



MEETING THURSDAY 1 APRIL

7:30 pm Australian National University

Meeting details back page



John Feehan is a recognised authority on Dung Beetles both in Australia and internationally. He was a member of the CSIRO team tasked with introducing bovine Dung Beetles into Australia. When the CSIRO project was concluded, John formed a private company based in Canberra, called SOILCAM, continuing researching, collecting and releasing suitable Dung Beetle species into grazing regions across Australia and internationally. John collects bovine Dung Beetles in a diverse range of regions around Australia and supplies colonies on a commercial basis to the Australian and international farming community. This year John was nominated for Australian of the Year with his work on Dung Beetles.

John will tell us more about the importance of Dung Beetles.

Contents

Page

Outing - 10 April - Farm visit	2
A New Website for Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra	2
Availability of "Field Natter" Newsletter in Future	3
Resurrection! The Yellow-spotted Bell Frog is Not Dead!	3
Part 3 Peru - Amazonia = Blood, Sweat and Tears	4
March Weekend at Kioala	6
Hanging Out with Bats	6
Will Molonglo Development Threaten Lizard?	7
Note from the editor	7
Remember - FNAC raffle is an ideal outlet for "Unwanted Treasures"	7
Contact details and map	8
Membership application	8

Outing - 10th April - Farm visit

Dung beetles:

Aerate the soil

Bury dung pads

Deepen the topsoil

Dig through compacted soil

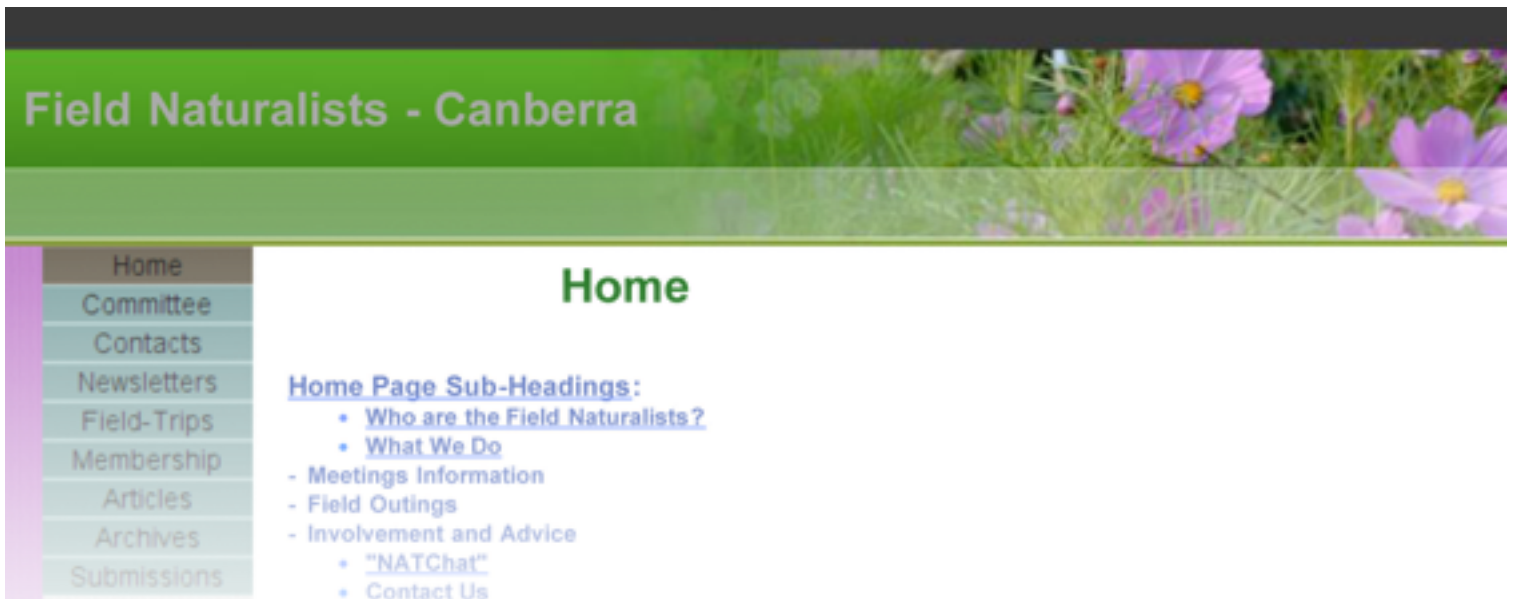
Help store soil carbon

Bury dung in the plant root zone

Reduce bush fly and parasite breeding

John Feehan will show us Dung Beetles in action and the results of their presence. We will meet at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Car Park, off Dairy Rd in Fyshwick at 10am. John will take us to another near by site if time permits. Contact Helen Dowsett by email, helen.dowsett@netspeed.com.au if you have any questions.

A New Website for Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra



The Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Inc. now has a new web site. It can be found at:-

<http://www.fieldnatscanberra.com>

Currently the web site contains eight pages;

Home page - contains general background information about the Field Naturalists', and a disclaimer.

Committee page - names the 2010 Committee members and their respective responsibilities.

Newsletters page - provides the past 12 months "Field Natter" newsletters, and a link to archived newsletters. As each new monthly newsletter is produced it will be placed onto the Newsletters page.

Field Trips page - notices about upcoming, and immediate past, Day and Weekend trips.

Membership page - membership applications and renewals.

Contacts page - how to make contact with selected FNAC Committee members, and links and information about a large number of other ACT nature organisations.

Articles page - various articles of interest sourced from the internet, contacts or members' writings.

Archives page - local natural history articles and more general articles, along with past "Field Natter" newsletters.

The FNAC Web Site is colourful, attractive and welcoming with a great deal of information. The current committee plan to set a high standard in the web site's continued maintenance; with an emphasis on up-to-date information, relevance, interest and variety. In that regard, there is every likelihood of additional pages being added to the web site to further broaden the topics / information of interest to people who will visit the site.

FNAC Members who haven't as yet gone to the web site, you are encouraged to do so. You will not be disappointed. You are also welcome to add articles of interest, contact the webmaster, Bob Lehman.

Application has also been made to have the FNAC Web Site placed onto several search engines, namely Yahoo!, Google, MSN and Ask.

Bob Lehman <[helbo\(at\)westnet.com.au](mailto:helbo(at)westnet.com.au)>

Availability of "Field Natter" Newsletter in Future

Posted with this April "Field Natter" newsletter is a separate sheet asking FNAC Members to complete a form indicating how you wish to access future monthly newsletters:

- (1) From the FNAC Web Site,
- (2) Receiving a "hardcopy" via Australia Post, or
- (3) Both - from the FNAC Web Site and also via Australia Post.

A stamped, addressed envelope is also enclosed for you to post your choice to Bob Lehman. Carefully read the sheet. Then respond quickly. Bob needs the information!

Resurrection! The Yellow-spotted Bell Frog is Not Dead!



Photo: Taronga Zoo
Michael McFadden

Brian Robins

In the world of amphibians, it is the equivalent of finding the Tasmanian tiger. A species of frog presumed extinct for nearly 30 years has turned up in the Southern Tablelands.

The yellow-spotted bell frog was once ubiquitous in the northern and southern tablelands of NSW, but was almost wiped out after the chytrid fungus arrived from Africa in the early 1970s.

It was found alive and well in 2008 by government researcher Luke Pearce, who was searching for a native fish, the southern pygmy perch. Instead, he spotted the bell frog, which has distinctive markings on its groin and thighs.

But Mr Pearce had to wait until last October before he could return with David Hunter, the threatened species officer of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, to confirm the finding.

"We heard this bell frog call," Mr Pearce said. "[We] went down looking for it and actually nearly stepped on it. It was quite amazing. This frog was just waiting there to be found."

In one stretch of stream on a farm in an unspecified part of the Southern Tablelands, an estimated 100 yellow-spotted bell frogs have been found. Six tadpoles have been taken to Taronga Zoo to establish a breeding program.

"If it has a predisposition to being resistant to this fungus, as opposed to having site attributes resulting in resistance, that will afford it much greater protection when we start putting it elsewhere," Dr Hunter said.

Michael McFadden, an amphibian keeper at Taronga Zoo, said the fungus had caused the loss of seven frog species in Australia. It was thought to have wiped out two species that have been found in the past few years.

In all, almost a quarter of the state's frog species have been affected by the fungus, including 15 threatened varieties such as the green and golden bell frog, the corroboree frog and the spotted tree frog.

"Highland species of frogs crashed really hard," he said.

Two years ago, the armoured mist frog of northern Queensland was found after not being seen since the early 1990s.

"This is the equivalent of discovering the Tasmanian tiger, in terms of amphibians, in terms of frogs," the NSW Environment Minister, Frank Sartor, said of the latest find.

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/bell-frog-thought-to-be-on-last-legs-spotted-alive-and-kicking-20100304-plsc.html>

Part 3 – PERU: AMAZONIA = MUD, SWEAT AND TEARS – October 2009

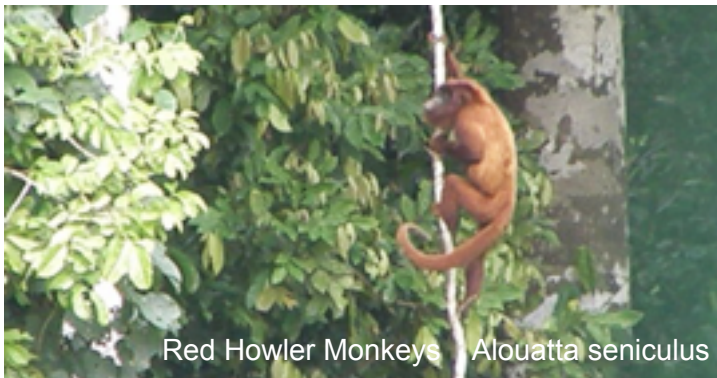
An adventure by Horst and Kay Hahne

My eyes misted over as I gazed on the wide, flat river below, which would be our transportation route for the next six days. The lowlands and jungle of Amazonia at last! No roads from this point on. We will head down tributaries to the Amazon, the Alto Madre de Dios, the Manu and finally head down the larger Rio Madre de Dios to the city of Puerto Maldonado. This vast lowland drainage area is called the Amazonia Basin.

We are transported by motorised canoes from Atalaya. One is large enough to hold 19! Our three guides, Juan, Janice, and Ribeleno proves to have absolutely amazing in his knowledge of his home territory. Another canoe takes our luggage, food, utensils, gas bottle, and water bottles.

Everyone had a life vest, although not all of them had buckles that worked.... We soon got blasé and only used them to keep a little warmer in the cool of an early morning start, but mostly it was just too hot. The breeze as we moved along was very welcome as it dried our constant perspiration. Only a plastic tarp kept out a bit of sun or rain. To disembark we had to literally walk the 20cm gangplank, requiring good balance. The temptation to leisurely dangle a hand in the water was quickly kerbed as we realised there are Black Caiman and four species of piranha in the river. It was a great way to bird watch! We spotted Amazon Kingfisher, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Great and Snowy egrets, Neotropic Cormorants and White-winged Swallows on our first short trip.

Look! A column of leaf-cutter ants (*Atta* sp.) carrying their heavy load of bits of green leaf or stem to feed the mushrooms in their chambers below ground. This is what you see in documentaries by David Attenborough! We are in the jungle! There were hummingbirds everywhere, darting between the flowers and the hanging sugar-water feeders: Long-tailed Hermit, Grey-breasted Saberwing, White-necked Jacobin, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Blue-tailed Emerald, Wire-crested Thorntail, Golden-tailed Sapphire, and Booted Racket-tail.



Red Howler Monkeys *Alouatta seniculus*

As we cruised downstream we saw large Red Howler Monkeys *Alouatta seniculus* eating clay on the riverbank, then moving up through the vegetation by climbing lianas including a baby. What beautiful, rich reddish-brown fur, but what a noise they make! Rather sounded like lions close up, or better yet, like the roar of jet engines. It would raise the hair on the back of your neck. Also we spotted and photographed the tall, stately Cocoi Heron, dainty Yellow-billed Terns and their sturdier compatriots Large-billed

Terns, a Greater Yellow-headed Vulture soaring overhead, Giant Cowbirds perched on vegetation along the banks, and a delightful row of White-banded Swallows sitting shoulder-to-shoulder on a thin branch overhanging the water.



Brazilian Tapir, *Tapirus terrestris*

As we arrived at Yanayacu Lodge we were greeted by a large (up to 2m and 300kg) Brazilian Tapir *Tapirus terrestris* walking out of the jungle. We were intrigued by his long prehensile snout that he wiggled around, showing bits of teeth and a pink tongue. This odd looking animal is most closely related to the rhinoceros and horse and has three toes on the hind feet and four toes on the front.

The lodges were built up on stilts, with steeply pitched thatched rooves. There are no more window panes – just flyscreen on the top half of the walls, and rough timber on the bottom half for a modicum of privacy. I quickly dispatched the hugest insect I've ever seen with a slap of my shoe and out the door pronto. There was a sizable spider on the wall, plus Horst's shirt lying on the bed was a mass of swarming ants!

Next day we turned upstream into the Manu River. Now we are in Primary Forest – the original. Several of us purchased T-shirts which said "Parque Nacional del Manu" on the front. The back sports a large Harpy Eagle (no we weren't lucky enough to see any) and the following words translated from Spanish: It produces an immense sadness to think that the nature speaks while the mankind doesn't listen to it. So true.

The Manu River is muddy brown, flatter, calmer, not so many rocks. We saw a Great Potoo looking exactly like a broken tree limb, large Horned Screamers, saucy Red-capped Cardinals, fat Orinoco Geese in pairs, a red and black Vermillion Flycatcher, plus 5 wild blackish-green Muscovy Ducks clinging to what looked like a vertical river bank (they nest in trees, so I guess they are good at going up). My favourites were the dozens of Sand-colored Nighthawks day-roosting on sandbars, or branches of driftwood, each facing the same direction, just like pussy-willow buds on a stem!

At 5 am near an oxbow lake next morning, our guide Ribeleno caught a beautiful little Spot-legged Poison-dart Frog *Epipedobates pictus*. There are 175 species in this colourful Dendrobatidae family. Most are extraordinarily toxic. Natives use their poison to tip their arrows/spears in order to kill monkeys and other prey. We asked Ribe how he is able to hold this poisonous thing? "I've been playing with these frogs since I was a child, but I must not lick my hands,

and my hands will itch and tingle for awhile. I've built up an immunity" he comments nonchalantly.

We reached Lake Salvador and were soon rewarded with wonderful views of 5 of the 6 Giant Otters *Pteronura brasiliensis* (up to 2 m) that live in this placid oxbow lake. They once thrived from Venezuela to n. Argentina, but are now endangered and only found in isolated and protected patches of their original range. They were hunted for their luxurious pelts. One adult always stays back to guard the pups in the den. They swam, fished, called and we saw otters emerge with a large fish. Their only real enemy (besides man) is the larger size adult crocodile-like Black Caiman *Caiman niger* (up to 6 m).

Some more birds: a Sungrebe swimming, a Sunbittern flew - allowing us to see the distinctive 'sunburst' pattern on the backs of its wings, a Black-fronted Nunbird with bright orange beak, Wattled Jacana flying about with yellowish wings and long trailing legs, a lone Limpkin, and an absolutely stunning deep bluish and rust Agami Heron. And we saw 3 Black Spider Monkeys *Ateles chamek* and 2 Dusky Titis *Callicebus moloch*. How agile all the monkey are as they climb and swing and jump from branch to branch.



There are myriads of butterflies – dozens clustered about a moist spot in the mud. Their colours vary: yellow and black, orange and black, blue and black, or all bright yellow Argent Sulphurs *Phoebis argante*. Really striking was the huge bright blue male Menelaus' Morpho Butterfly *Morpho menelaus*, and the stunning Lelius' Urania Moth *Urania lelius*.

Two beautiful Blue and Yellow Macaws showed off to us by clambering along the veranda and mucking about in a low tree nearby. At least we could get some close-up photos at last! Ribeleno's had planted hibiscus, bromeliads and other bird attracting flowers. We saw, White-chinned Sapphire hummingbird, Crested Oropendolas in a tree full of hanging nests and small Grey-rumped Swifts flying overhead.

Two nights at the lovely Tambo Blanquillo Lodge on the Rio Madre de Dios. We all dashed to the showers, but I made sure I got there first! My 50+ insect bites were driving me crazy.



We observed birds in a big hide with swivel chairs, a long shelf to rest camera, binoculars and bird book, 2 loos which you flushed with a bucket of river water, and 2 tables. Blue-headed, Yellow-crowned, and Orange-cheeked Parrots chattered and flew round and round and finally descended onto a vertical clay lick in the riverbank. Larger Mealy Parrots and Tui Parakeets and Red and Green Macaws appeared by the dozens. To see them so close is very special.



I asked Horst to get a close-up of a big black, hairy tarantula in the lounge. It would have covered the palm of your hand. It was probably a Brazilian Black Tarantula *Grammostola pulchra* (beauty is certainly in the eye of the beholder!).

On our last day we got a final look at a pair of Scarlet Macaws as they inspected a nesting hollow in a dead palm tree along the river's edge. At last we step out of our canoe at Puerto Maldonado, a frontier town of 25,000, we were back into civilisation! First stop was for cold ice cream in lovely native fruit flavours.

We can truthfully say we were knocked way out of our comfort zone and were mentally and physically challenged, but what amazing tales to tell and photos to show. I saw 190 birds; 150 were new species to add to my World List, bringing it to 1405 species. Group total list was about 300.

References:

- Fraser, Ian. 2009. Personal communication from our Tour Leader, plus our Peruvian guides.
- Pearson, David L. and Beletsky, Les. 2008, Travellers' Wildlife Guides: Peru. Interlink Publishing Group, Inc., Northampton, Massachusetts.
- Schulenberg, Thomas S., et al. 2007. Birds of Peru. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford.
- Wust, Walter H. 200? – no date. el vuelo del Condor / the flight of the Condor. CondorTravel.

March weekend at Kiaola

It was great that we were able to all eat together in the Community Building at the end of the day & be assured we did not starve nor go without liquid refreshment !!

The Community kitchen had wonderful facilities including a dish washing machine and as you can see by the photo of Kevin and Warwick we women didn't even have to wash the saucepans.

On the Friday night we congregated before dinner. Members had brought nibbles and drinks to share and then most people had brought something to barbeque.

On Saturday night, when the photo was taken, most of us had brought a prepared meal or something easy to cook up however I do know 2 or 3 of the menfolk were caught coming back with take away fish & chips!! Shirley provided a wonderful desert of mini pavlova nests with fresh cream and fruit for each of us.



Maureen (Bell) almost had a midnight feast as well. She awoke for a drink and felt something tickling her lips as she tried to drink her water. Using her torch she discovered a "wolf spider" in her glass. We told her that she was almost the old lady who swallowed a spider that wriggled and wriggled and wriggled inside her!!

Words and photos: Pat Kneebone



Hanging Out with Bats

Last November, several bats were noticed in Commonwealth Park. I thought to myself, "They are scout bats. If they like what they see, they will invite their friends." Now there are literally thousands of bats, (flying foxes) camped between stage 88 and Regatta Point Kiosk. You can hear their chatter and squeals when you get out of the car. As you approach, you can smell them too! Then look up to see them.



There will be impacts on the trees of Commonwealth Park with so many bats. The Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney has been host to 20,000 bats for many years causing many heritage trees to die. I noticed some of the poplar trees were denuded at the top already.

But the bats are amusing to watch as they preen themselves in the sun and squabble over roosting sites.

Words and photo: Margaret Kalms

Will Molonglo Development Threaten Lizard?

The letter below was sent to some members of the committee. Peter Ormay is concerned that the proposed development in Molonglo Valley will impact badly on the vulnerable pink-tailed worm lizard.

“The Type Locality of the Pink-tailed Worm Lizard *Aprasia parapulchella* is about 100m South of Coppins Crossing on the East side of the road. It is being overgrown by a small Radiata Pine plantation. There was a pine plantation there before the 2003 bushfire destroyed it but it appears that it was replanted.

I wonder if the Field Nats or the Herp Soc or both are interested making an official recommendation to have it conserved as a site of significance or similar? It would be best if both did. I don't have a contact for the Herp Soc. Could you pass this on to someone in the Herp Soc if you have a contact for them please? If you don't could you let me know?

I could show you or anyone interested in it the site.

Does the Field Nats. or the Herp Soc promote the conservation of scientifically important reptile sites?

Regards

Peter Ormay”

Molonglo Catchment Group have a detailed map of the lizard's location and can be found at;
http://www.molonglocatchment.com.au/MLM_EcologyMap.htm

The official plans and development can be found at;

http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/topics/significant_projects/planning_studies/molonglo_valley

Any letters to ACTPLA from inspired FieldNatters will have an impact on this planning process.



Photo: Museum Victoria.
Pink-tailed Worm-Lizard
taken at Bendigo
Whipstick, Victoria.
Aprasia parapulchella

Note from the editor.

I will not be editing May and June editions of FieldNatter because have other commitments If you send me articles, I will forward them to the reserve editor. Sorry for any inconvenience.

Margaret Kalms

REMEMBER - FNAC RAFFLE IS AN IDEAL OUTLET FOR "UNWANTED TREASURES"

During each monthly meeting we hold a fun raffle to raise funds for FNAC. There are usually several prizes giving each tickets has a high chance of a “win”. Please check your cupboards to see if you can part with material possessions that might otherwise mean a special trip to an op. shop.

IT'S ALL IN A GOOD CAUSE!!

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 the member application below and send it with your subscription to the FNAC Treasurer, GPO Box 249 Canberra, ACT 2601:

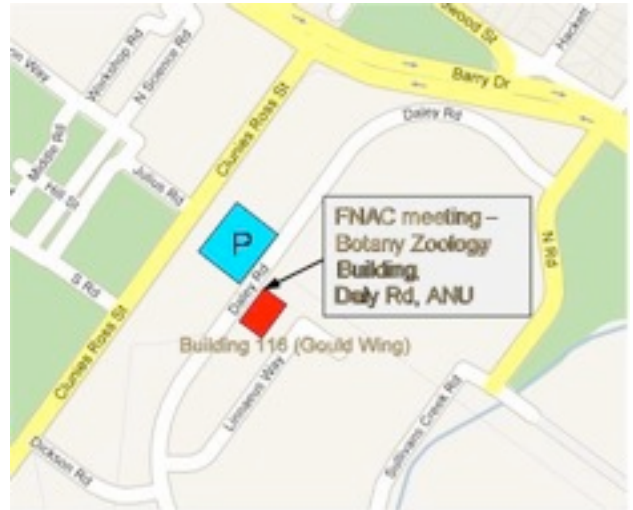
President: Benj Whitworth, Ph: 02 6272 3192 W
Mob: 0400250230

Secretary: Tony Lawson, Ph: 02 6161 9430
fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au

Website: Under construction.

Newsletter editor: Margaret Kalms margaret@ecospirit.com.au
Ph: 0414 652 567.

Published and distributed by Bob Lehman.



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University Park (occasionally at the adjacent Building 44).

Meetings start at 7:30 pm and are followed by refreshments.

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: