



Next meeting | Wednesday 3rd February
Where | Main Hall, Johnsonville Community Centre,

Welcome to another year of beekeeping!

And to the latest Wellington Beekeepers newsletter. We hope you've had a wonderful break over the summer holidays and that your bees are thriving.

You'll see that we have a new newsletter format. We're trialling this to align with our new website, and we'll continue the process for a while until we find something that suits everyone.

In the meantime, we hope you'll enjoy watching our progress and reading our 'new look' newsletter.

Next meeting's topics

✓ **Beginner's session:**
Frank Lindsay - Looking after your new hive

(upstairs Trust Room, 7pm)

✓ **Main meeting session:**
Steffan Browning (Green MP) - Neonicotinoids campaign

(downstairs Main Hall, 7.30pm)

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Apiculture NZ, National Conference 2016



**Rotorua Energy
Events Centre – 19th
to 21st June 2016**

<http://apicultureconference2016.co.nz/>

To all beekeepers, packers, exporters and industry stakeholders

We are pleased to advise that the Conference 2016 web-site [Click here](#) is now live and this presents an opportunity for you to register now or at your convenience for both the Conference and your accommodation requirements.

While the Conference Seminar and Workshop programme is still being finalised, we can assure you it will be full of excellent topics and interaction with keynote speakers.

We are assembling the largest trade exhibition that has been presented to industry, it will be an opportunity to learn, share thoughts, and meet those who play a key role in making our industry the success it is.

The conference team have been working hard to ensure that the cost of attendance is below that of 2015 and have been successful in obtaining very competitive accommodation options for your benefit, so please take advantage of these early.



Apiculture Conference (cont.)

It is appropriate at this time to acknowledge and thank the support of our key sponsors who have generously contributed to the future success of this conference.

- **Conference Partner:** Manuka Health
- **Platinum Sponsor:** Comvita
- **Gold Sponsor:** Ecrotek
- **Gold Sponsor:** 100% Pure New Zealand Honey

2016 is a milestone year for industry, please join us in Rotorua, it is a fantastic destination.

Things to do this month

1. Extract honey.
2. Put wet supers back on.
3. Put on additional brood boxes/ supers if needed.



4. Start varroa treatment.
5. Check for wax moth in stored frames.



Steffan Browning asks the EPA to say no to neonicotinoids

Steffan Browning works tirelessly for the bees. On behalf of the Green Party, he's begun a campaign to stop the use of neonicotinoids in NZ.

Neonicotinoids are toxic insecticides proven to harm bees and cause their populations to fail. A recent US Department of Agriculture study found that 42% of colonies were lost during 2015, the largest loss on record.

Being a beekeeper for many years, Steffan has seen their decline in New Zealand first-hand, and he wants to ensure our country doesn't lose suffer the same losses as seen overseas.

In November, Steffan launched a petition asking the Environmental Protection Authority to reassess the use of neonicotinoids as a first step towards banning their use for good.

The campaign has a 10-point plan that includes:

- Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) to develop a 10-year Healthy Bees Strategy, in conjunction with the beekeeping sector and other relevant stakeholders, to protect and improve the health of honeybees and wild bees in New Zealand.
- MPI to undertake annual surveys of bee populations to assess whether wild and managed bee populations in New Zealand are declining.
- Government to suspend approvals for the outdoor use of insecticides, which have been linked to bee deaths, until EPA has reassessed them and concluded that they do not pose a risk to bee health.
- EPA to reassess all registered pesticides that are known to be toxic to bees to ensure they do not pose a significant long-term risk to bee health.



Neonics' campaign (cont.)

- Mandatory labels to warn farmers about any pesticides that harm bees and other pollinators.
- Prohibit honey imports from countries that harbour bee diseases and parasites that could adversely affect the health of bees.
- Fund research into bee diseases and parasites such as varroa mite, and in particular on non-toxic methods of combating varroa mite and bee diseases.



For more information on Steffan's campaign:

Webpage (including a downloadable petition form to gather more signatures):

<http://action.greens.org.nz/bees-info>

Sign the online petition:

http://action.greens.org.nz/bees2?utm_expid=98069376-4.044JnMHSQ_S5PLwfTm8mPA.2&utm_referrer=http%3A%2F%2Faction.greens.org.nz%2Fbees-info

BEE-List USA; they're into winter absconding

Several beekeepers have determined from the description given that varroa has cause the colony's bees to disappear. It's very disappointing for a new beekeeper to suddenly find there are no bees in your hive.

Deborah to Kristina

Hi Deborah,

The sad reality nowadays is that ALL honeybee colonies have varroa mites. Varroa mites reproduce in the brood. Packages and swarms have lower levels because they have no brood. They usually survive until the next year. Nucs and established colonies have higher levels because they do have brood. So you started with some. Mite levels increase exponentially through the summer, along with the viruses that they vector. So, by fall, the biggest, strongest, most populous colonies, your favourite ones, are the ones that crash. It's counter intuitive, and so it can be hard to get your mind around it.

Monitor your mite levels carefully and frequently. Treat when thresholds are met. Don't wait. If you wait, you may be able to zap the mites back down, but they've already spread the viruses around, and there's nothing you can do about those. As Kim Flottum says, "Make sure that the bees that feed the bees going into winter are healthy."

I'm sure you have a local beekeeping group there. The state association usually has a list of the locals. It's a good idea to join one. You probably have a couple of choices there so shop around and find the one you like. Use the internet wisely. Avoid personal opinions and blogs unless they back themselves up with evidence, e.g. ScientificBeekeeping.com. Look for extension, university, USDA bee labs.



BEE-List USA (cont.)

If you go with swarms, remember that you are getting an older queen with unknown genetics wherever you are. Consider package bees from a reputable source. A bee club can help with that.

As for "saving the bees," you've learned that it's not that easy and, although your bees are likely dead, the mites may be thriving in another unlucky hive somewhere. This has been informally nicknamed a "mite bomb," and, though not studied extensively, seems to be commonplace in urban/suburban novice beekeeping situations. My hives have been affected.



Another thing to consider is the *carrying capacity of your area*, that is, the ability of your area to support a certain number

of bee colonies, feral and managed. The more hives you put there, the thinner the resources are stretched. They're not infinite.

I'm sort of a hobby/professional/educator beekeeper. The thing I love about beekeeping is that there are so many levels, aspects, reasons involved, and there are always things to learn even after 33 years. However, keeping bees is not really the best way to "save the bees". Plant healthy forage on your property and advocate for it in your neighbourhood, county, state. Support the beekeepers in your area by buying honey from them even though it costs more than the stuff from China/Costco.

Keeping bees is the most fun you can have with your clothes on, but it's also backbreaking, sweaty, sticky, dirty work on their schedule, not yours. I wouldn't trade it for any other.

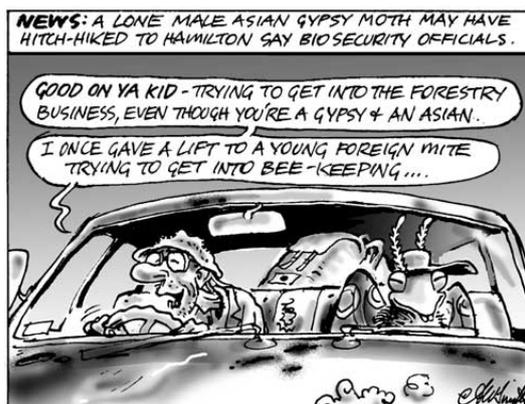
Jose

Agree that the most likely explanation for the disappearance of the colonies is from a high infestation of varroa. Kristina Williams explained very well the challenges for the myriad of beginners trying beekeeping all over the place.

Another trap that new beekeepers seem to be falling into is the idea that by using alternative hive designs they can give bees an edge over parasites. There is no logic or evidence for this. "Alternative" hives were designed as "poor man's (or woman's) hives" - the Warre design many decades ago, the top bar designs starting in the 1970s for use in beekeeping development programs. In some of the programs, they were even considered as "transitional"- a step to be taken between the fixed comb hives traditional in many areas and the unaffordable or inaccessible movable frame hives. The cost of alternative, transitional hives is lower, but the management more complicated, unless one uses minimal management and mostly just takes honey. And unless one is lucky or happens to have bees that can cope with parasites, the final outcome of this misadventure is dead colonies.

Frank Lindsay

Beekeepers in New Zealand should start treating their hives from the 18th February onwards. All beekeepers in the club should do this at the same time. Contact your nearby beekeepers and agree on a date to treat. If somebody doesn't and you treat, it's likely you will get more mites from untreated hives during robbing season and you will have wasted your money on the treatment.





Mead workshop

Around 30 people attended the mead-making workshop at Jacob's meadery in Houghton Bay on 20 January.



Jacob talked about mead's history as well as the 'health benefits' of drinking it every day for thirty years!

He then shared his techniques for

making it. These include not heating the honey, which ruins its subtle aroma and taste. He only uses honey, water and yeast, and after mixing these in a clean container (yeast last) he pours the mixture straight into a carboy and adds an airlock (he misses out the primary fermentation).

He finds that mead made with the addition of plums (melomel) is very popular although other fruits such as feijoas also make nice mead.

He uses a hydrometer to determine the right mix of honey to water (approx. 1/3 honey to 2/3 water). To make a sweet mead aim your sugar gravity above the 20% range, in the middle of the sweet zone on your hydrometer.

The yeast naturally dies below 14-15%, and the residual sugar will give you the sweetness desired.

If you are aiming for a table wine (mead), then that would be made drier, aim for a sugar gravity of 18%.

The source of your water is most important. Spring water is the best as there are no chemicals (fluoride, chlorine) in it and contains natural minerals that are needed for the yeast to grow on such as the trace elements, tannin, copper, zinc iron.

Rainwater, although pure, lacks these essential minerals and will fail the mead making.

Hygiene is important; make sure that all your equipment is cleaned.

Different flowers produce different flavours in the finished mead such as blue borage honey. Pohutukawa makes a mild mead and can be infused with fruits to flavour it further.



Thyme, manuka, fennel honeys have distinct flavours from the essence of the flowers that can be tasted. Manuka can be over flavoured.





Mead workshop (cont.)

Summer time is a good time to make mead, after the honey harvest, where the mead slowly dies as it reaches its 13-15% alcohol range as the autumn cools.

After Jacob's demonstration, several members made up their own batch to take home.

Thanks Jacob for a very informative session.

Nuc box design

By Frank Lindsay

All beekeepers should have a couple of nuc boxes as well as a couple of hives. This design was copied from one I saw at the President of the Auckland Beekeepers Club's house a few years ago.

We make nucs for insurance:

- To stop swarming. Removing four frames of brood and bees will reduce crowding and perhaps reduce the need to swarm.
- Nucs are the safest way to introduce a new queen to a hive. Unite the whole nuc to a queenless hive when the queen is laying in the nuc.
- As a standby hive to replace a failing queen (as above).
- To be kept over-winter to replace any hives that dies or to sell.

Most nucs are either four or five frames wide and are big enough to provide a bee space (7-9 mm) all the way around. I prefer to have mine slightly deeper (30mm) so the box is capable of hold the five full depth frames of bees and the equivalent of another frame of bees underneath. Otherwise when a nuc fills up with bees, it will swarm. This idea came from CC Miller who wrote a book in 1912 (and others). Download free and read "Fifty

Years Among the Bees" by Dr CC Miller (<https://archive.org/details/fiftyyearsamongb00mil>). I consider it one of the classic beekeeping books. He tells you what went wrong when he tried this, which sort of thing is missing from today's modern bee books.

Nucs can be made out of any untreated timber: pallets, boxing grade timber or if you live near a board factory, any reject untreated plywood. Or some cardboard boxes that products come in (at supermarkets) are exactly the size for a nuc.

If cardboard is used, an additional inner sheet of timber and an outer handle provides the strength and support to hold the frames.



The nuc box I showed at the meeting is made of two identical wooden ends to give strength to the structure. The outside structure is 5-6 mm core flute (large real estate signs). From a large sign, you can cut a lid and surround out

on one sign using a table saw. I staple on the core flute 3/4 of the way around at each end then staple on a thin strip of timber on to the sides to hold the core flute in place as the core flue doesn't hold well to the timber with rough handling.



My measurements are a little rough as I just use an old cut out as a template when I want to make more rather than re-measure everything again.

The timber ends are 180 x 280 mm x 21 mm thick. The top edge has a rebate cut in it 10 x 25 mm deep (down from the top) This gives a bee space above the frame so the bees can move across the top of the frames and allow the core flute to distort inwards which some do without squashing too many bees.

I drill a 3/4 inch hole in one end board and 1.5 inch in the other end about half way down. The small one is the entrance and the larger one is for ventilation covered with fly-screen. 100 mm down from the top, all the way across the outside on each end is staples a 25 mm square board which is your handhold. Some put this further down so that the entrance hole is just above it, which then provides a landing board for the bees (your choice).

The core flute wrap around is 950 x 510. Saw cuts are made across the width, half way through the core flute so it can be bends easily at 186 wide, 287 wide, 187, wide and 287 (not counting the width of the saw cut but it gives you the idea). Try this around an end to see if it's been cut correctly at each corners. If slightly out don't worry as the hot air gun will correct any mistakes.

Preserve the ends and then with a hot air gun, run it backwards and forwards slowly along the first cut until the plastic starts to bubble slightly.

Nuc box design (cont.)

Then fold into position holding it square for 30 seconds until the plastic reforms and seals the joint. Repeat with each fold until you have a square then staple or nail the ends in place making sure the rebate side is inwards (otherwise it won't hold the frames). Check with a frame before nailing on the second end so that there is a couple of mils free movement of the frame.

The roof is easy; 640 x 317mm. Set the saw to cut half way through the core flute at 55 mm and run around the four edges. Then take a knife and cut along the saw cut at both ends. This provides an over-lapping flap that folds around the ends to secure them.

Use the hot air gun again heat the joint but this time fold the sides past 90 degrees so it slopes slightly inwards; (this is to hold the roof on the nuc box tightly). Heat the ends and hold at 90 degrees. Heat the inside end of the cut-away flap (on each side) until it bubbles slightly and then press this hard against the end surface so it joins (it will be hot so watch your fingers). Vice grips might be safe to hold this in place while it cools.

I then take a couple of 3/8 in staples, fire them into each outer corner of the flaps from the outside, and then hammer over the inside tips of the staples to secure the ends a bit more (remember I hold these down with cargo straps on the truck so they have to be strong).

The original design had a section cut out of the bottom (approx. 50 x 150 mm) and this was covered with wind cloth. With my design, some more ventilation is essential as bees give off water vapour and this condenses on the cold surface and has to be able to run out the bottom. I put half a dozen 75mm cuts at each end underneath with a cutting blade on a grinder. The width of this cut is too small for the bees to get through but allows moisture to escape. Nail a piece of wood under the ends to form a small stand and allow air to circulate under the box.



Small bee boxes tend to disappear so fire brand them.

Bee aware month, September 2015

By Carolyn Fallon

This year's theme was FEED THE BEES and 2015 was the first year that the Club, National Beekeepers' Association (NBA) and Wellington City Council have worked together to create what was an exciting full-of-activity month.

Wellington City Council had a couple of community garden events and posted bee friendly information

on its website. They also provided the Club with a snazzy flyer about plants to feed the bees all year round.

The NBA organised media coverage on the radio and in the press, provided the Club with handouts from Trees for Bees, held a colouring competition and sold wildflower seeds on its website among other things.



The Club began its activity for the month at the very beginning of September, after we were asked if we wanted to share a stall with the New Zealand Honey Company from Mosgiel at the NZ Food Show. We 'flew' to the opportunity, with enthusiastic club members at the

Westpac Stadium for 18 hours over the three days of the show on the 4, 5, and 6 of September (the bees stayed the whole 72 hours, in their display hive!) The public was enthusiastic and Dave, the honey man, was chuffed with all the attention his honey got.

Next up was two Saturdays at Moore Wilson's, talking to people who were thinking about keeping bees, and sharing our knowledge with children and their parents. It was cold work though, as a fierce wind blew through the outdoor walkway!

On Saturdays throughout September, we had members stationed in two or three of the

Commonsense Organics shops around Wellington region for two to six hours at a time. Commonsense Organics also had 'None of these without bees' signs posted on all the fruits and vegetables dependent on bees for their existence.



The final Saturday in September, the Club was invited to have a stand at the Otari Open Day. We were there from 9 am - 3 pm with the display hive. Again, there was lots of interest from families, with some children VERY excited by the bees behind the glass. There was a fascinating talk by Phil Lester on the hidden lives of native bees – for those who missed it, don't panic, the Committee is going to invite him to a monthly meeting!



Bee aware month (cont.)

There were other events and activities organised by club members, including stands at Palmers and Mitre 10, visits to schools and garden clubs, and articles in local newspapers. I apologise if I missed something out.

All in all, it was a splendid month of awareness-raising activities about one of our favourite topics: BEES! A huge ginormous thank you to all of you who gave up your weekend hours to 'person' the

stalls, talk to people and hand out flyers. It was great!

(and please be prepared to do it next year!!)



Landcare Research: Wasp study

If you discover a wasp nest in coming months and are happy to put up with it (rather than nuke it) in the interest of science then please read on!

Landcare Research has discovered a new species of mite that lives on wasps (see abstract below) and they are currently collecting data on wild wasp nests - this year surveying Wellington, Canterbury and Otago. Researchers are hoping that maybe the mite could one day help control wild wasp numbers but it is only early days right now.

Below is Landcare Research's request to landowners (extracted from a longer email):

"IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP, WE ASK THAT YOU START KEEPING AN EYE OPEN TO DETECT EARLY NESTS AND MARK THEM WITH SOME PHYSICAL MARKING FOR EXCAVATION LATER IN THE SEASON. SOME OF THESE NESTS WILL COLLAPSE LATER ON, AND WILL BE DIFFICULT TO LOCATE IN THE ABSENCE OF PHYSICAL MARKING, AND THESE WOULD BE THE NESTS WE ARE MOST INTERESTED IN! NESTS THAT WERE SURVEYED LAST YEAR IN CANTERBURY AND NELSON/TASMAN SHOWED A CLEAR DIFFERENCE IN SIZE, WITH MITE-INFESTED NESTS BEING MUCH SMALLER AND LESS AGGRESSIVE IN COMPARISON TO NESTS WITHOUT MITES. WE SUSPECT THE DIFFERENCE IS EVEN GREATER, BUT OUR SAMPLING WAS BIASED TOWARDS DETECTABLE NESTS, WHICH ARE ACTIVE AROUND THE TIME OF SAMPLING, LATER IN THE WASP SEASON. THAT IS WHY WE ARE SO KEEN FOR EARLY NESTS TO BE MARKED, SO THEIR FATE CAN BE FOLLOWED EVEN IF THEY COLLAPSE BY THE TIME BOB COMES TO EXCAVATE THEM. IF YOU ARE KEEN TO HELP, PLEASE CONTACT BOB (BROWNB@LANDCARERESEARCH.CO.NZ)."

It would be great to get some Makara data into the study!

See here for more project background:
<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/about/news/media-releases/wasp-biocontrol-project-set-to-begin>



Interesting websites & articles

Preventing toxic honey:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZsEipIOcmI>

SumOfUs – A top bee scientist suspended for publishing research on bee-killing pesticides:

https://action.sumofus.org/a/lundgren_bees/2/3/?akid=16377.8267072.2shgJl&ask=50&rd=1&sub=fwd&t=3

NZ Herald - Bee swarm sparks Masterton

arrest: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/wairarapa-times-age/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503414&objectid=1119240

Oxfordshire Natural Beekeeping Group - Warm hives:

<https://oxnatbees.wordpress.com/2015/01/25/warm-hives/>

Radio NZ - The Backyard Bee Team:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/hiswayup/collections/backyardbees/backyardbees>

Independent Herald - Local hives on the rise (page 13):

<http://issuu.com/the.star/docs/215294ih?e=1420315/30835640>

Guardian: Bayer revises position to propose extra protections for bees from pesticides:

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/12/bayer-revises-position-extra-protections-for-bees-from-pesticides>

Swarming Bees: What's it all about and why do they do it?

<http://www.buzzaboutbees.net/swarmingbees.html>

Luis Saravia: What Were Bees Doing In Summer?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt_NCmxObWc

Press release: Wasp control product

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/nelson-mail/news/75067137/Wasp-bait-developed-in-Nelson-now-publicly-available>

Hive sites & notices

Queen Rearing, Wintering of Nuc's Weekend as Camp Rangī

There are a few places left (cabin, tent and day only) so you'll need to be quick. Please contact John Burnet for further details.



Hive site at Paremata (Seascape View) with manuka & native trees. Please contact Kevin Slader on 021 777469.

Hive site at Mangaroa Valley Upper Hutt for up to 20 beehives with plenty of manuka. Please contact Karen Pearce on 04 5262429 or 027 2451594.

Ceracell are selling a branding iron with an adjustable head for an approximate cost of \$2000. It might only be suitable for boxes (not frames).

<https://secure.zeald.com/ceracellbeeking/results.html?q=branding+iron>





Last meeting's minutes

2 December 2015 at the Johnsonville Community Centre

Meeting began 7.40pm, 52 in attendance

- 4 visitors/ new members introduced themselves, including 3 from the zoo whom John has been assisting

Mead workshop

Mead instruction workshop, 20 January in Lower Hutt

Activity in the hive

Swarm season. Members encouraged to put name on the swarm list on the web site to get bees. Best to give a daytime telephone number as that is when bees swarm.

Learn how to make a split to prevent a swarm. See Frank's instructions, which have been emailed out to members.

Swarming can be seen as a natural process, but if the swarm tendency is managed then you have a more productive hive and can grow hive populations in a managed way (or give the split away to a new beekeeper who wants a nuc). Losing a queen means a brood break in the hive, meaning a reduction in bee numbers and a consequent loss of nectar gathering potential. It could be up to 3 weeks before a new queen lays.

If there is a newly mated or virgin queen in the hive, or a new queen about to emerge, the bees will prepare an area for brood to be laid. Queenless hives often sound "unhappy" with a distressed sound.

General Business

- Hive viewing at John Randall's place, 216 Sth Karori Rd at 1pm on 5th December
- Wax dipping at 1pm at Wayne's place on 12th December.
- Chartwell apiary visit 12th December 10am
- **Nuc update.** First batch of nucs (about 30) being picked up on Friday. Location for pickup in Porirua (PK) or Lower Hutt (James Scott).

Last meeting minutes (cont.)

- Look for hives and nucs for sale on the club website – Trading Post
- Club calendars for sale - \$10.00. Many thanks to Eva for organising and printing the calendars.
- Reminder to club members to put their apiary address on the website, so disease outbreaks can be managed.
- Jay St Community Gardens in Newlands would like someone to put a hive near their gardens.
- A club member, who is a detective from the Wellington CIB, spoke about hive thefts. Police are now taking this seriously at a National level, so it is important to report stolen hives and ensure that regional and local stations are also aware. The more police are aware of the problem the more focus will be put on locally. Be vigilant. Make sure hives are labelled and be aware of whether their location is open to theft. Can also contact Crime Stoppers if you see suspicious activity.
- **Flowhive demonstration.** Richard Reith brought in his flowhive and is happy to show members how it works. Richard demonstrated the basics and will keep the club updated on how it works over the season.

Quiz

Seven teams based on geographical location battled over a four-round quiz.

Winner of the competition was the Upper Hutt group.

Mead Competition

Good field of entries this year (11 entries).

First prize to Luke for a Manuka/Kamaha based mead in the Open section.

Second prize to Edward Bowers for a sweet mead and third prize to Tracey Del for a dry mead.

Thanks again to Jacob de Ruyter for judging the competition.

Meeting ended at 9.10 pm with supper and mead tasting.



Meeting location

Johnsonville Community Centre, Moorefield Road



Who can I speak to?

President

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

Treasurer

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

Secretary

Jane Harding (04) 499 4123

Newsletter contributions

Lynne Brunton (021) 881874
lynnebrunton@outlook.com



- ✓ Newsletters are published in the last week of each month, except December.
- ✓ Member contributions to be with editor by 20th month.
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