

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

April 2022

ISSN: 1836-2761



GPO BOX 708  
JAMISON CENTRE ACT 2614

# FIELD NATURALIST

## April 2022 newsletter

**Are you up for the challenge?  
See page 3.**



## Contents

Frog pond observations	2
A challenge	3
A eulogy for some Casuarinas	4
Birding	5
On the western edge: Witnessing Bluetts	5
Dragonflies and damselflies: Why these vividly coloured, mosquito-eating predators are 'underrated' insects	6
Activities	7
FNAC web site: can you help?	7
New publications	7

## Frog pond observations

Charles and I saw this female Orchard Swallowtail in our back garden being closely followed by two males. One of them did stop on her briefly and then she stopped alone on the camellia for a little while. Lately, we have seen the males a lot in our garden.



We have also had a welcome success with our frog pond after some trial and error. Spawning Spotted Grass Frogs have led to these tiny frogs. I watched them evolve as tadpoles over the past two months and adjusted the pond to include ways for the frogs to exit the pond. The plastic black liner was completely resistant to their attempts to scramble / hop up it to the bordering rocks. I cut grasses and laid them over the plastic liner above the waterline and added sticks, rocks and more floating plants.



The frogs are clearly pleased with the quality of the water, the rocks to sit on and the plants to hide in because two nights ago, an adult male Spotted Grass Frog (or perhaps two) starting calling after a couple of months of quiet.

Then last night we heard the Spotted Burrowing Frog - with its distinctive knocking / tapping



*Hard to spot, but there are two juvenile frogs in this photo*

call. Then this morning, there were two fresh spawns.

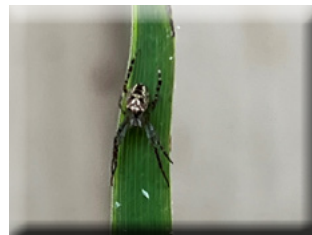
Apart from the plant, stick and rock additions to the frogs' home, other features are a solar driven fountain, top-ups of chlorine-free water (rain-water captured in a small nearby tank or when no rain, I fill it with tap water and let it sit for 24 hours)

and regular use of Splosht, a product that cleans the water of algae, which is safe for all aquatic life.

The last thing to be done is construction of a meshed cover to catch all the leaves and seeds that fall from the nearby Cape Lilac tree during autumn.



Also attracted to the pond has been a small spider in a web above the pond and since placed itself near the top of the strappy plant in the centre of the pond, and a fly on a floating plant.



**Lucy Bastecky**

## A challenge

Members know that I regularly check my garden for various invertebrates. However, on 26 February I decided to go one step further. Rather than just photographing the more unusual visitors, I decided to make a full list of everything that I observed in my yard. I started early with an overcast sky and low temperature, which meant that many insects were sitting waiting for warmer weather. I did do a further swoop when temperatures had increased a little, enough for the butterflies at least, to take to the air, and perhaps inducing the jumping spiders to emerge to seek their daily prey.

I did not include birds and I could readily identify many of the insects, but for expediency, while I recognised many, but not to species level, I did not try to ID them to this level. No doubt I could have done so with the help of Canberra Nature Map. As clarifiers, my flash batteries died so many of the later photos were not great and not good for ID. Also there were numerous flies and I did not try to photograph and ID all of the more common species and there were also many almost miniscule flying insects that are not included. I also excluded the few moths that I attracted to my back door light overnight.

With these limiting parameters I astounded even myself when I tallied the results. My tally for the day was an astounding 104 species (I can provide the list if anyone is interested).

My challenge to you is to beat this record, the only rules being that they need to be recorded on a single

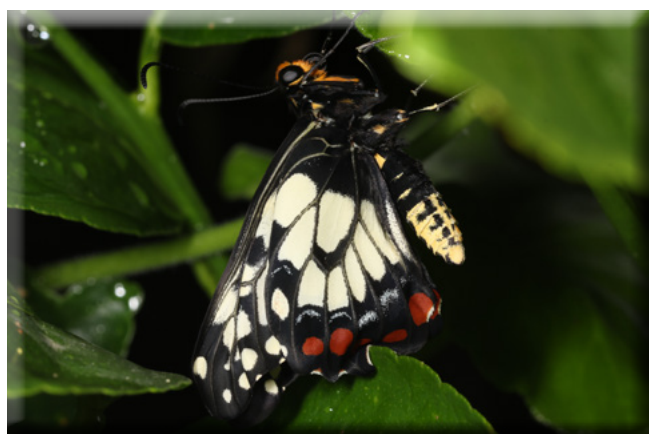
day and on your own property. I am more than sure that someone can beat this record if they put their mind to it. This does exclude birds.

I will endeavour to delve deeper into some of the IDs with the help of Canberra Nature Map but would love to see your results.

Send your results to [editor@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:editor@fieldnatsact.com) You don't need to include the full species list but a few photos for the newsletter would be great.

One of the observations was a newly emerged Dainty Swallowtail butterfly. Like Lucy, I've also been seeing a lot of Swallowtail butterflies in recent months. They are attracted to my various citrus trees. My feeling is that they are quite late to still be laying eggs and hatching larvae but I watched one Dainty Swallowtail larvae grow till it pupated on a branch of one tree. Quite often they travel away from the food tree and I don't find the pupae.

I checked the cocoon each day for several weeks and was rewarded with finding the adult moth just after it had emerged.



The last of the Dainty Swallowtail larvae have matured in the last week or two but I still have around 15 Orchard Swallowtail larvae in various stages, from one visible pupae to one very small caterpillar.

**Alison Milton**

# A eulogy for some Casuarinas

On a continent with diverse bioregions, a heating climate and a 234-year history of exploiting nature it's ecocidal, but unsurprising, that there is no independent national land use commission or a national settlement policy. How are we to treat Australia's unique habitats whilst simultaneously welcoming newcomers to Australia?

Too many have accepted that habitat loss, local extinctions, and a "they'll find new territory attitude" are inevitable consequences of the assumption that humans have the right to dominate other species.

Time will tell whether there are too many Australians for the continent's fragile, leached soils and decreasing rainfall, though there are already too many vehicles using roads built 50 years ago. Duplication of arterial roads is necessary for efficiency and safety, it is said. Infrastructure for humans takes precedence over healthy trees.

Ginninderra Creek needs a second bridge as the waterway's floodplain is crossed between Palmerville's Heritage Park and Giralang Pond's biodiverse wetlands.

Magnificent, tall River She Oaks, *Casuarina cunningghamiana*, were planted in the SE corner of Palmerville where Owen Dixon Drive meets the newly named section of Gundaroo Drive west of Giralang. The Casuarinas were given enough room to achieve their potential, though the constant traffic likely silenced the sighing of the wind through their needle-like leaves; the soothing sighs of those breezes said to have given the species the name, She Oak.

The busy footpath under the bridge meanders, giving pedestrians and cyclists a route past and shaded by the Casuarinas and deciduous Poplars.

Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoos visit the cohort of She Oaks at specific times in each year's cycle, seeking the female trees' cones. There are also times when Sulphur Crested Cockatoos prune all the trees for their own reasons.

Ancestors of the planted trees provided timber for axe handles and, in Queensland, timber for bullocks' yokes. The Casuarinas' timber was used as shingles during the first year of settlement at Sydney Cove according to AB & JW Cribb *Useful Wild Plants in Australia*, 1982

The trees' suckering and ready-seeding habits made the species popular for lining creek banks to halt the erosion caused by settlers' clearing of vegetation from land needed for cropping and pasture.

From the 2014 book, *Ngunnawal Plant Use: a traditional plant used guide for the ACT region* the authors state: "The timber and resin from this tree is used to make and repair tools and implements such as boomerangs, shields and nulla nullas. The seed cones can be used as jewellery, for ceremonial purposes and in children's toys. Seeds can be crushed into a paste and eaten. Grubs that bore into this tree can also be eaten usually after being cooked."

With all these attributes and values it is gut-wrenching to see how some of the Casuarinas were being wrecked during the duplication process. They were bulldozed by powerful earth moving machinery without any respect for those values and the beauty they have offered during their now-destroyed lives.



Couldn't they have been skilfully felled by arborists with the trunks used as seating logs for a natural playground somewhere in the suburbs or where watchers could observe Giralang Pond's scores of bird species?

**Rosemary Blemings**

## Birding

After seeing a notification of the sighting of two juvenile Nankeen Night Heron's at Giralang Ponds, I ventured out and was lucky enough to find one out in the open on the rocks at the pond overflow, where it had been reported. While the report had said they had been seen feeding in the late afternoon, I was surprised to find this one so openly visible at 2:00 in the afternoon, especially as it was feeding or doing anything special. I watched it for an hour during which time it barely moved apart from a couple of yawns and stretching its wing or just moving across the rocks a little or ducking when a White-faced Heron flew in to fish.



I returned a few days later, later in the afternoon hoping to see the second one, but to no avail. However, I did see the bulldozer start to remove the trees as described by Rosemary.

There was further excitement when a Little Lorikeet was spotted in the AIS car park. As a rare visitor to the ACT I again went in search of it.

It was first seen the previous week and had been reported by several people over the past weekend. I met a birder who had just seen it flushed from a tree across from the car park. Between us we then located it again back in the same tree. So I did see it briefly but was not able to get a photo.

Since it had returned to the same tree twice, I decided to hang around the tree for a while to see if it would return again. While waiting I met a woman walking a dog. She said her husband was looking for Superb parrots. They were visiting from Bundanoon and were told the AIS was the place to go for the Superbs. I'd seen several flying past me over the time I had been waiting so was able to direct the husband where to look (and he did find them). However, it seems my loitering attracted attention and a security guard arrived in his truck to ask what I (and the Bundanoon gentleman) were photographing. He was very polite and apologetic and quite happy with my explanation about birdwatching. It hadn't occurred to me that there might be any sensitivity around it currently being a vaccination centre, which was the guard's concern. We chatted a bit before he headed off again.

When I saw another man with a long lens, I assumed he was also looking for the Little Lorikeet, but interestingly, this was another interstate visitor seeking Superb Parrots, who had also been told that the AIS was the place to see them. Perhaps lucky that I had told the security guard that there were likely to be a number of people with long lens cameras.

**Alison Milton**

## On the western edge: Witnessing Bluetts

This is a photography course being run by Photo Access over seven months (one session per month).

The cost is \$395 with the first session at the end of April. There are still seven places available.

As you are no doubt aware, Bluetts Block (near Denman Prospect) is under threat of being subsumed into the further development of Denman Prospect. My feeling is that this project is partly aimed at documenting the flora and fauna of this area to help build the case to retain this area as a nature reserve.

Note however, that you need to be a member of Photo Access to participate.

If anyone is interested, details of the course, and sign up can be found on the [Photo Access web site](https://www.photoaccess.org.au/learn/classes/on-the-western-edge/) (<https://www.photoaccess.org.au/learn/classes/on-the-western-edge/>).

## Dragonflies and damselflies: Why these vividly coloured, mosquito-eating predators are ‘underrated’ insects

ABC Ballarat: By Gav McGrath

Are dragonflies and damselflies your favourite insects? Perhaps they should be. They belong to an extraordinary group of insects that specifically target buzzing mosquitoes, and better yet, their waterborne babies feast on baby mozzies.

Mosquitoes have been in the news due to Japanese encephalitis, a virus spread by the biting insects that can have severe health consequences.

### Mosquito controllers of the world

The Odonata (pronounced “odin-nah-tah”) order of insects includes dragonflies and damselflies. Virtually all consume flying insects. “Dragonflies and damselflies, along with bats, are the mosquito controllers of the world.”

### Watery habitats

Dragonflies and damselflies are dependent on healthy waterways. Ultimately dragonflies need water and clearly water bodies that are permanent or semi-permanent are ideal for our biodiversity.

“Our Odonata are critically linked to wetlands, and other types of man-made or natural water areas. It’s why we ask people to be considerate of our wetlands. They really play an important role in helping our broader environment.”

### Odonata: A spotter’s guide

There are more than 300 species of dragonflies and damselflies in Australia. In general, dragonflies are bigger and more robust, damselflies slimmer and more delicate.

The defining difference between the dragonflies (Anisoptera) and damselflies (Zygoptera), though, is the latter can fold their wings back neatly against their long, narrow bodies. The thicker wings of a dragonfly are permanently spread out.

Identifying a species was relatively straightforward for the males. For females it could be much more challenging. Generally, the female is a more drab creature.

### What dragonfly is that?

Blue-spotted hawkler (*Adversaeschna brevistyla*) — Wingspan of about 9cm and body length about 6cm. Males and females appear very similar. The male has blue spots on the base of the tail, while the female has green spots.

Australian emperor (*Anax papuensis*) — Wingspan of 10cm and body length of 7cm. When people think of a dragonfly they are probably thinking of Australian emperors when you see a swarm in late winter and early spring. They can bite: they won’t break skin but will give you a fright.

Tau emerald (*Hemicordulia tau*) — Medium-sized wingspan of 7cm and length of about 4.5cm. Males and females look very similar. The most widespread and common dragonfly. More common even than the Australian emperor.

Blue skimmer (*Orthetrum caledonicum*) — Wingspan is 7cm and length 4cm. Males and females are very different. The male is sky blue while the female is yellow and black, and are more camouflaged. Both the male and female have a bronze smudge towards the outside edges of their wings.

Wandering percher (*Diplacodes bipunctata*) — Wingspan of 5cm and length of 3cm. The male is red, the female is black and yellow. One of the few dragonflies you can find out in the middle of the bush and some distance from water.

### What damselfly is that?

Ancient greenling (*Hemiphysalia mirabilis*) — Wingspan is 2cm and body 2.5cm. Male and female are essentially identical. Bottle green with a white tip to abdomen and white on their face. Still quite rare in Victoria and not a secure population. The male wags its tail and because it has a white tip you can see it fairly clearly.

Blue ringtail (*Austrolestes annulosus*) — So named because the male has bright blue barring across its abdomen. Generally it has a wingspan of 4.5cm and body length of 3.5cm. Can be quite abundant.

Red and blue damsel (*Xanthagrion erythroneurum*) — Similar size to the blue ringtail. The male is dark red, with blue tips to its tail. Females have blue on them but are not as striking as males, and duller red in colour. Flies from October through until April.

Common bluetail (*Ischnura heterosticta*) — Mr Haywood prefers to call it the bobbing bluetail. Medium sized with a 3cm wingspan and 2.5cm body length. Tends to bob up and down and fly in a haphazard manner. Flying October until April.

Aurora bluetail (*Ischnura aurora*) — One of the smallest, slightly smaller than the greenling. The male is orange to red with a blue tip to tail, while the female is a dark bottle green. The female could be confused with an ancient greenling. Very widespread.

Slender ringtail (*Austrolestes analis*) — Can be extremely abundant. Seen in their hundreds. Also found away from water. At the base of the abdomen there is a blue shield marking. Can appear as early as August, right through until April.

Full article at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-20/dragonflies-damselflies-unsung-heroes-of-the-insect-world/100919252>

## Activities

### Sat 2 April: Honeyeater migration – Narrabundah Hill, Duffy

Meet 9.30 am in the parking area at the T-intersection of Eucumbene Drive and Warragamba Ave Duffy. There will be some flat walking to get away from the road, otherwise only mild exercise required. Bring binoculars, bird book and some type of light folding chair or stool to sit on. Dress appropriately for the outdoors and carry some light refreshments, thermos if so desired. I expect 2 hours should be enough time, although you are welcome to leave earlier or stay later. Morning coffee after, probably in Weston.

### 30 April–8 May: Canberra Tree Week – Australian National Botanic Gardens

For details see the ANBG web site [parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens/](http://parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens/)

## FNAC web site: can you help?

You may not be aware, but FNAC does have a web site, however it has not been well updated in recent years. Darryl has been attempting to keep it up-to-date but it really needs a new host.

Darryl has made access available to Kevin who has upgraded some of the information, but suggestions are invited. Can anyone suggest a new 'host'?

Please contact Kevin ([mccue.kevin@gmail.com](mailto:mccue.kevin@gmail.com)) if you have any suggestions on upgrading content or more importantly, someone who can host the web site.

## New publications

### Moths in the A.C.T.

Authored by Glenn Cocking, Suzi Bond and Ted Edwards, this is a community service book about many of the moths that live in the ACT, and about moths generally.

It is a 280 page A4 size stiff paperback with perfect binding. It has accounts of over 700 ACT moth species illustrated by 1500 colour photos. While presented for the ACT market, it contains general and some appropriate technical information about moths, making it informative both for the moth enthusiast and for the all-round naturalist.

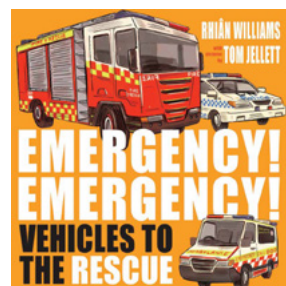
It is described at [mothsintheact.org](http://mothsintheact.org) where it can be purchased for the cost of \$50. I ordered it and was delighted that it arrived within just a day or two.

As Rosemary has already noted by email to members, if she can get orders of 10 or more copies, Glenn is prepared to sell it at cost for \$40, so if you want the discounted price, and haven't already done so, please contact Rosemary to place your order.

**Fire trucks, police cars and ambulances too! Here come the vehicles to rescue you.**

*Emergency Emergency - Vehicles to the Rescue* is a delightful picture book about the people who keep us safe and the vehicles getting them where they need to be.

The book is co-written by Field Natter member, Rhian Williams.



You are invited to the book's launch on Saturday 26 March from 11 am to 1.30 pm at the Fire Station Museum at 4 Empire Circuit, Forrest ACT.

There will be Fire Trucks, the chance to meet firefighters and other emergency service personnel, some surprise special guests, colouring in, giveaways, and readings of the book.

Book Cow Bookshop from Kingston will also be in attendance with a pop up bookstall and of course there are Museum Tours where kids and their accompanying grown ups can see lots of different emergency equipment including some fire trucks that are over 100 years old!

Children can also get their photo taken in a special, just-the-right size, fire truck!

Attendance is free. To help with planning for the event and to keep it Covid Safe please get your free tickets at the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/book-launch-emergency-emergency-vehicles-to-the-rescue-tickets-294305304087?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>



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 I

[president@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:president@fieldnatsact.com)

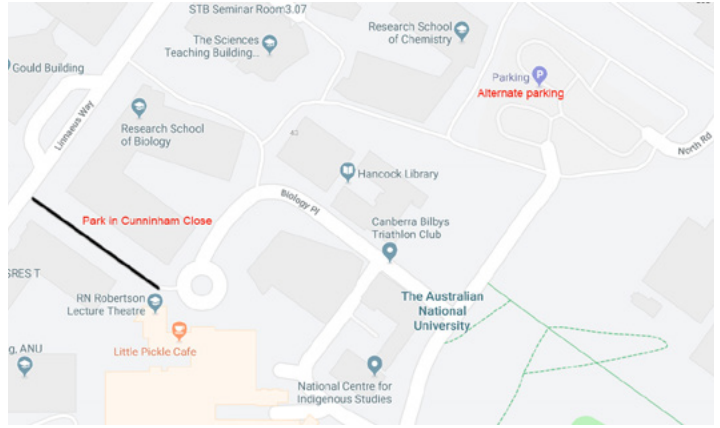
**Email:** [secretary@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:secretary@fieldnatsact.com)

**Website:** [www.fieldnatsact.com](http://www.fieldnatsact.com)

**Treasurer:** [treasurer@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:treasurer@fieldnatsact.com)

**Membership:** [membership@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:membership@fieldnatsact.com)

**Newsletter Editor:** [editor@fieldnatsact.com](mailto: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 708**  
**Jamison Centre ACT 2614**



### Membership application or renewal

Surname: ..... 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: .....

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: Friend

Other Please specify: .....

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

*Subscription renewals are due on 1 July each year*

**Pay by post (include completed form)**

Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra  
GPO Box 708  
Jamison Centre ACT 2614

**Bank transfer (renewals only: form not needed)**

Account name: Field Nats  
BSB: 325 185  
Account number: 03545251  
Reference: **Please include your name**