

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

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December 2021 newsletter Monthly meetings to be advised

**FNAC Christmas Party 2021: 6.30 pm, Thursday, 2 December;
Weston Park picnic area off Pescott Lane, opposite the mini
train 'Play Station'.**



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

FIELD NATURALIST

Visit to Yarrangobilly

Once the borders of the ACT reopened, at the end of October some friends and I decided to visit Yarrangobilly in northern Kosciuszko National Park near Kiandra.

Yarrangobilly is in a delightful setting nestled in a [karst valley](#) with a number of streams running through it. Sadly it was badly affected by the 2019–2020 bushfires but miraculously all buildings survived.

For those who are not familiar with Yarrangobilly's accommodation, the single storey east and west wing was constructed in 1901 and the two storey section was built in 1917 as part of a campaign by the NSW government to increase tourism in regional areas.



The reason for our visit was to stay at Caves House and have a good look at the area as this is one of the places where it is proposed by NPWS to expand and build additional infrastructure, such as ecopods (cabins) for more accommodation and onsens (Japanese bath houses) near the river and thermal pool.

Of course, the real draw card of Yarrangobilly are the caves. There are a number of them. Some are self-guided, some are guided and a couple are 'wild' caves that appropriately experienced people can access.

Inside the caves there is an abundance of all types of cave features from the usual stalagmites, stalactites, straws, shawls, flow stones, columns, cave pearls and my favourites [helictites](#) (the curly ones).



The area is well known for its thermal pool but that is a misnomer as the pool is only 24° C but it is entirely outdoors with lovely lawns surrounding it and views to the river and beyond. It is a wonderful spot to just relax on the lawn and take in the atmosphere and the views.

One of the great joys of our stay was the number of birds we saw and heard. Best of all were the lyrebirds calling. They seemed to be everywhere. I saw two males and one female right at Caves House and signs of their scratching were everywhere.

Another bird was a satin bower bird. My friend saw it but unfortunately I didn't although I did see the bower with its many blue objects.



Other visitors were a family of kangaroos, which visited in the afternoon. I was much intrigued by quite a big joey that would stick its head out of mum's pouch and graze with mum. Sometimes the joey would be outside the pouch hopping around but at any disturbance would hop back into the pouch, sometimes head first with the hind legs and tail dangling out.

As we were there in spring we were fortunate to see many

wildflowers in bloom. This was in stark contrast to all the dead gum trees. I did see what may have been a leopard orchard (*Diuris pardina*), colourful billy button type flowers, a very pretty purple ground cover that grew in profusion on rocky ground which I have been unable to identify, bacon and egg plants, bulbine lilies, violets, buttercups and daisies both yellow and white.

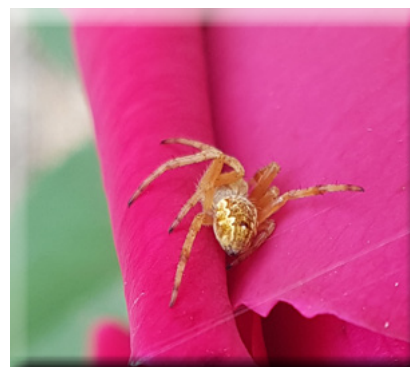


I can recommend a visit to Yarrangobilly as there are a number of things to keep you occupied. There are a number of caves to visit, many walks of varied distances and grades, the thermal pool and, of course, there are the wonderful birds, flowers and scenery.

Deidre Shaw

In the garden

Lucy found this orb-weaving spider on a rose in her garden.



Activities

Thursday 2 December: 6:00 pm at Weston Park as a reunion and Christmas Party

Bring food and drink for you and your guests and something to share? Be prepared to take any rubbish home again rather than clutter up public places' litter bins.

Sunday 5 December, 9.30 am – Property on the Yaouk Road on the south-western edge of Namadgi National Park: Return: 5.30 pm or earlier as desired

This trip is to visit Janet Stein's property just south of Namadgi National Park. Carpooling is recommended. Meet at the carpark next to the public toilets in Tharwa on the left, just after crossing the bridge over the Murrumbidgee River. Bring lunch and drinks, hats and sturdy shoes or boots. Janet will boil the billy and make tea and coffee. There are no shops or facilities so please bring everything you need for a day in the bush. The property is 65 km from Tharwa via Naas / Boboyan and Yaouk Roads, including 34 km of gravel road that is generally in very good condition and suitable for 2wd vehicles (just take it slowly over the occasional pothole or cattle grid). Activities will be flexible depending on members' interests. Options to explore sub-alpine grassy woodlands, forests and wetlands and the ongoing recovery and regeneration following the Black Summer bushfires and subsequent erosion events. Note that mobile phone coverage is very limited. Weak coverage available only on the very highest points on the property, very patchy on the Boboyan Road.

RSVP: with contact details to JanetStein01@gmail.com by Sunday 28 November.

To help with carpooling arrangements please also indicate whether you either require or can offer a lift and for how many people.

Bluett's Block – a biodiversity gem!

Below the Molonglo River Reserve and to the West of Denman Prospect Development, is a remarkable natural area known as Bluetts Block.

Two ecological communities are found at Bluetts Block:

1. dry forest with a shrubby-healthy-grassy ground layer located on higher hilly areas of the site, and
2. Box-Gum Woodland located on slopes and in gullies at the site.

The latter is of particular importance as it is critically endangered under the EPBC Act and ACT legislation, meaning that it is not only locally significant, but nationally.

The value of Bluett's Block has been analogised to Black Mountain as it is incredibly ecologically diverse and includes high quality habitat. It is likely to support many threatened and rare species, most notably, rare marsupial populations of Dunnart and Antechinus.

Specifically, Bluett's Block is arguably of a high quality as

indicated by a relatively low presence of weeds on much of the area. This suggests that there has been low disturbance at the site. The presence of extensive cryptogam cover (including mosses, lichens and algal crusts) further supports this observation as intact cryptogam crusts indicate a lack of recent domestic stock grazing, and as such a heightened conservation value as the land is relatively un-degraded and thus of high quality.

Old growth trees at the site suggest the presence of hollow-nesting fauna, including pardalotes, microbats and a range of birds. The diverse shrubby habitat is also likely to support various bird guilds, including uncommon, declining and vulnerable species. Rocky habitat observed at the site has been found to be suitable for reptiles. A considerable diversity of fungal fruiting structures also suggest that Bluetts Block is significant for many plant species, notably native orchids.

The site also plays a critical role in connecting The Murrumbidgee Corridor, Kama Nature Reserve,

Pinnacle Nature Reserve, Stoney Creek Reserves, and beyond.

Bluett's Block, and the similarly valuable areas around it may be under threat of continuing urban sprawl. The recently announced ACT budget committed \$2.3 m to investigate land to the west of Canberra for future development. This is known as the 'Western Edge Investigation', and includes consideration of Bluett's Block. The 2018 ACT Planning Strategy indicates that the Western Edge is in the ACT Government sights as a potential area for future urban development.

The Conservation Council is calling on the ACT Government to move quickly to put Bluett's Block into the reserve system to ensure it is protected in perpetuity.

References

1. Rehwinkel, Vegetation Survey of Bluetts Block, 2019.
2. Nature Conservation (Yellow Box – Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland) Conservation Advice 2020; Natural Temperate Grassland of the South Eastern Highlands; White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland National Recovery Plan



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

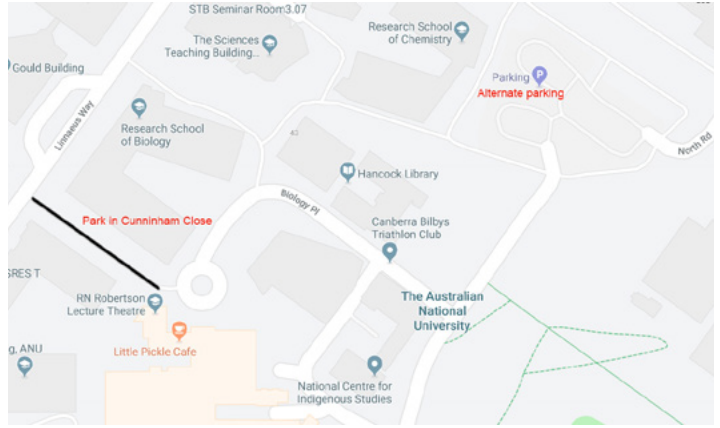
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Treasurer: treasurer@fieldnatsact.com

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

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Membership application or renewal

Surname: First name:

If a family membership, please include the first names of other members of the family:

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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**