

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

August 2021

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

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MEETING—Thursday 5 August 2021
7:30 pm Australian National University
Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU, ACT
details back page

ANU's Sustainable farms project

Speaker: Suzannah Macbeth

Suzannah Macbeth will talk about Sustainable Farms, an ANU project that's looking at the benefits of enhancing natural assets (such as shelterbelts, remnant vegetation and farm dams) on farms. The project is based on 20 years of long-term biodiversity monitoring on farms in the box-gum grassy woodlands, conducted by David Lindenmayer's research lab. The Sustainable Farms project also has an interdisciplinary element, with economics and mental health streams of the work. Suzannah is the communications manager for the project and will share some of the insights from Sustainable Farms research and from the farmers themselves about what they've observed as they change how they manage natural assets on their farms.



An example of a dam that's been enhanced from the stock-standard hole in the ground to a future wildlife hotspot

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A true story - the Hotel Aranda

Inspired by friends Esther and John, who have built insect hotels, I decided to try for a white card* myself but had no idea how to go about it. How high above the ground, what sort of wood, how long should the holes be and what diameter? We did have a lot of timber offcuts, not all the same length or cross section.

Without a decent post I put it close to the ground facing our deck, a bundle of 30 mm lengths of all types of wood, even some bamboo and tied them together with fencing wire after trying a few drill diameters; 3 mm to 10 mm and drilling the holes the length of the bit, at both ends of the wood – north and south facing rooms.

* A white card is a requirement for home builders in the ACT.

A large mature stringy bark was felled across the road and I figured that a length of bark might make a useful roof – do insect hotels need a roof?

Then I waited for action. A cheeky spider spun a web across the face of the hotel but that was the only activity I observed whilst we sipped our lattes on the observation deck.

Months went by with no obvious clouds of insects beating a path to the hotel and I contemplated demolition. However, one day with camera in hand trying to photograph a gorgeous spinebill mocking me with its piping, I took a photo of the hotel visage and as you can see, was astonished to find that 30% of the rooms were



indeed occupied – success. But who/what are the occupants?

Kevin McCue

Rhytidoponera aspera

I took a photo of a strange looking ant, which I submitted to Canberra Nature Map. The ant was identified as *Rhytidoponera aspera* and ant expert Jon Lewis provided the following notes, with this sighting being only one of four sightings of this ant so far on Canberra Nature Map.

Rhytidoponera aspera is closely related to *Rhytidoponera metallica*, both ants being similar in size and body shape and having a metallic colouration. However, *Rhytidoponera aspera* has clearly reddish legs and antennae, and the second segment of the gaster



is very smooth and shiny when viewed from above. In the past this ant has been incorrectly identified as *Rhytidoponera metallica* in a number of records on CNM – these records were updated in July 2021.

Kevin McCue

Indian Myna birds a pest

The ACT Government has recently added the Common or Indian Myna, and Red-Whiskered Bulbul to its Pest Plants and Animals list. The Myna bird is environmentally destructive, pushing native animals out of nesting hollows for their own benefit. The Conservation Council will be supporting calls from the Indian Myna Action Group for the ACT Government to follow through on the listing by developing an implementing an action plan.

Raffle prizes needed

As always, we need prizes for our monthly raffle. This 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. As the saying goes, 'One man's junk is another man's treasure' (or woman as the case may be), and if you are a gardener with fresh produce to donate, this would be greatly appreciated.



Activities

Monday 26 July– 10 am: Towards One Tree Hill on the Centennial Trail

Meet at the northern end of Victoria Street where there is an extensive area for parking on the left of the Village's main street. If it seems as though there would be too many people attempting the Centennial Trail on that day we can take a walk through the sclerophyll Woodland from the same parking area. The track will most likely be damp in places where water seeps across the clayey surface on its way to the Halls Creek floodplain and flats below. Be prepared for uneven surfaces and partly protruding roots and rocks. It's best to consider it a single-file footpath as cyclists, joggers and other walkers share the scenic track's twists and turns. From a naturalist's perspective there's plenty to challenge the brain's identification skills, extraordinary views to marvel at, vistas to stimulate discussion and senses of perspectives. If you choose to join me you can choose how long you take before turning back. Please let me know if you're interested in joining in. Please also supply a contact number in case the weather is so questionable that a cancellation is needed.

Rosemary Blemings
0402 760 397



Sat 9 October: Black Mt 50th annual spring wildflower ramble

Put it in your diary now and/or a reminder to book 3-4 weeks before the event!

This is the 50th anniversary of this annual ramble being held. Friends of Black Mountain is organising this popular ramble again this year, following the tradition of Dr Nancy Burbidge and George Chippendale. For further information please contact Linda by email or phone. Bookings will no doubt be essential.

Linda Beveridge, Convenor, Friends of Black Mountain
Email: friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com Mobile: 0437 298 711

NatureArt Lab - Drawing and Painting with Watercolour Foundation Studies classes

NatureArt Lab offer comprehensive beginner classes on a range of art techniques including drawing, painting with watercolour, scratchboard, acrylics, nature journaling and even textiles with wonderful tutors. The program includes studio classes and online sessions for some scientific illustration options. Field trips include Montague Island off Narooma or to Murramarang National Park.

Note that there is a fee for some course but they do offer a free community project called 'Reflections on Nature', which is open to everyone. Further information on courses is available at: <https://natureartlab.com.au/>

The curious case of the quolls in the nighttime

Did you know that like a human's fingerprints, the spot pattern on a quoll is completely unique?

This fact came in handy recently when we discovered not one but FOUR Western Quolls (*Dasyurus geoffroii*), or Chuditch – as they're known in WA from a word from the Noongar language – popping up on monitoring cameras at our reserves in midwest Western Australia, Hamelin Station and Eurardy!

These are the first two Chuditch sightings at Hamelin on record, after six years under Bush Heritage management. One was recorded in sand dune country while the other was about 10 kilometres away on Hamelin's coastline. Eurardy's two Quolls are

the second and third records for the reserve, following the inaugural sighting in December 2020.

We believe these curious Chuditch are travellers from the well-established quoll population at Kalbarri National Park, which is managed by WA's Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). DBCA has run a concentrated feral predator control program at Kalbarri for more than 20 years, setting the scene for its quoll population to expand and move outside the borders of the park in search of new territory.

Kalbarri sits directly to Eurardy's west and is connected to Hamelin via a corridor of nature reserves including Toolonga Nature Reserve and crown land stretching almost 200km down to the Shark Bay World Heritage Area.

The multiple sightings on our properties suggest that this wildlife corridor, carefully created by conservation organisations and government over many years, is providing a safe route through the midwest.

Although we don't believe there are any self-sustaining populations on either Eurardy or Hamelin at this time, we'll be keeping a close eye out for any signs of quolls through sand pad monitoring, scat searches and ongoing capturing and analysis of camera data. We plan to make our midwest reserves even more quoll friendly through the continuation of our integrated pest management program, now in its second year, and one day hope to see established quoll populations!

Ben Parkhurst
Bush Heritage Ecologist, Western Australia

Moth matchmakers needed

Science has yet to discover who the caterpillars are of 95% of Australian moths. Matching adults to their larvae is fundamental to understanding moths and their conservation. Help us match caterpillars to moths in six easy steps. In celebration of National Moth Week's 10th year, be a **Moth Matchmaker** and expand moth science!

Step 1:

Find and photograph a caterpillar. Take clear close-up photos from above, the side and both ends. Also photo the plant or lichen the caterpillar is on.

Step 2:

Register on Canberra Naturemapr and add your caterpillar and plant photographs as wildlife sightings.

Step 3:

Place a few centimetres of dry soil, a diagonal stick and dead and live leaves from the food plant the caterpillar is on into a glass jar. Collect your caterpillar and place in a jar, with fabric over the top, held in place by a rubber band.

Step 4:

Care for your caterpillar. It may need feeding with leaves from the food plant until it forms a cocoon. Dipping new leaves in water can increase humidity if your caterpillar is looking dried out. Cocoons may be built attached to the stick or be in the soil.

Step 5:

Photograph the emerged moth. Clear close-ups of head, top, side and rear are required.

Step 6:

Add your moth photographs to Canberra Naturemapr, include the sighting number from step 2 in the public comment box. You will receive an email from a moth expert telling you the identity of the moth you have matched with a caterpillar

Further information can be found on the web site at <https://citizenscience.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Caterpillar-Collect-and-Care-Detailed-Guide.pdf>

Pollinators of *Acacia genistifolia* early wattle

There is a big display of flowering of the Early Wattle, *Acacia genistifolia*, everywhere at the moment. I am very interested in finding out what insects are visiting its flowers in mid winter. It produces numerous pods in summer so it is being cross pollinated by something!

I have been looking in my neighbourhood at Burra but have drawn a blank so far, although the weather has been poor. Sunny conditions are best so that insects can warm up and fly, even at low air temperatures. Midges are quite active at this time of year especially in the afternoons

If you come across any bushes in flower in your travels (there are plenty in the bush areas of ANBG, Bruce Ridge etc) could you keep any eye out for



anything. I would much appreciate any pictures of insects to ID.

Roger Farrow

r.farrow@iimetro.com.au

Platypus month: platypus and rakali surveys

Did you know that August is a great time to see platypus in the ACT region? Platypus month starts in August and Waterwatch is once again asking for people to participate in the survey of platypus and rakali sightings. While the survey starts in August sightings are encouraged all year.

Links to the Waterwatch portal, survey form are:

[Platypus month info](https://www.act.waterwatch.org.au/programs/platypus-month) (<https://www.act.waterwatch.org.au/programs/platypus-month>)

[Waterwatch portal](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/4f4c647eb48c412e95a572f0859c9d16) (<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/4f4c647eb48c412e95a572f0859c9d16>)

[Survey form](https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/6a5fd689b6024c4bb3814b5f1ee5a998) (<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/6a5fd689b6024c4bb3814b5f1ee5a998>)

You can also add your sightings to Canberra Nature Map.

Latest observations

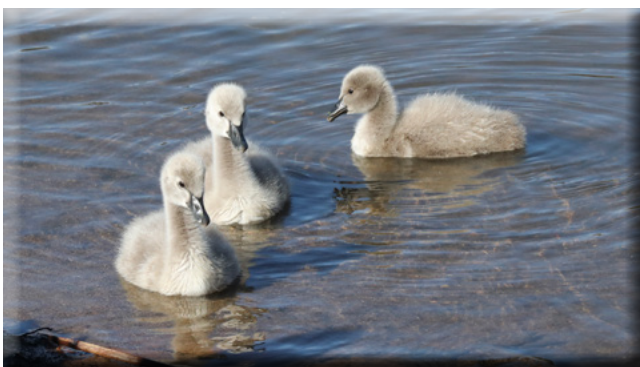
Gang Gangs: good news for The Pinnacle

It had been a while since I last visited The Pinnacle reserve but when I visited three weeks ago I counted 30 Gang Gang cockatoos in seven different groups. There were two pairs, one group of three pairs and two groups of three. The largest group consisted of 11 birds, mostly male, one of which was a juvenile. The two or three females were possibly also juveniles. With quite a few pairs, let's hope there is some nesting again this season.



Winter breeding?

I was alerted to the presence of young cygnets at Lake Gininderra so I set with my camera to find them. With good instructions I found them quite easily. One pair of adults and four cygnets grazing on the grass across the bay from the boat ramp. I stopped a distance away to photograph them and was aware of being watched from time to time, however anyone just walking, jogging or riding by was ignored, even when they moved up the edge of the pathway.



I continued walking and as I approached the boat ramp, realised that the family had taken to the water to cross the bay. The light was now much better and the cygnets were hidden in the grass so I managed better photos.

Corellas

As I walked round the lake and reached the bridge near the dog park, it was getting late and a small flock of Corellas was noisily taking to the sky, settling then taking off again. No doubt they were preparing to roost for the night, but I was amused to see a few settling on top of the bridge pylons like pigeons.

A few days earlier, at the Hawker playing fields, there were two Corellas among a large group of Sulphur-crested

Cockatoos, happily feeding the ground. The Corellas looked quite pink and when I looked at my photos later, I realised that it was a pair of Long-billed Corellas, considered a rarer sighting in Canberra so I was happy to find them.



Numbers continue to grow

This month I have seen a large increase in numbers of two bird species.

In the past few years we have seen a greater presence of Straw-necked Ibis on the Kippax (Holt) and Hawker playing fields. This month they have been mostly at Hawker and on at least two occasions I saw a small flock fly directly over my house from the direction of Kippax, towards Hawker. In late June I counted 23 birds at Hawker but each week the number increased until just three weeks later there were now 80 birds, spread across three ovals.



Closer to home, I always have one or two Pied Currawongs hanging around but numbers always seem to increase in winter with up to 20–30 birds. Last week however, I opened my front door to a cacophony of chorusing Currawongs. Even with my binoculars it was impossible to get a full count as they were continually flying around, but I did manage a count of 79. I'm sure there were more on the ground behind fences.

They were mainly interested in the berries on the ivy growing along a stretch of the fence across the road. The house is next to a lane way so I was able to dozens of birds enjoying the fruits, but one managed to find a grub in the leaf litter of the neighbour's chimney. The next day they were gone and the ivy had been stripped of berries.



At the time however, I had visions of being in the Alfred Hitchcock movie Birds.

Alison Milton



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

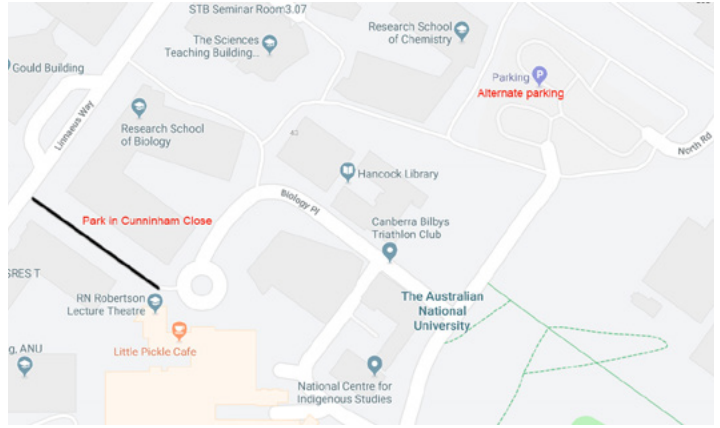
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Membership: membership@fieldnatsact.com

Newsletter Editor: editor@fieldnatsact.com



Monthly meeting venue: Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University

Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra
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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**