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FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC. GPO BOX 249
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FIELD NATTER

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

MEETING—THURSDAY 4th April
7:30pm Australian National University
Gould Seminar Room, Building 116, Daley Road, ANU, ACT
details back page

The white- browed scrub- wren

Tonya Haff

ANU Research assistant Tonya Haff has spent countless hours in the Australian National Botanic Gardens learning the language of birds.

Ms Haff, who comes from California, had studied birds for years when she decided to study for a PhD, hoping to discover how parent birds warn their young of danger without betraying their nest location to predators. She moved to Canberra and started work in 2008. She found white-browed scrubwren nests in the gardens, made recordings of different sounds and played them to baby birds to gauge their reaction.

Tonya said her research may be used to improve the survival rates of threatened species that had been bred in captivity and later reintroduced into an area.



Adapted from the Canberra Times December 2012

Report on our FNAC Bat meeting 7 March 2013

Darren Le Roux PhD candidate ANU on his study of bat hollows and their locations.

Bats are part of the web of life. Two-thirds of the human population will live in cities which inevitably spread into bat habitat and lead to loss of biodiversity. Trees, hollows, and bark are habitat structures which disappear. Bats are important as pollinators, for seed dispersal, and insect control.

Bat species survive with varying success in cities. Some species are disturbed by lights while others forage around them. Road noise interrupts their calls and they are killed by cars and power-lines. Many live under bridges. Bats are also predated by domestic animals and affected by pollution.

Darren's research concerns current and future resource availability; the landscape; tree level and the biodiversity of native trees and their size; the hollow level. Nine species have been recorded in his four study locations – among nature, pasture, urban parks and built-up urban areas. There are 16 bat species in the ACT.

Michael Pennay informed us about ACT BatWatch.

ACT Batwatch is coordinated by the Australasian Bat Society with support from the ACT Government. Batwatch ACT have bat detector instruments that record "the ultrasonic 'echolocation' calls bats make to find their way in the dark." These instruments reduce their high squeaky pitch so the human ear can hear and see them for identification purposes. "Using special software, bat experts are able to identify which species made which call." The bat detectors can be loaned, once registered with Batwatch, so that participants can take them while walking around their suburb to see if any bat species are present.

To register go to:

<http://ausbats.org.au/#/act-batwatch/4573612680>

If you own an iPhone or Android you can download a free iNaturalist App to record what species live where and what they do.

<http://ausbats.org.au/#/act-batwatch/4573612680>

If you don't have a smartphone, you can report details online at:

iNaturalist.org

March has been chosen for BatWatch month as the young are now flying. One tagged fruit bat/flying fox flew from Sydney to Canberra overnight. The bats prefer flowering Eucalypts and the older suburbs as they have more fruit trees. Hazards in Canberra include barbed wire, netting, and electrocution. Fruit bats have the knack of arriving when the trees are flowering even if there is a variation in flowering time. If a bat is so sluggish that it is easily caught then it should not be touched as it is highly likely to be ill and may have lyssavirus. [To which Chris Bunn, our veterinarian Field Naturalist would add, inoculation is strongly advised for bat handlers.]

Australasian Bat Society [ABS]

Maree Kerr of the ABS organised the evening's speakers for us. The society is a non-profit organisation and aims to "promote the conservation and study of bats in Australasia. and is registered under the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 1984 through the NSW Department of Fair Trading."

Our outing on the evening of March 10 enabled us to participate in the second Australasian Bat Night. Maree informed us of the stimulus for Bat Night (which really continues throughout March).

"In 2011 ABS organised the first Australasian Bat Night as part of the celebrations for the 2011-2012 Year of the Bat. Australasian Bat Night is based on European Bat Night, which takes place in more than 30 countries, and aims to educate and inform the public about the ecological importance of bats, the way bats live and their needs and threats.

Field Outing

This month we are supporting the activity described below as part of Heritage week. The first event is at Mulligans Flat from 11:00am until 3:00pm on Sunday 14th April. A suggestion is to bring your own lunch and drinks

Natural Treasures of the ACT:

Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary

Conservation Council ACT Region

11am-3pm The fun begins here, at the launch event, as you collect a passbook featuring events during the festival at nine heritage sites. Explore this woodland and discover the 'natural treasures' that await with guided walks and a treasure hunt.

**Free. The Woolshed, Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve.
Walk from Amy Ackman St car park, or Eric Wright
Street or Phyllis Frost Street, Forde**

(Continued from page 2)

Nature conservation agencies, sanctuaries, zoos and NGOs from across Europe arrange local events with presentations, exhibitions and bat walks, often offering the opportunity to listen to bat sounds with the support of ultrasound technology. In 2011, Bat Nights were also held in some Latin and South American countries and in South Africa. Last year, here, many events were held in partnership with LGAs and community groups. In time, I hope that Australasian Bat Night will be as big as European Bat Night.

Bats make up around 20% of the world's mammal species (the three new Zealand species are the only native mammals in New Zealand) but despite there being around 90 species in Australia and at least another 90 plus in Papua-New Guinea, bats remain little known by the general public, until they come into contact with humans. During 2011 the main media stories featuring bats have been on Hendra virus and flying-foxes. The vital ecosystem services provided by flying foxes (pollination and seed dispersal of native forest trees) have been ignored. Small insect eating bats are also crucially important in insect control, particularly of mosquitoes.

Bat Night is an opportunity to celebrate and educate the positive aspects of bats.”

If you haven't been to Commonwealth Park to observe the flying foxes leave the trees for their evening flight and meal, it is definitely worth a visit. They squabble, stretch their long wings, change trees and eventually 3 – 30 minutes after sunset fly off as individuals and then as groups in the direction of Pialligo and the Botanical Gardens, and who knows where. Perhaps you can help locate their other destinations by making your own observations and reporting them to BatWatch.

Thank you Maree, Darren and Michael. As one young child said “I've never been allowed to stay up so late before.” Now that's an endorsement for a wonderful experience.

Rosemary von Behrens



At the committee meeting, we bandied around the idea of having one location where all the nature focussed groups in Canberra could put up their coming activities/meetings in order to make more people/general population aware of what was happening and try and encourage them to get out and attend/help/improve their knowledge. **Rosemary von Behrens**



Promoting the nature of Canberra



The BatWatch evening showed, again, that we share a beautiful place/planet filled with the excitement of amazing plants animals and fungi. They stimulate wonder, exploration, discussion and reflection....from those who have time or make time.



How can we make more of presenting local wonders to those who live nearby? It is happening (as the Bat-Watching families showed) but not yet on the scale required to have "the public" motivated into action to protect what remains after 200 years of plundering and mis-management and present-day greed.



I wondered whether all groups and organisations* could unite to develop a blog (or whatever's technologically required) to celebrate and promote the nature of the ACT and region.



Such a site could contain photographs, articles, reported-sightings, links to survey lists but would primarily inform searchers about the landcaring, field trip, observation and presentation opportunities that are occurring all the time. I suppose it would be an enhanced calendar of natural history events in and around Canberra with the basic aim of increasing the sense of wonder, appreciation of natural beauty, inter-connectedness, belonging and wellbeing from which people are increasingly isolated.



There are some listings by specific organisations already but access may not be straight-forward enough to reach newcomers and, in the case of land-caring, potential volunteers.



The listings and Calendars of Events that I know of from Friends of Grasslands, Greening Australia, the catchment groups, COG, the Native Plants Society and Parkcare/Landcare groups could all reach a wider audience if there were a central site, possibly called **Canberra Nature:** or **Nature of the ACT (NACT)** disseminating their information. Each group would be able to forward event-information with the appropriate links to further details and the organisers.



Is it possible to make more-comprehensive the publicity and awareness attempts currently operating? The above is submitted with the aim of stimulating discussion.



Rosemary Blemings



*FNAC, ABS Australasian Bats Society, COG, ACTHA, FOG, ANPS, NPA, GA, Landcare & Parkcare Groups, the three Catchment Groups, COGS, PCS, Canberra City Farm, Friends of the ANBG, Geological Society, Bushwalking groups, Botanical and Wildlife artists and photographers' groups, garden clubs.



MONTH	SPEAKER	TOPIC
APRIL 4	Tonya Haff	White-browed Scrub Wren
MAY 2	Richard Baker	"Traditional Ecological knowledge: the Yanyuwa"
JUNE 6	Marianne Horak	The scribbly gum moth (Canberra the scribbly moth capital)
JULY 4	Dierk von Behrens and Rachel Marks	Clouding the Vision
AUGUST 1	Ric Longmore	Dangerous snakes of Australia
SEPTEMBER 5	AGM, members' night	Member's choice
OCTOBER 3	Trish McDonald	Macquarie Island, rabbit, rat, mouse control during her time as station manager for the Australian Antarctic Division
NOVEMBER 7	Under construction	
DECEMBER 5	Christmas party	

Continuing extracts from the 1964 book *Land of Wonder—the best Australian nature writing* selected by Alec Chisholm. This time closer to home. The Bluetts are an old Brindabella family.

AN OLD, OLD COUNTRY Douglas Stewart

Born in New Zealand, Douglas Stewart has lived in Australia for many years and has written freely, mainly in verse, on its fauna and flora. The accompanying extract is from Brindabella, an article published in the periodical Mearijin in 1962.

All was quiet, and rustic, and as civilized as a farm may be. But there was really no subduing the wildness of Brindabella. The lean stockman brought down a mob of cattle from the snow leases, and all night long they roared and bellowed and groaned around the homestead, speaking of snow and darkness, the granite peaks and the high bush and tussocky uplands where the dogger set his traps for the dingoes, I suppose the cattle were being branded, or the calves were being separated from the cows. They made the most fearful uproar.

In the dining room at night, thunderstorms came in and rang the telephone. Even in the shack—sorry, the "chalet"—even in the chalet on those sunny mornings when silver light came streaming through the chinks in the ceiling and we lay luxuriously in bed drinking Mr Bluett's tea, there used to be, regularly, a display of singular—and oddly beautiful—ferocity. It was given by a little grey bird that flew in and hunted around the undersides of the shingles for moths that had settled there during the night. It would seize on one of these great furry insects, half as big as itself, and, furiously struggling to devour it, batter it to pieces on the dressing table. Specks of moth-fur, moth-dust, moth-motes, floated up glinting in the silver light.

It was from the shack, too, through the big window that opened onto the great bald slab of granite across the river, that I watched one morning the magpies taking toboggan rides down a gum-tree. It was a day of flying storms and sun-showers. The gum-tree hung great bunches of shining wet leaves in the light. And down these bunches of leaves, from the tree-top almost to the ground, the magpie-, glissaded one after another in turn, like skiers on a snow-slope or Boys on a muddy hillside. Four or five of them, glossy black and glittering white, were rollicking in the game. They filled the whole morning with their delight.

Beyond them towered the mountain. I have never, elsewhere in Australia, felt that impression of the extreme antiquity of the land which so many people have recorded; but here at Brindabella, and particularly when looking at that grey granite bluff across the river from the shack, I did indeed feel the weight of the centuries. It was something to do with the bulk of that great bluff, like the back of an elephant, a mammoth more likely, curving above the tree-tops; and its greyness; its stoniness; its smoothness. It intruded among the trees like a living creature; but a creature of stone, patient, immobile, worn smooth. It was old, old, worn-down country. *Wee-loo, wee-loo*, wailed the black cockatoos, crying out their ancient aboriginal name as they flew overhead down the river. They were that exotic bird the funereal cockatoo, rare and shy; very big, quite startlingly so; very black, with yellow feathers under their wings and tails; and that long-drawn, wailing cry, forlorn and frightening.

The stream itself was a wild little creature, the loveliest and wildest of them all; crystal and silver in the sunlight, dark under the granite in the gorges, green and yellow in the pools with the reflections of the wattles and the ribbony-gums; fierce as a snake in its sharp and frequent floods. In the valley it ran sparkling under willows, bubbling over rocks and shingle, moving in that ever-enticing progression of rapid and run and pool, rapid and run and pool, sinuous, lithe and musical' as it hurried down out of the mountains

The small, just undersized fish we caught had often had a seiriously weazened appearance; dark, shrivelled, old-looking. They were, very likely, fully matured fish; old men of Brindabella who, in that clear swift rocky-bottomed stream, had never had enough tadpoles and yabbies and all the teeming life of quieter waters to fatten them.



A female golden orb web spider (*Nephila sp*) photographed on the foothills of Mt Majura.

"No web is more spectacular than that of a golden orb-weaver, swaying in a tree in the bushland or spanning a garden path. Shimmering in the sunlight or glistening with dew it is always an imposing site." (Barbara York Main)

The web is semi-permanent, with all the spider's refuse, which consists of skeletons of prey, suspended along a garbage line.

The golden orb-weavers never seem to rest. They sit in their web day and night and feed whenever prey is caught.

The committee is looking at producing a new brochure and are interested in an photographs, especially showing people 'field nattering'



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 von Behrens pH: 6254 1763

Email: fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au

Website: under construction

All newsletter contributions welcome.



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University. Park (the Xmas meeting is at the adjacent building 44 and will start at the earlier time of 6:30 pm)

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: