

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

**Cryptic Kelp: discovering a new south-east
Australian seaweed and the processes behind
speciation**

Speaker: Xenia Weber

Biology has become increasingly aware of the existence of species that appear identical and can only be told apart by their genetics. These 'cryptic species' have restored interest in debates about species concepts and the processes involved in speciation. Genetic, microscopy, ecological and physical examination as part of my Honours research revealed a pair of cryptic species within a south-eastern Australian seaweed, *Durvillaea potatorum*. *Durvillaea potatorum* (Australian Bull-Kelp) is an iconic, massive kelp found in the wave-swept, rocky shores of south-eastern Australia. This talk will explain how recent research has furthered our understanding of the role of both geography and ecological specialisation in the creation and maintenance of new species, as well as how major, long-term changes associated with the Pleistocene glaciation cycles can impact on biodiversity.



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Forests forever

At Easter I was fortunate to be able to attend a Forests Forever ecology camp run by Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and Environment East Gippsland (EEG) in the magnificent old growth forests at Goongerah campground north of Orbost.

All participants needed to be self sufficient with either tents, camper trailers or caravans although there was beautiful clear water and pit toilets available. The group also offered of an evening a selection of vegan soups and dessert for \$5 each as part of their major fund raising activity.

The area is part national parks and part state forest. Sadly a great deal of logging has gone on in the past and is continuing still although the group has taken the government to court to try to prevent them clear fell logging the remaining old growth forests and destroying the habitat of rare or endangered species.

There were a number of activities each day from which to choose. One of the trips included a visit to a sphagnum bog which is being threatened by the encroachment of ti-tree due to changes in water flow caused by logging. A trip to see how eucalypt forest, mixed forest and rainforest jostle for space in the landscape and finally a walk to see giant mountain plum pines with a grassy understorey and silver wattles. Another excursion was to visit a stand of ancient forest on Mt Kuark with trees estimated to be about 600 years old. It is



these trees that are earmarked for clear fell logging next and, which are the subject of a court case.

In every case there were either biologists, ecologists or environmentalists to accompany the groups and give a running commentary on what we were seeing.

There were also activities scheduled for the evening: setting up motion sensor cameras to see what was in the area at night; an art auction; a talk by a lawyer on environmental justice; a talk by a photographer on how to get the best shots.

Unfortunately, I have not done justice to the incredible beauty and special nature of this wonderful place with its hills of beautiful tall eucalypts of many species, the hillsides covered with several species of tree ferns and lovely little creeks.

These are only a few of the attractions and activities offered and sadly every day and evening it was a matter of making choices. I think I will have to go back next year as there is so much more to discover and especially as everyone was warm, welcoming and inclusive.

If you would like more information, go to <http://www.geco.org.au> or look up Forests Forever Easter Ecology Camp.

Deidre Shaw



Calls for community input on plan to protect Canberra's Scarlet Robin

The Scarlet Robin needs help to avoid extinction in the next 25 to 50 years.

The ACT government has reached out to the community for help in developing an action plan to save the vulnerable Scarlet Robin from extinction.

“The Scarlet Robin is an iconic, well-known bird familiar to many Canberrans, but is at risk of extinction in the region in the next 25 to 50 years unless we take action now,” the ACT Conservator for Flora and Fauna, Dr Annie Lane, said.

The Environment and Planning Directorate has developed a draft action plan that is available for community comment, in the hopes of securing the bird's long-term future in the ACT.

In 2015, Minister for the Environment Simon Corbell formally declared the species as vulnerable in the ACT, based on advice from the ACT scientific committee.

“The decision was based on a serious long-term population decline informed by historic and current records and research,” Dr Lane said.

“The main threat to the Scarlet Robin is the loss of its open forest and woodland foraging and breeding habitat and habitat degradation. It is also threatened by nest predation, including by the Pied Currawong, whose population has increased significantly in eastern Australia in urban and peri-urban areas.”

Dr Lane said it was important to increase community awareness of the need to protect the species in its habitat in the ACT and support community-based conservation action.

“The priority is to arrest the population decline and maintain a viable, stable, wild breeding population as a component of the indigenous biodiversity of the ACT and region.

“The action plan aims to identify and protect breeding and foraging habitat critical to the birds' survival and manage that habitat to reduce the threats.

“It promotes the survey, monitoring and research of the species to better understand its ecology and conservation, and to co-operate with other state and local government agencies to formulate and implement conservation measures.”

The draft action plan reflects the Scarlet Robin's scientific name change from *Petroica multicolor* to *Petroica boodang* based on a recent molecular study of the species and a revision of the taxonomy of Australian passerine bird species, the directorate said.

Consultation on the action plan is open until May 18 at www.timetotalk.act.gov.au . For more information visit www.environment.act.gov.au



Insects of South-eastern Australia: Book launch

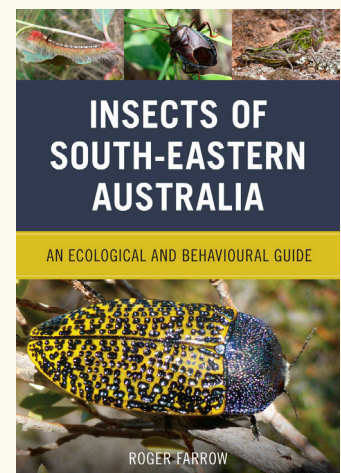
This book is an ecological and behavioural guide written by Roger Farrow.

The book will be officially launched by Geoffrey Robertson, conservationist, and former President of ACT Conservation Council and Friends of Grasslands.

When: Friday 13 May, 11.00 am to 12.30 pm

Where: Australian National Botanic Gardens Theatre and Dickson Room

The author will be signing copies of the book available for purchase from the ANBG Bookshop on the day.



Opening of Bundian Way Story Trail

The first section of the Bundian Way, one of the old Aboriginal pathways from the coast to Mt Kosciuszko, was opened last week at the Aboriginal ceremonial ground at Cocora Beach in Eden. The opening included performances by Gulaga Dancers as well as guided tours along the new Story Trail which forms part of the coastal section of the walk around Twofold Bay.

Les Kosez, acting CEO of Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council, led the tour with Darren Mongta showing people the coastal path used for centuries by Aboriginal people to look out across Twofold Bay. Darren also described the use of stone tools found along the pathway, including a tool to remove the skins of animals such as Kangaroos.

Stage two of the walk will be the section from Fisheries Beach (Bilgalera) at the southern end of Twofold Bay to Kosciusko (Targangal). It is expected that ongoing restoration of the pathway and cultural tours will provide expanding employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people.

Signposts and interpretive signage are expected to be installed over the next two months, but if you'd like to try out the new pathway before then, start at the southern end of Cocora Beach and walk 1.9 km along the coast to Quarantine Bay, a return trip of around 1–1.5 hours.

The Bundian Way, by John Blay

Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council has recently mapped one of the old routes or highways used by Aboriginal people to travel between the mountains and the coast.

The aim is to have the route recognised with heritage protection and to manage it for educational and tourism purposes. This would open the way for a greater understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage and Aboriginal approaches to land management. It would also add to our knowledge of the history of this area and to our appreciation of its natural values.

The Bundian Way is a pathway between Targangal (Kosciuszko) and Bilgalera (Fisheries Beach on the southern side of Tulemulerer (Twofold Bay)). It connects the highest part of the continent and the coast via an ancient Aboriginal route that brought together the people of the greater region, most notably for ceremonies associated with whaling in springtime at Twofold Bay and moth hunting in the high country during summer. Of all the routes in the network of old ways that lead from the coast to the high country, the Bundian Way is the best preserved, with a considerable part away from made roads and the remainder following trails and minor country roads.

On its way to the coast the Bundian Way crosses the Snowy River and

passes through some of the wildest, most rugged and beautiful country in Australia. It travels through Delegate and the village of Towamba, finishing near Boydtown on Twofold Bay. The route passes a multitude of localities highly significant to the Aboriginal community. In many parts the influence of Aboriginal land management is still obvious. For example, at Merambego, on the eastern edge of Kosciusko National Park, fire and the results of Aboriginal burning are evident in its grasslands and grassy woodlands.

Prior to surveying the Bundian Way, considerable consultation and historical research was undertaken. This took into account historical writings and maps, as well as stories, oral history and surveyors' scarred trees and journals. The survey of the route started in October 2010, with up to five Koori personnel at a time walking different sections of the 335 km length of the Bundian Way in legs of up to 8 days. Many parts, especially those in the wilderness areas, had to be visited again and again to clarify details and establish the old pathway route.

Travelling Stock Reserves form an important part of the Bundian Way. Across the Monaro watered campsites about twelve km apart were used by the old Aboriginal people. The bullockies and travellers also found they made excellent

campsites and from the 1870s many were made Crown Land reserves, now known as Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs). Artefacts and other indications demonstrate the earlier occupation.

The survey team recorded a large range of artefacts along the entire route, as well as scarred trees and very substantial yamfields (including yam plants like Early Nancy, Vanilla Lily and Diuris or Donkey Orchid), which provided an important food source for people making their way to and from the moth ceremonies. Due to the regularity and quantity of evidence it became clear that the Bundian Way should be regarded as a single site, one very large continuous place, rather than a number of individual sites.

The information gathered through the survey will be maintained at the Monaroo-Bobberer-Gudu Keeping Place at Jigamy Farm near Eden and used for management and educational purposes. The plan is to provide cultural sharing through activities such as guided walks, talks and cultural camps.

For Further information and to download the survey report visit www.bundianway.com.au or contact John Blay, Bundian Way Project Officer for Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council at info@bundianway.com.au

BUSH CAPITAL: the natural history of the ACT.... a great way to learn.

We have until June to visit the exhibition at Canberra Museum & Gallery (CMAG).

I've been twice so far and still haven't done each of the exhibits justice.

The way Ian Fraser has woven facts, anecdotes, fun and names' origins into the well-phrased captions he's created is very clever. On several occasions he's also managed to send important messages home without being too bullish or critical.

I made a note of some of the new entries into my memory bank!

In the introduction to the **Wetlands section** "so many living things rely on us recognising their needs as well as our own"

Casuarinas "They don't like competition and actively suppress growth within the groves by chemicals either from their roots or in fallen branch-lets."

Dragonflies "270 million years ago dragonflies with 70cm wingspans terrorised the skies....some 50 dragonfly and damselfly species can be found in the ACT, around any water-body."

"**Water rats** hunt mussels which they will leave out in the sun until the shell opens."

Eastern Great Egret "....millions slaughtered world wide for fashionable hat ornaments."

Straw-Necked Ibis "Baby Ibis are hatched with short straight bills to facilitate feeding by their parents."

Grebes "....have heavy skeletons and even swallow small pebbles as ballast....to stay under water."

White-Throated Tree-Creeper "Like other local species the White Throated Tree-Creeper needs hollows in mature trees to nest".

Jumping spider "They are common in gardens and provide both enjoyment and good pest control".

Daddy Longlegs "Just about any healthy house has a Daddy Longlegs or two, busily engaged in reducing the numbers of less welcome tenants such as silverfish, flies, mosquitoes, White-tailed and Red-backed Spiders."

Australian Raven "...able to count to some extent and hide food for later use – and unerringly recall where they put it."

Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoos "Their enormous bill can crush iron-hard Banksia cones... To breed they need deep hollows in old forest trees that must be around 200 years old".

Large Forest Bat "...but moths have learnt to dive away from their pings, or even to jam them with their own sonar." (I'd never considered until recently that moths would make noises. This came as confirmation.)

I also recently went specifically to the **Questacon Spiders Exhibit**. This was at Rachael's insistence. She's now 16 and grew up with Lucy trying not to pass on her arachnophobia. Lucy's done well because Rachael said "You've got to see it Grandma". She was right. We have until October for this and then it moves, I think, to Sydney. We may turn more people from arachnophobia through this great show and perhaps even show young people that the bush is as full of colour, excitement, drama, wonder, awe, surprises and discoveries as any screen-based show.

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 **Phone:** 6258 4724

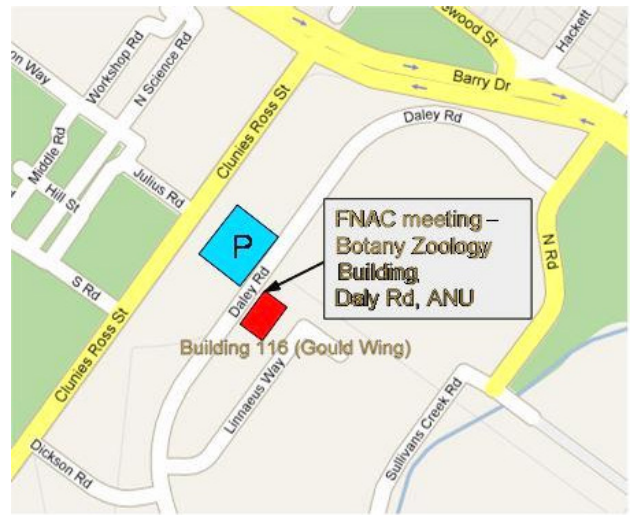
Email: fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au

Website: under construction

All newsletter contributions welcome.

Email: alison.milton@health.gov.au

Editor



Monthly meeting venue: Building 116, Daley Rd, 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: