



FIELD NATTER

Field Naturalist's
Association of
Canberra

November 2006

Field Naturalist's Association of Canberra

Nature, Culture and Human Impacts in East Timor A Sea to Summit Transect Tom Heinsohn

Like many islands in the seasonally dry Lesser Sunda Archipelago, the landscape of Timor has been massively transformed through thousands of years of human settlement and agricultural activity. Principal influences include anthropogenic fire, land clearance, grazing and browsing by introduced ungulates, and the introduction of a variety of exotic plants and animals. In this presentation the audience will be taken on a photographic journey from sandy beaches and jagged headlands to the 2,963 m summit of the island's highest mountain. This composite journey will be used as a vehicle for exploring human impacts on the environment and remnants of the original flora and fauna. Made in mid 2001, this photographic journey across East Timor also captures a landscape scorched by war but illuminated by the hopes and passions of a massive political rally the day before the young nation's first elections. Convoys of trucks packed with ecstatic people and festooned in the bright colours of hope stretched for kilometre after kilometre.

The presenter

Tom Heinsohn is a visiting fellow in the Department of Archaeology and Natural History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University. He has just completed a PhD on the history of zoogeographic interpretation of the Indo-Australian Archipelago, has a M.Sc. in vertebrate biogeography, and has published a series of journal articles and book chapters on vertebrate biogeography and ethnobiology. Until its demise, he was a regular contributor to *Nature Australia* magazine for which he wrote a series of articles and photo essays on the island ecology and ethnobiology of cuscuses. Ever since hand-raising an orphaned brush-tail possum as a child, he has had a particular passion for possums and has been accused of being a bit possum-like in his own habits.

"Barking up a Gum Tree" an exhibition of paintings by Rosemary von Behrens.
October 23 - November 10 2006
Belconnen Gallery, Belconnen Community Centre, Swanson Court (between Bus Interchange and Library)
Monday to Friday
9 am to 4.30 pm

Inside a visit to Lowden forest, the frog chorus report and a film review

Outing- Namadgi & Yankee Hat Sunday 5th November 10am

Namadgi is the one of the largest reserves in the ACT. We will be visiting two key areas. The Namadgi visitors centre that has been flooded with drought affected species such as white browed woodswallows and also has restless flycatchers and diamond firetails, both rare species in the ACT. The site is also a great spot for plants with a variety of habitats from woodland, dry forest and grassland. We will then move on to Yankee Hat one of the best local sites for rock art, plus having interesting ecosystems including montane bogs/swamp, grassland (including yam daisies) and forest. The second walk is easy but a reasonable distance (2-3 hours) whereas the first is a leisurely stroll. Car pooling will be available so contact Benj on 0409 544 557 or discuss at the meeting. Bring sunscreen and hat as the sites are very glarey, and wet weather gear if required. For Yankee Hat brochure see Environment ACT website- http://www.environment.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/13773/yankeehatwalkingtrackbrochure.pdf

ANNUAL MEETING DELIBERATIONS

Chris Bunn chaired the monthly & AGM meetings in Benj's absence. (In WA for work)

There was no copy of the Minutes from 2005's AGM *Whilst notes had been taken & the office-bearers details had been forwarded to the Registrar General Rosemary B admitted there was no hard-copy record.* Philip moved that the proceedings from that meeting be accepted.*

Chris spoke to highlights of the President's report which had been circulated in the October *Field Natter*. Of particular importance was the finalising of FNAC's being insured, the consistently maintained program of high-quality speakers, the quality of the *Field Natter* & Benj's significant effort as President in spite of bouts of illness.

Paula spoke to her Treasurer's report, also included in the newsletter, & with copies available. Debbie Saunders was especially thanked for Auditing the Association's books.

Philip suggested that the Term Investment funds be discussed at a Committee meeting with a view to making them a more active investment through Diversified Investment Funds. Dierk & Rosemary von Behrens seconded this idea.

Chris raised the point that at each AGM there should be formal mention of the Subscription for the new year. Whilst Committee had supported the Treasurer's recommendation that Subs remain at \$20 p.a. this was now officially declared at the AGM.

Dierk had agreed to be Returning Officer.

He declared all positions vacant.

President Benj Whitworth

Vice-President Chris Bunn

Secretary Rosemary Blemings

Treasurer Bob Lehman***

Public Officer Chris Bunn

Committee Paula Harwood

Debbie Saunders

George Heinsohn

Margaret Kalms

Philip Bell**

Newsletter editor Chris Bunn

Speakers organiser Rosemary von Behrens

Raffle organiser Pam Fenning

Conservation Council representatives Tony Lawson

Dierk von Behrens

***A motion was proposed by Pam Fenning, seconded Mike Doyle that the vacancy for the position of Treasurer would be resolved by the Committee asap.

***Bob Lehman offered his services as Treasurer after the formal meetings. This offer was greatly appreciated.

** Philip signified his willingness to being on the Committee over coffee.

* I don't recall ever having written a formal minutes for the AGMs so it's lucky I have not been arrested.

Rosemary

For the members' meeting:

Margaret Kalms spoke of her passion for conserving the unique biodiversity of Australian flora & fauna & the shame of the country's record of lost species.

Various projects & organisations have sought to redress this situation over recent decades. In particular she spoke of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy which buys & maintains a dozen reserves & sanctuaries around the country. She showed a DVD of Mornington in the Kimberleys to illustrate AWC's work & had a selectio of her photos, as cards, on sale to support her enthusiasm for the organisation.

Dierk von Behrens spoke of his walk, with Ian Haynes, along the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia. He displayed many illustrated 'souvenirs' from those travels for those who had time to be tempted. But he also mentioned some of the logistics of the walk, the staged huts for hikers & whetted our appetites with descriptions of the natural features of the areas traversed.

Rosemary Blemings asked members to jot down some of the "we can make a difference" actions they take in order to reduce 'ecological footprints' in day-to-day life. Suggestions ranged from Reduce, Reuse, Recycle to eating less & preparing food at home. Some kept chooks, there were several vegetable-growers, many had ideas for reducing electricity & water use. We nearly all mentioned the need for exercise. Perhaps environmental organisations could help the public by compiling lists leading to handbooks of suggestions for living more sustainably?

Welcome to our new member for the month

Julie Pettit - from Hackett

And thanks from the Treasurer for those that have provided donations to the club. The committee decided not to individually identify such people, but thank them for helping to keep our subscription at a low level

WWF launches shorebird conservation toolkit

To help protect and enhance shorebird habitat WWF-Australia, with funding from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, has launched a Shorebird Conservation Toolkit:
<<http://promomail.adrenalinmedia.com.au/ch/b6m1w5/131781/2670cmgtp.html>>

A VISIT TO LOWDEN FOREST

Hi

Just wanted to let you know about my trip to Lowden Forest out of Rossi.

I took the road out past St Stephens church on the road to Captains Flat, and stopped there for a look.

There are a lot of hawthorn (I think) which a few weeks ago were still bare. I was enchanted to be entertained by a grey fantail who came whisking around very close to me. But also, there were a few small flocks of those hard to identify little brown birds that so confuse an inexperienced birdwatcher (me) who were also flitting back and forth through the hawthorns and were not particularly shy, if I had been faster with my camera, so if anyone wants to get a bit closer to these little birds, this is not a bad stop.

We took the turn off to Rossi, through Rossi and follow the signs to Lowden Forest. The road is okay for ordinary cars with a bit of care. There are toilets and picnic tables. Take your own water, but in season, fires are obviously allowed.

Lowden Forest is lovely. Its too bad a bit more of the history of the Water Wheel is not posted but its very interesting. I was lucky enough to meet a very old lady a few years ago who was the daughter of the builder of the water wheel and she had memories of going out to the camp, before the water wheel was built, by bullock cart. It must have take a few days to get there. She told me a little bit about the timber camp.

If you walk around the short walks you can see where the old tracks and old loading areas must have been, where the timber would have been dragged up to put on the carts. There is an old winch, that could have been made there, as well as an old steam engine, on

site. The thought of that monster steam engine clanking its way out there in its working days to get to the site, was a bit mindstretching. The noise must have carried for miles.

There is another short walk down to the creek where there are a lot of tree ferns, past some granite boulders, but for the bird watchers, there is a pair of whip birds living in the gully. Its ages since I have heard whip birds. You could clearly separate the call between the two of them, though I didn't sight them. Forgot my binoculars, typical. On one of the other walks I finally spied some fungi on a fallen tree trunk. The area obviously gets more rain than the captains flat side, from all the ferns, its quite moist. So I thought there would be more fungi to find than I did.

So if anyone wants to add it to an excursion, a bit of carpooling would reduce the petrol cost and it's a nice day out.

We came back through Hoskinstown past the radio telescope array. Its worth a stop there too, to have a look, even from the fence. I want to find out if they have tours.

A coffee in Bungendore and a visit to the art gallery, or the Norman Lindsay gallery and home. Great day. So if you are a bit of a bird watcher or a fern fan, or a fungi fan (I reckon there has to be more) Lowden Forest is worth a visit. The difference in the local climate is also of note and the micro climates on site, going down to the creek and up the other side, there is much to notice. Many different eucalypts, which I wish I was better at identifying.

And a PS – everyone who loves lichens and mosses needs to go to Botanical Gardens and visit the Information Centre on the opposite side to the shop and find out how you can build and grow your own moss garden in a kitchen sink. Its brilliant!!!

Cheers Leonie Bell

AUSTRALIAN NATURAL HISTORY MEDALLION 2006

The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (Est. 1880) began awarding the Medallion in 1939 as a way of recognising and appreciating "some person's signal service" towards protecting native flora and fauna. Rule 6 read "Any person is eligible for the Award who it can be shown has increased popular or scientific knowledge of Australian Flora and Fauna..."

FNAC prepared a nomination for **Ian Fraser** and we heard in early September that Ian's nomination for this annual award had been successful. We received letters of support from Jack Holland of Canberra Ornithologists Group, Tritia Evans of 666 Radio Canberra, Dr Rosemary Purdie, the ACT Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Maxine Cooper as Executive Director of Environment ACT, Lorraine Oliver Threatened Species unit DEC NSW, Geoff Butler and Alison McKenzie a 'record-holding' Environment Tours participant. The presentation is on November 1st, in Blackburn, Vic..



Pam Fenning handles the fence on FNAC's September excursion

Photo Margaret Kalms

Australian governments lag - businesses call for action on global warming!

Origin Energy has just released its 2006 Annual Report. Its chairman, **Kevin McCann**, under the heading Climate Change states: "As a major investor in the energy sector, climate change is a significant business risk for **Origin Energy**. As public awareness of the impact of climate change in the Australian community increases, we believe that it will be an issue of increasing community concern. We have approached all of our investment decisions anticipating a **carbon constrained future**, while recognising the rules to manage greenhouse gas emissions on a national basis have yet to be determined by the Australian and state governments. **The lack of a long-term framework for applying a carbon cost is a major impediment** to investment in the energy sector..."

We are seeking planning approval for two large gas-fired power stations (Mortlake in Victoria and Spring Gully in Queensland), which are capable of operating at less-than-half of the existing pool greenhouse intensity. Commercial commitment will be contingent on Federal and state government policies that recognise the long-term value of cleaner forms of power generation.

We are also reducing the greenhouse gas intensity to our customers' energy consumption, through **green energy sales to more than 90,000 customers**. We are a major investor in **SLIVER solar technology** and **Geodynamics**, which is proving-up a hot-dry-rocks geothermal project in the Cooper Basin with the potential to provide base-load renewable electricity.

We believe that, if a **supporting policy framework on carbon cost** emerges, Australia can play its part in an effective

international response to climate change through reduced greenhouse emissions."

Origin Energy's Managing Director, **Grant King** expands on these concerns under the heading: Sustainability. "... This year, I joined with the chief executive officers of **BP Australia, Insurance Australia Group, Swiss Re, Visy Industries** and **Westpac**, and the Executive Director of the **Australian Conservation Foundation** to form the **Australian Business Round Table on Climate Change**.

CSIRO research, commissioned by the Roundtable, concluded that Australia is highly vulnerable to climate change, with significant impacts on two leading export earners – agriculture and tourism.

The Roundtable also commissioned the **Allen Consulting Group** to analyse the cost to Australia to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions as part of an international response. The research demonstrated that **Australia can deliver significant reductions at an affordable cost**. The research also showed that the longer we delay, the more expensive it becomes for business and the Australian economy.

The Roundtable has called for a carbon price signal and clear policy framework to encourage innovation and investment in emerging and breakthrough technologies.

I believe such policies would accelerate several projects that can mitigate the growth of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions." (This item and bolding by **Dierk von Behrens**.)

An Inconvenient Truth— a film review

I found the movie very well made. The science is clearly explained with excellent visuals. The greenhouse and climate change sceptics are answered in detail.

But he does tell this as a personal story -

As a boy who grew up in two worlds, living 8 months of every year with his parents in a

Washington hotel while his father attended Congress - and then the following 4 months of every year on the family farm with boyhood joy in getting back closer to nature.

On starting college and meeting the American professor who carried out the original statistical research leading to the first measurements of

the dramatic changes in CO₂ atmospheric levels which have occurred during our lifetimes,

Then how he tried when first elected to congress a generation ago to raise this matter in Congress and also invited his former professor to testify to an incredulous group of politicians, His lifelong dedication to spreading the message

of climate change through over a thousand presentations of his Powerpoint demos on the topic across every backwood of the US and in public lectures across the globe.

He comes across as a somewhat lonely figure in some way - a late middle-aged politician, somewhat overweight. He speaks in a matter-of-fact way about

(Continued on page 5)

Frog Chorus at Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

The October outing report

Paula and Rosemary

In the hope of hearing a frog chorus, we made the October outing an early evening visit to Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve - one of the best frog habitats in Canberra. Frogs are a popular group of animals and this outing attracted considerable interest from non-members. In all, twenty three frog fans, including eight FNAC members, assembled at the Mulligan's Flat car park.

Once we had introduced ourselves, Paula introduced the frogs and we listened to recordings of the species that we were most likely to hear. This also gave a few latecomers a chance to join us before we headed off into the Reserve. As we made our way towards the dams, there was still enough light for us to enjoy some birds and large groups of kangaroos.

When we passed the first dam, it was still quite light. The frogs

were silent but there were even more 'roos and several sulphur-crested cockatoos around the dam. By the time we arrived at the second dam, the frogs were beginning to call. As they were warming up, Debbie, a FNAC member and regular Frogwatch volunteer,



told the group a bit more about the Frogwatch surveys. She invited people to join her at another dam that she was about to survey. Eight of the group joined Deb whilst the rest stayed a little longer before returning to the first dam. As we listened to the chorus building up, we were able to work

out which species were calling and how many of them there were. Deb's Frogwatch assistants were also lucky to see two species of frog sitting between the reed clumps - one of which they identified as a Spotted Grass Frog.

During the evening a total of five species of frog were identified. *Crinia parinsignifera* (Plains Froglet) was easily the most common species that we heard. We also heard *Crinea signifera* (Common Eastern Froglet), *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* (Spotted Grass Frog), *Litoria verreauxii* (Whistling Tree Frog) and *Litoria peronii* (Peron's Tree Frog). Considering the very dry

weather that we have had recently, we were all relieved to hear so many frogs. Other wildlife that we encountered included micro-bats, which occasionally flew near us, and a Boobook which was calling as the full moon began to rise and we returned to our cars.

(Continued from page 4)

his defeat by Bush in the race for President. Such a defeat would be likely to cause "relevance deprivation" syndrome in almost anyone in his situation. But he has clearly got himself up and moving again with his lifelong passion to spread the message about what is happening to planet Earth and what we can do to fix it.

In my recollection, Gore always came across as a slow-talking, slightly stilted figure. But in this movie we get a more rounded view of the man - and his attachment to his family and his core values.

I greatly enjoyed his quotes from Mark Twain - which clearly echoed many of his hard-learned lessons from politics - such as:

"It's not what we don't know that is likely to do us much harm. What gets us into real strife are the things we know for absolutely darned sure - and they just ain't so."



A newly hatched red-capped plover or for older birdos the red-capped dotterel (*Charadrius veredus*). The adults are described in Graham Pizzey's book as "A plump little wader with short black bill. Often runs ahead along shore on twinkling black legs; bobs tail

Photo John Perkins (submitted by Dierck)

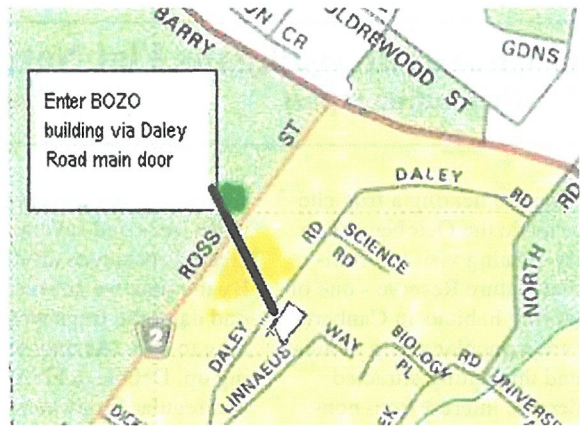


**Field Naturalist's
Association of Canberra**

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: Benj Whitworth, tel 0409 544 557
Secretary: Rosemary Blemings, tel 02 6258 4724
Website: www.geocities.com/fieldnaturalist/index.html
Newsletter editor: Chris Bunn <chris_b@webone.com.au>
Tel 02 6241 2968. Member contributions welcome.



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 44, Daley Rd, Australian National University. Park in Linnaeus Way. Meetings start at 8 pm and are followed by refreshments.

FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.
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CANBERRA ACT 2601

Print Post Approved
PP 233744/00022

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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 \$20) Donation: \$.....

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: FRIEND? OTHER? Please specify:

Handwritten notes in blue ink, including "10/10/2008" and "6/10/2008".