

BEE BIZ May 2019

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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Presidents Report.

Hi Fellow members

I have not formally met a number of you good people as yet. I have been in the NRABA for approx.. 4 years and have attended field days sporadically. I moved from Sydney to the Far North Coast 38 years ago.

I grew up in and around Sydney, but my roots are in the Lismore area. My Grandfather's family originally came from Lismore. They were flooded out in the 1930 floods and lost all their worldly possessions. They relocated to Sydney and Bob's your uncle. Actually, it was my father's name- Bob Mudge.

I first moved to Goonengerry where I purchased 75 acres of old dairy land and established an avocado and custard apple orchard, together with a small market garden.

My interest in bees started when I established a small sub-tropical fruit orchard and vegie garden in Uralba. I met one of our members at the Alstonville show. He gave me an application form and the rest is history

I have received an invaluable amount of education, support, camaraderie and friendship from the club's members. The recent committee meeting was a lively and productive affair. All future committee meetings will be held at the Lismore Workers Club on the 1st. Monday of the month commencing at 5.00pm. We agreed to have a suggestion box at all future field days. We are looking into a website for the club. We are looking at resurrecting the previous Facebook page or starting a new one.

We experienced a beautiful sunny day at the last field day held at Brian Windows residence. We ran two separate training groups, one for beginners and another for the more experienced. I received some great feedback from members on all sorts of issues.

We are a small committee (3 in number) and are struggling to get a quorum at every meeting. We will not be having meetings over the next 2 months due to 2 members being away. If you could support the committee meetings by nominating for a position I'm sure we could get a lot more done in a timely manner. Please ring me to discuss 0412535823.

A quote from the late JFK – “ do not ask what my club can do for me but what I can do for my club”.

Happy beekeeping and honey eating.

Jamie



WHAT BRIAN DOES DIFFERENTLY

(This is from a Field Day presentation on April 28th)

Essential to maximising the honey production of an apiary is that every beehive has plenty of workers. Without going in to elaborate methods to boost a hive population, this means having a young laying queen, a good supply of nourishing pollen, and a good supply of nectar or honey.

Given that this is achieved, what else can be done? . Most important is that the queen have available the maximum number of cells to lay worker eggs in. The first step is to have the maximum amount of usable space on the frames. The standard frame is self-spacing , with 35mm ends. Measuring this on new frames reveals that they are usually 35.5 wide, and some are even 36mm wide. With the humidity present in a beehive, they would probably expand to be wider still when in the brood box. The result is that a ten-frame brood box will not fit 10 frames, unless jammed up against the side walls. So the queen can only lay in the equivalent of 9 frames. One way to overcome this is to realise that the 35mm is not sacred; cutting the frames down to 33mm gives enough room to fit in 10 frames in a 10-frame box with 10mm space on each side. Apparently, it is commonly done in New Zealand.

The queen is quite fussy about the size and shape of the cell, and a lot of effort was put in by early beekeepers to stop the foundation distorting after it was put in the hive. The parallel wires usually used in frames have to sag in order to carry the load when the foundation is being drawn. This sagging results in the cells being elongated, and the foundation reaching the bottom bar. When it reaches the bottom bar, it then bulges outwards. The bees usually make such areas drone comb, which is not optimum. Cross wiring give support to the foundation without sagging, and should lead to better frames.

But there is another problem due to the high thermal expansion of bees wax, evident in the way it can crack in moulds. Some of the components of beeswax soften at about 40C, and it melts at 62C. Repetitive cycling the temperature up to 40C and down, as occurs if the frame is left on the back of a ute, or in the honey supers in hot weather, leads to the wax bulging out between the wires, and staying there. Parallel wires apparently have less of a problem than cross wires, because the sagging usually pulls the bulging out for the top spaces, and most of the distortion ends up near the bottom bar. The accepted solution for these problems is to only draw frames on a honey flow; they will often be perfect, and the cross wired frames will be the best..

One other way to avoid the complications due to the thermal properties of beeswax is to use plastic foundation. It will not sag, and when drawn out the cells are ideal for the queen. Some of the best frames of brood observed in the apiary have been on plastic foundation- laid up from top to bottom, and side to side. But getting plastic foundation drawn can be trying; the plastic must be coated with bees wax beforehand, usually by rolling on molten wax with a paint roller, and the drawing must be done on a good honey flow. Many commercial beekeepers use plastic foundation because of the lower cost.

Photo show two frames; top shows sagging parallel wires and damaged area at the bottom, and the bottom shows a well-drawn cross wired frame. But cross wiring also can have problems due to wax expansion.



From the Hives May 2019

The hives are still near Coraki, and there have been two good flowerings of the big paper barks (melaleuca quinquinervia) but with rain to spoil things.

As I'm going on holidays the hives will be expanded to 3 honey supers just in case

The melaleuca quinquinervia is a wonderful tree for beekeepers, with good honey flows and excellent pollen. It even provides all the smoker fuel that you require.

It is still very common along the east coast from Rockhampton to Newcastle, and many beekeepers still work it in winter.

Development along the coast has reduced the stands that there used to be and many of the large swampy areas have been replaced by houses and airports.

Where they are growing on good quality soils and with plenty of water they become huge trees.

Brian Window



Stand of Paper Barks and some flowering

May Flowering

No changes since the last newsletter. Melaleuca is still flowering and I have seen some *E. robusta* flowering around the traps. Other than the winter flowering on the coastal heath there is not much on offer until the spring.

Grey Ironbark and Red Gum are budded and of course complement each other. As the weather is cooling Fireweed is starting to flower. It is not particularly important but it does help with winter pollen and on occasion some nectar.

Most of you will have seen some 'sawdust' on the bottom board or at the entrance of the hive recently. This is a husk that the bees collect and store with the pollen from sheoak, it is discarded when the bees use the pollen. There are two hereabouts. One grows on the creek banks and is useless for anything. It is shallow rooted and often lodges in a creek and blocks the water flow with the root mass. Thus eroding creek banks. The other grows on higher ground and is usually termed hill oak or bull oak and has good pollen and useful timber for some purposes. In the past much sought after for kilns and shingles. Only the male trees flower and they will appear brown at this time. They are of course wind pollinated.

There are some other common weeds that bees are working now. Billy goat weed, *Ageratum*, and farmers friend. Neither has been checked for the protein quality as far as I know, but seem to be useful.

Callistemons are having a major flowering at this time. Although they usually flower in the spring or summer they can flower twice a year if conditions suit. If you are in town there may be enough to be useful. There are some spots in the rural areas where there are reasonable numbers of large specimens. They give pollen and nectar in useful quantities.

I am shortly off to Bathurst for the NSWAA conference, so will be able check out the prospects for a good bit of the country. I will have my binoculars with me.

Geoff Manning

SEEING BLUE

We're so used to seeing honey and bumble bees that you could be forgiven for assuming bees only came in yellow and black. But in reality, bees come in an array of colours, from green and ginger, to purple, white, and even pitch black.

But there's something about that rich, bright cerulean that really sets the blue carpenter bee (*Xylocopa caerulea*) apart. Nature doesn't often give us blue insects, so when it does, it's hard not to be impressed.

The blue carpenter bee is found throughout Southeast Asia, India, and Southern China, and they're known for being large and heavy bees that live solitary lives, and are generally non-aggressive.

While European honey bees (the most common species in Australia) grow to just 17 mm long, blue carpenter bees can reach a whopping 28 mm, which makes them appear eerily hefty.

the blue carpenter bee is all about the females. It's the females who sport that brilliant blue pubescence (yep that's what the fuzz is called), and the females alone wield a stinger. The males are stinger-less, and have a more subdued, brown or [greenish fuzz](#).

Unlike honey bees, which build complex and intricate hives filled with tens of thousands of workers and a single queen, carpenter bees live alone, [burrowing into trees](#) to create a perfect little nest for themselves.

Sometimes queen bees will go so far as to [share a common entry hole](#) to their nest, preferring a 'semi-solitary' lifestyle to being on their own. Carpenter bees make honey just like their smaller counterparts, but it's much thicker and denser than the honey we're used to, like a peanut butter or cookie dough consistency.

The females mix this honey with pollen to create a 'bee bread', which they'll deposit on the floor of a hollowed-out wooden chamber. On top of these delicious morsels, they'll lay their eggs, and then seal everything up to form a brood cell that keeps their eggs safe and with enough food ready for when they hatch.

While blue carpenter bees aren't found in Australia, we've got the shiny [peacock carpenter bee](#) (*Xylocopa bombylans*), which

can be found from up in the Cape York Peninsula in north Queensland, then south along the eastern seaboard to the Sydney region.

We've also got [green carpenter bees](#) (*Xylocopa aeratus*), which are only found in isolated areas along the east coast of Australia and on Kangaroo Island – the [last foothold in southern Australia](#).

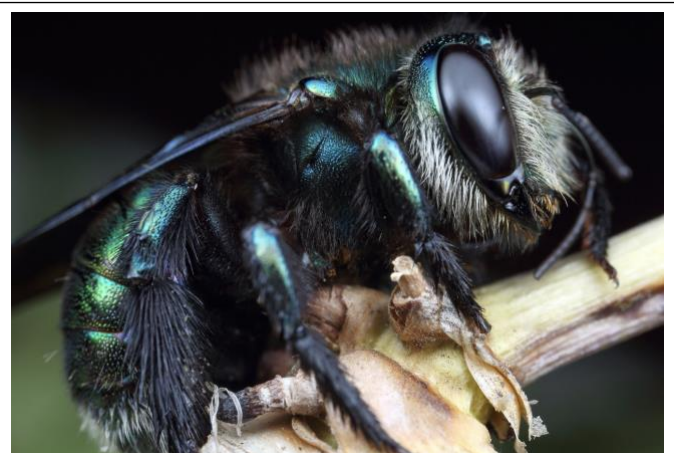
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BY BEC CREW



Blue Carpenter Bee



Green Carpenter Bee



Peacock Carpenter Bee

BEE - RILLANT NEWS

THE NOTRE DAME BEES

SURVIVE THE CATHEDRALS FIRE

After the inferno of Notre Dame's Cathedral beekeepers were worried that the 180,000 bees would have perished in the fire.

When threatened by fire European honey bees do not flee their hive, instead they remain behind.

As they do not have lungs they are not at risk of smoke inhalation, instead of killing them the carbon dioxide "makes them "drunk", puts them to sleep the Notre Dame beekeeper Nicholas Geant said.

When Bees detect fire they gorge themselves on honey and stay to protect the queen who does not move.

The main concern was that wax melts at 63 degrees C (145.4 F) but with the hives being 30 m lower than the main roof they were spared.

The hives were installed on the iconic Cathedral in 2013 as part of a Paris initiative to help save the dwindling bee population in the city.



LET'S ALL CELEBRATE WORLD BEE DAY

On the 20th December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 20 May each year as World Bee Day.

Every individual can contribute to the preservation of bees and other pollinators:

Plant nectar-bearing flowers for decorative purposes on balconies, terraces, and gardens.

Buy honey and other hive products from your nearest local beekeeper.

Raise awareness among children and adolescents on the importance of bees and **express your support for beekeepers.**

Set up a pollinator farm on your balcony, terrace, or garden; you can either make it yourself or buy at any home furnishings store.

Preserve old meadows - which feature a more diverse array of flowers - and **sow nectar-bearing plants.**

Cut grass on meadows only after the nectar-bearing plants have finished blooming.

Offer suitable farming locations for the temporary or permanent settlement of bees so that they have suitable pasture; as a consequence, they will pollinate our plants, which will thereby bear more fruit.

Use **pesticides that do not harm bees**, and spray them in **windless weather, either early in the morning or late at night**, when bees withdraw from blossoms.

HAPPINESS IS



*...seeing a bee
on the flower you planted.*

STEPPING UP

Joining the NRABA allowed me to learn about keeping of bees, how they worked together and willingly worked for the common good of the hive. Likewise, it also showed that a small group of dedicated people had been volunteering their time and effort to allow us to meet.

Now it's time for me to step up and be a contributor. It's also time for others to come on board and keep this organisation continuing to thrive.

There is plenty to do, much to achieve and all it takes is people to become involved. You do not need to be an expert beekeeper, enthusiasm will be sufficient to start with.

Volunteers are needed to assist with the running of field days (BBQ cooks, raffle ticket sellers, salad makers), arranging Steritech consignments and even a few vacancies exist on the management committee.

Contact our president Jamie and offer your assistance, the reward is worth it.

Greg McPhee

BEE NEWS

[Why a bad honey season is casting fear on pollination, food production](#)

[Australian invents device to harmlessly 'milk' bee venom](#)

[Sneak peak video shows beehives after the Notre Dame fire](#)

[Western Australia a sweet spot for beekeeping](#)

<https://www.offthegridnews.com/current-events/bee-apocalypse-threatens-the-food-supply/>

STERITECH

As most members will aware the NRABA has been arranging for the treatment of hives by irradiation. This is a safe method of ensuring that equipment is free of American Foul Brood disease.

NRABA has arranged for 13 trips, however the last consignment met with a few problems. To ensure that we can continue with this vital service, members need to be aware of the requirements of Steritech. Note also that we volunteer to do this for the benefit of all beekeepers.

- 1 No honey. Please ensure that there is no honey in the boxes you send.
- 2 Stack them a max of three boxes high. That way we can have the boxes six high on the pallets and still be able to move them
- 3 No twists or screws on the sides. The way we stack boxes means that they just fit three boxes wide. Any extra width and we cannot stack them on the pallet
- 4 Deliver and collect at agreed times. The carrier does us a favour by allowing NRABA to build the pallets at his home. We need to respect this. Also, it can be a problem if the pallets are unstacked and not all collected at the same time.

The next trip will be held in early spring, keep an eye out in Bee Biz for more details.

Greg McPhee



Steritech shipment being put together

FIELD DAY May 2019

Unfortunately, because both Greg McPhee and Brian Window are away overseas at the time of the next field day the committee has decided to cancel the May field day.

The next field day will be the 30th June 19.

However, there is a lot happening in May and early June, and those looking for an event will find a number of interest.

- Primex 16th to 18th May at Casino 9am till 4 pm. The NRABA will share a stand there with Apriasts Ass and thanks to the volunteers that will man the stand there this year.
- NSWAA Annual conference 16th to 17th May in Bathurst
- Queensland Beekeepers Association annual conference 30th to 31st May at the Bribie Island Golf Club. It has an interesting program of speakers.
- On the following Saturday, 1st June, they have field day at the Bribie Island State School.
- Annual Conference of the Amateur Beekeeping Association of NSW on the 7th-9th June, at the Hawkesbury Campus of the University of Western Sydney at Richmond.
The program of speakers looks interesting, with a large fraction dealing with topics other than the scientific aspects of beekeeping. Other events are the Conference Dinner on the Saturday night 9th June at which the Colonel Pulling Competition will be decided, and the Annual General Meeting of the ABA on the Sunday.
In the past, we have been fierce competitors in the Colonel Pulling Competition, but it looks like we will not have an entry this year.
More information about these events is available from the internet.

Brian

MEMBERSHIP CARDS the ABA have printed up new 2019 Membership Cards they will be available to pick up at our April 28th meeting. Log books for those who ordered them to be sent to us will also be available to pick up.

EQUIPMENT

We have fresh supplies of frames, supers and foundation available and carry stocks of most common beekeeping equipment, as well as pots and jars for honey sales.

Order and pick up from 5 Robb Street, Alstonville, in the Russellton Industrial Estate.

Wax is also needed to convert into foundation. So, if you have any good clean wax to sell we will pay the same price as Capilano.

Stephen Fowler 0418412621

HOST A CLUB FIELD DAY

Why not put your hand up to host one of the Clubs field days. It's the best way to meet your fellow club members and exchange ideas and information on all things bees. Not only that but if your hives can be opened you get the knowledge and expertise of more experienced beekeepers to check over and make sure your hives are doing well and are healthy. If you think you might want to host a day contact-

BrianWindow

northernrivers.secretary@beekeepers.asn.au

KEEP YOUR CONTACT DETAILS UP TO DATE

NRABA members are reminded to go to the ABA's website <http://www.beekeepers.asn.au> and check their contact details. Click on the drop-down menu at the top right of the homepage to sign in.

"I Haven't Ordered My Free LOG BOOK. aM I tOO Late?"

Brian has your membership cards and log books. They can be picked at 54 Donnans Rd Lismore Heights after 30th of May or at the next field day.

You can still order log books online via the membership system to get a copy sent to your home. Go to beekeepers.asn.au/sign-in and select the optional extras tab. Each ABA member is entitled to one free copy of the log book. You will need to pay \$5 to cover postage.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

If any members have any stories, photos or things that have happened to them in their beekeeping why not share it with other members. Just drop me a line on

northernrivers.editor@beekeepers.asn.au

Ruth Walker

MINUTES COMMITTEE MEETING NRABA APRIL 11th

- 3.30 pm April 11th 2019 at Capella Coffee Café, Lismore
- Members Present: B Window, J Mudge, G McPhee
- Apologies : none
- Minutes last Committee Meeting 14/03/19 No corrections, accepted, *Moved BW s GM passed*

• **Matters Arising**

-Biosecurity Course has been funded and looking for venue(R Walker).
Jamie Mudge to monitor what is happening.
Moved GM s BW passed

-Membership problems with ABA and \$5 membership (R Walker)

Brian Window to contact Vince Schnyder to ascertain problem *Moved G M s JM passed*

-Prizes for Lismore Show. Brian Window to talk to Geoff Manning about same. *Moved GM s JM passed*

- It was decided the NRABA will sponsor two boxes in the raffle next field day. Brian Window to contact Steven Fowler about purchasing them. *Moved GM s JM passed*

• **Correspondence**

A request for a submission for a grant of \$1000 was received from the ABA. Brian Window to prepare a case based on funding Steritech trips *Moved GM s JM passed*

• **Reports**

-Treasurers Report

Greg McPhee reported that he had changed the Public Officer to himself. He also noted that until a president was selected there cannot be access to the bank account.

Jamie Mudge accepted the position of President .
Moved GM s BW passed.

• **Agenda Business Items**

-AGM minutes

President's Report claimed that complaint seeking the expulsion of Brian Window has been sorted out. Brian Window said that he has been told nothing. President's Report has an erroneous claim that the ABA membership list which shows 264 names with only 140 names financial is in some way in violation of the constitution. It is a simple administrative arrangement at the ABA.

Annual Report needs to be submitted to the Department of Fair Trading on internet within a month of the AGM by the Public Officer Greg

McPhee. This involves expenditure, and the treasurer will complete the form and make payment when the bank account is accessible. *Moved BW s JM passed*

• **General Business**

(1) Field Days

Possible venues were discussed. These include Guy Small, Rob Blair-Hickman, Richmond River High, Jamie Mudge (September). Brian Window to approach possible hosts. *Moved GM s JM passed.*
Guy Small may be a possibility when BW and GM are away on May 26th. Self catering with picnic

(2) New Constitution

Brian Window had contacted the secretary of the ABA to find out the timetable for their changing of the financial year so that NRABA can be in step with them.

(3) Brochure for membership

A new brochure needs to be produced that meets the requirements of NRABA constitution. Brian Window and Greg McPhee to liaise. *Moved JM s GM passed*

(4) Bee Course

No bee course will be held this year.

(5) Steritech

The return of 4 pallets of bee equipment by Steritech because of poor packaging will cost the club extra freight. This will be paid for by the club and recouped over time from Steritech trips. Greg McPhee to organise this *Moved BW s JM passed*

(6) Catering

There was discussion about options for field days. Brian Window suggested a questionnaire at field days and Jamie Mudge suggested asking for suggestions from members in the newsletter.

Moved JM s BW passed

(7) Venue for Committee Meetings

Jamie Mudge preferred using other than a residence for committee meetings. This may be a cost to the association. He agreed to investigate *Moved JM s GM passed*

(8) Acceptance of New Members

Applications were received from Col Rankin, Alan Waldron, Kevin Sheehan, and Rebekka Hancock. They were approved . *Moved GM s BW passed*

• **Next Meeting**

5pm Monday 6th May provisionally at Brian Window's home 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights

- Meeting closed at 5.30pm

Brian Window, Secretary