

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

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

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## MEETING—Thursday 6 July 2023

7:00 pm Australian National University

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

# Rosenberg goannas

**Speaker: Don Fletcher**

Don is a retired ecologist, leading the 'National Parks Association Goanna Project' with other citizen scientists to investigate the conservation biology of Rosenberg's Goanna in the ACT region. The title of his talk is 'Recent developments in the NPA Goanna Project'. In the talk he will introduce the goanna species of the region and provide an update on what we have been learning. By way of interest, each goanna has different facial markings which is how they are able to identify individuals. In the photo below is M7.



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## Coastal observations

Ulladulla was perhaps a strange place to rendezvous with friends from Melbourne but we made the most of it a few weeks back with a walk out to the Warden Point lighthouse and lookout via the harbour and a small nature reserve.

We hoped to catch a glimpse of whales on their northward migration to pup in Queensland waters. We did see fins in the water but they could well have been seals, their relatives sunbaking on the offshore rocks.



Birds were relatively scarce until dusk, the only species we photographed that are not also native to Canberra were the Little Wattlebirds and perhaps the Sooty Oyster Catcher. The Grey Butcherbird was quite unconcerned by my presence.



Likewise a pair of White-faced Herons on the oval abutting the reserve.



Lighthouses always fascinate: their role in the old days before GPS so essential and the people who looked after them a breed apart. This is one of only two Australian lighthouses constructed using cast iron and was moved to its present location in 1889, its light extending to nearly 30 km, still guiding ships off this treacherous coast. The keepers cottages are gone with automation of the light: such a shame.

It was a pleasant break from Canberra, warmer, the smell and restless sound of the sea battering the rocky coastline, even the rocks are different, mudstone and sandstone.

**Kevin McCue**

## Observations

Driving home along William Hovel Drive last Monday during the day, I spied a pair of Black-shouldered Kites, hovering and beating their wings above the land on the right hand side of the road as one faces towards Belconnen.

It was a lovely sight. Their movement and size made them quite noticeable.

They were a good number of metres apart, but clearly together.

We've also had more than usual numbers of Eastern Spinebills in the rear garden. One plant that had four or five on it was a red and yellow Correa, now in flower.

The Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are again visiting the mature Cape Lilac tree to feed on the seeds.

Lastly, I found this fabulous fungi growing on the Judas tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*) in our backyard.



I think it is most likely *Trametes versicolor*: Turkey Tail.

**Lucy Bastecky**

## Fairies (no rodents) in My Garden

During the weeks of 9 February to 1 March my lunchtimes were enlivened as I watched a group of rodents – a minimum of 5 animals, possibly more.

That first day was very still – a pleasant change from the preceding very windy ones. That is why I noticed movement in the *Derwentia perfoliata* arching branches, covered in small fruit.

My first thought/assumption was there were birds finding insects, but soon realised they were small rodents. At least two individuals (visible at the same time) ran between the *Derwentia* and the rocks to the left, and perhaps behind them and into the *Wahlenbergia*, because they were out of sight for more than just a brief time. There were times when I could see three quite distinctly while several branches were moving in other parts of the bush. Two dropped to the ground in front of the retaining wall, reaching up to feed on *Bulbine* seed heads. In the attempt, one clambered up the wall, and clung on just long enough for me to register the snout at the junction of the top two planks, and the tail at the bottom of the middle one. That plank is 20 cms.

The first group of photos were all taken between 1:30 and 2:30 on Thursday 9 February.



I was away for several days and expected them to have moved on. The *Derwentia* was certainly bare when I arrived home.

However, on 24 February I realised that they were still here – and had just moved to a slightly different area. To the right of the *Derwentia* is a prostrate *Grevillea* that hangs over the wall and there are several *Bulbine* lilies behind the bee hive, and *Pratia pedunculata* as ground cover through the area in front of the hive and under a nearby wattle. Although I could see them moving around in the *Grevillea* and on the ground, the shade in this area is too dense for the phone camera's resolution.

The next day some behaviour was fascinatingly different. Two of them were 'rootling' just in front of the hive, scattering the pieces of chunky coir mulch. I'm not prepared to say what they were eating, but both above and below ground level the *Pratia* was clearly disturbed, the white rhizomes broken.

On 1 March I realised that at least one was a completely opportunistic forager. It moved across to the potted tomato plant next to the window and started to enjoy

the only ripe one. That's when I stopped skulking behind the glass to avoid frightening them away.



My neighbour on one side has a couple of mice in his compost – who scuttle away as soon as the lid is lifted. On the other side there have been a lot of rats – I've seen a big one scampering along on the edge below the guttering and he tells me his ceiling is filthy. I've had rodents in my garden, but not in my compost, nor in my roof. My 'ratty' neighbour is also my electrician and he confirms this!

I doubt if my photos are good enough for ID – a phone camera through dirty windows is not ideal equipment. But – I have enjoyed watching these rodents, exactly the same as I enjoy watching White Ibis hunting over a wet field using that beak in its pre-human-waste-supply role.

I'm planning to wash those big doors and windows next year when the *Derwentia* branches start to bend down with the fruit weight. Who knows – I might be lucky again.

**Robyn Black**

## What's living in my backyard?

By request, I will have copies of my book, *What's Living in my Backyard* for sale at the next meeting.



As many of you already know, it is a children's photographic book aimed at encouraging young children to look at nature in their own environment.

The book sells for \$10 a copy.

**Alison Milton**

## Scats

On 16 June at 15.50 I came across this 'cowpat' on the Bi-Centennial Trail parallel to Ginninderra Creek north of West Macgregor.



Barbara Triggs' Mammal Tracks and signs suggests a Fox has added its scat to the landmark.

A hundred metres further along I did come across two foxes but they ran away before my phone came out of my pocket.

**Rosemary Blemings**

## Who made the world?

*The following is a contemplative poem on life that was sent for inclusion in the newsletter. It makes you wonder.*

Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
 Who made the grasshopper?  
 This grasshopper, I mean—  
 the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
 the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
 who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up  
 and down—  
 who is gazing around with her enormous and compli-  
 cated eyes.  
 Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes  
 her face.  
 Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
 I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
 I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
 into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
 how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the  
 fields,  
 which is what I have been doing all day.  
 Tell me, what else should I have done?  
 Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
 Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
 with your one wild and precious life?

**Mary Oliver**

Mary Oliver (1935-2019) was a Pulitzer Prize winning poet. She published several poetry collections, including *Dog Songs: Poems* (Penguin Books, 2015).

## Membership renewal

Field Naturalists' membership renewals are due from 1 July 2023.

Please check the last page of the Field Natter for the membership renewals procedure.

If possible please renew by Bank Transfer. Filling out the form isn't necessary provided you add your name whilst banking online.

Amount for 2023–2024 is \$25 (Single/Family)

Account name: Field Nats

BSB: 325 185

Account number: 03545251

Reference: Please include your name

## Raffle prizes needed

As always, we need prizes for our monthly raffle. This 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. As the saying goes, 'One man's junk is another man's treasure' (or woman as the case may be), and if you are a gardener with fresh produce to donate, this would be greatly appreciated.



## Critically endangered earless dragon rediscovered in Victoria

Liam Beatty

NCA NewsWire : 25 June 2023

A population of critically-endangered Victorian grass-land earless dragons thought to have been extinct in the wild has been rediscovered.

Not seen since 1969, the ‘energetic’ reptile, measuring just 15 cm from head to tail, was once widespread in native grasslands west of Melbourne but numbers dwindled due to habitat loss and predation.

On Sunday, Victorian environment minister Ingrid Stitt announced a surviving population of the species had been found – the location of which is being kept secret.

“This is an amazing discovery and offers an opportunity for us to recover a species once thought lost to our state and the world,” Ms Stitt said.

Zoos Victoria had been actively searching for the dragon since 2017. Melbourne Zoo had spent years developing expertise through a breeding recovery program using populations from the ACT and NSW, and would now



establish a conservation breeding program to ensure the species is not lost again.

Chief executive Dr Jenny Gray described finding the reptile in the wild as “extraordinary”.

“The extraordinary rediscovery of this critically endangered and cryptic lizard inspires optimism for the recovery of this Victorian species,” she said.

## 60 billion leaf-litter critters died in fires

The Black Summer megafires engulfing south-eastern Australia in 2019–2020 were so intense they burned habitats rarely exposed to fire, such as southern warm temperate rainforest.

These rainforests range from East Gippsland in Victoria up to just south of Sydney. Usually, they stay moist enough to prevent major fires. But in that unprecedented summer of fire, 80,000 hectares burned. Our new research estimates more than 60 billion invertebrates in the soil and leaf litter died, too.

While our hearts went out to the burned koalas and kangaroos, this was a silent tragedy. These tiny creatures are enormously important in ecosystems. They eat dead leaves, create rich soil, and provide a key food source

for bandicoots and lyrebirds. Many species have very small ranges, putting them at real risk of decline or even extinction from fire.

As renowned naturalist EO Wilson once said, invertebrates are the “the little things that run the world”. But because they are small and out of sight, we still underestimate their significance in ecosystems and their contribution to Australia’s biodiversity. They’re all but forgotten when ecological disasters strike.

The [full article](#) can be read on-line at:

[https://citynews.com.au/2023/60-billion-leaf-litter-critters-died-in-fires/?utm\\_source=mailpoet&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=canberra-daily-todays-news-today\\_7801](https://citynews.com.au/2023/60-billion-leaf-litter-critters-died-in-fires/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=canberra-daily-todays-news-today_7801)

Month	Speaker	Topic
6 July	Don Fletcher	Rosenberg goannas
3 August	Peter Abbott	Native bees
7 September	Stewart Harris	Peacock spiders
5 October	Michael Mulvaney	Canberra Nature Map
November	TBC	
7 December		Xmas party

**This the first time since the start of Covid that we have been able to give an advance list of speakers for the monthly meetings, so please lock these dates into your diaries.**



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](mailto:president@fieldnatsact.com)

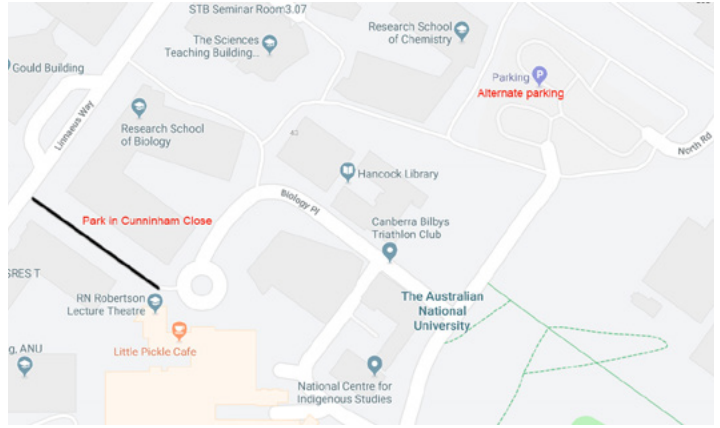
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**Monthly meeting venue:** Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University

**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**