

CHRISTMAS MEETING THURSDAY DECEMBER 3

6:30 pm Australian National University

Meeting details back page



There is no formal meeting in December, instead we get together for a for a couple of hours for a social Christmas celebration. Bring something to eat and drink. We share some Christmas treats.

It is held in the staff room downstairs in the Botany and Zoology building (Building 44) next door to where we usually meet.



Next Meeting - 7:30pm Thursday 4 February 2010



Bats - and why they are important

Speaker: Michael Pennay President of the Australasian Bat Society

Michael says there are insectivorous bats everywhere, when you know where to look, including the Botanic Gardens and Black Mountain. He has loads of enthusiasm combined with great knowledge.

We anticipate an interesting talk.

Bat artwork - Art Explosion

**Note: There is no Meeting nor Field Natter published in January.
Have a blessed Christmas and refreshing break. Editor - Margaret Kalms**

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FIELD NATURALISTS RE-VISIT MULLIGANS FLAT**NOVEMBER 7TH 2009**

Thirteen of us met on an initially overcast morning. Helped by having joined a Ranger-lead walk a few weekends previously, Sybil, chose a route into Mulligans Flat which took us three & a half hours...there was so much to see! Perhaps we covered 2 km but there was no hurrying through the stunning array of wildflowers that good spring rain and a mild winter had stimulated.

Most of the wildflower diversity was explored before we even entered the reserve through the specially designed fence which will protect wildlife from foxes, cats and suburban dogs. Don & Betty's book was in constant use often with Miriam's interpretations and backed up by *Grassland Flora* for grasses and confirmation of forb details.

It was exciting to renew contact with Stackhousia, Buttercups, Milkmaids, *Triptilodiscus*, Flax lilies, Sundews, native mint and several species of button daisies. Adrienne made a specialty of orchid-seeking but decided to try her luck within North Mulligans after only finding one *Diuris* and regretting missing-out on onion orchids.

As we were on our way back to the carpark we came across a blue daisy just clear of the track. With Ros Cornish's later help through ANPS species lists it seems it was *Brachyscome rigidula*.



Mike, whilst compiling a bird list, interpreted the faintest of calls when we drew blanks and suggested that seeing only male Superb parrots could mean that their mates were incubating somewhere close. A threatened species breeding locally...a real buzz!

In the dry forest, by noon, there was encouraging bird activity which included photographable Leaden flycatchers and Choughs on their respective nests for Kevin's mighty lens.

Choughs aren't commonly seen on Mt Rogers so they were notable for me. Joining them on my special list were Orioles' calls, Rufous Whistler, Shining Bronze and Pallid Cuckoos, the Leaden flycatchers, a Grey Currawong and a tantalizing "largish brown raptor".

Wood, Don and Betty *Flowers of the ACT & Region: A Field Guide*. Wood Books, 2005

Eddy, David et.al. *Grassland Flora: a field guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW & ACT)* 1998.

Rosemary Blemings

Photographs: Miriam Bruning

Left: Callotis sp

Right: Pultanea sp

**Suggestions for Speakers and Outings for 2010**

The Committee will soon be putting together a program of talks and outings for 2010. Do you have any suggestions? Have you come across a good speaker who you think would be of interest to Field naturalists? Would you be happy to organise and / or lead an outing during 2010. Your input to our program would be very much appreciated.

Tony Lawson

A letter from Canberra Ornithologists' Group (COG)

Benj Whitworth and I spent Tuesday exploring the remote southeast corner of the COG Area of Interest (AOI) and beyond.

We left Canberra at around 10am and drove to Pikes Saddle (Grid V30) via Captains Flat, Pointers Gap, Krawarree & Snowball, where we passed a **White-necked Heron** beside the road.

Although it is possible to drive along the Badja Fire Trail we preferred to park at the saddle and hike to Big Badja.

Highlights along the Badja fire trail included a Red-bellied Black Snake, a Highlands Copperhead, Blotched Blue-tongues, plus water skinks and garden skinks. Also a huge Emperor Gum Moth which had just emerged, Eucalypt Chafer (iridescent green beetle), a Jumping Jack (jumping ants) nest and many species of butterfly including Painted Lady and Brown. On reaching the summit of Badja Trig at 1363 m we flushed a single **Painted Button-quail** from among the dense scrub and heath. From the exquisite bright colouring it was probably a female. Unfortunately looking at the Google Earth COG grid KML file the summit lies just outside the COG AOI.

Admiring the 360 views from the windy summit we were joined by a **Peregrine Falcon** and later on a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Around us in the scrub were **Eastern Spinebills** in the flowering heath which included Grevillea and **Superb Lyrebirds** further down.

We then continued further along the trail to a spot overlooking Woila Creek and east to the ramparts of Tabletop and Mother Woila in the heart of the Deua Wilderness.

After retracing our steps to the car as it started to drizzle we drove south out of the COG AOI and headed for Badja State Forest. On the way we spotted **New Holland Honeyeater**, **Red-browed Finches** and **Eastern Yellow Robin** at the bridge over the Badja River and had two male **White-winged Trillers** and a massive Echidna near Countegany.

There is a record of Variegated Fairy-wren from Badja SF from the 90s, which was one of the reasons we decided to visit. Despite some searching we didn't record this species. Since my last visit several years ago Badja SF has been logged to ruin. We drove along Badja Forest Rd and then onto Peters Rd before the track became impassable. We were able to stop at some remnant wet forest gullies and recorded **Pilotbird**, **Eastern Whipbird**, **Lewin's Honeyeater**, **Eastern Yellow Robin** and a **Wonga Pigeon**. The number of **Crescent Honeyeaters** present was amazing, every few hundred metres we could hear one.

All up a pretty good day.

Cheers

Marnix Zwankhuizen

A Message From Our Committee Meeting

It was hoped/expected that using email addresses will become the main way of keeping in touch with club members next year. As well as receiving specific information e.g. a change of speaker, people will be advised when the next *Field Natter* is available on our new web site. This will be a saving for the club in both time and money. However, some people understandably, still prefer or will need hard copies of the Newsletter.

Considerable investigations are being carried out by Bob Lehman for a new Website base. Bob had a list of sections for the website. Last advice is that it is coming together well. The cost for the club will be in the region of \$5 initially and then \$10 per month.

Suggestions for utilising accumulated funds including:

- Increasing funds to ANU for an additional annual prize or an allocation of an amount towards research.
- Part funding for new community-created brochure(s), for example The Pinnacle,
- Investigate Field Naturalists setting-up a separate Website to publicise NATURAL HISTORY EVENTS organised by the Region's nature-based groups. For example (Con Council, FNAC, COG, FOG, ANPS, Herpetologists, Landcare & Parkcare groups, Catchment Groups, Greening Australia, NPA, PC&L. FNAC would support the project financially & through organizing the Website.

Chris Bunn

Male Australian Redback Spiders Employ Courtship Strategies To Preserve Their Life

ScienceDaily (Oct. 26, 2009) — New research shows that male suitors of a female cannibalistic spider risk facing a premature death unless they perform an adequate courtship lasting a minimum of 100 minutes. Further, the research shows that "sneaker" males can slip by and mate successfully on the courtship efforts of the hard-working first suitor.

Scientists at the University of Toronto Scarborough have published their research in the journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*. The study provides new findings on the mating habits of the poisonous Australian redback spider (*Lactrodectus hasselti*), a member of the black widow family where females are larger in size compared to males.

According to the research, if a male tries to mate without investing sufficient time and energy in courtship, the female spider will kill him and mate with his rival. However, weaker males, or those looking to expend little energy, have found a way to reap the rewards of the more committed suitor.

"The second 'sneaker' male slips by and mates successfully, essentially acting as a parasite on the effort of the first, hard-working male," explains Maydianne Andrade, associate professor and Canada

Research Chair of the Integrative Behaviour and Neuroscience group at the University of Toronto Scarborough.

"One of the surprising outcomes from the study is that females are unable or unwilling to discriminate the sources of courtship," said Jeffrey Stoltz, PhD candidate in the department of biological sciences at U of T Scarborough and co-author of the study. "This has provided the opportunity for intruding males to exploit the reproductive efforts of rivals and thereby circumvent female choice."

Adds Andrade, "Female choice using thresholds have been predicted in theory, but this is one of a few quantitative demonstrations of such a decision rule in action and the first to show that males can use the female's decision rule to exploit the reproductive efforts of rivals."

Journal reference:

1. **Female's courtship threshold allows intruding males to mate with reduced effort.** *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, (in press)

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/10/091022114311.htm>

Australia a global leader in biodiversity knowledge

Media release - PG/344 - 29 September 2009

Environment Minister Peter Garrett today released the only report in the world to document the planet's known animal and plant species - all 1,899,587 of them.

"This work by Australian scientists, which has been praised by internationally acclaimed naturalist Sir David Attenborough, is a fantastic contribution to the global fight to conserve biodiversity," Mr Garrett said.

"It also gives us new insight into how valuable Australia's plants and animals are, revealing we have even more unique mammals, reptiles and plants than we previously had thought.

"For example, the figures in this report, updated for the first time in 20 years, show 87 per cent of our mammals and 93 per cent of our reptiles are found nowhere else in the world.

"The report shows that the science of species discovery is alive and well - in the past three years in Australia, we've discovered 48 reptiles, eight frogs, eight mammals, 1,184 flowering plants and 904 spiders, mites and scorpions.

"But we have a long way to go - we have discovered and named only about a quarter of Australia's estimated number of flora and fauna. We need this essential information to do a better job of managing our biodiversity against the threats of invasive species, habitat loss and climate change.

Mr Garrett announced a new \$1.2 million partnership between the report's publishers, the Australian Biological Resources Study, and BHP Billiton to name and describe 500 reef species over the next three years.

To download a copy of the Numbers of Living Species in Australia and the World report visit:

www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/index.html

Attachment 1

Statement from Sir David Attenborough on Numbers of Living Species in Australia and the World

'The identification and naming of species is the very foundation of the natural sciences. Unless we can be certain of exactly what organism we are considering, we cannot protect it, still less understand it. Listing species is the beginning of that essential process. So this report will provide a crucial reference point for all those who are acting to protect our planet for future generations. I congratulate all those involved in producing it.'

25 September 2009.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/garrett/2009/mr20090929.html>



An example of diverse beetles from CSIRO entomology collection.

Photo Margaret Kalms

ANT NESTS - A WEB LINK FROM BRAZIL

Below is a link to an amazing ant video from Brazil. The scientists pour concrete into an ant nest. Once hard, the concrete was dug up, revealing the full complexity of tunnels and chambers. The worker ants literally move tonnes of dirt. Very interesting and amazing for such small animals.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9hte_cidadedasformigas_animals



The photographs of Australian ants by Margaret Kalms are for illustration only.

More on the Annual General Meeting

Before the November general meeting, the AGM was reopened to consider the minutes of the 2008 AGM, which had now been circulated but which had been unavailable at the earlier meeting. It was moved by Tony Lawson and seconded by Kevin McCue that they be accepted. The motion was passed unanimously by the 21 members there.

It was then agreed to re-appoint James Collins as the auditor for 2009-10.

Tony Lawson also pointed out an error in the draft 2009 AGM minutes which had appeared in the November Field Natter. The election of Dierk von Behrens to the Committee had been omitted.

Tony Lawson, Secretary

Signing up to NATChat

The Field Nats have their own chatline, which is used to keep members informed of activities and natural history items of interest.

It is very useful to be able to let you know of events which we find out about after Field Natter has been produced and which will occur before the next edition of Field Natter comes out. Members can post items to NATChat, though to date most of the items have been provided by me. If you would like to join send an email to [tlawson\(at\)homemail.com.au](mailto:tlawson(at)homemail.com.au).

Tony Lawson, NATChat Moderator

Items for Field Natter

I am always on the lookout for suitable material to publish. It can be an article or an anecdote or just a photo of something interesting - fauna or flora - that you have seen. Or a snippet from the internet.

Margaret Kalms - Editor

You are cordially invited to

Conservation Council's 30th Anniversary Cocktails

with the Chief Minister, Mr John Stanhope MLA,
who will talk about his personal views on
conservation in the ACT region

When: 6-8 pm, Saturday 2009,
5th December

Where: Australian National
Botanic Gardens,
Clunies Ross St

Cost: \$60 per person

RSVP: 1st December, 6229 3200 or
info@consact.org.au



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 the member application below and send it with your subscription to the FNAC Treasurer, GPO Box 249 Canberra, ACT 2601:

President: Benj Whitworth, tel mobile:

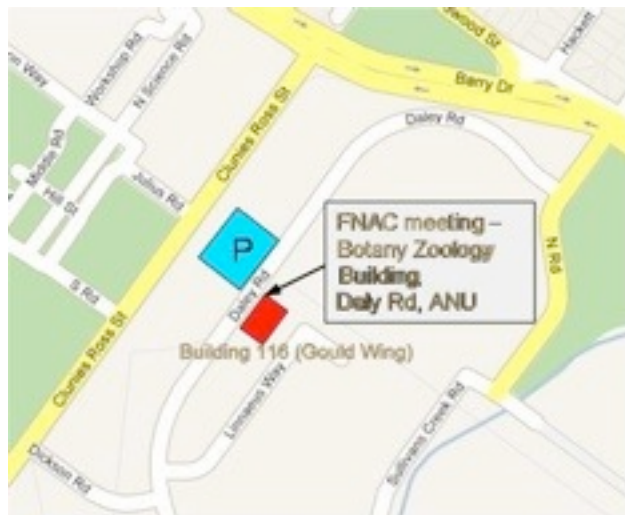
Secretary: Tony Lawson, tel [fieldnaturalist\(at\)yahoo.com.au](mailto:fieldnaturalist(at)yahoo.com.au)

Website: Under construction.

Newsletter editor: Margaret Kalms [margaret\(at\)ecospirit.com.au](mailto:margaret(at)ecospirit.com.au)

Tel:

Published and distributed by Bob Lehman.



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University. Park (occasionally at the adjacent Building 44).

Meetings start at 7:30 pm and are followed by refreshments.

Last Chance - Canberra Day Long Weekend Field Trip to Kioloa

The ANU's Coastal Campus at Kioloa is a *biodiversity hotspot* located on 860 acres adjacent to Murramarang National Park, south of Bawley Point, via Termeil.

Kioloa is very busy at this time of year and we have reserved three self-contained cottages for our group.

Each cottage consists of three twin-bedded rooms, a living area, small kitchen and bathroom. The approximate cost for a bed is around \$30.00 excluding bed linen and towels (\$60 if only one person in the room).

If you would like to join us on this trip you need to register your interest NOW.

We would like to release any spare accommodation to Kioloa before December. A more detailed program of activities and catering arrangements will be available later.

Please telephone Sylvie on

email to [sylviesampson\(at\)bigpond.com](mailto:sylviesampson(at)bigpond.com)

PS from the editor It is a great place with lots of interest, BUT we must book NOW.

See more at <http://kioloa.anu.edu.au>

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Family name: 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:

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

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: FRIEND? OTHER? Please specify: