

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

November 2022
ISSN: 1836-2761



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

FIELD NATTER

November 2022 newsletter No evening meetings until further notice



The Murrumbidgee River in full flood at Hay, NSW. Note the reflection of the painted silo in the water. This is normally a park. A once in 100 years photo.



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October field trip: Wamboin

Jo very kindly invited us to explore her rural property at Wamboin, which she bought in 1981, then subsequently built a house a few years later and has planted a substantial number of native plants since.

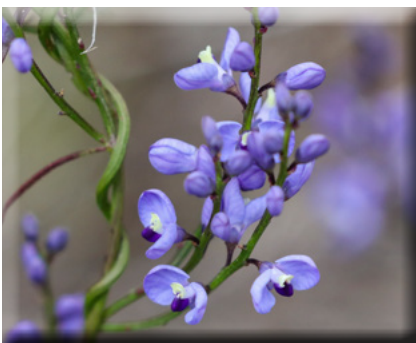
After a congenial cup of tea and biscuits she led us through meandering tracks through her property. But even before this the house itself held a fascination with the collection of geological rocks on the kitchen window sill and I've never been in a house that had a microscope and seed collection for examination on the kitchen counter.

Some of the plants on the property are original, however she has planted quite a few trees and shrubs that she encountered on her various trips around Australia so not all are native to this region.

She first led us to a small pond and even from the house we could hear the chorus of frogs that live in this and the larger pond further up the property, through which a small creek flows, though after all the recent rain, the ground was quite wet in a number of places.

Among the flowering herbaceous plants were Hoary Sunrays, Billy Buttons and Ranunculas. Rosettes of Greenhood orchids were not yet showing signs of flower buds and the wetter areas had a number of sundews, yet to flower and of course mosses and lichens, some of which were flowering. Early Nancys were everywhere.

There were a number of Acacia species in flower as well as a patch of *Comesperma volubile*.



Overturning rocks looking for Scorpions we uncovered two species of frogs: a Spotted Grass Frog and a Smooth Toadlet.



We did also find a number of Black Rock Scorpions as well as a couple of large Centipedes.



However, we shouldn't forget the invertebrates. One rock revealed a very interesting large Leopard Slug.



We didn't see many insects apart from a few Eucalyptus leaf beetles and numerous tiny grasshoppers that seemed to be everywhere.



However, we also found at least two Keyes Matchstick grasshoppers. Jo was very aware of the identity of these but they are considered rare in the ACT so it was an interesting observation.

After photographing the Sundews, I turned around to see an Echidna making its way across the field we had just passed through. Of course, we had to reace down to take a photo.



While not as easily photographed, we heard or saw Satin Bowerbirds, Currawongs, Eastern Spinebills and Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike among the bird life.

Back at the house for a very late lunch on the back steps, we had a few kangaroos pass close by to go and rest on the front lawn waiting to be fed. One had a young joey in her pouch.

In all we had a very enjoyable outing and thank Jo for letting us explore her lovely property and for her hospitality with cups of tea and biscuits.

Alison Milton

Reflections on and from our visit to Jo's place near Wamboin

I write this after eight hours of teamwork where volunteers presented 6000 native plants for sale to local enthusiasts. How many of the buyers will be creating, restoring and maintaining wildlife friendly habitat in the spaces in and around their homes?

Jo bought her property in the 1980s allowing the sclerophyll forest, the shaley woodland, creek lines and open native grassland to be a continuing haven, a home to the thousands of species whose ancestors stretch back millions of years.



Jo has protected the place from



invasive species like those we could see on public land and adjacent properties as we drove towards Wamboin from our suburbs. She studied and propagated her local species for others to enjoy and, like us on 4 October, has shown hundreds around the block that has views west towards distant Mount Majura.

Memories

Jo cautiously lifted and exactly replaced shaley stones revealing hidden invertebrate treasures including ants' colonies, spiders,

beetles, centipedes and scorpions and at least two frog species very distant from the creeks and dam.

A lone Waxlip Orchid showed that floral displays in woodlands nearer the suburbs are resulting from warmth whereas Jo's property is still recovering from winter.



There were treats of electric-blue highlighted by the sun on multiple *Comesperma volubile* plants scrambling over shrubs growing on the ridge line.



Sedges have edges, rushes have round (leaves) a helpful phrase from Morgan.

Multitudes of frogs calling near the dam, along the creek or wherever the grasses were damp enough.

The moments when we stood still listening to a serenade from a Grey Shrike-thrush silhouetted against the sky high on a Eucalypt's dead branches.

Two Cunninghams Skinks basked in the intermittent sunshine on a large, long-fallen tree trunk. They could rapidly retreat into the timber's crevices and hollows but their camouflage protected them from predators.

Habitateers

I think of those with light footprints who respectfully live in and care for other species

habitats as habitateers. They are volunteers (or volunteer with their money) who, with wonder, love, kinship, knowledge, and curiosity, take time to observe, record and share their experiences while regenerating the natural health of places drastically changed since colonisation.

Feelings for nature, for country and being caringly regenerative, deeply resonate in our souls in the spirit of being alive.

The rewards of being connected to a place, belonging within and being part of a community, making a difference for other species, sharing delight in the beauty and diversity of the natural world are powerful drivers of volunteers' enthusiasm and persistence.

Whether on a bush block or in suburbia, how many of us are there, living lightly and non-exploitatively on Country respectfully immersed in other species habitats?

We read the landscape, content to make the most of what we have without adversely affecting others.

How many of us have our own personal or official covenants with nature to take only what we need as First Nations have done the world over?



Thank you Jo for hosting and leading our explorations and remembering Ian Anderson, an exemplary habitateer and Field Natter.

Rosemary Blemings

President's report Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Inc. 2021–2022

Meetings

As Covid progressed Field Nats changed from no evening meetings with speakers to meetings every two months at ANU's Robertson Building. Even these didn't resume in 2022 but monthly walks visiting nature reserves and properties have been enjoyable and successful.

Your committee: Robyn Black, Dierk and Rosemary von Behrens, Rhian Williams, Lucy Bastecky, Kevin McCue, Janet and John Stein, Rosemary Blemings have met several times this year via Zoom. Thank you sincerely for your support and commitment.

The *Field Natter* succeeds due to Alison's indomitable, editorial persistence, observation skills and her resulting, amazing photographs and articles. Colin, Deidre, Kevin Mc, Lucy and Rosemary B have contributed their quality naturalists' accounts and observations to add to the newsletters' diversity.

Activities in the form of walks through reserves, Janet & John's property and the ANBG have been well attended, showing the appeal of sharing experiences in learning from the abundant and fascinating nature in our region.

Thirty-seven members participated in walks – activities i.e. 28 households and we enjoyed meeting their friends and guests from kindred organisations.

- ANBG Threatened species walk: leader, Naarilla
- Aranda Bushland attracted members of ANPSC, the native plants' society: Kevin
- Bluetts Block west of Denman Prospect in the Molonglo valley

- Gossan Hill, Bruce, Janet and John (then Flea Bog Flat): Bird species list from Sandra.
- Honeyeater migration in the Weston Creek area: Warwick and Shirley
- Jo's property near Wamboin: Jo
- Kama Nature Reserve with ANPSC members
- Pinnacle Nature Reserve, Hawker: Robyn's suggestion
- Yaouk bush block diversity Janet and John's property: Janet and John
- In November: Percival Hill, Nicholls

In each case Kevin provided maps to guide drivers. Sometimes we met for coffee afterwards.

Website

Kevin put in many hours updating the Field Nats Website including rearranging hosting. Darryl Seto's many hours of pro bono help with the technicalities are greatly appreciated.

Kevin has attempted a listing of previous FNAC presidents. Last year was our fortieth year.

Field Natter Newsletters are uploaded each month.

Memberships

Thirty-one households have renewed memberships. There are 11 others who might renew.

We have gained five new memberships in the past year: welcome Morgan, Mark and Carol, Margaret and Cecily.

Rosemary Blemings

Invasive weeds

The ACT has a list of invasive weeds that, while not banned, are discouraged to include in suburban gardens. One of these plants is the Gazania.

Not long after I moved into my current home (1984) I noticed one house that had a lot of Gazanias growing on their footpath (okay, I'm from Queensland and still can't get used to using the term nature strip). They had developed into many varying colours and looked wonderful. They have since been removed with new owners but I did like them at the time.

I have just returned from a seven day trip to South Australia and seen first-hand what happens when this plant gets out of control.

The whole highway around Renmark and Loxton is almost continuously lined with Gazanias. They are mostly confined to the roadside but have extended further into the bushland at some points. There are also evident around Mildura.

Alison Milton



Field Naturalists Association of Canberra AGM

Present: Brigitta Wimmer, Shirley and Warwick Daniels, Sophie Guy, Graham Muller, Morgan McClure, Sonja Lenz, Kevin McCue, Deidre Shaw, Janet and John Stein, Rosemary Blemings.

Apologies: Alison Milton, Lucy Bastecky, Robyn Black, Rhian Williams.

President's report: a draft was circulated for comment. Rosemary moved that the report be accepted, seconded by Shirley Daniels.

Treasurer's report: was circulated, explained and discussed. The three accounts' status and purpose were discussed.

There had been no membership payment to the Conservation Council as Kevin had explained he didn't have time to fill out the form's required details when the CC already had the FNAC information.

Did FNAC's income cover expenditure? Yes.

Should the subscriptions be raised from \$25 Shirley asked. Members could add a donation when paying their annual subs if they felt the \$25 was too modest.

Kevin moved acceptance of the Treasurer's report, seconded by Warwick Daniels. Kevin was unanimously thanked for his efforts as Treasurer.

Morgan agreed to be Returning Officer declaring all committee positions vacant.

President: Rosemary B was not standing for re-election.

Secretary:

Treasurer: Kevin McCue

Having a new committee could lead to discussion about and allocation of responsibilities, such as taking Minutes of committee meetings, dealing with correspondence (by email these days), organising speakers, organising committee meetings, the presidency.

Robyn Black, Rhian Williams and Lucy Bastecky were willing to be on the new committee. As a result of the AGM, they were joined by Janet and John Stein, Morgan McClure, Kevin McCue (as above) and Rosemary Blemings.

Sophie Guy would retire from the committee and was thanked for her contribution.

Alison Milton was thanked for her editorial achievements and photography in the President's report.

Rosemary was thanked for her long involvement as President through a motion from Sonja Lenz, seconded by John Stein.

Monday 24 October. FNAC meeting at Australian National Botanic Gardens

Janet and John Stein lead a walk along the ANBG's Bushland Walk with Deidre, Graham and Morgan prior to the AGM meeting at Pollen Cafe. Photographs from John will be sent to Alison for the Field Natter.

The AGM meeting moved on to being a general one, discussing general matters and future activities:

1. Should FNAC resume meeting at ANU? Would the Robertson Room, very generously free to

support our naturalists' group, be available in the evenings, at lunchtime or during the day? Janet agreed to find out what the situation was.

2. Libraries also had meeting rooms available. Kevin would check. The Conservation Council had a meeting room but their office was really only accessible by bus.

3. As the ACT was very well endowed with potential speakers presenting to other groups, did having meetings with speakers need to be part of FNAC's activities?

4. We could advertise other groups' meetings and speakers on our website.

5. We must go back to face-to-face meetings some time. Meetings could follow walks/outdoor activities.

6. Who would organise speakers?

7. Morgan mentioned a successful Darwin Week he'd been involved with. Would be in February, Darwin's birth month.

8. Shirley and Warwick have organised trips away and suggested field trip, weekends away. Staying in accommodation rather than camping.

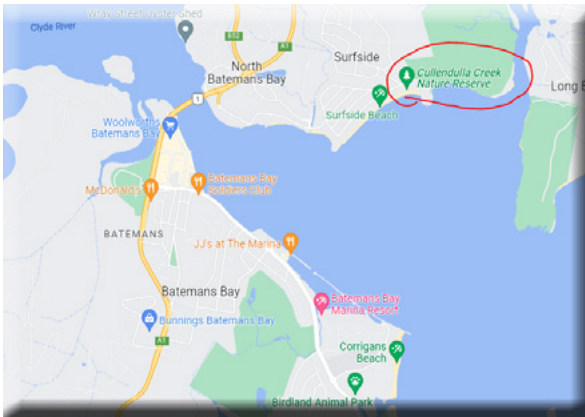
9. Kevin would show us the NPA's sign-on form for activities and how emergency numbers were collected.

It was very useful having input from others present today. Thank you all for ensuring we had a quorum.

Rosemary Blemings

Cullendulla Creek Nature Reserve, Batemans Bay, NSW

Sonja and I discovered this nature reserve during a day's R&R down the coast at Batemans Bay. It is ideal for short or longer walks in a marine tidal environment and there is plenty of parking.



My goal was to photograph a medium-sized raptor that we saw from the cafe on Sunday as it flew across to the northern side of the Clyde River. But of course we didn't see it again.

However, we did hear a Dollarbird calling and glimpsed a shy female Bowerbird in the casuarinas, plus all the gulls, cormorants and pelicans along the beach as the tide receded. A myriad frog species set up an impressively loud chorus in a small flooded sandy depression.

As we left, a butterfly flopped at our feet, a new one for the photographer so it was most disappointing to find it was a common variety, in fact a Common Ringlet (one that had been attacked by a bird or skink).



Underside and upperside of the Common Ringlet butterfly

The previous day we called in at Durras Lake and discovered that just two days previously they had opened the sand bar to partially drain the lake.

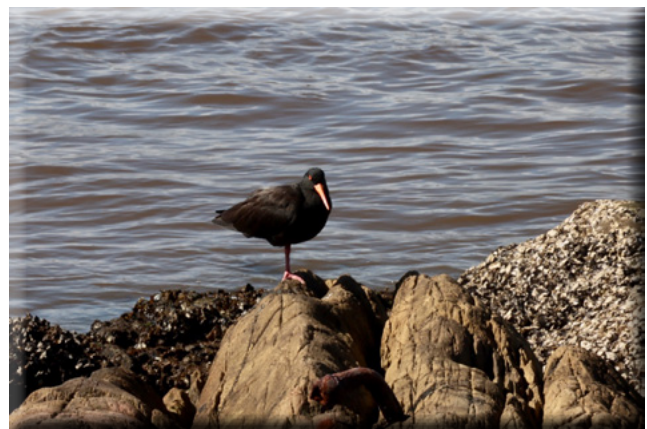
There were signs everywhere warning people to watch out for breeding shorebirds and we weren't disappointed. Unfortunately, we also learnt that the Pied Oystercatcher is now rated a vulnerable species. A Pied Oystercatcher was sitting on eggs according to the park ranger we talked with as he strengthened the protective 'fence' around the nest.



A Pied Oystercatcher on eggs at Durras Lake within a 'fence' to warn off humans

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/cullendulla-creek-nature-reserve/map>

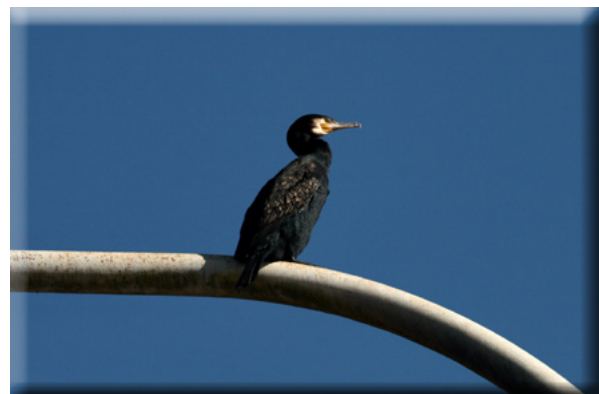
The tide was high and we didn't venture far past the Surfside entrance but we will return to investigate the park more thoroughly.



A Sooty Oystercatcher on the rocks

A word of warning - check for ticks when you get home and use a roll-on insecticide and then a good pair of tweezers to extract any ticks found.

Kevin McCue



A Great Cormorant

Activities

9 November: 9:30 am, Scowe Place – Percival Hill, Nicholls

Leptospermum buds will have opened. Scowe Place is off Temperley Street with Curran Drive the exit road from the Barton Highway. It's a steady climb through rocky grassland to the main track to the trig point. Then a meander down through sclerophyll woodland with rocky surface, along or between kangaroo tracks and through the Tea-Tree ground cover.

Percival Hill is an important site for Indigenous people though the Axe-grinding grooves are much more cryptic than those we saw at Theodore. The 360 degree views show what has happened since settlement. Curran Drive commemorates Harry Curran, the last operator of the Blacksmith services that were central to the success of Ginninderra Village, forerunner to both Hall Village and Canberra. The Blacksmith's shop can be seen from Percival Hill in its dilapidated state. Please let Rosemary Blemings know if you are coming so she can contact you if plans need to change. (Thanks Brigitta, Grahame, Robyn, Warwick and Shirley you've already confirmed attendance).

Race to document 'invaluable' tree art



Large baob tree with coiled snake carving, northern Tanami Desert. Photo: Darrell Lewis

University researchers and a group of First Nations Australians are working together to document ancient art in the bark of baob trees.

Prof Sue O'Connor, from the ANU School of Culture, History and Language, said many of the carved baob trees are already several hundred years old and there is urgency to produce high-quality recordings before 'these remarkable heritage' trees die.

Carvings in the baob trees tell the stories of the king brown snake (or lingka) dreaming in the Tanami Desert, which straddles the border of WA and the NT.

After more than two years of fieldwork, the research team from ANU, the University of WA and the University of Canberra, working alongside five traditional owners, found 12 trees with carvings.

'Unlike many Australian trees, the inner wood of boabs is soft and fibrous and when the trees die, they just collapse,' Prof O'Connor said.

'Sadly, after lasting centuries if not millennia, this incredible artwork, which is equally as significant as the rock art Indigenous Australians are famous for, is now in danger of being lost.'

Traditional owner Brenda Garstone said it's important indigenous knowledge and stories are not lost and continue to be shared for generations.

'We are in a race against time to document this invaluable cultural heritage,' said Garstone.

Prof O'Connor said Australian boabs have never been successfully dated.

'They are often said to live for up to 2000 years but this is based on the ages obtained from some of the massive baobab trees in South Africa, which are a different species,' said O'Connor.

'We simply don't know how old the Australian boabs are.

'It is vital we obtain some direct ages for these remarkable Australian trees, which help tell the story of First Nations Australians and are the source of a rich cultural heritage.

'There are hundreds of boabs visible on Google Earth, which we didn't manage to get to on this trip. They remain to be checked for carvings on our next Tanami adventure.

'We hope that our research will bring the art in the bark of these remarkable trees to many more Australians so that they can be appreciated for generations to come.'

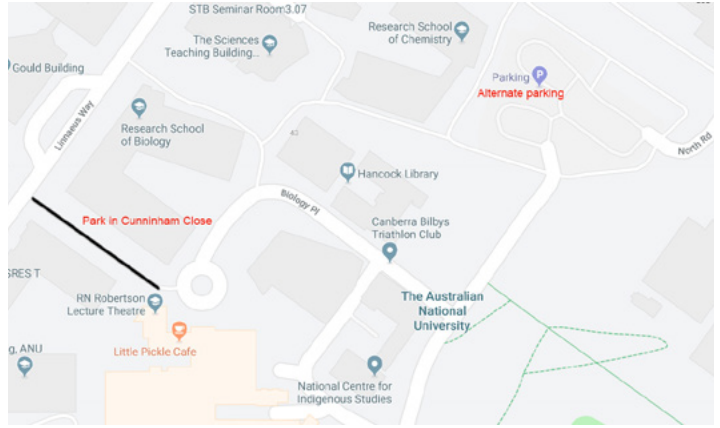


Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Inc.

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
- Email:** secretary@fieldnatsact.com
- Website:** www.fieldnatsact.com
- Treasurer:** treasurer@fieldnatsact.com
- 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:

.....

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**