OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

March 2024
ISSN: 1836-2761

MEETING—Thursday 7 March 2024
7:30 pm Australian National University

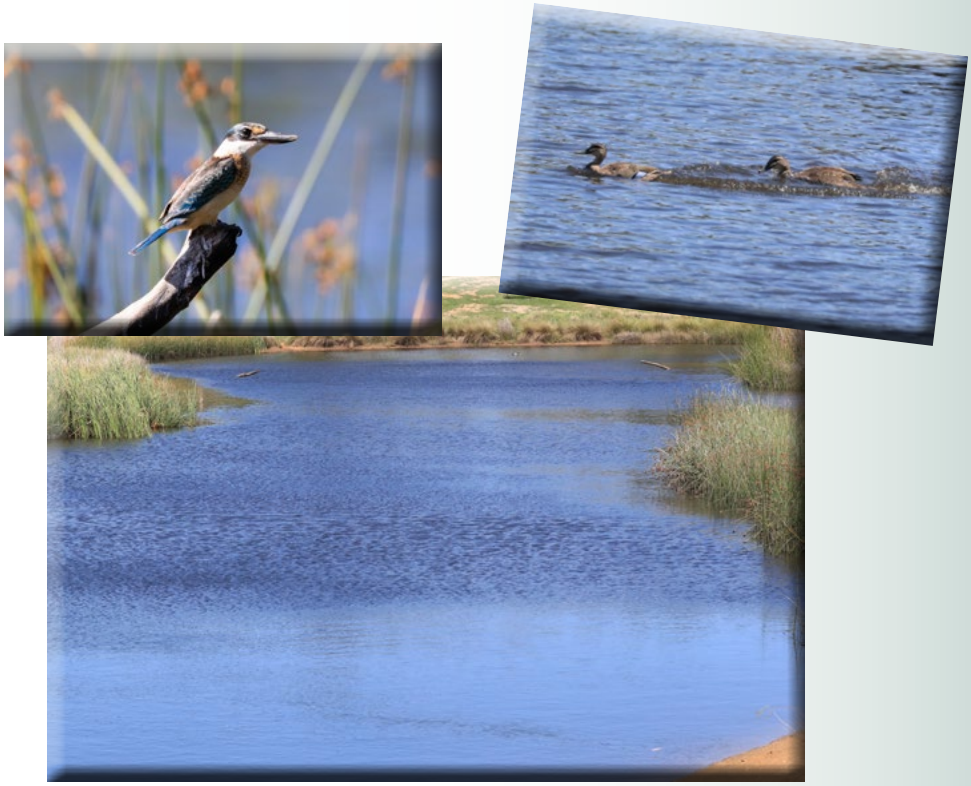
Slatyer Room (up the stairs),
R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, ANU
details on the back page

Refreshments before the meeting. Please bring your own cup.

Dickson wetlands

Speaker: Isobel Crawford

The Dickson Wetland (technically a 'pond') was commenced in 2010 and completed in 2013. Most of the original plantings have matured over the past decade. Some species have proven to be unsuitable, and others have done well, and some types of planting are easier to maintain than others. A local ornithologist, Julian Reid, keeps lists of birds and frogs. Isobel will discuss the evolution of the 'Dickson Wetland Weeders' and the important contribution that the 'pond' makes to the social life of this part of Canberra.



FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.
GPO BOX 708
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FIELD NATTER

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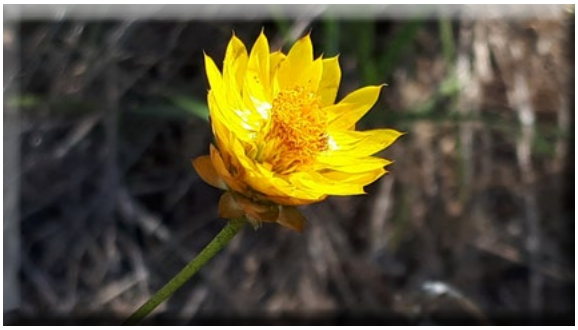
Dryandra Street bushlands excursion

On 7 February, Janet Stein showed a group of 15 field naturalists a surprisingly diverse patch of bushland at Dryandra Street, O'Connor. It is sandwiched between three main roads, and until recently had been long-neglected.

We spent more than two hours there on a pleasant summer morning. It was warm enough for insect activity, but not too hot for bird activity.

There were stands of *Eucalyptus mannifera* at the start of the walk, which gave way to *E. rossii* and then *E. macrorhyncha* as aspect changed. Mid-storey was dominated by acacias. In the lower landscape we followed a creek line where some *Crinia signifiera* (Common Eastern Froglet) were calling.

Goodenia hederacea (Ivy Goodenia) was in flower, as were a few *Dillwynia phylicoides* (Parrot-pea), and where there was no canopy cover, *Xerochrysum viscosum* (Sticky Everlasting) and *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (Common Everlasting) daisies were flowering in profusion.



Some *Einadia nutans* (Climbing Saltbush) were also seen bearing small red fruit.

Claudia provided a special highlight by pointing out a likely Indigenous marker tree. It was an old *E. rossii* with two branches that had been fused together when they were young. Claudia suggested it was probably through intervention to indicate something of significance.

Below is a list of the species observed on the day, which are a small subset of those documented on Canberra Nature Map.

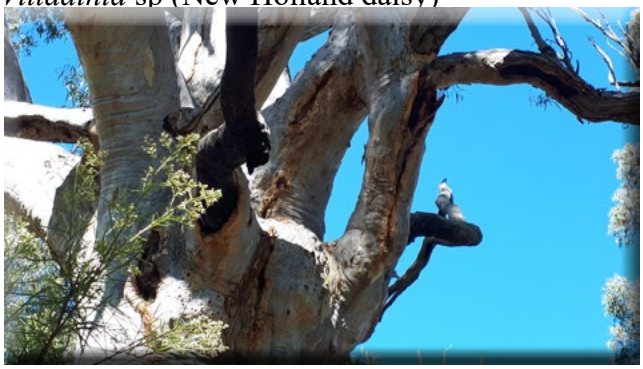
https://canberra.naturemapr.org/locations/sightings/10459

John Stein

Plants

Local native

Acacia buxifolia subsp. buxifolia (Box-leaf wattle)
Acacia genistifolia (Early wattle)
Acacia mearnsii (Black wattle)
Acacia sp hybrid (baileyana x mearnsii?)
Cassinia longifolia (Shiny Cassinia, cauliflower bush)
Cassinia quinquefaria (Rosemary Cassinia)
Cassinia sifton (Sifton bush, Chinese shrub)
Cassytha sp. (Dodder)
Cheilanthes sieberi (Rock fern)
Chloris truncata (Windmill grass)
Chrysocephalum apiculatum (Common everlasting)
Coronidium oxylepis subsp. lanatum (Woolly pointed everlasting)
Daviesia mimosoides (Bitter pea)
Dianella revoluta var. revoluta (Black-anther flax lily)
Dillwynia phylicoides (Parrot-pea)
Einadia nutans (Climbing saltbush)
Eucalyptus macrorhyncha (Red stringybark)
Eucalyptus mannifera (Brittle gum)
*Eucalyptus rossi*i (Inland scribbly gum)
Exocarpos cupressiformis (Cherry ballart)
Goodenia hederacea (Ivy goodenia)
Grevillea alpina (Mountain Grevillea/Cat's claws grevillea)
Hardenbergia violacea (False sarsaparilla)
Hydrocotyle laxiflora
Panicum effusum (hairy panic)
Pimelea linifolia (Slender rice flower)
Indigofera australis subsp. australis (Australian Indigo)
Senecio sp. (Fireweed)
Stylidium graminifolium (Grass triggerplant)
Themeda triandra (Kangaroo grass)
Vittadinia sp (New Holland daisy)



Wahlenbergia sp.(Bluebell)
Xerochrysum viscosum (Sticky everlasting)

Non-local native

Austrostipa aristiglumis (Plains Grass)
Grevillea "Canberra Gem" (*Grevillea rosmarinifolia* x juniperina (hybrid))
Hakea sp.

Weeds

Amaryllis belladonna (Naked ladies, Belladonna Lily)
Briza maxima (Quaking grass, Blowfly grass)
Centaurium sp. (Centaury)
Eragrostis curvula (African lovegrass)
Hypericum perforatum (St John's Wort)
Ligustrum sinense (Narrow-leaf privet, Chinese Privet)
Paspalum dilatatum (Paspalum)
Photinia serratifolia (Chinese photinia)
Rubus anglocandicans (Blackberry)
Erigeron sumatrensis (Tall fleabane)

Fungi

Trametes versicolor (Turkey tail)
Trametes coccinea (Southern Cinnabar Polypore, previously Scarlet Bracket)
One other

Birds

Acanthiza pusilla (Brown Thornbill)
Cacatua galerita (Sulphur-crested Cockatoo)
Cormobates leucophaea (White-throated Treecreeper)
Eopsaltria australis (Eastern Yellow Robin)
Corvus coronoides (Australian Raven)
Grallina cyanoleuca (Magpie-lark)
Malurus cyaneus (Superb Fairywren)
Manorina melanocephala (Noisy Miner)
Neochmia temporalis (Red browed Finch)
Platycercus elegans (Crimson Rosella)
Cracticus torquatus (Grey Butcher Bird)
Rhipidura albiscapa (Grey Fantail)

Insects

Apoidea: Bees

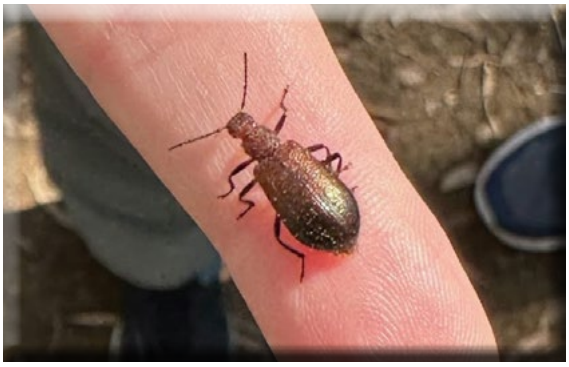
Apis mellifera
Lasioglossum sp (Chilalictus)

Lepidoptera: Moths and Butterflies

Heteronympha merope (Common Brown Butterfly)
Junonia villida (Meadow Argus)
Zizina labradus (Common Grass-Blue Butterfly)
Clania lewinii (Lewin's case moth)
Clania ignobilis (Faggot Case Moth)
Geometridae sp caterpillar (Geometer moth)
Macrobathra chrysotoxa
Scopula rubraria (Plantain moth)

Coleoptera: Beetles

Aporocera consors
Paropsisterna fastidiosa
Paropsisterna cloelia
Dicranosterna immaculata
Ecnolagria grandis



Perperus Genus (weevil)
Chauliognathus lugubris

Hemiptera: True bugs

Amorbus rubiginosus - various instars
Oechalia schellenbergii - 2 different instars
Rayieria acaciae
Ocirrhoe unimaculata

Orthoptera: Grasshoppers etc

Macrotona securiformis
Conocephalomima barameda

Diptera: Flies

Odontomyia hunterii
3 types of Robber flies
Crane Fly
Stomorhina sp
Leptotarsus clavatus

Odonata: Dragonflies

Orthetrum caledonicum

Other

Drymaplaneta communis (cockroach)
Melanococcus sp (mealy bug)
Chaetophyes compacta
Perga affinis (spitfire)
Planthopper - unidentified

Reptiles

Skink - unidentified

Amphibians

Crinia signifiera (Common Eastern Froglet)

Materials for a Bush Blitz activity base for the National Scout Camp

ACT Scouting Branch is hosting a national scout camp at the Governor General's residence in April. They are running a Bush Blitz activity base to encourage scouts to explore and understand natural environments and are looking for interesting items for a three-dimensional environmental display, for example, posters, feathers, insect cases, etc. – anything the scouts can engage with. The display will feature five local environments with models of animals, including birds, frogs, and insects, together with real plants. If you have any items that you think might be of interest, please email Elizabeth Davey (elizabeth.davey@iinet.net.au) before the end of March.

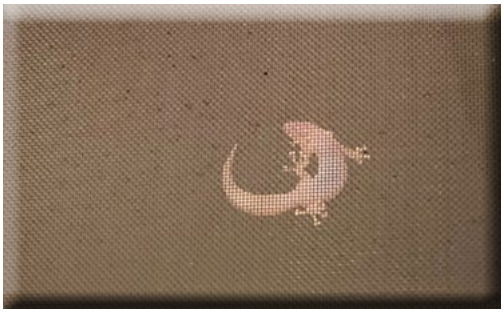
Nature in mid-Flynn

On 13 February the light I'd switched on prior to my shower, led to a delightful moth-hunting visitor.

The blurred effect came from the gecko trying to eat the struggling moth, which was larger than its head.

The Marbled Gecko later ran up the window after a large black spider but changed its mind about catching it.

The Gecko wasn't hunting on the windier evenings but another appeared on 22 February, curled on the flywire. It caught a couple of smaller moths.



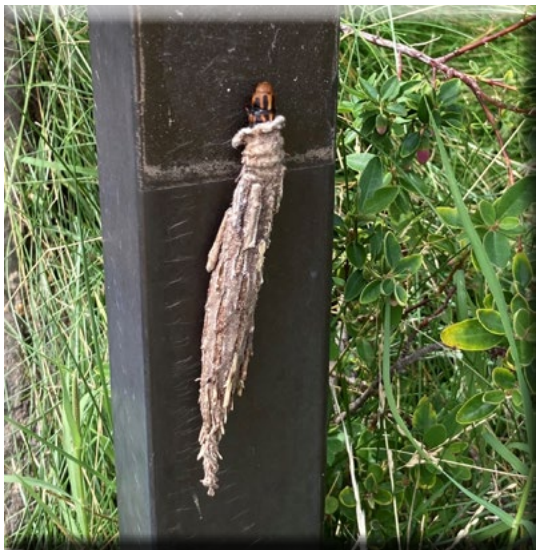
2023–2024 has been an exceptional sprummer for nature-watching in Flynn.

There have been Wrens nesting in a dense, prickly Grevillea (and three came back weeks later for a bird bath).

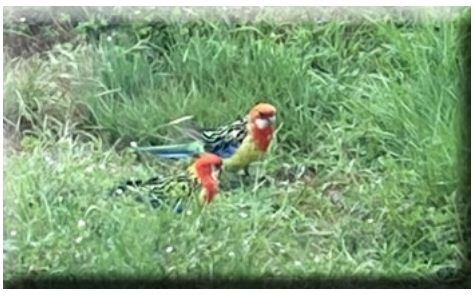
Flea beetles on the Hemp Bush near the nature strip;

tantalising non-sightings of Koels;

a Saunder's Case Moth on the letter box.



Crimson Rosellas' repeated visits for Geranium seeds among *Microlaena stipoides,* which has taken over the vegetable garden…. and once a pair of Eastern Rosellas following the Crimsons' example.



A plague of Common Mynas stealing the garden's invertebrates from native species after hatching in the Yellow Box's hollow.

Rosemary Blemings

Stop killing brown snakes – they could be a farmer's best friend

Published: 30 January 2024 [Extract]
Rick Shine

Many Australians who work outdoors – especially farmers and graziers – attempt to kill every snake they encounter, especially those thought to be venomous. In fact, research in one part of rural Australia found 38% of respondents tried to kill snakes wherever possible.

This attitude is misguided and dangerous. Despite their fearsome reputation, venomous Australian snakes pose little risk to human health and snakes are hugely beneficial on farms by consuming pests such as rodents.

New research found adult eastern brown snakes can collectively remove thousands of mice per square kilometre of farmland each year, which substantially increases farm productivity.

A study suggests the benefits of snake populations on agricultural land far outweigh the potential costs, and farmers should tolerate rather than kill them.

Brown snakes are the most common deadly snake species found in disturbed agricultural habitats in the southern half of Australia.

The snakes are fast-moving and active during the day. Brown snakes are generally persecuted in rural areas because the danger of fatal snake bites is seen to outweigh their benefits as pest controllers.

It's true that brown snakes are the most common cause of fatal snake bite in Australia, but the bites are rarely fatal. Statistics show snakes of any species kill fewer than three people per year in Australia, on average.

Around 3,000 snake bite cases are reported annually – a high proportion of which occur when a snake retaliates to being attacked by a person.

An upside to venomous snakes

The most obvious benefit of maintaining brown snake populations is to reduce rodent numbers. Introduced species of rats and mice are a major cost to Australian agriculture. In extreme cases, mice can destroy most or all of a crop.

A study found a square kilometre of farmland can contain 100 adult eastern brown snakes, even where rates of encounters between people and those snakes are low. If each adult brown snake consumes around 100 wild mice each year, which is likely an underestimate, this must equate to about 10,000 mice per square kilometre. Each mouse removed by a brown snake may eat several kilograms of grain crops over its life.

Give snakes a chance

Agricultural productivity gains are not the only benefits of tolerating brown snakes on farmland.

It would also allow a reduction in the use of chemical methods for rodent control, which can be expensive and ineffective. The chemicals can also threaten the health of humans, livestock, scavenging wildlife and pets.

Tolerating brown snakes might also reduce the incidence of snake bite. Most snake bites are inflicted when people are trying to catch or kill the reptile.

What's more, one study suggests snakes that are long-term residents of an area are less agitated by close encounters with people and know the location of nearby safe havens, and so pose relatively little threat. Culling snakes may create an influx of new animals unfamiliar with the location and not used to humans.

Finally, conserving snakes has merit in its own right. Many species of snakes are in decline, including in Australia, and should be protected.

Our findings suggest the need for a more balanced view of the costs and benefits of snakes, including brown snakes. Tolerating them may bring benefits that outweigh the already low chance of life-threatening snake bite.

Month	Speaker	Topic
3 August	Peter Abbott	Native bees
7 September	Stewart Harris	Peacock spiders
5 October	Michael Mulvaney	Canberra Nature Map
2 November	Doug Finlayson	National Rock Garden
7 December		Xmas party

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 you would be warmly welcomed.

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Outings Coordinator: outings@fieldnatsact.com
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/FieldNaturalistsAssociationCanberra

Membership application or renewal

New applications and renewals can be done through the membership page on the web site:

https://fieldnatsact.com/membership

Subscription (Single/Family $25) Donation: $.....

Subscription renewals are due on 1 July each year

Bank transfer *(renewals only: form not needed)*
Account name: Field Nats
BSB: 325 185
Account number: 03545251
Reference: **Please include your name**

If you are unable to make the payment through the web site you can contact the Membership Secretary at the email address opposite, or in writing to the address listed.

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Monthly meeting venue: Slatyer Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University