

Foreword

It is with some trepidation that I put pen to paper in an effort to produce a suitable prologue for this collection of works. As a relative newcomer to stingless bee research I felt I did not qualify for such a privilege. However, upon reflection, I may be just the right representative to complete this task and it is my honor to do so.

The information contained within these pages, albeit in very modern, electronic pages, has been put together by some of the most respected, experienced, knowledgeable and devoted stingless bee keepers and researchers in the world. It is only through their dedication that new researchers, such as myself, are able to access information pertaining to these wondrous creatures.

Of the 21 chapters in this book, seven are written in Spanish, and two in Portuguese, the native language of the author(s). This, in itself, demonstrates the value of this e-book. Through the wonders of modern technology we are able to receive information written in foreign languages by simply copying and pasting sections of text into online translators. Previously unattainable knowledge, acquired by those who work intimately with stingless bees, is now available to all those who have access to a computer. One chapter, written in Spanish, is a tribute to the late Professor João Maria Franco de Camargo, and tells of the meticulous and unerring work carried out on 88 species of bees, collected over a twenty-year period. The author gives insights into the reasons behind the names assigned to some of the species and portrays Camargo's love for the study and illustration of these remarkable bees.

The authors of the chapters within this book share the product of their love for and dedication to stingless bees in their respective fields of expertise. This includes the geological and cultural histories of stingless bees, their use in education, and the importance of stingless bee farming (meliponiculture) to rural communities and to bee conservation. In South America, the production of pot-honey, through meliponiculture, is growing; however, regulation of the quality of the end product is lacking. Here, a draft proposal is put forward as a guide for legislation of quality and safety standards in commercial *Melipona* honey. Pot-honey analysis is providing information on the geographical location of important floral sources, as well as resource preferences by foragers and the behavioral traits associated with these resources. Pot-honey can also be used as a bio-indicator of environmental health and levels of air pollution. The medicinal properties of pot-honey have become apparent with the development of honey therapies for wound management, antioxidant therapy and in oncology. The vagaries and complexities associated with taxonomic practices in stingless bee classification are also addressed. That was a good academic underpinning of some very complex phenomena.

I hope you enjoy sharing the information within these pages as much as I have.

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