

BEELINES

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEEKEEPERS CLUB INC

JANUARY 2019



Ian, Mat and Geoff sharing at the December festive meeting 2018

Upcoming Events (see website for full details and registration)

Club Monthly Meeting

17th January 2019, 7:00 PM

Doncaster Secondary College,
123 Church Rd, Doncaster 3108

Sausage Sizzle Supper followed by:

Q & A, then screening:

Bee Bio Security Masterclass

- Focus on Varroa Mite



Club Apiary Hive Inspection, BBQ & Honey Extraction

11 AM, Saturday 19th Jan 2019

A routine hive inspection will be held at the club apiary for any new or interested members. Bee suits and gloves will be available to borrow.

This will be followed by a BBQ and honey extraction demonstration/hands-on at 12 PM.

Please register for the events (free) on the web site to help with catering.

Note: You need to be logged in to see the event.

Beginners Course

9th Feb 2019 9:30 AM

St John's Anglican Church,
1 Burgundy St, Heidelberg
22 registered; 3 places left.

In the Hive

Well, exciting times for us and a lot of the members calling and asking to borrow the extractors.

Honey, Honey, Honey. Lots of it.

Earlier in the season we talked at the club meeting about the humid weather slowing down the ripening process of the honey, creating potential swarms because of bees back-filling the brood chamber, looking for extra room to store the nectar whilst finishing off the stores.

The solution for us was stacking up our hives to catch the nectar rather than leave it in the trees. The concern for this was the height factor and weight of a hive that's taller than me.

This paid off. We are now into Summer and the weather is much less humid, meaning that we are finding that our stacks of 5 and 6 high beehives are typically all holding 3 boxes of honey on average. Busy nights in the extracting room.

This is what we are seeing in Melbourne Metro and inner suburbs with some members also excited to be extracting honey, some for the first time ever.

It's not the case everywhere though. We have had accounts of areas in the Dandenong Ranges that are very 'localised' with bees still in only one box in the middle of the season and feeding to keep them alive, which shows how truly local beekeeping is to you and your hive.

Commercial beekeepers are getting very excited for a good Grey Box season and it is important that if you are in a Grey Box area, your bees need to be very strong to work the trees as it can be hard on them and some have lost hives as a result of too much nectar ...crazy.

Happy harvesting, remember to keep some of your best loot for the honey competition in April.

Mat Lumalasi
President

2019 Recreational Beekeepers Conference



Planning is well underway for the 2019 Recreational Beekeepers Conference.

The Conference Steering Committee is excited to announce the date: Saturday June 15th.

The venue has been confirmed and will be suitable to host both accommodation and parking on site in Essendon.

Speakers will be announced in February.

Stay tuned...

Honey Competition

The honey competition will be held in April. Jars should be available from the January meeting onward.

The competition includes photography, wax and food so start getting prepared.

Honey Testing

Gribbles honey test kits will be made available at upcoming meetings. The club recommends that you test a pooled honey sample each year for early AFB detection.

The cost (about \$42) of one test per member is reimbursed on presentation of the receipt.

Library Books

A reminder for anyone with outstanding books from the club library to please return them at the next meeting to avoid being chased up and fined. They are a valuable resource to share and we want all members to benefit from them.

December 2018 Meeting



The December festive meeting was a great success with plenty of food and time for members and gardeners to catch up.



2018 marked the 20th anniversary of The Beekeepers Club and we were fortunate to have Ian Brown and Geoff Neville come along and share a history of the club.

The club was formed in February 1998 with 13 members, initially meeting at the Manningham council depot. Within 10 years this grew to 78 members. Ian Brown was the club's third president and a regular trainer.

Three or four year's after the club started, Southside beekeepers club was formed as a subsidiary as people had to travel so far.

The club became well known and recognised throughout the industry and as far as Tasmania. While visiting Stephens Tasmanian Honey



recently Geoff saw the current production of 15,000 jars a day of Leatherwood honey coming off the line, exported to the Asian market.

Two of the first club members, Florian and Vin Anderson (senior), won first and third prize respectively for best honey *in the world*.

Ian made his start in beekeeping in England in 1942, aged 15. He arrived in Australia in 1964. In the 70's he bought a block of land in Heathcote and bought more bees from Norm Redpath (Alan's father).

After being made redundant in the late 70's, Ian expanded to 80 hives. Being on the edge of the Box forest the bees did very well.

It was around this time that Ian came across The Beekeepers Club, Doncaster and has enjoyed many good times.



Ian, Sue and Geoff cut a cake to celebrate the club's 20th year

The Beekeepers Club Inc – War on Waste Reminder

In effort to help reduce waste, we are looking at how we as a club can minimise its environmental impact.

As beekeepers who care for bees & therefore our environment it would be fantastic to set an example for other clubs.

One of the areas for consideration is disposable cups. More than 1 billion disposable cups are used by Australians each year, approximately 92% go to landfill. According to businessrecycling.com.au, that equates to 2.7 million coffee cups per day.

We invite you to bring your re-usable cup to the next club meeting. Every little bit helps!



Welcome Club Newbees

We extend a warm welcome to the following members who have recently joined the club:

Janine Arendsen	Yea
Michael Campbell	Donvale
Nicole Geerts	Templestowe
Erika Hamilton	Wonga Park
Matthew Kluga	Keilor Downs
Jordane Malaterre	Heidelberg Heights
Guillaume Martinez	Heidelberg Heights
Banibal Messo	Attwood
Ken & Sue Reid	
Frank Tutera	Briar Hill
John Webster	East Melbourne
Anthony Zandona	Ringwood

BEE WHISPERING Cues and Clues

Arthur Garske explains how you can tell a lot about a beehive before you even open the lid

To be a good beekeeper (and not just a keeper of bees) it is necessary to use ALL your senses. Especially your powers of OBSERVATION.

There is so much that you can learn from just watching your bees and seeing what they are doing.

- o How many bees are flying?
- o Amount of pollen being brought in
- o Are the bees landing light or heavy?
- o What is on the ground in front of the hive?
- o How many bees are crawling up grass stems trying to fly and falling back to the ground?

- Are their wings distended?
- Are they shivering?
- Do they look waxy?

- o Do the front of the hive bodies have orange looking spots?
- o Have you listened to the hum of the bees?

While you are watching them:

- o Have the bees been checking you out?
- o Are you something they feel threatened by?
- o Are there bees flying around the hive erratically looking into cracks or crevices, the breathing vents on migratory lids, landing on the edge of the entrance and taking off again erratically?



You may see a bee trying to run out of the entrance with another bee hanging onto that bee and maybe trying to sting the intruder. This could be taking place in several sites across the landing board entrance.

This tells you that all is not well in the honey gathering stakes: the flow has either been interrupted due to weather conditions or even that the honey flow has finished.

This means that maybe you should have a re-think about looking at your bees. If you had

been planning on robbing them then reassess. If you decide to go ahead and rob in a suburban situation, this could possibly lead to neighbours, family members or anything that moves in the vicinity getting stung.



The solution if you notice these external signs is to not go past the OBSERVATION STAGE.

- o Are they buzzing around five centimetres from your face to get to the hive taking no notice of you?
- o What is the buzzing sound now?
 - Is it normal?
 - Is the pitch much higher?
 - Are the bees movements jerky and darting?

If you dare to windmill with your hands, hey presto! Instant sting.

If you ignore that bee buzzing around five cm from your face rather frantically it will leave you for a short time but will return and go through the same process and eventually not come back at all.

Sometimes the first bee that was buzzing with a high pitch sound may return with two or three other high pitched buzzers. This tells you that all is not happy in the family home and it is time for you to de-camp slowly.

On the other hand you might, on first arrival to look at your hives, hear a really high pitch buzz and feel the bee hit you in the back of the neck or ear.

When this happens there is only one thing to



do and that is to hit the bee as it hits you and scratch the sting out immediately.

If you do not kill the stinger she will keep hitting you and the high pitched sound of her buzzing wings is a call to arms for her sisters who will be devotees of the same Kamikaze school of high speed attack.

IT IS TIME TO LEAVE AND GEAR UP!

If you absolutely have to look into the hives make sure the smoker is belching lots of thick white COOL smoke, preferably from forest She-oak needles.

Now OBSERVE what is happening around you.

- o Are there clouds?
- o Is it windy?
- o Which direction is the wind coming from?
- o Are the bees coming in light?
- o What is the smell or odour in the immediate hive area? Is it sweet or sour?

All this has been OBSERVED and you haven't even opened up the hive yet.

OPENING THE HIVE

Release a few puffs of smoke at the entrance. Lift the corner of the lid and add a couple of puffs. Put the lid back down and wait a minute or so making sure you are standing to the side or back of the hive, NOT in front of the entrance.

Lift the lid off, then the inner cover. Now observe what the bees are doing.

- o Are they forming rank? If so, use a couple of puffs of smoke. If not, use your hive tool.
- o Split the frames gently and deliberately.
- o Withdraw a frame.
- o Look at it on its edges.
 - o Smell the odour of the hive.
 - o Put your nose down to the gap formed when you withdrew the frame and breathe deeply.
 - o Is it sweet or sour (foul)?
 - o Are the bees in the hive buzzing normally?
 - o Are they buzzing nervously?
 - o Are they buzzing, crying, distressed?



Lift off boxes of honey, placing them on your upturned hive lid with a puff or two of smoke

over boxes before lifting them off.

Now you are down to the BROOD BOX. Lift out the frame of brood nearest the side wall. Look quickly on both sides making sure the queen is not on it and lean it against the side of the hive.

What you are looking for is eggs on end and tiny larvae. When you find these start observing the bees behaviour. This will help you find the queen.

All the time LISTEN to the buzz of the hive.

You should also be SMELLING at the same time.

Gently shake excess bees back into the hive body then start looking at the frame of brood. Give the frame a shake on the flat. This lets you know how good or bad is the honey flow.

o Turn frame on its axis and position yourself with the sun coming over your shoulder and the frame angled so that the sun lights up the bottom of the cells.

If the queen is young and vigorous there should be even concentric arches of brood and larvae.

If conditions are really good there should be a sea of royal jelly in the bottom of cells, with the tiny larvae floating in it.

The smell you should be smelling is slightly sour, coming from the abundance of royal jelly.

There should be a band of honey around the sides and top bar. All this is done quickly as you want to have the hive opened as little as possible. While you are doing this your ears are LISTENING to the sound of the bees.

When they start to alter their pitch to anxious, a couple of gentle puffs of smoke over the brood box and frames and also over the top of your honey supers is a good idea.

Quickly go through the brood frames.

- o How many sealed brood?
- o How many unsealed brood?
- o How lavishly are they being fed?
- o What sort of shake have you got?



- o Is it consistent with what you have observed in the flora (buds) flowering?
- o How much more is to crack, i.e., how much that is going to start flowering in another four weeks

Are the bees really happy and progressive? If so

- o Split the brood and, say, put in four well drawn combs alternating between unsealed brood.
- o Lift up four frames sealed brood and put into middle of honey super
- o Take out four frames sealed honey all the while LISTENING for changes in buzzing (bee talk) telling you when the judicious use of smoke is needed either to start putting the hive back together, take off honey or put on an extra box or boxes.

If you do not want to take off honey this time, put the four frames of sealed honey on the outside and four empty frames in the middle of the new box you have given them.

LISTENING

When you first take off the lid and cover, LISTEN to the hive sound or bee talk.

- o If a hive is queenless, the bees sound agitated or unhappy and I call it "crying"
- o If a hive has lost its queen (superseded and raised a new queen but she has not long hatched out and has not as yet mated) the bees sound "anxious."
- o If a hive is "sick" for whatever reason then the sound the bees make is sort of agitated. When your nose takes an active role you can smell that all is not well. The demeanour of the bees is aggressive.

When you take off the lid and cover of a queen-right healthy and prosperous hive the sound you will hear is a normal humming sound – "happy bees".

I have already told you how your sense of smell is so important in helping you to assess conditions in the hive. Likewise your eyes are the key to see what is going on outside the hive.



To be a good beekeeper you have to be a stu-

dent of nature. Look closely at what is happening around about your hives. Your hives may be getting a tremendous shake, the weather is fine and sunny, there is no sign of a change, there is a light breeze, you are working your bees, everything is great then maybe an hour later the breeze stiffens, the tone of the bees changes and they start to get a little toey but you finish your work.

The next day: no shake of nectar, bees are as cranky as all hell and prone to rob. But the following day everything is fine, bees are happy and getting a tremendous shake. The only thing different is there is no breeze.

Lesson to be learnt: wind stops a number of trees yielding.

Walking through scrub looking at bud and blossom, pull down a limb to look at the flowers to see how much nectar is in the flowers. Maybe they are full. Go around other side of tree that was in the shade, pull down a limb to look at the nectar in the flowers and guess what could be as dry as a chip.

Look at different trees on the shady side. No nectar; on the sunny side plenty of nectar. Go back in the afternoon and the reverse happens.

Lesson to be learnt: if you had looked on the shady side only, you would have thought there was zero flow.

Here's another example of when the bees were going great: The queen was laying profusely, really big brood and bees getting a tremendous shake, plenty of blossoms to break and then another floral source so heavy with bud the limbs were all hanging down like bunches of grapes. I came back to civilisation for four weeks, counting the tins of honey that are going to come.

Then I returned to the bees and went down into the brood nest on the first hive after lifting off three boxes of honey. The brood nest was shrinking. First thought: queen getting past it.

On the next hive I go down to the brood nest and find the brood nest shrinking, with bees packing honey into the cells as the brood hatches. All the hives were the same. At that

point everything around looked great to me: the flow they were working was yielding, and the buds on the upcoming flow were full and yellow and just about ready to start cracking.

When I went back four weeks later, not a flower was in sight. The ground under the trees was yellow with bud that the trees had thrown off.

Lesson learnt from OBSERVATION. Somehow those bees knew what was going to happen weeks before it did happen.

This article is from the Amateur Beekeepers Association, NSW, Dec/Jan 2019 newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

Nectar Collecting

- In one trip, a honey bee can visit about 75 and up to 3000 flowers.
- A bee spends 5-150 minutes/trip.
- In a lifetime, on average a honey bee produces 1/12th teaspoon (5 drops) of honey.

January Flora

Keep an eye out for the following trees over the next month.



Corymbia Ficifolia 'Wild Sunset'

These are what will be filling supers at the moment in the suburbs.



Eucalyptus Viminalis - Manna Gum

Rough bark on the trunk and base of larger branches, its upper bark peels away in long "ribbons" which can collect on the branches and surrounding ground.



Eucalyptus macrorhyncha, commonly known as Red Stringybark, is a small to medium-sized tree with rough, thick fibrous and stringy, dark-brown bark.

*This nectar will make bees aggressive and stings more painful than usual.



Thanks to Vin Anderson for the monthly floral update. We hope to see you at the meeting next Thursday with more.

Mat Lumalasi
President

Spot the Queen

You certainly don't need to find the queen every time you go into the hive. Seeing evidence of her recent activity (eggs and young larvae) is often all that is required.

However finding the queen is a useful and important skill a beekeeper should have and can be improved with practice.

The bees around the queen act differently. Often there are several bees facing her, tending to her needs.

The queen moves differently. While the worker bees are either moving quickly or just hanging and not moving, the queen usually moves slowly and steadily.

The queen is often a slightly different colour.

Try using some of the above tips to see how quickly you can spot her below.



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