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# The Macarthur Beekeeper

*Views expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the committee, the members, or the Association*

## President's Message - Caroline

Dear Beekeepers,

This month has just flown by. Just a quick message this month.

This Wednesday is our Annual General Meeting. This is where you get the opportunity to be involved with our club. Unfortunately, the web site is down but we are trying hard to quickly fix this it should be up and running next month with a new provider. Because of this nomination forms haven't gone out, so nomination forms are attached to this newsletter. You can download one or you could nominate on the night. The positions that are up for grabs are president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and various committee positions.

Last club meeting Arthur, once more explained honey judging. Because the interest was so great, we didn't have time to judge our honey. So, after the AGM we will judge the honey that was left behind last month. As I said at our last meeting, a student at Wollondilly backup Anglican College is doing a project on honey for her HSC I hope you don't mind but I extracted a small amount of honey from every jar and gave her some. She is very grateful, and her teacher wrote to tell me so. I will give you the results of her findings when she sends them through.

In the apiary, the last two months we have been looking at various aspects of the hives. Last month we extracted honey from several hives and noticed that a hive with a new queen had actually died. When the hive was open, we saw a lot of wax moth, very few bees but there was a young queen at the bottom of the box. I transferred her and some brood from another hive to a nucleus box and left her to it. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to get back and have a look to see whether she is still alive. A job for this weekend.

Don't forget to bring in your honey for the Camden Show. Please look on the Camden show website to see how the honey needs to be presented and the cost of entry. The committee will ensure that the honey arrives at the show office before the closing date.

If you can help out at the show on the Friday or Saturday, please see me at the meeting. I have a few tickets left.

Next Saturday I will be at Tim's Garden Centre. Tim, always very generous, is holding a day where he is supporting Beyondblue. I will be showing how we extract honey and spin it out. The honey will then be bottled and sold. All money will go straight to Beyondblue. Come and give me some support and support Tim as he supports Beyondblue!

Regards  
Caroline

## Bee Informed ... *member contributions/research articles*

### **Common-Sense Beekeeping Safety**

(Originally published in Keeping Backyard Bees. Oct. 2014, Updated by Ed Napiorkowski)

Apiphobes ... we all know one. Someone who is terrified of bees, who sees a bee and cannot contain his fear. Maybe they are truly allergic, or maybe, they were just trained from a young age to be afraid. Most of us (except perhaps those raised by beekeepers) have been conditioned to a certain degree: See a bee, think only of their capacity for stinging, not of their other less injurious attributes like making honey and pollinating many of our favourite fruits and vegetables. Because of this almost inborn fear, beekeeping can be a challenge for many people.

Safety equipment can be as little as long sleeves and a veil fitted over a hat you already own.

The first time you take the lid off the hive, hear the buzzing, and find yourself surrounded by bees can be a little scary for everyone, but keeping yourself safe is relatively easy. In fact, many tactics for beehive safety involve plain old common sense.

Bees are by nature defensive and reactive. Bees become defensive only when threatened in some way. They release an alarm pheromone (a smelly chemical that alerts the other bees of an attack), and when the odour gets the hive up in arms, the beekeeper is in for a bad day.

One of the keys to beekeeping is doing your best to avoid putting the bees on the defensive; a difficult task considering you're hoping to steal their hard-earned food supply.

#### **Timing is everything**

When handling bees, it's important to remember that a hive is moody. Knowing the natural rhythms of your bees is essential for staying safe. If you take the time to consider a few things before working the hive, your next bee encounter is bound to be more enjoyable.

If possible, choose a day that is bright, sunny and warm. Rainy or hot, muggy days can make bees more defensive. Thunderclouds or storms are to be avoided, as environmental factors during these times are thought to cause bees to be more irritable. More bees are likely to be in the hive during a storm – meaning more hanging around with the express purpose of defending the hive, and more bees for you to handle or avoid.

Working the hive on a colder day can be dangerous for the bees. The way bees stay warm is to bunch together in a complex cluster. Honeybees begin to cluster if the temperature drops. If you work the hive after the cluster has formed, you may cause the bees to become disorganized, and they may not get their cluster rebuilt before the temperature drops, causing the hive to be more susceptible to the cold. If you must manipulate them during colder weather, do so in the morning to give them plenty of time to get their cluster organized again before temperatures plummet.



The optimum time for hive management is during nectar flow when most of the bees are gone from the hive collecting nectar. This occurs when most flowers are in bloom and producing nectar and pollen for the bees to use. The timing varies based on your climate. Check with your local beekeepers' association or extension agent to find out when nectar flow happens in your area.

You can't always manipulate the hive at the best possible time, so getting to know your bees is essential. The mood of the bee's changes from day to day. If you open the hive and the bees seem agitated, you can always close the hive and come back another day.

Pay attention to what's going on when they are more defensive. Was the weather bad (did a storm come in soon after)? Was there some other threat present (animals or other insects, like wasps)? Has a car or lawnmower been by recently to get them excited? Paying attention to these small details and avoiding times when the bees are up in arms can make your next trip to the hive more rewarding.

### **What to wear**

Another relatively easy way to keep bees from becoming defensive is to consider what you're wearing. The best-dressed beekeeper wears light-coloured, smooth fabrics. Strong colours, especially red and black, can cause bees to become agitated. The hooks on the feet of shoes can become caught in fluffy fabrics, such as sweaters, flannel, and athletic socks. Your sweat can antagonize bees, so light-weight clothing that breathes is preferable on hot days.

Bees are also sensitive to movement and light. Remove your jewellery when you work with them. The sunlight glittering off your rings or watch may agitate your bees. Tuck or tie back long hair, both to keep it out of the way and to keep it from moving in the wind.

Your charges are quite resourceful and can use gaps of less than 3 millimetres to find their way into your clothing. To keep them from crawling up your pant legs, tuck your trousers into your boots or socks. Be sure that any gaps are closed. You can even use tape or elastic bands on your pants and sleeves.

Because scents and pheromones are so important to life in a bee colony, they also are an easy way to cause a defensive response. When you're on the way to visit your bees, avoid fragrances (hair products, perfumes, aftershave or deodorant) and other odours or fumes. For example, you may even want to avoid filling your car with petrol on the way to your hives.

### **Look like a pro**

The objective of protective gear for beekeeping is to keep bees away from your skin, and you can find beekeeping kit that covers you from head to toe. Special clothing includes a veil, suit or jacket, boots, and gloves.

Experts advise new beekeepers to start out with more protection to keep them more comfortable. Remember, you can't put on more protection while you're working the hive, but you can take pieces off if your comfort level increases or if you find the bees particularly malleable.

The veil is the most important piece of protective gear. Most beekeepers will not work bees without it. Being stung on the face or neck is more dangerous than other places. A sting to your eye or inside your mouth or throat could be particularly harmful. Many types of veils are available. Some hang from helmets and some (called the "Alexander" type) stand-alone without a helmet. They can be made from wire mesh or sheer fabric. Some even zip to your coverall or jacket.

You can find suits or jackets made especially for beekeeping. Usually, they are made of fabric that bees can't sting through and that fit tight around your wrists, ankles, and waist to keep bees from crawling in. Some have built-in veils or veils that zip on to create a bee-safe barrier. Coveralls and jackets are great for keeping honey, wax and other bee messes off your clothing as you work the hives.



Bee gloves are specialized with long cuffs gathered close to your arms with elastic bands so bees cannot find a gap. Many types of gloves are available, from canvas to rubber to leather.

Make sure they fit you well because you're trying to avoid any awkward movements. Long-time beekeepers suggest that those new to the business use gloves, but many old-timers prefer to work without them as it's easier to manipulate the equipment and the bees. One option is to start with gloves on, and then remove them if the bees are feeling cooperative.

The best way to decide what type or combination you like is to try them. Contact your local beekeeping association and ask to try others' equipment to see what works best for you. Beekeepers work in differing levels of protection. Some are covered head to toe; others prefer bare hands and short sleeves in the heat of summer. Wear what makes you comfortable.

Be sure to wash your beekeeping gear regularly. Alarm scents stay in the fabric (and upset the next hive you approach) even if your garments appear clean.

### **Smoke 'em if you got 'em**

One of the great tools of the beekeeping trade is the smoker. Smoke has been used for centuries to calm bees and keep them under control. Remember the alarm pheromone that gets the bees excited and triggers all their defensive responses? The smoker masks those scents.



A smoker is a relatively simple tool. It consists of a container for fuel (anything from pine needles to cow chips) and a bellows of some type. Using a smoker is often referred to as an art form. It sometimes takes a little practice, but the key seems to be patience. You aren't getting the most response if you puff a couple of times and then start working. Most resources agree that waiting at least two minutes after applying smoke to the bees is optimum. Giving the smoke time to take effect can

save time in the long run.

### **Unavoidable stings**

In the end, however, you will get stung. Prepare yourself for that eventuality. No matter how much protective gear you wear or how much research and planning you do, you will be in close proximity and stealing the bees' food, and you will get stung.

If you know that you are deathly allergic to bee stings, beekeeping isn't the right vocation for you. If you really want fresh honey, just buy it from your neighbour down the road.

If you're worried about bee stings, steel yourself, and know that most beekeepers say they get used to being stung, and stings hurt less as you get more of them. Beekeepers who are stung often develop antibodies to bee venom (apitoxin). Some beekeepers even think you should make sure you are stung each season to keep your antibodies up. Do, however, take whatever precautions are necessary.

Each person reacts differently to a bee sting or to multiple stings. Some people have a local reaction, such as a red welt and swelling at the sting site, while others experience a systemic reaction, also called anaphylactic shock, where breathing is affected. It's best for a beekeeper to have a sting kit (which requires a prescription) on hand at all times, especially if you expect to have visitors to your hives. It includes antihistamines (which treat the allergic response) and an epinephrine pen (which relaxes the muscles in the airways). Be sure you are familiar with how to use the kit in case of an emergency.

### **Attitude makes all the difference**

None of this preparation, protective gear, timing, smoke or lack of deodorant will do you any good if you don't approach the bees with the right attitude. Bees are like dogs; they can smell fear (quite literally). When working bees, it is imperative that you are calm, cool and collected.

Calm, sure movements are best. Stay relaxed. Don't work too fast or with quick jerky movements. Bees are sensitive to vibrations, so bumping or banging on the hive can set off their defensive response.

In the beginning, you may feel awkward and frightened. Don't worry, this will pass with time and practice. Wear more protective gear until you get comfortable. Make sure your equipment is in top form and that your gloves fit you well to make manipulating the bees easier. Eventually, you'll be the old hand in the business.

## **The Observation Bee Hive** (By Gene Rene, Jan 2016, Keeping Backyard Bees)

What's better than surfing the web or watching Netflix? Having your very own observation bee hive of course! Whether you are a newbie or a long-time veteran beekeeper an observation bee hive is the coolest addition to any home. Provided of course you put it in a room where your wife does not shoot you for putting it in the WRONG place. I would consult with her first and make sure it is in a place where it can please everyone. We put ours in our basement rec room / Beekeeping 101 classroom.



I first saw an observation beehive when I was about 10 years old in a family-owned general store. I couldn't take my eyes off it. When I was told there was one bee that was bigger than all the others called the "queen bee", that gave me even more motivation to keep watching until I could spot her. Hey, what can I say..... this was the time BEFORE video games and the internet. But even now having just installed our observation hive in the rec room, the rest of our family members and friends can't resist

spending several minutes just checking it out from time to time. Even some of our guests that have no real interest in bees find out that they really are in fact very interesting creatures and can't help themselves from watching the same as I did as a kid.

If you've ever thought of having one in your home, I thought I'd give you some of the pros and cons to help you make a good choice if you decide to take the plunge. First the pros:

1. They are just plain cool, everyone else has fish – not you!
2. You can watch the bees without disturbing them
3. As a beekeeper, you can see if they are bringing in forage
4. You can observe comb construction
5. You can sharpen your queen spotting skills
6. By observing what is happening in the observation hive, you can get a good gauge on what your yard bees are doing as well

There are probably many more reasons that you can think of too. But I think you get the idea. But here are a few cons to be aware of too:

1. You'll have to cut a hole in your wall or construct a window port entrance
2. You will have to take it outside to do any maintenance
3. Most observation hives are too small to house a full-size colony, so you'll have to build your own if you want enough room to do it right
4. They are a bit expensive unless you build your own

If you opt to build your own, make sure you have a way to feed them if necessary and have a door to get easy access for maintenance. Use correct bee space 3/8" in between frames and install vents so you don't get moisture build up.

Since keeping bees is an education in itself, you will find it to be a huge advantage in your learning curve. So, if you've ever given thought to putting one in your home, I hope these tips will help you make a good decision so that you too can enjoy beekeeping!

(A link to Gene's instructional video is posted on the club Facebook site)

## The world's largest bee has been rediscovered, and it's HUGE

(By Mark Kaufman on Mashable.com Feb. 2019)

In January 2019, a clan of scientists and conservationists tramped through the torrid Indonesian forest in search of the Wallace's giant bee — a species that hadn't been spotted alive since 1981.

"Nobody had seen it since then," said Robin Moore, a biologist and communications director for the organization Global Wildlife Conservation, which funded the expedition. "It was feared extinct."

It wasn't. They found a female.

The female bee — the larger sex of the species *Megachile pluto* — is four times the size of the typical European honeybee with a wingspan of 2.5 inches. It's the largest known bee on the planet. "This is the holy grail of bees," said Moore.

The species is named for Alfred Russel Wallace, the enterprising naturalist who conceived the theory of evolution at the same time as Darwin (though Wallace's work was largely overshadowed by Darwin's). In 1858, Wallace ventured into Indonesia and described this extraordinary bee, characterizing it as a "large black wasp-like insect, with immense jaws like a stag-beetle."



An image of a living Wallace's giant bee compared to a honeybee.

IMAGE: CLAY BOLT

Over the past few decades, dead bodies of the giant bees had been seen on the trade market, said Moore, but it was unknown if the species still existed. Now, Global Wildlife Conservation has the first live footage of the elusive critters, found on the North Moluccas Indonesian islands.

The big pollinators aren't easy to find. The bees burrow into mounds of soil built by termites, which hang on trees some eight feet off the ground or higher. To sleuth out the bees, the biologists had to find and stare at these mounds for 20 minutes at a time. The team scoured these brown mounds for four days with no luck.

"We all internally decided that we weren't going to find these bees," Eli Wyman, a Princeton University entomologist and bee expert who took part in the expedition, said in an interview.

"Sometimes we were certain that large beetles must surely be the bee, other times, we would stare for ages at termite mounds only to move on disappointed, with a growing sense

that we'd never discover the creature of our obsession," added Clay Bolt, a natural history photographer, in a statement.

But on the expedition's fifth and final day, the search team passed a low hanging termite mound near the road. "We almost didn't even stop to look at it," said Wyman. "That turned out to be the magic nest."

"It's pretty exciting," Becky Irwin, a biologist who researches plant-pollinator interactions at North Carolina State University, said of the discovery.

This rare find is especially significant, Irwin added, in light of there being a deluge of bad news about native bee and insect declines. "It's kind of nice to have a bee that's been rediscovered," Irwin, who had no role in the expedition, said.

Though, Irwin noted that it's challenging to know how most wild bee populations are doing because many are located in remote places. "We don't have good records of their population abundance," she said.

The same can be said of Wallace's giant bee. "The real status of the bees is still unknown," said Wyman. The scientists' next mission is to return and survey their population numbers. If it turns out these giant bees are dwindling, it wouldn't be a great surprise.

"They don't really have any protection," said Moore. "They are targets for trade."

As for why these bees are so giant, the jury is still out, said Wyman. It could be a case of island gigantism wherein species isolated on islands grow much larger than their mainland counterparts, sometimes due to a lack of predators. Or it could be that the larger bees were more fit to colonize and survive on a new island.

Whatever the reason, the bee's rediscovery illustrates that there are other "fantastical species" still out there that aren't widely known or haven't been seen in decades, said Moore.

Wallace's giant bee, for its part, lived only in museum collections, enticing curious entomologists to wonder if the creatures Alfred Wallace identified over 160 years ago still buzzed around in these remote humid forests. Until now.

**“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.”**

Our club relies heavily on volunteers to keep things going. Every bit helps and getting involved can be a lot of fun. Please consider how you can become involved and assist in making us a better club for everyone.



# Royal Easter Show – April 12 - 23

Visit **Honeyland** at Woolworths Fresh Food Dome!



## Bee-Zeebo

**Where:** Woolworths Fresh Food Dome

**When:** Daily 10.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm and 4.30pm

Discover just how sweet it is to be a beekeeper and see how apiarists care for their bees and harvest their

delicious honey. Make a beeline for the Bee-Zeebo for a live action, interactive display and your opportunity to ask all the questions that have been buzzing around in your head. Don't forget to sample and purchase some liquid gold at the nearby Honeyland stand too.



## Honey Competition

**Where:** Woolworths Fresh Food Dome

**When:** Daily 9.30am - 8.30pm

Australia's most prestigious honey competition, the Sydney Royal National Honey Show, is the only

National Honey Show in the Southern Hemisphere awarding Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. Liquid honey is judged on elements including flavour, density, colour, aroma, clearness and brightness. Natural granulated and creamed honey is judged on evenness of grain, flavour, firmness and colour. Beeswax Candles receive points for appearance, burn response & wick, ease of lighting, feel, and cleanliness. The 2019 Show sees the introduction of new native honey classes and, for the first time, judging of honey produced in flow frames.



## Facebook updates

(FB page maintained by Pino & Ed)

**Here is a sample of what you will find on our Facebook page.**

**For further details go to**

<https://www.facebook.com/macbeekeepers/>

### Behind the Shot:

An interview with Anand Varma, a photographer from National Geographic on the behind the scenes challenges and his approach to making a National Geographic special on Honey Bees.

<https://www.facebook.com/NatGeoBehindTheShot/videos/>

### How Bumblebees use vibration to pollinate:

This video clip contains some beautiful close up footage of the bee pollination process but especially how the 'Bumblebee' uses vibration to access the pollen in a particular flower.

<https://www.facebook.com/beekeepinginternational/videos/>

### How honey is made?

Ever stop to think about what's in a bottle of honey? It's really quite simple. There are no added preservatives. No added flavourings. No added colouring. Take a look at the additive-free journey that honey takes from bee to bottle and see for yourself.

<https://www.mybeeline.co/en/p/how-honey-is-made-2?>

# Meetings & Events

Please keep checking MBI web site for event updates: [www.macbeekeepers.asn.au](http://www.macbeekeepers.asn.au)

**Copy Deadline for our next newsletter:  
Friday, 8th March.**

To: [editor@macbeekeepers.asn.au](mailto:editor@macbeekeepers.asn.au)

## March 2019

15th- Find newsletter on website

20th- 7:30pm Club Meeting ~ **AGM**

## April 2019

7th- Field Day

12th - 23rd Royal Easter Show

12th - Find newsletter on website

17th - 7:30pm Club Meeting

## May 2019

5th- Field Day

10th- Find newsletter on website

15th- 7:30pm Club Meeting

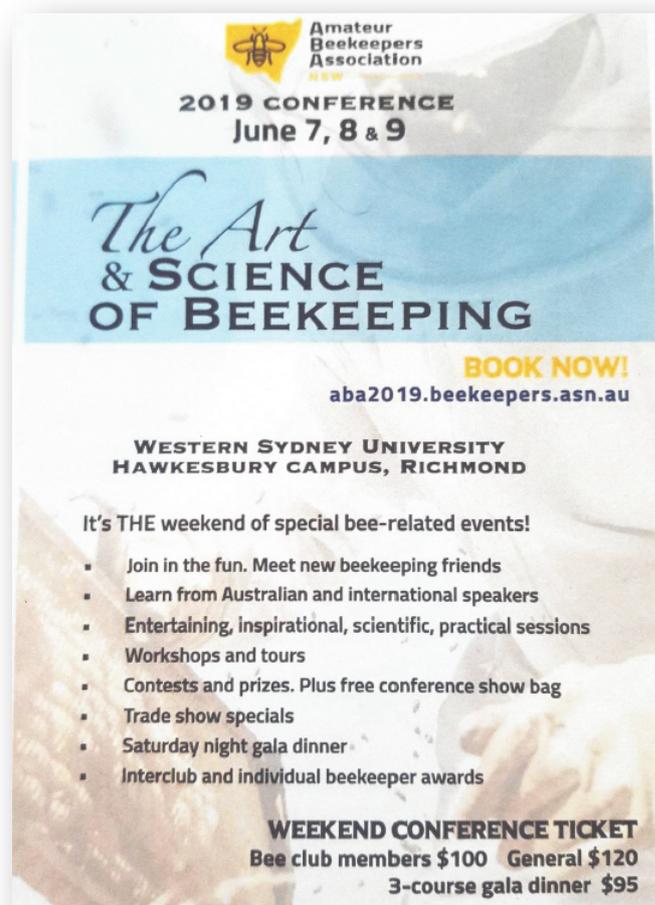
## June 2019

2nd- Field Day

7th - 9th – 2019 ABA Conference

14th - Find newsletter on website

19th - 7:30pm Club Meeting



*Please note - Bunnings dates yet to be confirmed for 2019*

## CLASSIFIEDS and SPONSORSHIP

### Club Honey

Now available in  
500gm  
1 kg Tubs Contact  
Jessie on  
0409845625

### Club Shirts

Contact Jessie or  
Michael at the next  
meeting  
With Name \$65  
Without Name \$60

### Club Member Advertising:

Short line with phone nos. = Free  
Size up to 60mm by 40mm (one per member)=  
Free

(Non member =\$10/per month)  
Renew ad each month. Provide artwork  
[editor@macbeekeepers.asn.au](mailto:editor@macbeekeepers.asn.au)

**FOR SALE**

4 Nuplas brand plastic ten-frame Langstroth hives, consisting of 2 boxes per hive with fully drawn combs on plastic foundation. All hives with ventilated base boards and beetle traps underneath. \$250 per hive, bees included. Telephone Robert, 0416 163 119 after 6 p.m. or email [rbtola@gmail.com](mailto:rbtola@gmail.com).

**Club equipment** for member use.

The following equipment is available for use by members:

2 frame manual extractor.

Electric uncapping knife

Cappings draining tray set.

Please contact Michael or Jessie via email

[treasurer@macbeekeepers.asn.au](mailto:treasurer@macbeekeepers.asn.au) or

[secretary@macbeekeepers.asn.au](mailto:secretary@macbeekeepers.asn.au)

Or Michael on 0429368353 or Jessie on 0409845625.

All equipment must be returned in a clean condition ready for the next user.

Thank you to our sponsors!



2 Queen St, Campbelltown, NSW 2560  
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