



**FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION  
OF CANBERRA INC.**

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

**PRESIDENT:** Simon Spinetti, Phone after 5 pm 257 4108  
**SECRETARY:** Loris Howes, Phone 231 6024(H)  
**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.

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**NEWSLETTER — FEBRUARY 1994**

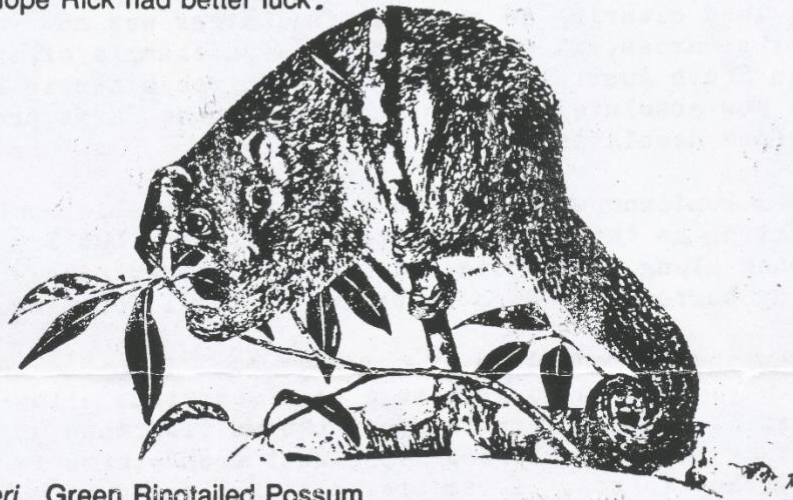
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**FEBRUARY MEETING - Thursday 3rd February - 8:00pm**

**Leaches and Lawyer Vine**

Rick Ford's trip and exploration of Mackay and Eungella national park.  
Rick will give us a slide presentation and talk about his observations in this area.

Eungella National Park sits on Dicks Tableland, 85 km west of Mackay. Eungella National park is  
predominantly tropical rainforest. Platypus can generally be seen there although they were evasive  
when I was there. I hope Rick had better luck.



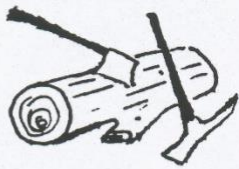
***Pseudocheirops archeri* Green Ringtailed Possum**

Found in dense upland tropical forest above 300M in a limited area in North Queensland (further  
north than Eungella).  
The Green Ringtailed possum is threatened by rainforest clearing.

**FEBRUARY OUTING - Sunday 20th February**

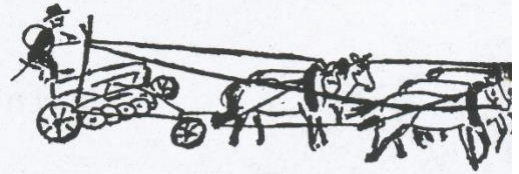
**Mt Aggie (In the Brinabella's)**

The snow daisies and Alpin Sunrays should still be visible.  
Meet on the corner of Eucambine and Cotter roads at 9.00am.  
Bring Lunch drinks and suitable clothing.  
The energetic may want to climb Mt Franklin as well.



## OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

### AGRICULTURE BEFORE 1950



Our earlier methods of agriculture were much slower than today. The axe and mattock were the main implements used for clearing. Firstly, trees were ring-barked. This killed the growth above the ring, leaves and small dead twigs fell off. Suckers invariably grew, and had to be knocked off for about three years. Gradually the tops fell off and some trunks fell. All this was a slow process, the light was allowed in for germination, the debris on the ground protected the soil. After a while grasses grew and provided food for grazing animals.

The methods used allowed fauna to move into untouched areas. Due to the new light situation, a different ecology emerged.

The fast method for clearing was by using bullock teams. A long chain had one end around a big tree, the other end the team pulled in a circle. One man drove the team and another kept the chain moving on the anchor tree.

Further clearing was necessary to provide areas for crops. Each of these areas were very small compared to today's. Another problem now arose - monoculture. Prior to ploughing there was a natural selection of vegetation for animals to eat. Some of the wiser farmers of the day did not totally clear the land, but left trees on the tops of hills and watercourses. The general idea was, if grass could grow, kill the trees.

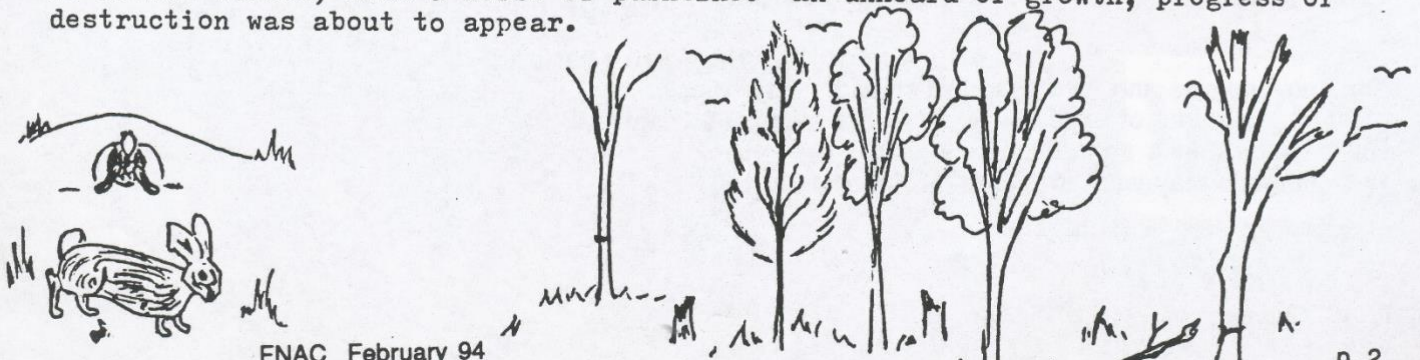
An interesting little book of the late 1930's was "Now Blame the Farmer". I think it was put out by the Bulletin. It explained how many farmers were forced by the Banks to clear. So the idea was to clear as much as possible.

This type of land clearing in good rainfall areas was not very damaging, but in the dry fringe areas, it was disastrous. An example of this is near the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. Here, one can see historic sites of different farms now absolutely barren. Some of these farms produced as little as three crops before desolation.

Rabbits were a continuous problem in their unbelievable numbers. Their effect was devastating as they not only ate all herbage, but I've also seen where they scratched along tree roots and ate them. They caused soil erosion, not only by digging burrows but also by baring the soil for wind erosion.

In 1953 we saw the introduction of myxomatosis. It practically annihilated the rabbits. The years 1955 to 1956 were very wet, thus allowing our back country to regenerate. We had very few dust storms from then until the 1980's drought. A point of interest, before 1953, dust from storms in Australia was found on ships well out to sea. I remember one that the dust actually landed in New Zealand.

During this period the cause and effect were slow. Mostly everything was slower. Our attitude and thinking was likewise. Very little was known of agricultural poisons, insecticides and herbicides. We ate home-grown products we either walked, rode a horse or pushbike. An unheard of growth, progress or destruction was about to appear.





## OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

### AGRICULTURE AFTER 1950



Behind us now is the depression of the 1930's, World War 2, and life is being sorted out. In Agriculture, the early 1950's saw very good wool prices and Australia was really riding on the sheep's back. This wealth meant farmers could buy tractors or bigger ones. It was the start of bigger things to come. Due to monoculture and overstocking, it became necessary for poisons, insecticides & herbicides to be used. Previously arsenic was the main poison used for poisoning trees and dipping sheep.

An interesting book of the 1950's was "Silent Spring" by Rachael Carson. It covered the problems of poisons and their uses and results. One point I remember was the spraying of forests near the Great Lakes and how the run-off damaged fish in the Lakes. Also, it was this woman who pressed for D.D.T. to be banned in U.S.A. Last year (1988) I was surprised to find that D.D.T. was still in use in Australia.

During the 1960's and 1970's bigger and better bull-dozers were pushing and pulling down timber in ever increasing quantities. An example that comes to mind, was in the Condobolin area - two bull-dozers with a chain between were pulling mallee country at 1,000 acres (400 Ha) per day. One can imagine what this sudden alteration to the ecosystem was doing. Such a lot of flora and fauna would be wiped out by this initial pulling. Then follows burning and root raking (a type of ploughing the roots out), more burning and then ploughing. Virtually, it had turned that which existed into a man-made desert.

During this period, many areas classed as only grazing areas were being cleared and sown to crops. During the 1960's drought, many of these marginal areas were badly soil eroded by wind and lack of protective vegetation.

An interesting programme on Country Wide (ABCTV Friday 5.5.89) David Bellamy showed what had been done in Western Australia by farming, compacting soils and loss of ground inhabitants. Possibly worst of all was the salting of the ground - it looked like Lake Eyre with fence posts in it.

On into the 1980's and we have yet bigger farming implements and tractors. These don't only plough and scarify the ground, they pound it and make an impenetrable hard pan a few inches below the surface. Some areas have had the few remaining shade trees pulled out as they are a nuisance when using big equipment.

Still today, we have no firm guidelines or laws against the haphazard way any freehold landholder may destroy not only his, but our, heritage. There is no need for a feasibility study. It is so much easier to clear the lot, even the areas that will never be agriculturally viable.

Our Resource Departments should be asked, even told, that something must be done to keep some balance with nature.

As with mining, agriculture has depleted our soil and water ecologies. When environment plans are put to authorities, they are dealt with individually. That is, if it is a land development, what effect will it have on surrounding land and/or people. Rarely does it go to the other fields. Will the water be damaged close by or further afield. How will the atmosphere be affected. I heard a scientist talk on the radio and he stated that they should think of their work as not just for today, but for tomorrow and on for all time. We need to have politicians and others thinking and acting this way. It is our heritage and environment, not for them only.



## OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

### WHAT CAN BE DONE

The meaning of Wilderness has been tampered with. It means nobody, but nobody, should go into a wilderness area. Whether it be our desert or rainforest wilderness. Four-wheeled drive vehicles, hard footed people and aeroplane sorties should all be banned. Kakadu found sight-seers on aeroplane trips were continually disturbing birds.

We are continuing on a course of no real wilderness areas for the future. These are our real natural heritage. They can be preserved by a hands off, no intrusions policy.

The components of our natural heritage have not been dealt with in detail. Hopefully, it will prompt thinking people to ask questions. How can these things happen today? Why isn't something permanent being done to avoid mismanagement?

Our natural resources are limited. - our selfishness is not.

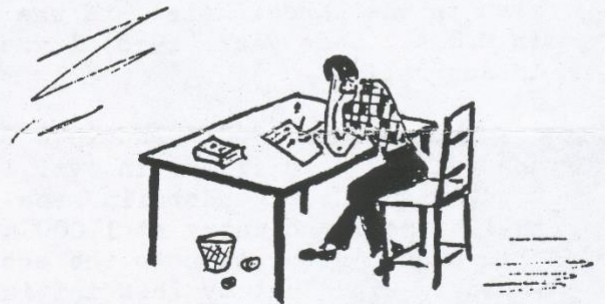
We have only one natural heritage - we will not get any more. Please help to allow its existence in perpetuity.

Author: Ted Walton

*Ted Walton*

Illustrations: Judy Fraser

*Judy Fraser*



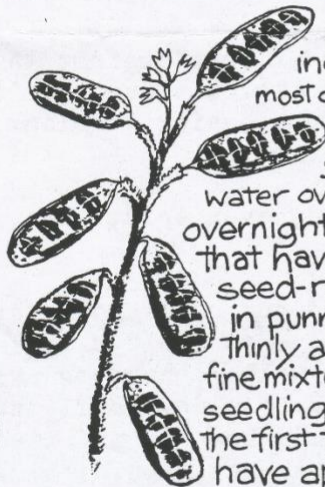
## Growing Native Plants from Seed

Blackwood  
Acacia meinoxylon

Split fruit  
containing  
seeds



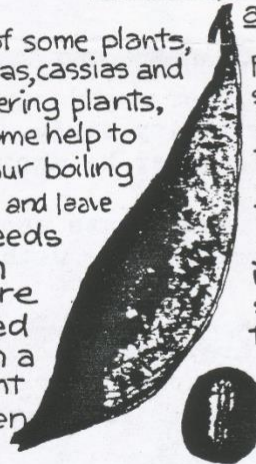
Cassia notabilis

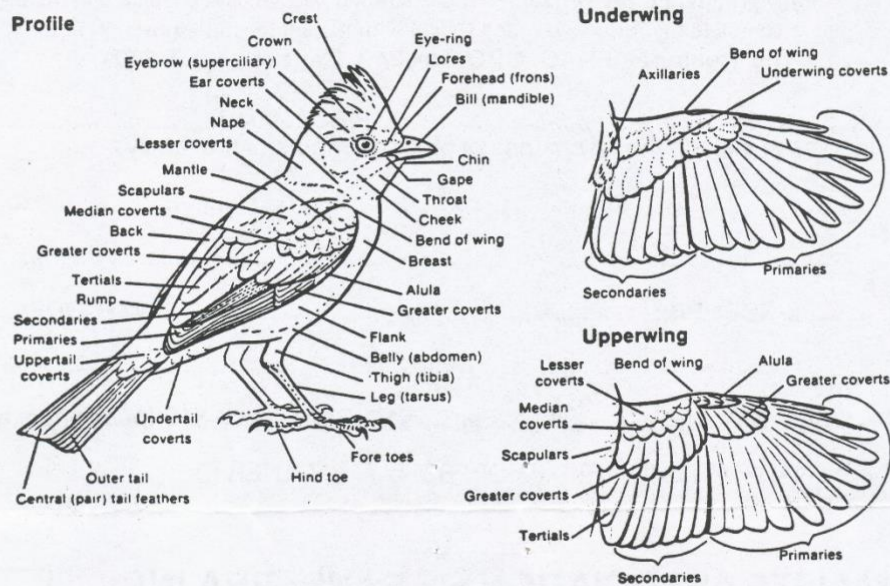


The seeds of some plants, including acacias, cassias and most of the pea-flowering plants, may need some help to germinate. Pour boiling water over the seeds and leave overnight. Sow the seeds that have swollen in seed-raising mixture in punnets. Sow seed thinly and cover with a fine mixture. Transplant seedlings to pots when the first true leaves have appeared.

Black bean  
Castanospermum australe

Fruit and seed. One of the few members of this family that will germinate without special treatment.






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## ODDS'N'ENDS

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**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.

**Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve** Bookings essential. For more information ring 237 5120.

Why not join Friends of Tidbinbilla? Ring 237 5120 or pick up a registration form from the Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre next time you visit.

**Murrumbidgee River Corridor - Ranger Guided Walks**. For Bookings ring 288 4930.

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

**Canberra Nature Park** - For details on activities ring the Information Line on 290 1057.

**ACT Government shop front** - Current literature available from the shop front includes

ACT Endangered Species Legislation - Draft for public comment

Proposed nature conservation (Amendment) Bill 1993

ACT Greenhouse Strategy

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## NEWSLETTER

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**Any contributions happily received large or small, reports or pictures, anything that may interest other members.**

Contributions can be handed in at meetings or sent to :

Pamela Finger

PO Box 185

Jamison ACT 2614

Telephone 264 4086 Wk

or 258 4886 Hm

If required I can be faxed. Please ring me first.

**Deadline for the March newsletter is Saturday, 21th of February.**

# 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:

.....

POSTAL ADDRESS:.....

..... SUBURB:..... POSTCODE:.....

PHONE: HOME:..... WORK:.....

SUBSCRIPTION ENCLOSED: \$..... Single/Family \$17; Concession \$10 (pensioners and F/T students).

How did you hear about FNAC? FRIEND  SHOPFRONT  OTHER

**FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.**  
 TO FOSTER AN INTEREST, AN AWARENESS AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF NATURE



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Visit the Natural History Centre  
 Room G5 ground floor Griffin Centre  
 Bunda St, Civic ACT  
 Phone: 247 4996  
 Representing

- Field Naturalists Association of Canberra
- Canberra Ornithological Group
- ACT Herpetological Association

Books, posters, information etc.

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