

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

April 2024

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

# FIELD NATTER

## MEETING—Thursday 4 April 2024 7:30 pm Australian National University

Slatyer Room (up the stairs),  
R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU  
details on the back page

Refreshments before  
the meeting. Please  
bring your own cup.



### A boring subject

Speaker: **Stuart Harris**

The jewel beetle 'seed' was planted in Stuart by another peacock spider discoverer from WA, David Knowles and on a trip with David to the Grampians in 2017 Stuart photographed his first jewel beetle. A healthy obsession of sorts kicked off then which sees Stuart scouring native shrubbery for at least half the year and his presentation 'A boring subject' is a reflection on the past six seasons of Buprestid research, primarily around the ACT.



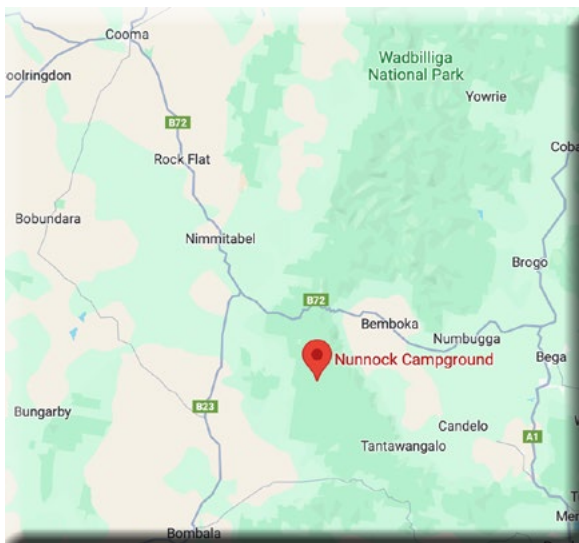
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## Nunnock Swamp car camp

Sonja and I put our hands up when we heard that Isobel and John were organising an NPA car camp to Nunnock Swamp on 2–4 February 2024, after all we had never been there. It is only a 2.5 hour drive from Canberra via Cooma and Nimmitabel, the last 25 km on a narrow pot-holed gravel road. The party was limited by camping restrictions: we started out with 13, three of us FNAC members, all of us looking forward to a couple of easy walks on marked tracks around the swamps.

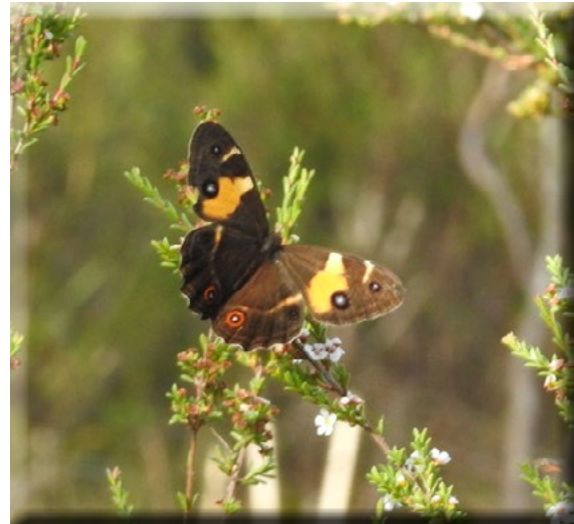
The camping site is in the Southeast Forest National Park at an altitude of about 900 m so we hoped that the temperature was going to be a few degrees cooler than the 35°C forecast for Canberra.



Disaster struck about 10 km from the camping ground when Deidre's camper van slid in soft sand on the verge and ended up on its driver's side facing in the opposite direction. She was unhurt fortunately, but it took a bit of time to extract her from the van and 3 anxious hours for the tow truck to arrive from Cooma and take Deidre on board with friends following close behind. Then there were 10.

Relieved at the lack of injury, the rest of us made camp just before dark. Facilities included a camp toilet, two fire-rings and a picnic table under shelter. Campers opted for different modes of accommodation: one caravan, one camper van and 6 were in tents, big and small.

At 8 am next morning we gathered in cool but fine weather for a briefing from Isobel and soon after set off at a leisurely pace to walk the Nunnock Swamp Walking Track. The pace allowed time for photographers and the three professional botanists to gather samples and share their intimate knowledge about the forested landscape through which we walked. We kept our eyes peeled for the spectacular Sword-grass Brown Butterfly that John assured us could be found here.



Arriving at the swamp lookout we disturbed a Pacific Heron and a flock of Black Ducks. A pair of Grey Teal stayed unperturbed at the far end of the swamp.

We had a 3 pm appointment back at the camp, with three of the brave bunch of heroic locals who confronted the timber loggers on foot and horseback in the late 1980s to prevent them clear-felling this part of the forest. It took them six years of lobbying and confrontation before this amazing forest was subsumed into a Southeast Forest National Park.

We marvelled at the huge trees we saw on the walk, how anyone could cut them down I don't know, even for use as sawn timber, but to convert them to wood chips makes me mad and my tears to flow.

Photographs can be found on [Canberra and South Coast NatureMapr](#), the border frustratingly through the vicinity of the camp ground. Perhaps the software could decide in which area any photograph belonged. (Includes photos not taken on this trip.)

Early the next day we embarked on another longer anti-clockwise walk around the Cattleman's Link

Track via Alexander's Hut. The hut was built in 1892 and purchased by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 2002, and restored. Soon after leaving the hut we came across a Copperhead Snake on the track, which posed for plenty of photographs before continuing on its way.



Photographers were let loose on plants, birds and insects, far too many to remember though John kept a bird log, which was handy. We did see a few Red-necked Wallabies but none of the deer or pigs that had left their tracks.

The weather was kind, no rain, not cold and not too hot, just right. There were few mosquitos but too many leeches so precautions need to be taken. It is a must-see venue for anyone wanting easy walks in a high altitude national park to see amazing wildlife, orchids and other wild flowers in season and magnificent trees in a small, well catered site for a small number of campers. You need to [book ahead](#) and take firewood.

The [Plan of Management for the Southeast Forest National Park](#) dates back to 2006, surely time for an overhaul. I have distilled from the 68 page plan the following snippets:

- Geology is important because it determines the soil type and, depending on water availability, the vegetation and flora and fauna. The geology of the park is quite complex, consisting of extensive areas of granitic intrusions plus basalt and rhyolite flows, narrow bands of metamorphic rocks and outcropping metasediments and sediments. Significant geomorphological features include upland swamps such as Nunnock Swamp in the Tantawangalo section.
- The park has high biological diversity and 48 vegetation ecosystems are predicted to occur of which six have 80% or more of their total distributions in the park.
- The park is an area of outstanding native animal species diversity and is vital to long term conservation of regional biodiversity. Several areas are particularly rich in arboreal mammals and hollow-nesting birds while others are

important habitats for threatened animal species, including the very rare long-footed potoroo. Three endangered native animal species and 30 vulnerable species are found in the park. In addition to the threatened species, a further 13 native animal species of conservation concern occur.

- The NPWS will undertake research to provide information about the park's natural and cultural heritage and human use in order to improve management. Research supported by the NPWS is also being undertaken in and around the park by CSIRO, Forests NSW, and Melbourne University.

Author. To this might be added the significant data contribution from Canberra NatureMapr, observations by citizen scientists such as the NPA campers, that is posted to an online database available to researchers and park managers everywhere. The following comment from NatureMapr is one of several received following our trip to Nunnock Camping ground:

Your *Anas gracilis* (Grey Teal) sighting is making an impact!

Your sighting is a new species for the following locations:

Nunnock Swamp

(Species Richness Score +3 points!)

South East Forest National Park

(Species Richness Score +3 points!)

Thank you for this important contribution, you are helping achieve real on the ground outcomes.

**Kevin McCue**

*Editor: As a matter of interest, Trevor Prescott sent out an invitation for Canberra Nature Mappers to join him on an exploration of this area in January this year. I was one of those who accepted his invitation and we met two other nature mappers at the site. In addition, two young nature mappers had by coincidence, decided to camp out over night. They were very keen on finding orchids. We met with them briefly and they said they'd found numerous orchids, plus numerous leeches as it had rained the day before. Luckily, on the day we arrived it was much drier and we only saw one leech.*

*Trevor has written a report of this trip for the March Canberra Nature Map newsletter, which you will find on the [Canberra Nature map web site](#). It includes a number of photos of species we found.*

## Backyard birds

Over the last month, Charles and I have seen in our rear garden the occasional female Satin Bowerbird and a few months ago, a male.

Then on 6 March about 9.30 am, four female Satin Bowerbirds flew into the garden, three going for the birdbath. They seemed happy to bathe in the water.

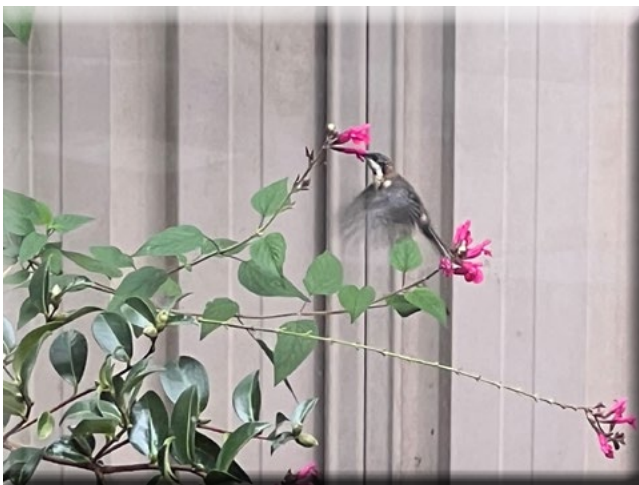
I suspect the hot, dry time we are having in Canberra has attracted them to a ready source of water.

After a few minutes of them bathing, a currawong flew in and made efforts to dissuade them from staying. The Bowerbirds appeared not to be intimidated when they were bathing in sight of it. I think they left when they were ready even though it occurred at the same time the currawong made a swoop on one of them.



We also have an Eastern Spinebill feeding. It is a daily presence and for the first time we recently saw a pair of them. They were feeding in the late afternoon in the shrubs on the other side of the house.

**Lucy Bastecky**



## Activities

### Friday 19 April 9:00 am: Walk in North Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

Meet at the parking area on Mulligans Flat Road adjacent to suburb of Bonner. Map 20 UBD Gregory's. This is a slow paced walk along the eastern fence line to a viewpoint overlooking Sutton, and return, approximately a 4 km round trip. The walk is among Eucalypt grassy woodland on an unsealed management track and rated easy with a gentle, long rise to the turn around point. Bring sturdy shoes, hat, sunscreen, water and a snack. Please register with FNAC Outings Coordinator, John Stein, at [outings@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:outings@fieldnatsact.com) by 17 April, providing your name and phone number and name and number of an emergency contact. Kirsty Craven will lead the walk.

### TBA May: New Ian Loiterton Walk, Aranda

Details coming soon.

### Future walks

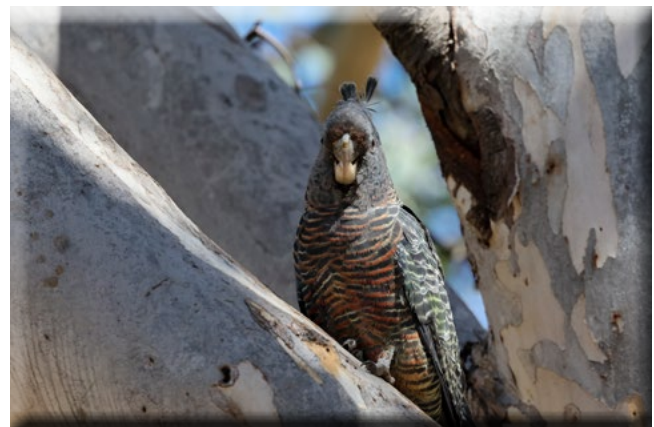
John would welcome any suggestions for future walk options. You don't need to be volunteering to lead the walk, but suggestions would be welcome. Please contact John by email at [outings@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:outings@fieldnatsact.com)

## Gang gangs in Lyons

Returning from a walk to Oakey Hill, I saw three Gang gangs fly across in front of me. I thought they'd continued on but then heard them in a nearby tree. Two then flew back to an old gum tree and I observed them drinking water trapped in the main fork of the tree.

On satisfying their thirst they flew back to join the third one, which I soon discovered was a begging juvenile.

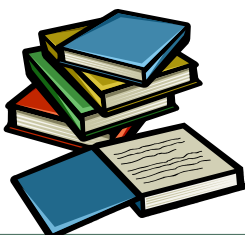
Alison Milton



## Raffle prizes

The monthly raffle is our only fund-raising event and is funded through members' generous donations, mostly consisting of items no longer needed or wanted at home. Fresh garden produce is also highly prized.

Please go through your cupboards for all those little items you no longer use or want and bring them along to donate as raffle prizes.





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 you would be warmly welcomed.

**President:** [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)

**Outings Coordinator:** [outings@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:outings@fieldnatsact.com)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/FieldNaturalistsAssociationCanberra>

### Membership application or renewal

New applications and renewals can be done through the membership page on the web site:

<https://fieldnatsact.com/membership>

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

*Subscription renewals are due on 1 July each year*

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

Account name: Field Nats

BSB: 325 185

Account number: 03545251

Reference: **Please include your name**

*If you are unable to make the payment through the web site you can contact the Membership Secretary at the email address opposite, or in writing to the address listed.*

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



**Monthly meeting venue:** Slatyer Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University

