



# *Beekeepers Association of the ACT*

Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the Australian Capital Territory  
Incorporated

Meetings of our Association are conducted on the 3rd Thursday of every month (except December) at the Yarralumla Primary School Hall, 24 Loftus Street, YARRALUMLA, ACT 2600

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**March 2016**

## **Next Meeting**

## **President's Report**

## **How healthy are Canberra's feral bees?**

## **Canberra Show report**

## **Beekeeping field day**

## **Executive & Committee nominations closing**

## **Classifieds**

## **Monthly meeting: 17 March 2016, Yarralumla Primary School at 7:30pm**

Following **Beeginners Corner**, Vice President Mitch Pearce will give a talk on his attendance at the **44th APIMONDIA International Apicultural Congress** in Daejeon, South Korea in September 2015, and his meetings with Korean beekeepers.

### **AGENDA**

1930 Introduction & Welcome– President (John Grubb).

1935 Beeginners Corner – Vice President (Mitch Pearce)

1945 44<sup>th</sup> Apimondia, South Korea (Mitch Pearce)

2030 Networking (light supper)

2100 Meeting close

**Steve O'Hearn Secretary (0408) 657 871**

## **President's Report**

Dear Members,

I have just returned from an overseas trip, anticipating the days to be somewhat cooler in comparison with the mid 30 degrees Celsius which I understand has been experienced over the last two weeks. I have just had a quick overview of three of my hives and note that the weight of each hive has reduced and a number of the bees are "scrubbing the entrance" presumably looking for fallen bits of pollen; yet another sign of no substantial nectar flow.

I departed for overseas the day after the Field day and have yet to be appraised of how well the day went. Based upon my observations throughout the morning, we had a reasonable turnout and certainly the demonstrations at the apiary were very well attended. On your behalf, I wish to extend my thanks to all those members who assisted in the preparation and execution of the Field day; well done! I also wish to commend **Jeff Matsen**, our hive manager, who came up with this initiative and, notwithstanding the support he received particularly from **Steve O'Hearn**, made this event happen; thanks Jeff. I wish to thank all the vendors from near and far who provided an invaluable presence on the day. I mentioned how much interest the presentations created, and I extend my sincere thanks to **Dr Doug Somerville**, **Sam Malfroy**, **Des Cannon** and **Adrian Iodice** for their participation and support to our Association; your presence and expertise as demonstrated on the day, was very much appreciated. I hope that such an event can be held on an annual basis.

I was pleased to see our 'proposed rule changes' passed in our February meeting, and now our attention is turned towards the AGM which will be held at our April meeting. In planning for this important event, I urge all of you to consider nominating for a position on the Committee.

**A number of our current committee members will not be offering to stand again.** At the time of writing, our second notice calling for nominations has been issued. I mentioned in my February report that the continued success of our organisation depends on members who are willing to commit to undertake a variety of essential tasks within the Association. **Don't delay, nominations for a position on the committee need to be submitted no later than midnight 31 March.**

**On the training front,** we are oversubscribed for Adrian Iodice's two day workshop on Natural Beekeeping (19-20 March). I wish to thank **Jon Justin**, the Association's Assistant Training Manager, for his invaluable support in facilitating all the administrative aspects associated with putting on a workshop of this kind. During this week, Jon and I will be meeting to put together a training program for the remainder of the year. I anticipate that the program will include Beekeeping refresher courses covering all aspects of hobby beekeeping and Introduction to Beekeeping courses; these courses will be conducted at our Jerrabomberra Wetland Training Centre.

On Saturday and Sunday 12-13 March, **Eric Davies** volunteered to provide an Association's presence at the **Lanyon Plant Day**. This event is sponsored through the Horticultural Society of Canberra and ACT Historic Places. For information on the Plant Fair, visit <http://www.hsoc.org.au/> or <http://www.historicplaces.com.au/>. My thanks to Eric for offering to represent the Association in this event. Thanks also to **Lyn Shiels** for her efforts again this year in managing the Association's presence at the **Royal Canberra Show** 26-28 February. Representations such as these are an education opportunity for the Association and beekeeping generally, helping to inform the community and interest the next generation. Thank you, to all involved. See Lyn's report in this newsletter.

I look forward to our **March meeting**, which will start with Beeginners Corner and then Vice President **Mitch Pearce** will give us an account of his attendance at Apimondia in South Korea in September 2015 and his meetings with Korean beekeepers. This should be an interesting evening and I hope to see you there.

Regards,

**John Grubb, President**

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## **How healthy are Canberra's feral honeybees?**

**A report from Lille Gill and John Roberts of the CSIRO**

Australian honeybees are one of the healthiest populations in the world, but there are still a number of diseases with the potential to cause hive losses and reduce pollination services. Recent research by CSIRO identified ongoing issues with Nosema and chalkbrood and found five common viruses in Australia's bee population (RIRDC publication 15-095). However, there has been little research into the health of feral bee colonies, despite concerns that pathogen spill over could impact wild populations or that feral bees may spread disease to managed colonies.

To address this, CSIRO summer student Lille Gill conducted a short study on the disease status of Canberra's feral bee population. She compared Nosema levels and the presence of bee viruses in feral colonies with local managed hives to ask, "Are feral colonies healthier?"

Over December 2015 and January 2016, Lille collected entrance bees from 14 feral colonies and 17 managed hives. For each colony, she used microscopy to count Nosema spores and used DNA testing to identify the Nosema species (i.e. *Nosema apis* or *Nosema ceranae*) and search for 7 different honeybee viruses (Sacbrood, SBV; Black queen cell, BQCV; Lake Sinai 1, LSV1; Lake Sinai 2, LSV2; Israeli acute paralysis, IAPV; Kashmir bee, KBV; Deformed wing, DWV).



**Table 1.** Percentage prevalence of Nosema and viruses in 14 feral and 17 managed colonies across Canberra

	<u>Nosema</u>		<u>Viruses</u>						
	<i>N. apis</i>	<i>N. ceranae</i>	SBV	BQCV	LSV1	LSV2	IAPV	KBV	DWV
<b>Feral</b>	10%	26%	10%	3%	19%	6%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Managed</b>	13%	32%	16%	6%	52%	19%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	23%	58%	26%	10%	71%	26%	0%	0%	0%

### Conclusions

This study is the first of its kind in Australia to look at both Nosema and viruses in feral colonies and suggests they are indeed healthier than their managed neighbours. This is consistent with a similar study in Western Australia that found lower *Nosema apis* levels in feral colonies (*Manning et al. 2007 Survey of feral honey bee Apis mellifera colonies for Nosema apis in Western Australia. Aust. J. Exp. Agric. 47: 883-886*). Possible reasons for this could include a 'survival of the fittest' scenario, where feral hives suffering high Nosema infections don't survive. The increased disturbance and additional care of managed hives may also support higher disease levels.

This study has provided some valuable insight into the health of feral honeybees, but will benefit future research that explores different times of year and includes more colonies from across Australia. This information is important for understanding the spread of pests and diseases between feral and managed honeybees and how this affects the health and biosecurity of Australia's bee population.

**Many thanks to the ACT Beekeepers Association for their help with the project.**

**Contact Lille Gill, [gilllille@gmail.com](mailto:gilllille@gmail.com) or John Roberts, [john.roberts@csiro.au](mailto:john.roberts@csiro.au) for further information.**

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## Canberra Show Report

**This year we had a very low number of entries in the Apiculture section of the show.** There was a high standard in all entries. Thank you to all exhibitors and our judges and stewards Gita Curnow, Alison Brinkley, Cordelia Dalton, Kate Brennand, Steve O'Hearn, Judy Burgess, Matt Leonard, Dirk Schmitt, Sarah Asis Sha'Non, Clovis Mendes, Phillipa Larkin, Jon Justin, Jennifer Woodley-Beattie, Greg Bates, and Peter Butler. Simon Cooke won the Most Successful Exhibitor Award and the David Banks Memorial Award with 99 for his creamed honey.

**Thank you to our long term sponsors Win's Creek Honey, Bindaree Bee Supplies and Ridapest Pest Control. Please give these businesses your support when possible in recognition of their support of the show.**

The honey tasting and live bees were popular parts of the stall. Unfortunately the live bees had to be removed on Sunday morning due to the stress they had suffered with the very hot weather. The volunteers answered many questions from beekeepers, prospective beekeepers and members of the community with general interest.

ACT for Bees brought some of their display Items to augment our stall. These displays prompted many questions about threats to bees and the usefulness of bees in food production as well as honey.





**Lyn Shiels and Jenni McInnes answering questions about bees**

Thank you to all friendly volunteers who staffed the stall: Alf and Heather Wilford, Clovis and Sonya Mendes, Frank Sek, Ros Tasker, Jenny Woodley-Beattie, Judy Burgess, Juli and Thomas Poole, Roland Inman, Eric Davies, Kat Watson, Jenni McInnes, Julie Armstrong, Phil Buchanan, Glen Toohey, Frank Derwent, Steve O'Hearn, Lorraine and Arthur Gentle, Carol Lilleyman, Dick Johnston, Lindsay Foot, Paul Zarb, Jon Justin, Gita Curnow, Cordelia Dalton and Peter Butler. A special thank you to Lochie and Anna who filled in when Darren and Malou were unable to come.

Thank you to all those who helped in other ways, especially Steve O'Hearn for collecting and taking away the bees, Jeff Matsen our hive manager, Julie Armstrong for the ACT for Bees display, Peter on setting up day and the pack up crew on Sunday evening.

Don't forget that the bee display box used at the show is available for loan to any member who wants to give a talk to a school or community group. It is presently stored at my place. Just let me know ahead of time if you need it just in case I am going to be away. Members are also welcome to borrow the feral hive and various photos and posters from my personal collection.

### **Lyn Shiels**

## **ROYAL CANBERRA SHOW APICULTURE SECTION PRIZE WINNERS**

Most Successful Exhibitor  
**Simon Cooke**

David Banks Memorial Award  
**Simon Cooke**

Class 602 - One 500g glass jar of Canberra Garden honey  
1<sup>st</sup> – Anne Widdup 2nd – Malou Riding 3rd – Darren Morris

Class 603 –Natural Granulation: One 500g glass jar, fine grain  
1st – Karen Drummond, 2nd – Darren Morris

## ROYAL CANBERRA SHOW - APICULTURE SECTION PRIZE WINNERS, cont'd

Class 604 – Creamed Honey: One 500g glass jar

1st – Simon Cooke

Class 607 - Block of Beeswax, up to 1kg

1st – Karen Drummond, 2nd – Simon Cooke

Class 608 - Collection of six beeswax moulds, natural beeswax

1st – Simon Cooke

Class 620 - One 750ml bottle of dry mead

1st – Tim Power

Class 621- One 750ml bottle of sweet mead

1st – Simon Cooke

Class 625 - One 750ml bottle of any other mead

1st – Tim Power, 2nd – Darren Morris

Class 650 – Collection of Apiary Products 6-8 items

1st – Simon Cooke



***Honey tasting was very popular, and the ACT for bees display prompted many questions about threats to bees and the usefulness of bees in food production***

## ACT Beekeepers Field Day

**Big numbers were in attendance, many joined the association and the weather was perfect when we held our inaugural Field Day at its site at Jerrabomberra Wetlands on a Saturday, 20 February.** The theme of the day was “Good Beekeeper = Good Neighbour” and it was intended to be an opportunity for Beekeepers in the ACT and surrounding NSW area to come along and listen to some of the most experienced beekeepers in Australia. There were 300 visitors throughout the day which exceeded expectations.

The speakers for the day included **Dr. Doug Somerville from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, Mr. Sam Malfroy, formally from Plant Health Australia, Mr. Des Canon the Editor of the Australasian Beekeeper Magazine and Queen Bee breeder and Mr. Adrian Iodice who specializes in Natural Beekeeping.** Each presenter had a section of the Apiary and presented continuously for most of the day. It provided a rare opportunity for local beekeepers and members of the public to listen to a wide range of subjects, from what is the best hive to how to control grumpy bees. The practical demonstrations also included the removal of established colonies from possum boxes thanks to Dermot and Sarah Asis Sha'Non.

The Field Day was also supported by an excellent range of products available from Beekeeping vendors who came from as far as Melbourne to demonstrate their products. You could purchase almost any type of hive, honey extraction tools and protective clothing.

*Thank you* to ABK Magazine, Angilley, Australian Honeybee, Bees R Us, Better Bee Hives, Bindaree Bee Supplies, Blue Bees, Dunc's Honey, Hornsby Beekeeping Supplies, Parker, David & Tracey (& Feed Bee), Penders Beekeeping supplies, NUPLAS beehives. Of course, no event would be the same without the **Lions club** to feed us, the **ice cream lady** to cool us down and **St John Ambulance** to be ready to pick up the pieces when it all goes wrong.

The Apiary at Jerrabomberra Wetlands was set up with the permission of the ACT Government throughout 2015 and is intended to showcase the various types of hives available to the public ranging from all forms of the traditional Langstroth hives (plastic, wooden and compressed polystyrene), Warre Hives and Kenyan Top Bar Hives. The Field Day also included a Flo Hive which has become very popular throughout 2015, lent by Frank Derwent.

The Wetlands area proved to be an exceptional site for an apiary and this type of event. The area is shared by other community groups including Canberra City Farms, the Friends of the Wetlands, and over time it will become a showcase site for organic gardening and beekeeping.

### **Thanks to our many volunteers who made the field day a success:**

Jeff Matsen and Steve O'Hearn for project management, John Grubb for hosting the media and the VIP visitors, Alan Wade for hosting our senior members, Frank Derwent, Tony Brownleigh, Ken Edwards, Alf Wilford for parking management, Jon Justin, Dick Johnston, Jim Calokerinos, Lindsay Foot, John Grubb for manning the BAACTI stall, Jessica Sutherland and Sue Whittaker for managing the vendor stalls and Cordelia Dalton, Greg Bates and Alan Wade for managing the hive demonstrations, and the many others who lent a hand, often at last minute, where it was needed on the day.

### **ACT Beekeepers Executive and the Committee for 2016/17**

**Nominations for the Executive and the Committee for 2016/17 have been called.**

All positions will be declared vacant (in conjunction with Association rules) at the Annual General Meeting which is planned for 21 April 2016.

A number of the current committee members will not be offering to stand again.

**This is your opportunity to make a difference to *your* Association**

**Apply by completing the [online form](#) by midnight, Thursday 31 March**



***Some comments about the field day:***

'My friend, who is new to beekeeping certainly learnt a lot from the lectures and appreciated the lesson on pests and diseases'

'I got a lot of equipment very easily on the day'

'The polystyrene hives were interesting. Many questions about whether the material is ok for bees, but the reports were very positive'

'The Kenyan Top Bar hive design layout is amazing and allows easy access, while keeping the bees very happy.'

'It was good to try on gloves, rather than buy online and not have them fit'

'Nice to taste home-made ginger beer'

'Whoever built the Cathedral hive – it is a work of art. Magnificent woodwork'

From a vendor: 'a good turnout'



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



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