

Native Bee Rescues

Bees in Trees

Clarence Native Bee Landcare recommends only recovering native stingless bees when the branches in trees, or the trees, become damaged. This could be through storms, lightning, wind, fire, timber cutting for firewood or fence posts, or land clearing. All native stingless bee hives must otherwise remain in the habitat in which you find them. Removal of dead wood or trees is listed as a key threatening process under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999 (EPBC Act)*.

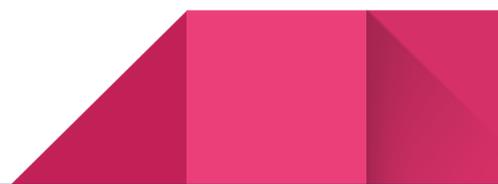
Where a tree cannot be saved, the log can be cut and capped. If the log piece with the nest can fit directly into a container for transport, then this is sufficient, providing the log nest is correctly orientated, and stable and secure inside the sealed container. One ventilation hole with taped flyscreen covering must be provided.

If the log is not badly damaged, then the nest should remain inside the log and the damage repaired. However, if a nest needs to be removed from the log due to damage/breakage or capping is not possible, then the nest will need to be removed and transferred temporarily. Place it into a 10L bucket with 2 x 6mm holes drilled in the bottom, fit a gauze layer (gutter guard or similar) on the bottom. Another hole with a taped flyscreen cover must be provided for ventilation on the side of this bucket. The 10L bucket can be sealed with a lid and then placed inside a 20L bucket for transport. These buckets must be of a food grade quality. Transfer of a nest is best done in shade. If necessary, at least, protect the brood by providing shade with a hat or umbrella.

To successfully re-stabilise and relocate the bees, the entire nest must be captured, along with as many bees as possible. It is important that all material associated with the nest is placed in the bucket or box you are using and that the queen bee also goes with the nest.

Bees not in trees

Sometimes bees like to nest in other areas, including the home, water meter box, electricity meter box, roofs, walls of sheds, and even old cars sitting in the paddock. Some of our members have performed rescues such as these. There is no tried or true method for bee rescues in these situations other than to follow the general procedure outlined above and below.



Transfer a native stingless bee nest from a damaged log

Transfer of a native stingless bee nest from a damaged log to a hive box is to be undertaken as follows:

- ❖ Gently lever open the log. Using a sharp knife and a hand spade, gently cut and separate the nest from the log and place the brood together with intact sugarbag honey and pollen pots, in the bucket include a little of the resin associated with the nest so that the bees will be drawn back to it. The brood should be placed in exactly the same position as it appeared in the log.
- ❖ Excess hive material (resin, propolis) is to be kept in a separate container (2 litre bucket with lid), clearly marked with which hive it belongs to, and then be transported with the hive.
- ❖ Physically shake the log cavity and gently brush the bees out of any crevices. Sometimes the queen may be found hiding in a crevice in the log cavity, so be gentle.
- ❖ Stand the log up to drain out any spilt honey which may cause bees to drown.
- ❖ If native stingless bees persist in the log, place the log in direct sunlight or place a cloth soaked in tea tree oil inside the log cavity until bees take flight.
- ❖ Collect all excess nest by placing in a separate sealed container and remove log debris from the immediate area. This will encourage the bees not to cluster on this material. They will remain or return to the bucket with the brood. Place the bucket as close to the original hive position for as long as you can, as the bees will want to return to the nest. Do not take too long, as predators are very quick to enter damaged nests.
- ❖ Ensure hives and excess hive material buckets are placed in a safe shady position. Check for ant activity prior to placing containers on the ground. If ants are in the area, stand the buckets on top of bricks placed in a dish of water. When you are ready to transport the hive, you will need to be prepared for transfer of the hive to a hive box (see Care Sheet on Clarence Valley Hive Box Design).
- ❖ Place the brood in first, and materials (including their food sources) around the brood. Seal the top, close the lid and tape the two boxes together. Place in a sheltered and suitable position in the garden.