

BEEBIZ JANUARY 2020

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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<u>Committee Member</u>	two vacancies		

President Report

Hi folks !! It is with great pleasure that I have been elected the new President of the NRABA after Jamie Mudge stepped down from leading the club through a bit of a bumpy period in 2019. Things are back on track for 2020 with some more interesting field days at exotic venues. There is still a couple of vacancies on the committee entailing 1 meeting per month for approximately 1.5 hrs in Lismore. We are always looking for new venues for Field days. If it would be possible for you to host one at your property contact Brian Window with the details. As far as I'm aware no club member lost any hives during the extreme weather conditions that engulfed the country just some emergency evacuations of bee hives. Looking forward to seeing you all at the next field day especially the new members.

Cheers Kevin Virgen

Secretary Report

It is a relief to get to a new year, with a difficult year in the past, and to look forward to progress in 2020. Unfortunately, there are still issues associated with the end of 2018 and beginning of 2019 to be resolved, and the committee is working on them. I look forward to working with the new President, Kevin Virgen.

The committee intends to revise our constitution at the AGM to make it obligatory for members to also be members of the ABA, and to introduce a membership grade of associates, which will be available to relatives of members and members of other ABA clubs. The latter is so that members of other clubs will be recognised in our club, and will be on the mailing list for the newsletter.

Another issue is to get a more truthful statement of the cost of membership on the ABA website; nobody should be able to join our club for \$5 and get the same rights as members who pay \$35.

However, we should not forget that the main task of the committee is to arrange field days to entertain and educate our members, and we welcome suggestions of topics, speakers, venues etc.

Brian

Update on Last Field Day

My partner Josephine and I enjoyed the (unplanned) hosting of the Xmas party at our home in Lismore, and we hope that all who attended it had a good day as well. It was a shame that we could not go back to Rocky Creek Dam Reserve as it was closed because of the Mount Nardi fire, but maybe we can try again next year.



About 30 people attended and enjoyed the company and the excellent food. The meats came from Australian sources, and the salads were made by the committee members and their partners. Xmas pudding with custard or cream went down really well.

The raffle prize of items donated by club members overflowed the laundry basket purchased to contain them. Thank you to all for donations. The prize was won by Ray and Vicki Smith; congratulations Ray and Vicki, but Ray will have to watch his waistline!

Brian

Flowering Report

I am only telling you what you can probably see out of your window. During the end of year hiatus Rough Barked Apple has had a wonderful flowering. Plenty of useful pollen but seldom any nectar. The name apple is given because when the timber is cut with an axe, it looks like a nice bite taken out of an apple. Following and equally spectacular is the Bloodwood. Again a pollen producer but again one of the long list of trees that are shy nectar producers. This is not true of the Pilliga Bloodwood, it is a reliable yielder, of typical Bloodwood honey. By which I mean it strings when an implement is put into it and withdrawn, not wanting to break the stream. This can be felt in the extractor, like the strings of the Lilliputians.

Also flowering is Swamp Mahogany

(*Lophostemon suaveolens*), a close relation to Brush Box. Not a showy flowerer, it is easy to miss when driving past. It is one of the species that flower in bursts, often almost continuous. Not a regular nectar producer but can perform on occasion giving a choice honey. It occurs mostly on the flats, so has often been cleared, leaving only remnants.

I notice some Red Gum are starting to show bud. This should mean they will start flowering around May. Excellent pollen and sometimes producing acceptable honey. Mostly its value lies in years when it flowers with Grey Ironbark, a great honey producer but in its case pollen short. I have just noticed some bud on Grey Ironbark, I would expect it to flower with the Red Gum.

For those near the coast Ti Tree or Paper Bark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) should start to flower soon. It comes in bursts but this can be a problem at times. The pollen is good and there is usually at least some nectar. This stimulates the queen to lay only for it to cut out and leave the larvae half starved, only to be repeated again and again. As it also tends to be wet when it flowers this can shorten the effective flowering periods.

Speaking of wet. At this time of unprecedented dry it behoves beekeepers to make sure there is water available for their bees. This is not normally a problem on the coast, but it is possible that there is no water available in range, or that your bees could be a nuisance in someone's swimming pool.

Much country has been affected for some time to come. Spare a thought for those who have lost hives.

Geoff Manning

From the Hives January 2020

The period since the last report has been eventful for many, with the long running drought and the devastating fires.

The first move of the beehives was the exciting one; David Fairhall, who had just got his hives out of Bora Ridge before the Myall Creek fire came through, rang in the morning to say it was going to incinerate my sites at Bungawalbyn and I should get the hives out as soon as possible. It took until about 5 pm for it to sink in that he was right. David volunteered to help, and enlisted his professional beekeeper friend, Aaron McMaster, to help. The hives were in area readily accessible by utility and not by truck, so I asked John Bull to help. We all met at the corner of Elliot Road and the Summerland Way, and there we struck a brick wall. It was barricaded by fires and they would not let us in to pick up the hives. Locals could go in but not beekeepers.

We were always cordial, and after about an hour, they relented and called the supervisor, who they had said was tougher than them. But he let us in, as the fire was nowhere near where the hives were located yet.

We went to the first site with 16 3 box hives, and realised that we did not have a smoker. Still, we threw them on one utility, leaving the stands, and did the same to the 16 hives at the second site about a kilometre away. The hives were moved open to avoid overheating. We saw some smoke but no fire. The fire went through the next day; the fires saved all the houses in that area. Thankfully, it burnt through at a time of little wind.

The hives were taken back to Rous, and put on a custard apple farm. I never move hives open like the professionals do. I was assured it was a piece of cake. By this time we had a smoker, but the bees were really savage. None of us had our fully impregnable gear on, and we copped what Geoff Manning would describe as "a pissing" (I define this as at least 20 stings). It is a word, according to the Macquarie Dictionary. Most of the stings were around the ankles. We just had to grit our teeth and bear it. None of us showed allergy symptoms, but it took a few days for my shins to feel normal. But we saved the hives.

In the last week they have been moved out, because the orchardist hand pollinates one variety of custard apples, and the bees are pinching the pollen. He says that after about 4pm you can see the bees queuing up waiting for the female flowers to open and get at the pollen. There are 16 hives at Afterlee past Kyogle, and an extra 22 hives at Mongogarrie.

I have been out to Bungawalbyn since to pick up the stands. Again, because it was a low wind fire, many of the tall trees seemed to have survived with little damage in the canopy. There were flowering bloodwoods and flowering swamp mahoganies in the burnt areas. So maybe the area will recover quicker than expected.

Brian

Venues for field days

There is always a need for volunteers to host a field day. It can be at your place or at a hall nearby, hopefully with some beehives available to show beginners. The requirements of having car access and adequate parking seem to be limiting factors. But talk it over with Kevin or Brian.

Biosecurity

According to the last The Amateur Beekeeper, as part of a survey, each club is invited to send 100g samples of honey from three different apiaries for testing for AFB spores. Testing is free, and the details of the apiary are anonymous. You do get the results. Contact the biosecurity officer Ray Smith if you wish to participate. Samples have to be in by 28th February.

Steritech Trip

A consignment was sent to Steritech just before Xmas. It consisted of 3 pallets of boxes and frames, and one bucket half full of honey. The honey was intended to be used for the manufacture of queen candy for queen cages by a queen bee breeder near Grafton.

It costs \$33 to irradiate a bucket of honey, and the bucket cannot be full as irradiation causes a substantial increase in volume.

The exact details of what happened are not known, but apparently when loading to bring back to Lismore the bucket was placed in an unstable position, from whence it fell, splitting and spilling all the honey. It was a recycled light weight food bucket of doubtful vintage, and it would have been made more brittle by the irradiation. The club will refund the cost of the irradiation (\$33) but not the honey.

The charge per box was set at \$17. The amount of AFB does seem to have decreased considerably.

Library

The library now has a copy of the new book by Doug Somerville, titled "Honey and Pollen Flora of South Eastern Australia". It is impressive in many ways. It will be in the library box to have a look at, and will become available for borrowing later. In the front of the book is a list to determine who gets the book next.

Services Directory

Summary of available products and services

NRABA Members

Paul Davey (hive care)(Mullumbimby) 0491 608 272

David Fairhall(queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771

Leland Eglington (Steel beehive stands) (Alstonville) 0455 555 136

Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736

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

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

Corrections and additions welcome

Field day Sunday February 2nd 2020

The next field day is at the property of Rob and Rebecca Blair-Hickman, 98Whytes Lane West, Pimlico. The topic will be how to recycle frames from beehives, and there will be opportunities to look at Rob's equipment and products. Rob and Rebecca have built up a substantial business in honey and bees wax products of high quality.

The day will commence at 9.30 am with a welcome by the President, and the activities will start at 10.30 am.

Lunch of sausages and salad will be served at about 12.30 pm, and the raffle will be held before the end of the day at 1.30pm.

All attendees are asked to bring either a morning tea item or a salad for lunch. As a guide, bring enough for twice the size of your group. Male beekeepers in particular note, we need more salads! Lunch will cost \$5. In the past, the club has always relied on lunch payments and the raffle to provide funds for the operation of the club. So raffle items are always appreciated. Raffle tickets will cost \$2, and you could win big.

So, remember to bring

- Salads/morning tea
- Raffle items
- Chairs
- Nametags

Directions

The Blair-Hickman property is at 98Whytes Lane West, Pimlico. From Lismore, go to the big interchange on the south side of Ballina, and take the Pacific Highway south towards Grafton. Do NOT take the turn off to Pimlico.

The highway goes under a big flyover further on, and you take the exit immediately after the flyover, and then go over the flyover to end up on the west of the highway. Turn right at the bottom of the bridge. Do not re-enter the freeway to head north. Turn left on to the gravel road and head to the mountains. Follow the powerlines after 500m. The property is 1km from the start of Whytes Lane West. The action is in the tan shed left of the driveway.

Coming from the south, the directions are the same after you exit before the flyover.

Be considerate when you park.

Do not rely on your GPS, as it may not have been updated, If you have difficulties, call Rob on 0412 157 593

Look for the bee signs.

Poem supplied by Geoff Manning taken from: Bee People.

BEES VS PEOPLE

We all know local bees are best, we're used to climate, crops and pests. What does the keeper do? the fool with imports wrecks our local gene pool.

We like a hole up in a tree, a bushel's the best cavity. He puts a hive upon the ground, too big and square, we like it round.

The entrance should be really high, an inch-round hole from which we fly. The hive slot's sixteen inches long, the size, height, shape are simply wrong!

We do not like it on the ground, too many enemies are around. Badgers, rats, mice and sheep, or worst of all, that blasted keeper!

He parks us next to other hives, that's not how we like to live our lives. If only we could have our say, our neighbour'd be half a mile away.

In late spring, when the weather's warming our duty is to be out and swarming. Our keeper has a different thought and makes our efforts come to naught.

To spread our genes is in our bones, to do this we rear lots of drones. The keeper will our drone comb cull and thus our breeding efforts null.

Our queen should really stay alive until she gets to four or five. What does that blasted keeper do? he kills her when she's only two.

We craft our comb so every cell will do its own job very well. Another keeper condemnation: "One size fits all" foundation.

We need to feast all summer long to feed our many thousand throng. But with weedkiller and massive fields the countryside no longer yields.

With summer o'er we've stacked our stores, remember that they're ours not yours. Nevertheless he steals our honey, gives us sugar - worth less money.

He attacks our hive with smoke, makes us run and makes us choke. He doesn't always though prevail, if we all use our sting in the tail!

Chris

MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 2019

Time 5 pm Monday 4th November

Place Room 5 Lismore Workers Club

- Members present B Window, J Mudge, K Virgen, Greg Booth, Paul Towner
- Apologies Ray Smith
- Minutes of Committee meeting October 7th be accepted (moved Paul Towner s Greg Booth passed)
- Matters Arising

-Email addresses for Col Rankin and Reg Crouch. No action taken

-Rocky Creek dam has been booked for the Xmas picnic (Rous Water; no charge)

- Correspondence

-Secretary has sent welcoming letters to new members. Diane Howard is not a member

- Reports

-Treasurer

(1) Should sort out accounts now he is back from leave. Secretary reported that at present he is owed \$895.46.

(2) Secretary has received an email about Manager software from LyallZweck, treasurer of the ABA. The treasurer to liaise with secretary to implement the software.

(3) October Field Day income \$0, expenses \$22, gift to come. attendance 20+

(4) Email received from secretary ABA asking our membership supplement fee for the 18 month, and listing ABA fees for that period. It was decided to keep our fee at \$5 non-reducing.(moved PTowner;s K Virgin; passed). Secretary to inform ABA .

(5) Librarian to purchase new Doug Somerville book for the library at a cost of \$180. (moved BW s KV passed}

(6) Treasurer reported that the Greater had a limit of 10 cards for an account, and we have reached that limit; he could not get one. It was agreed that he should open a new account, which could issue up to ten cards, as there will be some changes in office bearers early in 2020, and close the old account..

- Agenda Business Items

(1) Field Day

-Program

November Xmas party at Rocky Creek Dam on Sunday 24th November

January Field day at home of Brian Window on Sunday 2nd February

February Field day will be AGM at Ruthven or Rous Mill Hall on Sunday 1st March

Other volunteers are Rob Blair (Pimlico), Greg Booth(?).

(2) Acceptance of New Members

The committee approved Isabella Thomas and David Wilson as new members (moved JM s BW passed) Secretary to write to them welcoming them to the club, and membership officer to notify the ABA and record on the register of members.

(3) Constitution

Secretary tabled a discussion paper on the proposed changes to the constitution which he intended to circulate to the members early to allow them ample time to consider before presenting it to the AGM. The document had general support, but the President said that he would not support the associate members not having full voting rights.

(4) Newsletter

The committee approved of Barry O'Connor as the new editor, and suggested that he be invited to serve on the Committee either as a full member or as an ex-Officio member.

(5) Brochure and Membership

The brochure was not discussed, because of the complexities introduced by the 18 month membership period.

(6) Planning for Xmas Party

Secretary outlined plans for the Xmas picnic, having booked Rocky Creek Dam area with Rous Water.

(7) NRABA Prize Lismore Show

Secretary reported that Tony Lamont had won the inaugural NRABA Prize at the Lismore Show for the best honey. The hive tool had been engraved at a cost of \$50.

- Meeting finished at 6.20pm

Next Meeting

Time 5pm 6th January 2020 (subject to availability of members)

Place Lismore Workers Club