

# BEEBIZ AUGUST 2021

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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## August Activity cancelled because of COVID

### Presidents Report

*“Although manicured lawns may be pleasing to the European eye, Insects and wild animals need precisely the type of natural habitat that humans perceive as a mess that needs to be put in order”*  
Christian Schmid -Egger 2021

Hi! Folks,

Well, the Virus has thwarted us again causing cancellation of July and August field days; however, lockdown has been a good time to repair and paint all those dodgy supers in the shed ready for a big spring expansion. Two mini bee courses were held at the Window residence, and at Tuncester, to pass on some valuable knowledge to new beekeepers. Big thanks to Brian Window and Geoff Manning for donating their time and venues to service our new members. Other than that, not much has happened since the last newsletter. Hope to see a good roll up at the next field day. That it from Byrangerry Creek this month. Take care everyone.

Cheers Kevin Virgen

### Secretary Report

Little to report this month. We await COVID developments. New beekeepers are reminded that we may be able to arrange to give them a basic lesson in beekeeping to get them started. Contact me or one of the helpful beekeepers listed at the end of the newsletter.

Brian

### From The Hives

The hives were about to be moved from Coraki to Rous when the snap lockdown was called. After some thought as to whether any rules would be broken, they were moved after locking up in the early morning. All hives had been reduced to two boxes, and honey removed from the supers taken off. Two poor frames have been removed from each super of stickies and replaced with foundation frames in the middle. The plan after moving is to oversuper with these stickies, aiming to get two foundation frames nicely drawn for putting in each brood box.

Brian

## Flowering Report

Another month, another report much the same. Except that Mistflower, (*Ageratina riparia*) also known as Small Leaved Croftonweed, is flowering. It does give some pollen although not all that good. One year I got a super of honey off it on my property. There was nothing else in flower at that time. Because of its flowering time and prevalence on the red soil it may regularly produce nectar hidden in the mix from all the other sources at this time of year.

There is some Tallowood flowering which will do your bees no good. Just mentioning as it is a little early.

The Red Gum is powering along in some localities. Not where I live, only a half to five eighths budding and many are close to finished flowering. I had reason to go through Caniaba the other day and it appears to be a full budding around there. I am also keen to check out the trees that last year showed a pink dusting on many of their flowers. The one in the pic is at the carrier's entrance we have used for transport of AFB hives to Steritek for irradiation. It is well budded, unlike some of the pinky ones from last year, in other areas. One of them has only about five buds on the entire tree. The reason that I am interested is because the trees that did it last season had never done it before, at least in my time. There was a red flowering one near the Tin Bridge, that always was red when it flowered. I assume it is still there. The Tin Bridge was a bridge over the railway north of Kyogle. It was a well known landmark as it had a right angled turn both onto and off it. The tin referred to the covering of sheet galvanised iron on the sides.



White and Pink Red gum flowers Photos Geoff Manning

Coming up is White Mahogany, (*Eucalyptus acmenoides*). Good useful pollen and on occasion honey. But don't hold your breath in that regard. Clover as mentioned last time is showing flowers in places. It won't get into its stride until October, and even then all going well. Not too much rain or it will get smothered by the grass.

Grey Ironbark, (*E paniculata*) is yielding in my country. It tends to flower later as one moves westward. Geoff

## Swarms

As the weather warms up, beekeepers start to think about bee swarms. There are a number of good sources about swarms on the net, covering why it happens, when it happens, how to catch them etc. Just use Google to find them.

Some information relevant to our area may be of interest to club members. First, collecting a swarm in early summer is a good way to acquire a hive. Only strong hives should swarm, showing that they had little



Pole-dancing bees Photo Geoff Manning

disease and they have a vigorous queen, and the practice of hiving the swarm onto foundation should reduce the likelihood of disease even further( see last newsletter).

### **Advertise**

Bees leave the hive usually between 10 am and 12 am and congregate on a neighbouring object usually within 100m of the source hive. While there, the scout bees decide on a new hive location. It is at this congregation stage that the beekeeper can easily trap them. Most swarms are gone by the end of the day.

There is no way a swarm is going to drop into your lap; you need to advertise. Contact your local Council and WIRES to say you will collect swarms for free, and leave them your mobile number. Put your name on the ABA swarm catcher list.

Put a note with your mobile number in letter boxes in the vicinity of a stand of hives. Hives in the macadamia area are highly likely to swarm in Spring, and the beekeeper is unlikely to be there to catch it. The residents usually are delighted to have them removed.

### **Be Prepared**

It is best to catch the swarm with a catcher box, rather than try to hive it on the spot. You can then put the hive where you want it, rather than having to move a hive later. It is much easier to juggle a light box than a hive with a loose base, a loose lid, and an Emlok. You can also leave the swarm in your box in the shade for a day or two if you need to make up bee equipment.

You should have your swarm catching gear in your vehicle ready at all times. Swarm catching gear should include your bee protection gear (but not essential), and a box to put the bees into; it must be able to be sealed so that bees can not get out in your car, and it must be such that a large swarm will not overheat (be wary of any polystyrene foam box). Cardboard boxes are OK, but some holes may need to be taped; for



Swarm on a wild cotton Photo Geoff Manning

large swarms a netted ventilation panel would be a good idea. You want it to be light so you can climb a ladder with it and juggle it under the swarm, and large enough that it is an easy target when you brush or shake the bees off. Fifty litres is OK.

A ladder and secateurs may be useful.

*(I use a plastic storage box, with a throw over fibreglass net, plus an octopus strap to go around below the rim to seal the bees in. Ed)*

### **Get Details**

When the call comes in, it is important for you to get some details; how big is the swarm ( cricket ball, football, and bucket are acceptable units), how high up, do the



Ferris Swarm Catcher Photo Geoff Manning

people have a ladder, is it hanging off a tree, branch, fence, how long has it been there? If it has been there for a few days, it may now be a hive and should be treated differently. Get their phone number.

### **Catching the Swarm**

Most can be pruned, shaken, brushed or scraped into the box. Some are difficult to get into a catcher box, and a bee box or hive with frames will be preferred. Remember that bees always crawl up. So a swarm on the lawn can be collected by placing a bee box with frames on top on a few spacers. Another situation is where the swarm is high up in a tree; this can be collected using a length of plastic drainage pipe with a funnel on top, placing this into the swarm, and shaking up and down. A packet of bees will slide down to land in front of the hive and walk in. If an end stop is on the pipe, the bees can slide to the bottom, and are then tipped into or in front of the hive. This process can be repeated after the swarm re-settles (invented by Bill Ferris).

When you arrive at the swarm, get it in your catcher box ASAP; it is annoying if you are standing there talking to the property owner and the swarm takes off. Talk after catching. Once the swarm is caught, it can be left in the catcher box in the shade for a day or longer before hiving. This is when you prepare their new home, not when you are rushing to go out to collect the swarm. Do not worry if some bees are left behind. Chances are that the parent hive is nearby, and those bees will return there later in the day.

### **Hiving the Swarm**

When the bee hive is ready with its complement of frames with foundation, the bees can be hived. After a sharp bump on your box, they can be poured into a gap in the brood box left after removing half the frames, and the frames replaced on top to float down. Another method is to put a wide ramp up to the entrance at the front of the hive, dump the bees on the ramp, making sure that some land at the hive entrance, and they will all march in following the pheromones blown out by the bees at the entrance. It is usually possible to see the queen walking in.

Most swarms will stay in the hive after they go in, particularly if the site is well away from their original location. A small percentage will abscond; que sera sera! Some beekeepers put a piece of queen excluder across the entrance or a frame of brood in from another hive to guarantee they stay.

## **Volunteers**

The club requires more volunteers for the Committee, and we need new office bearers. The AGM will be postponed until the COVID restrictions are in the past. We also need people to host field days; our meetings have been quite small since COVID started, and just about any home could fit us in. 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**

As a guide, queen cells should be available at about the end of August, mated and tested queens should be available late in September, nuclei should be available a bit later.

Summary of available products and services

### NRABA Members

David Fairhall( queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771  
Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736  
Geoff Manning (hives) (Bentley) 0400 221 602  
Ray Smith (nuclei) (Lismore) 0427 734 954

### 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

Correction and additions welcome

## **Subscriptions are Due**

Beekeepers are to join as full members of both the NRABA and the ABA, as many of the expenses of the NRABA are paid from the payment to the ABA. Associate membership is an honorary membership, intended for non-beekeepers (including family of members), and members of other ABA clubs. It does not carry voting rights in club affairs.



Easy to get Swarm

## MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE June 10<sup>th</sup> 2021

Time 3.00 pm Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present BW, KV, GM, RS
- Apologies PT
- Minutes of Committee meeting May 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 (accepted m BW s RS passed)
- Matters Arising

BW reported giving a talk to Lismore Girl Guides

- Correspondence

Flowhive have donated the Flow hive used at Primex. KV and BW to work up a thank you letter to the company.

- Reports

-Treasurer

May field day Expenses bus \$244.83 Fuel \$44.67 embedders \$32

Ink cartridges \$179.93

PT to refund \$822.17 to BW (m KV s RS passed)

Report accepted (m BW s KV passed)

-Editor

-Membership

Shane O'Dea was accepted as a member (m BW s KV passed)

There were no new Associates

- Agenda Business Items

(1) Field Day June 6<sup>th</sup> at Beenleigh. Numbers were disappointing. Those who went enjoyed the day.

(2) Field day June 27<sup>th</sup> to be arranged by BW ( equipment, embedding)

(3) Year program Field Days Possible AGM in July.

(4) Beekeeping course to be mapped out by BW similar to what the club has provided in the past. ( Maximum 12 students on 3 Saturday mornings)

(5) Primex Display was very successful, with many brochures distributed. The flow hive and the bees in a glass case ( supplied by GM) were the main attractions.

(6) Biosecurity course There seemed to be a good response to the expression of interest in a Biosecurity Course.

(7) Membership rates to stay the same for 2021=2022 (m RS s GM Passed)

- General Business

- Next Meeting

Time 3.00pm Thursday 8th July 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights

Finish 4.03 pm