

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

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GPO BOX 249
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

FIELD NATTER

MEETING—THURSDAY, 4 December 6:00 pm Australian National University

Downstairs BOZO Tea-room, Building 116, Daley Road, ANU, ACT
Gould Seminar Room, Building 116, Daley Road, ANU, ACT

details back page

FNAC Christmas party

**Please note the change of venue and earlier start
time of 6:00 pm**

It is our Christmas Get-together in the downstairs BOZO Tea-room. Please bring your own food, refreshments, plates and glasses with something to share. It's a good old natter time. Do come along and join us.



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The South Australian Museum

Rosemary von Behrens is currently visiting Adelaide and has sent these interesting articles for our enjoyment.

The giant squid

Located in an old lift well and extending over four floors is a model of a giant squid *Architeuthis*. The diorama is dark but the squid can be viewed through glass on each level along with other creatures of the deep dark ocean depths. Computer technology allows an explanation of the various parts that make up a squid. The 'circular' fins at the top of the head stabilise the animal and are relatively small when compared with its length. Water is forced through its funnel, which opens on the underside of its head and provides the jet propulsion required for movement. The skin of the model is red. It is believed that red light travels poorly in water and that would make it invisible to its prey. Chromatophores enable the squid to vary its colour. The eyes are as large as 25 cm across, perhaps to see bioluminescent light.

Squid have eight arms and two long tentacles. The arms have two rows of suckers on one side and these are approximately 2.5 cm in diameter. The suckers have a sharp ring of teeth, which are used to grab and hook onto the prey. They are capable of cutting deeply. Imagine being held by these, if a mate! The tentacles are all that are visible of the squid at the lower level. They are approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of its total length and have a long heavy looking club at the base of each with four rows of suckers. Tentacles can feel, taste, and seize prey, reaching much further than the arms.

Information supplied by the SA Museum at diorama site.

Pacific cultures

The South Australian Museum brochure explains the gallery, which I chose to visit on Saturday 22 November, as follows: "*The*

Pacific Cultures gallery is the largest exhibition of Pacific material in Australia and a truly remarkable collection of the material cultures of the Pacific. Artefacts are on display from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Santa Cruz Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji and New Zealand.

The Pacific Cultures gallery is being preserved as an example of 19th century museum display using the original heritage-listed wall cases and flat cases. This forms a striking contrast within the Museum." As indeed it does.

Two hours didn't even see me past a quarter of the exhibits on display. I was disturbed to see that no or very few collection dates appeared on the items and the magnificent Solomon Island spears, up to three or four metres in length, with their intricate patterning of finely split rattan or grass (guess) left a lot to the imagination. Did the pattern represent the owner, a clan, or a leader? The fine motor skills required to create these intricate patterns of zig-zags, diamonds, stripes and triangles was almost out-skilled by the even finer details on the shorter thinner arrows. The patterns were done in yellows and reds while some carvings on the same spears were ingrained with white. Backward facing barbs looked like quills from an echidna but no label provided an explanation.

San Chrisobal spears were wrapped simply but had an enlarged incised section below the barbs, which increased in length the further away from the pointed tip. Fijian spears appeared almost cumbersome in comparison as they were thicker, had wooden barbs and ornate designs carved into the shafts. Were they ceremonial or were the men who used them very strong?

Shells were used for many purposes. Woven shell money, banded shell designs for money or foreheads (Solomons); forehead bands from shell strips, cowie shell strips, pendants from cone and baler shells, nose pegs (New Guinea); breast ornaments, Kap Kaps, discs of finely polished clamshell overlaid with fine fretwork made from turtle shell using a shark tooth tool (Melanesia); baler shell breast ornament (New Britain); shell collars from *Nassarius callospira* (New Britain); pearl shell fish hooks entirely out of shell, hooked with turtle or as a bright backing to attract fish (Melanesia).

Other uses for shell were as body ornaments, decorating homes or trading canoes, costumes, armlets i.e. from trochus shells or clams or *Conus litteratus*, rattles on legs, or to attract sharks in water, girdle rattles for dancing, spoons, tools e.g. shaving, weapons, scrapers, food preparation, and as ritual objects.

Skulls were also on display. One was decorated in a black substance and had pearl shell inlay in a well thought out design, another; a head hunter's trophy, was held together by rattan (Solomon Islands); fibre coated and painted black with prominent red stripes (Vanuatu); three distorted and elongated because their skulls were bound as infants. This result was preferred by the parents who bound them (Linden Harbour); a magnificent cassowary head dress decorated yet another (New Britain PNG). A photo of a young woman explained the incised vertical grooves in a skull that were regarded as beautiful. They looked as if they were made by a blunt instrument but something could have been pushed into an infant's forehead while it was still soft. My sympathy went out to those who suffered such

an indignity (Lahir Island New Ireland Province PNG).

This is a traditional museum display and I have only covered one section of a very large room. I have no objection to the way these fascinating items have been housed. I love looking at the designs incised on the spears, shields, shells from an artistic point of view. Artists today are still doing similar things and many are discovering patterns

that are centuries old without ever having seen those already created but they do not have the same meaning or spiritual connections as those displayed here embody. I would, however, have liked to see more written detail next to the objects themselves. The information gained from a computer screen at the head of the Giant Squid illustrates what can be stored and brought forth when one touches the screen and other galleries make use of

these. The Museum is well worth a visit, many visits in fact would be required to do all the displays on the four floors justice. Australian Aboriginal Cultures, South Australian Biodiversity, World Mammals, Whales and Dolphins, Ediacara Biota, Minerals and Meteorites, South Australian Megafauna, Opal Fossils, Ancient Egypt and in the Footsteps of Sir Douglas Mawson await the reader.

The Jacaranda

Adelaide in November sports the beautiful purple and mauve hues of the Jacaranda tree. It is a native of the tropical and subtropical regions of Central and South America, the islands of Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica and the Bahamas. There are 49 species in the Jacaranda genus, which belongs to the family

Bignoniaceae (Wikipedia). Isolated trees adorn various gardens and whole streetscapes and laneways have been planted in Adelaide suburbs. A veritable delight to the eye and after the heavy rainfalls experienced this week the footpaths and road verges are awash with a purple carpet.

Did you know?

Did you know that your mobile phone can spread weeds into Australia's national parks and nature reserves? This is a fact that has recently come to my attention and may surprise many mobile phone users.

The Canberra Bushwalking Club has for many years been involved in conservation activities in conjunction with Parks and Wildlife. This year they have formed a Weed Busters group and some members have been attending weed identification courses, mostly aimed at weeds in the Alpine region.

On one of these courses the participants were told that the single greatest impact on the spread of weeds in recent years has been the invention of the mobile phone.

Why? you might ask. How do mobile phones spread weeds into unwanted areas?

The fact is that when a mobile phone rings, many drivers pull over to the side of the road to answer the call. They park among grasses and weeds; the seeds catch in the wheels of the car and are then dislodged further along the road or on dirt fire trails as they continue their journey.

Perhaps then, when we receive that inevitable call on the mobile we should consider where we are and where we are headed before deciding if it is important enough to pull over to answer.

Month	Speaker	Topic
4 December	Christmas party	BOZO meeting room

The next meeting is Thursday 4 December at 6.00 pm in the downstairs tea room of Building 44, i.e. the adjacent building to the Gould Wing. Entry is underneath/close to the overhead walkway. Please note the **different time!** This is when we get together without a speaker and bring our own food to share with others. Chat, explore ideas, exchange information on an informal basis. It's our **Christmas get together!** Please bring your own plates, cutlery, food etc.



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 von Behrens **Phone:** 6254 1763

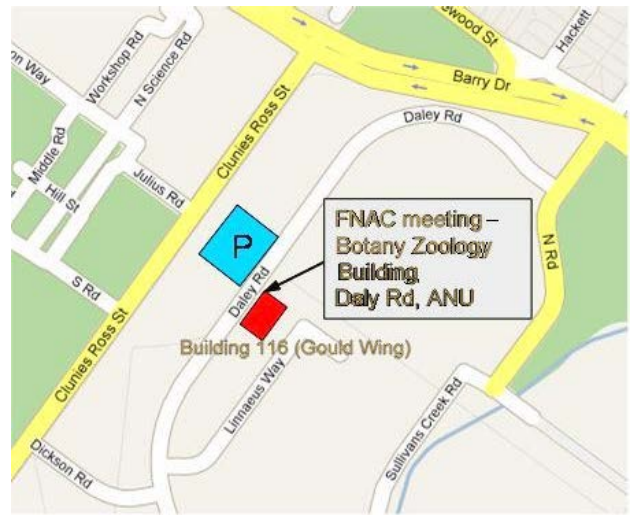
Email: fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au

Website: under construction

All newsletter contributions welcome.

Email: alison.milton@health.gov.au

Editor



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University. (The Xmas meeting is at the adjacent building 44 and will start at the earlier time of 6:30 pm.)

Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra
GPO Box 249
Canberra ACT 2601



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: