

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

May 2023

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

FIELD NATTER

MEETING—Thursday 4 May 2023

7:00 pm Australian National University

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

Nature rich cruise

Speaker: Kevin McCue

Kevin has very kindly offered to give a presentation on his recent trip to sub-Antarctic islands. This was a nature-rich cruise.

Note: this is our first meeting in around three years but parking should be available in Cunningham Close, though spaces are limited. I believe a Zoom option may also be available with details to be sent out before the meeting.



Exciting new discovery of a new species of butterfly: only found in the ACT and Kosciuszko National Park, thanks to Canberra Nature Map citizen scientist Matthew Frawley. See page 2.

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New species of butterfly identified, native to ACT and parts of Kosciuszko National Park

The first new species of Australian butterfly to be discovered in eight years has finally been identified after it was first photographed in 2017.



Five years after being photographed the spotted trident-blue butterfly has been formally identified.

The butterflies have only been found in the southern ACT and adjacent areas of NSW.

CSIRO National Insect Collection Associate Professor Michael Braby says finding an entirely new species is quite remarkable.

The spotted trident-blue butterfly – or *Cyprotides maculosus* – is normally found in high altitudes in southern ACT and adjacent areas of New South Wales, in the areas of Namadgi and Kosciuszko National Parks.

CSIRO National Insect Collection Associate Professor Michael Braby described the discovery as “significant”.

He said it was not uncommon to find new variants of butterfly species or subspecies, but this was something different altogether.

“To turn up something completely new, that’s quite rare. That doesn’t happen too often,” he said.

“The last one was eight years ago in 2015, so to have it on our doorstep of the ACT – just 50 kilometres from Canberra – is really quite remarkable.”

He said discovering a new species like the spotted trident-blue highlighted how incomplete the knowledge of local biodiversity was.

“Butterflies, compared with other insects are pretty well known,” he said.

“We estimate more than 90 per cent of the butterflies are described in the taxonomic inventory, it’s pretty close to completion.

“The fact that we can find a new species just on our doorstep highlights that the inventory of our biodiversity hasn’t been fully catalogued or studied.”

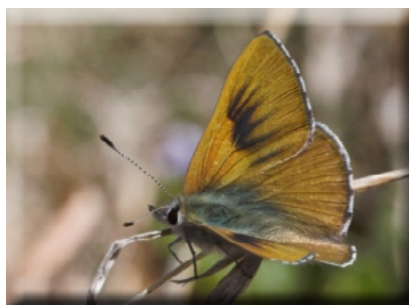
“Why on earth has this thing been overlooked for so long?”

Associate Professor Braby said the first photo of the Spotted trident-blue, which was taken in Namadgi National Park by a citizen scientist, left him “a bit suspicious” that what he was seeing might be a new species.

Then in 2019 the first specimen was collected at Kosciuszko National Park by one of his colleagues, Justin Armstrong.

“These individuals had very large spots, so that sort of rang some alarm bells, but there were some other differences too,” he said.

“The underside colour was much paler – they had a lot more yellow on the underside of the forewing – and the other side is this brilliant coppery sort of bronze colour, whereas the other species is much more purple-pink.”



In 2020 and 2021, Associate Professor Braby went looking for the butterflies’ breeding habitat and what their food source was, and found the answers to his questions in subalpine frost hollows.

“They live in these very specialised grassy frost hollows around the southern Namadgi and in the adjacent Kosciuszko National Park, and the altitude varies from about 1,100 metres up to 1,500 metres,” he said.

Associate Professor Braby said the Spotted trident-blue butterfly made its home in these frost hollows because they contained the plant they eat and lay eggs on, the *Hakea microcarpa*.

He said during experiments he found the caterpillars were willing to eat plants that were related to *Hakea microcarpa* when in captivity, but female butterflies would not lay their eggs on anything but that specific plant.

Associate Professor Braby said their strange habitat and unconventional flying schedule likely contributed to the Spotted trident-blue butterfly not being discovered earlier.

“We were thinking ‘why on earth has this thing been overlooked for so long? Why has it taken so long for people to discover this?’ and we suspect it’s a combination of the fact that it flies fairly early in the year and it’s in this very specialised habitat,” he said.

“It’s not the sort of the place you’d really go to look for butterflies.”

“They also fly quite early. It’s around about springtime [around] October, November, when most insects in Namadgi don’t really start flying until the summer months.”

ABC News 18 April 2023

Responding to the results of the survey of members

The FNAC Committee met on the 16th March to consider the results of the survey of members. The Committee acknowledged members' interest in attending regular meetings with an invited speaker and resolved to resume meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 7.30pm beginning on the 4th May, subject to the availability of a suitable venue. The ANU will be contacted to see if the previous arrangement for use of the Jan Anderson Seminar Room might be continued. The Conservation Council Rooms and the Uniting Church in Weston, alternative venues suggested by survey respondents, will be investigated if the ANU rejected FNAC's request. The Committee also agreed to investigate IT capability for streaming meeting presentations live via Zoom for members unable to attend in person.

A position of FNAC Meetings Organizer will be created with responsibility for all tasks associated with running the meeting including room bookings, liaising with speakers, and arranging a thank you gift. Identifying potential speakers will be the responsibility of the broader membership.

Deidre Shaw has kindly agreed to take on the role of Meetings Organiser. Thank you, Diedre!

There was strong support to continue regular local field outings. A FNAC sub-committee will be established to develop procedures and protocols and to assist planning for member led field outings. Survey respondents who expressed an interest in the role of Field Trip / Outings Coordinator or related assistance will be invited to join this sub-committee.

As a first step to increase membership and awareness of the association and its aims, FNAC meetings and outings will be advertised on local events notice boards and the like. Other good ideas aimed at fostering an interest in natural history and attracting new members were also discussed for possible implementation at a later date.

The FNAC website (www.fieldnatsact.com) was recognised as an important source of information for potential new members. The website was recently migrated to a new hosting service and more content added including past newsletters. What other content do you think should be there? Did you find the website easy to navigate? Please email your ideas to Kevin (mccue.kevin@gmail.com).

Janet Stein

Activities

Pinnacle Bird Walk: 9.00 am, Sunday 30 April 30 – Dungowan Street, Hawker

John is again hosting a guided bird walk on behalf of the Friends of The Pinnacle. You may have noticed the migrating honeyeaters and fantails appearing in your gardens recently. The birds are on the move and many of them will be stopping over at the Pinnacle, either for a brief rest or for a longer stay over the winter. Join John for a stroll around the reserve to see how many of the local residents and migrating species we can spot.

Please dress appropriately for the conditions and the possibility of some off-track excursions along the way.

Bring water and your binoculars and/or camera if you wish.

All ages are welcome, but John will have to limit numbers, so get in early to book your spot.

You can either email John Brannan <johnbrannan@tpg.com.au> or call on 0405 331 405.

If you have any ideas for monthly outings, please let the committee know.

Raffle prizes needed

With the resumption of monthly meetings I am presuming that the monthly raffle will also resume. Therefore 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.





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

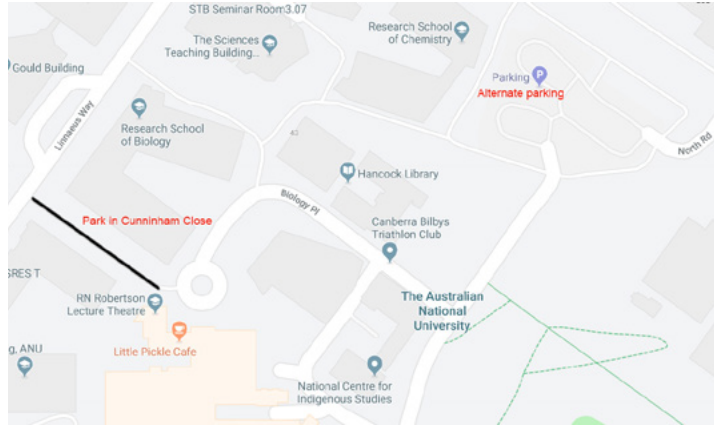
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Membership: membership@fieldnatsact.com

Newsletter Editor: editor@fieldnatsact.com



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:

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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**