



Beekeepers Association of the ACT

PO Box 1482, Woden, ACT, 2606

Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Incorporated

Website: www.actbeekeepers.asn.au

Meetings of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Inc are held on the second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm at the CIT, Heysen Street, Weston in Building A

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Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday 9th March at 7.30pm, at CIT Weston. One or more Association members will speak about aspects of beekeeping.

The meeting will begin with Beeginner's Corner, sharing beekeeping news and questions and the speakers will speak from about 7.45pm. As usual there will be a cup of tea and chat after the meeting.

President's Note:

It was great to see all those members able to attend the March AGM and to hear how active our Association has been over the last year. As the incoming President of the Association I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Hooper, last year's Vice President, for the great job he did in steering the committee through the issues it dealt with last year during the period when the Association had no President. Paul was also instrumental in introducing the popular new format for our monthly meetings which start with a very brief report of issues the committee has addressed since the last meeting, is followed by 'beeginners questions', and then has the guest speaker addressing the meeting.

It was with great pleasure that I saw most of the previous committee members elected for a further year, albeit taking on different roles. A new committee member, John Rice, was elected to fill a newly created position of webmaster. I am confident that the new committee of Paul Helliwell, Paul Hooper, Dick Johnston, Angie O'Neil, Jennifer Woodley-Beattie, John Rice, Mark Elliott and Lyn Shiels will work well together and will serve the Association well. (See elsewhere in the newsletter for who holds which committee position).

As the evenings draw in and get cooler I hope that members are preparing their hives for Autumn shut-down. Thanks go to Paul Hooper, our 'guest' speaker at the March meeting, for discussing some of the finer points of the shut-down process so that our hives will emerge strong

in Spring. Autumn is also a good time to review the season just gone and to plan how to build on successes and learn from mistakes. I hope you enjoy your reviewing and planning.

Dave Alden

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held on Thursday 9th March at CIT Weston. After hearing reports from the Vice President and Treasurer the following Committee members were elected:

President: David Alden

Vice President: Paul Helliwell

Secretary: Paul Hooper

Treasurer: Jennifer Woodley-Beattie

Librarian: Angela O'Neil

Web-Master John Rice

Newsletter: Lyn Shiels

Public Officer: Mark Elliott

Committee Member: Richard Johnston

Committee meetings will generally be held from 7.00pm to 7.30pm prior to the monthly meeting. A report of the main issues will be given to members at the beginning of the monthly meeting. Members are welcome to attend committee meetings as observers and are invited to contact any committee member to raise matters with the committee.

Previous Meeting

At the monthly meeting held on 9th March Paul Hooper spoke about some of the issues involved in preparing bees for winter.

The purpose of Autumn preparations is to prepare hives to survive winter and come into spring strong and ready to take advantage of honey flows. Vital factors are queens, population, stores, disease, location and ventilation.

A strong queen is important at any time and a hive with no queen or a failing queen can be requeened or amalgamated

with another hive. If a hive is low in population it can be amalgamated with another hive to increase their chance of surviving winter in good condition. However, before amalgamating a hive, look for why the colony is small. If the reason is disease then consider curing or destroying, rather than spreading the disease

A hive with 8 frames of bees should be left with a full box of honey to see them through the winter and the queen excluder should be removed to allow the cluster to move up as the honey in the bottom box is consumed. As the brood nest contracts in Autumn place full frames of honey on the outside and any uncapped honey in beside the brood nest. Extract any extra honey and protect frames from wax moth in storage. Don't leave large amounts of uncapped honey as it can ferment or go mouldy. Place a hive mat on top of the last box under the lid.

Any hive without a full box of honey should be fed now until they have sufficient stores. Sugar syrup fed to bees in Autumn should be made up in the ratio of two measures of sugar to one of water.

A box of stickies can be left on top of a strong hive above a Mercer mat. The mat reduces heat loss to the empty box and the bees will go around the mat and patrol the frames often enough to keep the Wax Moth at bay. If there is an unexpected early nectar flow the bees will have space to take advantage of it.

Locating the hives in a dry, sunny spot with the entrance turned to the north or north east and away from prevailing winds will help the bees keep the hive warm and dry during the winter. The entrance should be closed down to a couple of centimetres using a couple of small wooden blocks. This will help conserve warmth and make it easier for the bees to defend against predators such as European Wasps. Make sure the hive is tipped slightly forward to allow any moisture to drain away. Keep grass and weeds down around the hive as these tend to create damp conditions.

Throughout Winter and in early Spring check the hive for supplies. This can be done at any time by hefting the hive slightly from the back to test the weight. If it is very light supplies are low and the bees require feeding. It is possible to do a quick visual check during Canberra winters. On a

still warm day have a quick look. Don't remove every frame and don't stand brood frames out of the hive.

With a bit of care now our bees should be ready for the good season we hope is in store in Spring and Summer.

Lyn Shiels

Empty Super Awards

Lesson: Leave the Queen Alone

When we are collecting swarms or removing feral hives we often find the hosts of uninvited bees are interested in learning about why they have been so favoured as a home. We often spend a bit more time than is really needed for the bees to settle while we talk to people and show them frames, drones or even a queen. This extra attention is appreciated by the people but not always the bees.

Recently we were called to a home where a very small swarm had taken up abode in a cleft in a rock garden. The sum total of bees would be about 500 but there was a queen. The family hosting the bees were interested in proceedings so when I spotted the queen near the entrance to our hive box I quickly grabbed her and put her in a queen catcher to show them. Two minutes later I released her near the entrance to the hive which by then contained most of her family. I watched her crawl inside but a few minutes later realised that the bees were leaving the hive and settling on the branch of a small tree nearby.

Several attempts to shake them into an ice cream carton and deposit them near the hive were unsuccessful and eventually I opened the hive, deposited a goodly number inside and the remainder followed. Thank goodness, my credibility was beginning to look a bit shaky.

At this moment, two days later, these same bees are hanging in a tiny cluster high in my neighbour's tree. I have no idea why they are taking the suicidal option of leaving a perfectly good box for the open. Their chances of survival without help is slight even in a nice warm box.

Pat hopes I have learned my lesson and will leave the queen alone to get on with it next time but I suspect this lot would have been wayward anyway.

Lyn Shiels



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