



## 2019/2020 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!

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

Email to Robert  
[robertodibben@hotmail.com](mailto:robertodibben@hotmail.com)

## Your Club News

### *From the President*

Hi All

It's a delight, when doing a Spring brood inspection, to find frames that fill all your expectations and more, this came for me after some disappointments, but not surprising, being such a big swarming season.

Everyone I have spoken to this season has a swarming story or two which is in stark contrast to last year with the drought and fires and just about no swarming at all.

I collected a swarm that was hanging in a wattle tree near the house; put it in a 10 frame brood box with six frames of new foundation and a 4 frame spacer that occupied the empty space. I looked at the swarm after about 10 days and to my surprise they were pulling comb, bringing in honey and had made 7 queen cells. I removed all the cells bar one. Two weeks later the new colony is producing drone cells and no Queen to be seen. I guess the moral of the story is, no matter how much thought and consideration you put in to managing a hive, things don't always turn out as you would like. This is the challenge of bee keeping, trying to anticipate the next move and be one step ahead.

We have held two meetings this season, beginners in September and the regular first Wednesday of the month meeting. The first was for people who are new to beekeeping and the regular meeting was held as usual on the first Wednesday of the month. Both meetings were held under Covid spacing conditions, which was not a problem as we were in one of the main exhibition sheds. Hopefully group meeting conditions will be relaxed soon and we will be back in the canteen, which is a more intimate space and can also have a cuppa.

To conclude, if there is anyone out there who would like to contribute to the Pollinator, please contact myself or Vicki. Your contributions are most welcome.

Happy beekeeping from me. See you at the next club meeting.

Robert D

PS. There are some good articles in the October, Australian Beekeeper, for new beekeepers. Well worth a look.

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## WEIRD BEE FACTS

- Honey bees have 170 odourant receptors, compared with only 62 in fruit flies and 79 in mosquitoes. Their exceptional olfactory abilities include kin recognition signals, social communication within the hive and odour recognition for finding food. Their sense of smell is so precise that it can differentiate hundreds of different floral varieties and tell whether a flower carried pollen or nectar from metres away.
- A hive of bees will fly 90,000 miles, the equivalent of three orbits around the earth, to collect 1 kg of honey.
- A honey bee visits 50 to 100 flowers during a collection trip.
- The bee's brain is oval in shape and only about the size of a sesame seed, yet it has remarkable capacity to learn and remember things and is able to make complex calculations on distance travelled and foraging efficiency.
- Each honey bee colony has a unique odour for members' identification.

Source: <http://honeylady.com.au/did-you-know/bee-facts>

## Meet our Members

*This month we talk to Deb Whitfield about her journey into beekeeping.*

Being an avid gardener started my incredible journey and admiration for "The Bee". Watching the bees at work, the many varieties located on our property, some of which are the carpenter bee, blue banded bee and the amazing native bee, and of course the honey bee, all of which pollinate my garden. I was so captivated and grew a passion and desire to be a part of their world.

A year before we got our hives I joined our local bee club. Talking to other beekeepers, as enthusiastic and passionate as me, I found there were many opinions and different techniques, all of which were helpful.

In April 2019 we picked up our first two hives from a dear friend and arrived home late evening. Not wearing our bee suits, we placed the first 8 frame brood box and honey super on its stand, all good. Well, we placed the second 8 frame brood box down and then slid what we thought was an 8 frame honey super on top, not realising it was actually a 10 frame box. The bees started to pour out - you've never seen two people run so fast. The bees seemed to be everywhere, following our car lights back to the house! Both my husband and I were stung many times - what an introduction to beekeeping! But we were hooked!

The next months were uneventful, just doing the regular inspections and getting ready for winter ahead. We locked down our hives in May and began to build our bee room in anticipation of a busy summer.

In October we opened our hives, brood was strong and honey frames were building up. In November tragedy struck, we were surrounded by fires on all fronts. The next few weeks we were fighting fires, helping save properties all around us.

*Continued next page*

## EUCALYPTUS AUSTRALIAN NATIVE TREES

Eucalyptus trees are prolific honey producers when conditions are favourable. The iron barks on the coast to box trees of inland areas rate highly in quantity and quality of honey produced.

If you have a permanent apiary site take care to not starve your hive but leave some honey for the bees over winter.

As beekeepers we can't afford to become complacent or careless or fall for the trap of tunnel vision. There are many more other types of flora and trees that are of service for the observant beekeepers.

Many other trees are of use to the beekeeper for stimulating brood-rearing in preparation for a honey flow to come or for winter. An example is the tea tree, which is not a eucalypt plus other eucalypts that are placed lower down on the list of pollen and honey producing trees.

Eucalypts have a very interesting characteristic. Most species give a bud prospect often 12 months before they flower. Here is where the diligent beekeeper gets a heads-up for the potential of the coming season. Preparation and planning is required for success.

### Identifying Eucalypt Trees

The botanical markers are often small and often takes a trained eye to interpret the differences between eucalypts. The diligent beekeeper, by paying attention to detail, can learn to determine principal trees in their own areas.

#### Bark

Bark is very useful in helping to identify different trees, of popularity, separating them into different groups such as gums, iron barks, stringy barks, boxes, etc. Barks are different and colours vary accordingly and often are separated into groups.

**Gums or smooth barks** – bark is smooth all over, with rough bark often at the base of trees stopping at different heights up the trunk of the tree.

**Stringy barks** – the bark is fibrous and pulls away in fairly long strips. It is not matted or flaky.

**Iron barks** – the bark is hard, rough, and deep with ruts. Take caution. It is often difficult to determine because barks vary according to location and similar is not the same.

**Box trees** – Bark is sub-fibrous, interlaced, compact, closely matted and is usually confined to the trunk and larger branches. The upper branches are smooth but, in some cases, the rough bark does extend to the smaller branches.

**Blood woods** – bark is scaly or flaky and usually found in poor classes of soil.



Gum or smooth bark



Ironbark



#### Buds and Fruits

Buds are helpful in the identification process and are in two parts – the lower portion is the calyx tube. The lid or cap which is thrown off when the flower opens is called the operculum. The shape of the operculum and its relative length to the calyx tube is helpful in establishing identification. *Left: Ironbark flowers and gumnuts*

#### Leaves

*Size, shape, colour and venation of the leaves are useful in identification also. Often leaves can almost be identical with some trees being truly unique.*

*Right: Ironbark leaves*



Paperbark



Privet

#### Habitat

Different types of trees are common to specific soil types and terrains. When in doubt seek out proper identification by those in the know. Remember one man's name of a tree is not necessarily wrong. Sometimes the names are different in different places.

Around Christmas I did our routine check and discovered a very distressing sight. Many bees in one hive were shaking and falling to the ground dead. I'd never seen or heard anything like it before. So I rang our bee club and they came out to help us, which was amazing. We were told our bees were in a stressed state, trying to fill the hive but with no resources they were really struggling.

They then condensed our hives into one box and told us how to feed our bees with sugar water. We then transported both hives to my daughter's where there were lots of food sources as they hadn't been touched by fires. They flourished.

I missed my bees so much that year but in October we split one of the hives and brought that home. Within two weeks I had a swarm up a tree. Another first. We ended getting the whole swarm without too much difficulty and then put it into a nuc box, another hive yay! Four days later we had another swarm, this time it was easier, we cut the branch that they were on, shook it hard over a nuc box and they all fell in. We had put two stickies and two clean frames into the nuc box first. We closed the lid fast and now we have another hive.

We now have five hives, all doing really well, all have queens and are as busy as bees.

It has been an incredible journey, learning and ever increasing my skills and resources. I have grown an incredible respect and love for our newest members of the family.

*Thanks for sharing your story Deb, you certainly have had a rollercoaster ride on your beekeeping journey, but have gained so much experience on the way.*

*Here are some of Deb's photos.*



## BEEKEEPING RESOURCES

There are many websites and YouTube clips on beekeeping. Many are from countries which do things very differently to how we keep bees in Australia and a lot of things that are contrary to our regulations. For this reason you need to be selective about what website and videos you learn from. Here are some Australian websites that are very good.

### Flow Hive Website

<https://www.honeyflow.com.au/>

### Beekeeping Videos by Flow Hive

<https://www.honeyflow.com.au/search?q=videos>

### BeeAware

BeeAware is a hub of information for beekeepers and growers about honey bee biosecurity and pollination of agricultural and horticultural crops.

The site contains an extensive range of information about exotic and established pests and diseases of honey bees, and helps beekeepers to identify and respond to these pest threats.

<https://beeaware.org.au/>

### Plant Health Australia

Plant Health Australia is the national coordinator of the government-industry partnership for plant biosecurity in Australia.

The purpose of PHA is for government and industry to have a strong biosecurity partnership that minimises pest impacts on Australia, enhances market access and contributes to industry and community sustainability.

This site has resources about bee biosecurity as well as the Biosecurity On-Line Training (BOLT).

<https://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/>

### NSW Dept of Primary Industries

Contains information on wide range of issues relating to keeping bees and has fact sheets that can be downloaded.

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees>

For DPI videos about beekeeping

<https://www.youtube.com/user/NSWAgriculture/search?query=bees>

Merryn Gallucio has shared her recipe for mead – Tony Moran, you will like this one!

## HOW TO MAKE MEAD (HONEY WINE)

Mead making goes back millennia, and honey wines have been found at archaeological sites from around 10,000 BC. Humans have been making mead for a very long time.

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Honey
- Fermentation Vessel (x2) ~ Generally a glass 5 litre jug or you can use a plastic brewing bucket. It helps to have two so that you can siphon the mead.
- Water Lock/Air lock ~ Often the fermenting jars will come with a rubber stopper and water lock, but if not, you'll need one to seal the jug. A water lock is a one-way valve that allows carbon dioxide to escape.
- Plastic tube Siphon ~ Optional, but highly recommended. A siphon allows you to move the mead from one container to another, leaving the cloudy sediment behind. You can just pour, but it's not as clear a finished product.
- Wine Bottles ~ Any clean, sterilized wine bottles can be reused for bottling.
- Sanitizer ~ A one-step sanitizer cleans all equipment quickly, and won't leave any residue to interfere with your mead making. I recommend metabisulphite.

### HOW TO MAKE MEAD

- Making mead at home is incredibly easy.
- Start by adding one part honey and three parts water to a fermentation vessel. For a 4 litre batch, that means 1 litre honey and 3 litres water. Mix thoroughly until the honey is completely dissolved.
- Next, add wine or mead yeast to the mixture. Raw honey straight from the hive already contains natural yeast but adding dry yeast does help the fermentation process.
- Choose a good white wine yeast.
- Add in any optional additives, such as fruit, herbs or winemaking additives (tannin, etc). All of these are optional and will flavour your homemade mead or help it ferment more efficiently. The only additive that should be added to each batch is either 1 tsp yeast nutrient (or a handful of raisins) per 4 litres. Honey is a complex sugar, and it's harder for the yeast to metabolize than straight sugar or fruit sugar.
- Seal the fermentation vessel with a water lock to create a one-way valve. This will allow the CO2 created during fermentation to escape, but it won't allow contaminants to enter.
- Bubbles should be present with 24 hours, and the first week or so will be very active fermentation. Allow the mead to ferment for 2-3 weeks, until fermentation slows. This is called primary fermentation.
- After 2-3 weeks, use a siphon to move the mead to a new container for secondary fermentation. This process is called "racking." The sediment is left behind in the primary fermentation vessel, which helps to clarify the mead.
- Racking is optional, but really improves the quality of the finished mead.
- Allow the mead to ferment in secondary for at least 6 weeks, or as much as 6 months. Longer will usually improve the mead, but it's up to your level of patience. If you're choosing not to rack into secondary, just leave it in primary for 8 weeks before bottling. That's fine too. For bottling, I'd strongly recommend using wine bottles with lids. Mead improves with age. Allow the mead to age for at least a month, or longer.

