

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

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GPO BOX 249
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

FIELD NATURALIST

MEETING—THURSDAY
7:30 pm Australian National University
Gould Seminar Room, Building 116, Daley Road, ANU, ACT
details back page

Ainslie to Kossie: Window on a wonder wander

Speaker: Matthew Higgins

An illustrated presentation mainly on the natural values of the straight-line route between Canberra and Mt Kosciuszko, looking at animals, birds, plants, geology, water, snow, fire, climate and some underlying human stories of our high country. Cultural aspects of some species' stories will be discussed, and a little bushcraft thrown in. As well as celebrating biodiversity along the route, the talk will look at several key issues including feral species, local extinctions and climate change threats.



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A winter surprise

Everyone knows that snakes hibernate in Winter, especially in the cold climes of the ACT and the Snowy Mountains, but it seems that so-one has told the snakes.

In a surprise report, a man was bitten by a snake on his upper leg while at Mount Kosciuszko on 13 June, when snakes should have been well into their Winter hibernation, especially in the high country of Kosciuszko. However, it seems no-one told this snake.

The 32 year old was air rescued by a Snowy Hydro South Care helicopter in the Geehi Valley. The air rescue mission was initiated shortly after 2.30 pm on Saturday and the man arrived at the Canberra Hospital at around 5.30 pm.

Doctors had not yet determined the type of snake bite the patient sustained. What kind of snake is out and about to bite a hiker in winter?

It was a question many asked. It turns out, just like your average Canberran, snakes will creep from their cosy winter burrow for the chance to bask in the winter sun.

Sunny weekend weather combined with the low elevation in the Geehi Valley meant the walker must have come across a snake basking for warmth.

Common species in that area of Kosciuszko National Park include the red-bellied black snake, eastern brown snake, tiger snake and copperhead snake.

Australian National University herpetologist Dr Damian Michael had a leaner list of suspects.

He warned winter bushwalkers to tread carefully, saying snakes were more likely to feel threatened in nippy conditions.

“A cold snake doesn’t have the ability to move away quickly so it feels threatened straightaway. If it is not up to its preferred body temperature it is more likely to give a bite.”

Below their optimal body temperature snakes were sluggish and likely to strike inaccurately.

But which one was it? Here are the candidates:

An eastern brown snake

“I don’t think it was a brown snake,” Dr Michael said. “Being an arid adapted snake it feels the cold first and it will go underground first.”

Eastern brown snakes’ venom is ranked among the most toxic of any Australian land snake and with a high level of neurotoxins it causes progressive paralysis and stops the blood from clotting.

A copperhead snake

Given Geehi Valley’s elevation of 410 metres this was also unlikely, he said.

“I am sort of ruling out that one,” Dr Michael said. “They are a typical alpine species and tend to be more common above 700-800 metres.”

The copperhead snake is the only Australian venomous snake found above the snowline, and is active in weather usually considered too cold for snakes.

A red bellied black snake

Dr Michael said red-bellied black snakes were the second-most cold-adapted of the four.

“The red-bellied particularly will bask all year round,” he said.

They were not particularly aggressive and will escape from humans if possible, but when threatened will flatten their bodies and hiss loudly, he said.

A tiger snake.

“Tiger snakes don’t usually bask in the midwinter,” he said.

Mainland tiger snakes are responsible for the second-highest number of bites in Australia, as they inhabit highly populated areas of the east coast.

The verdict

Dr Michael says it’s a toss-up.

“I think it would really be between tiger and red-bellied black snake, but to tease those two apart would be difficult now,” he said.

Both snakes were known to give dry venomless bites, but Dr Michael said each had a dangerous venom that acted very differently on the body.

In every case pressure bandaging and immobilisation were vital and gave victims of snake bites time to wait for help.

Notice of annual general meeting

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO ALL MEMBERS THAT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra will be held on Thursday 7th AUGUST 2014 at 7.30 pm in the Seminar Room, Building 116, Gould Wing, Daley Road, ANU.

Business:

- a. To confirm the minutes of the last preceding annual general meeting.
- b. To receive from the committee, auditor, and servants of the Association reports upon the transactions of the Association during the last preceding financial year.
- c. To elect the officers of the Association (President; Vice President; Treasurer; Secretary) and the ordinary committee members
- d. To appoint the auditor and determine his/her remuneration
- e. To conduct other business of which notice has been given

Nominations for election of members of Committee shall be made in writing (see below) and shall be delivered to an officer of the Association by Tuesday July 29th. If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the committee, the candidates shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall be received at the Annual General Meeting.

NOMINATION FORM

I hereby nominate _____

BLOCK LETTERS

A member of the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra Inc

For the position of _____

Name of Proposer _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Name of Secunder _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Acceptance of Nomination

I _____ accept nomination for _____

Signature of Nominee _____ Dated _____

Saving our species

As part of World Environment Day, Environment Minister Mark Speakman announced the next step towards reintroducing native animals to areas in NSW where they are extinct, with the selection of two expert organisations to undertake the project.

The Australian Wildlife Conservancy and the Wildlife Restoration and Management Partner-

Details can be found at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/SavingOurSpecies/extinct.htm>

ship led by University of New South Wales will now begin discussions with the government on how to deliver the project.

The project will see the return of more than 10 mammal species to our national parks. Reintroduction of mammals is a significant component of the Saving our Species program.

Honeyeaters from the brink...?

With a population that has declined greatly in recent years, the Regent Honeyeater needs all the help it can get. BirdLife is excited to announce and share that recently, its population received a huge boost with the largest-ever release of captive-bred honeyeaters into the wild.

Nearly 80 birds, were released into Chiltern–Mount Pilot National Park in north-eastern Victoria to bolster the dwindling population of wild birds.

Already over 100 dedicated volunteers have contributed over 1800 hours of their time to track the birds' movements, noting their behaviour, what they're feeding on, and which birds they associate

with. It all helps piece together the birds' habitat use, seasonal movement and breeding patterns.

Each honeyeater is fitted with colour bands on its legs so that individual birds can be easily identified, and some of the birds are also wearing tiny radio-tracking devices, which allow their progress to be followed. The results have been much better than could ever have been hoped.

Some of the honeyeaters have joined up with wild birds, and they have spread through the box–iron-bark forest to all corners of the Park, and in some cases they are even forging new frontiers well beyond. The eucalypts are flowering profusely to keep them all well fed with sweet nectar over the coming winter months.

It's a great boost for the Regent Honeyeater, and it's heartening to know that so many people care. Nevertheless, despite this wonderful result, the species is still considered endangered, and even with these extra birds its population is still critically low.

There are many ways people can help the Regent Honeyeater. If you see one, let us know by calling Free Call 1800 621 056.



Activities

Sunday 5 July Excursion The Settlers Track

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre at 9.30 am. The Settlers Track is a moderate 6 km return walk along a marked trail visiting two restored huts passing through open woodland and grassland in the southernmost parts of Namadgi National Park. The start of the walk is 50 minutes drive south of Tharwa. Those fitter than the rest could walk an extra 3 km and visit a third hut. A shorter walk would only visit one hut. Bring sturdy shoes, lunch, drink your camera and binoculars. Contact Warwick Daniels wda68126@bigpond.net.au

Brayshaws Hut



Waterhole Hut



Westermans Hut

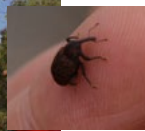


Red Hill excursion

On 7 June a few Field Nats members met at the base of Red Hill for the monthly excursion. A few others met us at the top of the hill where we began our walk.

We walked The Red Track, which was developed by the Red Hill Regeneration Group. Seven colourful signs along the way, give interesting information on varying aspects of the reserve, including flora, fauna and birds.

Near the start of the walk, several acacias were almost in bloom while just a little further on numerous trees were so afflicted by bolls, that they looked like decorated Christmas trees (ozzie style). Opening up one of these bolls revealed a small weevil, but whether it caused the bolls or was simply feed-



ing on is the question.

One sign lays claim that Red Hill protects one of the largest Yellow-box-Blakelys Red Gum grassy woodland in Australia.



We were also treated to most of the parrot species listed on one of the signs: a flock of corellas; galahs; sulphur-crested white cockatoos; crimson rosellas; and a pair of gang-gangs.

The track is easy walking, apart from the last leg, back up to the car park. Apart from a few who arrived early and walked this track at the start, we didn't do this leg. Warwick thoughtfully arranged for us to meet at the base of the hill, then drive to the top for the start, leaving some cars at the base so that we could drive up again at the end.

Most participants then retired to the cafe for coffee or hot chocolate while enjoying the sunset.

Alison Milton

Month	Speaker	Topic
2 July	Matthew Higgins	Ainslie to Kossie: Window on a wonder wander
6 August	Liz Truswell	AGM
3 September	Pat Wright	Celebrate our Wattle
1 October	Kate Garrock	Mulligans Flat and Bettong project
5 November	Ian Fraser	How Australian Birds Got English Names

The Mystery of the need for sleep may have been solved

by Dierk von Behrens

In a brilliant article © 2014 American Academy of Neurology, called ‘**Sleep Well: Could getting high-quality sleep protect the brain?**’ Amy Paturel MS, MPH, summarises recent research and, almost by the way, explains why we need sleep, how the plumbing system of the brain works, and gives this system the name recently coined for it by Ph.D. Rashid Deane’s team from the Centre for Translational Neuro-medicine at the University of Rochester in New York: the **glymphatic system**.

For centuries scientists and philosophers have debated what our brains do during sleep.

‘Now, for the first time, researchers have solid evidence that a good night’s sleep may literally clear the mind’ she says, referring to a study published in the journal *Science*.

Researchers found that the space surrounding brain cells—called interstitial space—may

increase during sleep, allowing the brain to flush out toxins that build up during waking hours. Cerebrospinal fluid bathes and cushions the brain and spinal chord. It is continuously produced and reabsorbed. In mice the interstitial space volume increased by 60% when the mice were asleep and toxic waste products disappeared at twice the rate as when they were awake.

I came across this inspiring article in the June 2015 newsletter of the **Sleep Apnoea Association**: <http://www.sleepapnea-act.org.au/images/Newsletters/June2015A1.pdf>

It is highly recommended, particularly for older members who may be concerned with the aging processes in their brains and how sound sleep may help.



Open garden lovers

After 27 years of operation Open Gardens Australia is closing operation as at 30 June 2015. However, Open Gardens Canberra has been established to continue the tradition in our nation’s capital.

Open Gardens Canberra places strong emphasis on ecological sustainability and the human relationship with nature.

They have just reached their goal of opening 10 gardens in the 2015–16 season. But they’re not stopping at 10—they’re looking for even more. If you know a lovely garden, please let them know!

Open Gardens Canberra now has five garden selectors, including two with L-plates.

To help them find more gardens, they are also contacting professional garden designers in the Canberra area. Open Gardens Canberra is keen to promote the work of professional garden designers, as one way of encouraging good garden design.

Aloe vera plant near Red Hill café





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 von Behrens **Phone:** 6254 1763

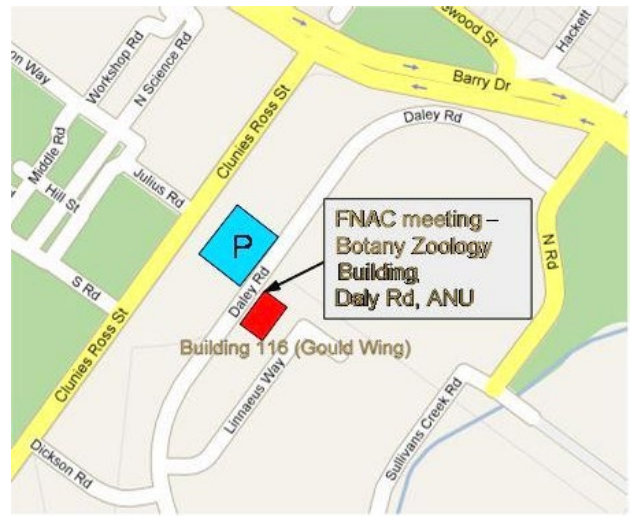
Email: fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au

Website: under construction

All newsletter contributions welcome.

Email: alison.milton@health.gov.au

Editor



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University. (The Xmas meeting is at the adjacent building 44 and will start at the earlier time of 6:30 pm.)

Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra
GPO Box 249
Canberra ACT 2601



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 \$25) Donation: \$.....

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