

BEEBIZ MARCH 2024

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

<u>President</u>	Elizabeth Essery	0447 514 749	northernrivers.president@beekeepers.asn.au
<u>Secretary/Treasurer</u>	Meg Winterford	0412 167 486	northernrivers.secretary@beekeepers.asn.au
<u>Committee Member</u>	Kevin Virgen	0493 141 707	kevin.virgen1945@gmail.com
	Brian Window	0466 790 736	brianwindow@internode.on.net
	Karen Nurthen	0438 206 601	knurthen@lis.net.au
	Geoff Manning	0400 221 602	podargus@ycw.com.au
<u>Membership Officer and Editor</u> Brian Window			
Postal Address 60 Codrington Lane Coraki 2470			
To Join log in to ABA.member jungle and follow the prompts			

March Activity 24th March 2024

The next field day is on Sunday 24th March 2024 at the home of Jamie Martin and Catherine Goulding, 61 Anderson Street, East Ballina. The activity for the day will be extraction of honey from Langstroth hives on a small scale. There will be an opportunity for looking inside hives.

The day will commence at 9.30 am with a welcome by the President and morning tea, and the beekeeping activities will start at 10 am.

A lunch will not be provided, but there are several lunch options available in the town.. There will be a raffle of bee equipment and donated items at about 12pm, followed by a meeting of the club committee. Members are welcome to sit in on this meeting.

All attendees are asked to bring an item for morning tea. Extra raffle items are always appreciated. Raffle tickets will cost \$2.

So remember

- Morning tea item
- Raffle items, such as vegetables, bee gear, jam, potplants etc
- Chairs (not many spares available)
- Nametags

Directions

Address is 61 Anderson Street, East Ballina. From Lismore interchange on M1, pass through the main street of Ballina, cross the North Creek bridge, left into Manly Street, becomes Links Avenue, right into Anderson Street. Look for 61.

Please be considerate when you park.

President Report

Thank you Mark for a very informative and interesting demonstration of the techniques of queen breeding at Iluka last month. I'm sure everyone learnt a lot and had a very enjoyable outing.

The sub-committee is progressing well on the new club logo, brochure, club business card, facebook page, as well as our NRABA web information. We will soon have an attractive new brochure to hand out to entice new beekeepers.

Elizabeth

Secretary Report

There have been detections of *Varroa Jacobsoni* and Asian honey bees (*Apis cerana*) in Brisbane, so remember to check with Queensland Biosecurity if you are doing anything with bees over the border.

Daniel Martin of the NSW DPI is going to give a talk on biosecurity at the April meeting.

Meg



Report on Last Field Day

Mark Vale gave a very instructive demonstration of how he produces queens on a small scale by grafting larvae into plastic cups (the Doolittle method). Because he grafts only a small quantity for his own use, the methods demonstrated were not as “slick” as those of a commercial queen breeder, and more easily followed by the beginning beekeepers.

He started by removing frames from his source colony, searching for eggs and larvae of the appropriate age (36 hours) for grafting. He showed where the frame with a bar of queen cups pointing down would be inserted into his queenless cell builder after grafting.

The group moved under the patio, and Mark showed how the small larvae are transferred from the cell on the frame into the cups using some magnifiers with a light and the Chinese grafting tool. The frame with the cell bar was then put into the cell building colony.

After 8 days, when all the cells should be capped, the bar was removed from the cell builder and placed in an incubator set at 35C while the queens underwent the pupation stage. These cells were removed from the incubator at 10 days from grafting, and individually placed into mating nuclei. There they hatch and go on their mating flight, returning to the home nucleus and start laying. If mated successfully, the beekeeper should be able to find eggs in the bottoms of some of the cells towards the middle of the hive (look 27 days after grafting). If successfully mated, the queens and some

workers are placed in introducing cages with a candy plug, and inserted into a queenless hive.

Lastly, members had a look at Mark's extraction facility. I think most members enjoyed this day as much as I did. Brian





Flowering Report

More Red Gum is showing bud now so it should extend the flowering. I expect it to start flowering around the end of May. That will mean swarming in August. Some Grey Ironbark is also showing bud. As I have mentioned before, Red Gum has excellent pollen and Grey Ironbark is deficient. So they go together like a horse and carriage. Lilli Pilli is flowering as is Blue Fig, not really a fig but a Quandong. The both grow along creeks so you may not have access to them. They don't give a lot but are useful. Quandong seeds were used for Chinese checkers.

Paperbark (see picture) is still flowering, most useful for those on the coast. And so is some Swamp Mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*). This should not be confused with *Lophostemon suaveolens*, also known as Swamp Mahogany. The Paperbark will have a number of bursts to come.

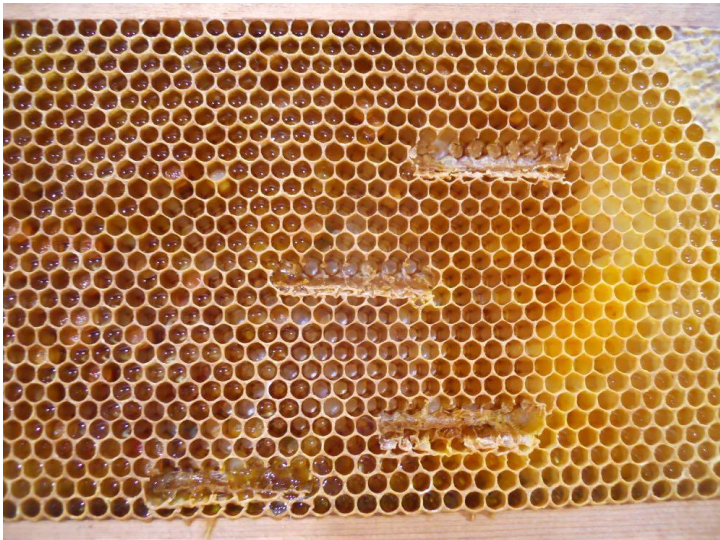
Ragweed looks to be getting close to flowering. It is attractive to bees but the pollen is next to useless. No, worse than useless. And still some Flatweed flowering.

Geoff

Varroa Preparedness

There have been a number of presentations from various sources about varroa mites to prepare the beekeeping industry in our area for the inevitable arrival of varroa mites. The one by the DPI in Casino seems to have been very thorough (I did not get in). I did attend one in Byron Bay by some NZ people, hosted by Lockwood Beekeeping Supplies, and it was useful. The approaches are oriented more towards the professional beekeepers than the small amateur. The main point that stuck with me was that the hives need to be treated for mites in different ways three or more times in the season, and that this could be quite expensive. (*We expect that Daniel Martin of the DPI will talk about Varroa at our April meeting.*)

One approach that seems to me to offer promise, particularly to the smaller beekeepers like our members, is that of introducing two brood breaks in the season, pioneered by Mel Dissenkoen in the USA. Of course in the colder part of the USA there is a period in the middle of winter when the hive may have no brood.



stopping the mite from breeding. We do not have this in the Northern Rivers, but it can be easily produced by removing the queen.

Mel, and other proponents of OTS (On The Spot) queen rearing, remove the queen a week before the "swarming season" , "notching" suitable cells in the hive so that the hive can make a good queen, and producing a brood break of nearly a month. The "notching" involves removing the lower third of a cell with a 36 hour larvae down to the frame mid-rib, to allow extra room for the bees to form an emergency cell. Three notches put in an empty comb with a hive tool are shown in the picture.

They do the same notching and queen removal again near the summer solstice to produce another brood break. Productivity remains high, as the hive will not swarm, and new queens are renowned for their extra vigour.

Losses during the queen mating process are picked up by retaining some of the removed queens in nuclei, or by splitting the primary hive into two nuclei both with notched frames. The losses in Michigan seem to be about 10%, compared to the Northern Rivers of 20%.

Mel Dissenkoen has a book on OTS, and there are good videos from him, John Schwartz (google John Schwartz OTS) and others. It is important to notch properly, as this gives the room for the bees to make a good queen.

Brian

How Much To Leave

The questions that new beekeepers always agonise over at this time of the year are "How much honey do I leave for my bees over winter? Take too much, could my bees starve? What happens if a lot of honey is left on the hive? Is it safe to extract uncapped honey?"

It is usually safe to extract uncapped honey in autumn after the last major flow of nectar. The bees very quickly dry out nectar, and often leave the cells uncapped, probably anticipating more to come in. I usually establish that the flow is finished by giving a frame with uncapped honey a vigorous shake while horizontal over a surface, and look for drops of nectar on the surface. Any drops, do not extract that frame. Of course, if extracting a number of full frames, a few drops of nectar wont make it ferment, but remember that it is difficult to mix honey.

Bees have well established procedure as winter approaches. As the temperature drops, the queen reduces her laying and the size of the brood nest, and the bees pack honey around the brood nest to insulate it from the outside cold. In the Northern Rivers, the brood box would be maybe 75% full of honey. Also in the Northern Rivers, winter is short, and the winter shortage of blossom is very short or non-existent particularly on the coast. The recommendation that gets thrown around for Sydney is to leave a half box of stores above the brood box on the hive. My suggestion for the NR coast is the brood box itself is enough, and maybe an extra half box up in the mountains..



Why not leave more honey on the hives? The honey around the outside of the hive will candy as the temperature is reduced, and become difficult to remove. The sugar crystals make it hard to uncap, the sugar crystals will only spin out partially in the extractor (see photo), and the remainder will be thrown out by the bees when the frame is put in the hive, In a flow hive, it will jam up the moving frame parts.(flow frames should be extracted fully in Autumn).

What about storing empty boxes on a hive? Up to two supers is OK, but it is not a bad idea to place a piece of plastic sheet on the excluder above the brood nest to interrupt the chimney effect and reduce heat loss. Brian

ACE Instructor

ACE Community College is looking for someone with industry experience and a love of bee keeping to deliver a course in Lismore. They have in the past delivered successful courses. The past trainer has retired, and they are currently looking for someone to take on this course.

The college provides the space and facilities and takes care of the publicity and marketing, the college pays \$40 p/h to trainers, and the course runs with a minimum of 6 participants.

Contact **Liliana E. Correa** if interested liliana.c@acecolleges.edu.au

From the Hives

The teatree (melaleuca quinquinevia) have had a good flowering, and the best hives are close to having 2 supers full. Some hives which had become queenless were replaced by hives from home (Lismore). One hive which had become queenless and subsequently was overcome by small hive beetle (due to beekeeper tardiness) had the copious larvae killed using a phostoxin pill to fumigate the hive.

Brian

Aps for Beekeeping

Jamie Martin uses these apps for beekeeping records.

Beeplus (a \$15 once-off fee) and ApiManager (free app)

Talk to Jamie Martin 0435 295 533

Swarm Collection

If you are interested in becoming a swarm collector go to www.beekeepers.asn.au/sign-in then to the "Swarm Collector" page. Members can change the default "no" for Swarm Collector to "yes" complete and submit the form. Once submitted they are on the swarm list. If they would like to take their name off the list at any time, just go back to the page and click "No". They are automatically removed from the list immediately.

To find a beekeeper to help remove a swarm go to <https://www.beekeepers.asn.au/swarms> and then "Find a Beekeeper" enter your postcode and click Search.

Free Bees

Two beehives have been given to the club for beginners by a Lismore beekeeper. They were double 8 frame brood boxes from flowhives, and are being converted to double box hives with an excluder.

Brian

Beehives for sale

Ray Smith has been told by his doctor to reduce his number of beehives. These are full beehives with varying amounts of honey, and are at McKees Hill. Contact Ray 0427 734 954

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	Lismore	0400 221 602	John Bull	North Casino	0414 842 903
David Fairhall	Richmond Hill	0444 513 771			

Beginner Lessons

Remember that the club is offering to give beginners free introductory sessions on a beehive to get them started. Contact the secretary, or a helpful member near you.

Services Directory

Summary of available products and services

NRABA Members

Brian Window (nuclei, and advice) (Lismore) 0466 790 736

Not NRABA Members

Stephen Fowler (nuclei, hives, all sorts of bee equipment) (Alstonville) 0418 412 621

Merv McDonald (nuclei, hives, hive care)(Alstonville) 0439 166 016

Rob Stone (cells, mated queens, nuclei)(Casino) 0487 598 105

Ross Wood (mated queens, nuclei)(Grafton) 0421 817 710