



Tilligerry Habitat Association



Report on Beekeeping Workshop on Saturday 14th May 2016 Dorothea Willey

A very successful workshop was conducted on Backyard Beekeeping on the above date, with 21 people attending. A cuppa was provided on registration and the presentations began at 09:30, with Fran Corner welcoming the attendees.



The room

David Gear, a well known and respected former breeder of queen bees – which he exported worldwide- opened the presentation with a history of how honey bees came to Australia and how modern day hives came to their present form (the gaps between frames and measurements of the cells is referred to as “bee space”). He then went on to explain the anatomy of a bee and how it develops

from egg to mature bee, and the different “castes” – the division of labours among the bees in the hive and whether they are male or female. The role of the queen bee was of particular interest as she has the ability to determine the gender of the egg she lays, and also whether any female eggs will be fertile or not. The presentation was delivered in an informal manner, and questions were invited from the floor at a time of choosing of the attendee/s. This helped to spark a flow of information which enhanced the visual displays placed around the room and on the screen.



David

Morning tea was served at 10:30, with the majority of the food provided having honey as an ingredient. All participants partook of this with relish, as evidenced by the speed with which the food disappeared from the servery!

The session following morning tea dealt with, among other topics, the subject of biosecurity, and was jointly delivered by David and myself (hobbyist beekeeper and volunteer at Tilligerry Habitat). The main threat to local hives is the small hive beetle, and its incidence and control formed the basis for a lively discussion. The importance of maintaining a strong hive i.e.: one that has a large population of bees, was noted as being extremely important as this assists the bees to maintain control of their environment and therefore be less likely to develop serious problems with infestation or disease.

Among the topics that participants indicated were of interest was the flora – particularly local- that might be of use as “bee food”. As bees collect both pollen and nectar, it is important that a variety of flora be available in good numbers. Angophora costata, the Leptospermum polygalifolium (jelly bush), Banksia varieties, and Callistemon (among others), which occur on the Tilligerry Peninsula particularly in Tanilba Bay are excellent flora for bees to feed upon.

Just prior to lunch, **Gina Cranson** (writer, editor, proof reader, illustrator), gave an extremely interesting talk on Australian native bees and how she came to be interested not only in illustrating them, but in discovering their anatomy, how they live and forage, and whether or not they produce honey. Among the information that she provided was the fact that there are as many as 1600 species of Australian native bees, that only **11 of these species are stingless** and produce honey (in very small quantities, perhaps a 500gm jar a year!). Most native bees are solitary bees, and live in holes in the ground, wood, bamboo canes, and similar habitat which a person can provide in their own garden to assist in attracting these bees. Native bees are efficient pollinators of a variety of flora, including but not exclusive to macadamias and cherry tomatoes. Gina also had on display – and for sale (with a donation to the habitat from each sale) her beautifully illustrated posters of the native bees of NSW, and the Hunter Region. Gina also donated a poster of Hunter Native Bees to Tilligerry Habitat.



David, Fran., Gina, Dorothea, Nev.

A BBQ lunch was provided, with the chicken marinated in honey to once again showcase it as something much more than just a sandwich spread.

Following lunch, a field trip to my home to observe a working hive and extraction of honey was undertaken by those who wished to participate. An outdoor area fully enclosed by insect screen proved to be a perfect place for participants to view the brood and honey

frames taken from the hive. I demonstrated how to uncap a frame of honey and invited participants to taste the honey before it was spun from the frames, as this is



honey

an experience most people would not have had the opportunity to undertake before. Looking at the smiles on people’s faces, it was evident that they enjoyed the taste! Participants also found it fascinating to observe how the honey had the appearance of “fairy floss” on the side of the extraction centrifuge, collected at the base of the drum, and then flowed through a series of filters (each successively smaller), to finally end up in the pail in which it is then sold.

Evaluation :Of the **21** participants, **12** returned their evaluation forms.

1.Venue rating – 7 rated at 5 (highest), 2 rated at 4, 3 did not rate the venue.

2.Organisation of event: 8 rated at 5 (highest), 1 rated at 4, 3 did not rate

3.Catering: 10 rated at 5 (highest); 2 did not rate

4.**Introduction to bees:** what did you learn?. Comments include:-

Need for habitat for bees, history and care of bees, too much to express, number of native bees we have, that stability in a hive is not a difficult process, importance of

honey bees, important information for native bees, process for moving hives, flora for planting, respect for bees/attracting them to my garden

5. Biosecurity issues? Comments include: *care of the hive, what's out there that could affect the hive, our honey is just as good as Manuka honey that certain processes are necessary for a successful hive, usefulness of honey garden plants, management of pests, honey process, register my hive*

6. Native Bees : comments include *diversity of habitat, study bees more, fantastic- can't wait to install a couple of bee hotels, buy a box of native bees for my verandah, that one can derive a great deal of pleasure form observing and recognising native bees, the number of native bees in Australia, leads one to want to learn more and to discover what is around in the natural world*

7. Other topics for workshops: *Native orchids of the local area, frogs, birds, chickens for the backyard, looking after domestic pets, chickens, vegies, vegies, geology and soils of the area: geomorphology, flying foxes, spiders, snakes, building native habitat in backyards, native bees, flora.*

Funding etc

The Bees in Dorothea's Backyard

