

TREES FOR BEES CORNER

THE NAATI BEEZ CHALLENGE TO TREES FOR BEES

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The Naati Beez vision for long-term beekeeping on their East Cape land has been a big challenge to the Trees for Bees programme. Naati Beez holds strong values for their land, including long-term sustainability for rural employment, environmental protection and cultural sensitivity.

Naati Beez is a local group of Ngāti Porou beekeepers in Rangitukia directed by Willie Kaa and Rangi Raroa, who each have over 10 years' beekeeping experience. Last year's pilot project funded by MPI Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) was a great success, but more research is needed to meet the Naati Beez challenge. The main goal is to create long-term residential apiary sites to support honey harvesting by using locally sourced native plants. The first results of the project were reported in the August edition of *The New Zealand Beekeeper* (Newstrom-Lloyd, et al., 2016) and information was distributed at the Naati-Beez-Trees for Bees exhibit at the National Māori Mānuka Conference in Rotorua, 4–5 August 2016.

Over the next three years, Trees for Bees will continue this SFF project with the Naati Beez team: Willie Kaa, Rangi Raroa, Maia Taare and Rapata Kaa. This new research will broaden the range of native plants and deepen our understanding of environmental and cultural values. For Naati Beez' beekeeping to be successful and sustainable, permanent residential apiaries are preferable because local employment is a priority and environmental and cultural protection a necessity.

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One of the obstacles to residential apiaries is a dearth of pollen and nectar sources for the 44 weeks of the year when mānuka is not flowering. We strive to install the best native plants close to apiaries to build up pollen and nectar sources in spring and autumn. This results in more productive apiaries with reduced labour costs for feeding and transporting bees and less external inputs (protein supplements and sugar). This makes the beekeeping occupation more attractive as a rural employment opportunity.

Maximising productivity is one thing, but carrying capacity is another. In these days of overstocking hives in mānuka areas and competing for wintering sites, how can the Naati Beez environmental sensitivities be supported? At what point are honey bees taking too much pollen and nectar, leaving nothing for the native bees and other pollinators?



Rangi Raroa



Willie Kaa

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Native bees and honey bees are able to share in both native and exotic flowers but excessive populations of honey bees will drive native bees to decline. This year, Naati Beez will embark on research to determine how to best monitor native bee populations to make sure they survive and continue to thrive. Increasing mānuka production by planting more locally sourced mānuka along with spring and autumn support plants helps protect native bee populations.



Maia Taare



Rapata Kaa

A holistic approach

The Naati Beez challenge is a holistic approach embracing all aspects of beekeeping on their land. They recognise the importance of meaningful work as the most effective means of improving the wellbeing of *tangata whenua*, *whanau*, *hapū* and *iwi*. The most critical guiding principles adopted by Naati Beez is to provide *mahi* (employment) and to protect the natural environment. But there is another important aspect too—*waahi tapu*—the respect for sacred areas of land and the need for not placing hives on these areas. This cultural sensitivity in beekeeping operations is something that all Māori will understand.

The opportunity is great for a land-based, Māori-owned extractive industry that protects highly valued native flora and fauna while upholding significant cultural values. The beekeeping livelihood fits this ideal for Naati Beez.

Reference

Newstrom-Lloyd, L., McPherson, A., Raine, I., & Li, X. (2016, August). Naati Beez planting Trees for Bees for East Coast mānuka support. *The New Zealand BeeKeeper*, (24)7, 26–27.