



Next meeting | Wednesday 2 April 2025

Where | Johnsonville Community Centre

Editor | Jane Harding janeh@xtra.co.nz

Beginners session: Guarding against robbing and preparing for winter – Janine Davie

Main meeting; 7.30pm in big downstairs room at JCC Honey Competition. Frank Lindsay will judge.

Richard Braczek will give us an introduction to mead making



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From the President

I have decided that April is my least favourite month of the beekeeping calendar – robbing season! I only have two hives now and one hive has decided they should acquire some resources from the other one. I spent most of the day yesterday changing the “victims” into a Hive Defender base and box then wetting sheets and covering the various boxes I had separated them into. Hopefully this has solved the problem, there is still a lot of action around that hive but I think it is the home-bees trying to get in because I now have the entrance reduced substantially. I know Frank has told us many times we should have robber guards on and I do have lots in the bee cupboard, where they do a lot of good – not. Learn from my mistakes people.

I’ve extracted a bit more honey. It’s very unusual this year – I’m assuming due to the lack of Pohutukawa. Very amber in colour and taking ages to “set” whereas usually it only takes a couple of days.

Now I am a retired person I thought I should pay some attention to my garden. The garden at the front looks good for about a month every spring because it is chokka full of bulbs. I took a trip to the garden centre and bought a selection of plants. I chose the ones which looked to be attracting the most honey bees, photos to follow.

Escallonia on the left. Bumble bees love this but seems to be attractive to butterflies and honey bees as well.





On the right **Cuphia “Bianca”**.
Covered with honey bees at the
nursery but my bees are too stirred
up to notice it as yet.



Parahebe in pink



Parahebe white and Salvia Sallyfun Deep Ocean.

I have cleared a lot of bulbs out of the garden so will have lots to give away, sent me an email if you are interested – j.davie@orcon.net.nz. I'll bring them to the meeting on Wednesday. They are mostly Earlycheer daffodils and Iris as shown in the following photo.





Honey Competition

As indicated at the last meeting, the annual honey competition will be held this month.

Frank Lindsay will judge the competition.

If you have honey to enter in the competition, please bring to the meeting as early as you can, any time from 6.45pm. The sooner we have the honey entries, the sooner we can begin the judging.

There are three classes of entry:

- Liquid honey
- Creamed Honey
- Comb honey

A cup is awarded to the winner of the liquid honey class.

Click here for full details and [competition rules](#)



Last year we had 14 liquid honey entries and 15 creamed honey entries and 1 comb honey entry. Let's see if we can better that!



Honey Tasting Notes

From the March meeting, tasting notes for the different sorts of honeys.

Mānuka

Mānuka is the queen of New Zealand honeys, well-known both at home and overseas. Its colour can range from dark cream to dark brown and it has a distinctive earthy mineral flavour. Its taste has also been described as woody or nutty, with toffee notes. The flavour profile intensifies as the Unique Mānuka Factor (UMF) increases, due to naturally occurring phenolic and flavonoid compounds found within this honey. Depending on the packaging process it can have a 'jellied' texture and often small air bubbles can be seen.





Kānuka

While mānuka and kānuka plants look very similar with small white or pink flowers and long leaves, kānuka plants can be distinguished as the flowers grow in groups and the plant has softer leaves and smaller seed pods. While it tastes similar to mānuka, kānuka has a calmer, sweeter, less overpowering flavour and a floral aroma.



Tāwiri

Tāwiri is one of our very sweetest native honeys, a luxury honey known and loved for its buttery richness and clean, floral flavours. Tāwiri honey comes from the nectar of the tāwiri (*Ixerba brexioides*) tree, which is endemic to the northern part of the North Island.





Honeydew

Honeydew honey is made from nectar produced by insects, rather than from flower nectar. It is also called 'forest honey', 'pine honey' or 'fir honey'. Honeydew is dark amber in colour and it tastes complex and treacly, with some describing its flavour as like 'Christmas cake'. Honeydew honey is predominantly sourced from West Coast beech forests.



Rewarewa

Made from the New Zealand honey suckle flower, Rewarewa is a light amber coloured honey with hints of orange. It tastes clean and has complex herbaceous flavours. Its rich, malty taste profile makes it a great natural sweetener for teas. This honey is mainly sourced from the Bay of Plenty region.





Rātā

New Zealand has 11 rātā species, all of which are considered to be threatened species due to the potential threat from the fungal disease myrtle rust, and possums.

Their vibrant red flowers produce a pale coloured honey that is best when creamed, giving it a rich, buttery texture. It is a distinctive, mildly salty honey, with a heady aroma, that is not overly sweet.



Kāmahi

The delicate, creamy-white flower of the New Zealand native kāmahi tree produces a distinctly aromatic honey that comes in a range of colours. This elegant honey is smooth, rich and sweet, with a buttery aftertaste.





Clover

Clover flowers are a wonderful by-product of the New Zealand agriculture industry and many Kiwis have grown up with this family-friendly honey. It has a mild, clean, delicate flavour and a herbal aroma. It is another honey that benefits from the creaming process and ranges in colour from white to pale gold.



Bush Honey/Native Forest Honey

Bush blend honey is made from the many different nectars collected from flowers in New Zealand's bush and pasture land. It varies in taste depending on which region it comes from and when it was collected.





What's Happening Science-Wise?

Local Council bylaws and attitudes toward urban beekeeping

By Phil Lester

Like me, many readers of this column will be city dwellers and part of a growing number of urban beekeepers. Different local city councils around the country have different bylaws, leading to considerable variation in how we are treated and valued. So, are we beekeepers of benefit? And how should local councils treat bees and beekeepers? These are the questions asked by Dr. Dara Dimitrov from Te Piringa – The Faculty of Law at the University of Waikato, in an article recently published in the journal Urban Planning (Dimitrov, 2025).

New Zealand has 11 regional councils and 67 territorial authorities. Dr. Dimitrov describes how the general public's perception of honey bees in many regions often tends to be more fearful. Councils receive submissions citing 'bee attacks' and 'frightening swarms', and as a consequence, different councils have introduced different laws. For example, until 2021, the Waipa District Council had a bylaw requiring resource consent under the Resource Management Act, at a cost of \$1,200 per beehive. This costly bylaw was largely ignored by urban beekeepers, who kept beehives without paying such an exorbitant fee.

Here in Wellington, we must obey the Animal Bylaw 2024 (<https://wellington.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/bylaws/animal-bylaw-2024#bees>). We are limited to a maximum of four hives, though they can be removed or relocated if they cause a nuisance. Beekeepers are also required to provide a suitable water source for their bees. Meanwhile, beekeepers in Porirua are subject to the Porirua



City Council General Bylaw 1991 and must obtain permission from their neighbours before setting up hives.

In Auckland, the Animal Management Bylaw 2015 is the key document (<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/bylaws/Documents/animal-management-bylaw-2015-december-2021.pdf>). Auckland has similar rules for beekeepers to those in the capital, with some additions. Their regulations include a requirement to maintain bees with a “*calm temperament*”, and beginner beekeepers must learn how to be responsible.

Whatever the rules that we must obey, it is true that bees contribute significantly to the Sustainable Development Goals, which Dr. Dimitrov argues should be of major relevance to regional councils. Bees provide essential pollination services and contribute to sustainable cities. They support environmentally responsible consumption and the sustainable production of food. There are also economic benefits to keeping bees, and beekeeping can connect communities to food sources through honey production and hive products. Dr. Dimitrov suggests that urban beekeeping fosters community connections and brings people closer to nature.

Dr. Dimitrov argues for several changes and improvements in how councils engage with urban beekeeping. She recommends that councils build genuine relationships with beekeeping clubs, enabling collaboration on urban beekeeping issues and the development of intelligent, practical solutions. Community and club engagement could lead to more sensible problem-solving and ensure beekeepers have a stake in bylaw outcomes.

She also suggests that bees should be elevated from their current classification as mere livestock. *“Beehives meet the environmental needs of urban ecosystems by improving the yields of edible fruits and vegetables grown by many backyard gardeners. For this reason alone, council bylaws need to reflect the domesticated perspective of urban beekeeping rather than the commercial perspective. Furthermore, urban green spaces are essential for the physical and social well-being of communities, yet they*



cannot thrive without pollinators—particularly honey bees from urban beehives, which play a central role.”

The key take-home message is that local councils and beekeeping clubs should engage and collaborate to create a fair and reasonable environment for keeping bees. I believe Wellington City Council, and others, would be open to such an approach and discussion. They already have webpages on “*Tips on how to ‘bee’ friendly*” that include information on ‘*caring for our fuzzy flying friends*’.

Reference

Dimitrov, D. (2025). Urban beekeepers and local councils in Aotearoa, New Zealand: honeybees are valuable allies in achieving the sustainable development goals. *Urban Planning*, 10, 9166. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.9166>



Urban beehives, Wellington Nov' 22



Exotic Pest Surveillance

There are many exotic honey bee pests and diseases that, by exclusion from New Zealand, afford the beekeeping industry significant production and marketing advantages. Keeping our country free of exotic bee diseases relies on an effective border control and frequent hive inspection to ensure that anything that does arrive is identified and responded to quickly. Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) undertakes a comprehensive surveillance survey annually in autumn.

AsureQuality has been contracted by MPI to undertake this Surveillance Programme on their behalf. Whilst this is a voluntary participation by beekeepers, the early identification of unwanted pests (AFB, European Foul Brood and Small Hive Beetle) is extremely important to the whole industry. Beekeepers should be reassured that only experienced AP2 (authorised persons who are experienced beekeepers and trained by MPI and AsureQuality) undertake the inspections.

All apiaries chosen are completely at random. The area covered by the Wellington team is from Silverstream, Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt and then the whole of Wellington. When an apiary is selected, the AP2 contacts the nominated Beekeeper who needs to agree that the exercise can be conducted on their hive. The AP2 will thoroughly check the exterior of the hive prior to opening up the hive and then all brood frames are checked. Once this has been completed 2 apistan strips will be inserted into each brood box and a sticky board is placed under the hive. The next day the strips and the sticky board are removed and packaged. A small sample of bees is taken and sent to the MPI laboratory for analysis (trachea mite, EFB, Hive Beetle Africanised bees). After the second day the AP2 will contact the Beekeeper with the findings

All AP2 are experienced BK. They all undergo annual training from MPI, AQ and the AFB Man Agency. All AP2s are police checked



Varroa Book for Sale

Many of you will have seen John's email about purchasing the latest copy of the Control of Varroa book. Latest edition (March 2021) Now available from John at the heavily discounted price of \$10. John will have copies available at the meeting on Wednesday and if you can't make the meeting and want a copy, email John at treasurer@beehive.org.nz and he will hold a copy for you.

Hives for Sale

1 x Single 3/4 box of ten frames with good laying queen (needs feeding for winter). Purchaser needs to provide all hive-ware (I can transfer into your boxes), new replacement frames negotiable. Cost \$250

1 x Double 3/4 box (20 frames) with good laying queen. Purchaser needs to provide all hive-ware, (I can transfer into your boxes), new replacement frames negotiable. Cost \$350

Contact Viv Harris - Phone 027448-9991 or email vivharris@xtra.co.nz





Who can I speak to?

President – Janine Davie president@beehive.org.nz

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