just need to ensure that both boxes have eggs. The hive without the queen will make a new queen as soon as the boxes are separated.

To make a 5-frame nuc with a high probability of success, take three brood frames with various stages of development, one frame of food (honey and pollen) and one sticky (a frame where the honey has been extracted leaving only the sticky comb of empty cells) or a frame of built comb. Also shake in two frames of nurse bees. You can put the existing queen into the nuc, a couple of capped queen cells or eggs. Depending on your decision, either the old hive or the nuc will raise a new queen.



## Flowers of the Month for Your Home Garden

Submitted by Esther Bligh



**BORAGE**(starflower) is an annual herb native to southern Europe and the Middle East . The plant grows to about 60cm tall and can be sown directly into the soil once the ground has warmed up after winter. Borage is adaptable to most soils and likes a sunny or partly shaded position. The plant has very beautiful blue flowers that are bee magnets. The stems are quite soft and might need some staking or they fall over when reaching a certain height.



Borage is great to fill corners in your garden then sit and watch the bees.

**EUPHORBIA FULGENS** is a medium sized, weeping plant from Mexico. Its small orange flowers open in spring and are much loved by both, native and honey bees. The plants are quite spectacular when they are in flower and grow to 1.5-2m tall.

# A History of Honeybees on the Gold Coast

*Thanks to Bee One Third P/L*

Although South East Queensland is home to several species of Australian native stingless bee, the honey production capacity of the European honeybee *Apis mellifera* made it a useful species for Queensland's early settlers [1]. Honeybees were originally imported to Sydney Australia from Europe in the 1820s and provided honey as a sweetener before the introduction of sugar cane [1]. Honeybees quickly became established in the bush after their first introduction and spread across coastal Queensland [2].

By the late 1800s beekeeping practices were well established across South East Queensland and several local newspapers published regular Beekeeping columns:

*"Queensland is the paradise of the honeybee. In former days, and indeed even now timber-getters, fencers, farmers, and, in fact, all bush settlers, supplied themselves lavishly with honey from trees which they felled in the course of their business. This was not the honey of the little native stingless bee, but that of the European brown bee. We have seen as much as six buckets of honey taken from a single hollow tree. This honey was worth in Brisbane 1s per lb" [one shilling per pound] [3].*

Until the 1930s beehives were located mainly around Brisbane, Ipswich, Warwick and Caboolture [1]. Beekeeping on the Gold Coast supplemented the timber-cutting and dairy farming industry activity that expanded from the town centre of Nerang.

With our sunny subtropical climate and coastal marshlands supporting local flowering species which produce nectar and pollen throughout winter months, the Gold Coast Region became known for conditions favourable to continuous brood rearing and plentiful honey surplus year-round. In colder months the demand for local honey increases and retail prices rise:

*"Honey prices are always better in winter than in summer. The consumer finds that honey is a heat producer and has valuable medicinal effects upon persons suffering from coughs and -colds. Hence cold weather tends to increase its consumption" [4]*



Industry representatives, Government officials, researchers, and international beekeepers have converged on the Gold Coast to discuss bees and beekeeping. The First Australian Bee Congress, 'Presenting Australian Honey to the World', was held at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast, October 13-16, 1972 [5]. Three decades later the 3rd Australian Bee Congress, 'Pollination and beekeeping for the future', was held

at Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast, Queensland from June 27-30, 2018 [6]. 917 delegates attended, with representatives from every state and territory, including Norfolk Island, and 17 other countries.

Honeybees are the most widespread managed pollinator having co-evolved with our food production systems over thousands of years. Bees are critical to our livelihood because bees pollinate most of the crops we eat and many that feed farm livestock. More than one third of Australia's agricultural production benefits from bee pollination [7]. The Australian Honeybee Industry represents between \$60 and \$65 million per annum in value from hive products and pollination of crops [8].

Today the Gold Coast is home to hundreds of recreational and commercial beekeepers. The Gold Coast Amateur Beekeepers Society inc., established in 1979 supports local recreational beekeepers [9], while the Queensland Beekeepers Association have supported Queensland's beekeepers since 1886 [10].

Bee One Third are proud contributors to the Honeybee industry in South East Queensland, caring for the apiaries at Robina Town Centre which produce beautiful pure local neighbourhood honey, brought to you direct from farm to table.

## REFERENCES

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## JOBs in Your Bee Yard this Month

- Inspect for varroa destructor mite **REGULARLY**  
Current requirements are at least every 16 weeks but **MORE OFTEN** is recommended.  
You must inspect 10 hives or 10% of your total hives, whichever is the greater :  
Alcohol wash &/or uncap drone brood.  
Report results
- Insect your hives closely for symptoms of AFB and any other pests and diseases.
- Keep beetle controls in place.
- Replace old dark combs with fresh frames and foundation for your bees to draw fresh comb
- Ensure your queen doesn't run out of laying space. Bring frames of honey and one or two frames of capped brood up into the honey super and replace with new frame or built comb.
- Harvest excess honey so hives do not become honey bound but leave some for times of dearth or bad weather.



# Varroa Destructor - Moving toward Management

From GCABS Biosecurity Liaison Officer, Keith Barton.

On 19th September, 2023, the National Management Group (for exotic plants, pests & diseases) made the decision that eradication of varroa destructor in Australia was no longer technically feasible.

This is disappointing but hardly surprising based on the failed experience in other countries.

NSW DPI is currently defining what 'transition' to management' will look like. Interim guidelines have been provided & more detail will be released (likely prior to release of this edition of The Buzz). QLD DAF is also updating guidance for a variety of affected industries.

As beekeepers we have a responsibility to stay up to date with the latest guidance, to learn how best to manage varroa within our own hives & to adhere to our General Biosecurity Obligation to report exotic pests & diseases. It is incumbent on every one of us to learn to manage varroa mite as quickly as possible.

Now, more than ever, it is important that WE ALL perform regular mite checks & report our results as per your state controlling body guidelines. Knowing where varroa is will help with understanding rate of spread, containment options & inform the evolving management program that various governing bodies will define.

Stay tuned for further instructions.

Read more: Latest Update:

[AHBIC Varroa incursion update 47 - PDF Download](#)

- Eradication efforts abandoned.
- Resources will be reallocated to slowing the spread of the pest
- Government and industry groups made the unanimous decision to move to a management approach
- Non-compliance from beekeepers and illegal hive movement was a major factor in the failed eradication effort



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