

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

February 2023

ISSN: 1836-2761



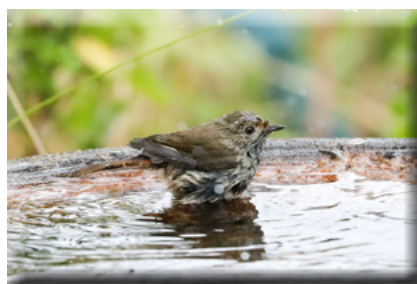
FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC. GPO BOX 708 JAMISON CENTRE ACT 2614

FIELD NATTER

February 2023 newsletter No evening meetings until further notice



This year's visitors



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Snakes Alive! 2023 at the ANBG

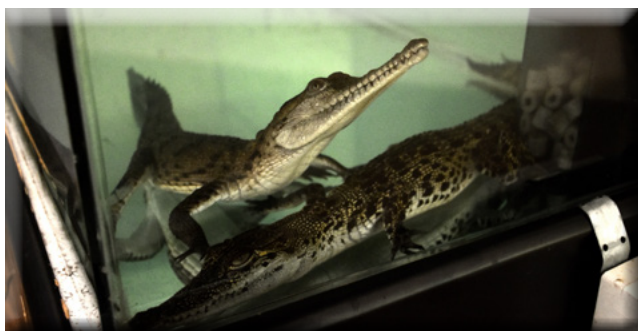
Snakes Alive! was back at the ANBG's Crosby Morrison building for eight days in January. How good it felt to be welcoming families and individuals for two-hour, pre-booked periods where they could be safely close to a diverse range of Australian reptiles and amphibians.

Children were especially excited to see frogs, turtles, goannas, lizards, pythons and snakes behind glass but often keeping watchful eyes on those who came to admire them. Shinglebacks and Blue-tongues were in an accessible display case where, supervised, visitors could reach in to touch them. The Gardens' Water Dragons warmed up in the sun before coming out from their natural hideaways to find crumbs from those who ate snacks and lunches on the amphitheatre's steps.



An hour after each entry time there was more excitement at Feeding Time in the Banks building and an introduction to Venomous snakes.

Most of the animals are 'family' to members of the ACT Herpetological Association. They are used to having humans near and to being handled. They live in purpose built, temperature-managed enclosures in suburban homes. They are cared for by young and old who all have extensive knowledge of their needs, their life cycles and observe their animals' behaviours!



It was such a rewarding and affirming experience seeing the interactions between people and the displayed animals. Moments were made even more special when carers could bring pythons out to meet us, wrapped round their shoulders. Touching reptiles' scales, feeling their temperatures, seeing their senses at work, admiring glorious patterns, thinking about camouflage colouration strategies

and being able to ask questions one-on-one is really memorable.

My favourite was a Water Python, *Liasis fuscus*, whose subtle rainbow sheen caught the light during his shoulder-draped-time outdoors. ACTHA president, Luke Dunn, brought Steve the Goanna out for a harnessed walk and basking session on pavers too hot for human feet but perfect for goannas. Lucinda and Morgan had explanations about the snakeskin, Goannas' and Snakes' eggs displayed near the entry table.

Morgan and I walked round the immediate garden



area compiling a naturalists' list of interesting species and sightings. This became a scavenger hunt for those exploring the Botanic Gardens' habitats and recording sights and sounds. Their grandson Jiyan sourced photos for challenges about Water dragons, pollinators, birds, plants and the pond and did hours of formatting before Margaret and Geoff refined the questions and text into an A4 hand-out family naturalists at Snakes Alive! that the Gardens' staff then copied.

We Field Natters were part of an at least 25-strong group of volunteers bringing the display to the public again. Herpetologists allowing their animals to be connectors linking each species to the parts they play in their ecosystems and as catalysts for learning, for citizen science based on local nature.

Time and again we could see and hear delight in what the Gardens has to offer, how beautiful the gardens are, being 'tidy' but still able to offer excellent habitat for Australian flora and associated animals.... a contrast to the rapidly drying-out bush around Canberra.

A request: Snakes Alive is running out of colour pencils for colouring in their reptile and frog drawings. If you have pencils at home that are no longer used, would you like to donate them to ACTHA for use at future Snakes Alives?

Rosemary Blemings and Margaret Ning
Photos taken by Lucinda Royston

Activities

2–12 February: Reflections on Nature Exhibition — NatureArt Lab

This unusual exhibition will be on display at Pialligo on 2–5 and 9–12 February.

I will be sitting at the desk at the exhibition on the afternoons of 9 and 10 February from about 13.30. Field Natters might like to see the images' diverse reflections as a February activity.

Cool Country Natives nursery is at Pialligo as well as several eateries.

https://natureartlab.com.au/products/reflections-on-nature-exhibition-and-events-program-2-12-february-2023-canberra?_pos=1&_sid=764bd0c1e&_ss=r

Rosemary Blemings

Distorted statistics

When I checked the rain gauge for the Flynn result of the pseudo storm on 18th January I found this Garden Skink in the cylinder.



How can lizards flatten themselves to such an extent that they can squeeze into the gauge to, I assume, reach the water?



Once rescued onto the drying grass I covered the skink with a terracotta flower pot. From there it vanished back into its backyard habitat.

Rosemary Blemings

Survey reminder

Earlier this month Janet Stein sent out a link to a survey on the future of the Canberra Field Natters. So far only a handful of members have completed the survey. It would be useful to have the opinion of the majority of members for the committee to make decisions for the continuance of this branch of Field Natters.

If you haven't yet completed the survey please do so or contact Janet at janetstein01@gmail.com If you need the link to the survey.

Thanks

Alison Milton

Feisty parents

I have been watching the Magpie Larks and Willie Wagtails at home taking on much larger birds in order to protect their young.

The Magpie Larks must have a nest nearby as I've watched them swoop Magpies and Ravens (who themselves raised two chicks this year).

I've watched the Willie Wagtails feeding on chick in my backyard then bravely constantly harass marauding Currawongs.



Such feisty little birds to take on their much larger counterparts.

Alison Milton



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

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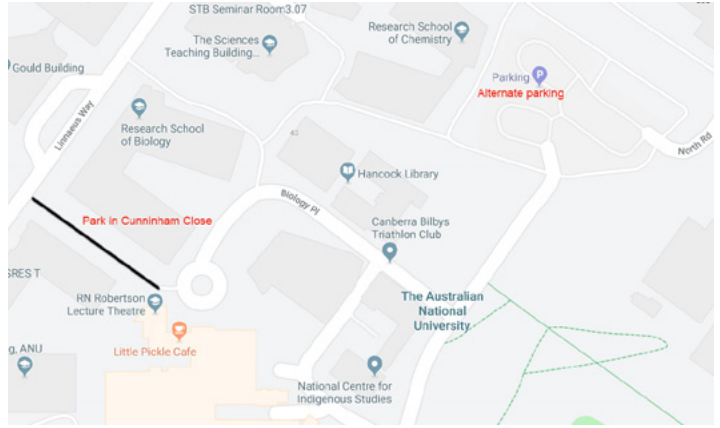
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Website: www.fieldnatsact.com

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:

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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**