


# THE BUZZ



The official newsletter of the Gold Coast Amateur Beekeepers Society Inc. Est. 1979  
 Website: [gcabs.net.au](http://gcabs.net.au)  [Gold Coast Amateur Beekeeping Society](https://www.facebook.com/GoldCoastAmateurBeekeepingSociety)



*Are cane toads snacking on your bees?*

*Learn how we can help to eradicate them. Pg 4*

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All welcome to attend our Committee meetings via this link: [meet.google.com/fyq-ujco-kth](https://meet.google.com/fyq-ujco-kth)

- Mon 4th April 6:30 – 8:30pm
- Mon 9th May 6:30 – 8:30pm

## DATE SAVERS

Queensland is currently adapting to “living with COVID”, so we are having to be a bit flexible in how we do things. The information below is correct as at time of publication, but keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates. The Gold Coast Amateur Beekeeper’s Society inc. welcomes new members, existing members and visitors to attend. Non-members attending will be asked to make a gold coin donation.

- **Mon 7th March 6:30 – 8:30pm Committee meeting.** Members are welcome to attend any/all Committee meetings to join in the planning & direction of GCABS. Committee meetings are held the 1st Monday of each month starting at 6:30pm. We usually meet online but for March we will meet at the GCABS’ Clubhouse, Nerang Country Paradise Parklands.
- **Sun 20th March - 10am - 12pm. Member Meeting.** A presentation on the **collection and use of bee venom** by Whale Labs Venue: GCABS Clubhouse, Nerang Country Paradise Parklands
- **Sun 24th April 10am – 12pm Member Meeting.** GCABS committee member & Buzz editor, Leonie Schwarzel will give a presentation **All about Honey – Facts & Fiction.** Venue: GCABS Clubhouse, Nerang Country Paradise Parklands.
- **Sun 15th May 10am – 12:30pm Member Meeting.** Join in an **Apiary Farm Visit** to ‘Mariefields’ in the spectacular Mt Warning Caldera. Activities: World Bee Day celebration, hive inspections, sugar shake, workshops. Hosted by GCABS member & Mariefields owners, John & Carol Quayle. Address: 229 South Pumpenbil Rd, Tyalgum NSW.

# From GCABS President



*Last month I spoke about how resilient our bees are coming through adverse conditions such as wet weather and extreme heat. This last month that has truly been put to the test with massive floods across most of the regions our club members have their hives. Our Buzz editor, Leonie, lost eight of her eleven hives, and yet three survived, albeit in a sorry state, but with love and expertise she believes they will recover.*

*My heart goes out to all members who, aside from other horrific losses, have also suffered the loss of their much loved bees. That said, there is nothing like stories of survival in the worst of times though to buoy our spirits and remind us just how resilient nature is, and I would love to hear from any members who have tales to tell of the resilience of their bees through the current floods.*

*On the good news front, we were delighted to be able to finally put our new club house to good use and host our first member meeting there in February. We also held our first Beginners Course at the club house and I know everyone involved really appreciated being able to run these events from our new home. There is more still to be done putting the finishing touches in, but it is gradually starting to grow in character and showcase what we are about as a club.*

*I would also like to acknowledge the donation from our longest serving member, Col Payne, who at our first meeting presented us with a framed photo and story of the original skep hive our logo is based around, as well as an antique spinner, probably over 100 years old, for extracting honey from a single frame. I totally embarrassed myself in front of everyone when I struggled to work out how to use it, but after some explanation from Col I was away! A great piece of early beekeeping ingenuity, and it will be proudly on display in our clubhouse.*



*Our first beginner class in the new club house*



*Making a fool of myself trying to work out how to use a one frame spinner!*

*With the covid venue numbers restrictions now being lifted, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our March member meeting. It will be a good one! Cheers... Colin Allen - President*

## March Honey Flora - S.E. Queensland

*Submitted by Jim O'Regan*

Blackbutt, Blue Heliotrope (bluetop), Broad-leaved Banksia, Broad-leaved Ironbark, Brown Bloodwood, Flooded Gum, Glycine, Golden Candlesticks, Groundsel Bush, Gum-topped Box, Hickory Wattle, Mallee Box, Manna Gum, Paper-barked Tea-tree, Pink Bloodwood, Rough-barked Ribbon Gum. Small-fruited Grey Gum, White Stringybark.



*Paper bark Tea-tree*



*White Stringybark*



*Blue Heliotrope*



*Golden Candlesticks*

# February Member Meeting Review

by GCABS' member Jim O'Regan

A seminal moment was reached in the forty-three year history of our club with our first meeting in our own club house. About fifty members attended and the main feature of the meeting was an extensive talk by Dr. David Schlipalius, Bee Biosecurity Officer with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Dr. Schlipalius spoke for about ninety minutes beginning with the difficulties encountered by people new to beekeeping, talking about the responsibilities incumbent upon all beekeepers and the requirement to notify certain pests and diseases. Notifiable pests and diseases are American Foulbrood, Tropilaelaps mite, Tracheal mite, Braula fly (bee louse) and Varroa mite. Of these last two, Varroa mite is not in Australia and Braula fly is only in Tasmania and not in mainland Australia. However, Dr Schlipalius spoke of two tests, the sugar shake test and the alcohol wash test to determine the presence of these pests. It is expected that all beekeepers do the test twice annually in April and October and notify the results.



Quite a lot of time was spent on American Foulbrood. Dr. Schlipalius said that there is no cure for American Foulbrood. The bees must be destroyed and the hive must be either burned or irradiated. It was interesting to note that when a member asked for a show of hands of how many members had encountered American Foulbrood, only three put up their hands.

Time was also spent on the small hive beetle but there doesn't seem to be any alternate management process on the horizon apart from the things we're all doing already.

The new clubhouse is just what we need. It worked well for holding the meeting, there was plenty of room, kitchen facilities at one end of the building and, being on the perimeter of Country Paradise Parklands, it has its own address, 74 Billabirra Crescent, Nerang, 4211. Parking isn't plentiful but there's room for perhaps a dozen cars adjacent to the building mostly for people with mobility issues. Others are encouraged to park in the lower carparks.

The new GCABS club house is a building we can all be proud of.



# Drones, Drones & more Drones...

By John Vallance, GCABS Biosecurity Liaison Officer

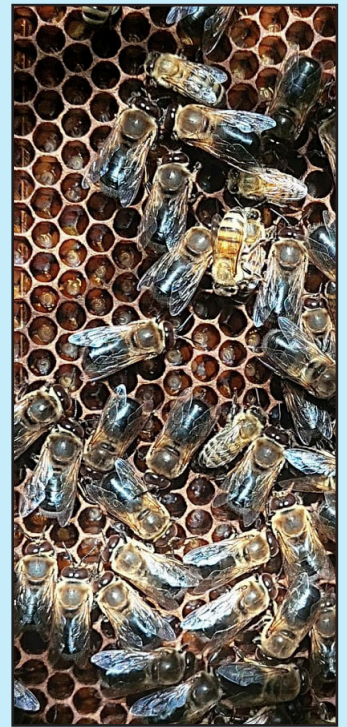
## The Problem

You open up the hive and all you see is DRONES! Drones everywhere, all over the frames & stuck in the queen excluder. You start to wonder what is going on in your hive? Why do I have such a big population of male bees (see photo) and why is my hive still looking so strong at the same time?

With an inspection, I eliminated the possibility of a laying worker straight away because I had beautifully capped solid worker brood (a laying worker can only produce drone, not worker brood). This also eliminates a drone layer queen as well, as this queen is clearly laying both worker (fertilised) & drone (unfertilised) eggs.

## The Cause

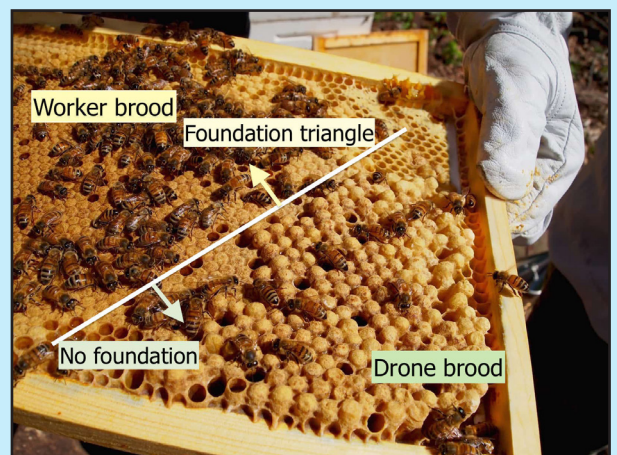
So why such a high drone population? The answer is quite simple... however, we have to step back in time a few weeks to when I put new frames into this hive. To save a bit of money, I often use wax foundation triangles instead of a whole sheet. 1 wax sheet gets me 4 triangles for 4 separate frames as a starter for the bees (see photo). The bees draw the comb on that 'foundation triangle' as per the template size, which is for worker brood size cells. BUT when the bees draw beyond the triangle to fill the remainder of the frame, they draw drone comb which has larger cells (see photo). This queen wanted to lay



right away but the workers weren't resizing these cells for worker brood. Yes, before laying an egg, the queen inserts her head into each empty cell to 'measure' its size using her antenna. It is the cell size that determines whether she will lay a worker (fertilised) or drone (unfertilised) egg. The colony just lets her lay drones, and thousands of them. So I now have a hive that is still moving along but it isn't collecting any excess honey and seems to just be feeding the male population.

## The Fix

Some hives are really good with resizing the cells and it won't take them long to naturally bring it into line. This hive has been this way for coming up to 6 months so it needs some help. The best way was to move up the majority of the frames into the super making sure the queen stayed below. I've added full foundation frames to the brood box so this gives them very little option but to draw worker size cells. It won't be long before we see a quick turn around but be sure to clear out your queen excluder or give a short-term upper entrance for the drones to escape.



*Note the two differing cell sizes has determined where the queen lays worker or drone brood*

This is also why I highly recommend as a new beekeeper to avoid going foundationless. You want a strong hive of workers to protect against some of our main pests such as small hive beetle. A weak colony will get overrun with beetle with the rain & humidity we have had for months and won't have enough defences to combat them.

## Night Predator... CANE TOADS

Thanks to GCABS' member Peter Manthey for initiating this topic. The following article is a collaboration between Peter Manthey & Leonie Schwarzel, the Buzz editor.

### Peter's Experience

If you feel you've been losing a few bees from your hive lately, it might not be the fault of a swarm or the small hive beetle or birds but a night time predator – the ugly looking beast, the Cane Toad.

I've been backyard beekeeping for over 30 years on several different blocks but never realised what a problem the cane toad is to our hives.

My daughter in Brisbane, who has had a hive that I set up for her two years ago, told me how many cane toads she'd been disposing of each night. Not having inspected my hives at night previously, I didn't really believe that it was such a problem. It only took me a few nights patrolling to realise that she was correct.

I don't see cane toads every night as they're not always there but I believe they are a continuous problem to virtually every hive owner. I'm not sure how many bees they consume each night and I suppose it would depend on the number of toads and their size but my daughter has killed 4 to 5 in a night fairly frequently. I've never encountered that many, fortunately; my most has been three in a night.

### The Problem

102 cane toads (*Rhinella Marina*) were brought to Queensland in 1935 in an attempt to control cane beetles that were decimating sugarcane crops. They are now well established in 4 states (see map) with their numbers exceeding 2 billion. They are toxic at all stages of their lifestyle so will kill animals if consumed. They have a voracious appetite & a huge breeding capacity. Each female can produce up to 70,000 tadpoles each year

### Cane toads & Bees

Cane toads will change their location, foraging behaviour and dietary composition to exploit the nutritional opportunities created by beehives. Simply stated, they will move to & remain in close proximity to hives, forage on live bees at hive entrances, rather than dead bees on the ground & pile on top of each other in a tower to gain access to a raised hive entrance. The best way to prevent your bees being consumed is to raise your hives to 45-50cm above the ground.

### Control & Eradication – Let's be part of the Solution!

Cane toads present a serious threat to native species & pets, & they eat our bees. It is important that we band together as a community to control them. But how? The RSPCA, DPI & animal welfare groups **advocate for humane euthanasia, the best method being fridge to freezer ([Instructions here](#))**. Do not be tempted to use a dettol spray as it causes extreme pain & skin irritability to the toad.

The organisation, Watergum, are in the process of addressing the cane toad problem nationwide. They



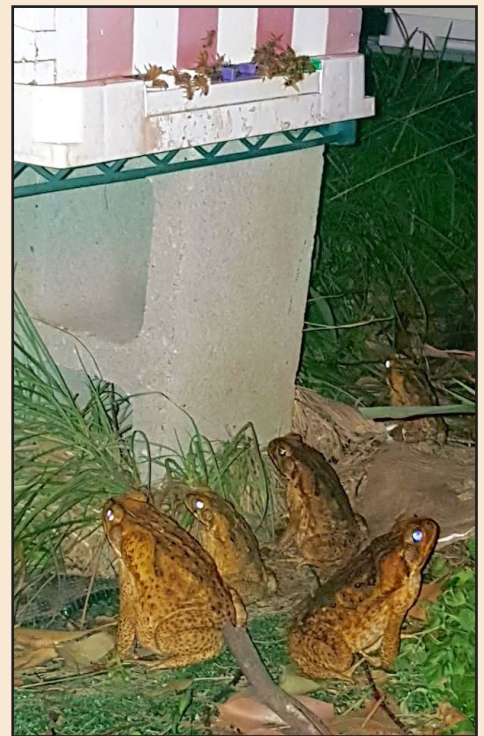
have an office here on the Coast. Watergum is seeking our help to collect toads & deliver them to their Southport office. Watergum has a revolutionary new method of cane toad control that uses the toad's own toxins against them. Pheromone lures produced from toxic cane toad glands tempt tadpoles into traps that can catch upwards of 4000 in one go! That toxin, is extracted from the glands of toads that are collected & dropped off by community members like us. Note that by chemical (dettol or Hopstop sprays) cannot be used.

“Maybe alert your neighbours that the person prowling around with a torch each night is you; otherwise you might get a visit from the boys in blue!

Happy beekeeping”  
*Peter Manthey*

Learn more about the Watergum Cane Toad Bust at <https://watergum.org/greatcanetoadbust/>. Call the Watergum office 0478 422 280 for details on how & where to drop off the toads.

NOTE: NSW group Peri-urban Environmental Biosecurity Network conducted an annual cane toad blitz during February 2022. Learn more: <https://extensionaus.com.au/periurbanenvirobiosecurity/toad-at-the-hive/>



*If these bees decide to beard overnight due to summer heat, they will fall prey to the cane toads' hungry tongues.*

## Bee Watering Station

*by GCABS member Greg Hamwood*

Bees need a reliable water source. Water is essential to the colony to quench thirst & to distribute over brood frames to help with cooling during the summer heat. Here's Greg's solution for his hives.

Set up an old wheelbarrow or any decent sized tray to hold a bag of sand. I've used coarse sand which seems to suit the bees better and retains moisture longer. Make sure that any holes in the barrow are sealed to prevent leakage. Large sized pebbles, both white and dark, are placed on the sand in clusters to allow bees a landing place above the water level. Fill with water, making sure the sand is covered and most of the stones are exposed.

Hot days increase evaporation, so regular topping up of the water level is required. Possibly every 2/3 days.

I have encouraged my neighbours to place terra cotta trays with some stones plus water in their gardens to provide resting stations as the bees return to hive.

Google maps of your locality and look for the number of swimming pools close by. On a hot day neighbours will find bees stopping for a swim or a drink on the side of the pool. Not ideal for them but the bees just see pools as another pond.



## JOBS in Your Bee Yard this Month

- **Hungry Hives- Ensure your bees aren't starving.** With the almost incessant rain since November, many hives in the GC hinterland & rural areas of S.E Qld & northern NSW have virtually no stores & are on the brink of starvation. If your bees' stores are lacking, feed 1:1 sugar:water syrup ongoingly. Heft the back of the hive. If it is light enough to lift, your hive is hungry.
- **Protect against small hive beetle infestation & slime-out.** SHB thrive in hot, moist weather. Have traps & controls in your hives to manage their numbers. Keep your hive crowded. Remove extra supers if necessary so that the population is strong for the space they need to protect.
- **Plenty of honey? Lucky you! Harvest some frames if 90% capped but don't be greedy.** Leave about half for the colony in case of continued wet weather and in preparation for winter.
- **Patrol for cane toads** Ensure your hives are 40-50cm from the ground to escape cane toad reach. Check your hives at night to see if cane toads are present.

## A welcome return to Rod Luke, interim GCABS' treasurer



We are delighted to welcome Rod back to temporarily fill the role of treasurer. Rod joined GCABS in July 2020 and was elected to Treasurer in August the same year. Due to increased work commitments, Rod stepped down a year later but when a vacancy for treasurer arose in January this year, Rod was willing to take up the mantle again.

He brings considerable business & financial expertise developed from a background in agricultural consulting, farm management and business analysis.

Thank you Rod for your commitment!



### *A warm welcome to all our newest members:*

*Leighton B, Gary H, Julian H, Cheryl M, Martin M, Rogette M, Nicky M, Kerrie O, Luke S, Hamza V*

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