

# BEEBIZ MARCH 2021

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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## President Report

*" I am now looking at bee keeping as more of a conservation and restoration project than a profitable hobby"*

*Phillip Chandler " The Barefoot Beekeeper"*

Hi! Folks,

A small intimate group gathered at Byrangerry Creek for the first field day for about 1 year. Brian Window delivered an interesting lecture on how to enable the bees to draw the perfect combs and we inspected a couple of hives finding no real problems. It came to my attention that the club needs a person with hands on experience with flow hives to deal with the problems that new flow hivers are experiencing. All of our experienced beekeepers are of the traditional variety so not much help with flow hive problems. Is there anyone out there to help in this regard? My only observation is that bees have in their DNA the need to build comb and the more that is restricted, I feel, the more that problems will occur.

A couple of good folks have stepped up to the plate and offered to have field days at their premises but we still need more venues going forward. Now that the contagion has subsided, I would personally invite you all to the next field day advertised in this newsletter. That's all from Byrangerry Creek this month.

Happy beekeeping

Cheers Kevin Virgen

## Secretary Report

Last year after a field day with a poor attendance, I suggested that most members should try to attend at least one field day a year. I repeat that request now that community activities are becoming more common. Our club has 180 members; quite a few distant members are in the club just for insurance purposes, and some will not attend for other reasons, but surely we can get more than a dozen at a field day.

You should get a separate flyer about the next field day to remind you to come, and I intend to ring some members to urge them to come. So, come along. If you have a beekeeping neighbour, invite them to come with you.

Beekeepers do constitute a community, and the benefits for members in being a known part of that community are access to equipment as well as advice and assistance if urgent. There is also the educational and social interactions for members and partners that come with field days. Beekeepers are a weird but interesting lot.

Brian

## Report on Field Day February 28<sup>th</sup>

Unfortunately the Field day at Kevin Virgin's bees was not well attended. We had a look at two beehives that were doing o.k., although there was no nectar coming in on the day. Probably not for some days. As a result they were a little toey, and there was a light moment when a person who should, and admitted he did know better appeared with a woolly black beanie. He showed a surprising turn of speed as he was chased out of the yard, arms wildly swinging.

As usual some interesting discussion during luncheon.

Geoff

## Flowering Report

The Paperbark, *Melaleuca quinquenervia* will keep flowering, possibly until July. This season it is living up to its name Belbowrie, the rain tree. I noticed today the first flowering on the Lilli Pilli. This is a tree/shrub that flowers in a number of bursts. The pollen and nectar are handy at this time of year. The plant is not all that widespread in the wild, mostly growing on or close to watercourses. It is rather popular as a garden plant these days and will tolerate pruning to be turned into a hedge.



Figure 1 Flowering Lilli Pilli Photo G Manning

Grey Ironbark and Forest Red Gum are showing some bud. So far it is not all that extensive, but here's hoping. A reminder, and for the newbies. Grey Ironbark is pollen deficient for bees, Red Gum is a good source, sometimes yielding nectar as well. It looks as if they will flower closely together. They are a little later than last year, my guess is the flowering will start around June. They tend to grow together and are widespread.

Geoff

## **From The Hives**

The two groups of 16 hives were moved to a tea tree site near Coraki in time to catch the first flowering of the year of the broad leaf tea tree *melaleuca quinquinervia*, and managed to accumulate about one super of honey. It was not up with the heaviest flowering seen in the past, but still pretty good. The bees do very well on this plant with an abundance of nectar and beneficial pollen. Some stragglers are still flowering, but most of the flowers have browned off.

There should be another flowering soon, maybe by the end of March.

Brian



Figure 2 Majestic broad leafed tea trees



Figure 3 Buds of forest red gum

Photo G Manning

## **An Inventor's experience. Flow Beekeeping.**

Stuart Anderson, member NRABA

I love the aroma around beehives on a late spring or summer afternoon. The bees are busy processing their day's haul and the smell of the nectar is divine. So long as the colony has plenty of stores, Flow Hives can be harvested at any time of the day, and late afternoon is my favourite time. I no longer have to wait until I have a few spare hours on the weekend to go through the sticky job of removing frames or boxes, uncapping and spinning out the honey. In minutes I can begin the harvest of a frame or two then potter around the hives as the jars fill. There's something special about cupping my hands around a warm jar of fresh honey on a cool evening, it reminds me of my times as a child in the dairy with my uncles, warm milk flowing into huge frothy vats.

Over sixteen years ago, prompted by my son Cedar, we began to experiment with ways to extract honey from honeycomb without opening the hive. We hoped this would make harvesting easier for beekeepers and less stressful for the bees. After many years and dozens of failures, we finally achieved our goal. I'll never forget standing with Cedar in that grassy paddock in happy amazement, watching the honey flow from an unopened hive, excited in the knowledge that this was the first time ever that this had been achieved. What I didn't realise then was that the work toward making this a viable product had barely begun.



Figure 4 Stuart Anderson

resource, in conjunction with the world's leading bee experts, TheBeekeeper.org to offer a comprehensive video-based online course. We're pleased that this initiative, though barely a year old has helped educate over 5,000 newbees.

Harvesting with a Flow Hive is a calm experience. The bees rarely come around the back of the hive to investigate. This means children (under supervision) can be part of the process. I am so pleased that young people can be involved in and inspired by the extraordinary world of honeybees. I think this provides a gateway for all to learn more about our connections with the intricate cycles in nature and of the vital need to protect pollinators in general.

Most challenges that Flow beekeepers face are general problems faced by all beekeepers. However, there are a few Flow-specific hurdles that are worth mentioning here. When I was a boy my father kept bees in hives that sloped slightly forward in order to minimise rain coming in the entrance and to drain moisture off the solid bottom board. Flow Hives however, slope to the rear so that the honey can exit at the back of the hive. The entrance design and screened baseboard ensure rain is not a problem. If a Flow Hive is not sloped back the honey will not flow out of the Flow Frames properly during harvest and this may mean it leaks into the lower parts of the hive. The 'Flow Hive 2' has bubble levels set into the side and back of the base to aid in the proper set up.

When building a new colony, it is best to add the second box or 'super' only when the bees have filled the brood box and are clearly thriving. Occasionally the bees are slow to take to the Flow Frames. It helps to rub or paint melted beeswax onto the new Flow Frames. The bees will move the wax around and in doing so familiarise themselves with their honey storage area. Burr comb from the brood box can also be rubbed into the new Flow Frames (it is bad practice to use honey from any other source to tempt the bees to the new frames as this can spread disease). Another method to familiarise the bees with Flow Frames is to put the new Flow Super on the base with the thriving brood box on top. If you are using an excluder it will still sit

Even with a viable product, funding must be found to begin production and then a business has to be run. With the skills and hard work of dozens of people, our business, Flow, reached six years of age in February 2021. We are proud to employ fifty people locally, be Australian made and to have sold over 85,000 hives to beekeepers all around the world.

Whenever a new method or invention is introduced to an established industry there is bound to be some scepticism and criticism. Flow has been no exception, particularly as it burst into the beekeeping world without any warning. Most concerns were around Flow making beekeeping look too easy. Beekeepers around the world worried that newbees would not put in the effort to care for their colonies properly and that therefore pests and diseases could multiply. About half of those purchasing Flow have never kept bees before. Flow recognises this and encourages and supports newbees to take on courses and learn good practices from local beekeepers and beekeeping clubs. There are many videos and materials on responsible beekeeping on our website and we have established a new

between the boxes. The bees then have to travel through the Flow Frames to get to the brood. They get to know the new frames and within a week you should be able to return the boxes to their usual order. In many regions two boxes are not quite enough for a large colony to minimise swarming or for nectar evaporation efficiency. Just as with most hives, additional Flow supers, conventional supers or brood boxes can be added depending on the region, the season and the beekeeper's preference.

The Flow Frames are made of a high-quality, food-grade, BPA-free plastic matrix which the bees must seal and complete to form the hexagonal comb for storing honey. Sometimes propolis, bee glue, is used as well as beeswax and this can make 'cracking' the frames for the first harvest difficult. I like to insert the key only about one quarter of the way in before turning it 90 degrees to operate the mechanism. This progressive 'cracking' of a small proportion of the frame makes turning the key much easier. The method of inserting the key only a couple of centimetres into the frame is also useful if you want to sample a small amount of honey before harvesting the whole frame.

Cedar and I continue to work together every week on new innovations that, we hope, will provide more options and tools for beekeepers. He has been and is the driving force behind the success of our invention and business. I am proud that Flow is an Australian world-first invention and count myself fortunate to have been the co-inventor. I wish you all the very best in your beekeeping.

Stuart Anderson

( Next time Stuart will address the problem created by candied honey. If members want wax rolled on to frames, ask the secretary.....Ed.)

## **Report on Talk at Apiarist's Meeting Casino 26<sup>th</sup> February**

### **Madlen Kratz**

Madlen's background is in research on honey bee nutrition, foraging behaviour and pollination. She has done a PhD on the effects of nutrition on colony health and crop pollination efficiency. Last year, she joined the Department of Primary Industries in NSW at the Tocal Agriculture Centre as the Honey Bee Industry Development Officer. She is currently conducting research on the palatability of protein supplements, and on honey bee pollination of blueberries grown under protective covers.

Madlen gave an interesting presentation on the feeding of managed bee colonies; Much of it was already known to the professional apiarists, but there were some lessons for the amateurs.

#### Nectar

Stimulating syrup is 1:1 sugar:water. Stimulation lasts only three days after feeding.  
Storage syrup is 2:1 sugar:water.

Bees will collect and process nectar containing as little as 5% sugar, reducing the water content down to below 19%

#### Pollen

Bees require essential aminoacids and other minerals and vitamins and get them from a mix of different pollens. The collection of pollen is usually self-adjusting to meet the needs of the colony ie too much pollen to consume in the short term, more field bees turn to getting nectar.

Feeding gives a worthwhile return for most managed colonies, and is essential for many pollination jobs.

## **Volunteers**

The club requires more volunteers, not just for the Editor's job, but also to hold field days. The requirements to hold a field day are sufficient parking not requiring a four wheel drive, and some beehives. Most rural residential properties can manage this. We would like to fill the entire program for a year, so come on. Speak to Kevin or Brian.

## **List of Helpful Members**

Kevin Virgen	Federal	6684 9213
Brian Window	Lismore	0466 790 736
Ray Smith	McKees Hill	0427 734 954
Paul Towner	Rous Mill	0418 321 305
Geoff Manning	Bentley	0400 221 602
John Bull	North Casino	0414 842 903
David Fairhall	Richmond Hill	0444 513 771

## **Services Directory**

Summary of available products and services

### NRABA Members

Paul Davey ( hive care)( Mullumbimby) 0491 608 272  
David Fairhall( queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771  
Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736

### Not NRABA Members

Stephen Fowler ( nuclei, hives, all sorts of bee equipment, buys wax) (Alstonville) 0418 412 621  
Merv McDonald (nuclei, hives, hive care)(Alstonville) 0439 166 016  
Rob Stone (mated queens, nuclei)(Casino) 0487 598 105  
Ross Wood (mated queens, nuclei)(Grafton) 0421 817 710

Corrections and additions welcome

## **March Field Day 28<sup>th</sup> March**

The next field day will be on 28<sup>th</sup> March at the home of Meg Winterford and William Brener, 60 Codrington Lane, near Coraki. Meg and William have two Langstroth hives. The main activities will be to discuss extraction techniques and to inspect those hives. Meg also has an interesting garden.

Bring your beekeeping gear. The club will provide sterilised hive tools and gloves for the demonstrators.

The day will commence at 9.30 am with a welcome by the President, and the beekeeping activities will start at 10.30 am. Lunch of sausages and salad will be served at about 12.30 pm, and the raffle will be held before the end of the day at 1.30pm.

All attendees are asked to bring either a morning tea item or a salad for lunch. As a guide, bring enough for twice the size of your group. Male beekeepers in particular note, we need more salads! Lunch will cost \$5. In the past, the club has always relied on lunch payments and the raffle to provide funds for the operation of the club. So raffle items are always appreciated. Raffle tickets will cost \$2, and you could win big.

So, remember to bring

- Salads/morning tea
- Raffle items
- Chairs
- Nametags

### **Directions**

Property is at 60 Codrington Lane, near Coraki.

From Coraki, head towards Casino. About 4 km from Coraki, pass Reynolds Road on the left, proceed about another kilometre, and turn into Codrington Lane on the right. Almost immediately after turning, take

the second entrance on the right, go along a tree and bush lined driveway for about 1 km. There are two residences at the end; Meg and William's place is the one on the right.

From Casino, proceed towards Coraki. After you pass Baillie's Lane on the left, turn into Codrington Lane on the left.

Look for the bee signs.

Please be considerate when you park.

## MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE 4th February 2021

Time 5.30 pm Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present KV,BW,RS, GM
- Apologies PT, Maddy Allen
- Minutes of Committee meeting January 7<sup>th</sup> 2021  
Accepted m BW s RS passed
- Matters Arising
  - Secretary reported that the person who may have joined as an associate had withdrawn their application.
  - Secretary had spoken to Stuart Anderson and Ross Wood about early swarming of bees in Flow hives. Ross said that he was aware that it happened. Stuart said that it was mentioned on the Flow Hive website that it would be beneficial to coat some wax on to the flow frames.
- Correspondence
  - Contributors to the newsletter(BW, KV, GM) had received an email from the editor Maddy Allen saying that she wanted the contributions to be in by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. Secretary pointed out that this date has always been the 10<sup>th</sup>, and that this gave the editor ample time to prepare the newsletter ready to be sent to the ABA on about the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month. The closing date of the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month was too close to the committee meeting date (1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> of the month), and it would be difficult to implement the committee decisions in such a short period. Secretary agreed to communicate those views to the editor.
- Reports
  - Treasurer reported a balance of \$7028.54 in bank account, unchanged from last month.

### -Membership

Membership officer reported that the member approved last month had been sent a welcome letter, and his acceptance by the NRABA committee notified to the ABA.

The following new members were accepted; Daniel Peterson, Wendy Scott, Sarah Hamilton, and Robert Argent. ( m BW s RS passed)

- Agenda Business Items
  - (1) Field Day February  
It was decide to have a field day at the end of February with the usual catering, and Secretary to approach Paul Towner about having it at Rous Mill.
  - (2) Field Day Program.  
Various options were considered, with committee members volunteering ( BW, KV, RS).  
Various parks , like Rocky Creek Dam, Spink Park ( Lismore) or Meldrum Park ( Ballina) were suggested.
- General Business
- Next Meeting
  - Time 5.30pm March 4<sup>th</sup> 2021
  - Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights
  - Meeting finished at 6.30pm