



Media Release

Wednesday 9 March 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Native Stingless Bees

Gecko's next Guest Speaker night is Wednesday March 23rd, 6.30pm at Gecko House, 139 Duringan Street, Currumbin, and presenting on the evening is Steve Maginnity, of 'Steve's Native Bees', on native stingless bees and Australia's developing native stingless bee industry.

True to its busy reputation, a single bee pollinates up to 5,000 flowers a day. Bees are the most important plant pollinating animal, and their work ensures the success of crops like strawberries and cucumbers. They also play a role in boosting biodiversity by spreading plant genes.

Over the last two decades, bee numbers in the U.S. and Europe have declined, and a new phenomenon has emerged: Colony Collapse Disorder. Coined in the U.S. in 2006, Colony Collapse Disorder is the disappearance of bees from an otherwise viable hive. Exactly why bees suddenly leave a hive full of honey is so mysterious it's known in the U.K. as 'Mary Celeste Syndrome'.

In the U.S. bee numbers have fallen by over a third every year since 2007. In contrast to Australia, where bees pollinate crops for free, paid crop pollination is vital to U.S. agriculture. The situation has generated strong demand for live bee imports from Australia.

Luckily, Australia has remained free of Colony Collapse Disorder, and is the only country free from the curse of European honeybees, Varroa mite. Another difference is that the U.S. has no native bee species, whereas Australia has over 1,500 species of native bees. Better still, fourteen of these are stingless.

Steve's talk will cover the role of native stingless bees in agriculture, their distribution, lifecycle and behaviour. He will also cover habitat destruction and adaptability, hive location and hive keeping. His website, 'stevesnativebees.com.au', offers information about Native Stingless Bees, education programs, a hive rescue service, discussion forum and a range of beekeeping products. Would-be apiarists can even hire a hive.

Join us on Wednesday the 23rd of March, upstairs at Gecko House, 139 Duringan St, Currumbin for drinks and snacks from 6:30pm, then Steve's presentation from 7 to 8. BYO questions!

Gecko presents a free guest speaker night on the 4th Wednesday of each month on topical environmental issues. For catering purposes and to prevent waste, RSVP by 3pm on the day before the event to speakers@gecko.org.au or call 5534 1412. For more information, visit www.gecko.org.au/guest-speaker

A gold coin donation is requested per glass of wine and nibbles. Alternatively, Gecko encourages the contribution of vegetarian/organic/environmentally-thoughtful food options at all of its events.

ENDS

Information for media:

Guest Speaker	Steve Maginnity	0404 831 659
Gecko Secretary	Lois Levy	0412 724 222