



**Amateur
Beekeepers
Association**
NSW MANNING VALLEY

THE POLLINATOR

October 2021

2020/2021 Committee

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CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED!

Contributions for the next issue
are welcome

Do you have a favourite honey
recipe? Share it with the rest of
us!

A funny story about your bees?
We'd love to hear it!

Read a good book recently?
Why not write a review so we
can tell everyone about it?

Photos of your bees? Make them
famous and send it in to us!

Anything to sell? Or want to
buy? A Buy & Sell section
coming in the future!

**WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM
YOU!**

Email to Robert
robertodibben@hotmail.com

Your Club News

From the President

Hi everyone, apologies for the late publication date but here we are after two weeks of lockdown and not having August and September club meetings, hopefully we are on the way back to some sort of normality (not that the bees care one iota).

Seems like swarming has started early this year, I have had two hives swarm by mid August. Have been pleasantly surprised at how much capped brood our bees have produced so early on in the

season. Of course we always have to be thinking ahead and anticipate the next move, when all that brood hatches, bearing in mind it's still quite cool outside, they are going to consume stored honey supplies, and if for some reason the spring nectar supply is low or delayed, honey supplies can get very low before the new brood bees are mature enough to be harvesting nectar. Here's fingers crossed for some spring rain and the start of a good season.

Don't forget your documented two mandatory hive / brood inspections each year. I have been putting mine off till the weather is a bit warmer and the hive is more developed. Your Beekeepers Logbook that you receive with your membership each year is good, there is no mention of Drone observations, which is a shame, but there's plenty of room for notes.

The AGM has again been postponed, watch this space because it will happen some time before Christmas.

Vicki has set up Whats app, which is going well. I will defer to her for more detailed information.

The Club meetings venue at the Showgrounds has had quite a few disruptions this year, starting off with the floods and now lockdown. Hopefully we are heading into steadier waters going into the future.

Happy beekeeping
Robert D

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**INSPECT
TEST
NOTIFY
ACT.**

NSW GOVERNMENT | Department of Primary Industries

October is AFB Awareness Month

**HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF
AMERICAN FOULBROOD
IN AUSTRALIA**

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/afb

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Check DPI NSW "AFB Near Me" page each month for current infection locations.

Meet our Members

This month we talk to Claire Pontin about beekeeping story.



I first started beekeeping in the early 80s when we lived on a 'hobby farm' outside of Canberra. At that time, the TAFE system was wonderful – and Peter and I both enrolled in a 10-week evening course with weekend field days, run by a commercial beekeeper in the area. It was a great introduction and a solid foundation for keeping and managing bees.

We bought some second-hand equipment and a couple of hives from the owners of the local café, who were finding it too difficult to manage. This included a very old but very effective Penders hand-cranked honey extractor built in a galvanised 44 gallon drum. Those were the days!

The main lessons we took away from that course were to close the hives down to one box each winter by Anzac Day and basically not go near them again until spring (cold winters down there). In spring, the job was to manage the hive to prevent swarming by always rotating fresh comb into the brood box and adding supers as required. There was no small hive beetle back then and life as a hobby beekeeper was good.

We sold off our hives after about 8 years but kept all the equipment and spare boxes and frames. I must have been unconsciously expecting to start it all up again. Which I did in about 2015 (Peter is not too keen on bees but helps with some of the heavy lifting). It was a no-brainer to join the Manning Valley Amateur Beekeepers Association, to catch up on some of my forgotten bee information.

I bought a couple of hives from Charlie Fuller who also mentored

SWARMS

Swarming has started early this season. After several bad and some not so good seasons, the conditions at the start of this season are looking very favourable. With these favourable conditions will come swarms.

Why do bees swarm?

Bees usually begin to swarm early Spring. It is part of the natural reproductive cycle of honey bees. Bees will swarm when the colony outgrows its hive, or it is too crowded. If this is the case the old queen will leave the colony with half the worker bees to establish a new colony. Sometimes they will all abscond due to things like lack of provisions, an infestation (like Small Hive Beetle) or other problems.

As responsible beekeepers we need to minimize the likelihood of our bees swarming. How can we do that? Coming into Spring we should be doing the first checks of our hives after Winter. When we do those checks, there are things we should look for regarding swarms as part of that check.

How crowded is the hive? Does it need more room? If so, does it need a whole box on top? When you open the hive do the bees spill out of the box and do they look like a carpet on the top of the frames? If yes, then add a super above the excluder. When doing this consider taking two frames of sealed brood from the brood box & replacing them with two frames from the super. This gives more room for the queen in the brood box as some of the nurse bees will move up with the frames to look after the brood. Another way to make more room is to remove some frames of brood and eggs to make up a nucleus hive. This is better when you have two or more hives as you can take a couple of frames from each hive. This should only be done if there are no signs of disease in your hives. If honey is in the outside frames, you can remove them and extract them and replace them with frames of fresh foundation.



Queen cells in a honeycomb frame. R. Okon

Catching a Swarm

Before catching a swarm there are some things that you need to consider. Is the swarm easily accessible? If the swarm is in a structure, are you equipped to collect it? Is it close to people or animals? How big is the swarm? How far do you have to travel to collect the swarm? Do you want another hive? Do you have a suitable location for the swarm? What time of year is it? The possibility of disease from the swarm.

Getting Ready

Before going to collect a swarm ensure that you have all the required equipment you need. Make sure you have personal protective gear such as a veil and gloves, a nuc box or brood box plus frames to put the swarm in and a strap, a bee brush, masking tape, smoker & fuel. Do you need ladder or secateurs?

Wait for the swarm to settle before attempting to collect it. Light your smoker if required. Once the swarm has settled position your box underneath the swarm or as close to swarm as possible. Remove some frames from the middle of the box. If the swarm is in a tree or bush carefully cut away any vegetation away from the swarm so that it has a clear path into the box where possible.



me through the process of setting up and expanding my hives. Thanks Charlie.

I am now working with 6-8 hives at Hallidays Point. It was 8, but I'm down to 5, having made every rooky mistake in the book over the last 12 months. There is a reason not to leave stickies on for too long; not to leave escape boards on for too long; not to remove swarm cells before sighting the queen; not to let a hive remain queenless for too long. I knew all of this, but with multiple pressures on my time (and any other excuse I can think of), I still did it.

(Did you know that leaving a hive without a queen for too long will result in laying workers who get crankier and crankier and who become too aggressive to accept a new queen and can turn your trousers and gloves into pin cushions? I found out it IS possible to wear two ventilated bee suits – one on top of the other!)

I'm looking forward to spring this year and expanding back to 8 hives. I have just completed the queen-rearing course at Tocal College and have been doing a lot of reading on beekeeping and queen rearing. I'm much more interested in selling bees and perhaps queens, than making honey. I also make some of my own woodenware and plan on making a horizontal hive that will take Langstroth frames and allow supering. Should be fun.

My favourite recent books are "Beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey" by Brother Adam and "Increase Essentials" and "Queen rearing essentials" by Lawrence John Connor. They are highly recommended. The latter are quite technical (just the thing for me, being a scientist).

Thanks for sharing your story Claire, and for the book recommendations

RECIPE

Honey Butter with Walnuts

60gm walnuts finely chopped (almonds can be substituted)

180gm soft butter

120gm honey

Pinch of salt

Mix all ingredients together.

This is delicious served over the top of pancakes, waffles, scrolls or banana bread

Once the box is in place prepare to drop the bees directly into the box. If it is on a branch try to give the branch a quick shake so that the bees drop into the box. You may have to cut the branch they are on carefully & then shake the branch directly over the box.



Carefully replace the frames and then put the lid back on the box and wait. If you have the queen, the bees will start to head into the box.



Follow Up For a Swarm

If you know the swarm has come from one of your own hives and you know that they have no disease, you can place the swarm within your apiary. If you have collected a swarm from an unknown origin then you need to keep it away from your apiary for at least three months. During that time check the brood frames carefully for disease several times.

What do I do with the swarm?

After you have caught a swarm you need to keep it separate from your apiary for at least 3 months if it is unknown if it is from your own apiary. A swarm from an unknown source may carry disease. Do brood checks regularly and after it has been quarantined for about three months it can be added to your apiary if there are no signs of disease.

Requeen the swarm, if necessary, after three weeks. The swarm generally leaves the hive with an old queen just before the new queen is due to hatch. So, check how well she is laying. If there are any problems, requeen.

What if I don't want any more hives?

If you catch a swarm but don't want another hive, then find someone who would like it. If you don't know anyone who would like it then contact the club.

What do I do if someone contacts me about a swarm?

Not everyone wants to catch a swarm or is equipped to do so. If people know you keep bees, you may get contacted when there is a swarm. If you are not able to catch a swarm you can still get all the details and pass the information onto someone else.

When someone notifies you of a swarm there are several questions you should ask.

- Where is the swarm? What area? How far
- Is it easily accessible? How high & what is it on?
- How big is the swarm? Use something like a soccer ball as a comparison.
- Is the swarm near people or animals?
- Do I want another hive or can I give it to someone else?
- Am I equipped to catch a swarm?
- Do I have somewhere to quarantine the hive away from my apiary?



2021 Tocal Beekeepers' Field Day

FREE Virtual Event

The 42nd Annual Tocal Beekeepers Field Day will be livestreamed from Tocal College Paterson through their YouTube page from 9am on Saturday 16 October 2021. Access the page from here: <https://www.tocal.nsw.edu.au/news-and-media/tocal-beekeepers-field-day>

Over 13 presenters confirmed including:

- Ashley Zamek - Hort innovation
- Jody Gerdts - Bee Scientifics
- Dan Cook - QUT
- Mel Parker - Beekeeper
- Dr Cooper Schouten - SCU, Bees for Sustainable Livelihoods - ACIAR
- Soumi Paul Mukopadhyay - NSW DPI
- Tobias Smith - Native bee expert
- Belinda O'Rourke - EMAI Disease Diagnostics
- Fiona Chambers - When Bee Foundation
- Anneliese Austin SCU - Bees for Sustainable Livelihoods - ACIAR

Register on their Eventbrite page <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/42nd-annual-tocal-beekeepers-field-day-2021-tickets-167541915379>

For updates, follow them on Facebook at www.fb.me/TocalBees

Email: tocal.bees@dpi.nsw.gov.au

What's App Group Chat



If you have a swarm that needs to be collected it can be put on the club's What's App group chat. For those who have What's App already and you want to get on the group chat just let Vicki know and she will add you. For those who don't and would like to join, just download What's App on your phone and then let Vicki know to add you.

What's App is a free messenger app that can be used to send messages, images, videos and audio. It can be used to reach a whole group of people or just an individual.

So far this season we have been using the app mostly for swarms. When a call comes in about a swarm, we get details about the swarm and contact details. This is then posted on the group to see who is available to get the swarm. In previous years Vicki would get a call about a swarm and then ring around trying to find someone who could collect it. Using What's App is saving time and lots of phone calls.

It is also a great forum to ask advice, share ideas and encourage other beekeepers. If you have questions about something you notice in your hive, you can take photos and put them up on the group chat. Anyone can send an answer.

WEIRD BEE FACTS

- Honey bees are the only insect that produces food consumed by humans.
- Honey is the only known source of the antioxidant pinocembrin.
- Honey bees are not born knowing how to make honey. Instead, they are taught in the hive by older bees.
- Honey is the only foodstuff that contains all of the necessary nutrients to sustain life.
- There are people in Africa who keep elephants out of their fields by keeping honey bee hives around the fields in what is called a "bee fence." When elephants bump into the fence and disturb the nearby hives, the sound of bees causes the elephant to flee. This is a safe way to keep elephants safe from being hunted due to their ability to destroy crops.
- In Greek mythology, Apollo is credited as being the first beekeeper.
- In ancient Egypt, people paid their taxes with honey, while the ancient Greeks minted coins with bees on them.
- Stone Age cave paintings have been found of ancient beekeepers. The oldest known art depicting honey gathering can be found in the Cave of the Spider near Valencia, Spain.
- Bees can be trained to locate buried land mines.
- Ounce for ounce, honey bee venom is more deadly than cobra venom. Don't worry, though – it takes 19 stings for every kilogram of a person's body weight to be lethal.
- In the Hittite Empire (modern-day Turkey and Syria), a swarm's value was equal to that of a sheep, and the penalty for bee thieving was a fine of 6 shekels of silver.
- The Magna Carta legalized the harvesting of wild honey by common folk.
- Newborn bees ask for food by sticking out their tongues at passing worker bees.
- Due to the rise in popularity of urban beekeeping, it is estimated that honey bees outnumber the residents of London 30-1 in the summer months.

Source: beepods.com

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