



SOUTHERNS BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

GAUTENG PROVINCE AND COUNTRY DISTRICTS

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY to JUNE 2008

Southern Beekeeping Association
P O Box 912, Randpark Ridge, 2156,
GAUTENG

Tel: 011 678 2996

Fax: 011 476 6308

bees.mikem@mweb.co.za

www.beekeepers.co.za

MEETING VENUE

Saronde Valley, Cnr Cecil Knight &
Wren St. Rant-en-Dal, Krugersdorp

CHAIRMAN

Tom Cain - Tel 011 678 2996

Cell: 083 262 2047

tom@fma.co.za

TREASURER & WEB PAGE

Mike Miles - Tel: 011 476 5626

Cell: 082 456 4177

bees.mikem@mweb.co.za

MEMBERSHIP

Dean Martin

Cell: 082 893 1590

dedo@netactive.co.za

MINUTES SECRETARY

Caroline Whitehead

Cell: 083 653 6290

rawhoney@icon.co.za

MEMBER

Paul Edwards - Tel: 011 888 2259

Cell: 084 514 0948

ednet@mweb.co.za

Editorial

Before we realize how quickly time passes, summer has gone, the autumn leaves have fallen, the first ground frosts have whitened the grass in the frost hollows, it is dark early in the morning and dusk arrives before we eat our evening meal. Winter has arrived!

"Be prepared" is the Boy Scouts motto. The same comment should apply to beekeepers. Think ahead and have your equipment ready before it is needed. If you have bees near to winter flowering aloes, or plan taking bees there, prepare your supers now, not on the day you need them! Use the quiet wintertime to check all your equipment and carry out whatever repairs are necessary.

Draw up a plan for your beekeeping season. Your plans may not work out always as anticipated so you need to be flexible, resourceful and adaptable to circumstances, as and when they occur. Expect the unexpected! I always try to have more equipment with me than I anticipate will be needed. Do not attempt to manage more hives than you can handle. Build up the number of colonies slowly to gain confidence and experience. If you have too many hives early in your beekeeping career, you are likely to be less efficient and your yield per colony will no doubt suffer.

So far this year our meetings and Field days have been well supported. Even when we went to Kevin Armitage's farm on 16th March, when the temperature was only eight degrees, nearly twenty degrees less normal, eighteen members braved the elements and travelled through the rain, the one hundred and eighty kilometers to get there. Whilst it was too cold to open any hives we did

extract honey in his honey house, which is fitted out inside an old shipping container. A splendid lunch in the century old family farmhouse rounded off an enjoyable and informative, if wet and cold, Sunday afternoon.

Earlier, at our first monthly Thursday evening meeting, Tracy Gill, from the SA Weather Bureau, on a return visit, again was able to demonstrate, from weather records, how our climate is changing. The day before there had been violent storms on the High Veld and she was able to project images of where these had been. It illustrated how sophisticated the equipment is, which is now in use to assist meteorologists in their work for recording what has happened and also to predict both near and long term weather patterns.

The following month, Eddy van Zyl, one of our professional beekeeping members, spoke about the need for us to be aware of the new regulations that will be coming into operation covering the production, extraction, handling and bottling of honey. Even the paintwork on the walls and the grouting between the tiles on the floor of your honey house has to comply with certain standards. We will keep you informed.

On 19th April Eddy Lear hosted some twenty or more members at his plot in Alewynspoor. The black iron bark Eucalyptus trees were in flower with bees eagerly working the sweet smelling white blossoms for the nectar they provide. This species of gum does not yield pollen, but fortunately there are usually plenty of other sources of protein rich pollen available from alternative plants or trees.



Inside Kevin's container converted to a honey house



Using an electrically heated uncapping knife



Eddy Lear demonstrating how to handle a heavy comb of honey from a Kenyan top bar hive, keep it vertical ALL THE TIME!



Harvesting honey comb

Below: Kenyan top bar hive. Note Slopping sides



General view at Eddy's place

Eddy has a couple of top bar hives, so he showed us how to cut off the combs, full of capped honey, for harvesting. If the new combs, built at the back of the brood nest have not been used for brood rearing, then you can harvest wonderful comb honey. Nicely presented, in leak proof plastic containers, with a transparent lid, honey sold like this fetches a much higher market price than bottled honey. There is a big demand, at country markets and elsewhere, for honey sold in this way. The price per kilo can be twice what you can obtain for filtered, bottled honey.

After the practical beekeeping, and lunch, (Eddy & Tina's lunch was cooked in a solar cooker, so they are doing their bit to minimize CO2 emissions), Dr. Sven Graef, from SASOL, spoke about a synthetic substance, that has been around for years, but is only now being considered a suitable material to make beehives with. It is a compound of wood and plastic and can be cut and planed as if it was wood. It is hoped the product will prove to be more durable. Only the test of time will tell. Prototype hives are being tested, but we will not know for a season or two how successful the use of this material will be.

Old hands will tell you that you never stop learning about beekeeping. I find that even after over forty years of practical beekeeping there is always some different aspect of considering an issue virtually every time I go to a meeting. For new beekeepers, Field Days are an excellent way of learning and honing your skills.

The first Field day was at Joe & Jenny Hugill's. I was unable to be there but I understand it was a good day and plenty of photos were taken. We will try to include photos of all our field days in our newsletters, so you can see what you missed!

Quite apart from our Field days we have our monthly meetings on the first Thursday of every month.

At the last meeting at the beginning of this month (May) Nick Holme, gave us all a lesson in how to market, not only your honey, but many other bee related products, in particular cosmetics. It was an eye opener for some, to see how many ways there are to utilize the products of the hive. All credit to Nick and Natalie for their enterprise. They deserve to be successful.

The Association owes a huge debt of thanks to Mike Miles, who, single handedly has put together our programmes for several years now. This year is no exception. Whilst he has relinquished the role of editor, he is now the Treasurer, as well as the organizer of Field days and meetings. With attendances averaging over thirty a month, he is obviously getting the formula right. Thank you Mike!!!!

We want you, our members, to bring along to our meetings, any item of interest, or gadget you have made or use, to show those present. I plan to have a question and answer session at the end of the meetings so that we can all benefit from an individuals beekeeping problem. Several different solutions are likely to be provided!

A final reminder for you! Please pay your 2008 subscription now! If you do not, you will be deleted from our membership list and no longer receive email notices of our meetings and Field Days. How can you afford not to be a member! If you snooze, YOU lose!!!!!!

Tom Cain



POM POM WEED

This is a conspicuous pink flower which has become much more noticeable in recent summers. I had a close look at it a year ago and found that it was being intensely worked by honeybees, who were gathering pollen and they also appeared to be seeking nectar from the flowers as well. I would be interested to hear from beekeepers about how valuable a source this is for bees. As you will read, from the following article, reproduced by permission of KZN Wildlife, this weed has become a problem plant. It is an invasive alien.

Since I first began putting together this newsletter, another article appeared in the Saturday Star dated 31st May on the page devoted to environmental issues. Under the heading "War declared on invader". It quotes Lesley Henderson, a senior researcher at the Agricultural Research Council, who said "It is probably the worst grassland invader plant that South Africa is facing, apart from woody plants". It flowers from December through to March. It dies back during the winter, but appears again the following spring.

It is indigenous in South America and was first detected here in the 1960s. "Biological control is the only thing that can help to stem the tide". We will have to watch and see how the effective procedures adopted are to limit or eradicate the spread of this invasive plant. Have any of our members had experience of having bees working big areas of pompom weed, and if so what kind of honey does it provide?

KZN Wildlife Article – April 2008 POM POM WEED

Just when we thought that we had a handle on invasive alien plants in South Africa, another one appears and rapidly assumes the status of number one threat to our grasslands. There has been much publicity about alien plants and recently, legislation to compel landowners to clear category one invasive aliens from their properties. We are all familiar with American bramble, Australian wattle, Australian eucalypts (gums), lantana and a host of others that threaten our biodiversity. There is the well known story about fodder being imported from South America to feed the British horses during the Anglo-Boer war. As the troops galloped around the country with hay nets attached to their horses, the seeds fell onto fertile soil bring the curse of khakibos, blackjack and even cosmos, as beautiful as they are.

Pompom weed or Campuloclinium macrocephalum, as it is known scientifically, is an ornamental South American herb belonging to the daisy family, Asteraceae. It is rapidly becoming the most serious threat to the conservation of grasslands in South Africa. Infestations become conspicuous when the plants are in flower between December and March, transforming the veld from green to pink. The plant initially establishes itself in disturbed sites such as roadsides, but then invades natural grasslands, open savannah and wetlands. This weed displaces native species, reducing both the biological diversity and carrying capacity of vleis and veld. How or when the plant was introduced into South Africa remains unknown. The earliest record in the Pretoria National Herbarium is of a specimen collected in Johannesburg in 1962. Currently it is most prominent in Gauteng, but also occurs in Mpumalanga, Limpopo, NW Province, KwaZulu-Natal, E Cape and Free State. Pompom weed is a perennial, erect herb up to 1.3 m high. The stems and leaves are covered with rough, bristly hairs. Leaves are scattered along the length of the stem but clustered at the base to form a rosette. The plant has a short woody rootstock that ends in thick tuber-like perennial roots. In spring shoots arise from, and in autumn die back, to the rootstock. The showy pink flowerheads are produced in dense clusters at the ends of the aerial stems. Each flowerhead consists of hundreds of tiny, star-shaped florets surrounded by purple bracts. Methods of control such as uprooting or hoeing are ineffective and make the problem worse through disturbance. It is not advisable to plough lands with pompom weed as this will damage the rootstock, stimulating further vegetative growth and denser stands. Biological control using introduced insects and pests of pompom weed is underway. The Plant Protection Research Institute (PPRI) has undertaken three exploration trips to Argentina and one to Brazil to survey for potential biological control agents of pompom weed in its natural habitat. Two rust fungi and nine insect species have been brought to South Africa where they are being studied under quarantine conditions. In my view the description "showy pink flowerheads" gives a clue to the How? I believe that they are garden escapees and the fact that they were first seen in widely separated areas lends itself to this theory. The number of potentially invasive alien plants with lovely flowers is huge and having something new for sale to the gardening public is a great temptation to nurserymen. We probably need much stricter legislation to control what plants are sold from plant nurseries. The cost of clearing invasive aliens from South Africa must run into billions annually!



Global Warming – fact or fiction?

You cannot avoid hearing, seeing or reading about global warming and “carbon footprints” and all the dire predictions of what will happen to our climate and our way of life. It was refreshing to have all these doom and gloom forecasts put into question recently in an article in “The Weekly Telegraph”, issue no. 876 for the period 7th to 13th May 2008.

The World Wild Life Fund, seemingly a supporter of the warmest flag, published information that fails to mention that this year, in March, the Artic ice covered 14 million square kilometers, some 1 million more than the previous year and the cover around the Bering Straight and Alaska was at its highest level ever recorded. North America and China have experienced their coldest winters for

decades and the snow cover on the Eurasian land mass was the most extensive ever recorded. Interesting reading! Last winter was the coldest on the Highveld for twenty years or more. Who do we believe?

Do any members keep temperature records over a twenty year period. If so, what trend do you see? Please let us know.

The complete article is reproduced in full at the end of the newsletter, so that you can get a different perspective of the global warming issue. The item about the Pacific Ocean currents influence on the world’s weather has particular significance, it would seem to me.

The Editor.

*“ the Artic ice covered
14 million square
kilometers, some
1 million more than
the previous year.”*

BEECON 2008 – 17th – 19th July

This year the venue is Honeywood Farm, Heidelberg in Southern Cape Province. Visit the SABIO website

www.sabio.org.za. Here you will find all the details of the programme and costs.

These gatherings are a chance to keep up to date with what is happening in the beekeeping world, to meet up with old

friends and make new ones. Miss it at your peril!

Liddy Born has made a block booking for accommodation, which only costs R120 per person per night, but bring your own duvets and pillows. Meals are available, details on the web site.

SOLAR COOKER

With our sunny winter skies you could save yourself money on your electricity bills and still be able to cook, during the day, if the power fails. I don’t need to remind you how often that has happened this year and I have no doubt that we have not seen the end of power cuts for some time (years) to come.

If you want to find out more about the solar cooker referred to in the editorial, that Eddy Lear was using, I suggest you have a look at the manufacturer’s web site. www.sungravity.com. Approximately cost R200.

Tel. number 011 969 2818
Email: sunstove@iafrica.com



FUTURE EVENTS:

Next Meeting:

Thursday 5th June
Crispen Jackson
"Bee farming in Norway and Italy". Crispen has spoken to us before about beekeeping in Mozambique and on another occasion about his experiences in Nigeria.

He is always a fascinating and loquacious speaker. As he is an avid and good photographer, I hope he will be showing scenes of his year long stay beekeeping overseas.

Next Field Day :

Saturday 21st June. Visit to Swiss Herbs Farm. Beekeeping and organic farming. 10.30 to 15.30. See Mike Miles's email notice dated 1 June.

Don't forget to look at our web site. Please let us have any constructive comments to improve it. www.beekeepers.co.za.

Thoughts about effective foraging distance and optimum number of hives per apiary

I am always amazed when people say that they want a hive of bees in their garden and they say "I have lots of flowers in my garden for the bees". I then point out to them that their garden is probably only about .001% of the total area that bees will use to collect what they need. Of course the area bees will forage from any site will depend on the flora in the vicinity. Also that will vary as the seasons change, depending upon what is flowering, the temperature, the wind strength, and other weather related reasons.

Eddy Lear recently sent an email to Robert Post on the subject of bee forage/ distance. It makes interesting reading, so I thought our members would gain some knowledge if it is reproduced here.

I just wanted to comment on your claim (re farming concept discussion) that a bee will forage an average radius of 6.5 km, in the light of permanent sites (hives in one place 52 weeks a year) with hives placed meters apart. Migrating beekeepers experience a totally different complexity. To start with, this is really not efficient. To use the scenario of only nectar collection, it has been calculated that a bee requires a minimum of 75% of its body weight to fly 5 km. It can carry 110% of its body weight in nectar back to the hive, but after travelling 5 km arrives at the hive with only 40% of its body weight in nectar.

Whereas a bee foraging 2 km away will need 27.4% of its body weight to the source and enter the hive with 85% body weight of nectar. The use of fuel is exponential rather than uniform, so the shorter the distance, so fuel consumption decreases. The impact in the Cape I'm sure is greater because the bee has to compensate for wind in its fuel requirements.

When it is gathering pollen it has to compensate for both trips (outward & inward). So it will take enough fuel to last the whole round trip. Usually entering the hive with 5% body weight in fuel reserves. That is, if it had a non eventful trip. On some occasions you will find a bee walking home with its pollen baskets loaded, 5 meters from the hive because it ran out of fuel due to wind which blew it off course or head wind on its return trip. The bee will always calculate its fuel requirement according to the prevailing weather conditions on the outward trip.

With our bees up here in Gauteng I have found that the bees will abscond if they need to travel 5km continuously for forage. In fact,

they are under pressure when there is no forage for 2 km and that includes water. They always require water, which acts almost like a radiator. If the daytime temperature is high they will 'gobbit', allowing a drop of water to run down its extended tongue and in the process of evaporative cooling, keep their body temperature right while in flight.

Of course our bees are better in fuel efficiency than their European sisters, who can only carry 90% body weight, due to the additional fat content to balance the temperate climate.

Taking a scenario where the forage extends 6.5 km radius and is saturated, there is another factor that comes into play. The territorial aspects of bees, has a huge impact. Once a colony has marked out its territory, bees of another colony will not encroach. So if you place 20 hives on a single site you might find up to 5 hives becoming weak and not surviving. The main reason is the distance they have to travel is just too far and they are consuming so much fuel to bring in their supplies. There is a ceiling as to how many hives should be in an apiary (remember I'm talking permanent sites). I think that in a migratory scenario the bees do not build up a high sense of territory jurisdiction as I have seen 100s of hives in one apiary.

The beekeeper should also study the best efficient saturation level of hives per site. Should conditions be optimum (a solid tree canopy of 28Ha mixed Eucalyptus) we can create a scenario where the beekeeper can harvest 3 crops/annum. It is better to have ten hives with 3 to 4 supers on (allowing ~100 000 bees/colony) during a flow and bringing in 1440kg honey/a, than 15 hives allowing a maximum of two supers each (~60 000 bees/colony), bringing in 1080kg/a. The overall surplus is greater and during times of death, the honey consumption is less. Excessive saturation of 20 hives could result in 800kg/a. Another factor in the equation, which changes these figures extensively, is the nutrient value of the pollen brought into the hive.

Maybe these musings may help aspiring beekeepers to come to their own informed conclusions. So use it, abuse it or just leave it.

Regards
Eddy





If any members are looking to sell their honey or any bee related products, then you may find this article of interest. Su West welcomes beekeepers to use the market

The Magalies Green Kitchen Market is an initiative by local community members to create a supportive environment in which mainly local organic farmers, craftsmen, chefs/cooks and musicians can showcase the products of their labours and offer them to the general public in a relaxed country atmosphere.

It aims to offer a creative outlet for adherents to a natural wholesome organic to promote an environmental conscience.

It is an outdoor market held at the Trading Post in Magaliesburg (just off the R24 Rustenburg) every Sunday from 09:00 until 13:00.

The main theme of the market is focused on the organic country kitchen. Anything from fresh produce, fresh prepared organic or natural food, home bakes to processed and bottled foodstuff – all the best from farms of the greater Magaliesberg area.

Authentic and hand made crafts are also available any many more odds and ends.

Ample parking, kids entertainment and exotic refreshments are provided making the visit more relaxed and carefree.

Special events are organised regularly and include live cooking demonstrations, music, storytelling and actual craft lessons.

Traders, visitors, shoppers, volunteers welcome!

For more information please contact

Stall Organiser:
Su West (082) 717-9165 or
Mail: magalies@greenkitchenmarket.co.za

The Slow Living Alternative ...



A FINAL REMINDER

If you have not paid your subs yet, you will be deleted from our membership list and no longer be informed of our activities.

We don't want to lose you, so please arrange to pay your R195.00.

BANKING DETAILS:

Southern Beekeeping Association, ABSA Cresta
Branch code: 63200500 (internet payments)
or 516805 (bank deposits)
Account number: 906 194 0886

**Please use your
full name as reference on deposit slips**

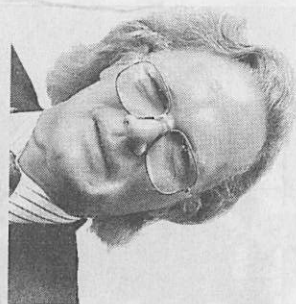


Anti-warming evidence piles up on Snowdon

A NOTABLE news story of recent months should have been the evidence pouring in from all sides to cast doubts on the idea that the world is inexorably heating up. The proponents of man-made global warming have become so rattled by how the forecasts of their computer models are being contradicted by the data that some are rushing to modify the thesis. So a German study, published by *Nature* last week, claimed that, while the world is definitely warming, it may cool down until 2015 "while natural variations in climate cancel out the increases caused by man-made greenhouse gas emissions".

A little vignette of the media's one-sided view was given by recent events on Snowdon, the highest mountain in southern Britain. Each year between 2003 and 2007, the retreat of its winter snow cover inspired reports citing this as evidence of global warming. In 2004 scientists from the University of Bangor made headlines with the prediction that Snowdon might lose its snowcap altogether by 2020. Last November, viewing photographs of a snowless Snowdon at an exhibition in Cardiff, the Welsh environment minister, Jane Davidson, said "we must act now to reduce the greenhouse gases that cause climate change".

Yet virtually no coverage has been given to the abnormally deep spring snow which prevented the completion of a new building on Snowdon's summit for more than a month, and nearly made it miss the deadline for £4.2 million of EU funding. (Brussels



Christopher Booker

eventually extended the deadline to next autumn.)

Two weeks ago, as North America emerged from its coldest and snowest winter for decades, the US National Climate Data Center, run by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued a statement that snow cover in January on the Eurasian land mass had been the most extensive ever recorded, and that in the US March had been only the 63rd warmest since records began in 1895. While global warming enthusiasts might take cheer from the NOAA's claim that "average global land temperature" in March was "the warmest on record", this was in striking contrast to a graph last week on the Climate Audit website by Steve McIntyre. Tracking satellite data for the tropical troposphere, it showed March temperatures plunging to one of their lowest points in 30 years.

Mr McIntyre is the computer expert who exposed the infamous "hockey stick" graph – that icon of warmist orthodoxy which showed global temperatures soaring recently to their highest level for 1,000 years. He showed that the computer model that produced this graph had been so designed that it would have conjured even random numbers from a telephone directory into the shape of a hockey stick.

On April 24 the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), another body keen to keep the warmist flag flying, published a study warning that Arctic sea ice was melting so fast that it may soon reach a "tipping point" where "irreversible change" takes place. This was based on last September's data, showing ice cover having shrunk over six months from 13 million square kilometres to just 3 million. What the WWF omitted to mention was that by March the ice had recovered to 14 million sq km (see the website Cryosphere Today), and that ice-cover around the Bering Strait and Alaska that month was at its highest level ever recorded. (At the same time Antarctic sea ice-cover was also at its highest-ever level, 30 per cent above normal).

The most dramatic evidence, however, emerged last week with an announcement by Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory that an immense slow-cycling movement of water in the Pacific, known as the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), had unexpectedly shifted into its cool phase, something which only happens every 30 years or so, ultimately affecting climate all over the globe. Discussion of



The 'snows of yesteryear' have made a spectacular comeback on Snowdon in recent weeks

this on the invaluable Watts Up With That website, run by the US meteorologist Anthony Watts, shows how the alternations of the PDO between warm and cool coincided with each of the major temperature shifts of the 20th century – warming after 1905, cooling after 1946, warming again after 1977 – and how the new shift to a cool phase could have repercussions for decades.

It is notable that the German computer predictions published last week by *Nature* forecast a decade of cooling due to deep-ocean movements in the Atlantic, without taking account of how this may now be reinforced by a similar, even greater movement in the Pacific. Mr Watts points out that the West coast of the USA might already be experiencing these effects in the recent freezes that have devastated orchards and vineyards in California.

Mr Watts's readers are amused by the explanation from one warmist apologist that "these natural climate phenomena can sometimes hide global warming caused by human activities – or they can have the opposite effect of accentuating it".

It is striking, in view of the colossal implications of the current response to "the greatest challenge confronting mankind" – as our politicians love to call it – how this hugely important debate is almost entirely overlooked by the media, and is instead conducted largely on the internet, through expert websites such as those run by Mr McIntyre and Mr Watts.

On one hand our politicians are committing us to spending unimaginable sums on wind farms, emissions trading schemes, absurdly ambitious biofuel targets, and every kind of tax and regulation designed to reduce our "carbon footprint" – all based on blindly accepting the predictions of computer models that the planet is overheating due to our output of greenhouse gases. On the other hand, a growing number of scientists are producing ever more evidence to show how those computer models are based on wholly inadequate data and assumptions.

The fact is that what has been happening to the world's climate in recent years, since global temperatures ceased to rise after 1998, was not predicted by any of those officially-sponsored models. The discrepancy between their predictions and observable data becomes more glaring with every month that passes. It won't do for believers in warmist orthodoxy to claim that, although temperatures may be falling, this is only because they are "masking an underlying warming trend that is still continuing" – not to fob us off with assurances that the "German model shows that higher temperatures than 1998, the warmest year on record, are likely to return after 2015".

In view of what is now at stake, such quasi-religious incantations masquerading as science are something we can no longer afford. We should get back to proper science before it is too late.