

A 'honey' business

The CRC for Honey Bee Products' *Natural Resources for Beekeepers Questionnaire* marks a timely update on the state of beekeeping in Western Australia. Little was known about local beekeeping, for either honey production or pollination services, as the last industry assessment was conducted in 1992.

A burning issue

Western Australian beekeepers depend on public apiary sites managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). The industry has long complained that flowering events in key species are becoming less frequent and productive due to a changing climate. This is exacerbated by the loss of flowering events due to wildfires and prescribed burning.

The CRC estimates that between 1992 and 2018 the annual loss in honey value, at current prices, was between \$700,000 and \$1.4 million, with a strong increasing trend.

The biggest losses occurred in the Jarrah Forest and Swan Coastal Plain ecological regions. As a result, rather than growing and benefitting from the high prices for Jarrah honey, the industry and honey revenue has stagnated.

Beekeeping - a hobby with risks

Amateur beekeepers are steadily increasing, with most based in Perth and the urban fringes. Unlike commercial beekeepers, they rely on backyards and private apiary sites. This is a valuable hobby that processes honey worth \$1.9 to \$2.73 million per annum.

Amateur beekeeping in the state is expected to grow to \$5.3 million worth of honey per annum by 2025. This does not include the additional pleasure derived from keeping bees.



CRC HBP
FOR HONEY BEE PRODUCTS



quality product



biodiversity



biosecurity





This poorly understood group of beekeepers represents a challenge to industry regulators as new biosecurity threats, such as the exotic pest *Varroa*, are likely to originate in the urban environment and with amateur beekeepers due to their proximity to ports.

What is an apiary site worth?

DBCA apiary sites are the key resource for commercial honey production and the backbone of the growing export industry. The CRC's *Natural Resources for Beekeepers Questionnaire* asked beekeepers to value these sites to reflect the expected contribution of a site to the profitability of a beekeeping business. This valuation reflects nectar flow uncertainty, fire frequency, remoteness and the price of honey produced.

Apiary sites in Jarrah forests and the Swan Coastal Plains of WA command the highest prices.

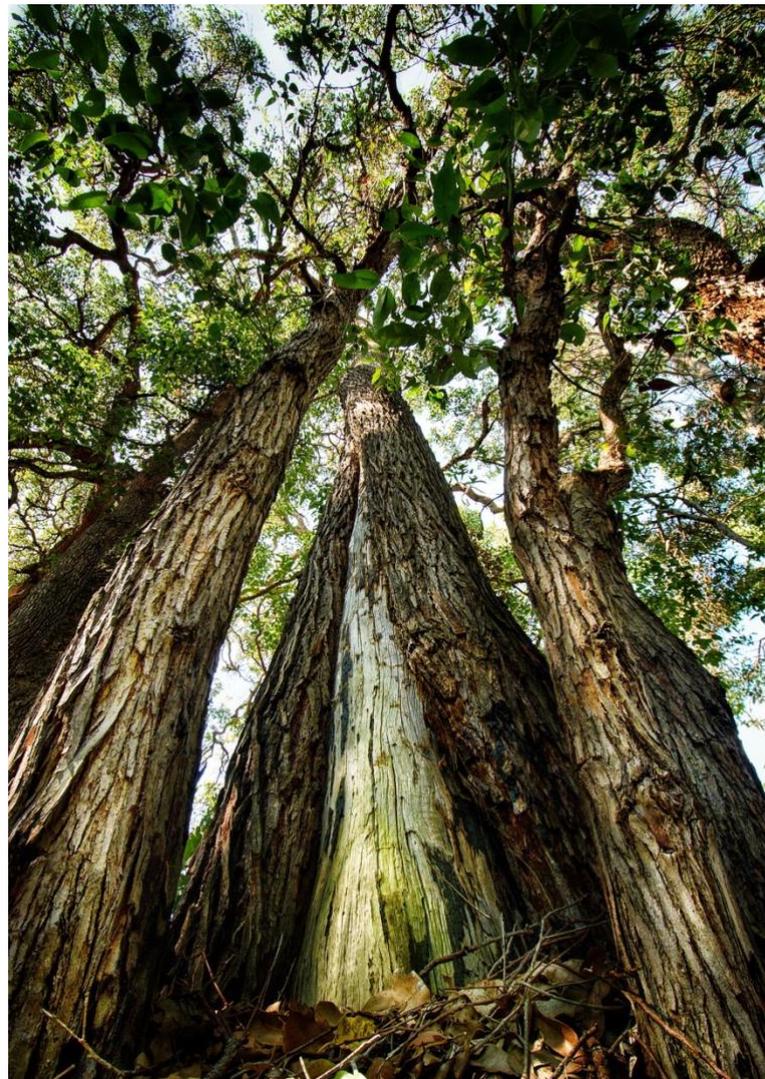
Jarrah forests provide an opportunity to produce high-priced bioactive honey and the Swan Coastal Plain provides overwintering and colony development opportunities. Swan Coastal Plain sites are becoming rarer as they are lost to development and fire.

The world record for honey production was achieved from sites in the Warren National Park in south-west WA. These sites have rare flowering events lasting up to nine months with mature Karri (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*) trees.

The future is golden, but...

Through the marketing of bioactive monofloral honey, the Jarrah honey price is up by 400% over the last 5 years.

With the recent logging ban, the future for honey producers and pollination for growing horticulture is bright. However, the industry's requirements must be accounted for in prescribed burning policies to protect WA's native vegetation.



Apiary sites located in the Jarrah forests of Western Australia command a high price