

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

February 2022

ISSN: 1836-2761



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

FIELD NATTER

February 2022 newsletter No monthly meetings until further notice



A welcome visitor



A road block on a field trip



John and Janet's little patch of paradise at Yaouk

Contents

What's at Yaouk (and nearby)?	2
Colin's cultural conundrum	3
Emergence	3
Yellow-spotted epicoma moth	4
More local invertebrates	4
Interesting visitors	5
Warning	5

What's at Yaouk (and nearby)?

In early December, 13 of us visited John and Janet's property at Yaouk, just over the NSW border south of Namadgi National Park.

Our first stop was at Brawshaws Hut where we saw a Tiger moth hanging in the grass, and a Cabbage White Butterfly that had a fly on its wing, giving new meaning to the term butterfly.

Just over the border is a family of Masked Lapwings with two now half-grown chicks. When the chicks were very tiny the family had a habit of sitting in the middle of the road. At the speed some of the locals drive along that road, it's a wonder they weren't killed.



The first time John stopped the car but rather than get off the road the female fluffed up her feathers and spread her wings preparing to take on the car.

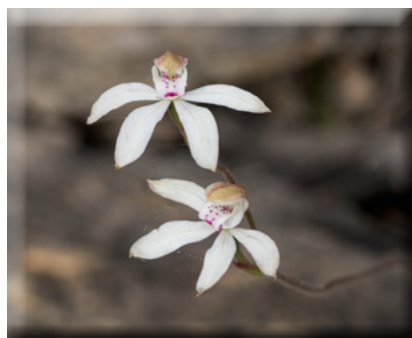
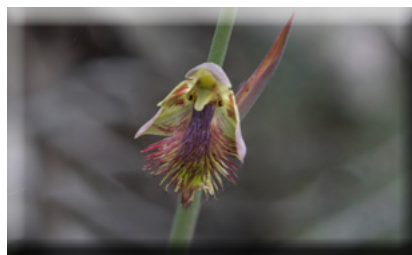
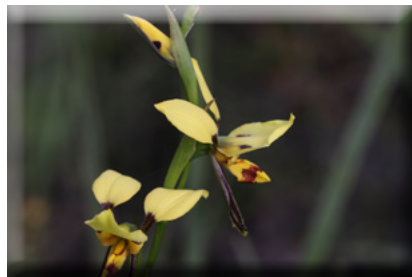
At the property Popplebonk and Striped Marsh Frogs were occasionally calling from their watery home. Sonia spotted the resident snake down by the river but it had slithered back into the grass by the time I got there with my camera.

The river was too full to cross after all the recent rain but we were able to spend several hours exploring the long stretch between the river and the roadside, photographing and where possible, identifying the range of flowering plants. Shirley brought along her plant identification book so was able to name many of them. Meanwhile I found a myriad of micro fauna.

On the drive down John slowed down to navigate a very muddy road crossing and as we passed

I spotted a number of *Durius* orchids. We looked for them on the way back. I remembered the wet boogy road so we stopped at the first likely spot and did indeed find an orchid by the side of the road. It wasn't where I thought I remembered and I was surprised that I would have spotted just this one orchid.

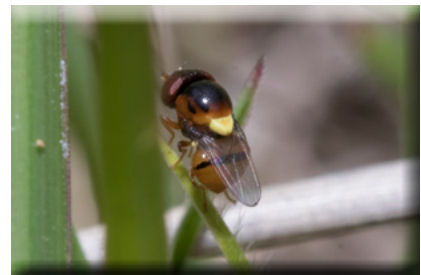
Exploring the bush on the other side of the road we had actually stumbled upon a little treasure trove with two types of *Durius* orchids, dozens of Brown Caps, a single sun orchid, not in flower, and two bearded orchids, with one flower open.



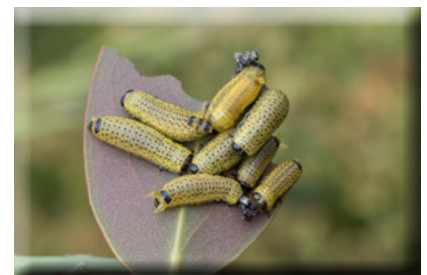
Travelling on, we came to the last muddy crossing and this is where I had first seen the orchids. There were about 15 of them growing tall in the mud-splattered grass.

After putting most of the sightings up on Canberra Nature, and with some of Kevin's sightings there were 47 confirmed sightings of different species from John and Janet's property at Yaouk and I haven't yet even added the plants

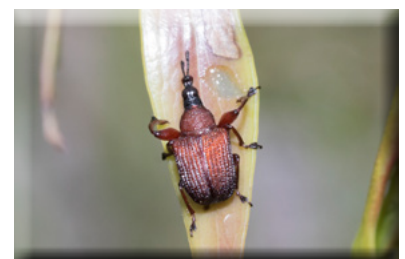
Some of the more interesting species included a wonderful Mayfly and a very interesting fly, less than 5 mm in size.



Among the leaf beetles, were some larvae that I didn't recognise.



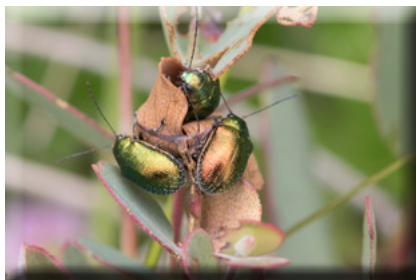
Leaf-rolling Weevils were spread across the property.



Of the more populous species, there were hundreds of tiny grasshoppers, either green or brown, and Plague Soldier Beetles lived up to their name.



Two small Eucalypts were home to around 150 Edusella beetles.



Numerous ants tended the larvae of various leafhoppers and there seemed to be hundreds of tiny orb weaving spiders found in among the leaves of almost every tree.



This bull ant was so aggressive that it actually climbed down out of the Eucalyptus sapling and came for me. Since it was so determined to reach me, I used that to lure it into the sun for a better photo.



Due to my bias towards insects, I've run out of room to include the flora (maybe next newsletter), but the sandwash Janet told us about at the Field Nats meeting has created what their grandkids now delight in calling a beach, along which the flora is beginning to flourish.



I look forward to another visit sometime.

Alison Milton

Emergence

I found (well, a friend found) this lovely chrysalis hanging on my *Bossiaea grayi* (rare in ACT) about 3 weeks ago. I put it in a jar and the butterfly emerged about a week later.



Australian Painted Lady

The bossiaea is found in 10 sites in the ACT only I believe: along the Paddy's, Cotter and Murrumbidgee Rivers.

Nola McKeon

Colin's cultural conundrum

I collect antique pictures of birds, especially those produced by John Gould (although they have become very expensive). Now I have some tantalizing close, but maybe not properly available. It's like this.

A few years ago at an old book fair I bought six issues of the *Proceedings of the Scientific Meetings of the Zoological Society of London* for the years 1869 and 1871. Condition: not too bad.

Originally they cost Fifteen Shillings for each issue and are wonderful to read.

The one for 3 January 1871 begins:

Professor Huxley, F.R.S., V.P. in the Chair.

There is some wonderful reading in them, but the main thing for me is the illustrations. They are usually full page (23 x 16 cm) and some of them are brilliantly coloured, including several of new birds being reported. They have been produced by some of the best and famous lithographers like Smit and Keulemans. Many of them are superb.

So to my problem: should I cut out the illustrations so they can be framed, viewed and appreciated; or should the journals be kept whole (and in a cupboard where nobody sees them)? Would I be a vandal? What is the proper thing to do?

So far I cannot bring myself to mutilate old books. Who should I consult?

Colin Pask

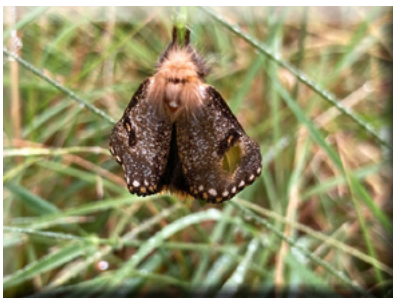
Yellow-spotted epicoma moth

Inspired by Lucy's 'capture' featured in December's Field Natter here's another West Belconnen invertebrate celebrating these bountiful 2021–2022 seasons.

When I first saw this moth it seemed to be a storm-sodden leaf draped over a grass stem beside the hoist's pole. Rain enhances the colours of numerous natural objects I reasoned.



A closer look revealed a moth species I'd not noticed before. Photos with the phone turned out well enough to post on Canberra Nature Map where the 2–3 cm wingspan moth was identified as *Epicoma contristis*, Yellow-spotted epicoma moth.



There's more about the species from the Butterfly House (<http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/notes/contristis.html>).



I'd also sent the photos to Christine who is fast becoming Flynn's unofficial naturalist as her interest in bird watching morphed into photography..... and birdwatchers co-evolve into naturalists as their curiosity demands answers beyond "what is it?"

- What is it doing?
- why is it doing that?
- where else will I find them?
- what shelter and food plants does it need?
- when are they around?
- and multiple hows!

Christine had photographed *Epicoma contristis* at Symonston some years back. Here and now they seem to be out and about from 9.30 on sunny days. I've seen at least seven flying around in the same area until moving on to seek whatever they need, but how long do they live? As day flying moths, where do they shelter?

Are they after egg-laying sites, food plants for the eventual larvae? Caterpillars are found on Eucalypt, Leptospermum, Melaleuca and Casuarina species all of which are found near my place.

Whatever the answers the *Epicoma* species illustrates the point that there is so much beauty to be found if we pause to include moths in our explorations and observations.

The Butterfly House article sent me off to find my copies of Buck Richardson's books including *Mothology*. Some of his decorations and prints are shown at leapfrogoz.com.au

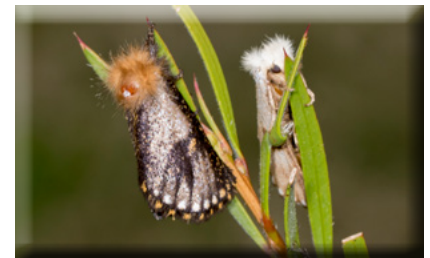
Rosemary Blemings

More local invertebrates

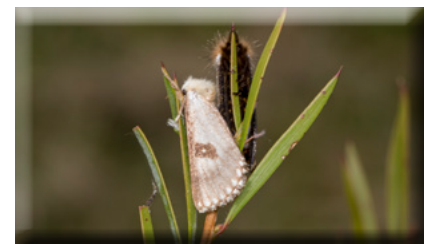
Following on from Rosemary's moth sighting on Australia Day while walking the dogs, I decided to investigate the plantings at Hawker College. Planted a few years ago the trees and shrubs are now getting large enough to attract insects.

Like Rosemary I found a pair of moths, which I thought were *Epicoma contristis*.

When first spotted they were mating, sitting at the top of the plant leaves looking like bookends. Unfortunately, I didn't have my camera but since I was on the way home from our walk, I hurried home then returned with my camera. This took about 30 minutes. I wasn't expecting them to be still mating and wasn't even sure if they would still be there. They were still there.



What was interesting however, is that one of them was very pale in colour and has caused some discussion on Canberra Nature Map (CNM) as to whether this is actually a different species, *Epicoma tristis*, not yet reported on CNM.



Since I now had my camera I continued exploring and found quite a few beetles, spiders and moths.

What was exciting was finding a new beetle species for me. There

Observations

have been quite a few recent reports on CNM of *Paropsis pictipennis*, Tea-tree button beetle. All sightings have been peri-urban or outside of the ACT. I was therefore excited to find this species on a number of *Leptospermum* bushes. In fact I found 12 beetles, including a mating pair, plus larvae.



I also found a mating pair of *Cadmus litigiosus*. From the first single record in 2018, this beetle is becoming more commonly reported. I actually had a mating

pair in the Eucalypt on my front yard just two days earlier.



Other finds included newly hatched larvae of *Paropsis atomaria*.



Alison Milton

Warning

Lake Bathurst and The Morass (near Tarago) are home to lots of birds, some quite rare – or so we believe. We made a trip there but fences and terrain make it virtually impossible to get anywhere near the water. We did see a Swamp Harrier and met some interesting critters to sharing the road.

Colin Pask



Interesting visitors

For the first time in over 20 years we had a Brush Cuckoo spend time with us.

Its peep peep peep... calling seemed to go on and on. More insistent than even the trilling Fan-tailed. We also had a Square-tailed Kite visit for two days. The flight is very distinctive, just over the tree tops.

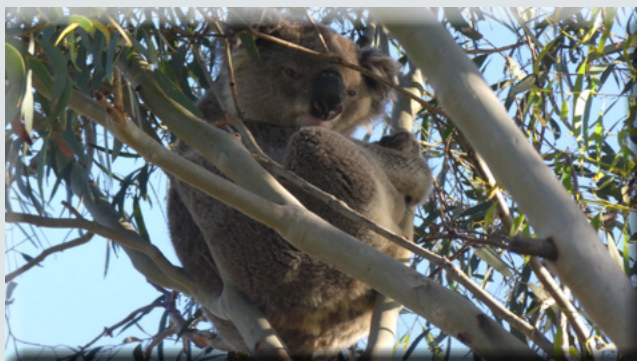
But the real star visited us for the day on 15 December. I went out early and a White Cockatoo was screeching at maximum volume in a gum tree right next to the house. Get out of my tree it was yelling at a Koala ! A Raven came and squawked a bit and a Currawong tried a peck on the bottom. The Koala ignored them all and they soon flew off.

The Koala was with us all day but left during the following night.



We had a Koala a few years ago (also located with a Cocky) and a Ranger told us it was probably a wandering male. Koalas are notoriously hard to locate; look out for a demented Cockatoo is my tip.

Colin Pask





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

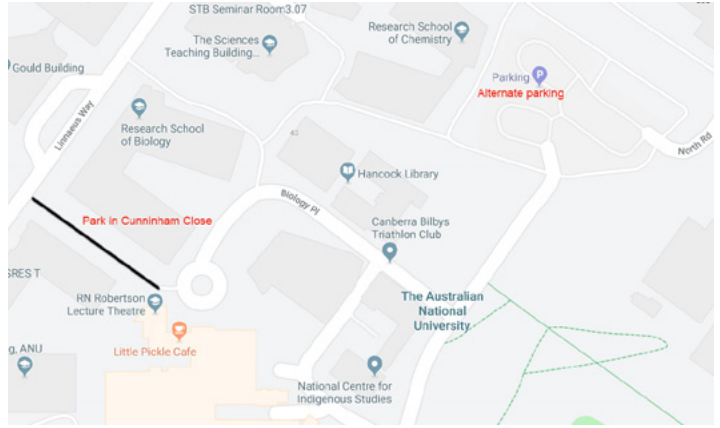
Email: secretary@fieldnatsact.com

Website: www.fieldnatsact.com

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

Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra
GPO Box 708
Jamison Centre ACT 2614



Membership application or renewal

Surname: 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:

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**