

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

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

FIELD NATTER

MEETING—Thursday 2 November 2023 7:30 pm Australian National University

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

National Rock Garden

Speaker: Doug Finlayson

The National Rock Garden is a project of the Geological Society of Australia that aims to highlight some of the Australian rocks that feature throughout Australia's historical record, both culturally and scientifically. This talk will cover some aspects of the project's genesis and evolution in central Canberra and describe some of the background to large rock samples that are destined to be a permanent feature in central Canberra at the National Arboretum. Some of Australia's oldest and youngest rocks will feature in the talk. All have an interesting story to tell.



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White-winged Chough

On a recent visit to Broken Hill we extended our trip to include an extra few days in Mutawintji National Park, which is between Broken Hill and White Cliffs.

One morning as I sat eating my breakfast, I saw a White-winged Chough hopping towards me with something in its beak that looked like a hazel nut. When it came to a rock it gave the 'hazel nut' several good wacks on the rock to fracture the shell. It then proceeded to eat the juicy morsel inside.

This was a clear demonstration of a bird using a tool.

Unfortunately it all happened so quickly I didn't have a chance to get a photo.



Deidre asked if I had any photos. While not exactly showing the Chough using a tool, I came across these Choughs cracking open Pine Nuts at the ANU a few years back. Photo by Alison Milton

Deidre Shaw

Butterflies at the National Botanic Gardens



A few people, including Robyn, have discovered a batch of Imperial Jezebel butterfly cocoons that are emerging as adult butterflies at the botanic gardens.

Shorty has posted some amazing photos of one newly emerged adult just getting ready to dry her wings. His [sighting](#) can be found

on Canberra Nature Map.

Alison Milton

Could snow gums have occurred naturally around Dickson?

On Majura Ave, there is a solitary old Snow Gum that has been identified as *Eucalyptus pauciflora* on Canberra Nature Map. It is in the grounds of North Ainslie Primary School and seems to pre-date the school, which looks to have been built around it in 1958.



An earlier planting may be a possibility, but unlikely, so could the tree be a woodland remnant fringing frost hollows? Perhaps linked to the remnant snow gums between Aranda and Lake Burley Griffin?

John Stein

Field Natter's email addresses

With a lot of work from a number of people, we can now report that the email addresses listed on the back of this newsletter and on the Field Natters web site are now working.

Grateful thanks to Janet, and no doubt, a few others in the background.

There is also an additional email address for the newly appointed Outings Committee should you wish to send in any suggestions of outings you would like on the program or to even nominate as a leader.

A link to the Field Nats Facebook page is now also on the back page. So please visit.

Australian National Botanic Gardens outing

On 20 October Peter Abbott kindly offered to lead Field Naturalists on a walk through the ANBG in search of native bees. This followed on from his talk at our August meeting.



To take advantage of ideal warm and calm conditions, it was an impromptu outing with little notice. Even so, a group of six were able to attend.



It was early in the season for bees, but there were enough to delight the participants for two hours. We were given a knowledgeable insight into a micro world often missed.



Although the focus was bees, flies and other bugs were also keenly observed.



John Stein

Black Ridge outing

Dierk and Rosemary kindly invited us to visit their conservation property, Black Ridge, south east of Bredbo. The map gives a rough indication of the location. Ten Field Natters made the journey, car pooling in three cars.



The property is co-owned by eight people, though for varying reasons, now only a few actually visit the property to weed and maintain it.

Our first stop was a short distance from the gate so that Dierk could lead us to an old gum tree that had died due to being ring barked. It is a remarkable old stump: still standing.



Photo: Janet Stein

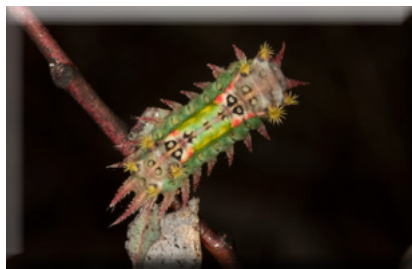
Dierk and a few others followed the fence line back to check the state of the fence while the stragglers took our time on a more direct route, sighting various plants and insects. I found a few leaf beetles but of particular interest were two Eucalyptus beetles new to me.



As well, there were a number of tube spittlebugs. Most interesting was that I was able to find the four stages of this bug: the tubes; spittle; early instar; and adult; and to get a photo of three of these stages in one photo.



I also found the several larvae of the Painted Cup Moth.



Dierk, always likes to stop at the top of ridge (before the steep descent to the cottage) to show off the view.



Some years ago they found a Rosenberg Monitor at a nearby termite nest. By her behaviour, she was obviously depositing eggs.

As we descended into the valley the terrain changed from open forest to dense shrubbery with many pea bushes. Where the vegetation once again thinned out lower down we stopped to observe some trees that had recent scratchings from koalas.

The property has a known koala population and a survey a few years back showed it is one of the richest populations in the area. However, as we drove through this area many of the eucalypts seemed to be dying. Whether the trees were truly dying or if the leaves had just been attacked is not clear.

Reaching the cottage at the far end of the property, thankfully the trees did not seem to be suffering from the same die-back. The first thing we noticed however, was a small group of feral goats.



The cottage is by the Buchans Creek, though there was very little water in it. On our last excursion in 2015, Spotted Pardalotes were nesting in the banks of the creek, but not this time. There had also been orchids but it was a bit later in the year and perhaps there had been more rain. There was certainly more water in the creek.

After lunch we wandered across to a section of mass erosion. This had previously been part of a gold mine but the creek line here now had massive erosion gullies. It was in this general area that orchids had been flowering on the previous visit, but one

of my favourite trees was a eucalypt that had grown almost horizontal.



There were many birds calling and David Dedenczuk kept a record, eventually recording 49 species, including the rare Hooded Robin (and even managed a photo or two).

On the road to the property, we also found a number of White-browed Woodswallows, as well as at least one Masked Woodswallow. These are rare visitors to the area and David explained that they knew it was going to be hot and dry inland

this summer, so had flown east to cooler climes.

Thanks to Dierk and Rosemary for again inviting us to visit this property and for showing us around and giving us some history of the conservation efforts being made here.

David's bird list

- Australian Magpie
- Australian Pipit
- Australian Raven
- Black-faced Cuckooshrike
- bronze-cuckoo sp.
- Brown Thornbill
- Brown-headed Honeyeater
- Buff-rumped Thornbill
- Crimson Rosella
- Dusky Woodswallow
- Eastern Rosella
- Eastern Spinebill
- European Goldfinch
- Fairy Martin
- Common Starling
- Fan-tailed Cuckoo
- Galah
- Grey Currawong
- Grey Fantail
- Grey Shrikethrush

- Hooded Robin
- Laughing Kookaburra
- Magpie-lark
- Masked Woodswallow
- Noisy Miner
- Olive-backed Oriole
- Pallid Cuckoo
- Pied Currawong
- Red Wattlebird
- Rufous Whistler
- Satin Bowerbird
- Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
- Speckled Warbler
- Spotted Pardalote
- Striated Pardalote
- Striated Thornbill
- Superb Fairywren
- Varied Sittella
- Weebill
- Welcome Swallow
- White-browed Woodswallow
- White-eared Honeyeater
- White-naped Honeyeater
- White-throated Treecreeper
- White-winged Chough
- Willie Wagtail
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater
- Yellow-rumped Thornbill
- Yellow-tufted Honeyeater

Alison Milton

Eventually, a mystery plant reveals its identity

Last year or possibly even longer ago I came across a small elegant looking seedling that seemed different and determined to defy the weeding efforts in my garden. As it had a certain 'attitude' and was solo, I decided to pot it up to give it time to reveal itself.

It was re-potted with unsympathetic soil mixed with compost several times. Why waste good soil or potting mix on a weed?

The pot was in the middle of the backyard surrounded by cut grass and subjected to all weathers, including -5° of frost.

By August 2023 the plant was 90 centimetres tall.

By late September I noticed many tiny buds in the leaf axils. By 3 October two tiny four-petaled pink flowers opened.

I remembered that Don and Betty Wood's pioneering, *Flowers of the South Coast and Ranges of NSW* arranged species by flower-colour. On page 40 of book 3 there is Don's perfect image of *Myoporum bateae's* prettily opened flowers with the caption, Narrow-leafed myoporum flowers pink in spring and summer.

Amazingly I'd had its parent plant growing in the garden until its death five or more years ago. It grew to be nearly two metres tall and flowered with bridal tresses every year.



Just one seedling had survived unnoticed until I spotted the tiny 'stipples' on its narrow leaves.

I bought the parent plant from Ben and Irene Stocks' Harden nursery at an ANPS plant sale. The label may have mentioned its uncommon status and noted it needed part sun to shade in a well-drained but moist subsoil. Here's a [link](#) to more detail.

Never give up on native species and the surprises they often bring!

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 you would be warmly welcomed.

President: Rosemary Blemings president@fieldnatsact.com

Email: secretary@fieldnatsact.com

Website: www.fieldnatsact.com

Treasurer: treasurer@fieldnatsact.com

Membership: membership@fieldnatsact.com

Newsletter Editor: editor@fieldnatsact.com

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.

Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra

GPO Box 708

Jamison Centre ACT 2614



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

