



July 2012

## Wellington Beekeepers Association Incorporated Newsletter

**Next Meeting: Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

**Main Hall, Johnsonville Community Centre, Moorefield Rd.**

**7.30pm - Main Meeting**

**AGM**

**7.00pm - Beginners Session**

Revision of equipment for the next season and ordering

Return address: 280 Major Drive, Kelson, Lower Hutt



## WELLINGTON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



Meetings Johnsonville  
Community Centre  
Main Hall, Ground Floor,  
Moorefield Road

**1st Wednesday** of the month  
Main Meeting @ 7.30pm  
Beginners Tuition @7.00pm

### WHO TO TALK TO

#### President

Richard Braczek (04) 973 3028  
ibraczek@paradise.net.nz

#### Treasurer

John Burnet (04) 232 7863  
johnburnet@xtra.co.nz

#### Secretary

Jo Salisbury (04) 977 5250  
salisburyz@yahoo.com

#### Newsletter Contributions:

Sandie Matcham (04) 565 1083  
smatcham@actrix.co.nz

Newsletters are published in the **last week** of each month, except January.

Members contributions to be with editor **by 20<sup>th</sup> month**.

Please submit articles in Microsoft Word document format.

If recommending articles from the web, please confirm whether these can be reproduced or have copyright.

## CONTENTS

3. Useful Websites
3. June 2012 General Meeting Minutes.
7. July Meeting Details
7. Honey, Lemon and Ginger drink
8. The Food Bill - Update
8. Natural Beekeeping Conference Report
11. Jet-lagged bees
11. Creating a buzz around bees, hibiscus and Boonies
12. Robotic Bees Take Flight
12. Find nectar in fun new Kiwi game

## Useful Websites

Club Website: [www.beehive.org.nz](http://www.beehive.org.nz)

From the *Home* page, create your own username and password

Club Library: <http://www.librarything.com/>

Username: wellingtonbeeclub

Password: buzz



## MINUTES OF THE WELLINGTON BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION (WBA) MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT THE JOHNSONVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE, WED 6th June,

Present: Richard Braczek and 43 members signed in.

Apologies: Suzanne Basiora, Ray Duncan, Dave Carlton

Visitors/New Members: Introduced themselves

### Theme: Gadgets and Gizmos

The instruction session focussed on standard hive equipment and a recommended list was given out.

### Matters Arising

None.

### General Business

#### Introductions

PK introduced himself. He does beekeeping with his wife. He joined about November. PK was always interested in bees, Bob Mc Gahan helped him out and told him not to touch the box with his first hive. It swarmed and then after-swarmed, once he had housed them he had 3 hives, then more. PK is an engineer but looks after rental property, he looks after his bees like tenants. He puts a rebate on all his corners so he can easily slip the hive tool in without damaging the timber. PK also built the observation hive from all recycled timber, it takes 3 full depth or 4 ¾ depth frames. This is the 'mark 3' hive, the bottom is covered where the dead bees end up. For the 'mark 4' he is aiming to add a feeder method. John Burnet commented that the observation hive was the star attraction at the Better Home and Living show and would also be great to take into schools.

#### What's happening in the Hives?

On a sunny day the bees are still bringing pollen in, with the long autumn they could be still be maintaining brood and therefore chewing through their stores. Check the weight of the hives to

see if they will need feeding. PK reported that he had 3 hives still with brood, late in the season. You should be reducing entrances and removing honey supers to reduce the hive down. Monitor for varroa as a long robbing season makes this a late problem this year. Your Annual Disease Return is due in on 1 June. (Added by Ed. Copied from "Starting with Bees", *This return is forwarded in April each year to all registered beekeepers for completion. It is a statutory requirement that the return be completed and returned by 1 June to the Management Agency. The return confirms the number of Apiary sites and hives owned by the beekeeper and also if any American Foulbrood (AFB) has been discovered and hives destroyed during the preceding year.*)

Wayne said he has some wax dipped boxes for collecting, one person has collected someone else's box by mistake, please check your markings if you have collected dipped boxes lately and return to Wayne

Tony reported seeing bees on the crown of a punga fern, unsure what they were gathering.

Tony Coard recommended a T.V programme re bees (a separate email went out about this with two links. Here is the link for the stream on the TVNZ on-demand service: <http://tvnz.co.nz/ever-wondered/s2-e8-video-4414990>

Here is a link which explains the programme.

<http://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/Science-Stories/Ever-Wondered-Series-2/Animal-behaviours>

#### Question and Answers session

Q. I took the honey off and there were still two varroa strips in there, is the honey edible?

A. If it is Bayvarol it is fine, it doesn't taint the honey, some other products are not O.K to consume the honey and you would need to return it to the bees for winter feed.

Q. Will there be much brood over winter?

A. It varies by hive, some zero and some keep brood. Usually slow down the amount though.

Q. Is it temperature that stimulates laying?

A. No, it is stimulated by nectar, pollen and sun.

Q. I was watching the front of the hive and there were wasps eating dead bees.

A. They do this to get the smell of the hive on them and they can then enter without being detected.

Q. How do you check if condensation is too high in the hive?

A. If the hive inner cover board is damp in the middle then the hive needs more ventilation, put matches under your cover board to let a little air in. The hive cover board will often be a bit damp on the sides but it shouldn't be in the middle. You can drill holes in the sides of plastic hive lids to assist ventilation but ensure they are too small for bees or wasps to enter.

Q. I have a small hive, will I need to feed it through winter and if so how?

A. Yes, sugar syrup, lots and regularly as a dribble will stimulate brood and you don't want this.

Q. I have one hive where the bees have gone dark. I assumed that meant they would be the more aggressive strain of bees but these are very docile and my queen is still golden.

A. This is the first cross of your queen with a Carniolan drone. If her daughter also mates with a Carniolan then this second cross will be aggressive and no longer suitable for your small back yard. Advice: re-queen in spring.

## Field Day Report – Top Bar hives.

Audrey Shearer reported on this. They assumed they needed to do an AFB check by the end of May so they did this. A small group of top bar hive beekeepers. It went well and all the top bar combs came out cleanly so they were able to be inspected. They are thinking of doing another in spring.

Presentations around Gadgets and Gizmos Theme follow.

### Jo Salisbury

Jo showed her standard hive opening equipment, kept in a plastic washing basket as her hives are in her back yard. Jo has a bulldog clip holding a piece of paper on to a bit of cardboard (too cheap to buy a proper clipboard). She usually scribbles a quick template piece of paper for each hive with the box numbers and notes a few things as she goes, such as which boxes the honey/pollen/nectar/brood are in and anything which needs to be done next hive opening. On a really good day she even writes this up afterwards on the computer. This gives her an idea of where she can ~~rob~~ borrow stores from for the other hive if it needs it next opening. Jo also demonstrated the cloth covers she made after seeing them on a video. Jo uses these for hive openings, these are rectangular and the sides drop down over the long edge of the boxes. They are weighed down with a top bar from a frame slotted into an open seam on each side so they can be washed. Jo used whiteout backed curtain fabric as it is thick and warm. It reduces heat loss and robbing.

### Ian

Ian has a grandson with cancer so he is very interested in honey and health and aims to eliminate residues in the wax on frames. He demonstrated a v shaped strip of wood he puts under the top bar of a standard frame which the bees use as a guide to make their own comb (he does not start them with wax sheets).

Ian also demonstrated a \$4 sieve for the wax cappings when extracting. It is a 10 litre plastic bucket with a lid inside of which is another smaller bucket with holes drilled in the bottom. Suspended over the top of the smaller bucket is a 'net' sieve made out of plastic shade cloth with a shoestring through a seam at the top. If you put this whole thing in the sun with the lid on it separates out the honey very well (delicious honey sample was provided).

Ivan is Danish and makes a living from his bees and demonstrated a number of items:

Ivan has a 'machine' for making honey drinks or a base liquid for mead. It is a box which a frame of honey can be placed in and immersed in water, new foundation so fully capped but still liquid. Uncap the frame and place frame upside down in the cold water. In 24 hours you have a honey liquid which you can keep in the fridge and return the frame to the hive, or use as a mead base.

Ivan demonstrated an uncapping fork (not a 'scratcher', this one has bent tines) which if used skilfully does not damage the comb like hot knives but still uncaps very efficiently

Ivan has an annual holiday to Iceland where there is no AFB or bee sickness of any kind so he always takes new gear and leaves it there. Ivan was disturbed to find most beehives die over winter, this is in contrast to Greenland with a similarly harsh climate (long dark moist winter

with high humidity) where the beehives survive winter. He helped the beekeepers set up an experiment with a shed over hives (and measuring temperatures inside and outside) and their success rate for overwintering improved markedly. Ivan has made his own thermometer with sensors mounted on corflute at much less than the \$39 charged by Dick Smith. Ivan no longer subscribes to the ventilation theory; Ivan believes from his experience and temperature readings that you should assist the bees to keep the hive warm, including foam rubber mats on the top.

#### Martin

Martin demonstrated a 'bee sedan': a device manufactured at Onslow school where he has a group of beekeeping pupils who make their own gear. This device allows his school pupils to pair up to lift a hive box where it would be too heavy for one pupil. They also make their own hive tools out of old planes, from the plane 'irons' which form the blade of a woodworking plane. They can make two from each iron.

Martin also makes crown boards from clear 3mm Perspex so that the kids can see in.

Martin puts polystyrene under the lids but the damp problem in Wellington can cause condensation problems.

#### Tony

Tony demonstrated how to make alternative 'cords' to help manage varroa. Get a big roll of the blue multi-cloths ('Uncle Bills' in Porirua is the cheapest) and cut into chunks 100mm wide. Do one part honey, one part wax, one part food grade mineral oil (other oils go rancid) and cook it up gently on the stove. The honey and oil always settle out which is the reason for the next step. Get the narrow paint tray roller. Put the mixture into the paint tray with roll threaded on something. Arrange it so that as each strip comes off the roll it dips down through the mixture (maybe under the metal roller that came with the tray) and back up to get oil, honey and wax on it. Pull off one strip at a time and put bunches into plastic bags to keep. It is a very messy business so do it outside but they keep for ages (Tony is up to 6 months and still fine). To treat hives lay the strip on the frame, you will need two strips for each box containing brood. Many beekeepers use 60% sugar syrup plus caster sugar instead of the honey as it is less of a disease spread risk. Can put in all through the season each time you go in the hives, the bees will discard the cloths once they have eaten the product. Frank reports some Australian beekeepers state that it also helps against hive beetle (not in NZ yet but for any beekeepers near ports it is an added reason to use this).

#### John Burnet

John demonstrated a commercial beetech top feeder (not his invention) supplemented with a custom made wood surround which he has had dipped in the club paraffin wax dipper. The benefit of these top feeders is that you can feed without a hive suit and the hive doesn't lose heat, you often need something as a honey soaked wick down into the hive with these top feeders to lead the bees up. A new version of this is made by the Hive Doctor too, the club sells them for \$20.

John was also concerned about the price of bee suits, which for a full hooded version costs around \$160. After looking for alternatives he sourced some camouflage ones from Pakistan (they do white as well). These are also a good one piece with a stirrup foot which is a useful feature. They are 100% cotton, seem a little lighter but he has tested them and a club member

suggested spraying them with Scotchguard to improve the seal of the fabric. Being made in Pakistan they are made for smaller people so would be a good option for children, start at XS size. You can use a brimmed hat under to give more guarantee of face netting distance from your face. The club can put in an order if people let John know their interest.

Andrew

If you are using the 40 ml pad method for varroa management and put them over the brood boxes, then a cover board on top of the pads will touch them. Andrew has made a crown board where one side has a 20mm rim, put this on top of the pads and they will not touch. Then just reverse back to normal 8mm side when you remove the pads.

Meeting ended with social and supper.



July meeting

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012

**Beginners Session 7pm** - Revision of equipment needed by beginners for the next season and the opportunity to order via the club

**Main Meeting 7:30pm** - **AGM**



Recipe: Variation on warm Honey, Lemon and Ginger drink

(Thanks to Jo Salisbury for this great idea)

I recently bought a tiny grater from Spotlight after reading an article about how we should be using the lemon skin as well as juice for the traditional warm honey, lemon and ginger drinks for colds and flus.

I now swear by it, the tiny grater neatly grates lemon skin which I add to my drinks and it seems to add to the throat soothing qualities (as well as the flavour!). I usually squeeze slices of a whole lemon, a heaped spoonful of honey, I then add a couple of slices of fresh ginger which is good for dodgy tummies. For my fussy kids I strain it with a tea strainer.



## The Food Bill – Update

Celia Cunningham at Ministry for Primary Industries sent more information regarding the inclusion of honey in the 'small trader' exemption from National Programme level 1.

The relevant paragraph was:

“While people selling their own fruit and vegetables direct to consumers are able to operate under food handler guidance, this was not considered to be appropriate for those selling their honey direct to consumers. National programme level 1 is necessary as the production of honey generally includes some level of processing and it is important for MPI to know who is selling honey and whether they are complying with the Food (Tutin in Honey) Standard 2010.”

I have replied pointing out that this rationale is inconsistent with the exemption for gifts or donations of honey, or even the ability to sell it providing the proceeds go to charity without any apparent concerns about hygiene, or compliance with Tulin regulations. “I suggest that this reasoning is open to question, since it appears to be founded more on a concern with protecting export market perceptions than the reality of food safety.

When submission are called for on the regulations I think we should encourage as many people as possible to advocate for an exemption on the 'small trader' basis.

Pete Matcham



## NZ Natural Beekeeping Conference

A calm and mild afternoon saw a substantial contingent from Wellington Beekeepers amongst more than fifty people who came from all over the North Island to the Natural Beekeepers Conference in Havelock North on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Speakers were Marcia Meehan, a horticulturist from Hamilton, Daniel Martin talking about Warre hives, and the organiser, Janet Luke who has had Top Bar hives for 5 years.

Several common themes came across in the presentations. These emphasised the philosophical differences between the methods of beekeeping advocated by natural beekeeping and the production maximisation approach. Marcia in particular considered that key benefits of keeping bees for most people were the opportunity to continually learn how another species lives, with pollination of the garden and any surplus honey as a bonus. This philosophy which emphasised doing what the bees wanted rather than continually attempting to modify bee behaviour to suit the beekeeper, was characterised by the advice to ‘listen and watch’.

Ideally, a hive should mimic as closely as possible the kind of cavity bees would choose by preference. This has led to a return to one of the oldest of hive designs – the Top Bar, and to the Warre hive.



Janet touched on the controversy that was initiated by a few individuals in the NBA, who suggested that these hive designs contravened the AFB NPMS. Janet reported that she had had correspondence from Paul Bolger (Senior Policy Analyst MPI) that echoed his statements on 'Morning Report' on 21<sup>st</sup> June that 'A properly maintained Top Bar hive is not a problem'. Providing a 'starter' strip either of wax or just a sharp edge of wood will assist the bees in building the combs straight and regular, and if they do start to go off line, a gentle manual manipulation while the wax is soft will get the combs back on the straight line.

Janet explained how important it is to manipulate the combs in the correct way. You cannot twist or lean the comb, as you would a framed comb, as they are not supported on the sides. The critical point being that top bar combs should be rotated in the vertical plane rather than horizontal i.e. the comb has to be kept vertical at all times. This also means that to get the light shining through the comb as required for AFB inspection, it must be lifted higher, often above head height whilst remaining vertical.

There was also a lively discussion on methods of Varroa control. All the common methods discussed at our meetings were suggested. Whilst the strips such as Bayvarol can be used with the Top Bar hives, it was acknowledged that using the atmospheric dispersion types (Formic Acid, ApiLife var etc) proves a bit more difficult, as the top of the hive is full enclosed and there is no way for the active ingredients to get inside the working part of the hive. Placing the treatment in an enclosed space under the hive is an option, and Carol Downer from Auckland reported that she has had success with for ApiLife var placed in homemade hanging baskets which are tied to a top bar.



A new Formic Acid based treatment, MiteAway quick strips, is currently undergoing MPI approval for import and use in New Zealand (see [Kiwimana.co.nz](http://Kiwimana.co.nz)). Unfortunately, again, this is intended to be placed between brood boxes and will need an alternative approach when used in a Top Bar environment.

Another option is sugar dusting, either dusting each comb, or blown up from below if the hive has a mesh bottom board.

In summary, Janet noted that keeping bees 'naturally' required more commitment and consideration than 'conventional' hives, with more maintenance and more frequent visits required. However, the enhanced opportunity to observe and learn compensated for this, as did the lack of a need to lift heavy weights! Top Bar hives in particular being ideally suited to an urban environment, a point that Janet's hive situated on her balcony illustrated perfectly.

Janet opened her hives to show how the bees had filled the space, and demonstrate the correct way to manipulate the combs.

The conference closed with much sharing of ideas and experiences over drinks and pizzas.



Janet's hive on the balcony shares the space with family and friends in appropriate weather without the bees being concerned about the close proximity of the family.

An open Top Bar hive showing the comb hanging tidily from the top bar



## Jet-lagged bees

<http://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/2012/04/18/jet-lagged-bees-cause-media-buzz/>

New research investigating the impact of anaesthetic on bees' body clocks has been featured widely in the news.

Researchers from the University of Auckland have used honeybees as a model to find out why patients waking from general anaesthesia experience 'jet-lag'-like sleep disruption.

Scientists were able to measure the disruption of the bees' internal time keeping caused by anaesthetic by using radio tracking transmitters to monitor the bees' navigation. Because bees use the position of the sun and the (presumed) time of day to orient themselves in relation to their hive and food sources, changes in their navigation can indicate a change in their internal time keeping.

The researchers also studied anaesthetic-induced changes in the activity of genes in the bees' brains, finding that general anaesthetic disrupts the usual daily cycle of this activity, which is believed to be the bees' internal 'time-keeper'.

As bees' internal clocks are believed to be similar to mammals, the research provides some understanding of what happens in humans when they are 'put under' for surgery. Managing this effect in humans could help with post-operative recovery, the authors suggest.



Creating a buzz around bees, hibiscus and Boonies (Garden NZ)

Too much to reproduce, but a lot of information on your garden and bees:

<http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=fc1848c3bbb95dc097d214453&id=1e0942ed40&e=f2ee3c0847>



## Robotic Bees Take Flight

<http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=5b63a0823e3b9c105434c46d7&id=3d7e4ce551&e=9e7811d123>

Robotics engineers are buzzing about a machine with potentially transformative implications for agriculture, surveillance, and mapping: the "[robobee](#)." Researchers at [Harvard's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences](#) plan to have the mechanized critters flapping through the air autonomously within the next three years, according to [NPR](#). And if coaxing the machines into flight isn't enough of a challenge, the real innovation lies in getting the machines to mimic the collaborative behaviour of a colony.

Each robobee will be equipped with sensors and cameras, instead of antennae and eyes, that will allow them to do everything from pollinating a field of crops to searching for survivors after a natural disaster. Communication among a swarm of bees—decentralized and leaderless—is a particularly compelling model for an automated system, since the insects are able to efficiently adapt to changes in their environment without receiving orders from one authority. If successful, the project promises an important step forward for designing and coordinating systems of machines.

Manufacturing the bees has required completely rethinking materials and process. Last week, the team announced a new method of mass production that takes a page from pop-up books. Laser cut sheets of fibers expand with one smooth movement into the shape of a bee.



## Find nectar in fun new Kiwi game

Ever wondered what it is like to be a bee. Check this out for a fun game to play.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/technology/7081228/Find-nectar-in-fun-new-Kiwi-game/>

