



FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

OBJECTS: *To foster an interest, an awareness and an understanding of nature*

PRESIDENT: Simon Spinetti
SECRETARY: Mark Carson, Phone 252 2528 (W)
ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: GPO Box 249, Canberra ACT 2601
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Bob Ecclestone, Phone 241 4512 (H)

Meetings are held downstairs in the Division of Zoology and Botany, ANU, on the first Thursday of each month. Meetings commence at 8.00 pm and are followed by refreshments.

NEWSLETTER — FEBRUARY 1992

FEBRUARY MEETING - 6th February

Our speaker will be Leonie Andrews, former FNAC President. She will talk about Loggerhead Turtles and her work as a research volunteer at the Mon Repos turtle rookery during the 1990/91 egg-laying season. The research program at Mon Repos, a project of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, has been operating for some 20 years.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW PRESIDENT, SIMON SPINETTI, who takes over from Maureen Bell for the remainder of the year (until our next AGM in August).

FEBRUARY OUTING - SUNDAY 9th

We are up and running! The first Field Nats OUTING for 1992 is a picnic and walkabout on Mt Franklin on Sunday 9 February. In the high Brindabellas there should still be lots of wildflowers and Leonie Andrews, who suggested this outing, will be with us as THE expert. Please meet at Cotter Rd and Eucumbene Dr for carpool at 9.30 on Feb 9, and kindly remember sun and rain protection and \$8 for your driver. Contact: Sophie Caton 247 2469 (H), 248 7701 (W).

MARCH OUTING - 14-16th

The long weekend in March will be a camping trip to private properties either on the South Coast (Mimosa National Park) or Araluen Valley. Number of participants is limited, so please voice your interest early to Sophie Caton 247 2469 (H), 248 7701 (W).

REPORTS

GORILLAS AT JERSEY ZOO

Jenny Bounds

On my recent overseas trip, I fulfilled a long held wish to visit Jersey Zoo, on the English Channel Island of Jersey. This is a unique place established as a Trust by Gerald Durrell, the famous writer and naturalist, to preserve many of the world's rare or endangered species. In particular the mammals, reptiles and birds of islands such as Madagascar, Mauritius and Round Island (near Mauritius) are featured.

On islands where specialised forms of creatures tend to evolve, habitat destruction and the introduction of exotic animals, like rates and goats, devastates endemic species. The Dodo, of course, was found on Mauritius and was hunted to extinction by humans by 1693.

At Jersey Zoo, there is a wonderful collection of lemurs, a primitive form of primate found only on Madagascar. These animals are a nightmare to photograph because they are constantly on the move; most of my photos were out of focus! The ring-tailed variety delights in swinging its long tail around and pointing its bottom, tail up, right in your face!

There is a group of ten lowland gorillas led by a magnificent male called Jambo. Jambo was the gorilla who watched over the little English boy who fell into the gorilla enclosure (you may have seen that on the news several months ago). Gorillas are shy, sensitive family creatures and are vegetarians. What amazed me about these animals is their likeness to humans; they smell more human than animal, a kind of bad case of human body odour, and behave in human ways. I spent a couple of hours watching them and taking photographs.

The three female gorillas in the group played stand-off games with Jambo who displayed all the human emotions of the macho male. Jambo would get sick of the crowds taking photos and would go to the part of the enclosure where he knew it was impossible to get photos. On one occasion he gave a loud drum on his chest as a sign of annoyance; it was truly magnificent. Jambo was obviously the head of the family, but the keeper told me that the females and juveniles had a certain tolerance threshold and when they thought Jambo was being unreasonable they would gang up on him to assert their group authority. When given branches of leaves to eat, the gorillas would eat most delicately, using their thumbs and forefingers to strip the leaves off the branches and pop the green bundles into their mouths. I told a friend of mine how I used two rolls of film on the gorillas - he said (jokingly) I was a sick woman!

The Trust works with foreign governments to reintroduce species back into the wild. There is an International School attached to the Zoo which teaches foreign rangers and animal keepers how to breed and look after rare and endangered species and then reintroduce them back into the wild, the ultimate aim of the Trust. Notable successes have been the Mauritius Kestrel, whose number was down to 6 in 1970; over 100 birds having been reintroduced into the wild since 1978. Also the Pink Pigeon, the world's rarest pigeon, which suffered from habitat destruction and the loss of its eggs by introduced monkeys on Mauritius. Many species are still under threat, like the tamarind monkeys from the diminishing rainforests of South America.

Jersey and the other Channel Islands are easy to get to from Britain or France, by ferry or air. There are many good package deals available from travel agents in Britain, which include travel, a hire car (essential to get around the island) and dinner, bed and breakfast in family run guest houses. Unfortunately agents in Australia have little or no information about the Channel Islands, a favourite holiday destination for the British. There is also no VAT (sales tax) on the islands which are known for good quality gold and other jewellery.

SPOTLIGHTING

Jenny Bounds

Nocturnal wildlife is abundant in Canberra, particularly at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. You can arrange to go on a spotlight walk with the rangers, but must book a place. It is advisable to book well in advance as these activities are popular. Pick a night when there is no or only a quarter moon, as the gliders seem to be more relaxed and visible when the sky is dark and they think predators cannot see them. The telephone number is 237 5120 between 11 am and 4 pm on weekdays. Some of the creatures you may see are:

Greater Glider: This glider is about the size of a cat, with dense fur, usually dark in colour and a tail more than a metre long. It is a flying possum, and lives almost exclusively on eucalyptus leaves, preferring species which grow on deeper, more fertile soils for the higher nitrogen content.

Yellow-bellied Glider: Half the size of the greater glider and recognisable by its stylish tuxedo of cream shirt front, dark upper body and a dark, fluffy tail nearly a metre long; very long in relation to its body. It is the most competent of the gliders and can glide some 50 metres or more. These gliders make marks in the bark of trees to stimulate sap on which they feed; the marks have a V-shaped pattern.

Sugar Glider: About rat size, this is a pretty greyish animal with white along the gliding membrane, and a distinctive stripe running from snout to tail.

Brush-tailed Possum: About cat size, usually dark brown or greyish in colour, with very thick fur, rounded ears and a medium-sized tail.

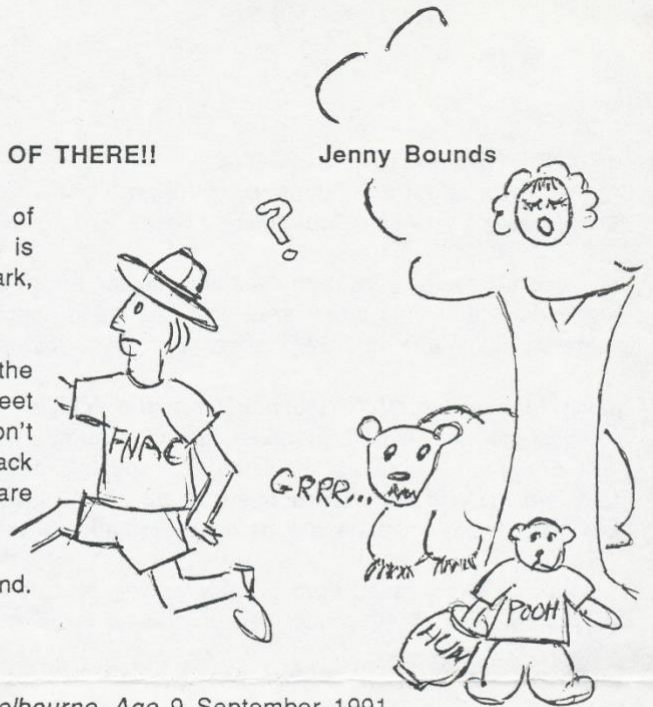
There is also the possibility of seeing koalas, bats, spiders and birds and hearing a Boobook Owl or a Powerful Owl. The Powerful Owl is a specialist hunter of gliders. On a warm, summer night the bush is filled with wonderful aromas from the trees and flowering plants. You can have a picnic or barbecue beforehand at Tidbinbilla. Don't miss this experience!

FIRST IDENTIFY YOUR BEAR - THEN GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE!!

In the National Parks in the USA where there are populations of bears, the Rangers give lessons in bear identification. This is apparently important because if you come across a bear in a park, the evasive action you take will depend on the kind of bear.

Fortunately, there are only two kinds, the Grizzly Bear and the smaller (less dangerous!) Black Bear. The idea is that if you meet a Grizzly Bear you make for the nearest tree as Grizzlies don't climb trees. If it is a Black Bear, don't climb a tree because Black Bears are masters at tree climbing; instead yell and try to scare it off, but if that doesn't work, run for your life.

And, you have to make your choice of bear all in a split second. I think I prefer the snake-infested (?) Aussie bush!



"WILDLIFE DEPENDS ON TREES TO LIVE" - an article in *Melbourne Age* 9 September 1991.



A Way of Life

By GRAHAM PIZZEY

DO YOU remember from school John Masefield's epic, 'Reynard the Fox', in which the fox, after a brilliant run to hounds, is fatally caught out by a dirty trick at the very entrance to his earth? (*Earth in this context means, burrow, or den.)

*'He passed the spring where the rushes spread,
And there in the stones was his earth ahead
One last short burst upon failing feet —
There life lay waiting, so sweet, so sweet,
Rest in a darkness, balm for aches.
The earth was stopped. It was barred with stakes.'*

IF YOU happen to be one of the fortunate Australian majority with a home of your own, the pathos of that unexpected end, even for a thieving fox, is unconsciously heightened by a warm sense of home, a place of balm for aches, physical and mental.

Having just arranged for our new home, or more particularly, its 40 hectares of Grampians heath and woodland, to join the State-wide "Land for Wildlife" scheme, developed by the Department of Conservation and Environment, we are conscious of a shortage of potential home-sites for certain native animals, furred and feathered on our land.

The fact is that you can drive past miles of bush like ours which looks safe and inviting for wildlife, but unless it has been left undisturbed for well over a century and contains some really old trees, its value for certain kinds of wildlife will be much less than it seems. . . .

Pizzey goes on to say that many mammals, birds, reptiles and even some frogs need tree hollows for either nesting or roosting. These hollows take decades to form, which just can't happen if forests and woodlands are continually cleared of old, rotting or dead trees and logs. Artificial boxes do work sometimes, for certain species, but still they do not have the numerous qualities of a natural wood hollow, and are often infested with vermin like the introduced starling.

. . . .

That is why it is so vital to maintain old trees and protect existing stands of trees of mixed ages. For it is now evident that an ecologically healthy Australian woodland is one where the trees range from as much as three or four centuries old, down to seedlings of the year.

The 'Land for Wildlife' scheme, which anyone with suitable wildlife habitat on their property can join after inspection and approval by a regional representative of C. & E., is one way of encouraging the retention of these precious, mixed-age woodlands. National parks can't do it all — nor should we expect it of them. We need a state-wide mosaic of woodlands, maintaining local diversity. Only such a network can maintain a stable gene pool and a healthy diversity of native animals and plants.

Now 10 years old, recently revitalised and expanded, 'Land for Wildlife', with its characteristic diamond-shaped green sign, is a voluntary scheme which puts member-properties on a register and provides up-to-date, useful data on the whole subject of providing habitat for wildlife.

Incidentally, these values go far beyond just the retention of tree-hollows, important as that is.

Already some 1300 properties, totaling more than 100,000 hectares, have registered. Ours is just one of the latest. The scheme promises to be of first-rate importance. Information about 'Land for Wildlife' is available at regional offices of the Department of Conservation and Environment

QUEANBEYAN NATURE RESERVE

Maureen Bell

Did you know about the Queanbeyan Nature Reserve or, like me, read about it for the first time in the freebie newspaper, *The Community Times*?

Following controversy over the subdivision for housing of the Mt Jerrabomberra Estate in the early/middle '80s, this small area was set aside specifically to preserve a habitat for the endangered Button Wrinkle Wort daisy, *Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*.

During January the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service conducted guided walks of the reserve. Although only just over 2 hectares, it had a number of things of interest including the thistle-like Blue Devil *Eryngium rostratum*, 23 listed bird species (baby Wood Swallows evidently fallen out of the nest rather too early in life were hopping about on the ground), and the now-protected daisy in flower and flourishing. Major weeds are being systematically removed.

The reserve is accessed from a track leading off to the left from the end of Furlong Road, near the racecourse. If a FNAC group were interested in going on a short excursion there, it could be arranged.

WHAT'S NEW IN OUR FNAC LIBRARY?

The conservation of remnant woodland and native grassland in the ACT, March 1991 Report prepared for the National Parks Association of the ACT (Inc.) by Kevin J. Frawley.

ACT Decade of Landcare Plan, Draft September 1991, ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

ODDS'N'ENDS

ACT Birdwatchers Hotline - Ring 247-5530 for a current 5 minute recorded message on meetings, outings, bargains, interesting, rare or migratory birds to be seen in our area. Now that spring is just around the corner, the migratory birds will be back with us soon. Anyone heard a Pallid Cuckoo yet?

Greenline - The Environment Centre "Greenline", 248-9745, provides toll free advice on the week's events in the natural history/conservation world, "Green" tips, and meetings and outings of the various groups in Canberra. It is updated monthly.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve have Ranger guided activities every weekend for all the family: No need to book, just call in at Visitors Centre. For more information ring 237 5120.

Namadgi National Park - Bookings essential for popular walks. Ring 237 5222.

'**The Scribbly Gum**' - Welcome to the recent first edition of this Park Care newsletter for Canberra Nature Parks. Many of our hills and ridges are being restored towards their original condition with the help of 13 Park Care Groups. Some 300 to 400 active volunteers are planting trees and bushes that once occurred locally. They are helping to eliminate weeds, particularly woody species such as Briar Rose, Boxthorn and Cotoneaster. Why not contact Michael Ivill on 295 5326 or Geoff Young on 286 5356 ?

Entire fossilised diprotodon skeleton found in WA riverbed in the Pilbara. Previously only a few bones and teeth have been found, so this whole rhinoceros-sized skeleton is a significant scientific find according to Dr Ken McNamara, curator of invertebrate palaeontology at the WA museum, and will go on display soon in the "Diamonds to Dinosaurs Gallery". From *Canberra Times* 5 Dec 1991.

NEWSLETTER - Contributions please. Let us know what you've been up to during the holidays. Share with us your tidbits of news and information, we'll find an appropriate spot for them - eventually. Contributions can be handed in at meetings or sent to either of the following addresses:

Kay Hahne (Tel. 251-1792) OR Kay Hahne (in Building 7; Tel. 252-2913)
5 Gingana Street Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Canberra
Aranda ACT 2614 PO Box 1, Belconnen ACT 2616

Deadline for the March newsletter is 21 February.

Reservations over size of Gungahlin reserve **We're not out of the woods yet: Falconer**

By DAVID SIBLEY

The ecologically important Mulligans Flat woodland area will be retained as public open space in the Canberra Nature Park.

The Minister for Environment, Land and Planning, Bill Wood, announced last week that Mulligans Flat, the largest area of open forest and woodland in Gungahlin which contains large areas of native grassland, will be identified as public land in the Territory Plan.

While happy that Mulligans Flat has been saved from development, the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra is concerned about the size of the reserve.

Council director Rodney Falconer said that the area of Mulligans Flat to be set aside by the ACT Planning Authority was too small, with many of the important ecological areas of the woodland left outside the proposed park.

Mulligans Flat is recognised as having regional ecological significance because of its considerable variety of habitat types. The woodland supports a large range of native plant and animal species, including a number which are uncom-

mon, and a number of rare or declining bird species such as the Hooded Robin and Jacky Winter.

Other species include the crested shrike-tit, speckled warbler, brown tree creeper, regent honeyeater, diamond firetail.

Mr Falconer said that the more damaging aspects of recreation should be kept out of Mulligans Flat, such as horses and motor bikes and called for a cat and livestock boundary fence to be installed around the park to protect endangered bird species common in the area.

"We are concerned that the most important parts are not in the boundaries," he said. "The planners say 'ok, put that in and lop off another part'. They seem to be treating it as a part of real estate."

Mr Falconer was concerned that one part of the planned park along a ridge was not wide enough, unable to support native plants and wildlife.

"To have it too narrow is to be committing ecological genocide," he said.

Mr Wood said that the Government was reviewing the boundaries to determine whether should be changed to conserve important habitats.

Canberra Times
7/9/91

The gift of Linnaeus ^{ET} 7/9/91

THE Swedish botanist Linnaeus (Carl von Linné), born in 1707, has exercised a remarkable and wide ranging influence on the study of botany all over the world. Like many of his contemporaries he studied both botany and medicine becoming a professor of both.

At the age of 21 while at the University of Uppsala, he helped the dean with the preparation of a two-volume work, *Hierobotanicon*, which dealt with the plants mentioned in the Bible. Linnaeus's own paper on the sexuality of plants brought him to the attention of the university authorities, who eventually appointed him professor and put him in charge of the botanic gardens.

His lifetime collection of over 20,000 sheets of pressed plants, 3000 insects and 2500 books, as well as shells, minerals, correspondence and manuscripts purchased after his death formed the basis of the British Linnean Society, formed for the cultivation of natural history.

Linnaeus's most important works were *Philosophia Botanica* (1751), a complete exposition of the Linnean classification of plants, and *Species Plantarum* (1753), in which he dealt with nearly 6000 species of plants, arranging them according to the sexual system.

Linnaeus developed the nomenclature by which the scientific name of organisms consists of two words — the name of the genus and the name of the species.

FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION of CANBERRA Incorporated

The Field Naturalists Association of Canberra was formed in 1981. The aim of the club is to stimulate interest in the natural history of the ACT through regular meetings and field outings. Meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Field outings are also planned each month and range from day outings to long weekends and camping. The emphasis is on informality and fun. New members are always welcome, especially family groups and young people. Information on activities is circulated in the monthly newsletter.

If you wish to join FNAC, please complete the form below, and send it with the appropriate subscription to:
The Treasurer, FNAC, GPO Box 249, Canberra ACT 2601

FAMILY NAME **FIRST NAME**

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

.....
HOME ADDRESS

..... **SUBURB** **POSTCODE**

PHONE: HOME **WORK**

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