

Field Natter

Newsletter of Field Naturalists Club of Canberra



OBJECT: To foster an interest in, an awareness and an understanding of nature

Meeting, 8:pm Thursday 3 July

Geology of the ACT

Dennis Dyer

Geology and climate are very important determinants of our topography and soils, which in turn produce our habitats and ecosystems and the flora and fauna that live in them. In the words of Richard Fortey, 'geology underlies everything'.

Dennis is a professional geologist as well as a keen herpetologist (is there a connection?). He is giving a series of talks and outings to the Field Nats and to FOG (Friends of Grasslands) on the Geology of the ACT and (later in the year) on the Monaro region.

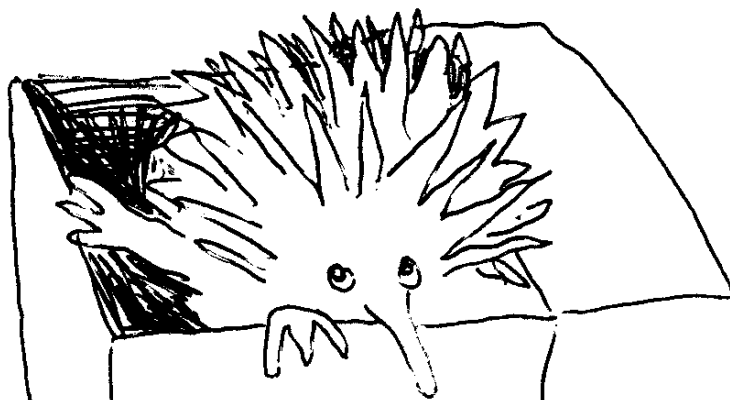
July Outing

ACT Geology

2 - 5pm, Saturday 5 July

This outing will be a follow up to the meeting and will show some of the interesting local geological features in the Canberra region. The outing will start at the top of Mount Ainslie at 2:00pm. It will be led by Dennis Dyer. We will finish at the *Canberra Environment and Sustainability Resource Centre car park*, which is at the corner of Lennox Crossing and Lawson Crescent (for a map, see <http://www.ecoaction.com.au/category.php?id=72>). **Participants are encouraged to meet there beforehand by 1:45pm** to consolidate vehicles before heading to Mt Ainslie. For further details contact Tony Lawson on 6161 9430 or tlawson@hotmail.com.au.

Later in the year Dennis will be leading a FOG field day around Cooma on the Geology of the Monaro.



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"Echidna in a box" by Lisa Bell, from a Parks Service photo by Peter Mills.

Some more on our geology

By Tony Lawson

"Geology underlies everything" is a quote from Richard Fortey's book *The Earth – an intimate history* - in Canberra public library.

A new map of the geology of the ACT is about to be produced under the auspices of the local branches of the NPA and the Australian Geological Society. I will be bringing a draft copy of the map to show and to take orders for its purchase – it should become available later in the month.

For those that are interested, there will be a talk on the new map at the July 15th meeting of the ACT Branch of the AGS. Doug Finlayson and Kevin McCue will be giving a presentation on the new ACT Geological Map and Guidebook.

They will give an overview of each of the products, which include; a new map of the geology of the ACT; a guidebook on the geology with field excursion sites; and a GIS (geographical information system) CD of the geology, which includes landsat, topography, magnetics and gravity layers. They hope to have copies available for purchase at the meeting.

The AGS meets at the David Brown Lecture Theatre, in the Research School of Earth Sciences, Building 47, at the ANU. Access is off Linnaeus Way. Pre-meeting drinks at 5:00pm. The talk starts at 5:30pm.

For those who want to learn more about our local geology, apart from hearing Dennis you might like to look at the Wikipedia article – see

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geology_of_the_Australian_Capital_Territory .

(NB there are underscores between the words in the internet address)



May Pinnacle Visit

Benj Whitworth

A large group of 29 people attended The Pinnacle walk on Sunday the 25th May, with over half being from COG and the rest being from Field Naturalists, FOG and other friends. We split into two groups, with Rosemary Blemings taking the beginners and John Brannan and myself taking the more experienced birdos.

A quick introduction to the local trees (mainly yellowbox, Blakely's redgum and applebox) also yielded a large mixed feeding flock (MFF). This flock enabled us to identify the features of spotted pardalotes, a male and female scarlet robin and a small flock of white naped honeyeaters, while Rosemary Bell wrote down our ticks. Good views from The Pinnacle itself provided a useful setting for discussing the history and management of this site, and how this fits within the broader Molonglo valley.

Heading towards the more native 'red stringybark forest' we saw a rainbow lorikeet (an ACT tick for some birders), another male scarlet robin and a black-faced cuckoo shrike. In the forest were white throated tree-creepers and more scarlet robins and spotted pardalotes very close, plus some interesting plants included cauliflower bushes, paper daisies and everlasting daisies which had just finished seeding, and matt-rushes (*Lomandra*). Plus 'hazard reduction' burning. Moving back into tree plantings we finally saw speckled warblers, 2 white eared honeyeaters, white naped honeyeater, a striated thornbill and other sbbs (and Roger Curnow didn't have his camera - now that is a tick!).

I think John Cummings was first to see a wedge-tailed eagle which was being harassed by magpies, ravens and magpie-larks. Then John Brannan showed us a chough nest and we bumped into a group of choughs, plus more white eared honeyeaters and a grey shrike-thrush.

A number of people hadn't been to The Pinnacle and hopefully this introduction will encourage them to return. Thanks to Rosemary Blemings for organising the walk, John Brannan and Barbara Allan for helping out, and all the other input on the day. We can send a full bird list if you would like it (by Rosemary Bell).

Of course, when walking home I saw a sparrowhawk and a grey currawong that we must have only just missed on the walk.

(Left) Water dragon, Sanctuary, Tidbinbilla, April 08. Thanks to Paula for organising an enjoyable Field Nats outing. Photo: Philip Bell

Your *Field Natter* newsletter - Hard copy or electronic?

– a suggestion from Philip Bell

I have asked at recent meetings whether members should be further encouraged to receive our newsletter electronically?

Chris Bunn has been producing *Field Natter* electronically now for some time. This makes it much easier to organize hard copy printing – and opens up other possibilities.

The committee decided around 18 months ago to encourage members to receive the newsletter by email if they are happy to do so. This saves money for the club on paper, printing and postage and also saves on greenhouse gases in hard copy distribution across Canberra. Some members receiving a newsletter this way may also choose to read it on their computer – if perhaps only in part – and so may not print off all or more than part of the newsletter. This results in further environmental efficiencies – and also in generating less paper to send to recycling. And less “stuff” in the house to deal with!

About 20% of our membership has changed over to receiving the newsletter by electronic means alone. But this percentage has been stagnant now for around 12 months. The “electronic only” members are saving the club over \$100 per annum. They are paying the same membership fees as those who have their newsletters posted. This is arguably unfair.

Up until recently, receiving *Field Natter* electronically meant receiving the newsletter via email attachment. This can be a file of between half a megabyte to over one megabyte. I have always felt that this was not a good long term option – and for 3 reasons:

A). People on dialup prefer attachments to be under a quarter of a megabyte – and some of our members use dialup.

B). Delivering publications as email attachments is an inefficient way of using the internet. The email process adds a significant extra percentage to data load across the net. It is much more efficient for people to receive publications by downloading from a web page.

C). Email attachments are a major carrier of computer viruses and other malware across the net. It is better to avoid this practice if possible - and it may make some of our members feel more comfortable about receiving the *Natter* electronically.

FNAC has now started to put up links to a pdf download of the newsletter on a (free) public web page. All members can now access the *Natter* by clicking on a web link rather than by receiving a substantial email attachment. It could now be time for the club to take a further step in encouraging environmental sustainability in the way we publish our newsletter. And the current lesson of politics is that we need the market to lead us into environmentally responsible behaviour. At the moment our “electronic” members are subsidising the rest of the club

- and there is no financial incentive to other members to go electronic and thus to do a little extra to protect the environment.

So I suggest that we consider introducing a price differential for “electronic” membership over “hard copy”.

My guess is that electronic membership could be set at around \$10 - \$15 p.a. and hard copy membership at around \$25 - \$30 to represent the cost differential. With higher postage about to apply, this would be a good year to make such a decision. Perhaps we should discuss this at the next AGM. What do you think?

June Outing to the Botanic Gardens

By Tony Lawson

A small but distinguished group joined Tony Lawson to explore the Botanic Gardens in winter. There is always something in the way of flora and fauna to see in the Gardens, even in winter. There were plenty of flora out - especially the banksias, which in turn attracts the fauna, particularly birds. This makes it a better spot than most for winter birdwatching.

On the other hand it can be rather grey - as it was that day, which made it harder to spot them. Thus we heard rather more than we saw.

The focus of the walk was on the thematic parts of the Garden. We started in the Tasmanian section, which in warmer months has many water dragons, but on this day they were happily hibernating. There were lots of Brown Thornbills, which joined a mixed feeding flock of Fairy Wrens and Spotted Pardalotes.

We passed through the small section in front of the Visitors Centre, which represents the local grasslands and grassy woodlands, on our way to the Eastern Mallee section behind the Admin Building, where we spotted a Mallee Fowl! From there we circled around the top of the Rainforest Gully and on to the Western Mallee section, where there was a variety of plants in flower, which were appreciated by the Eastern Spinebills.

From there we wandered through the Eucalyptus lawn, where there were plenty of fungi to see, to the Sydney Basin section, then on to the Rockery areas. A highlight here were a pair of King Parrots having a drink at the top of the waterfall. From there, we proceeded through the Rainforest gully to the cafe for a coffee.

I think that the participants enjoyed being shown a few parts of the Garden that were different to what they usually saw.

Editor's note: Thanks to Tony and Benj for timely copy for this issue. *Field Natter* copy closes on 15th of the month.



Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra

Established in 1981, our association fosters interest in natural history through monthly meetings and regular field outings. We meet on first Thursdays. Outings range from weekend rambles to long weekends away. See our monthly newsletter. New members always welcome. We emphasise informality and the enjoyment of nature. Member application form below.

President: Benj Whitworth, tel w 6272 3192 h 62544556

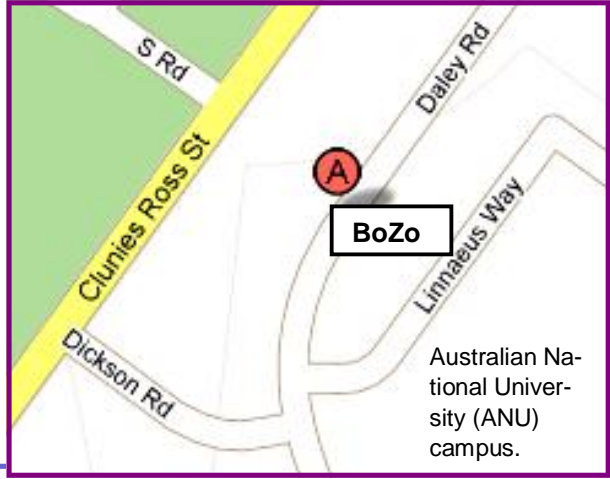
Secretary: Rosemary Blemings, tel 02 6258 4724

Website: www.geocities.com/fieldnaturalist/index.html

Newsletter editor: Chris Bunn <chris_b@webone.com.au>

Tel 02 6241 2968. Newsletter contributions welcome.

Published and distributed by Philip Bell



Australian National University (ANU) campus.

Monthly meeting venue: BoZo (ANU Division of Botany and Zoology), Building 116, Daley Rd, Acton. Use Daley Rd entrance (Occasionally we meet in adjacent Bldg 44). Park in Linnaeus Way.

FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Family name: 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:

Subscription enclosed: \$.....(Single/Family \$20) Donation: \$.....

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: FRIEND? OTHER? Please specify: