

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

February 2024

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

# FIELD NATURALIST

## MEETING—Thursday 1 February 2024 7:30 pm Australian National University

Slatyer Room (up the stairs),  
R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU  
details on the back page

Refreshments before  
the meeting. Please  
bring your own cup.



## Western Australia flowers

**Speaker: Janet Duncan**

Janet and a friend travelled in Western Australia and South Australia for almost five months. After crossing the Nullabor they headed north to Karajini Gorges then to the coast at Exmouth. From there they drove southwards stopping and photographing the flowers in the many National Parks in Western Australia.

Janet will tell us about this experience and the many flowers they saw and photographed on their journey.



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# Mt Painter outing report

We had a good turn out for the Field Natters' last excursion for 2023, exploring the lower southern slopes of Mt Painter.



Though at a distance, we were graced by the sight of three Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring above the reserve even before we began our walk.

We may not have travelled too far but we had an impressive list of observations by the time we finished.

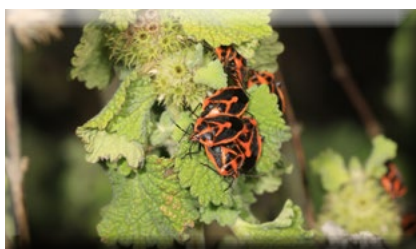
The list below is by no means complete but are the most significant sightings observed.

## Birds

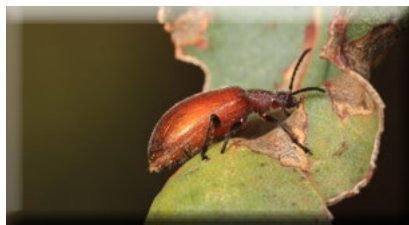
Australian Magpie  
 Australian Raven  
 Black-faced Cuckooshrike  
 Brown Thornbill  
 Common Bronzewing  
 Common Starling  
 Crimson Rosella  
 Eastern Rosella  
 Galah  
 Grey Fantail  
 House Sparrow  
 Noisy Friarbird  
 Pied Currawong  
 Silvereye  
 Striated Pardalote  
 Sulphur-crested Cockatoo  
 Superb Fairywren  
 Tree Martin  
 Wedge-tailed Eagle  
 Weebill  
 Yellow-rumped Thornbill

## Insects

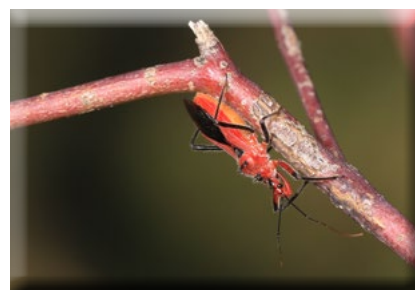
*Agonoscelis rutila* (Horehound bug)



*Alleculinae* sp. (Claw combed beetles)  
 Ambertail cicada  
 Bristle fly  
 Cabbage White butterfly  
*Caedicia simplex* (Common Garden Katydid)  
*Camponotus consobrinus* (Banded sugar ant)  
*Chrysolina quadrigemina* (Greater St Johns Wort beetle)  
 Coccinellidae (lady beetle)  
 Common Grass-Blue butterfly  
 Darkling beetle  
 Dragonfly  
*Ecnolagria grandis* (Honeybrown beetle)



*Glycaspis* sp (Sugary lerp)  
*Gminatius australis* (Orange assassin bug)



Golden-tailed sugar ant  
*Heteronympha merope* (common brown butterfly)  
*Leptocybe invasa* (Stem gall wasp)  
 Meat ant  
*Monomorium* sp. (monomorium ant)  
*Papyrius* sp. (Coconut ant)  
*Paropsis atomaria*  
*Paropsisterna cloelia*  
*Rhinotia* sp (Belid weevil)  
*Sextius virescens* (Plant hopper)  
 Silver princess cicada  
*Staphylinidae* sp. (Rove beetle)  
*Torbia viridissima* (Gum Leaf Katydid)

*Trachymela* sp. (brown button beetle)  
 Unknown ant  
 Unknown small beetle  
 Unknown tiny fly (on fungus)  
*Uraba lugens* (Gumleaf Skeletonizer eggs)  
 Yellow Admiral butterfly  
*Yoyetta australicta* (Southern clicking cicada)

## Arthropods

*Clubiona* sp. (Stout sac spider)

## Mammals

Eastern Grey Kangaroo

## Reptiles

Skink

## Plants

*Acacia* sp.  
*Amyema* sp.  
*Brachychiton populneus* (Kurrajong)  
*Calotis lappulacea*  
*Cassinia* sp.  
*Convolvulus angustissimus* (Australian Bindweed)  
 Drooping / Box Mistletoe  
*Eucalyptus melliodora* (Yellow Box)  
 Native raspberry  
*Vittadinia gracilis* (New Holland daisy)

## Weeds

Broom Rape  
 Great Mullein  
 Pattersons Curse  
 St Johns Wart  
 Saffron Thistle  
 Horehound

## Fungi

*Bovista* sp (Puffballs)  
*Coprinellus* sp (Inkcap)  
*Polyporus arcularius*

Following our walk we met at the Two Before Ten cafe in Aranda for coffee, after which Kevin led some of us to his local park nearby that he and Sonja have taken on as a project to maintain.

The following article gives more information on this project.

**Alison Milton**

## Loving your local park

Thirty years ago, our local park, Jalanga Park, boasted 14 mature Eucalypts (mainly *E. polyanthemos*) and one large mature Acacia (*A. mearnsii*) at the end of its life. Parks staff mow the park several times each summer so no wildings survive and they maintain the children's swings, a big attraction for a changing demographic in Aranda. But that's been their lot.



Some 20 years ago Sonja and I removed a very large Bamboo stand in the park to reclaim the footpath for pedestrian access to the bus stops. We cleared it from the park and a friendly Parks Ranger brought in a backhoe to dig out the source in a resident's backyard. She also arranged for a new footpath, as the Bamboo had badly damaged the old one. A couple of years of regularly treating the regrowth with roundup saw it's eventual demise.

Then we surveyed the other weeds, African Daisies mainly in the northwest corner, and lots of sticky weed among the Plantain and other weeds. The vegetation was mainly weeds! A couple of years later we noticed that new weeds were sprouting where the lawn mowers were unloaded from a truck, as obviously no washdowns were undertaken. We surmise this was the cause of an outbreak of African Love Grass and the spread of the African Daisies, which we had been getting on top of until then.

We decided to clear the area under the drip lines of the mature trees and plant some more trees, understorey plants, shrubs and

flowering plants. We built several gardens along the boundaries and within the park. That meant we needed mulch, lots of mulch. We waited till a couple of local trees had blown down and the other members of our group, Scott and Ann, convinced the tree surgeons to dump two loads on our park. In the meantime, friend and FoAB member John helped out with several trailer loads from his 4 cubic metre personal load and then Parks provided another. The four of us managed to secure a picnic table from a generous group in another park in Aranda. We were away.

To get the government mulch we had to form a Parkcare group and lodge a plan of action. That enabled us to get some ACT government funding for more plants and trees.

In the meantime around the stump of the former Acacia and another stump more than 30 years deceased, the tree long ago removed, dozens of Acacia seedlings sprouted. Now they are 4m high. Hopefully the Hairstreak butterflies will remember this site and return to lay their eggs and when caterpillars, be guarded by their attendant Meat Ants. Three Onion Orchids appeared this year, never seen there before.

The first Eucalypts we planted are now 4m high and this year birds nested in one of the Hakeas: a first. A Bearded Dragon seems to have adopted the park.



Three species of skink scuttle in and over the mulch and disappear into the bushes, which include *Lomandra*, *Stypandra*,

Everlasting Daisies, Blue Devils, Bulbine Lilies, Veronica, etc, many of them donated by Aranda residents Pam and Colin.



Our friendly botanist Isobel regularly visits to help identify the growing Eucalypts and contributes to our plantings, lately two Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*) as companions to the Red Gums.

The African Daisies are rare plants now, and the occasional Sticky Weed that pop up are small. We had sprayed some of the African Love-grass and have now started chipping them out with two surprises, we uncovered a 10 cm high Eucalypt seedling, now surrounded by mulch and with a tree guard, and an interesting exotic rock that might be an aboriginal stone tool (to be confirmed).



We take photos of the plants, birds, reptiles and insects in our little park and submit them to Canberra Nature Map. On a recent short tour of the park with John and Janet, Alison tagged along; found lots of interesting insects and commented that we should write an article about the park (*this was after the aforementioned post-Mt Painter excursion coffee nearby* – Editor).

**Kevin McCue**

## Snakes alive!

I had four very enjoyable days volunteering at the National Botanic Gardens. Each year the Gardens host Snakes Alive!

Members of the ACT Herpetological Association (ACTHA) lend their pet reptiles for display as a way to promote the essence and roles of turtles, pythons, frogs, lizards, snakes, Earless Dragons, geckos, goannas, and Corroboree Frogs from a range of Australian locations.

The ACT herpetologists range in age from five to 90 years of age, also being extremely diverse in their backgrounds and occupations. Their animals are hand raised, i.e. not taken from the wild.

Ben, the Centralian Python belonging to Dennis, lives just a couple of kilometres from Flynn in his purpose built, temperature controlled enclosure. I have met him before but was given this chance to 'wear' and hold him. He's very used to being handled and ACTHA members say he's the most 'laid back' python they've come across. He's 13 years old.



We were very relaxed about this wonderful and unique-for-me situation. For several minutes Ben rested his head on my right wrist. Dennis said that was Ben's way of finding and utilising a warming spot.

More information about the Centralian Python can be found on the [web site](#) and [ACTHA](#).



Thanks to Lucinda Royston for the photographs. Lucinda meets and greets those who don't have Online bookings, shows visitors where the Corroboree Frogs are hiding in their tank's cool sphagnum moss.

Margaret Ning and Geoff Robertson have co-ordinated Snakes Alive! for many, many years but stress that the event belongs to the dozens of enthusiastic, dedicated ACTHA members and families who have each played multiple roles in the events' successes.

If you missed Snakes Alive! visit or re-visit the Reptile Zoo in Gold Creek Village, Nicholls.

The enclosures were on loan from the Reptile Zoo along with an exciting range of animals whose ancestors live thousands of kilometres from Canberra.

*(My role was to be near the table outside the door to meet and greet visitors and keep an eye on any youngsters who wanted to colour-in copies of lizards, turtles, frogs and snakes.)*

**Rosemary Blemings**

## Raffle prizes

The monthly raffle is our only fund-raising event and is funded through members' generous donations, mostly consisting of items no longer needed or wanted at home. Fresh garden produce is also highly prized.

Please go through your cupboards for all those little items you no longer use or want and bring them along to donate as raffle prizes.

## Activities

### Wednesday 7 February 9 to 11 am – Dryandra Street Woodland, O’Connor

Welcome in a new year of FNAC activities with an easy stroll through the Dryandra Street Woodland; a small, but biodiverse area nestled between Black Mountain Nature Reserve and the suburb of O’Connor. To find out more visit <https://canberra.naturemapr.org/locations/sightings/10459>.

Meet at 9 am at the gate across the road from the entrance to the Canberra Chinese Christian Church at 56 Dryandra Street, O’Connor. We’ll follow a mostly shady section of the Canberra Centenary Trail looping back to our starting point by about 11 am. The walk of around 1 km is mostly level with just a couple of short, steeper sections. Park on the eastern side of Dryandra Street or if spots are available, in the church carpark. Bring sun protection, a drink and sturdy footwear. Email John ([outings@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:outings@fieldnatsact.com)) if you are interested in attending. Please include your phone number and the name and phone number of someone to contact in case of an emergency.

## Bower bird’s bower

It was in spring that I first noticed a male bower bird coming to drink at my bird bath. I was immediately struck by his shiny iridescent black feathers and blue eyes. Shortly after I noticed several female bower birds also at the bird bath. I couldn’t help but admire their striking plumage also.

The birds continued to visit my bird bath but I thought nothing more of it until December when I happened upon an immaculately constructed bower in my front yard. The male had gone all out with the construction and had also taken great care with its decoration of predominately blue bottle tops. I placed a couple of blue pegs nearby for

him but he took absolutely no notice until I replaced the pegs with blue bottle tops, which were quickly relocated to the bower.

From then on I frequently saw the male and several females (I think there may be as many as three females) at the bower and could hear the male chirping, trilling and warbling to attract the females.

Then just after Christmas there was a calamitous event. I went out one day to inspect the bower only to find that it had been almost totally destroyed and the precious decorations removed. From this I surmised that it must be the work of a rival male. I waited to see what would happen next.



After a few days the resident male bower bird had reconstructed the bower, although not as high-quality as the original version, and had retrieved some of the decorations.

It is most gratifying to see that both birds have returned and today I saw the male displaying to a female and hopping around with a blue bottle top in his beak whilst making trilling noises. I do hope she is impressed as it would be amazing to have my own small family of bower birds in my yard.

**Deidre Shaw**



Month	Speaker	Topic
1 February	Janet Duncan	Western Australia flowers
6 March	Isobel Crawford	Dickson Wetlands
4 April	Stuart Harris	Jewel beetles



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 you would be warmly welcomed.

**President:** [president@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:president@fieldnatsact.com)

**Email:** [secretary@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:secretary@fieldnatsact.com)

**Website:** [www.fieldnatsact.com](http://www.fieldnatsact.com)

**Treasurer:** [treasurer@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:treasurer@fieldnatsact.com)

**Membership:** [membership@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:membership@fieldnatsact.com)

**Newsletter Editor:** [editor@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:editor@fieldnatsact.com)

**Outings Coordinator:** [outings@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:outings@fieldnatsact.com)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/FieldNaturalistsAssociationCanberra>

### Membership application or renewal

New applications and renewals can be done through the membership page on the web site:

<https://fieldnatsact.com/membership>

Subscription (Single/Family \$25) Donation: \$.....

*Subscription renewals are due on 1 July each year*

**Bank transfer** (*renewals only: form not needed*)

Account name: Field Nats

BSB: 325 185

Account number: 03545251

Reference: **Please include your name**

*If you are unable to make the payment through the web site you can contact the Membership Secretary at the email address opposite, or in writing to the address listed.*

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



**Monthly meeting venue:** Slatyer Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University

