



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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November 2006

Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday 9th November at 7.30pm, at CIT Weston. The guest speaker will be Dr Andrew Barron, a research scientist from the ANU. Andrew will speak about Dance language and Division of Labour in the super-efficient environment of a honey bee colony. Andrew's talk will review the understanding of two key mechanisms that contribute to efficiency in the bee hive. These are the advanced division of labour between workers, and the honey bee's unique symbolic dance communication system.

As usual the meeting will begin with Beeginner's Corner, sharing beekeeping news and questions and the speaker will speak from about 7.45pm. There will be supper and time to chat after the meeting.

President's Note:

First, to those members who know their mites from their beetles and spotted my error in the last Newsletter. At our September meeting Dr Denis Anderson described some little critters that scurry about on Asian honeybees. I incorrectly referred to these as beetles when, of course, they are mites. Thank you Mr Vice President for being the first (but probably not the last) to bring this to my attention!

Second, thank you Lyn Shiels for leading our discussion at the October meeting on how to prevent swarming, how to collect swarms and how to merge swarms with existing hives. As many members would know, Lyn and Pat Shiels have many stories resulting from their years of swarm collecting. Lyn shared some of these to illustrate various collecting techniques. I'm sure members will draw on the wisdom from these stories when next they collect a swarm.

Third, it was good to meet some of the current batch of students on the 'Backyard Beekeeping' course run by the Association. It appears that the course is so popular that CIT, who administer the course, have enrolled a second batch of students for a course in November. All members of the Association can be proud of the high quality teaching that is provided by our members: Dick Johnston, Lyn & Pat Shiels, Paul Hooper and John Rice. Thank you all for your time and enthusiasm in delivering these courses. And to the students, I extend a 'welcome to beekeeping' to you all on behalf of all members of the Association. I hope that we'll be seeing some of you at our monthly meetings.

Dave Alden

Photo of the Month



Bumblebee (Bombus terrestris) Photo taken by John Rice in Dorset, England September 2006

Fried Bees - Could Be Food of the Future

Baby bee, deep-fried in butter, may be the food of the future according to a Victorian, Alan Frost, now working with the apiary branch of the Alberta Department of Agriculture in Canada. A recorded interview which he made for the Alberta Department's Radio programme "The Call of the Land", has been made available to the Victorian Department for its programme "The Voice of Agriculture" as part of series of exchanges between the two.

Brood Destroyed

Large amounts of bee-brood are destroyed in Canada each year and fresh brood imported from California, reports Mr Frost, but research done by Dr Hocking of the Alberta University has shown that this waste brood could be a valuable food for humans. It has the same protein content as beefsteak, ten times the vitamin D equivalent of cod liver oil, and twice as much vitamin A as egg yolk.

Dr Hocking tried various methods of preserving baby bees such as salting and pickling in vinegar. The two most successful methods were quick freezing and drying in an oven. The processed bees were flaky and resembled breakfast cereal. Women members of a tasting panel who sampled the baby bees fried in butter described them as being shrimp-like in flavour, nutty, and like pork crackling.

Not New

The use of baby bees for human food is not a new idea; according to quarantine officers of the Victorian Department of Agriculture, chocolate-coated baby bees have been imported into Australia from Japan along with such exotic novelties as fried ants, chocolate-coated ants, fried grasshoppers, cooked silkworms, fried caterpillars, quail eggs and smoked frogs legs. While chocolate-coated bees are in the luxury class at present, the day may come when, as a result of Dr Hocking's work, baby bees fried in butter will vie with bacon and eggs for pride of place on the breakfast plate.

*Extract from The Australian Beekeeper, March 1960.
Thanks to David Goodwin for this article from days of yore.*

Royal Canberra Show

It's time to think about placing a few new frames into your strongest hives to produce that prize winning frame for showing in February next year. Put aside a jar or two of your best honey to crystallise if you haven't already done so and maybe have a go at creamed honey. Wax entries could also be made well ahead of show time and perhaps some new honey recipes tested.

Award for Canberra Scientist

Professor Mandyam Srinivasan, director of the Australian National University's Centre for Visual Science, has been awarded the Prime Minister's Science Prize for his research into insect vision.

Much of Srini's work has been conducted at the Research School of Biological Sciences at ANU with honeybees. His discoveries into the way bees use their vision to navigate, regulate speed and measure distance have been used to develop robot flyers that can be used in situations where manned flight would not be possible.

Srini has been a popular speaker at our meetings on a number of occasions and has welcomed members to the university to see some of the experiments and work done there. Congratulations, Srini.

Irradiation of Beehives - System Change

We will send a load of hives to Steritech as soon as we have enough to make up a load. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have hives that you would like to send.

The total weight of each unit must be less than 25 kilograms and they must be double wrapped and double emlocked. We have some extra emlocks available to members to help with packing. NSW Agriculture publishes an Agnote detailing the wrapping required which can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/j9g78>

To assist with despatch of load from Steritech when they are being returned could members in future mark their hives "ACT BEEKEEPERS followed by their own name and address as usual." It will make it easier for Steritech and TJS Transport to identify the hives that belong in our load.

Transport cost depends on the number of hives sent and is usually about \$6-\$7 per hive. Please contact Lyn or Pat Shiels on Ph 62862421.

New Charges

Single Hive \$8.80

Double Hive \$16.50

Triple Hive \$23.10

Prices for irradiation of honey are available on application.

Help Wanted

A couple of local people have contacted me asking if there would be someone willing to do a bit of paid work helping them with their hives. If anyone has a bit of time to spare and could help please let Lyn or Pat Shiels know on 6286 2421.

Fifty Years Ago

The danger of fussing bees to death

A Beekeepers Diary by Alf E Norton (a commercial beekeeper)

Sunday 24 October 1954

My planning was interrupted by a ring from an enthusiastic amateur nearby, asking if I would come around and have a look at this few hives of bees in the back yard.

Said he "they don't seem to be doing any good. I would hate to lose them as I love pottering about them in my spare time. No matter what I do they don't seem to build up as they should, and goodness knows they get enough attention. I've been reading quite a lot about them. They tell you in the book that I have, that if the brood-nest is too jammed up the queen has nowhere to lay, so I opened up the brood-nests by putting a comb or two of brood each side of the hive and the empty combs in the middle; that was over a month ago, and I have inspected them every day expecting to see eggs in the combs. Most of the combs are only partly drawn out, but I suppose that wouldn't stop the queen laying in them, would it? They also advise keeping plenty of room on top for honey storage; otherwise they might swarm, so I put a super of foundation on each. They recommend foundation as being better than combs. I hadn't the combs anyway. I wouldn't mind them swarming but I'm away nearly all day and the wife won't have anything to do with them, and the book says that swarms weaken the parent colony."

I asked him if he wanted me to do with them what I would do with them if they belonged to me. He'd be delighted; did I want anything? I suppose he meant

more supers. It was the work of only few minutes to throw off the supers and snug them up on the sunny side, while friend amateur stood open-mouthed. I said "Now don't lift a cover for a month". He eventually found his speech: "But I thought bees needed a lot of attention."

I said "No doubt they do, but not the sort you are giving them." I then painted him a word picture of that old classic drawing that appeared in one of the American journals many years ago. It portrayed the remnants of a backyard apiary – hives standing on end and stacked up in a corner, combs standing around and not a bee showing. In the middle of it all sat a disconsolate man on an upturned hive with hat and bee veil on the ground. Below was a caption of three words only "Fussed to Death."

Extracted from *The Australasian Bee Keeper*, Vol 56 January 1955 (published by Pender Bros, Maitland, NSW).

Thanks to Angie O'Neill for finding this gem. Most of us are unlikely to fuss our bees to death and are rather more likely to be waving goodbye to a swarm or two or answering calls from neighbours who are unwilling hosts to swarms.

Extracting Party

On Saturday 2nd December there will be an Extracting Party at Edith Thompson's home at 70 Hawker Street Torrens. Everyone will have an opportunity to decap a few frames and turn the extractor as we extract Edith's spring honey.

Edith will provide tea, coffee, juice and some yummy cake. We'll start at 11.30 am and anyone who wants to bring some finger food for lunch will be welcome to stay and enjoy Edith's lovely garden over lunch.



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