

April 2023

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FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC. GPO BOX 708  
JAMISON CENTRE ACT 2614

# FIELD NATTER

## April 2023 newsletter No evening meetings until further notice



An interesting sighting yesterday. The first time I have seen either an early instar or an exoskeleton of this leafhopper: *Sextius virescens* (Acacia horned treehopper).

Yesterday, both were on the same plant.

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## Invertebrates I've enjoyed in March

I was weeding at STEP early this month and noticed a small grey moth among the leaves over the woody mulch. I'm intrigued at how its colouring gives an almost 3D effect of shadow near the top of the wings.



Within a couple of minutes I'd seen a brilliant green grasshopper with a very long, pointed head – which dropped onto the mulch within seconds. While I could still see it, the phone camera couldn't, so it's a lovely memory to share – but no photo.

The following week, I found a much more cooperative – just as interesting and very different grasshopper. It was on a seed head of red-legged grass (*Bothriochloa macra*). The colouring is interesting. The sides and lower body are brilliant green, the wings match the mottled fawn colouring of the seed head, and it has a very long, bright red projection at the hind end. A friend helped with the photos – but none of them show just how long the projection was.



Two days after seeing the moth, I began noticing more at home. First was the lovely orangey moth on the inside of my compost bin. It remained there for almost a week, then after not seeing it for a couple of days I found it on the screen door next to the compost, with its abdomen lifted over its back, not something I've seen before.



In between the two moth sightings came a Plague Soldier Beetle – disturbed as I watered a pot (almost next to the compost). The thing I enjoyed most about this one is that the amber colour between thorax and abdomen is matched by a small curved band on the end of each wing. Very stylish!



The next two visitors, spider and moth, were both inside the house, on the floor.

I've been endlessly intrigued since I moved here at just how many small animals can make their



way inside a fully screened house, when there are sliding aluminium doors and windows.

The insects and spiders are not really surprising perhaps, but I've had a frog in twice and skinks on several occasions. No photos – I was too interested in getting them safely outdoors again.

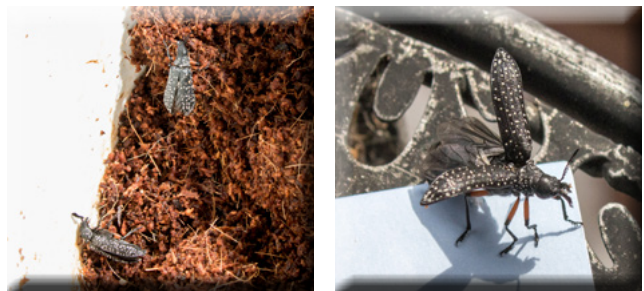
**Robyn Black**

# A visit by feathered friends (of a different kind)

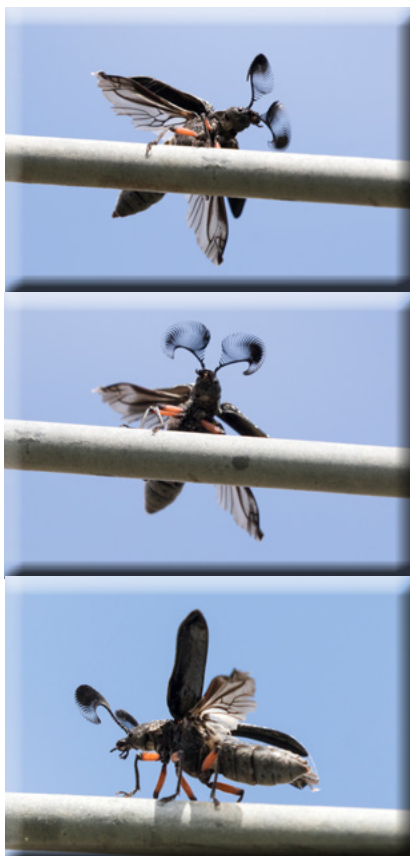
This isn't about the usual feathered friends that you might be expecting. Sitting out on the deck reading a book in the sunshine, I noticed an insect flying around my clothesline that looked suspiciously like a feather-horned beetle: a very unusual sighting in suburban Higgins. Fetching my camera I confirmed my suspicions. A female beetle was clinging to one of the struts on my clothesline and the male was flying round looking for a way to reach her. He finally did and then they did what male and females do.



More time passed as I alternatively read and dozed off. Then I looked down and beside me was a bucket of damp coconut fibre I had been using for potting plants. There in the bucket was the female. I thought perhaps she was trying to lay eggs, but then I noticed the male on the other side of the bucket. I was amazed that he had managed to track her down, however they both seemed to be struggling in the fine fibre despite the fact that they can fly. So I plucked both of them out and put them on a pamphlet on a small nearby table. The female quickly flew off but the male remained. He seemed weak and not well so since the table had a cut out pattern I moved him to a doona on a nearby chair.



After taking some photos I returned to the deck and my book but some time later I saw that the male was still flying round the clothes line. The female had left but he was still searching and even landed on a strut and wandered up and down in search of his lady love.



My visit was not yet over it seems. About 15 minutes later I looked down and the female was now on the arm of my comfy chair. Almost as if he could sense her, the male then turned in her direction but she flew off then crawled along the deck to seek shelter under a shady pot.

Sadly, the male, now exhausted by his efforts seemed to get weaker and died.

Meanwhile over on the far side of the deck a skink skittered across taking advantage of the sun on the boards.



**Alison Milton**

## Red Hill fauna excursion

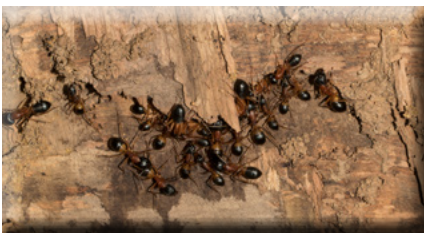
In March, around 10 Field Natters turned up to explore the southern slope of Red Hill in search of fauna.

Even before we set off there were several bird species either seen or heard. A lovely flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew across but I didn't manage a photo because of the trees. I thought there was a small flock of Little Corellas but on checking a photo of one atop the mobile phone tower at home, I realised it was the rarer Long-billed Corella.

Jacky had lived in the area until very recently and was eager to show us the Coconut Ants. Some members were not aware of the significance of these ants. They have a symbiotic relationship with the Small Ant Blue Butterfly. They take the eggs into their nest, then tend the larvae until the butterfly emerges. The real significance however, is that the ACT is the only place in the world where this butterfly can be found.

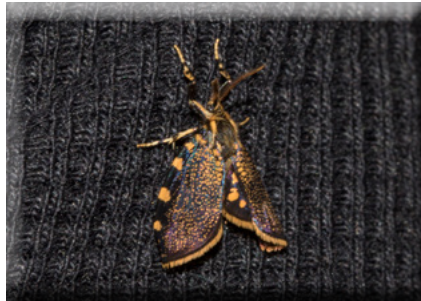
Around 30 years ago there was a colony under study in Victoria but they disappeared and it was only five years ago that Christine photographed one in the ACT making it the first sighting in many years. We now know of several breeding locations but the locations are not generally shared to protect the species.

Lifting a sheet of discarded wood revealed a large Banded Sugar ant nest and a slug, then we headed up the slope to find the coconut ants.



We spent a bit of time on the slope moving slowly and not making much ground but there were heaps to be found. Everyone got into the spirit of the exercise and called out when they found something

of interest. I think it was Morgan who found the beautiful bag case moth on the same dead tree trunk as the coconut ants.



Other sightings were tiny leaf-rolling weevils, several species of leaf beetles and leafhoppers.



The *Scopula rubraria* (Plantain moth) was in abundance rising up from the grass as we walked through and the Common Brown butterfly was also, well common.

I didn't take photos of every sighting but have put most of my photos on Canberra Nature Map (I'm still working on the rest), for identification, especially for those I didn't know. The sightings can be viewed at <https://canberra.naturemapr.org/collections/sightings/9907> The collection is public and other members can add their own photos if they like.

In the two hours we didn't cover much area but we found a staggering 65 species. The full list is below.

Thank you to all those who came to explore the smaller inhabitants with me.

### Ants (7)

*Black house ant* (possibly)  
*Camponotus consobrinus* - Banded Sugar Ant  
*Camponotus suffusus* - Golden-tailed sugar ant  
*Iridomyrmex purpureus* - Meat Ant  
*Notoncus capitatus* - An epaulet ant

(possibly) tending scale  
*Papyrius nitidus* - Coconut ant  
*Rhytidoponera metallica* - Greenhead ant

### Arthropods (3)

*Beautiful Badge Spider* - skin  
*Phonognatha graeffei* - Leaf Curling Spider  
*Ambigolimax nyctelia* - Slug

### Beetles (10)

*Chrysolina quadrigemina* - Greater St Johns Wort beetle  
*Euops* sp. (genus) - A leaf-rolling weevil  
*Goniapterus scutellatus* - gum tree weevil  
*Paropsisterna cloelia* - eggs and larvae  
*Paropsisterna decolorata*  
*Paropsisterna fastidiosa*  
*Paropsisterna octosignata*  
*Paropsis atomaria* & eggs  
*Trachymela* sp. (genus) - Brown button beetle

*Transverse lady beetle*

### Birds (15)

*Australian Magpie*  
*Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike*  
*Crimson Rosella*  
*Gang Gang*  
*Grey Butcherbird*  
*Grey Fantail*  
*Long-billed Corella*  
*Noisy Miner*  
*Rainbow Lorikeet*  
*Red Wattlebird*  
*Satin Bowerbird*  
*Spotted Pardalote*  
*Sulphur-crested Cockatoos*  
*Welcome Swallow*  
*Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos*

### Butterflies - moths (6)

*Cebysa leucotelus* - Australian Bagmoth  
*Heteronympha merope* - Common Brown  
*Pieris rapae* - Cabbage white  
*Platyptilia celidotus* - Plume Moth  
*Scopula rubraria* - Plantain Moth  
*Zizina otis* - Common Grass-Blue

### Leaf hoppers (5)

*Eurymeloides pulchra* - Gumtree hopper  
*Anzora unicolor* - Grey Planthopper  
*Brunotartessus fulvus* - Yellow-headed Leafhopper  
*Chaetophyes compacta* - Tube spittlebug (pupae casing)  
*Ipoella* sp. (genus) - Leafhopper (attended by meat ants)

### Mammals (2)

*European Rabbit*  
*Grey Kangaroos*

### Other flying insects (9)

*Apis mellifera* - European honey bee  
*Black wasp*  
*Braconidae* sp. (family) Unidentified  
*braconid wasp*  
*Damsel fly*  
*Echthromorpha intricatoria* - Cream-spotted  
*Ichneumon*  
*Hover fly*  
*Parasitic wasp egg*  
*Praying mantis egg*  
*Sheep blow fly*

### Other (8)

*Amorbus alternatus* - Eucalyptus Tip Bug  
*Anisolabididae* (family) - Unidentified  
*wingless earwig*  
*Aphididae* (family) - aphid  
*Creiis costatus* - Shell lerp  
*Frog* (heard)  
*Johnrehnia concisa* - a native cockroach  
*Scale*  
*Wasp galls*

Alison Milton

## A few observations from Lucy and Charlie

There have been four sightings of Paper Wasps nests:

- an inactive nest underneath eaves
- an active nest in a west facing shrub with good shade



- An active nest on west facing porch; and



- a new instance of active paper wasp nest on brick wall at our home.

Other observations were a bee and an ant on a sedum and a beautiful small jumping spider and an ant on the Correa Alba.



At Ferntree Gully, Melbourne, in my mother's garden, I was happy to hear their resident frog, a Southern Brown Tree frog. My sister at North Warburton also has one.

We have continued to enjoy, even up to now, the call of the Eastern Banjo frog in our 'frog pond'. Occasionally, we hear the Spotted Grass Frog, which was previously the dominant species in terms of calls.

Recently, I had the sprinkler going on a well-established native garden bed Charles has created on our section of the service road nature area and saw about 10 Yellow-rumped Thornbills enjoying the very shallow pool of water created by the runoff. It was such a pleasure to watch them.

One afternoon, Charlie and I were watching a small flock of Silvereyes taking water and bathing in a bird bath and Charlie said: It makes it all worthwhile.

**Lucy Bastecky**

## Online articles of interest

The 50 beautiful Australian plants at greatest risk of extinction — and how to save them” — <https://theconversation.com/the-50-beautiful-australian-plants-at-greatest-risk-of-extinction-and-how-to-save-them-160362>

Species don't live in isolation: what changing threats to 4 marsupials tell us about the future. — <https://theconversation.com/species-dont-live-in-isolation-what-changing-threats-to-4-marsupials-tell-us-about-the-future-200990>

**Bill Willis**



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

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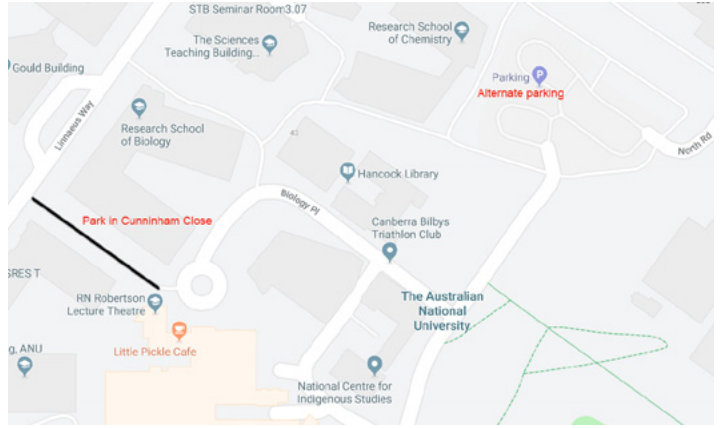
**Email:** [secretary@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:secretary@fieldnatsact.com)

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**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:

.....

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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  
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