



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

Contact: President – Cormac Farrell (0422) 441 358

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

June 2017

Monthly meeting: 15 June 2017, Yarralumla Primary School at 7:30pm

AGENDA

1930 Introduction & Welcome: President (Cormac Farrell)
1935 Beeginners Corner
1945 Presentation: Dr John Roberts from the CSIRO
2030 Networking (light supper)
2100 Meeting close

Phil Andrews Secretary (0408 539 579)

President's Report

**Biosecurity update-
Wax moth not all
bad?**

Bee Buzz box

**May meeting - Top
bar hive presentation**

**Hive management
software**

**National plant
security efforts**

SIG-native bees

**Book review: The bee
friendly garden by
Doug Purdie**

Links to our websites

Classifieds

President's Report

Dear Members,

Some days you get great news, others news that just infuriates you.

And no, I am not talking about orange people with tiny hands [i.e. president of a certain world power we'd rather not name] but rather the theft of a hive from our apiary. Sometime in the dead of night, persons unknown made off with the club's Flow Hive.

I was furious initially, but then we realised that our hive management team had removed the flow super (i.e. the expensive bit) for winter and it was now safe behind a securely locked and alarmed set of doors. So they got a colony and a basic body. Not great, but fortunately these will be easy to replace in spring, and it is a lesson to us to increase security again.

We have been aware for some time that the success of Jerrabomberra field station was beginning to attract thieves – City Farm share the block with us, and they had all their ripe fruit stolen one night. In response, we had started paying more attention to the locks and general security, but that did not appear to work this time. We had been investigating a range of options and will now go with a few of these to increase our capacity to catch anyone interfering with the hives.

One good thing did come out of it though – everyone shared the post about the theft widely, which is what the police recommended we do. At last count the post had been seen by almost 9 000 people. While the likelihood of catching the thieves is still low, it would be sweet if we do manage to collar them.

The last meeting did bring happier news, with our club finances now very healthy. The committee is keen to get some ideas from members about what we should do with the surplus that has built up. With solid insurance policies in place to manage risks and a permanent home for the club apiary, we have the freedom to do a lot. We will be discussing this at the upcoming meeting and then following up with surveys to identify the best options.

Look forward to seeing you all at our June club night - it promises to be a fascinating presentation from Dr John Roberts from CSIRO.

Regards,

Cormac Farrell, President

Biosecurity update - Wax moth not all bad?

An [article from ABC news](#) tells of how wax moth worms biodegrade plastic bags. They are not shredding them, but something they are producing, possibly in their salivary glands, literally breaks up the chemical bonds in the material, releasing ethylene glycol. The process is incredibly fast - When the test team exposed about 100 wax worms to a plastic shopping bag, holes started to appear after 40 minutes, with a reduction of 92mg after 12 hours. To compare: plastic-eating bacteria biodegraded plastic at a rate of 0.13mg a day, and it takes 100 to 400 years to degrade polyethylene in landfill.

Like all great discoveries, this was accidental. Scientist and amateur beekeeper **Federica Bertocchini** picked parasitic wax worms from the honeycomb of her beehives and left them sitting in a plastic bag. When she returned to the bag, it was riddled with holes and many of the worms had escaped. It was that chance discovery that led her to collaborate with scientists at the University of Cambridge in England to unearth the possibility of using worms to munch through the world's plastic problem.

Another reason to celebrate and encourage amateur beekeepers!

Just a reminder: Any unusual plant pest should be reported immediately to the relevant state or territory agriculture agency through the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881).

Early reporting increases the chance of effective control and eradication.

From the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council April newsletter

Bee Buzz Box - Hive management report

Things are quiet at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Apiary (JWA) now that winter is here. The main news from the hive management team is that we have removed the trays from under the screened bottom boards in the Langstroth Hives to allow better air flow and to reduce condensation and also introduced a few newbies. These screens also make a tremendous difference in helping keep small hive beetle at bay and in keeping chalk brood spore levels down.



Neat and Tidy with special thanks to Jon Justin

Over the cooler months we will be recruiting hive buddies. Once spring is here, we will have regular activities at JWA which will allow members to have hands-on experience with the club's hives. This is an excellent way to learn from experienced beekeepers. We will also continue to run mini field days with guest speakers that were very popular last spring and summer.

If you would like to sign up as a hive buddy, please see Alan or Christine at our monthly meetings or email us:

Alan Wade

alanlynnnewade@me.com

+61 4 1777 5201

Christine Joannides

christine.joannides@gmail.com

+61 4 1221 4632

May Meeting - Top Bar Hive Presentation

At the May meeting, attendees were treated to an interesting session presented by Jon Justin, our treasurer, who refrained from discussing money and budgets and concentrated on the ins and outs of Top Bar Hives.

Jon used a range of audio visual tools to explain and demonstrate the various types of Top Bar Hives that are available around the world and showed first hand a Kenyan Top Bar Hive that he made for the demonstration. (see right)



Powerpoint was the main platform for the presentation, which included informative slides, explanatory pictures and a number of short but entertaining video clips. At the end of the presentation, Jon connected his iPad to the overhead projector and used the iPad's video camera to provide a hands on guided tour of the demo Kenyan Top Bar Hive by way of the big screen. (Thanks to the lady on the front row who helped out by holding the iPad)

Below left: Jon's Cathedral hive Below right: a dome sun hive



The next presentation in the "Hive Types" series will be hosted by Warren Clendenning and Cormac Farrell at the July meeting, where they will discuss and explain Warre Hives.



Hive Management Software

by Cormac Farrell

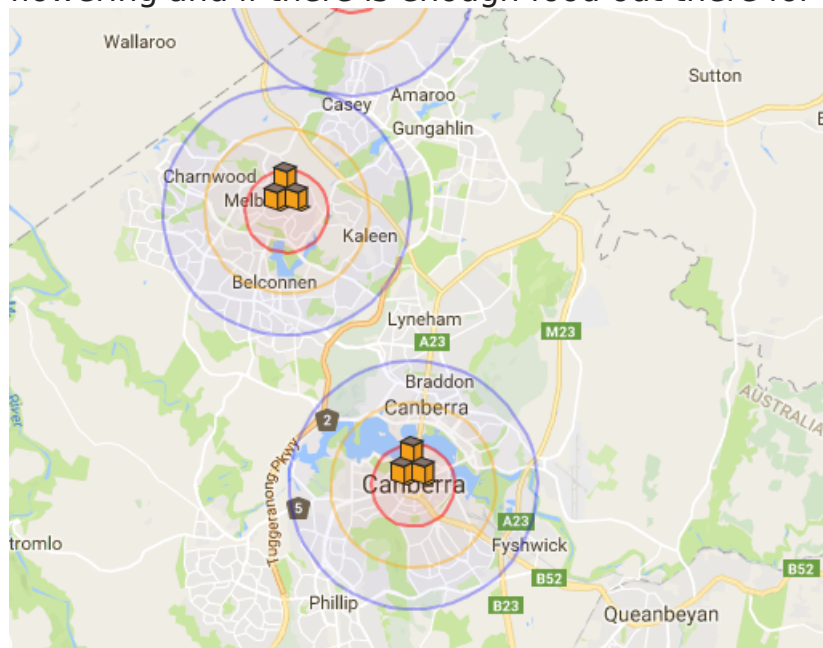
One of the first things that every experienced beekeeper seems to have in common is rigorous record keeping. For those lucky enough to be blessed with an excellent memory this can be kept in their head, but for the rest of us mere mortals it is paper or electronic notes. As the number of hives we keep has increased in the association, we have been looking at options to standardise our note taking.



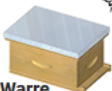








At present it is a standard system of notes written on the lids of the hives, supplemented by hive condition reports and personal notes. While this is effective, I have been looking into electronic systems, especially now that these are so easily integrated into smart phones.

I tried two systems last year – Hive Tracks, and HiveKeepers. Both have a free trial and then paid subscription services, and are geared towards hobbyists with 3-10+ hives. It is also a really good idea to get a stylus – something to help you tap your phone screen when taking notes with gloves on. While sometimes it is fine to go gloveless, when something is wrong and the colony has turned defensive is when taking good notes and photos is critical.

Hive Tracks (<https://hivetracks.com/>)

I have been using this for a few years as a freeware version, and recently decided to upgrade to the full version. The focus is on overall colony health, looking at key indicators such as brood pattern, honey stores, One of the features that I really like is the dashboard, which shows at-a-glance tasks coming up, number of inspections, average hive condition and a map of the apiaries. Over time you can also see the strength of the hive change, and relate this to specific events (re-queening, robbing etc). The map of your apiaries and the foraging range for each is also a nice feature, and helps show where you need to be looking to assess what is flowering and if there is enough food out there for your bees.



Weather	Hives	Actions
 Clear, 37° F Humidity: 81% Wind: 8 mph N	 Home 8-frame  Warre	Edit Yard Delete + New Hive Make Public Map No photos History
 Clear, 37° F Humidity: 81% Wind: 8 mph N	 Loriendale 1  Loriendale 2	Edit Yard Delete + New Hive Make Public Map No photos History
 Clear, 37° F Humidity: 81% Wind: 8 mph N	 ANU OSBH Top Bar  Aurecon Flow Hive  Girrga yabang  Original	Edit Yard Delete + New Hive Make Private Map No photos History

HiveKeepers (<https://hivekeepers.com/>)

If you like keeping detailed notes, this is the system for you! Everything is customisable, and you can keep notes down to individual frames. If you are a 'details' person then you will love it. Personally, I found it to be too much for my style of beekeeping, but it is a beautifully crafted app. There is also a good set of statistics and summary pages.

I used the trial version when it first came out last year, and it is a very polished product. It worked really well on a smartphone (again a stylus is recommended) and has some very cool features, like being able to photograph frames and compare over time.

Created by Simon Mildren from the Yarra Valley in Victoria, there is also a Youtube channel and a regular newsletter, so you get plenty of support. I didn't keep screenshots from the trial, but they have really good examples on their website – check it out on the link above.

Conclusion

I fully realise that using a smartphone app to track your hives is not everyone's cup of tea. However, some form of systematic record keeping is critically important if you want to stay on top of hive management. It helps you see trends in the condition of hives, spot problems emerging (like a weakening hive, or if you are robbing too much). If you have a mentor, it is also a resource that lets them help you become a better keeper. Take a look, and consider if these might be a useful tool for you.

National plant biosecurity effort shifts to next gear

From [Plant Health Australia news](#)

Since nation's plant Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) announced they would unite their efforts to strengthen Australian plant biosecurity last month, the partnership has appointed a Chair, implemented a management plan and is in the process of recruiting a program director to oversee operations of the new initiative.

The group – comprising Wine Australia, Forest Wood Products Australia, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Grains Research and Development Corporation, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Sugar Research Australia and Horticulture Innovation Australia, elected **Plant Health Australia chief executive Greg Fraser** as Chair.

"Plant biosecurity in Australia has become highly reactive and fragmented in recent years, largely because there are many unconnected players. Through this initiative, the seven plant RDCs will provide an environment for better coordination and action," Mr Fraser said.

"As Chair of this cross-sectoral biosecurity partnership, my sole focus will be bringing all of these stakeholders together to ensure they are applying their respective skills and resources in the best possible manner. This initiative is a first in Australian biosecurity history."



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



Book Review: *The bee friendly garden* by Doug Purdie (Murdock, Nov 2016)

Those of you who heard Doug present at our Association meeting some years ago while promoting his first book: ***Backyard bees***, will remember his engaging style and passion for bees.

This book does not disappoint. It is a delight: colourful, easy to read and a pleasure to browse, with advice for the gardener and non-gardener alike. Best of all, it's Australian and written for an Australian audience. I do hope we have Doug back on the book selling tour in our region again soon!

Newsletter content and feedback

Have your say about what you'd like to see reported, contribute pictures and articles, or just give feedback!

Go to our website below, select 'Forums' on the left-hand side of the menu, and then 'Members forum'. Respond to the topic: Newsletter articles.

We'd love to hear from you!

Your editors: Juli and Stuart



online

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](#)

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