

Valley Bees Monthly Meeting Minutes for 10 March 2019 - #97

Opened at 1-30 by Pauline, who Chaired the meeting. Glenbo taking Minutes.

We welcomed new-bees Maxine and Vern, Craig, Greg and Jordie.

Apologies received from Jeannie and Eric, Phil and Debbie, Kayle, Tom, Derek and Lyn, Kaye, Skaidra, Reg and Marj, Greg Lewis, Michael, Peter and Sandra Wood, Bill, Victor and Mariana, Sara and Howie, and Max.

Minutes were sent out and read by membership: Pauline moved that Minutes have been read and passed. 2nd and passed by membership.

Jeanne not in attendance today for **Treasurer's Report**, it will be presented along with April's Report, at April meeting.

Initial discussions focused on some swarm catching stories.

Open discussion was led by Glenbo on the Valley Bees Community.

Glenbo spoke about future directions, with an emphasis on the positive options and directions we now have in front of us. One idea was that rather than measure our success by size and frantic activity, we could continue to grow, but..."grow smaller, in a humble way." With an emphasis on focus groups. Shared responsibilities. Clusters of activity. And certainly there's now a chance for active members to have an input to our direction. Open to discussion.

Our April meeting is our 100th, and a chance to work out what we all want for the group. Some ideas and suggestions so far have been noted, and these will be in a print-out at our April meeting.

Easter Saturday: A regular Kenilworth Easter event has been cancelled, and an Imbil event (street market) is being held over the Easter weekend, which will be run by the Chamber of Commerce. Our input towards the day is being organised by Phil at Honeybee, and will enable us to display, promote VB and to sell any wares we have - honey, wax, equipment, boxes, creams etc. A plan for the day is being supplied from Phil. Suggested we have two 3x3 gazebos with tables, or a small cluster of gazebos, for us to set up. Any questions, or if you want to be involved in the day / stall holder, contact Phil direct. (Please note: Phil has been in contact since meeting, and there is a new game plan which is outlined in the email text accompanying these minutes).

VIC REPORT - Gympie Landcare First Saturday Session

We had a wonderful turn up again, as usual, and a very successful day. We referred to Athol's bee book, regarding the seasonal changes and activities. It's the start of autumn, and had a good 30 minute interchange on the seasonal input to our hives. One of the points was, since we are coming out of a hot, dry summer now, we need to be mindful not to take too much honey from the hives, as this will be needed by the bees over the winter period in the hives. The bees have started to 'close in around the brood,' meaning that they are filling the outer few frames in the brood box with honey, which will act to insulate the central brood during the cooler periods. The 2nd frames in from the edge, were all mostly honey. This was observed on the first few hives, but there was one hive which was not following this trend, still had brood to the walls, and it was deduced that they simply hadn't read Athol's book! It was commented that we could advertise the sessions wider, however, word of mouth and the current soft-sell approach sees the mornings already very successful with attendance.

We noted that not much honey is coming in. But we still extracted a couple of frames for a few people that needed to see all the aspects of beekeeping. Someone reported that 'out west' they have lost a number of hives in the poor conditions (12 hives down to 3), there simply has been no pollen, some good honey coming in, but just no pollen. Ants have moved in to the weaker hives, and the stronger hives are robbing out the weaker hives. (Survival of the fittest?)

Can't start nucs this time of year, as there simply isn't enough time for the hive to establish and strengthen in time for the colder months. In general, the nuc will remain fairly weak. However, we will start a new hive (a new hive with full lot frames, and made strong with brood and honey, if the situation necessitates this).

It was a great morning, people came from Maryborough, from Redland bay, for the morning, so proving popular. Even on rainy days we still have the sessions, wiring frames, upgrading equipment, beesy discussions. Nearly everyone that comes get beehives, we have a wonderful on-going relationship with Landcare, and look forward to this continuing on. A great success story. Vic noted that he is keeping really busy, and it's lucky that he has 'retired' !!!!!

The session is run on the first Saturday of every month, at Gympie Landcare Nursery, starting at 9am in the warmer months, and 10am in some of the cooler months.

Derek and Lyn not attending today, for Native Bee Report.

ROBYN REPORT - Native bees, held every 2nd month on the morning before the Sunday meeting.

Robyn discussed the solitary bee habitat wall at her place. Running very successful, great to observe all the activity. Some new systems observations and 'inventions' are taking place, and exciting to see the results. Has a new "Y-frame" system. Observed that holes for the solitaires certainly need to be longer. many of the current products (and advice) on the market have the holes too short. (This causes problems, in that the bees may still rear young in the holes, but if they are not of enough length, there will end up being a disproportionate balance between males and females hatching out, and a much weakened network.

Please go to www.valleybees.org.au and download "Attract Bees" document for suggested hole sizes and corresponding

lengths). However, no-one is really quite knows what the real needs of the bees truly are. That's also the joy of solitary bees, the experimenting, the observing, the sharing and the adapting.

Noted that a tiny new species of solitary bee has been observed in the Aussie outback (though we are quite sure the species itself is not new, just out notation of them!)

Click here for report:

<https://www.news.com.au/national/south-australia/sa-scientists-find-26-new-species-of-native-bees/news-story/cf5b81fbb8f47ee271c6c0eae056d440>

MARK REPORT - Flow Hives

Our Flow Hive at Landcare is once again strong, although not a lot of honey coming in, so still unable to put the super on top. But very strong now. The hive is recovering from a slime out, and full brood frames have been added to strengthen it.

Noted that tea trees flowering really good, but only in small patches. They are being worked hard. *Buckinghamia* - ivory curl - in full flower. Hives seem to be firing up again with the *Buckinghamia*. Bees are certainly pouring in with pollen in those areas.

VIC REPORT on Honeybee Farm Session (in Phil's absence)

Good session, well attended again. The hives are good and generally pretty strong, but noted that a lot of beetle. All looking good, once again, only a few frames taken off. Noted that good lots of fresh honey coming in.

The session is run on the third Saturday of every month, at the Honeybee Cottages Kandanga, starting at 9am in the warmer months, and 10am in some of the cooler months.

LOG HIVE honeybees

In Cousins Road there was a hive in a 4m log, couple of meters in the middle was absolutely full of bees and comb. Filled 2 x 10 litre buckets with honey / comb, to be strained. A few people there, so demonstrated how to remove honey, strain and store. The honey was very old, very dark, and strong in flavour ('Yum,' said many!)

The bees were re-hived from the log. It was noted that the huge hive had 2 entrances, 3 meters apart, one near the brood chamber and one down near all the honey. Good exercise to show, but there were some problems.

The comb being removed from the hive was already a little slimy, and the next day, the bees in the new boxed hive had abandoned that retained brood, and moved on the the new / fresh frames we provided. We saved the honey from the middle of the hive, but not from the ends. Always a challenge when capturing fallen hives, must be aware, and best to have a number of 'good heads' to work out the rescue.

Interesting to note that the honey saved, first appeared very 'dirty' and some declared that they wouldn't eat it. But with straining and proper care, a good end result. The honey was pressed, with Mark's honey press. a good discussion evolved from this about the pressing of honey, but the Minute's taker (i.e. Glenbo) was too actively involved, and didn't note it all. We will have a future focus on the honey press at some of our workshops / meetings, and document the process better, for all to access. We'll keep you posted!

Native Hives

Noted that there have been a number of slime-outs in the native hives reported in the past few months, and a number of hives lost to slime-out or *Phorid* fly, when splitting the hives. great care needs to be taken when splitting to avoid over or prolonged exposure of the hives. Three different maggots / grubs have been observed in the lost hives - bigger maggots (but not wax moth, no web), small hive beetle maggots, and *Phorid* fly maggots.

SCOTT REPORT - Top Bar hives

"I'm walking!" was the first exclamation. Congrats offered to Scott on his brave face and ability to walk upright, after his accident. Well done.

Vic came across to Scott's place to re-queen his very aggressive hive, and he put a queen cell into it. He came back 3 weeks later, still very aggressive (noted that not enough time to really see any difference yet). The queen cell was empty, but not obvious whether the hive had taken in the queen, or destroyed her as they sometimes do. Maybe the colony produced another queen on their own, time will tell. But hopefully the end result is for a quieter, more manageable hive. Vic was quoted as saying: "Yep, they were savage!"

Vic noted that he re-queened with 25 cells at that time, around the district, he noted that some of the cells were opened at the top, but still quite intact (better chance that the queen survived) and some where the cells were already torn right down (more likelihood that the queen cell may have been destroyed. we're still learning it seems. Although the jury seems out on this one. there may well be a number of reasons the queen cells appears torn and destroyed (simply good housekeeping etc), so best to read up about this and get to understand a bit better. (Good luck!)

Scott went into Top Bars, pulled out quite a few heavy (honey) frames, from the frames furthest away from the entrance. Very full. One of the advantages of the Top Bar frames is that if the removed honey frame is not fully capped, and the bottom edges are only half full of unripened honey, this can be cut off and kept separate from the bulk off the honey to be pressed.

Got around 15kg of honey, and put through the honey press. Used Mark's press once again, a particularly good system of extraction, and great for Top Bars. The honey came out quite clean from the extraction, but still strained it.

The wax from the press still has honey in it, so Scott soaks the wax in water to dissolve the honey, and to clean up the wax. This is done as Scott has a particular solar melter that cannot have any liquid / honey in the process of melting the wax. The wax is placed onto an aluminium tray lined with paper towel, and strained through this. It drips through very clean, and down into a bowl of water below. No water or honey can be in contact with the paper towel, as this doesn't give good results.

So now we introduce you to **Scott's Honey Pop**. This honey water retained from the initial washing of the wax, is placed in a clean bucket, and (oops, once again the actual process was not recorded fully) We will ask Scott to detail the making of the Honey Pop again at our next meeting. He had a sample on the day - beautiful! Slightly tangy, a few % alcohol, not too sweet - divine. A different product resulted from just the mixing of honey and water. A magical elixir indeed! Thanks Scott, may you bring in more!!!!

Honey Press

We received a request during the week regarding more info on the honey press, via Jeff Owen (Redlands Bee group). Jeff is an ex-CSIRO, and worked years back with Bill Winner on the CSIRO booklet of Honey Harvesting and Extraction. He requested more info on the honey press we used, via an online article by Erin Mason. This will need to be followed up further, maybe with direct contact with Jeff.

Propolis

A good discussion instigated by Athol on the magic and power of propolis / cerumen, a mix of resin, balsam, wax and pollen, a true super-product of the hive. Acts within the hive as a barrier against disease. When a tree buds, it produces resin to stop diseases and fungus, so it is a strong natural product.

He has been utilising it for many years, always used dissolved readily in pure alcohol and used (externally only) and a dab on his family's cuts, ulcers and wounds, to great success. (Just take look at how Glenbo turned out for proof!!!) Current research is showing that leaving the inside of the hive boxes unpainted / rough, or with some small slots, promotes the hive to produce more propolis, which seems to produce a stronger hive with more resilience to disease. A hive placed into a new box that is fully smooth / paint coated on the insides, prompts the hive to not create much propolis. Tests are currently being taken out.

It should be noted here, that it has been found that some resins can be toxic to humans (as bees can sometimes gather 'wrong resins'), so care needs to be taken. This advice here is from our observations. So please take care when using propolis, and have a 'testing process' to ensure its safety. Needs further research.

A propolis mat (placed fully across the top of the super) was brought in the show how the hive blocks these slits up with propolis. The propolis can then be removed from the mat and used.

Bees will also use propolis to varnish the insides of the brood cells to discourage disease. Used also to encase any unwanted intruders into the hive, and acts to prevent the decomposition of the decaying bodies. The balsams in the propolis are what gives it that strong, distinctive aroma. Very sharp.

Story on how Les Dollin did work decades ago on the newly discovered mosquito solitary bee in the mid 80s. On the trip he visited Athol's farm, and at that stage suggested Athol drill extra holes in his fence posts and logs all around the property for the solitaires to nest in. These were the beginning years of our broader understanding of the importance of the solitary bee population.

Skew-whiff frames

Some sample frames were brought along to show what can go 'wrong' *** in a hive super when not enough frames are placed, and the frames are situated skew-whiff and wrongly spaced. Care needs to be taken when reassembling hive when closing up.

***Although could be noted that bees would have been perfectly happy with this comb arrangement, it just wasn't comfortable for the human handleability (is there such a word?) Noted that nothing stirs bees more than broken honey, so be careful when checking hives, good management should see as little 'broken honey' as possible. This both disturbs the hive bees, and also attracts nearby robbing bees to the open hive, and aggression results.

And that Top Bars produce a good amount of propolis. Indigenous usage of propolis (cerumen) from stingless hives - used in sealing, binding, protecting, and didgeridoo mouthpieces etc.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21347735>

Singapore visit, on Wednesday

Zestin and two colleagues from the National Parks Board (a public service agency that manages green spaces and biodiversity conservation in Singapore) will be visiting Gympie next Wednesday, to learn more about native bee conservation and education. They have a special interest in gaining practical insights into conserving eusocial stingless bees and solitary bees (both cavity-renters and diggers) through the provision of nest boxes and clay blocks. In the morning they are visiting Chris Fuller in Kin Kin. In the afternoon, along with Tim Heard, will be visiting the Valley Bees Community at the Landcare Nursery.

A NEW BEETLE has arrived, just what we want to hear!

Pauline reported that there is a new beetle on the scene, that robs out the honey. It's a Bisallardiana Flower Beetle, quite a lot larger than the SHB, and found so far from Childers to Rockhampton, and up to 100 km inland. It goes in to the hive to eat the honey, and leaves a trail through the comb.

http://afbrc.org/bis_hive.html

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/Discoveries-in-the-Australian-flower-beetles-Cetoniinae>

Native Bee Stand at the Gympie Show

Valley Bees have been offered a stand in the Pavillion at the Gympie Show, with a focus on the Native Bees. Derek has limited time, but is available for a session or so. Athol and Glenbo have indicated that they are able to over see the stand. Merv Jesson can also do a bit. Eric mentioned costings: Glenbo will follow up on entrance tickets for volunteers, and any costings, which look like there are none at this stage. Photocopy hand-outs will be at no cost, same with stand. Further report at April meeting.

Glenbo: Gathering more info on Stingless Bees in Indigenous Lifestyle

Glenbo has been attempting to gather information about indigenous relationships with the Stingless bees, and with the native Solitary bees, and has encountered an interesting development. Some information has certainly been gleaned over the years, and this appears in various reports and articles, but Glenbo saw the need for further gathering and discussions on the native bees, as a valuable resource in our current work and understanding. And through an inquisitive nature. After having a discussion with Eugene Bargo, it was clear that yes, the information requested is available, but you need to "do the walk." In years gone by, stingless bee knowledge and activities were shared at particular ceremonies, particular walks and with a genuine focus passed down through many generations. And all involved time. Months. Years. So yes, the info can be gleaned, but certainly not with immediate ease. Glenbo feels a little humbled...but intrigued.

Rob's story on Shungite

Rob gave a report on the mineral Shungite, possibly from a meteorite, found in Russia. Lots of healing properties. Reports are that when Shungite is mixed in with the exterior paint, and also nuggets placed at the entrance to the hive, positive results have been noted in regards to the health and disease resistance of the hives. Read it for yourself;

<https://www.shungitebeehives.com/about>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shungite>

Meeting closed, fruit and vege box raffle drawn (won by Vic, but passed in, then redraw won by Athol.) But Glenbo did offer a banana to Vic!!! Followed by afternoon tea, and Much-Bee-Banter.

But we're all winners, as beekeepers, aren't we?

Note Valley Bees Bee Registration # V108

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