



Beekeepers Association of the ACT

**Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the
Australian Capital Territory Incorporated**

Meetings of our Association are conducted on the third Thursday of every month
(except December) at the
Yarralumla Primary School Hall, 24 Loftus Street, YARRALUMLA, ACT 2600

Next Meeting

President's Report

Biosecurity update- Varroa outbreak QLD

Special interest group on native bees

Training update

Book review: Backyard bees by Doug Purdie

Working bee 23 July - details

Links to our websites

Classifieds

Contact: President - Cormac Farrell (0422) 441 358

Email: enquiries@actbeekeepers.asn.au

www.actbeekeepers.asn.au

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

July 2016

**Monthly meeting: 21 July 2016, Yarralumla Primary
School at 7:30pm**

AGENDA

- 1930 Introduction & Welcome: President (Cormac Farrell).
- 1935 Beeginners Corner
- 1955 Presentation by Hayley Pragert, NSW Bee Biosecurity Officer, a new role in the National Bee Biosecurity Program

Hayley's expertise include pest management, biosecurity and microbiology. She managed her own hives and produced and sold queen bees. Her research Masters with the University of Auckland looked at management options for Varroa mite

- 2030 Networking (light supper)
- 2100 Meeting close

Steve O'Hearn Secretary (0408) 657 871

President's Report

Dear Members,

In case we needed any reminding of the value of beekeeper registration in biosecurity, over the past few weeks it has come in the form of some most unwelcome visitors. Earlier this month a hive of Asian Honeybees (*Apis cerana*) complete with two Varroa mites was discovered next to the port of Townsville.

This invasive pest species had previously been confined to the Cairns region, but since the biosecurity strategy moved from eradication to management, eventual expansion into other areas was largely inevitable. To date the hive and its parasites have been killed, and no further colonies detected. The mites turned out to be *Varroa jacobsoni*, rather than the globally infamous *Varroa destructor*, however there are stains of this arachnid that are just as deadly to our bees.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed with the scale of the global problem, and the seeming inevitability of Varroa making a major incursion, but there are lots of concrete actions that you can take:

1) Register as a beekeeper! Yeah I know that I am harping on about this. Don't care. This is important!

For the ACT: [Register as a beekeeper in the ACT](#) (ACT government site [Home Parks and Conservation Plants and Animals Licensing of Plants and Animals Registration for bee hives](#))

2) Screened Bottom Boards - in addition to helping your colonies survive the damp of winter and the heat of summer, there are lots of designs that can accept a sticky board, both killing Varroa groomed off your bees and setting you up to identify infected colonies

[Information on the benefits of screened bottom boards](#) from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation site (www.rirdc.gov.au, then search news for 'screened bottom boards provide varroa management option')

3) Learn testing procedures - the Association runs regular pest and disease management courses, which provide the most up-to date information on prevention, detection and treatment.

To me, this most recent incursion also highlights how complacency can creep into our biosecurity approaches. It was only relatively recently (2011) that the Australian Government essentially gave up on attempting complete eradication of Asian Honeybees. This move was strongly opposed by beekeeping organisations, who wanted to keep this out of the 'too hard' basket. There is the potential for Asian Honeybees to spread extensively throughout Australia, and they are a significant vector for Varroa mite.

As governments become more marginal, the voice of ordinary voters becomes more powerful - remember to make yours heard on biosecurity. Time to give these unwelcome visitors the Pistol and Boo treatment

Plant Health Australia Sentinel Hives

I am pleased to announce that we have extended our funding arrangement with Plant Health Australia. This is largely due to the strong track record and close relationship that our hive managers have forged with government agencies. This will see the association funded to maintain sentinel hives and trap boxes throughout the ACT, but with a focus on high risk sites such as Canberra Airport. **Congratulations are due to Jeff Matson, Frank Derwent, John Grubb and Alan Wade** for continuing this initiative. This puts the Association at the forefront of the fight against invasive pests and diseases, and has practical spin-offs for members.

A series of field days are planned to demonstrate pest inspection techniques, including sugar shaking for Varroa mites. We hope that we never need most of these skills, but they are really good to have.

Working Bee

While the focus this month is on biosecurity, there is also a chance to have a lot of fun, and few things are as fun as setting up a new apiary. Due to the ongoing expansion of the Associations hives, we are establishing a third pad to house hives at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands site. A great way to do something practical in the winter months, and to meet other members. Check for details in this newsletter, and we hope to see you at the working bee.



Far left: Swarm Trap opening night crowd

Left: Dermot Asis Sha'non examines an exhibit

Below: Beci Orpin's 'Hexagonal Flower' swarm trap

Bottom: Swarm trap by Loose Leaf

Swarm Trap Review

For those of us who braved a wintry Canberra night last Thursday, we were treated to a unique and fun art experience, with the opening of [Swarm Trap](#) at the Nishi Gallery in New Acton. 'Swarm Trap' is an exhibition of conceptual and functional architectural objects.

For those new to beekeeping, swarm traps are safe houses for bees – small man-made structures designed to give bees refuge when they swarm seasonally, looking for a new home.

The exhibition is curated by [Honey Fingers](#) (look them up on social media) and [MANY MANY](#). The exhibition includes works by [SIBLING](#), Beci Orpin, London-based [Soft Baroque](#), [Loose Leaf](#), Ben Blakebrough, experimental design collective Field Experiments, Melbourne artist Madeleine Mills, MANY MANY, Zurich-based graduate architect Nicholas Ashby, Shauna Toohey (of [Perks and Mini](#)) and natural beekeeper and Honey Fingers founder [Nic Dowse](#).



My personal favourite of the night was a mirror-box swarm trap, and there was a range of styles from utilitarian through to truly weird and wonderful creations. It will be intriguing to see if the swarm trap made from t-shirts will work at all – anyone who has a clothes line near their hives knows how much swarms like hanging laundry!

The exhibition closed on 10 July, and the swarm traps will be placed in bushland between Canberra and Melbourne to capture wild swarms for rehoming.

It will be interesting to see how these weird and wonderful creations go in attracting attention from scout bees!

Regards,

Cormac Farrell, President



Biosecurity update

Detection of *Varroa jacobsoni* in Port Townsville, Queensland

For full information, go to our [Forum](#).

Summary: A colony of Asian honey bees (*Apis cerana*) was detected in a container stand at Port Townsville. On inspection, two Varroa mites – *Varroa jacobsoni* – were found. There are Asian honey bees already in Far North Queensland which have not been able to be eradicated.

The Asian honey bee is a highly invasive insect and considered a significant pest. The Asian bee is the natural host of the Varroa mites, *Varroa destructor* and *Varroa jacobsoni*. One particular strain of *V. jacobsoni* is known to parasitise European honey bees and destroy colonies in the same way as *V. destructor*. It is not known yet which strain of *V. jacobsoni* has been found in Port Townsville.

- ✓ Educate yourself on inspecting for these pests at the [NSW DPI website](#)
- ✓ Inspect your hives
- ✓ Report anything unusual to the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881**
- ✓ Ensure vehicles or equipment moving from one area to another does not harbour Asian honey bees
- ✓ Be vigilant if dealing with imported goods



Please contact me should you require any further information on the above

Hayley Pragert

Bee Biosecurity Officer

Department of Primary Industries

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[Latest update](#) from the Australian Honey Bee Council on the outbreak

Special interest group on native bees

If you would like to participate in this group or make a suggestion, contact me at peterabbott@iinet.net.au or on 0421 227 315.

Peter Abbott

Native Bee SIG Coordinator

HOW TO BECOME A CANBERRA NATIVE BEEKEEPER

Like the idea of keeping hives of stingless native bees but live in Canberra, where the winters are too cold for these bees? Don't despair – there are ways around this dilemma. First, let's be clear – there are plenty of other native bees living happily in Canberra, but they are the ones that like to live solitary lives in small burrows in the ground, or in hollow stems or holes in trees. There are many ways in which we can encourage and support these shy but busy pollinators which will be discussed on another occasion. The focus in this article is on the social native bees – the stingless bees. There are 11 known species of stingless native bees, most of which prefer a warm climate. The only species that tolerates latitudes down to the south coast of NSW is the tough *Tetragonula carbonaria*. Like all of the stingless bees species, *T. carbonaria* are small (>5mm), black and a little tricky to spot. Fortunately, they have adapted in living in small artificial hives, which enables us to study them more closely and enjoy their company.

So, how do you become a Canberra stingless beekeeper? Firstly, the bad news - you have to become used to periods of separation from your bees! Because of our cool winter, stingless bees can only be kept here in the warmer months. During other periods, and certainly in the winter and early spring, you need to keep your bees on the NSW coast or in Qld. The Batemans Bay area will support stingless bees, but it is close to the limit of their range so attention to food stores and temperature control in the winter becomes more important. It is useful to have other hives further north where these factors are not so critical in case your southern hive fails. It's also a good way for you to get to know your northern friends and relatives better.

If you are happy with a distant bee love affair, you need to get yourself some bees! There are a number of suppliers of stingless bees, mainly in Qld, who are happy to send a hive complete with bees by post. A couple of days with the postman does not seem to bother the bees. Suppliers are relatively easy to find online – a useful list is provided at <http://www.aussiebee.com.au/buy-stingless-bees.html>. Hives of native bee are in high demand, so you would need to order a hive soon to ensure delivery in the spring. Your numbers of native bee colonies can gradually increase by splitting your original hive once it has become established and the colony has expanded. I make my own hives with 25 mm hoop pine and can supply hives to interested beekeepers.

Finally, you need to educate yourself about the life and times of stingless bees, in order to manage your bees, expand your colonies, and perhaps enjoy a little of their delicious tangy honey. Tim Heard's new book *The Australian Native Bee Book* is a one stop guide to keeping stingless bees. It is available online and at most bookshops, including the ANBG bookshop. Keeping stingless bees is surprisingly easy and enjoyable – they happily go about their business and prefer little human intervention, while providing us with an entertaining and beneficial addition to our gardens.

Peter Abbott
Native bee SIG coordinator
peterabbott@inet.net.au

Sentinel Hive Monitoring Program

- Support Needed in the ACT

Hello All,

The good news is that even though we are in Canberra you can be part of the **National Bee Pest Surveillance Program**.

The Beekeepers Association of the ACT manages and monitors the ACT sentinel hives and reports those results to the Federal Government via Plant Health Australia.

We need to do the Asian Honey Bee (AHB) and Varroa checks in the ACT for two reasons:

1. From early August International direct flights will come to Canberra Airport, which includes flights from Asia.

2. AHB/Varroa could also arrive in the ACT via somewhere else in Australia. The following actual examples are worth noting:

(a) Asian Honey Bees (AHB) have been found in **Port Kembla** (without varroa) and **Sydney** (with varroa). So an AHB/varroa incursion into Canberra could be as simple as one freight delivery from a coastal port.

(b) AHB earlier this year was found in **central NT**. Turns out they hitched a ride in a caravan leaving Cairns where AHB is now established. <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/>

- Asian Honey Bee (AHB) swarms are much smaller than European honey bee swarms: AHB swarms are usually between 'closed hand' and 'basketball size'.
- Unlike European honeybees, one AHB hives warms multiple times per year.
- Unlike European honeybees, AHB often moves whenever the local food source runs out.

If you want to help with regular checking of the ACT sentinel hives, then drop me an e-mail.

Some good sources of info on AHB, varroa and other exotic risks to European honeybees are the [Queensland Government website](#) (DAF Qld) or [Plant Health Australia](#).

Regards,

Jeff Matsen
Hive Manager
0466 247 481
snow.gum@hotmail.com

Training Update

Jerrabomberra Wetlands (JW) Courses.

A '**Pests and Diseases**' course was conducted at JW on Saturday 16 July; 14 students attended.

A second '**Introduction to Beekeeping**' course being held on 24 July is fully subscribed. On the basis of the interest received, I believe members would receive greater benefit from the holding of a third 'Intro' course in lieu of running a second Pests and Diseases course.

Consequently, a third 'Introduction to Beekeeping' course will now be undertaken on Sunday morning 14 August. Formal promulgation of this course is anticipated to occur by 21 July.

I would, however, appreciate hearing from members who were hoping to attend a 'Pest and Diseases' session.

CIT Backyard Beekeeping Courses.

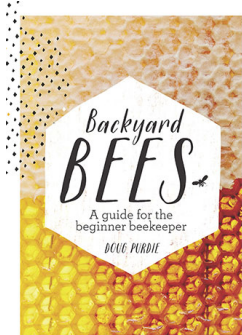
As mentioned in the June Newsletter, the Association has a dedicated group of Tutors who assist in conducting the CIT courses, both classroom and practical, at the Association's apiary located within the CIT campus.

We have room for more volunteers and interested members are requested to contact me (my email details are provided below).

Both experienced and beginner beekeepers are welcome.

John Grubb
Association Training Manager
Email: the.grubbs@gmail.com

Book review



***Backyard Bees: a guide for the beginner beekeeper* by Doug Purdie** An engaging book for those thinking about keeping bees, and those who already have bees and need family and friends to understand why they find bees so fascinating.

There is a lot useful information for the beeginner, plentiful colour photographs, stories about beekeepers and many helpful hints about keeping bees in urban environments.

Best of all, Doug puts forward a compelling argument for the importance of keeping bees. ISBN 978-1743361719 published by Murdoch Books 2014

Call for Assistance - Sat 23 July - Jerrabomberra Wetlands

Dear Members,

The Association will be holding a **working bee** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Apiary on Saturday 23 July. The working bee will commence at 0900 and will be completed by 1600. If you can spare some time, please advise Steve O'Hearn (0408) 657 871 or email gooster777@gmail.com



Task 1 - Sheep Yard Apiary Pads

The primary purpose is to build two foundation "pads" for the Sheep Yard Apiary. Last year we built two 7m x 5m foundations for the Vineyard Apiary. The borders are made of ACQ treated pine sleepers which are 2.5m x 140mm x 50mm. A small trench is dug to secure the sleepers. They are held in place with 450mm star pickets and 100mm screws. A layer of useless weed matting is placed on the ground and approx. 1.5 cubic metres of gravel is spread across the weed matting. The aim is to have approx. 50mm of gravel in the pads. We need people to bring mattocks, trenching shovels, a large spirit level and gloves.

Task 2 - Sheep shed huck out and weed clearing

The hut used for shearing training belongs to the ACT Government. We will use it as a temporary storage for low value items. We need brooms, dust masks (essential) and possibly a scrubbing brush on a long handle. Getting water to the hut will be a challenge and we don't wish to damage the posters inside. A sturdy brush cutter or whipper snipper is needed for the weeds outside.

Full Information sheet and photos are on the [Forum](#)



Our website: www.actbeekeepers.asn.au

It's all there in one handy location: information, news, forums and links. Register to take part in the forum discussions, ask a question or provide advice.

Have you taken a look?

More photos and information from our [forum](#) at the [website](#) or [Facebook](#)

Classifieds

Club caps

Any new member - or old member for that matter - who hasn't a club cap and would like one can pick it up at the Treasurer's table after the July meeting. Members are entitled to one cap per subscription. Members can buy extra caps for \$10.

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