



Cocos Keeling Bee Project

The purpose of the Bee Project on Cocos Keeling, in particular Home Island, is multi faceted. With bees of all species becoming more endangered and at risk, it is vital to record and measure the success of colonies and their environment. With an isolated location, Cocos Keeling is unique in having disease free bees and through understanding of what keeps them healthy, the knowledge gained can help protect other bee species globally. With such a pristine environment, products from the hive, including honey and propolis, will also have beneficial medicinal properties, with global demand and use.

The aim is to establish honeybees on Home island, teach local home Islanders beekeeping, providing them with a valuable commodity in the form of products from the hive.

Working with bees is known to have significant benefit in the treatment of post traumatic stress disorders, as well as many other health conditions. With the sponsorship of Oceania House, area for beehives as well as enabling retreats to be held at the house for locals and tourists.

The setting up of the project is being recorded by film by Paula & Greg Carnell with Golden Bee Productions which is a Community Interest Company. Profits made from the licensing of the finished documentary will be invested back into the community bee project on Home Island.

The project involves many moving parts. Initially a ,Bee Audit‘ was required accross the islands. Despite many entomologists and evn Charles Darwin’s visit, no thorough bee audit had been undertaken. Paula has in the past two months located 3 different species of bees accross the islands. Of the 22,000 species world wide, Asia and Australia have many thousands and so it is of little surprise that Cocos has some native bees. Native bees give valuable information on pollination capabilities and along with the introduced honey bees (in 1940s) increase the options of growing food and creating a sustainable ecosystem.





Why should Cocos Keeling care about bees?

The benefits for the community include:

- The Quran includes a chapter called The Bee in which Allah gave his wisdom to the bees to pass onto humans
- Learning new husbandry skills, suitable for all ages.
- Production of bee products, including honey, propolis, pollen, royal jelly, hive air, bee 'safaris' and bee workshops.
- Honey can be exported to Europe where there is a great demand for pure unpolluted honey.
- Associated health benefits from the bees presence.
- Reconnection with the land through understanding of the bees
- Putting Cocos Keeling on the map for bee research, and possibly increased tourism.

What help do we need?

To establish a beekeeping cooperative on the islands, support from the Shire in practical and communication terms is essential. Transportation of bees from West island to Home island, additional bee suits, a harvesting and production kitchen will all be required eventually for the manufacture of lip balms, honey and skin products.

Golden Bee Productions have self funded the project to date, with accomodation for Paula & Greg provided by Oceania House. Golden Bee have provided 10 new Apimaye bee hives and related equipment. Two beesuits, hive tools and all expert training required. Paula has given two bee presentations, one at Oceania House and a second at the Home Island preschool. There is a request for a talk on West Island. Paula has been auditing the other bee species accross the islands and recording her findings.

Access to Horsburgh, North Keeling and eventually Christmas Island would all be helpful in building a thorough picture of the status and importance of bees on the Indian Ocean territories.

