



Next meeting | Wednesday 5th November 2025

Where | Johnsonville Community Centre

Editor | Jane Harding janeh@xtra.co.nz

Beginners Session: 6.45pm Upstairs. SPRING buildup and catching and settling-in a swarm

MAIN MEETING: 7.30pm

Annual Photographic Competition

Guest Judge: Simon Woolf, Managing Director and Lead Photographer of Photography by Woolf.

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From the President

I know I shouldn't start on a negative note but truly this is my least favourite time of year, wind and swarms seem to be the order of the day. I thought I would be proactive and split my strongest hive to try and stop them swarming. I found the queen and split her off into another hive. There were 2 or 3 swarm cells at the bottom of various frames and stupidly I thought the strongest would hatch and dispatch her rival sisters. How wrong I was, they still swarmed. The weather has been so horrible and I still have too many boxes on my hives so it's a real production to check them for swarm cells, consequently I haven't checked my bees as often as I should have so I've been spending half my time at the neighbour's place retrieving swarms. Luckily, they mostly seem to prefer his feijoa tree as their staging place. I had purchased some bases, hive mats, lids and frames recently so I've been able to make up hives pretty easily.



Thank you to Dave Watson for hosting the equipment assembly workshop at his place last month. Though it was a very small turnout Lucy got good value from the one on one attention, John and Dave refurbished quite a few frames from the club hives and it was a very pleasant place to be even though the weather was wet and windy. Fingers crossed that we get



enough boxes to run the wax dipping at John Randall's place as I have a couple of boxes that need doing.

I hope you have all been taking photos for the Photo competition which is being held at the next meeting. I have been out snapping away but I seem to take about 200 photos for one that looks halfway in focus.

Janine

Beekeeping at Te Aro School

Claire Hart

Hard-working, patient, and endlessly curious, that's how I'd describe the Year 5 and 6 children at Te Aro School. Through the school's *Garden to Table* programme, the children rotate through four different workshops each week: beekeeping, gardening, cooking, and social action. Each session runs for 90 minutes, and I feel incredibly lucky to be their beekeeper teacher. Who would have thought there'd be a job that combines my two passions; teaching and beekeeping!

When I first started with the school in 2024, I assumed I'd be the one bringing all the bee knowledge. But the children prove me wrong every week. Their curiosity, courage, and natural empathy for the bees constantly amaze me. They listen carefully, ask thoughtful questions, and tackle every task, from inspecting brood frames to spotting the queen, always with confidence and care.

Te Aro School currently has three hives, and each session includes a small group of five children, the perfect combination for a hands-on, engaging lesson. Every week, we all get suited up and head to the hives, which are



tucked beside the school's play area. All the children in the kura know the bees are there, but they also know the golden rule: no one enters the apiary unless they're suited up and with me. The result is a very healthy respect for the bees.

Before we head to the hives, we always discuss the purpose of that day's inspection. The focus changes with the seasons: checking for a laying queen, making sure there's enough space, looking for swarm cells, monitoring food stores, inspecting for AFB, maintaining hive ware, or keeping an eye on varroa

Our beekeeping year follows the rhythm of the seasons: we begin with the



honey harvest, always a highlight. There's nothing quite like seeing the children's faces as the first stream of golden honey flows from the extractor and their delight when they taste the honey they helped produce. Then comes *wintering down*, tidying up and preparing the hives for the cold. As *spring* arrives, we check for new brood, watch for swarms, and start seeing the first signs of the *honey flow*. The children quickly learn that beekeeping is about patience, observation, and care, not just honey.

Some of their favourite activities include gently scooping up handfuls of bees to watch their tiny bodies wriggle and buzz, and using the smoker (always a popular job!). They approach it all with a mix of wonder and bravery that's so delightful to watch.



Their comments say it best: “I thought it was really cool how the bees made a chain! I had so much fun,” said **Ella**.

“I was brave today. Usually I am scared of bees, but today I held a frame of bees!” said **Yifei**.

Nguyen shared, “I find it really interesting because normally I don’t like bees crawling on my hand. But I was brave - and now I love bees.”

“I thought everything was really cool, especially how the bees swarmed my thumb!” said **Junyi**, still grinning behind his veil. And from **Cheuk-Yin**: “I liked collecting wax because it’s cool and I like the hexagon shape”.

Every session reminds me why I fell in love with beekeeping, the quiet connection to nature, the rhythm of the seasons, the joy of discovery, and the occasional sting! Seeing these young beekeepers at work gives me real hope for the future of apiculture in Aotearoa. Their curiosity and courage show that the next generation is more than ready to carry on the art and science of caring for bees.





Catching swarms

Eva Durrant

Responding to a swarm alert I have a few questions of the person who has found it.

Such as: Has the swarm settled down, or are there still thousands of bees in the air? If the bees have settled, where are they? Will I need a ladder and loppers, or (hopefully) are they hanging nicely from a branch within easy reach? When I get there I encourage the person who rang to watch from a distance and

People appreciate a 'thank you' jar of honey, which of-course, is always welcome.

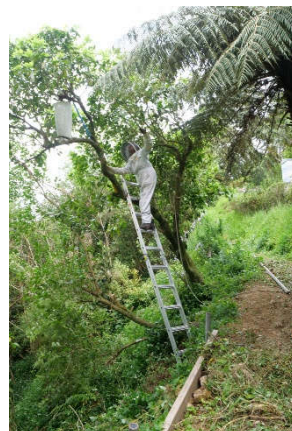
A corflute nuc box with five frames is ideal – light to carry and no gaps. Frames with old comb are attractive, but there should be comb

on all the frames.
The frames and the box walls will



provide 12 surfaces for the bees, rather than just a crush of bees in an empty box. A spray bottle with water is also useful. On hot days the bees really appreciate a cooling spray and drink- it calms them down.

Its best to place the nuc box as close to the cluster as possible. The bees scent the old frames and sometimes need no encouragement to check out the box and then it's just a matter of time before they bring the queen in and then follow.





But more often than not, if there is easy access to the swarm, I jiggle the nuc box under and around the bees as best I can and give the branch a thump and most of the bees drop in to the nuc.

I usually spreading a white cloth in front of the nuc entrance and shake more bees onto it. Then it is all easy going as the bees walk in. A beautiful sight indeed. Secure the box and if it's a windy day, weigh it down. Come back in the evening when the bees will all be in.

Of course if the senario is more like the first photo, the capture takes longer. I have long rod with a bag with a wired opening at the top, then angle this under the swarm and jiggle as much of the swarm into the bag as I can. The bag gets emptied into the open nuc box, and then its wait and see the remaining bees follow. Swarm catchers have amazing stories to share. Perhaps we could have a few tall tales one club evening.





Wingate Apiary

Richard Braczek

Wingate Hive Repair and Frame Workshop and Barbecue, 10am Saturday 29th November

We'll be repairing any hives that need some TLC as well as rewiring frames and adding foundation in preparation for the honey flow.

Afterwards, we'll put some sausages on the barbie and relax, enjoying the bush ambience and view, weather permitting. All welcome, either at 10am for the hive work or at midday for the barbecue.

Apiary is located at Page Grove Taita (Wingate). Further details closer to the time.

Hive Doctor Baseboards and Frame Feeders

We have some surplus Hive Doctor Bases and Frame Feeders. If you would like some, you can collect them during the apiary visit on the 29th or let Richard know on 0210344311 and he will bring them along to the club meeting in December for you.

January Apiary Visit

The next apiary visit will be in late January. Details will be sent out in early January for anyone interested in coming along.





Chartwell Apiary

Field Day - Sat 1 Nov at 1pm

Wgton Beekeepers Assoc Field Day Chartwell - Sat 1 Nov 1pm.

All members - novice and experienced are welcome.

Limited number of spare suits available for new members. Bring Gardeners gloves.

Objectives :

- Check on queen laying and presence of AFB
- Check for swarm cells, splitting and making nucs where necessary
- Varroa check with new treatment to be added.
- Feed, upgrade and add hive-ware where necessary.

Chartwell Apiary directions -

Turn off Churchill Drive into Chartwell Drive opposite BUPA Crofton Downs Retirement Village. Drive about 1km up Chartwell Drive to Chartwell Reserve - on left after end of footpath and centre white line. Park on side of road and walk past Reserve boom gate about 400m down 4WD track. Club apiary is on the left at the bottom of the track.

Queries to John Burnet (Ph. 0274-379-062) or Frank Lindsay (Ph. 478-3367)

Report from Frank Lindsay

All hives came through the winter. Just 4 autumn losses through varroa.

These were all outside but no new brood or queen cells. Added a box to each. Two stacks of frames uncovered. Driven out by rain and hail. Got wet as had hives open when it started.



Weather Woes

Eva Durrant

Hurray, the weather has turned, and the cabbage trees (*Cordyline australis*) are now flowering. The swarming season has finally started two months late. One of the consequences of the atrocious weather was that the wind and rain played havoc with nucs, new splits and emerging queen.

I was talking with Mark Grenfel about the terrible weather in September and early October. Mark told me that raising queens requires suitable weather - light winds and 18 degrees, and that we shouldn't expect any splits that we have made this spring to be successful. If queens have by some miracle got mated they will be very poor quality layers. Mark has been squashing virgin queens in his mating nucs and starting the whole process again because of the lack of mating opportunity.

I have a feeling that we will have a good run now, counting the number of swarms this weekend. Looks like the queen raising course will be in late January when the weather stabilizes and there are still sufficient drones about.



Interesting bee facts!

Provided by Graeme Chisnal

Click and learn -

[Honey bees' antennae have more than 300 taste receptors.](#)

[Honey bees cannot see red light but can see ultraviolet light.](#)

[Bees navigate using the sun as we would a compass,](#) and because they can see polarized light, are able to find their way even on cloudy days. There is some evidence that bees are also sensitive to the earth's magnetism and may use it to navigate as well.

[The queen bee releases her own distinct pheromone called Queen Mandibular Pheromone, or QMP.](#) Every bee colony has its own distinct scent, or pheromones, so that members can identify each other.

When temperatures drop below around 10 °C, the queen and worker bees [form a ball to conserve heat.](#) To generate more heat, they rapidly move their wings, shake and shiver. At the centre of the ball near where the queen stays, temperatures will be maintained at 32–38 °C

[Honey bees do sleep!](#) But when they sleep, how deeply, and for how long depends on their age and role within the hive. Foragers typically sleep at night, and they sleep more deeply than their hive worker bee, known as "house bees", counterparts who sleep whenever they can over a 24-hour period. Cumulatively, bees sleep between five to eight hours, but these are broken up into as many as 40 to 50 naps per day.



Wax Dipping for Hive Boxes

Sunday 9th November – 10am to 12 noon

John Randall's place at 216 South Karori Rd, Karori - (about 1 km south of the Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park).

- Paraffin wax dipping is the best preservative available for hive boxes. Boxes can be left unpainted i.e. natural wood or painted at any time after dipping.
- Assembled new and used boxes accepted (used boxes must be fully scraped of wax and propolis and must not be from an AFB infected hive).
- You can wait while your boxes are dipped (it only takes a few minutes) or you can leave with John and collect later.
- All boxes must have your name and phone number written with felt-tip pen on the inside of the box.
- Cost - \$5 per box in cash to John or you will be invoiced by the Club.
- If more convenient you can leave boxes to be dipped with John Burnet, 21 Kiwi Cres. Tawa on any day prior to dipping. You can collect boxes from John B at a later date.

Any enquiries to John Randall on phone 04-476-9959 or John Burnet - phone 0274-379-062



NZ COLONY LOSS SURVEY

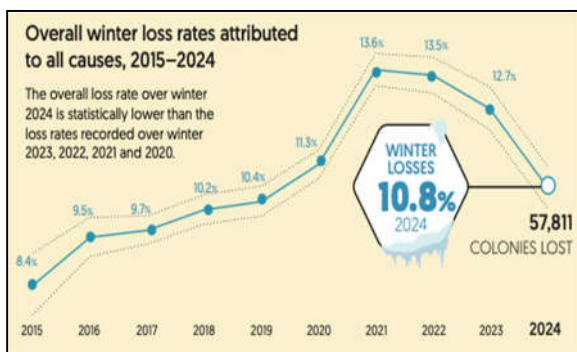


The 2025 NZ Colony Loss Survey is currently open.

The survey collects information on varroa management and over-winter losses to paint a better picture of bee health at a national scale. Results are shared with all beekeepers in graphical form

(www.landcareresearch.co.nz/bee-health) and through data tables with

results going back to 2015 (www.mpi.govt.nz/bee-colony-loss-survey/).



Other topics included in 2025 include wasp management, sources of beekeeping advice and information, and your personal views about gene

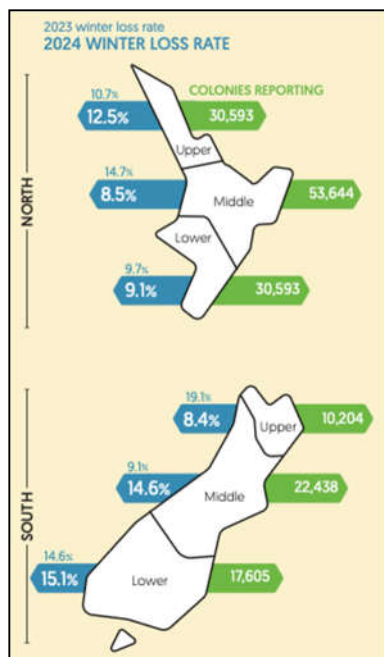
technologies. This year's survey also takes a deeper dive into pollination.

Similar surveys are undertaken in more than 40 countries, but New Zealand's participation rates are the highest in the world. Help us maintain our leadership in monitoring bee health by taking part.



If you haven't completed the survey yet, an email with a unique link for each registered beekeeper was sent on 13 October. The next reminder will be sent on 3 November. If you prefer, you can request a new link by sending your apiary registration number to Dr Pike Stahlmann-Brown at brownp@landcareresearch.co.nz.

This year's survey closes on Friday 28 November. Everyone who completes the survey goes into a prize draw for one of five \$100 supermarket vouchers.





Interesting websites

How Bees See and Why it Matters

<https://beeculture.com/bees-see-matters/> The most likely colours to attract bees, according to scientists, are purple, violet and blue. Bees also have the ability to see colour much faster than humans. Their colour vision is the fastest in the animal world-five times faster than humans. Read this fascinating article from Bee Culture, the Magazine of American Beekeeping.

What's Coming Up?

December – Christmas social, Christmas quiz and the mead competition. Richard Braczek will be judging the mead this year.

Who can I speak to?

President – Janine Davie president@beehive.org.nz

Treasurer – Eva Durrant treasurer@beehive.org.nz

Secretary – Jane Harding 027 421 2417 secretary@beehive.org.nz

Membership – John Burnet – 0274-379-062

Supper co-ordinator - Barbara Parkinson – (04) 2379624

Swarm WhatsApp Administrator - Jim Hepburn (021 926823)

Newsletter Editor - Jane Harding - 027 421 2417