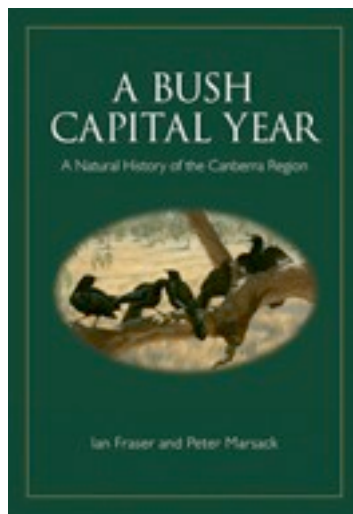




MEETING THURSDAY 3rd MARCH
7:30 pm Australian National University
Meeting details back page

A Bush Capital Year

Speaker, scientist and author - Ian Fraser



Ian has long championed our region as a treasure trove for naturalists. He has joined with celebrated wildlife artist Peter Marsack to create a magical book with wonderful tales and scientific secrets of dozens of local species. Peter's paintings bring the subjects to life, thoroughly complementing and enhancing Ian's words.

Many of the fascinating insects Kim showed us in February are in the book. Over 35 birds, 20 plant species, ten reptiles and frogs are featured. Peter depicts virtually countless associations with miniature, medium and larger paintings that show his naturalist's flair is as

vibrant as Ian's. There are ten stories for each month of the year, ideal for our own learning or for sharing with each generation.

In the style so regularly heard on ABC's 666 Radio Ian will illustrate his passion for our own habitats and wildlife and reiterate the role we can all play in re-connecting people with the natural world around us.

Copies of ***A Bush Capital Year: A Natural History of the Canberra Region*** will be on sale if you haven't yet bought your copy. RRP \$49.95.

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Outing - Naas Valley - Sunday March 6th 10:00 am

This walk on a well-developed trail meanders through the remote Naas Valley providing an insight into the fascinating natural, geological, aboriginal and pastoral history of the area. There is a long walk and a short walk of approximately 4km along an undulating track. The short walk ends at a ford of the Naas Creek. Last week the creek was fast-flowing, so if you want to walk further bring a towel.

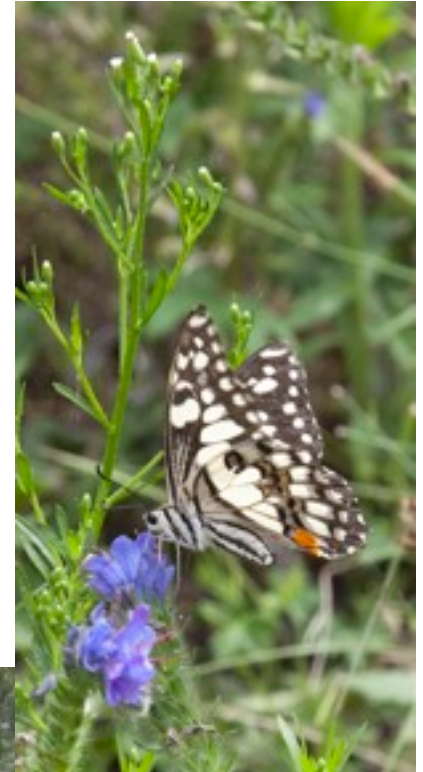
We will meet at the Namadgi visitors centre to pool vehicles to travel a further 30kms to the Mount Clear campground where the trail starts. A brochure is available at

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/13831/NaasValleywebversionlores17.12.10.pdf.

A booklet prepared some years ago, by the Field Naturalists, is also available from myself.

Bring your lunch and possibly some afternoon tea

Further contact Chris Bunn 6241 2968



Above: A butterfly found in the Naas valley recently.

Left: The Naas River.

Photos Margaret Kalms



Did you get what you wanted for Christmas?

DON'T FORGET THAT THE FNAC RAFFLE IS AN IDEAL OUTLET FOR "UNWANTED TREASURES"

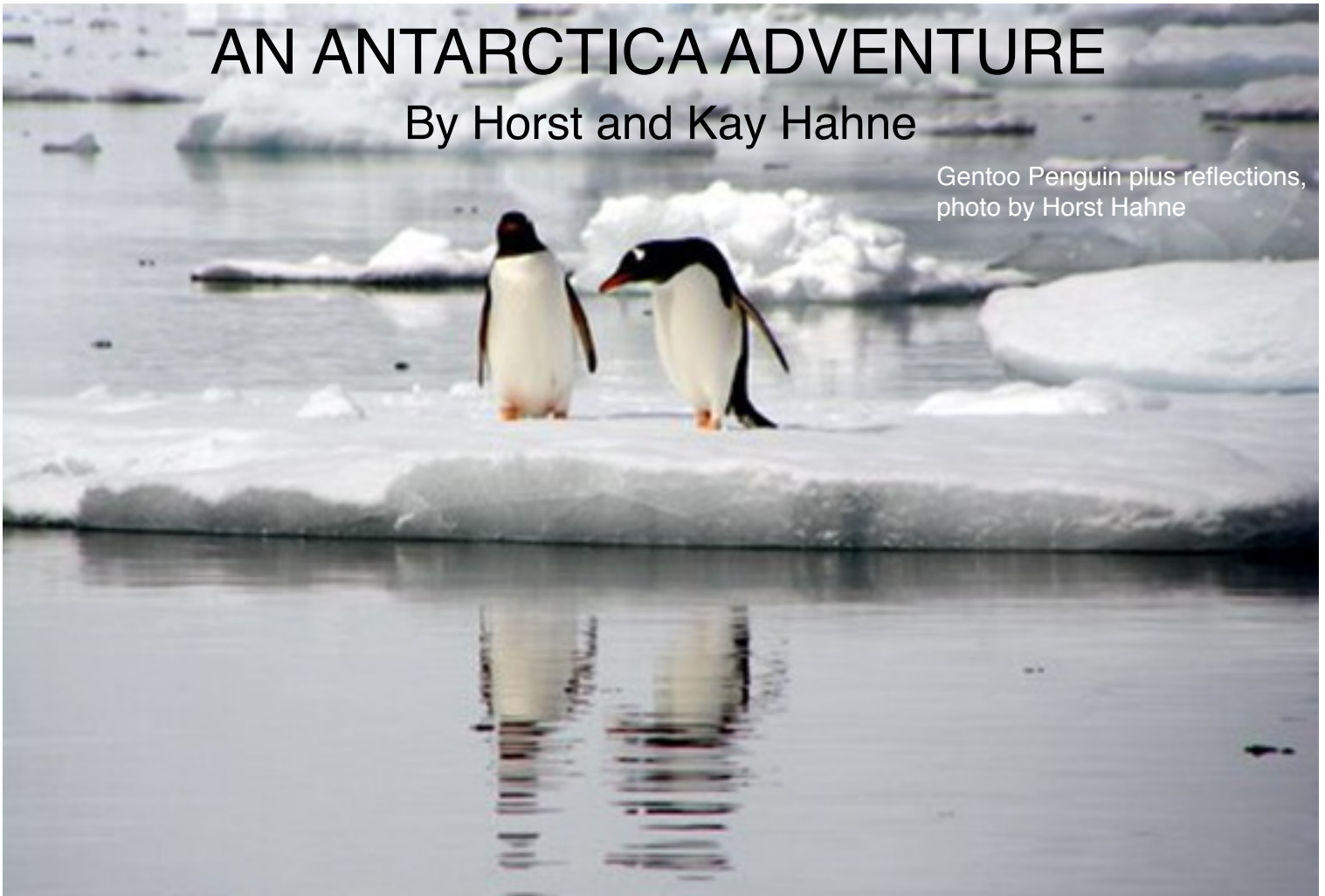
Please check your cupboards again & see if you can part with material possessions that might otherwise mean a special trip to an op. shop.

IT'S ALL IN A GOOD CAUSE!!

AN ANTARCTICA ADVENTURE

By Horst and Kay Hahne

Gentoo Penguin plus reflections,
photo by Horst Hahne



Antarctica. The 7th and last continent to be 'discovered' and explored. Of course the penguins and seals knew it was there, long before white men claimed 'discovery'; men such as Scott, Amundsen, Shackleton and Mawson – some returned to tell the tale, others didn't. It's been carved up like big pieces of pie by many countries, but thankfully no one really 'owns' a piece.

This Peregrine Adventure Tour was well organised. We flew to Buenos Aires, then flew to the most southern city in the world, Ushuaia, at the southern tip of Argentina. Calmly sailing down the Beagle Channel we were seen off by some Magellanic Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus* swimming alongside. By the afternoon of 4 Jan. we had travelled through the notorious Drake Passage at its very tamest. It can be wild and windy with huge waves. We had a small swell, and no wind.

The Tour provided gum boots and bright yellow waterproof parkas with a zip-out navy polar fleece jacket. We looked like bright yellow giant penguins waddling along. On our first Zodiac trip we went for a landing on Aitcho Island, South Shetland Island group. It was black volcanic soil, green moss, with misty rain at 62°24'S 059°55'W. Our first contact with Chinstrap *Pygoscelis antarctica* and Gentoo Penguins

Pygoscelis papua. Southern Giant-Petrels *Macronectes giganteus* were nesting, young Southern Elephant Seals *Mirounga leonina* were lolling about like closely packed cigars and huge whale bones were strewn across some beaches.



Young Southern Elephant Seal,
photo by Horst Hahne

At Half Moon Island we encountered more snow and a lone Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus* amongst a throng of Chinstraps with their thin black strap appearing to firmly anchor their little black helmets.



Chinstrap penguin,
photo by Horst Hahne

Deception Island was almost a complete ring – a nearly submerged volcanic crater. At Whalers Bay we saw the rusty, dilapidated ruins of a Norwegian Whaling Station. The huge round tanks used to hold thousands of gallons of whale oil, rendered down from blubber. Whales (eg. Humpbacks, Sperm, Blue + Elephant Seals) were hunted by the tens of thousands and nearly rendered extinct in a few years. Thankfully it has long been a deserted site, but kept as an historic monument to the monstrosity and greediness of mankind.

16 kayakers had a close encounter with a Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*! We saw Humpbacks and Antarctic Minke Whales *Balaenoptera bonaerensis* from a distance while cruising in Zodiacs. We were glad to have seen the large pod of Orcas *Orcinus orca* from the safety of our ship in the Gerlache Strait. Those towering dorsal fins would have given us way too much adrenalin from water level!

On Friday 7 Jan. we made our first landing from Neko Harbour onto the Antarctic Peninsula, – the frozen, coldest, driest, highest and windiest continent. While the interior is getting colder and its 3-4 km thickness of ice is safe, the peninsula is has been effected by global warming. However there is still plenty of snow, glaciers and icebergs to be seen. Wildlife was abundant. Penguins were nesting with many eggs and young fluffy grey chicks. Penguin parents are very vigilant, as the ever-present Brown (Subantarctic) Skuas *Stercorarius antarcticus lonnbergi* were continually watching for an unguarded egg or chick to eat. We were not allowed to get too close to anything. If we stood still, or sat in the snow, a curious penguin would come up to us. We often just watched their antics. Once three were bathing in the water close to shore. They rolled and splashed and preened their breasts into a pristine white again. We watched a Gentoo thief stealing pebbles from the

edge of a neighbouring nest. He methodically stole one pebble at a time in his beak, waddled the short distance to his own mate and placed it on their nest. The victim was not happy and stabbed toward him with her beak, but he was safely out of reach and she dare not expose her egg. The minute a back is turned a skua is making off with a chick - we saw one being torn to shreds and eaten. The scavengers of the Antarctic are Snowy Sheathbills *Chionis alba* – they eat anything!

Antarctic Fur Seals *Arctocephalus gazella* sat upright; my favourites were the cute little Weddell Seals *Leptonychotes weddellii*, of mottled grey fur and a cute smile. Many of the longer, solid colour Crabeater Seals *Lobodon carcinophaga* were about, often lying stretched out on an ice floe.



Crabeater Seal, photo by Horst Hahne

It was these kinds of seals and penguins that kept Shackleton and his party alive and free of rickets and scurvy during their 2-year ordeal of being frozen into the ice and leaving the ship and many provisions behind. Fresh meat and blubber – better than being slowly poisoned by the concentrated Vitamin A in your sled dogs' liver, as happened with Mawson and actually killing his partner Mertz. At our furthest south 65°10'S we saw Leopard Seals *Hydrurga leptonyx*. They looked quite ferocious when they yawned, showing sharp teeth. No wonder penguins hesitate to leap in the water.

At this same latitude on Petermann Island we also viewed our only Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae* colony, with darker charcoal grey fluffy chicks. These birds feed almost entirely on Antarctic Krill *Euphausia superba*, a tiny 2-8 cm crustacean which is also the main food for baleen whales. We saw how full the water was of these tiny, nearly bottom-of-the-food-chain creatures. There may be as many as 5

billion ton of these in the Southern Ocean alone! We didn't quite reach the Antarctic Circle at 66°30'S. Following the ship were Albatrosses – Wandering, Black-browed, Light-mantled and Gray-headed; also Cape Petrels and Wilson's Storm Petrels. Other birds seen on the land or ice were bulky Kelp Gulls, dainty breeding Antarctic Terns and breeding Antarctic Cormorants (Shags) with vivid blue eye rings.

What were our most exhilarating experiences? The Zodiac cruises around and amongst the icebergs and along glacier faces as they met the sea. The beautiful aqua blue colour of parts of the ice just blew you away. Size, majesty, colour, shape (arches, holes, striations), just being there and part of this amazing scenery was very special. Some days mysterious with low, grey cloud; other days with blue sunny skies and fluffy white clouds. Perfect reflections in icy water smooth as glass. The glow of icebergs or snowy mountains in the low slanting sun about 10:30 pm. The guides were so knowledgeable and caring of this continent and instilled that in us. Is it only our so-called 'civilised' human-kind that hunts and fishes, mines and drills, denudes and scorches our Planet Earth till nothing is left? No trees, no clean rivers, no unpolluted air, no spirit or song left in the natural landscape? It is scary what some of us do to our one and only means of Life. Did we leave

only footprints behind on this once pristine continent? As our Tour Leader said on Day 1 "Do you want your children and grandchildren to see and experience what you are about to do this week? If so take care, be aware." Let's all be good stewards of our patch, our country, our continent, our world.

References:

Specialised lectures and personal communication with our Tour Guides.

Bickel, Lennard. 1977. *This Accursed Land*. (Sir Douglas Mawson's story). The Macmillan Company of Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne.

Griffiths, Jay. 2006. *WILD: an Elemental Journey*. (especially the Section entitled "Wild Ice"). Penguin Books Ltd, London.

Griffiths, Tom. 2007. *Slicing the Silence: voyaging to Antarctica*. University of New South Wales Press Ltd, Sydney.

Shackleton, Ernest. 1919. *SOUTH: the Endurance Expedition*. (from Shackleton's own logs and journals of other party members). First published by William Heinemann, London, 1919. First Signet printing, 1999.



Iceberg with Zodiac driver in background, photo by Kay Hahne

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 the member application below and send it with your subscription to the FNAC Treasurer, GPO Box 249 Canberra, ACT 2601:

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Mob: 0417 407 351

Secretary: Tony Lawson, Ph: 02 6161 9430
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Mob: 0414 652 567

Published and distributed by Bob Lehman.



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University Park (occasionally at the adjacent Building 44).

Meetings start at 7:30 pm and are followed by refreshments.

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: