

July 2021

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

# FIELD NATTER

## MEETING—Thursday 5 August 2021 7:30 pm Australian National University

Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU, ACT  
details back page

### The next meeting will be in August

**Speaker: If anyone is willing to give a presentation or has a suggestion of a possible speaker, please let Rosemary Blemings know. Organising speakers is a huge job so the help of members would be much appreciated.**

**Rosemary does so much for so many organisations and has kept this chapter of Field Nats limping along for so many years that it would be good to see some other members step up to help out. I strongly feel that without Rosemary the ACT Field Nats would cease to exist.**

### The rat is back

Over the past weekend I spotted the Lake Ginniderra Rakali on consecutive days, near where the reclamation work is taking place. On the Sunday, there was just the one rat but the light wasn't good so the photos were too dark. Going back early the next morning I again spotted a rakali as soon as I arrived, but it headed off out of sight.

Patience pays. The light was right for good photos so I settled in to wait. About 90 minutes later it returned and this time it had a mate. I only followed the trail of one. It made a quick stop right against the wall to clean itself before taking refuge among the recently placed sandstone blocks; part of the new reclamation landscaping. I was amazed by the size of the back feet.



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## Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra: President's report 2019–2021

### Meetings

Whilst there have been no evening meetings for more than 18 months, we have successfully trialled daytime activities once Covid restrictions were eased.

By sharing their local knowledge and sense of adventure, members have guided us on nature walks through Aranda, Bruce Ridge, Hall, the STEP garden and at Theodore. The rehydrated soils have stimulated abundant growth, emerging species and hundreds of invertebrates keeping our brains busy with identifications and shared ecological revelations.

### Committee

We have had two committee meetings this year. Thank you to Kevin McCue, Lucy Bastucky, Rosemary and Dierk von Behrens, Jenni Marsh, Rhian Williams, George Heinsohn, Bill Murphy and Margaret Kalms for your diverse contributions, ideas and support for Field Nats since you were elected all those months ago in 2019.

### The Field Natter

Alison has really held everything together and kept us informed of sightings, news and a bounty of members' experiences and observations through editing the monthly newsletter. Alison is an accomplished photographer and CNM contributor with a flair for the natural history of her, often minute, subjects. Thank you Alison!

### Field Naturalists' Prize 2020

This ANU Prize is awarded annually to a student for achievements in their studies in what used to be colloquially known as the BOZO, Botany and Zoology, faculty.

FNAC offers the \$300 prize to show our appreciation for being permitted to meet on the ANU's campus each month.

Monika Iskander is the 2020 prize-winner and, as she is overseas, Monika has very generously suggested we donate her prize money to a natural history organisation of our choice. Perhaps you would like to suggest some worthy causes?

Monika is a Special Project Student in the ANU's Masle Group - Environmental sensing, systemic signalling and development: plant resilience to drought and changing climate

### Donations

When renewing their subscriptions and at other times Field Natters generously contribute to the Club's own Conservation Fund. Recent beneficiaries have been the local Frogwatch, Waterwatch citizen sciences programs and the national Invasive Species Council. Thank you for your generosity.

### Website

I have neglected The FNAC Website in that it proved too difficult to load calendar items and have them saved. Alison has sent each *Field Natter* edition to the Webmaster but I'm not sure if Darryl has received them or had time to upload them for us. Nevertheless, new subscribers continue to show interest in FNAC. A few are obviously spam.

### Members

Thank you for being actively involved by attending and sharing knowledge during our monthly daytime activities. We are trialling evening meetings every two months.

### Rosemary Blemings President

## Winter nesting?

I thought winter was a time when birds either flew north or hunkered down here in the suburbs to weather the winter, surviving and with no thoughts of breeding.

To my surprise the parrots don't seem to have got the message. On one side of our house a pair of White Cockatoos have been hammering (chiselling?) away at a potential hollow about 10 m high in a 55 year old Candlebark (*Eucalyptus rubida*). On the other side of the house a pair of Galahs is doing likewise with a pre-existing (more than 55-year-old) Scribbly gum (*E. rossii*) at a similar height.



Only one of the birds seems to work at a time, the other keeping watch at a few metres distance.

The industrious cockatoos have built up quite a pile of sawdust pickings.

Are they planning for a long term investment - a future home among the gum leaves? or next year? are birds more involved in the evolution of hollows than I knew? or is there another reason for them chewing on the inner hardwood of eucalypts? wearing down their beaks? or seeking minerals or sugars from the sap flowing through the outer cambium layer?

The only thing I have learned about these unexpected observations is that hollows can form in eucalypts in half the often mooted 100 years, with a little avian help.

**Kevin McCue**

## Minutes of the Field Naturalists' AGM 2021

**Present:** Alison Milton, Sophie Guy, Michael Braby, Robyn Black and her sister Libby, Adrienne Nicholson, Sonja Lenz, Kevin McCue, Janet and John Stein, Rosemary and Dierk von Behrens, Rosemary Blemings

**Apologies:** Lucy Bastecky, Johanna and Colin Pask, Deidre Shaw, Rhian Williams.

Rosemary v B, Kevin and Alison spent many minutes coaxing the ANU's computer system towards accepting our laptop and the USBs we had brought for the meeting.

Rosemary v B had a recording for us to identify bird calls, which were in fact Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo juvenile's begging calls. This led to a discussion of the species' fate since the fires, recent sightings and their diet.

Rosemary B continued the *Field Natter* story of the Saunder's Case Moth found in Flynn, its time indoors, in the backyard and on a Barbed Wire Grass tussock.

Chris and Sandra Bunn moved to South Australia after many years of active involvement in Field Nats. Chris sent three photos of a Rock Wallaby they were lucky to see during a drive through the Flinders Ranges. A special moment for them and for us as the species is gradually responding to conservation programs after previously the species has been killed in large numbers for its pelt, primarily through the period between the 1880s and 1920s, according to Wikipedia.

Adrienne's theme was emergence; showing her own observations of a Case Moth, an emerging chrysalis and possum.

Robyn has become a Frogwatch volunteer at Mirrabei in a probably under-explored

part of Ginninderra Creek's journey through Gungahlin. Her presentation also featured Red Wattlebirds and some observations of scats as part of a citizen science Pooper Scooping project. Her observations included some possum poo in an interesting formation, and the poo from an unknown reptile visitor.

### Drought and fire

John and Janet's 40 hectares at Yaouk gave us much food for thought, reflection on the fires, the complexity of fighting bushfires and strategies.

They showed us photos of their property during the drought and its recovery after the welcome rain received pre-the 2019 bushfires that ravaged much of Australia.

Their property is just within NSW and abounds the southern boundary of Namadgi National Park. It has not been burnt for perhaps over 100 years and as such leaf litter on their block was said to be in an ideal balance. However, much of it was burnt after an incendiary was used as part of back burning to stop the spread of the 2019 fire in Namadgi. It seems that firefighters do not need a property owner's permission to initiate fire fighting strategies on private property, such as grading for access roads or fire breaks.

A Rural Fire Service scrape, possibly for an access track, was ill-located and destroyed native vegetation near a natural wetland. With the slopes burnt, ashy soil subsequently washed down filling their wetland with sandy sediment.

Not all of the property was burnt, however the Snow Gums on the higher altitudes have been completely burnt. These do not regenerate.

Twelve months on there has been some recovery but much of the revegetation now includes weeds such as Thistles that were not previously present, thriving on the ash's fertility. It will take many years to remove these new weeds.

On the positive side, they were able to video an echidna that had survived the fires.

Janet and John have agreed to Field Natters visiting their place in October—November.

The presentations ended with Alison sharing some photos of a cute pair of young Tawny Frogmouths, perched in easy view at the Pinnacle Nature Reserve.

After the presentations, the business of the AGM got underway, with Dierk von B nominated as Returning officer with Rosemary v B taking the Minutes.

After all positions were declared vacant the following committee positions were nominated and subsequently endorsed.

President: Rosemary Blemings

Vice: vacant

Secretary: Rosemary von Brehens

Treasurer: Kevin McCue

Committee members:

Lucy Bastecky

Rhian Williams

Sophie Guy

Janet Stein

John Stein

Robyn Black

Public officer: Dierk von Brehens

Newsletter: Alison Milton

Raffle: Johanna Pask

**Rosemary Blemings**





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, et al

**president@fieldnatsact.com**

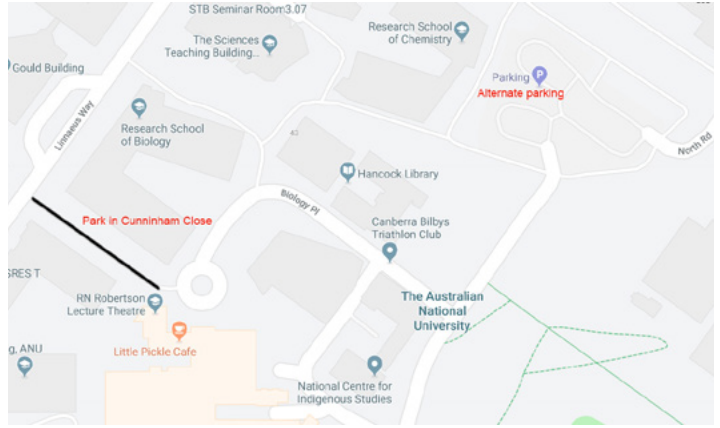
**Email:** [secretary@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:secretary@fieldnatsact.com)

**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)



**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: Your name