

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

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GPO BOX 249
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

FIELD NATTER

MEETING—Thursday 4 July 2019

7:30 pm Australian National University
Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU, ACT
details back page

Camp and colonies: Bats in the Australian Capital Territory

Speaker: Ingrid Singh

As a volunteer wildlife carer, Ingrid has been helping to rescue, rehabilitate and release bats around Canberra with ACT Wildlife, since it was established.



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Control of exotic trees

In autumnal months April and May 2019, members of the National Parks Association of the ACT (some of them also FNAC members) continued their on-going program to control the spread of exotic trees into Namadgi National Park. Work parties were held at Bendora Arboretum and Blundells Flat.

Bendora Arboretum

The Bendora Arboretum is the sole surviving arboretum in the Brindabellas following the 2003 bushfires. It was established in 1940 by Dr Charles Lane Poole, Director of the then Forestry and Timber Bureau, as one of a series of experimental plantings to help determine which species of trees could be grown commercially in the ACT. They planted 52 species of trees in blocks (81 trees per block), including Coniferous Larches with soft feather foliage (Larch are one of the World's few deciduous conifers), Maples and European Limes. The arboretum is listed on the ACT's Heritage Places Register.

We met ACT Park Ranger Darren Roso on site to discuss the work plan and subsequently began weeding on the southern boundary of the arboretum, in native bushland across the perimeter track. More than 800 *Pinus radiata* wildings up to 2 m high were found and pulled out or cut off, most of them within 20 metres of the track. Fewer scattered wildings were also removed from outside the other three plantation boundaries.

Within the arboretum there were 100 *Pinus radiata*, and Arizona Cypress carpeted the forest floor. We removed about 2,500 wildings within the plantation. Also removed were an oak, a suckering apple and numerous briars and blackberries.

As Brian Slee, our work party leader commented, *the weather was fine and chilly and the light superb, especially filtering through the yellowing leaves of the deciduous larches. Mountain peppers bore plump berries.*



For scale, the folded saw is 23.5 cm



Some amazingly large and colourful fungi dotted the floor of the arboretum. Needless to say we didn't collect them for dinner. Notable was the lack of birds or other wildlife.



Blundells Flat



Blundells Flat is an unusual montane flat and wetland below Mount Coree. It is close to Namadgi National Park and the adjacent Brindabella National Park in NSW. Nine of the Blundell's 11 children were born in their hut after they moved there in 1866.

An arboretum dedicated to poplars, about 70 sq m, was established between 1959 and 1963. Sources of seedlings included the USA, Canada, New Zealand, UK, South Africa and local. These poplars were trialed by Lyndsay Pryor as part of a research program to improve availability of match sticks. Yes matches. Demand for match sticks (and consequently funds for research) waned so the plantation was never harvested commercially. But the trees were not removed. Most of the arboretum was destroyed in the 2003 bushfires.

NPA's May work party was the third at the site aimed at eradicating the large infestation of poplar wildings. The poplars range from finger-sized to trees requiring chainsaw removal. We lost count of numbers but one couple cut and dabbed 240 suckering wildings in a 10 sq. m. area in about one hour (before morning tea break). Five *Pinus radiata* and numerous briars were also removed.

These photos give some idea of a problem we don't want in the national park.



We spotted few birds but there were numerous spiders in the moist leaf litter. We had no time to search out *Eucalyptus camphora*, a tree species known to occur naturally from just this area of the ACT.

Kevin McCue

Bird sightings

On Thursday, 20 June, Charles and I were standing out the front of our home in old Macgregor talking to our neighbours when we all observed a Wedge-tailed Eagle circling above us. Two smaller birds, one a Magpie, were flying under it. We were amazed to see the eagle virtually over Southern Cross Drive. I wondered if the drought was causing the eagle to venture into unfamiliar territory to find food. Is this a realistic supposition? We haven't seen an eagle near us before.

This morning, 22 June, Charles and I observed a Grey Butcherbird fly from our bare elm tree to our front porch area. We got a very good look at it before it landed on the ground out of our view. I had seen one a couple of days ago in our garden. This is also a first for us in our eight years here.

Then, this morning, a little later, I went for a bike ride and noticed large nests in the tops of the steel power structures that convey electricity.



We are still having pairs of Crimson Rosellas come into the garden to use our 'main' bird bath.

About two weeks ago, I heard and saw three Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos flying at a little distance from the Uniting Church in Kippax towards the direction of Ginninderra Creek.

We usually have Silvereyes and now Buff-rumped Thornbills, but their numbers are not good in comparison with previous years. In that last long hot summer, I had a 'system' going, which gave me joy. About 4ish in the afternoon, when I'd hear the Silvereyes in the garden, I'd put on a fine sprinkler that sprays up through a large shrub. The Silvereyes

would come to the shrub and move up and down and around through the spray, wetting and cooling themselves. If I heard them in the garden at any time during that great heat, I'd run out and put the sprinkler on!

A Red Wattlebird also thrives in our garden (not sure if there is a pair) as well as a pair of Magpie-larks. There are Magpies around and through our garden as well.

Lastly, the King Parrots have arrived and we've observed a pair of them in the immediate surrounds to our garden in large trees, one of which is a Cape Lilac and they seem to feed in there.

As for the exotics,

Regularly, I hear and then see a pair of Common Mynas in a neighbour's property, which I shout at or wave a stick at. So far they haven't come into our garden that I've observed.

The Sparrows have seemed much less present over recent months.

The other birds I've observed in our rear garden recently are a pair of black birds. The female used a bird bath that I've never seen any other bird use. The blackbirds have been a consistent feature of our garden.

Some time ago, Bill Murphy and Alison Milton wrote separately about the observed decline in small birds in their gardens. I am grateful to them raising this topic. I too have to say that it's been about four years since the Superb Fairy-wrens have come in any numbers into our garden in winter, when for a few years prior to that we were delighted to see them on the grass feeding regularly.

My approach to supporting birds, from reading and listening to others, is to provide habitat and food through plants, but to provide water always. I have seen Sulphur-crested Cockatoos with beak and feather disease* (at Fraser and Macgregor properties where feeders were used to provide seed), which I understand spreads from artificial communal feeding.

By the way, I wholeheartedly agree with Alison about leaving the lid of your green bin open when you've added garden material so that creatures caught up in it can escape.

Lucy Bastecky

* A recent PROMED report states that researchers at Charles Sturt University, NSW, have developed a vaccine. They are now ready to submit their work to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority for approval. If approved, it should be available by 2021.

Editor

Early Winter sightings

With the changing seasons insect activity has declined, though there are still some sporadic sightings. I found two moths on the same Lomandra outside Belconnen Mall (quite by accident).

Lucy has given us an account of bird activity near her though COG survey reports seem to indicate fewer birds and species than previous surveys. For my part I have a glut of exotic invaders that seem to be increasing in number, perhaps due to a neighbour who has chooks but spreads their feed on the ground within easy access of wild birds. Thus the electricity wires that run along the back of our neighbouring fences, constantly has up to 30+ Crested-pigeons and about as many Starlings. The Sparrows continue to invade my back yard. However, I also have a

number of Red Wattlebirds and this week saw the return of a pair of Eastern Spinebills. A small number of Thornbills have been constant visitors but the Silvereyes are once again joining them.

Parrots are also a constant, with Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (it's good to see my friend with the hole in its chest is still around, and now healed well), Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, and King Parrots are making a reappearance, though not in the numbers I once had.

Like Lucy, I've also been lucky to see Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. While walking one of my dogs I saw six fly overhead and land in pine trees close to home. I quickly took my pup home and went back with the camera to watch them feasting on the pine nuts. Since

then, I've seen three flying East over the Hawker ovals the last two weekends.

Rakali are making their presence known, perhaps preparing for the breeding season. I've seen them on almost every foray to a water site in recent weeks: Weston Park, a pair at Lake Ginniderra beside Ginniderra Drive, and on Ginniderra Creek near Kaleen where I've seen it on three separate days as I think I know where it has its burrow. Sadly, I also found a dead one at the Lake Ginniderra hotspot near the skate park.

Fungi now seems to be prevalent with many sightings on Canberra Nature Map and I found the best examples I've seen of *Amaritis muscari* near Weston Park, Yaralumbra.

Alison Milton

Australia's conservation efforts need ten times more funding

According to the recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Report over 1 million species are at risk of extinction. This is driven by human use of the land and sea resources, followed by direct exploitation of animals, climate change, pollution and invasive species.

More than a third of the world's land surface and nearly 75 per cent of freshwater resources are now devoted to crop or livestock production, with most of what is grown as crops fed to livestock for meat production. Urban areas have more than doubled since 1992 meaning the space for nature is more and more squeezed to the ever-diminishing margins.

And here in Australia we have the highest rate of mammal extinctions in the world and we are the fourth worst for biodiversity loss globally. Professor James Watson, the director for the University of Queensland's Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Science, in a recent interview with the ABC, explained that part of the problem is rapid deforestation. He said,

We are world leaders in habitat clearance, vegetation clearance — we clear more land than just about every country on the planet, especially for cattle farming.

Another story on the ABC News website stated that there are more than 1800 plants and animals on Australia's threatened species list and that includes more than 500 animals. The story goes on to explain that by analysing state and federal budgets, scientists from the government-funded Threatened Species Recovery Hub research group have found Australian governments are

spending a fraction of what is needed to conserve all the wildlife on the list. Research hub director Professor Brendan Wintle said Australia was already,

... picking winners and losers and we're currently spending about a tenth of what we need to spend. By not funding all species to the level that's required to keep them in the game, we're essentially allowing quite a lot of species to fail.

The article goes on to explain that scientists often have to rely on crowd-funding and volunteers for conservation work. Professor Wintle explained that the Threatened Species Recovery Hub research analysis has shown that despite the Commonwealth Government saying it has invested \$400 million in threatened species recovery efforts the total funding by both federal and state governments is only about \$121 million. He also explained that at least one third of Australia's threatened species were not being monitored saying,

we could be losing them and we wouldn't know.

So what can we do? FNAC has been a keen and generous supporter of conservation efforts and that is wonderful but it is time to encourage our politicians to give more and do more – 10 times more in fact. Oh and time to consider that Planetary Diet to help to do our bit to bring an end to land clearing in Australia.

And any other suggestions gratefully received.

For more info on the Planetary Diet – you can read the report at <https://www.thelancet.com/commissions/EAT>

Rhian Williams

Activities

Sun 21 July 2019 9:00am. The Pinnacle Nature Reserve bird walk led by John Brannan

Note: This is a COG outing.

The Pinnacle NR is one of a chain of Canberra Nature Park reserves in the Belconnen hills. Heavily planted with trees in the 1980s and 1990s, it now offers a lovely mix of woodlands and open areas, including a largely undisturbed patch of remnant Red Stringybark woodland, and expansive views across the Molonglo Valley. July is a good time to spot the Scarlet Robins that regularly over-winter at the reserve, and the local Speckled Warblers are enjoying a bit of a resurgence in recent years.

Meet at 9 am at the reserve gate at the southern end of Dungowan St, Hawker and feel free to bring something for a spot of morning tea at the Pinnacle summit, weather permitting.

A revolution in the paddocks - regenerative farming

<https://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-22/regenerative-natural-farming-revolution-in-our-paddocks/11219812?pfmredir=sm>

“A young farming couple find out they can rehabilitate the environment by the way they farm, but the stakes are high, they could go broke by doing it.”

As Field Nats have already heard about Martin Royd’s Regenerative Agriculture efforts off Old Cooma Road near Bungendore and the Small Farms Network organised by Alex James here’s another inspiring example from near Narrabri.

When you’ve 30 minutes arm yourselves with a relaxing beverage and turn on the RADIO...by listening to this young family’s journey to healthy food and chemicals-free agriculture (<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/earshot/a-revolution-in-the-paddocks/11211088>).

Like Martin, Charlie Massy of Call of the Reed Warbler fame, Colin Seis and Peter Andrews we’re lead to concepts of listening to the land, rehydrating and revitalising soils for crops and grazing and, essentially, to studying how Indigenous peoples cared for Country.

There’s also The Mulloon Creek Institute near Bungendore: (<https://themullooninstitute.org/what>), leading by example and through field days, showing how healthy food and respectfully treated livestock can play an increasingly sought-for role in feeding people.

Should I go further to add “There’s no such thing as cheap food from Industrial Agriculture if the cost to the planet’s habitats of land clearing, artificial fertilisers destroying soil structure, herbicides destroying insect populations and the detrimental presence of chemicals in all species’ systems is taken into account.”

Rosemary Blemings

Links

There are many like-minded groups in the ACT dedicated to conservation and looking after the environment. Below are links to two of these that may be of interest to FNAC members. Please let me know of any others we should include that may be of interest.

[Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park](https://www.step.asn.au/) (<https://www.step.asn.au/>)

[Friends of Grasslands](http://www.fog.org.au/) (<http://www.fog.org.au/>)

Raffle prizes needed

Once again it’s time to go through your cupboards for all those little items you no longer use or want and bring them along to donate as raffle prizes. As the saying goes, ‘One man’s junk is another man’s treasure’ (or woman as the case may be.





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

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

**Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra
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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: