

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 1 June 2017
7:30 pm Australian National University
Gould Seminar Room, Building 116, Daley Road, ANU, ACT
details back page

How to discover over a thousand new species of plants and animals in modern-day Australia

Speaker: Brian Hawkins

Brian will talk about Bush Blitz, a species discovery program that has mounted scientific expeditions all around Australia. In particular, he will discuss the expedition to Kiwirrkurra in remote inland Western Australia



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Dingo relative rediscovered in remote highlands of New Guinea

Scientists have confirmed the existence of an ancient dog species in one of the world's most remote places — the mountains of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia's Papua provinces.

- The discovery is the first sighting of the dogs in more than 40 years
- They are among the oldest and most primitive canines in the world
- Analysis of the species could help explain dog and human co-evolution

The international team led by scientists from Indonesia's University of Papua captured evidence of the New Guinea highland wild dog during a 2016 expedition to an austere, high-altitude region near the Grasberg mine, one of the world's largest copper mines.

The discovery is the first confirmed sighting of the species in more than 40 years.

The dogs are believed likely to be the same species as the New Guinea singing dog, a wild dog that has been bred in captivity since several pairs were taken from the remote New Guinea highlands on both sides of the border in the 1950s and 1970s.

There are about 200 New Guinea singing dogs in zoos around the world, but little is known about the ancient breed famous for their unique vocalisations.

However, scientists are certain it shares ancestry with the Australian dingo.

American zoologist James McIntyre, who had been searching for the elusive dog for years, joined the team as an adviser on a leg of the research that took them



to the slopes of Papua Province's highest mountain, Puncak Jaya.

Mr McIntyre led his own expedition in the 1990s to the highlands of north-western Papua New Guinea — however while his team heard chorus howling at dawn and dusk, they made no sightings.

While there have been several sighting reports since his initial expedition, it wasn't until last year that Mr McIntyre found what he considered to be credible scientific evidence pointing not only to the existence of healthy populations, but also of the dog's curious nature.

"We were travelling up this beautiful valley and it consists of three terraced lakes that eventually wind up at two active glaciers.

The researchers set photo traps, lacing the ground with scents they hoped would lure the dogs, and waited.

"It wasn't until the very last day, after the weather had cleared for a while, that I got any photos whatsoever," Mr McIntyre said.

"I don't mind saying out loud that I squealed when I finally saw documentary proof of these animals."

A window into the history of Australia's dingoes

The highland wild dog is seen as a "pristine" canid — an example of how dogs were at the time they began being domesticated.

Mr McIntyre said the discovery of the ancient dog in such a remote location was enormously important to the understanding of dog and human co-evolution.

"So this can tell us a lot about the history and the pre-history of Papua New Guinea and just the migrations of the people and the dogs and how they got to where they are today," he said.

Mr McIntyre said a full investigation of the dogs' DNA would prove the highland wild dog, the New Guinea singing dog and the dingo are "the only animals on the planet that are even remotely related to each other".

Pacific Beat: By Kerri Worthington

Hunting observation

These events unfolded over the last three evenings above and near a farm dam on our property at Wanna Wanna Road, Carwoola.

Micro bats are seen every night, for as long as I can remember, feeding above this dam. They start to come out as the sun sets and it is usual to see 6 bats or more.

Sunday evening I saw a falcon (pointy wingtips) flying over the dam carrying something in its talons and there was an accompanying high pitched squealing from the prey. Initial thoughts were a mouse but then I realised it was likely a bat. The Falcon flew to an exposed dead branch. A few minutes later I saw a concerted attack on the bats. The Falcon missed in three passes but got a kill on the next pass.

Monday evening was overcast and there was no opportunity to silhouette the Falcon against the sky. It made two passes that I saw and then it wasn't seen again.

Peregrine or Hobby? I couldn't decide.

Tuesday evening Martin Butterfield came around and between about 5.05 and 5.30 we witnessed

4 kills. Two kills were only a few minutes apart. Clear skies again and excellent views of the action. One kill was directly overhead at probably less than 10 m above us.



The bats tended to disappear for a short while after a kill, surprise, surprise. The mode of attack was from behind and slightly below.

There could have been two predators as there appeared a size difference, but we didn't see two at once so that is speculation.

Martin has come to the conclusion that it was probably a pair of Hobbys.

There were two bats still cruising the dam after the action ceased last night so I am assuming the Hobby/Hobbys will be back this evening.

Graeme Clifton

How often do spiders eat?



I've asked myself this question recently as in late March I photographed this spider in my front yard reeling in her night-time catch. After devouring her meal she retreated into the curl of the leaf and has remained there ever since. The leaf has shrivelled more so that she is now almost undetectable, but I did note that she is also guarding an egg sac.

My question arises because since these photos were taken I've never seen evidence of another spun web, although I check almost every day. I fact I walk past this tree every day to walk to the bus for work.

Dr Google tells me that some spiders can in fact survive for months without eating. Perhaps she filled up on this moth and is now more concerned about protecting her egg sac.



What I find more amazing however, is that her leaf is part of a small twig that has broken off of the plum tree. The fork of the twig has caught on another branch and has been hanging there for the past few months without being knocked or blown off, even in heavy rain.

I will continue to watch with interest.

Alison Milton



Little eagle's remarkable migration from Canberra to the Northern Territory

Georgina Connery

With a GPS tracker strapped on its back one of the ACT's rarest birds of prey has been shown to migrate from Canberra to the Northern Territory.

The study tracked a little eagle, a threatened species in the ACT and a quarter of the size of a wedge-tailed eagle.

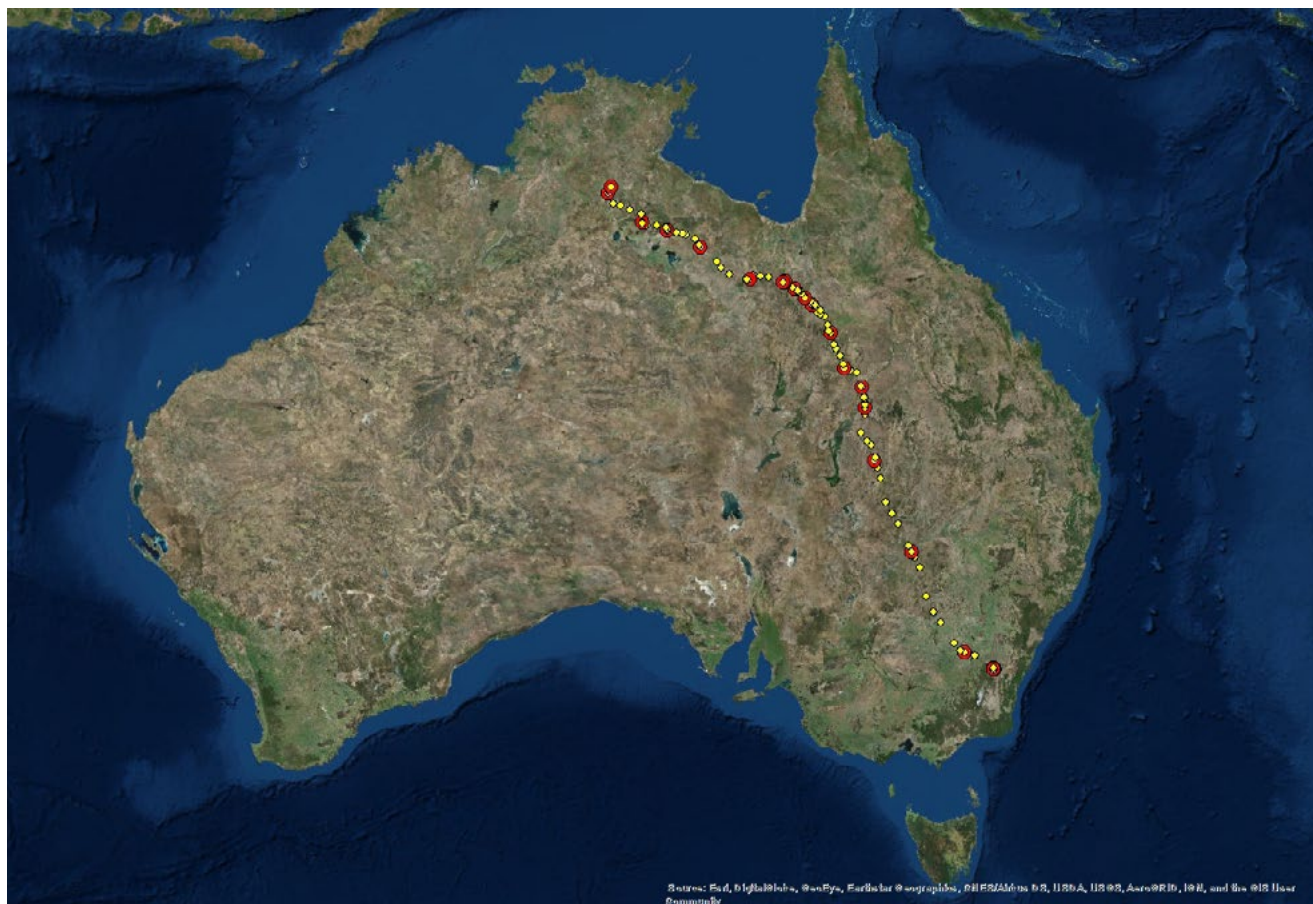
The little eagle's flight path stretched 3,300 kms and took it to Daly Waters in the Northern Territory. The distance was travelled in a three-week period.

The migration was documented as part of a combined ecological research study undertaken by the ACT government, the University of Canberra, CSIRO and Ginninderry Joint Venture.

The male bird travelled 1800 kilometres in the first eight days, and during its journey reached speeds of up to 55 kilometres per hour.



The images used by the research team to follow the journey illustrate where the male bird chose to roost.



The GPS track of a little eagle's 3300 km journey from Canberra to the Northern Territory. Red dots denote overnight roosts.

The Minister for the Environment Mick Gentleman said the little eagle tracked was part of a Belconnen pair that had successfully raised a chick in the spring and early summer period.

“The little eagle was suspected of migrating between breeding and wintering territories. This study provides the first proof of this and a clear indication of the vast distances involved.

The minister was fascinated to learn more about the habits of this bird of prey and said findings from the

research would guide future management plans and inform development plans in the ACT.

“During the nesting season, the male is thought to have hunted mainly juvenile rabbits and middle sized birds such as magpies, rosellas and starlings over an area of 65 square kilometres, ranging from the junction of the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee rivers north-east to the CSIRO land along the Barton Highway and north to Wallaroo in NSW.”

Vale Adam Burgess

National Arboretum Canberra chairman John Mackay has paid tribute to horticulturalist Adam Burgess, one of the key driving forces of the arboretum, who died this week aged just 43.

He leaves behind a devastated community of loved ones and friends.

Mr Burgess was the curator of the living collections at the arboretum, and had been a part of the growing institution since its inception, working first with his father Mick in the family company, Urban Contractors.

“He has been the heart and soul of the arboretum since the very first day,” Mr Mackay said.

“He was there when they started planting the first trees. He just loved the arboretum and the arboretum loved him.”

Mr Mackay said Mr Burgess has been in remission from Hodgkin lymphoma and recently back in hospital for surgery to remove two of his ribs, believed to be a measure to prevent blood clotting.

It’s understood Mr Burgess died at home on Monday as the result of complications.

He turned 43 only on 26 April.

His mother Joan Feiner, of Queensland, said her son had been in remission from the cancer for 12 years. He was a man who “spoke his mind” and was “always happy”.

Mrs Feiner remembered fondly her son’s absolute love for plants and trees.

“We were driving in Queensland one day and he said, ‘Stop, stop, stop!’,” she said.

“And I was thinking, ‘What’s happened?’. He got out of the car and ran back two blocks to take a photograph of a tree he’d never seen before.

“Adam used to say, ‘Hug a tree’.”

Always cheerful, Mr Burgess was always willing to sing the praises of the arboretum to all visitors. He was especially proud to show off the arboretum to Prince William and Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge in 2014.

Mr Burgess studied at the Canberra Institute of Technology and was previously a student at Campbell High and Dickson College.

He did his apprenticeship at Willow Park Nursery at Pialligo.

Mrs Feiner said Mr Burgess had been back to Willow Park only last Friday to buy vegetable seedlings.

Mr Mackay said the arboretum would be organising some kind of tribute to honour Mr Burgess’ work there.

“Adam was a much loved and respected member of the National Arboretum team as the curator of the Living Collection,” a statement read.

“Adam made a significant contribution to the establishment and development of the National Arboretum over 11 years.

“He was driven by a passion for horticulture, for the trees and forests, which he helped to establish, and a willingness to share his knowledge and learn from others.

“Adam will be greatly missed by his colleagues at the National Arboretum, the extended arboretum family and all those who knew him. Our deepest sympathies are with his family at this time.”

Animals in the Wild photo competition

The Animals in the wild photo competition is run to encourage animal and nature lovers to shoot with a camera not a gun.

The competition is co-hosted by the Eurobodalla Greens as part of the campaign against recreational hunting, and in particular the arms fair 'Huntfest', which blights Narooma every year.

This year a prize of a \$100 gift voucher is offered to the best picture in each of the following categories:

- A. The image that most evokes a connection with an animal in the wild in Australia
- B. The most beautiful image of a bird in the wild in Australia
- C. The image that conveys the threats facing native animals in Australia, including the

reality of environmental and habitat damage, hunting, guns and killing culture in Australia; and

- D. The most beautiful image of an animal in the wild photographed by a photographer aged 16 years or under.

Short-listed photographs will first be exhibited in Bodalla over the June long weekend, where the winners will be announced, as selected by renowned Australian photographer Rex Dupain.

Entries are open now! Head straight to animalsinthewild.net to find out more about the competition and see past winners.



Open Art Competition

Theme 'People caring for the ACT Regions' land and waters'



You are invited to enter the ACT Region Catchment Groups Art Exhibition, with the theme: 'People Caring for the ACT Regions' Lands and Waters'

Entries close 9 June

Exhibition 22–30 June at Kingston ACT

Threatening process nomination - removal of mature native trees

This notice is perhaps a little late but it is worth noting that the *Threatening process nomination Removal of mature native trees* by Friends of Grasslands, Australian Native Plants Society, Canberra Ornithologists Group, Field Naturalists Association of Canberra and the Conservation Council is currently seeking public consultation from 28 April to June. There is still a short window for personal comments. See http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cpr/conservation_and_ecological_communities/Threatened-Species-and-other-Nominations



Pinnacle bird walk

21 May 2017

Though a little late this year, John led his Autumn bird walk at the Pinnacle Nature Reserve, with perfect weather.

We gathered at Dungowan Street and as we set off we heard Gang Gangs that landed in a nearby gum. We couldn't spot them, but John then spotted a male in the big gum tree at the entrance to the reserve.



It was a little quiet as we entered the woodlands, but in the distance a Kookaburra sat on a dead branch and Crimson Rosellas abounded in the thistles just over the fence. This was perhaps the most abundant species we saw, though later on we also saw quite a few Eastern Rosellas.

There were the ever-present, expected species such as magpies, but I was hoping for some of the smaller migratory birds.

While not bird related, we noted a few flowering Green Hood orchids: late this year and very few compared with previous years. Less than a dozen with only one good specimen.



Emerging from the woodlands we finally began to see some bird activity: robins and thornbills flitting through the tree-tops and some Superb Fairy Wrens flossicking on the ground.

Approaching the Pinnacle itself, we continued to see more Scarlet Robins and Wrens, with one particularly busy patch of Acacias. While I veered around for a better position for photographing birds (i.e. with the sun behind me) I photographed a juvenile Golden Whistler, unaware that the others had seen the male – out of my line of sight.



We did see another male later on close to the Kama property house, but every time I had him in my camera sight he flitted off. Camera shy I guess, but I know where he lives!

John had planned to take us up to the Pinnacle Trig but a large group of people were also headed there so we skirted round to the South to wait for them to leave. Along the Central Track we saw more Scarlet Robins; Eastern Rosellas and Thornbills.

Coming back through the woodland area it was now a hive of activity, with Scarlet Robins, Thornbills and a tree creeper.



Further on there were two male and one female Scarlet Robins. It will be worth coming back here in Spring to see if they are nesting.



We then spotted a Eastern Spinebill in the Grevilleas near the fork in the track and just to finish off our count of 23 species, just as we approached the cars a Crested Pigeon sat on the telephone wires, while a small group of Red-rumped Parrots flew through almost giving us a complete list of the local parrot species. In this, I am counting the pair of King Parrot I saw before the rest of the group arrived.

I probably can't remember the full list of species spotted as I was recording, but those I can remember include:

Gang Gang; Crimson and Eastern Rosella; Galah; Rainbow Lorikeet; Sulphur-crested Cockatoo; Red-rumped Parrot; Brown, Yellow-Rumped and Buff-rumped Thornbills; Scarlet Robin; Yellow-faced and White-eared Honeyeaters; Magpie; Kookaburra; Eastern Spinbill; Crested Pigeon; Golden Whistler; Fairy Wren; White-breasted Tree Creeper; Weebill; Raven.

Alison Milton

Correspondence on raven behaviour and golf balls

(Hijacked from the COG chatline)

Recent frequency of the activity justifies raising the recurrent matter of ravens stealing golf balls. This has happened to me at Queanbeyan and Royal Narrabundah. As Kathy Cook has mentioned, orange balls (used because they are easier to find among pale leaves) are particularly attractive, precluding their use around Canberra so far as I'm concerned.

Yesterday at Duntroon I lost one white ball to a dark marauder. I was about to lose a second when a brisk sprint scared off the purloiner, and I was rewarded by finding it had dropped another white ball it had been carrying – so all square for the day. I spoke to another golfer who had lost one yellow and one white in the same afternoon (not the extra ball I retrieved, which had an unusual insignia. I am happy to return it to any golfing chatliner who can identify it).

It seems this problem occurs around the world, so different species of corvids are implicated, certainly A Ravens and Torresian Crows in Australia. There is evidence the practice is seasonal, apparently increasing now that pairs of A Ravens are beginning to act in territorial fashion. The high-risk fairways I have mentioned are lined by mature Radiata Pines, probably nest sites of the ravens in question. My own belief is that the ball-



stealing is food motivated. Corvids are well-known cachers of food items and may believe the hard object will become edible in due course – by hatching, or giving rise to an emergent insect, or simply decomposing. The association of humans with food items may be a factor, particularly as golfers are seen to eventually pick up their balls and take them away. The practice continues

despite what must have been many disappointed expectations as regards 'becoming edible'. Perhaps older ravens, veterans of a hundred or so unsatisfying ball thefts, know better.

Geoffrey Dabb

I believe they do think that the balls are food. My local pair bring them back to my place and I have observed them trying to break them open. Sometimes they bury them and try again the next day and even put them in my birdbath to try and soften them.

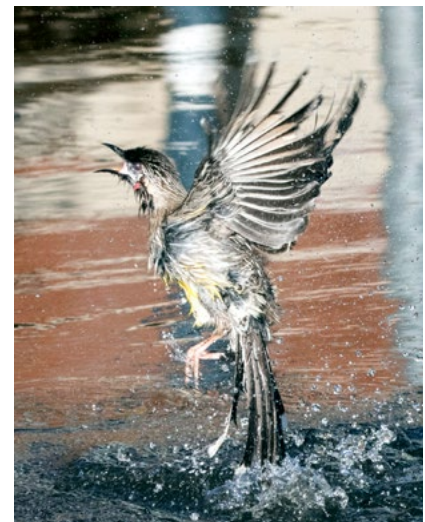
One time one of the Ravens spent nearly an hour trying to crack one open, quite amusing to sit on the deck and watch them. I often wonder what they think when they drop them from the tree onto the road and the ball races back up to them after hitting the road.

Shorty

What does the modern Wattlebird like to drink?



Bathtime



Alison Milton

Activities

Friday 9 June: Gardens' Bushland Track – meet at the Visitors' Information Centre at 10 am

The first part of the path goes through rough degraded bush from the entry off Black Mountain Drive for about 100 m. After that the track is surrounded by typical Black Mountain vegetation. Please wear sturdy footwear and clothes to suit the expected weather. It's not a long walk but there should be plenty to interest naturalists (and students of invasive weeds in the first 150 m!). Cameras for capturing the views would be advisable and binoculars. If it has been very wet or is raining on the morning then we will postpone the walk. It might be a frosty morning of course so in that case walking with due care will be the 'rule'!!

Month	Speaker	Topic
1 June	Brian Hawkins	The Bush Blitz scheme
6 July	Erin Walsh	Scientific illustration
3 August	Members chance to shine	AGM
7 September	Martin Royds	Organic/non-industrial farming
5 October	Alex James and Jennie Curtis	Small Farms network
2 November	Meredith Cosgrove	Photographic guide to ACT native plants
7 December		Xmas party

University of Canberra scientist eavesdropping on frogs before they croak

Georgina Connery

University of Canberra scientists are harnessing mobile phone technology to eavesdrop on local frog populations before they croak. But this is not your average spying racket. The conservation-focused project aims to reduce the time spent by ACT Frogwatch volunteers out in the field monitoring frog numbers.

The world-first project has brought together assistant professor in network and software engineering Kumudu Munasinghe, research associate Adrian Garrido Sanchis, and Anke Maria Hoefler from ACT Frogwatch. Dr Munasinghe likened what his team had built to humans and the waterways communicating via mobile phone.

“They dial a number from their phone or their home. The device automatically picks up and you can do real time listening.” Recording can take place on the listener’s side or the deployed devices can be set up to record at specific times of day.

“Frog whisperers are spending many evening hours sitting near waterways listening for frog calls and keeping a tally of the various species they hear,” Dr Munasinghe said. “My project team and I have created an Internet of Things network, which can transmit the frog calls in real time from a remote location to a volunteer’s mobile phone, meaning they can carry out their monitoring wherever they are.”

The technology can be recalibrated to monitor species that communicate in infrasound and ultrasound, which the human ear cannot detect.

Dr Munasinghe said CSIRO has expressed interest in the prototype to assist with monitoring other endangered species. “The best part is that this technology allows humans to pick up frequencies they wouldn’t otherwise be able to,” he said.

“We’ve developed a system that makes it possible to detect those calls and notify the people monitoring to ensure that nothing is missed.”

Optus has offered its support for the project, granting access to its 4G network to hasten the transmission of data.

Ms Hoefler said frogs were a barometer for the health of their environments and a great deal of effort was put by close to 200 volunteers each year into monitoring their numbers in Canberra.

Having these technological ears in remote areas meant survey work could be done without significant safety concerns associated with volunteers navigating bushland areas at night.

Remotely activating the gadgets also meant technical issues could be noticed and rectified quickly.

Along with support from Optus, the ACT government has provided the volunteer group with a \$3000 grant for materials and Strathnairn Gallery have opened ponds surrounding the gallery to ACT Frogwatch volunteers.

“ACT Frogwatch as it is stays, however this technology will take the program further by allowing us to do surveys in hard-to-reach and pristine areas without being out and about there,” she said.



Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Inc.

Who are the Field Naturalists?

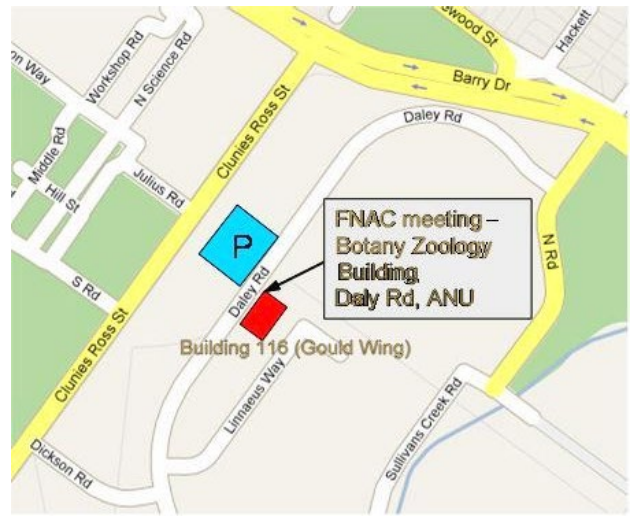
The Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra (FNAC) was formed in 1981. Our aim is to foster interest in natural history by means of meetings and regular field outings. Meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Outings range from weekend rambles to long weekends away. Activities 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

Editor: Alison Milton All newsletter contributions welcome. **Email:** apm56@optusnet.com.au or cc' Alison.milton@health.gov.au



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Road, 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: