

July 2022

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

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

July 2022 newsletter

No monthly meetings until further notice



Lucy has been experimenting with silhouette bird photography and of course, I love her cookies too.

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A new moth and butterfly society!

Moths and Butterflies Australasia Inc. (MABA) is an exciting, new society devoted to the scientific study, research and conservation of moths and butterflies (Lepidoptera) in the Australian Region – Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and the adjacent Pacific islands. The society was founded late last year, and we hope to increase community engagement between various people interested in, and working on, Lepidoptera in this mega biodiverse region, including professional entomologists, amateur naturalists, photographers, conservationists and citizen scientists, as well as facilitating networks between various research institutions and non-government organizations.

The aims and objectives of MABA are to:

- bring together in a scientific forum people of all ages and backgrounds interested in moths and butterflies;
- exchange scientific knowledge, specimens and observations of moths and butterflies in a social and congenial atmosphere;
- compile and disseminate information on the identity, taxonomy and distribution of all species of moths and butterflies, both native and introduced, for the purposes of advancing education, training, biosecurity and evaluation of pest status;

- promote and support the conservation of moths and butterflies and their habitats, and provide information to government agencies and non-government organisations on land use, threatened species and biodiversity for the purpose of advancing the health of the natural environment; and
- lobby for improved funding and training for research on moths and butterflies.

For further information about MABA, including membership, please visit our website: <https://maba.org.au>

MABA logo

The MABA logo was designed by artist Sharyn Wragg. The logo features the drepanid moth *Hypsidia erythrospalis* Rothschild, 1896 a brightly coloured species endemic to the Wet Tropics of north-eastern Queensland, where it is restricted to tropical rainforest from Cooktown to Innisfail. Like many Australian Lepidoptera, the larval food plants, life cycle and biology are unknown, highlighting the knowledge gaps and opportunities for field discovery that typify so much of our vast fauna.



Champions of Change Film Festival

Local people. Local stories. Environmental heroes in our community!

Southern Tablelands Arts and Landcare are delighted to premier the Champions of Change film festival, featuring short documentaries about real people working to create a more sustainable future in our community in the local area.

The documentaries have been created for the festival by local emerging film makers, who attended creative film making workshops with internationally acclaimed filmmaker Brain Rapsey from Rhapsody Films.

The project was made possible with funding from Inspiring Australia and will feature topics such as regenerative farming, soil health, conservation and



Puddles

threatened species with the following short documentaries to be screened:

- Street Trees for Bees by Vivian Straw
- Pygmy Perch by Rhian Williams and Kim Morrison
- Toe prints: Live well, use little, grow lots by Elizabeth Goodfellow
- Whole Paddock Regeneration by Sue Mackenzie

- Waste not, want not by Heidi McGeoch

Each Champions of Change film festival screening will feature a Q&A from the film makers. Local Landcare groups will be on hand with information about how you can get involved and make a positive change in your local environment.

Champions of Change film festival is screening at:

Crookwell 8 July at 4pm

Gundaroo 9 July at 4pm

Dalton 10 July at 4pm

For bookings visit:

<https://www.southerntablelandsarts.com.au/champions-of-change-film-festival/>

Entry is free

Zac H and the 2021 ANU Field Naturalists Prize

Earlier this year I received notification from the ANU Science Prizes 'section', that the award of the 2021 Field Naturalists Prize had been made to Zachary (Zac) Hewertson.

Field Nats has purchased a \$300 Book Voucher through Harry Hartog Booksellers at ANU and Zac recently collected his Prize.

The ANU Prizes officer sent this detail about Zac.

Zachary Hewertson (2021) – Zac is a summer research intern. He is working on extracting behavioural data on skinks using the motion tracking software EthoVision XT, as well as monitoring the skinks and helping to build outdoor enclosures for them.

Zac has sent the following about himself.

"Hi, I'm Zac Hewertson and I am currently studying a Bachelor of Science, majoring in ecology, evolution and organismal biology. I am most passionate about animal sciences,

and learning different biogeographical relationships, particularly in Australian organisms has been so enjoyable.

During my time at ANU I've had the pleasure of participating in the Summer Research Scholarship program, where I worked on quantifying behavioural data generated by garden skinks. I also got to collect and incubate lots of baby lizards in egg form! I hope to continue my research of ecology into the future."

I later asked Zac what had become of the skinks he had raised and studied.

"I was shocked at how many eggs they were laying each week and my supervisor said that it was an unusually long laying period so hopefully the wild skinks had similar good conditions!

The research was about altering the hormones the eggs received and observing any behavioural changes in the hatched skinks, so all the hatched skinks are still

in the research pool I'm sure, although I'll have to ask my superior since it's been a while since I saw him."

Additional queries:

I wondered whether this good season for skinks had also resulted in any imbalance between the proportions of male to female skinks. I base this on climate heating factors influencing the female:male ratios in larger reptiles. Hotter temperatures in turtle nests produce a higher number of female turtles. This poses an existential risk for affected species.

Are male:female ratios in birds similarly affected? Perhaps not, as birds' eggs are mostly incubated by parents.... but if incubating birds overheat on their nests does that risk the success of the breeding attempt?

And what about Mallee Fowl, Brush Turkeys?

Rosemary Blemings



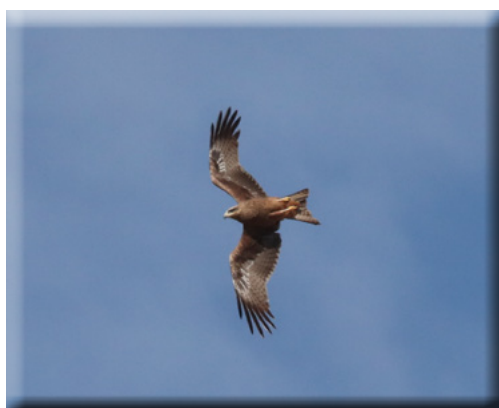
Outback wildlife

On my recent outback tour there were plenty of kites to be seen, most likely hunting mice in particular as we did see a few dead ones at one rest stop.

One little guy however, thought it had found a safe haven to hide from the kites. I was surprised to find this little guy when I lifted a hat I was thinking of buying.

Yes I did buy the hat and the mouse eventually dropped and scurried under another display stand, just leaving its tail as evidence of its presence.

Alison Milton



Nature pics from The Pinnacle Reserve, 13 June 2022

Many people recoil in horror when they see scale-insects encrusting a wattle branch or eucalypt galls pustulating a eucalypts's foliage. They cry foul if insect larvae feed on their favourite blossoms or on their unopened buds. Often, their first instinct is to reach for the insecticide and to nuke the invading 'pest'.

In the Australian bush, these plant-animal interactions are all very much part of the ecology. The scale-insects feed on the sap of the wattle, and in turn, the excess sugar that they excrete not only feeds attendant ants (that may in fact be the scale colony's protectors and even its farmers), but the scales also feed the sooty black mould that grows on the excreted sugars. The mould ultimately coats the branches under the colony of scale.



Wattle Tick Scale, *Cryptes baccatus*

Most interestingly, female scale insects, which are true bugs in the order Hemiptera, remain in their juvenile state, i.e. as a larva, even as breeding adults, while the mobile males are tiny flying insects, like their relatives, the more familiar aphids and greenfly.

The flying males no doubt contribute to the food resources of the numerous small insectivorous birds of the Australian bush, the fantails, fairy wrens, thornbills, robins, gerygones and weebills.

The tiny sugary scale insects that occur on the leaves of eucalypts, the Psyllids, support an entire economy of birds and mammals, from rosellas to miners, pardalotes to ring-tailed possums. These were named 'lerp' by Indigenous Australians, and were harvested by them. This phenomenon gave the name to the Manna Gum, *Eucalyptus viminalis*. Manna is indeed the old Northern Hemisphere equivalent of our lerp.



Then there's the fascinating ecology of the gall-forming insects. Many are wasps, and in this group, a female will lay her eggs under the surface of a leaf, or in a leaf-stalk or a slender twig, and as her larvae develop, a reaction from the insect causes the tissues to swell, creating the characteristic gall. Not only is the larva given a ready-made and expanding food

source, but also, both the developing larvae and ultimately the pupa are provided with a safe, impregnable home.

Then when the tiny wasps emerge from their galls to find mates and breed to start the cycle over, their tiny bodies are vulnerable to predation by, yep, you guessed it, the numerous small insectivorous birds that we all love so dearly, the fantails, fairy wrens, thornbills, robins, gerygones and weebills.

As for those 'pesky' grubs that 'destroy' the buds of your flowering gum, or the stamens of your bottle-brush, or the delicate petals of your tea-trees, well,



they and the adult beetles, bugs, flies, wasps, or whatever it is that they will grow into, also help feed the numerous small insectivorous birds, the fantails, fairy wrens, thornbills, robins, gerygones,

weebills and all the other small and seriously declining songbirds of our bushlands and urban open spaces. Those songbirds that need all the help that we can give them.

So, don't say 'yuk'! Don't reach for the insect spray.

Stop, look and marvel at the wonderful world that is woven before our very eyes.

Rainer Rehwinkle

Robyn also recently joined a COG trip to The Pinnacle and found herself being more of a Natter and less of a birder, so many interesting things. Quite a few seedling *Exocarpus*, large numbers of *Bursaria* of varying ages, and a big patch of *Cheilanthes* with part of one frond folded over and bound with a web – small animal presumably inside, plus a few nests, one fallen, reputedly that of a Noisy Friarbird, one fairly low in a bush – a finch, I think was the owner, and of course some magpie ones. There were also plenty of lichens and mushrooms.

She said she suspects that it could be an interesting place to visit at any time, and they did just a small selection of the possible paths.

I've suggested a date in September as an excursion.

Activities

Covid has interfered with planned meetings and outings for the past few years. We have had a few outings but I am looking for suggestions and volunteer leaders for the rest of the year (and into the new year??).

I have listed the following suggestions. Jo has offered a visit to her property in October and I have put my name and suggestions forward for some other trips. My suggested dates can be altered and while I am willing to lead these trips, my leadership depends on being offered transport for some options.

Let's not leave all the work up to the usual cohort of Rosemary and Kevin. Are you able to offer some suggestions even if you are not prepared to lead the excursion, though some volunteer leaders would be great. It is not onerous and there are others who would be willing to help.

8 July, 10:30 am: Australian Botanic Gardens special 'threatened species' guided walk

Naarilla Hirsch is a Volunteer Guide at the Botanic Gardens and has offered to take members on an hour's walk through the Gardens following a Threatened Species theme.

In Australia there are numerous threats to ecological communities and plant species but the National Botanic Gardens is well-placed to contribute to the conservation of threatened species.

Naarilla is a long-term member of FNAC, a naturalist and a diligently active member of the Friends of Grasslands' advocacy team. Naarilla devised the walk as part of the ANBG Guides program and we'll be able to see a series of threatened species and learn of the strategies developed for their recovery programs.

The meeting place is near the clock close to the bridge leading to the Pollen Cafe.

I'm sure there will be Field Natters who would enjoy a convivial coffee and/or lunch after the walk.

Please let Rosemary Blemings (rosemary@blemings.org) know if you intend joining this walk and provide a contact number in case a cancellation is needed.



Month	Excursion	Leader
8 July	Botanic Gardens guided walk??	ANBG staff - bookings needed
9 August	Featherstone Gardens, Heyson Street, Weston	Alison Milton or volunteer
13 September	The Pinnacle Nature Reserve, Hawker	Alison Milton
4 October	Jo Walker's property at Wamboin	Jo Walker
8 November	Namarag River Reserve/Butters Bridge	Alison Milton
December	Suggestions?	
7 December	Xmas party – location suggestions?	

Field Naturalists' donation

The FNAC Committee made a \$750 donation to the Friends of the Grasslands (FoG) The Treasure, Janet sends her thanks to FNAC for the donation.

If you would like to make a personal donation, Jamie Pittock, president of Friends of Grasslands, made the generous gesture of offering to double donations to FoG towards the group's decision to employ a project officer.

Your Field Naturalists committee agreed this was a good opportunity for Field Nats to practically support our kindred organisation's efforts to advocate for the protection of Native Grasslands in and beyond the ACT region.

(Quite a few Field Natters are also members of FoG, including Janet and Andy Russell. Andy creates regular colourful updates of the species attracting attention at the STEP gardens at the Arboretum)

Rosemary Blemings

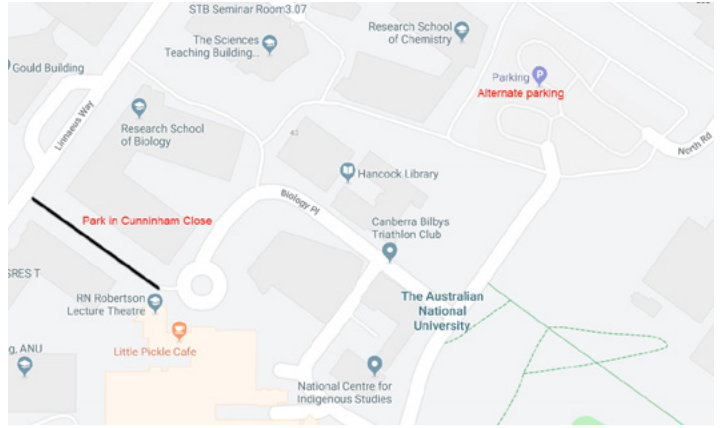


Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Inc.

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 I
president@fieldnatsact.com
- Email:** secretary@fieldnatsact.com
- 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:

.....

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**