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Your Club News

From the President

Hi All

I always advise new beekeepers at the club to take a lot of care and not to compromise on attention to detail when gearing up to attend the bees. I didn't take my own advice a few weeks back and suffered the consequences.

I thought I would quickly duck out between showers and check out a couple of hives. Big mistake! I didn't take enough time to ensure I was

properly protected and was stung multiple times. Was quite an unpleasant experience. Wet, windy, overcast, cold, these are all conditions that are not conducive to working your bees.

I overheard someone say that this summer has been a long autumn, a lot of rain, cool and overcast days, not the best for optimum honey production, perfect conditions for small hive beetle though.

The elements have continued to play havoc with Club activities. Taree show ground was inundated in the big weather event and of course the tea rooms where we have our meetings was rendered unusable for quite some time. Efforts were made to acquire a meeting venue for April's club meeting but to no avail. The April meeting is important because it's when we discuss how to close down the hive for winter and do the official end of season documented hive inspection, but it was not to be. Secretary Vicki has referenced some links from the ABA and DPI that gives good information on the subject of brood inspections and closing down the hive for the months of May, June and July. April is also sugar shake month, looking for evidence of the dreaded varroa mite that Australia is still free of.

Beekeeping makes us very aware of the seasons, the weather and the flowering of plants and trees, there is never a dull moment observing and keeping track of things. This season had got off to a good start after the disruption of the drought and fires of the 2019 /20 season but, the summer coolness and rain has not been ideal. I hear people say that next season is going to be a good one cause it's expected to be an excellent eucalyptus flowering next spring due to all the rain we have had.

Happy beekeeping
Robert



We need bees.

FOOD SECURITY
BIODIVERSITY
ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

WorldBeeDay.org.au

See story page 3

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 4th August. All executive positions are up for re election. The first club meeting for the new season will be held straight after the AGM

2020/2021 Committee

PRESIDENT
Robert Dibben

VICE PRESIDENT
Ana Martin

SECRETARY
Vicki Grace 0413 264 124

TREASURER & PUBLIC OFFICER
Sandra Sargent

EDUCATION OFFICER
Merryn Gallucio

LIBRARIAN
Paula Fulton

CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED!

Contributions for the next issue are welcome

Recipes, funny bee related stories, book reviews, buy/swap/sell etc

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Email to Robert
robertodibben@hotmail.com

GET WELL SOON SVEN

A lot of you have met Ana (our Vice President) & Sven.

Sven had an accident recently on his way to the markets and sustained an injury that will keep him off his feet for some time.

We all send our best wishes to both Sven and Ana for a speedy recovery

In the meantime, please support their delicious **AMBER DROP HONEY**

Meet our Members

This month we talk to Pat Powell about her journey into beekeeping.



For many years I toyed with the idea of keeping bees but always put it on the back burner, thinking it would be too much extra work while I was still employed and also heavily into the Surf Life Saving movement in a voluntary capacity.

We live on 25 acres backing onto a National Park, ideal for keeping a few hives and the idea of bees always stayed in the back of my mind. So a couple of years ago, being retired and no longer having any excuses, I started searching up and down the coast for bee keeping courses close to home, finally finding the Manning Valley Bee Club (nearly) in my backyard!

Then followed a bee keeping course at Robert and Paula's - very informative and hands on - and finally my one hive arrived.

I was probably the same as every other new beekeeper - checking on them every day, watching them going in and out of the hive and greeting every bee I saw in the garden as a long lost friend!

When the day came to actually open my hive I was filled with trepidation! Would I remember everything I had learned? Would my bees be friendly? Would they like me? Donning my bee suit and gloves and accompanied by (reluctant) hubby also suitably kitted out, we approached the hive and opened the lid. And everything went perfectly! Thousands of bees buzzing happily around and starting to fill up and cap frames. No problems there.

This hive continued to grow and in that first season gave us nearly 50kg of honey. A second hive was added but was never as strong and we finally realized

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OUR LAST TWO BEEKEEPING SEASONS?

The past two bee seasons have been vastly different in our local area. First, we had drought and then the worst fires we have had in this area in living memory. Then we had some minor flooding before being subject to restrictions because of the COVID 19 pandemic. This season we were looking like getting back to some semblance of normality when the rain started. This persistent heavy rain washed the nectar out of the flowers which then left the bees looking for food within the hive.

So, what can we learn from these last 2 seasons? Well, the main thing is to be careful when we choose a site for our apiary. There needs to be a nearby source of fresh water for our bees. In times of drought, we need to be watching that this source of water does not dry up. We also need to be careful in times of rain events that that the area does not flood or flow through our apiary. Now that we have had our biggest flood in this area since 1929, we should use the level to help in our decision where to site our apiary. Recently a beekeeper advised someone that he had lost his hives in the recent flood. The sad part of this story is that the beekeeper had lost his hives 12 months earlier from the exact same spot. If it is possible, it is better to find another spot rather than the one where you have already had trouble.

Another problem after some of the rain events is access to your apiary. We have had a few apiaries where we have had to wait for a good while before we could access them to work the hives and especially before we could lift off the honey supers. Just walking through the apiary you would sink up to your ankles in mud. Is there somewhere else that affords better access?



How easy is it to maintain your apiary? Can it be kept clear of long grass and weeds? Is it situated under large trees that could drop branches onto your hives, or for that matter, the whole tree in a storm?

In the bushfires 18 months ago there were some stories of near misses for some keepers. One keeper had the fire come across the paddock where his hives were. Because his site was well maintained with short grass and his hives up off the ground, the fire went under the hives so quickly that there was no damage done. If you have your hives flat on the ground you may wish to consider raising them up off the ground on a stand or on blocks.



You also need to be careful when handling your smoker during droughts and bushfire season. A spark from your smoker can cause a fire. Be aware of when there is a Total Fire Ban for your council area.

It is also useful to keep an eye on the Rural Fire Service website page "Fires Near Me" to check how close a fire maybe to your apiary. If you see that your apiary is in an area that maybe impacted by a fire consider relocating your hives if it is safe to do so.

For amateur beekeepers you may never need to feed your bees, but there are some situations where you may need to do so. In this area after the bushfires ravaged many areas there were no longer blossoms for the bees to feed on. In fact in some areas most of the vegetation was gone. Some keepers moved their hives to other areas so they had somewhere to forage. Others did not have anywhere to move to at the time. The club did get offers from some people who were willing for

that the queen had either absconded or died, and so did the hive.

The following season was drought and along with every other beekeeper I know we did not take any honey out, leaving it all for our bees to keep them going. I didn't replace the second hive that season as conditions were so bad.

And then the rains came! Our property turned green again, trees and flowers bloomed and the air was filled with happy buzzing as my girls went about their business. That hive was so strong and by early this year we had taken about 30kg of honey out, leaving plenty more behind.

Then came a series of events which led to disaster for my girls. First I put my back out and could not even bend for a month – I had to content myself with just watching my bees going in and out of the hive, still looking very healthy and active. Next came the rain – heaps of it! Luckily we were not flooded like many other people, but we could not get anywhere near the hive and anyway did not want to open it while we were having continual downpours.

When the rain stopped and I finally got to my hive, I knew straight away something was wrong. It was quiet, no buzzing sounds and no bees in sight. They had all gone and hive beetles had moved in – I'm not sure which happened first. But the hive was a mass of hive beetle larvae, no bees, dead or alive, to be seen anywhere. We were devastated! It was so disappointing for such a strong hive, I really hope they did get away and find a new home before the hive beetles took up residence.

So now I'm waiting impatiently for spring so I can start up again – this time with maybe three hives. This beekeeping thing is a continual learning experience, and I've certainly learned a few things along the way with the help of our bee club.

Wish me luck while I continue my beekeeping journey.

In times when there is not much food around for you bees you need to be careful of how much honey you take from your hives. In the previous season we had keepers who were not able to take any honey from their hives. They needed to leave what little honey was in the hive for the bees to get through Winter. Some needed to also supplement those stores with feeding both sugar syrup and pollen sources. The recent rain event has also caused a situation where some keepers will need to feed their bees to get them through Winter as the bees have not been able to get enough stores into the hives.

Another consequence of the recent rain event has been an increase in small hive beetle. The water in the ground followed by some very warm days led to very humid conditions. It is in these humid conditions that the small hive beetle thrive. Several keepers rang for advice on what to do after a small hive beetle infestation. The previous season we had fewer problems with the beetle as with the drought the humidity just was not there. We need to be mindful of the small hive beetle when we have humid weather and take appropriate action to keep them at bay.

These are just a few things we can learn from these past two seasons. There maybe other things you have learned. So, what is in store for our next season? Well, it should be a bumper season. The rain we have had has set the trees up for the next season. They should flower well and provide lots of pollen and nectar for our bees. We may be running to keep up with our bees. So, get ready!

WORLD BEE DAY 2021

20 May 2021



The day "celebrates our hard-working little pollinators." The Australian website for World Bee Day encourages us to find an event near us or to host our own to raise awareness of the importance of bees. They give the following ideas for individuals:

Every individual can contribute to the preservation of bees and other pollinators:

- Plant nectar-bearing flowers for decorative purposes on balconies, terraces, and gardens.
- Buy only Australian made honey and hive products
- Raise awareness among children and adolescents on the importance of bees and express your support for beekeepers.
- Set up a pollinator farm or 'bee hotel' on your balcony, terrace, or garden; you can either make it yourself or buy one from selected gardening stores.
- Mow your lawn or nature strip in the evening when bees are no longer foraging.
- Encourage mixed species lawns and nature strips that include clover and other flowers and allow them to flower before mowing.
- Substitute your grass-based lawns or nature strips with food producing plants that feed bees and people.
- Support farmers using sustainable methods of agriculture which is healthier for us and for soil, water, biodiversity and the climate.

Suggestions for groups:

Kindergartens, schools, gardening clubs and other community groups may like to join in by organizing a local Bee Day activity such as:

- Visiting or hosting a beekeeper to become acquainted with their work
- Learning about honey and hive products
- Learning about nectar-bearing plants
- Setting up a bee hive or native bee hotel in your home garden, yard, terrace, etc.
- Preparing a breakfast that contains honey and other hive products
- Organising art competitions on the topic of beekeeping and pollinators

For further information go to:

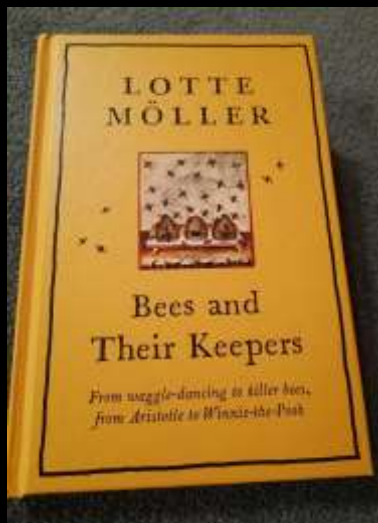
<https://www.worldbeeday.org.au/>

BOOK REVIEW

BEES AND THEIR KEEPERS

From waggle-dancing to killer bees, from Aristotle to Winnie-the-Pooh

By Lotte Moller



Swedish author and one-time beekeeper Lotte Moller takes us on a delightful journey through a beekeeper's year, full of anecdotes both historical and current, and interesting facts on beekeeping through the ages.

Lotte's humorous accounts of her travels around the world and her meetings with characters such as Brother Adam of Buckfast Abbey in England, the breeder of the Buckfast bee well known in Europe, and a Californian beekeeper worried about the invasion of the Africanised killer bee in the USA, keep the reader engaged throughout the book.

Little known incidents such as the bee war on the Danish island of Laeso between keepers of the original European brown bee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*) and keepers of the yellow Italian bee, which after many court battles resulted in the eastern cape of the island being divided into two zones, one for the brown bees and one for the yellow bees (with a 6km buffer zone between!), are recounted in detail.

This book is full of beautiful illustrations and photos through the ages, and a great read.

Pat Powell



WEIRD BEE FACTS

1. BEE STINGS HAVE SOME BENEFITS

A toxin in bee venom called melittin may prevent HIV. Melittin can kill HIV by poking holes into the virus's protective envelope. (Meanwhile, when melittin hitches a ride on certain nanoparticles, it will just bounce off normal cells and leave them unharmed.) Scientists at Washington University in St. Louis hope the toxin can be used in preventative gels. Bee stings may also ease pain caused by rheumatoid arthritis. Researchers at the University of Sao Paulo found that molecules in bee venom increase your body's level of glucocorticoid, an anti-inflammatory hormone.

2. WHEN BEES CHANGE JOBS, THEY CHANGE THEIR BRAIN CHEMISTRY

Bees are hardwired to do certain jobs. Scout bees, which search for new sources of food, are wired for adventure. Soldier bees, discovered in 2012, work as security guards their whole life. One percent of all middle-aged bees become undertakers—a genetic brain pattern compels them to remove dead bees from the hive. But most amazingly, regular honeybees—which perform multiple jobs in their lifetime—will change their brain chemistry before taking up a new gig.

3. THEIR BRAINS DEFEY TIME

When aging bees do jobs usually reserved for younger members, their brain stops aging. In fact, their brain ages in reverse. (Imagine if riding a tricycle didn't just make you feel young—it actually made your brain tick like a younger person's.) Scientists at Arizona State University believe the discovery can help us slow the onset of dementia.

4. THEY GET BUZZED FROM CAFFEINE AND COCAINE

Nature didn't intend for caffeine to be relegated to your morning pot of coffee. It's actually a plant defence chemical that shoos harmful insects away and lures pollinators in. Scientists at Newcastle University found that nectar laced with caffeine helps bees remember where the flower is, increasing the chances of a return visit.

While caffeine makes bees work better, cocaine turns them into big fat liars. Bees "dance" to communicate—a way of giving fellow bees directions to good food. But high honeybees exaggerate their moves and overemphasize the food's quality. They even exhibit withdrawal symptoms, helping scientists understand the nuances of addiction.

Source: mentalfloss.com

RECIPES

HONEY JOYS



75 g butter
1 Tbspn caster sugar

1/3 cup (115g) honey
5 cup (200g) corn flakes

1. Preheat oven to 180°C. Line two 12-hole (1/3 cup) muffin pans with paper cases.
2. Stir butter, honey and sugar in small saucepan over low heat until smooth.
3. Place corn flakes in large bowl, add honey mixture; stir until corn flakes are well coated. 4.4. Divide corn flake mixture into cases.
4. Bake 8 minutes. Stand 15 minutes or until firm.

<https://www.womensweeklyfood.com.au/recipes/honey-joys-28579>

WARM TURMERIC & HONEY MILK

200ml milk 1 tsp honey pinch turmeric

METHOD

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and heat over high heat until just warmed through and the honey and turmeric have dissolved.

<https://www.kidseatbyshanai.com/warm-turmeric-honey-milk/>