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GPO BOX 249
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

FIELD NATTER

MEETING—Thursday 1 August 2019

7:30 pm Australian National University

Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R.N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU, ACT
details back page

AGM

Speaker: Alison Milton: How many native species could you expect to find in a suburban back yard?

After the formalities of the AGM, Alison will talk about the species she has observed within her own backyard, and within the broader area around her West Belconnen home.

Here's a challenge for the rest of us:

Please bring and share examples of how natural history, citizen science and information can be or has been presented through stories and via a diversity of media. The challenge's title might be Natural History and Narrative. Members could show or USB their own versions of stories and narratives that:

- reveal the wonders of the natural world, or
- present facts or information in a memorable manner.



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Plastic fool seabirds in an unexpected way

Have you seen images on TV of dead seabirds, when autopsies are carried out they have a gut full of plastic pieces? I have wondered why they eat it as it doesn't look like their food to me. I recently read an article in a marine magazine that explained a lot.

The article, *The seabird's cry*, by Bruce Stannard, was published in *Afloat*,* July 2019.

The following is information I extracted from the article.

It is well known that Shearwaters, Petrels and other seabirds with large nostrils, have a keen sense of smell, which they use to find their nest in darkness, and maybe use as a navigational aid.

Scientists at the USA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have discovered phytoplankton emit an odour-rich gas known as *dimethyl sulphide* (DMS). They found that where the phytoplankton was thickest, krill gathered to eat it and as they did, plumes of DMS were released into the atmosphere. Birds with acute olfactory senses could detect the DMS and read it as a signal of a feeding site of krill and fish.

Scientists then discovered that small pieces of plastic that had been floating in the water for some time, also produce a plume of DMS. Therefore, the birds are probably eating the plastic as the odour is telling them 'this is food'.

Bill Murphy

* *Afloat* is a priceless publication that is available at some marine and outdoor stores, if you wish to read the complete article. It is also available [online](https://downloads.realviewdigital.com/a55f9f1b-ff6b-4b6a-967d-11fec52ddf7/f71a6e62-0f71-4338-94db-669897f8b042/Afloat%20July%202019.pdf) (https://downloads.realviewdigital.com/a55f9f1b-ff6b-4b6a-967d-11fec52ddf7/f71a6e62-0f71-4338-94db-669897f8b042/Afloat%20July%202019.pdf).

Fire, disease, people: the native plants facing extinction – in pictures

Discover Australia's threatened plant species, as well as their major threats

Alexandra Spring

Humans are devastating the world's plants and causing a "frightening" number of extinctions, according to a global scientific survey of the issue. This is certainly the case in Australia, where plants make up 72% of the total threatened species list, with 1,308 listed species, and 370 species listed as critically endangered or endangered at a state level. This accelerating decline in the world's biodiversity will have grave consequences for human society, according to the UN's recent global assessment report.

In Australia, recent research by the Threatened Species Recovery Hub listed the 100 plants that are most at risk. Dr Jennifer Silcock from the University of Queensland said the list, published in the *Australian Journal of Botany*, showed the main threats were urbanisation, inappropriate fire regimes, introduced plant disease and habitat loss.

"The good news is that every one of the species on the list can be saved, we have the techniques required, we just need the commitment," said co-researcher Dr Rod Fensham.

"The fate of these species depends upon support and action from governments and the community. A bonus will be that the actions required to save these species will also benefit many other vulnerable plant species."

Submitted by Rosemary Blemings

Ancient tree collection

Rosemary Blemings has muted the idea of an ancient tree collection. She has approached the founders of Canberra Nature Map but this doesn't seem to be a project within the bounds of their data collection.

Rosemary wrote:

"I was walking up on Lyneham Ridge recently at the northern (Kaleen) end. The flowering early wattle, *Acacia genistifolia*, was spectacular. and, due to the warm sunshine, the ancient eucalypts called out to be photographed and the images kept as a snapshot of them in 2019. I have a challenge for each of you – create a personal album or other record of each of these enigmatic woodland sentinels for 2019–2020. Also please record the location of each, so that changes over the next decades can be studied. I am proposing that in the future, these bush tree records could be gathered up and compiled into one record and made available. Special attention could be given to the less recorded nature reserves around Canberra's suburban interface.

The main aim is to challenge those who "go bush" with a camera to create images that celebrate the significant trees they come across in the next ??? 12 ??? months...EFFECTIVELY, A SNAPSHOT IN TIME. The criteria might include the trees having been alive for centuries.....perhaps pre-settlement.

I see many ancient trees as nature's sculptures and significant for the visual impact they make.

They could also be significant for the stories they might be able to tell, the events they may have witnessed.....

Photographers are requested (if not mandated??) to record the trees' locations so that others may return to them over the ensuing years. (Unless they're in a sensitive area to which the photographer has privileged access.)

Images would be particularly welcome if they come from less-visited reserves or places less likely to be regularly visited by professional ecologists and naturalists. (This would be a way to celebrate other open spaces and that we need those places as much as the gazetted reserves.)

Photographers would collect the images on USB's (or similar) for sharing with whoever is interested in the role of collating images... perhaps with the prospect of a celebratory exhibition and/or publication eventually.

Since Canberra Nature Map doesn't seem to be a likely option for this collection, if members have any ideas on how this may be achieved, Rosemary would love to hear from you (rosemary@blemings.org).

A lovely sighting

Canberra's bus service does not always provide a service to places that non-drivers would like to go. One such is Pialligo, understandable I guess in that anyone keen to buy plants would most likely take a vehicle in which to transport their purchases home. However, I was looking for a particular species of *Acacia* and too impatient to wait for the next ANPS plant sale. The plant was available at Pialligo.

The nearest bus stop is the airport but it is only a shortish walk to Pialligo.

Alternatively, I decided to make a day of it and get the bus to Kingston to look for raptures at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands first. The pair of Black-winged Kites were actively hunting and chasing mice.

After taking some photos I then headed out on the walk to Pialligo (and ultimately, the airport for the

bus home). The signs are confusing. The sign at Jerrabomberra says that it is 3 kms to the airport, but after walking quite a distance, another sign also proclaims that it is only 3 kms to the airport. Never mind. I'm used to walking long distances.

What was interesting however, was that crossing the bridge over Morshead Drive, I looked down into the river and spotted a platypus.



Such a lovely sighting.

Alison Milton

FNAC's ANU prizewinner 2018

Just prior to Ingrid Singh's fascinating and informative presentation on local Flying Foxes and Micro bats we welcomed Kara Tedman.

Kara is the 2018 winner of the Field Naturalists' Prize for second year students at ANU's BOZO.....or that was the acronym of the Botany and Zoology faculty, which had generously hosted our meetings for decades.

Kara is a lively and outgoing person with the capability of being a fine ambassador for the natural world. She's deeply immersed in her ongoing studies and said she was enjoying chances to learn about the multiple fields of natural history.

She would make choices about more specific research and studies over the next couple of years.

Rosemary Blemings

Winter birds at the Pinnacle

John Brannan led a COG bird walk at the Pinnacle Nature Reserve on Sunday. I intended to join the walk but lost track of time. I went up there anyway hoping to catch up, arriving half an hour after the start of the walk.

In the end I didn't catch up to them until they were heading back to the cars. In retrospect, probably a good thing as I was distracted by a female Scarlet Robin. While photographing her, the male then flew in, then a Grey Fantail...

The result was that I barely left the area and recorded quite a number of species:

- a pair of Scarlet Robins
- a pair of White-throated Tree Creepers
- two Grey Fantails
- a White-eared Honeyeater
- 8 Superb Fairy Wrens
- 3 Eastern Rosellas (flying through)
- a dozen or so Crimson Rosellas
- at least three Sulphur-crested Cockatoos; a pair of which were inspecting tree hollows
- various thornbills and weebills
- Ravens flying through overhead.

Moving on, I finally spotted the COG group just as I also spotted a White-plumed Honeyeater. Waking with them back to the cars we spotted another White-plumed Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin and Thornbills. Then at the car park a group of eight Straw-necked Ibises flew overhead.



A particular curiosity was a tree some had spotted at the beginning of the walk. The dead tree, near the Dungowan Street entrance, had what at first looked like an owl or similar bird perched up the top of one of the dead branches. However, a closer examination of the photos revealed that it was in fact just a simulacrum.



Alison Milton

AGM nomination form

Notice of annual general meeting

Members are asked to think about volunteering for the committee or suggesting how they could help the Field Nats.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO ALL MEMBERS THAT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra will be held on Thursday 1 August 2019 at 7.30 pm in the Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R.N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University, ANU.

Business:

- a. To confirm the minutes of the last preceding annual general meeting.
- b. To receive from the committee, auditor, and servants of the Association reports upon the transactions of the Association during the last preceding financial year.
- c. To elect the officers of the Association (President; Vice President; Treasurer; Secretary) and the ordinary committee members
- d. To appoint the auditor and determine his/her remuneration
- e. To conduct other business of which notice has been given

Nominations for election of members of Committee shall be made in writing (see below) and shall be delivered to an officer of the Association. If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the committee, the candidates shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall be received at the Annual General Meeting.

NOMINATION FORM

I hereby nominate _____

BLOCK LETTERS

A member of the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra Inc

For the position of _____

Name of Proposer _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Name of Seconder _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Acceptance of Nomination

I _____ accept nomination for _____

Signature of Nominee _____ Dated _____



Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Inc.

Who are the Field Naturalists?

The Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra (FNAC) was formed in 1981. Our aim is to foster interest in natural history by means of meetings and regular field outings. Meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Outings range from weekend rambles to long weekends away. Activities are advertised in our monthly newsletter. We emphasise informality and the enjoyment of nature. New members are always welcome. If you wish to join FNAC, please fill in the member application below and send it in with your subscription to the FNAC Treasurer at the address below.

President: Rosemary Blemings, et al

president@fieldnatsact.com

Email: secretary@fieldnatsact.com

Website: www.fieldnatsact.com

Treasurer: treasurer@fieldnatsact.com

Membership: membership@fieldnatsact.com

Newsletter Editor: editor@fieldnatsact.com



Monthly meeting venue: Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University

**Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra
GPO Box 249
Canberra ACT 2601**



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Family name: First name:

If a family membership, please include the first names of other members of the family:

.....

Postal address:

Suburb: State: Postcode: Home phone:

Work phone: Email address:

Subscription enclosed: \$.....(Single/Family \$25) Donation: \$.....

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: FRIEND? OTHER? Please specify: