

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

August 2023

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

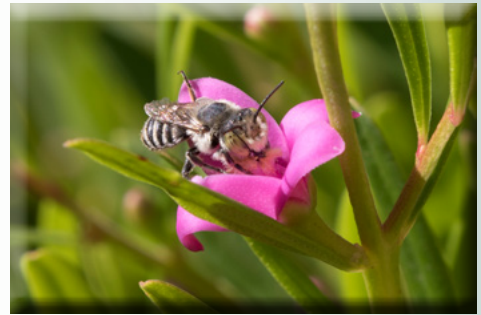
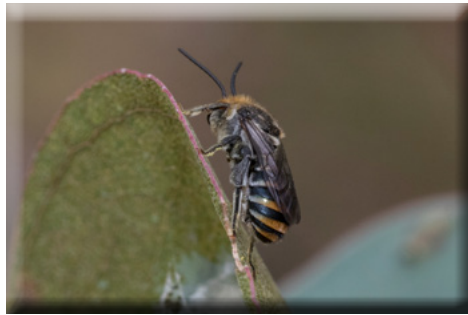
FIELD NATTER

MEETING—Thursday 3 August 2023
7:30 pm Australian National University
Slayter Room (up the stairs), R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU, ACT
details back page

Native bees

Speaker: Peter Abbott

Peter Abbott is the author of the book *Native bees of the ACT and NSW south coast: A spotters guide*, released last year. It is a very useful and informative book with lots of photos to help you to identify our native bees. With luck, he may have some copies with him for purchase.



Contents

Rosenbergs monitors	2
Unusual mid-winter sightings?	2
Bells phase Lace Monitor	3
Meeting time	3
Observations	3
Aborigines - the first geologists	4
Raffle prizes needed	4
Tuggeranong Homestead outing	5

Rosenbergs monitors

For those who missed last month's meeting, Don Fletcher gave a fascinating, well-presented talk on his research project on Rosenberg monitors or more commonly known as goannas.

I remember the excitement some years ago about Matthew Higgins finding a nest on Mount Ainslie and (with Don) witnessing the laying of eggs in a termite mound and the subsequent emergence of the hatchlings some eight months later. Matthew, understandably kept the location very secret, and if I recall correctly, actually gave a talk on this subject to one of our meetings.

Since then, Don has taken up the challenge of a monitoring project with the help of a number of volunteers and, when studies permit, ANU students.

The main focus location of his study has been the Nass Valley where they have been able to find a large number of species and to trap and tag them with GPS trackers.

Studies have shown that these monitors only lay their eggs in the nests of the gluegum termites. Interestingly, there have been many sightings of the monitors in the higher regions of the Naas Valley where these termites are not found. However, during the mating season the tagged males have travelled up to 12 kms to the lower regions where these termite nests can be found in search of female with whom to mate.

In 2022, with the excessive rain they were eventually forced to stop travelling to the Nass Valley due the road being cut off with flooding, the cost of travel with little success and National Parks closing the road. They therefore relocated their research to Mount Majura/Ainslie, where Matthew first observed the female he named Rosie.

Despite putting out many camera 'traps' this area had a number of disadvantages. They only managed to trap and tag three goannas but tracking them, they found that the proximity to the radio towers on Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie, the airport etc,



A Rosenberg Monitor I photographed in Namadgi.

meant that there was a lot of radio interference and they had get very close to their subject to pick up any radio signals. They also found that they detected far fewer individuals than they had expected.

In this area they relied greatly on camera capture rather than actually capturing the animal and were very surprised at some of the results. The camera sights were set with very smelly chicken carcasses as an attractant. With 1.8 million photos collected (but still not all processed) they only got a few shots of goannas attracted to the baits. Other visitors included foxes, domestic dogs (presumably off-leash) and surprisingly, a feral sheep, a sugar glider and red-necked wallabies.

This project has great potential to not only learn how to preserve the presence of these reptiles but also for example about control of foxes.

It was a fascinating talk.

I was interested in the original sighting of Rosie and whether she is still around. Don said that her last sighting was in 2016 but it doesn't mean that she is not still on Mount Ainslie. Let's hope so.

Alison Milton

Unusual mid-winter sightings?

I was surprised to turn on the back porch light just after dusk in June to find a very young Southern Marbled Gecko on the windowsill. However, I've discovered this week that there are in fact two and if I time it right I can see at least one of them every night. They are very young as you can tell by the photo below.



This week I also found a Delicate Skink sunning itself on my back deck, perhaps flushed from its hiding spot in the cracks in the brickwork, when I hosed down The deck. Having been disturbed, it later moved further across the deck to a sunny spot to warm up again.

Alison Milton

Bells phase Lace Monitor



At first I thought our photographer, Clive Collins, had photo-shopped the image but I decided to check with an expert at the University of Canberra, Enzo Guarino. His verdict: A Bell's phase or morph Lace Monitor. Clive was down near Echuca on the NSW/Vic border when he spotted it, back in 2004. The goanna seems to be moulting and may have lost the tip of its tail.

I have never seen this magnificent goanna, nor, I suspect, have many other FieldNats members. Clive described it as a large goanna so the tree must be commensurably large too. If you have seen one, please write in to the editor with a location and approximate date.

Kevin McCue

Meeting time

At the Field Nats meeting last month a show of hands from the 15 members present preferred a start time for our meetings of 7.30 pm.

This 'vote' was modified slightly to be arriving by 7:00 pm for those needing a cuppa, light refreshments and socialising beforehand. It also takes time to ensure the technology is ready to go.

The meeting and speaker to begin at 7.30 pm.

Observations

Is this old remnant Apple Box (*Eucalyptus bridgesiana*) a scar tree? It seems to show a scar, 2 m in length, that could have resulted from bark being cut long ago. It is located near the corner of Miller and Faunce Streets in O'Connor. Is there a heritage listing, or other evidence to support this?



A backyard observation

A large flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos (*Zanda funerea*), 59 birds, were observed at 8:15 am on Thursday 20 June 2023.

We first heard the distinctive calling of *Zanda funerea*, then a large flock was sighted flying in a straight line from the vicinity of Black Mountain, over O'Connor, towards Mt. Majura. There were 47 birds in the main formation, grouped in threes and fours, followed by 8 more, and then a final 4.

John Stein

Aborigines - the first geologists

Walking through Namadgi NP you can find many artifacts left by the Aborigines over tens of thousands of years, wooden hunting and digging sticks, cutting, flensing and grinding stones. Not just any stones though, some of the grinding stones and axe heads are sandstone or a granite like rock, the majority of flensing tools are fashioned from a hard rock called chert.

There isn't a lot of chert in the ACT. It can be found in the Pittman formation, some of the oldest rocks in the ACT, ~460Mya. The type locality is creeks such as Etheridge Creek in Pittman Valley, south-east of the Canberra suburb of Aranda. The lithology is quartz-rich sandstone, siltstone and shale with minor black shale, chert and calcareous sandstone; regionally metamorphosed to quartzite, phyllite, schist and locally calc-silicate rock.

Aborigines mined chert for making tools as evidenced by stone scatters found at the chert outcrops. They took with them core stones from which tools and flakes could be made anywhere as required so finding chert at a site does not necessarily imply a local origin for this precious rock material.

According to Wikipedia, chert is a fine-grained, non-crystalline sedimentary rock composed of quartz. Chert may be composed of the petrified remains of siliceous ooze, the biogenic sediment that covers large areas of the deep ocean floor, and which contains the silicon skeletal remains of diatoms, silicoflagellates, and radiolarians. It varies greatly in colour, from white to black, but is most often found as grey, brown, greyish brown and light green to rusty red and occasionally dark green. The other type of chert is found as an inclusion in limestone formations.

Like glass, chert fractures in a Hertzian cone when struck with sufficient force. This results in conchoidal fractures, a characteristic of all minerals with no cleavage planes. In this kind of fracture, a

cone of force propagates through the material from the point of impact, eventually removing a full or partial cone. The partial cones produced are called flakes, and exhibit features characteristic of this sort of breakage, including striking platforms, bulbs of force, and occasionally eirallures, which are small secondary flakes detached from the flake's bulb of force.

In the photograph two of the three rocks are chert. The white one an inclusion in limestone, the reddish one, bottom left, formed in deep water from microscopic diatom skeletons stained red/brown by iron. The latter is used by Australian aborigines to fashion scrapers and other cutting tools. When it is struck with a hammer it splits as shown, no cleavage planes. The cubic rock in the background is from a rocky ridge south-east of Aranda. It is a shale / sandstone with coarse inclusions and, when struck with a hammer, splits neatly along a cleavage plane.



The point is that aborigines selected particular rocks for different tasks, mapped their locations and stored details in memory, just as modern geologists do today.

Kevin McCue

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.

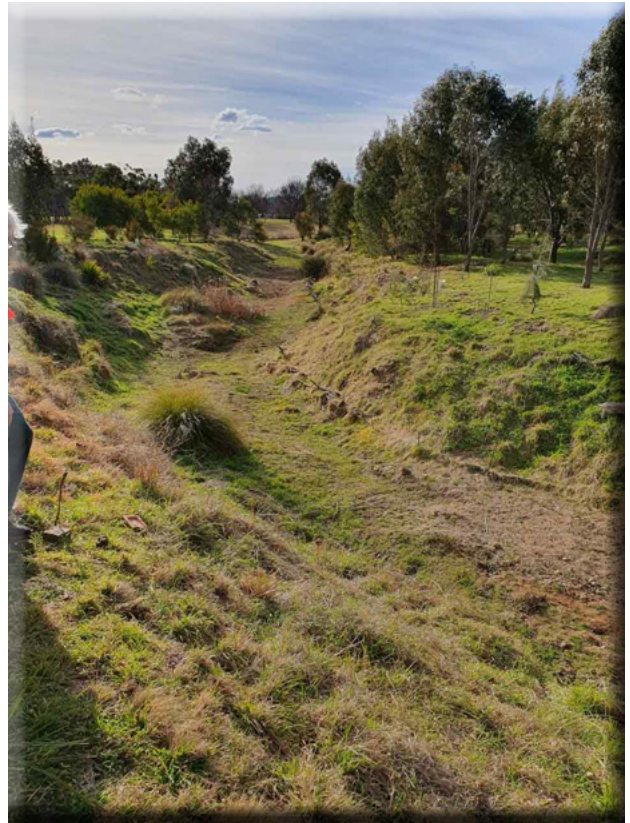
Please go through your cupboards for all those little items you no longer use or want and bring them along to donate as raffle prizes. As the saying goes, 'One man's junk is another man's treasure' (or woman as the case may be), and if you are a gardener with fresh produce to donate, this would be greatly appreciated.



Tuggeranong Homestead outing

Last month some members of Field Nats, joined an excursion hosted by Friends of Grasslands, that took them to the grounds of Tuggeranong Homestead.

The following are some photos from the outing. All photos were taken by Rosemary Blemings, unless otherwise stated.



Tuggeranong Creek: photo by Dave Kelly



The group standing in the dry channel of Tuggeranong Creek where there are plans to restore the currently diverted flows. Photo by John Stein

Month	Speaker	Topic
3 August	Peter Abbott	Native bees
7 September	Stewart Harris	Peacock spiders
5 October	Michael Mulvaney	Canberra Nature Map
November	TBC	
7 December		Xmas party



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

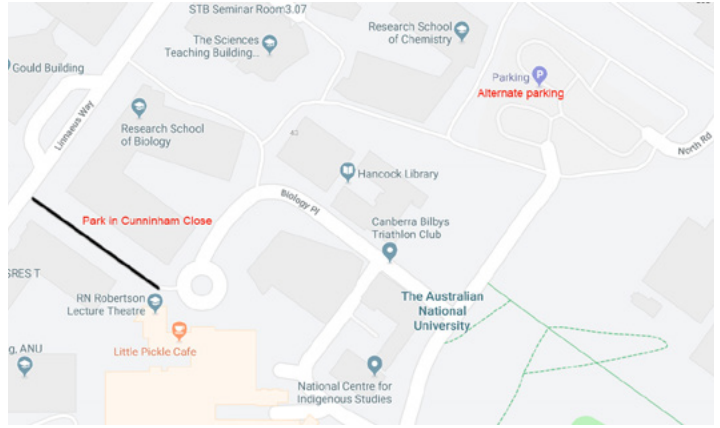
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Website: www.fieldnatsact.com

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Membership: membership@fieldnatsact.com

Newsletter Editor: editor@fieldnatsact.com



Monthly meeting venue: Slayter 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**